

Speech by Lord Kerslake: Chair of the UK2070 Commission
24th November 2022 : House of Lords

Good afternoon, and welcome to the end of year UK2070 Reception. Thank you all for coming.

Our aim today is to give you an update on the work of the Commission over the last year, to thank you for your work in supporting the Commission and to provide an opportunity for networking.

The UK2070 Commission was set up over four years ago to examine the extent of regional disparities in the UK and set out proposals for tackling it.

We preceded the current Government's Levelling Up Agenda but I think it is fair to say that much of the analysis in the Government's White Paper published earlier this year follows that of our reports.

It has, to say the least, been a turbulent political year. The Levelling Up project looked in some doubt during the Truss administration but has returned again with appointment of Rishi Sunak as Prime Minister and the reappoint of Michael Gove at the Levelling Up Minister. Given these short term political upheavals, it is important to hold on to the long term task of rebalancing and comprehensive programme of action needed to deliver it.

Our third UK2070 report ***Make No Little Plans*** set out a 10-Point Plan to tackle the deep-rooted inequalities across the UK. This has formed the basis of a programme of action by the Commission, particularly in three areas of activity:

1. **Firstly through Major Projects** : We have sponsored some major projects in order to take forward and demonstrate the power of the 10 Point Plan that we set out in our 2020 Report. We will come on to discuss two of these in a moment. The reports covered:
 - Empowering local action. This has been reflected in the major research project and Oxford Universities into experience of success in '*turning cities around*'. Its report will be published soon.
 - The need for Effective national strategies.
This is no better illustrated than the discussion around the Integrated Rail Plan. We therefore set up an independent Advisory Group to review this. Its report will be launched early 2023. In it, we will argue for pipeline programme of investment projects and a rolling minimum 5 year investment programme. The key message from the report though, is that whatever the scale of available resources and whatever the 'plan' that is ultimately agreed, we need to establish new and better institutional arrangements to ensure effective delivery and long-term commitment.
 - The UK2070 Teesside Task Force.
We have sought to demonstrate the power of our message of '*Going Big: Going Local*' through the UK2070 Teesside Task Force. The report has been published on our website and since then it has led to an international collaboration with South Africa which you will hear about later. My thanks to Mayor Houchen and his team and Teesside University, who have demonstrated the power of civic engagement and the collaboration of anchor institutions in the levelling up agenda.

This leads me on to thank all those who have made a major contribution to these initiatives. I want to mention two organisations in particular.

- We have been very grateful for generous support from our American partner, The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. I would though, like to give special recognition to the contribution that we have had throughout from Armando Carbonell whom we are delighted can be with us today. I'd like to congratulate him on his new role as its Envoy for Europe, including the UK.
- The UK2070 Commission also owes an enormous debt of thanks to Turner & Townsend for all their ongoing support.

2. **Our second area of activity has been contributing to the wider national policy agenda**, especially on the Levelling-Up agenda. This has been pretty wide ranging but includes in particular:

- The Productivity Institute's deep dive into understanding the Productivity gap that blights the UK's economic prospects
- The Northern Powerhouse update of its 2016 Independent Economic review;
- The RSA – Core Cities Commission - UK Cities 2050 Urban Agenda

We want to continue to be contributors in the year ahead.

3. **Our third area of activity has been in through follow-up research:** The work of the Commission has triggered research covering a range of issues taken up by our three partner universities, (whom I must thank for their continuing support) including:

- **The University of Sheffield's Oxford-Lincoln** research which I have already mentioned. In addition, we have benefited from the generosity of the Crook Public Service Fellowship's sponsored research into building resilience in places to economic shocks by Daniel Timms and inform the work on greater devolution of powers and funding in the UK by Zoe Billingham one of our new Commissioners.
- The **University of Manchester's** ESRC funded research on the work and potential of the combined authorities.
- The **UCL Lincoln** funded research into the Everyday Economy and UCL Grand Challenges funding on the '*Sacriston*' project (in Durham mining community).

As you can see from the above there has been a lot going on. The UK 2070 resource is small and we owe a lot to the core team and to those who give their help voluntarily. I want to express thanks to:

- **Emma Degg** through her work with the NW business Leaders Partnership into how business can engage positively with this important policy both nationally and in the North West;
- **Ying Jin** for all the work that your team at Cambridge University are doing, that has demonstrated the deepening of existing regional inequalities that we face in a period of recession;
- **Andrew Jones** in his support for the work of the Commission, including the London and Wider South East.
- **Vincent Goodstadt** for all the hard work and his technical guidance as chair of the UK2070 Commission Streeting Group.
- **Sioban Campbell** for programme management and secretariat for the UK2070 Commission, whose work has been invaluable to the Commissions breadth of body of work and
- **Michael Henson**, as chair of the UK2070 Teesside Taskforce and leader of the work with the South African Government.

Today is a milestone in taking forward the work of the UK2070 Commission. It not only allows us to explain what we have been doing but it also allows me to make clear our continued commitment to fight for a fairer and stronger society, and address the deep-rooted inequalities across the UK.

We are therefore planning a programme of activities for 20223 in which we hope to reach out across the UK with a series of regional economic visits building on the experience of our UK207 Teesside Taskforce. We also want to support the efforts for strategic cross border collaboration in the Western Gateway.

The Chancellor's Autumn Statement two weeks ago highlighted the economic risks that the UK faces, including a sustained recession. This mirrors the work that the UK2070 Commission commissioned from the University of Cambridge. What this work highlighted is that these risks will be unequal and unfair in their impacts unless there is change in way we do things in this country. Existing inequality will be deepened unless as our latest report says, we '**Go Big & Go Local**.'

Thank you