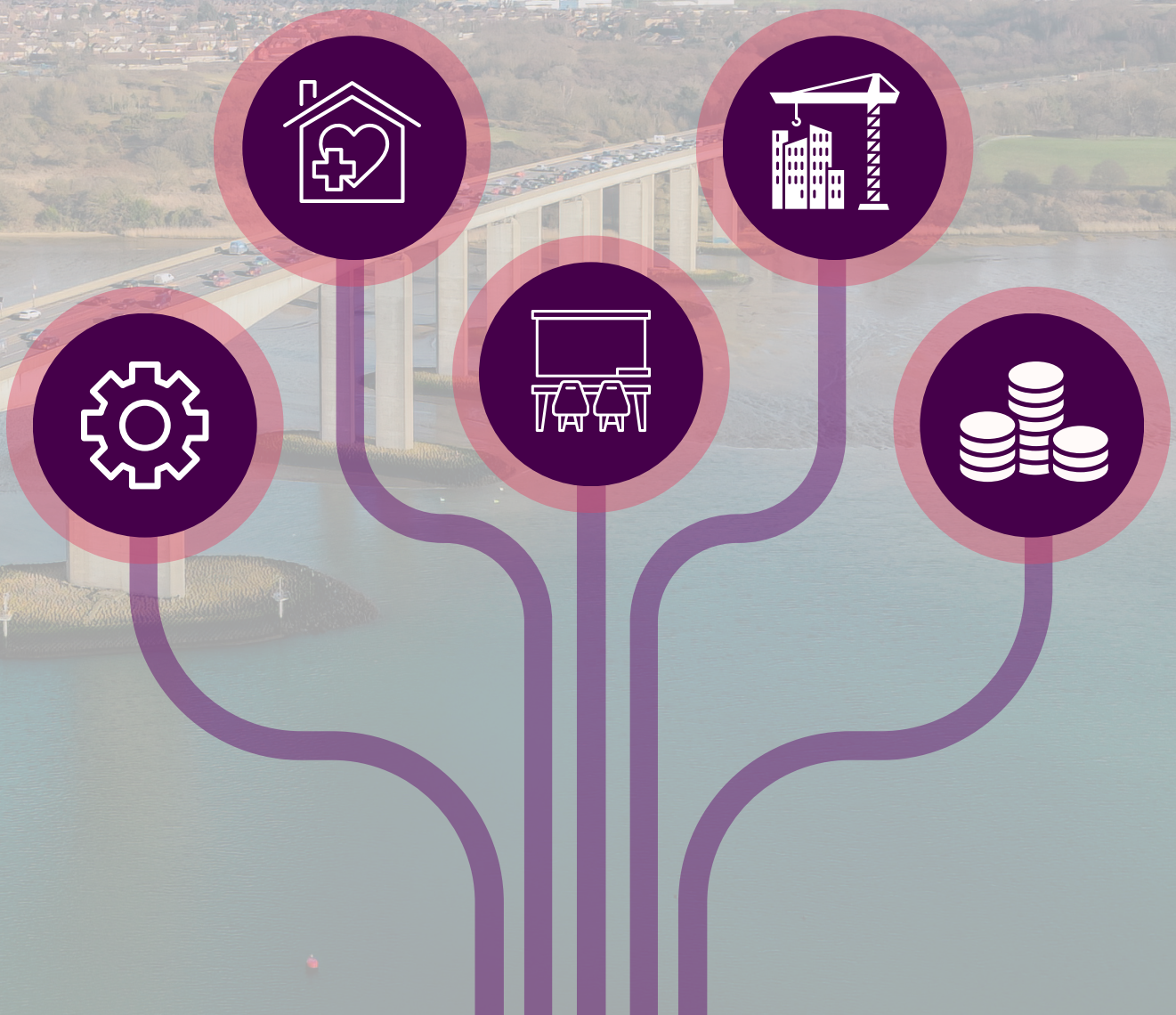


A Five Point Plan for National Renewal



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5

A Five Point Plan for National Renewal

Introduction

The 39 county and unitary authorities that make up the County Councils Network (CCN) stand ready to help deliver a new era of national renewal.

CCN is the voice of England's counties. The authorities that serve these areas are home to almost half of England's population and generate a substantial share of national economic output, while our councils deliver hundreds of public services residents rely upon every day.

But the role of our member councils and the places they represent has never been more critical — or more constrained. We know that government agendas rarely account for county and rural realities. This is often why they fail.

County and rural areas are central to achieving the new Prime Minister's ambitions for good growth in every postcode, underpinned by a new era of devolution and public service reform.

This Five Point Plan sets out the reforms needed to unlock the full potential of our areas to create stronger counties and stronger communities.

1

Ambitious county devolution & public sector reform



Deliver ambitious devolution in every county area to drive regional growth underpinned by a clear distinction of powers between mayors and councils, ensuring the role of councils is enhanced, not diminished.

2

Reforming adult social care



Deliver practicable and sustainable adult social care reform that keeps services locally delivered by councils, democratically accountable and focused on prevention.

3

Improving outcomes in SEND & children's services



Implement long-term SEND reform alongside wider reforms to children's services focused on prevention and early intervention.

4

Planning reform that creates communities



A locally-led planning system that delivers sustainable housing growth in the right places and more affordable homes, alongside supporting infrastructure and services.

5

Sustainable funding and reorganisation



Ensure a fair, transparent and sustainable funding system and approach to reorganisation that meets the needs of county and rural areas.



1

Ambitious county devolution & public sector reform

The problem

If the government is to succeed in its top priority, it needs to recognise the potential of polycentric and rural economies to contribute to UK PLC, but government policy has always been too urban focused. County areas continue to have fewer economic powers than metropolitan areas, while devolution deals have been delayed and watered down.



The solution

Deliver ambitious devolution in every county area to drive regional growth underpinned by a clear distinction of powers between mayors and councils, ensuring the role of councils is enhanced, not diminished.

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Our Asks



Drive growth in every postcode through the extension of devolved powers and funding to Strategic Authorities and faster progress towards mayoral status, including integrated settlements and expanded fiscal devolution.



Recognise the unique needs and potential of county and rural economies and ensure that the Devolution Framework reflects this.



Put councils in the driving seat of public service reform and integration, ensuring a clear delineation of responsibilities between strategic authorities and constituent councils.

Read more about our research and advocacy [here](#).



2

Reforming adult social care

The problem

More people need care and needs are increasingly complex, while workforce shortages, funding pressures and fragile care markets place services under strain and present unique challenges in county and rural areas in reforming services.



The solution

Deliver practicable and sustainable adult social care reform that keeps services locally delivered by councils, democratically accountable and focused on prevention.

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Our Asks



Continue backing the Casey Commission and commit to implementing its recommendations on a cross-party basis.



Provide multi-year funding settlements that meet rising demand and enable investment in prevention.



Fully fund fair pay agreements and ensure local government expertise is embedded during negotiations.

Read more about our research and advocacy [here](#).



3

Improving outcomes in SEND & children's services

The problem

The SEND system is leading to poor outcomes for children and remains financially unsustainable, while demand for children's services continues to grow. Recent reforms have been strongly welcomed, but county and rural areas face a number of unique challenges and the change in administration creates uncertainty over implementation.



The solution

Implement long-term SEND reform alongside wider reforms to children's services focused on prevention and early intervention.

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Our Asks



Commit to delivering the existing SEND reforms and provide sustainable home-to-school transport funding.



Write-off 100% deficits up to March 2028 and consult on changes to the High Needs Block distribution.



Continue to drive forward reforms to children's social care, including investment in family help and prevention through best start in life, families first and regional care cooperatives.

Read more about our research and advocacy [here](#).



4

Planning reform that creates communities

The problem

Counties face a housing crisis with unaffordable house prices, growing homelessness and increasing reliance on temporary accommodation. At the same time, housing growth is constrained by insufficient infrastructure, and planning reforms that risk weakening local accountability.



The solution

A locally-led planning system that delivers sustainable housing growth in the right places and more affordable homes, alongside supporting infrastructure and services.

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Our Asks



Pause and review proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and provide stability in the planning system to allow local plans and spatial development strategies to come forward and deliver the right type of homes in the right places.



Establish a long-term County Infrastructure Fund and reform developer contributions to ensure growth areas receive sufficient funding to deliver new infrastructure.



Deliver an ambitious national affordable homes programme to enable councils to drive the delivery of council houses and genuinely affordable homes.

Read more about our research and advocacy [here](#).



5

Sustainable funding & reorganisation

The problem

The recent fair funding review has left many CCN councils facing significant reductions in funding and an overreliance on council tax, while recent reorganisation decisions have also raised serious concerns around financial sustainability of new unitary councils.



The solution

Ensure a fair, transparent and sustainable funding system and approach to reorganisation that meets the needs of county and rural areas.

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Our Asks



Provide a sustained uplift in core funding for councils to meet demand-led pressures.

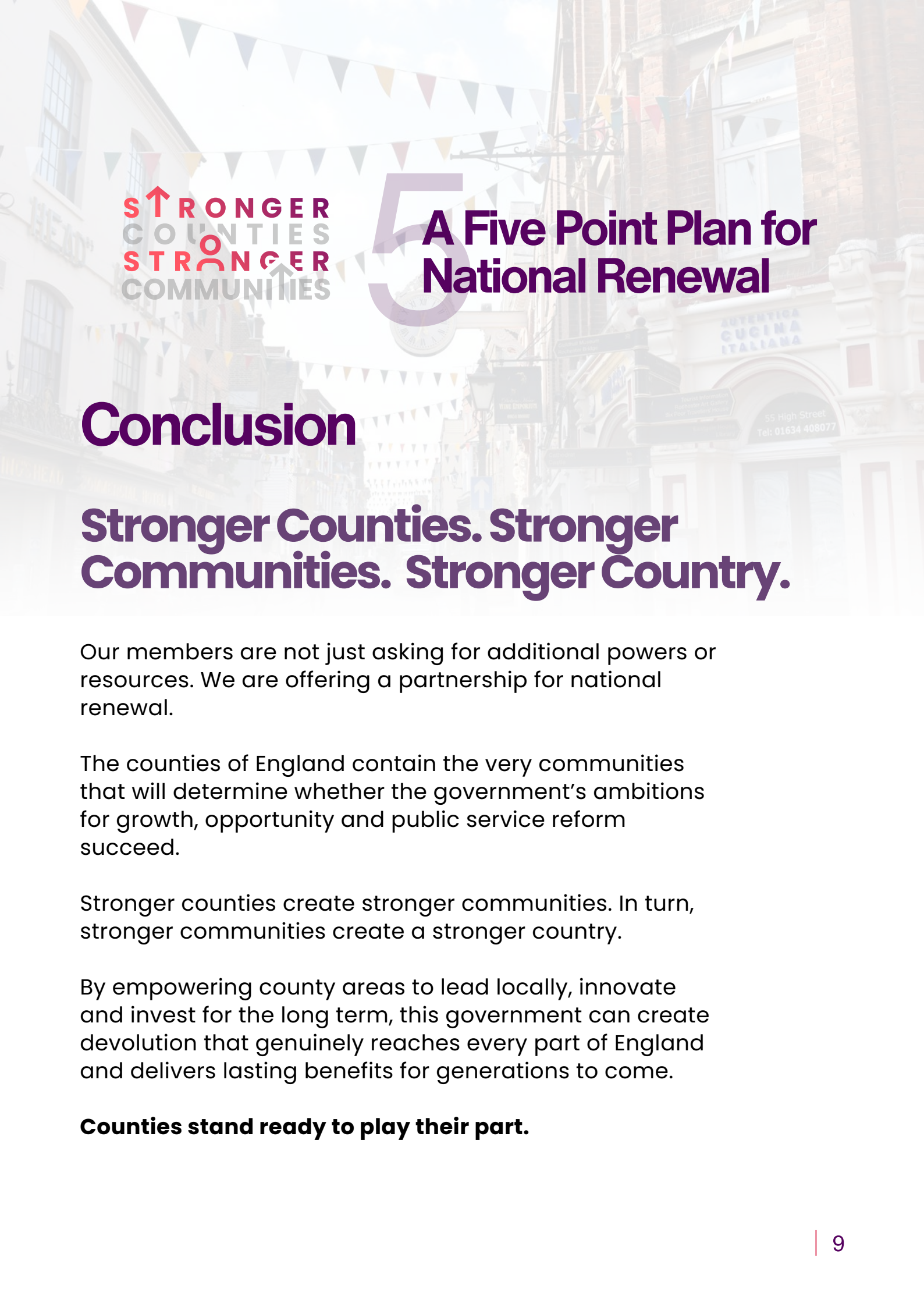


Reinstate the remoteness indicator across all funding formulae to fully recognise the additional costs of delivering services in rural areas.



Review the programme of reorganisation, including implementation timescales and transition funding, to deliver sustainable councils able to maximise devolution and public service reform opportunities.

Read more about our research and advocacy [here](#).



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A Five Point Plan for National Renewal

Conclusion

Stronger Counties. Stronger Communities. Stronger Country.

Our members are not just asking for additional powers or resources. We are offering a partnership for national renewal.

The counties of England contain the very communities that will determine whether the government's ambitions for growth, opportunity and public service reform succeed.

Stronger counties create stronger communities. In turn, stronger communities create a stronger country.

By empowering county areas to lead locally, innovate and invest for the long term, this government can create devolution that genuinely reaches every part of England and delivers lasting benefits for generations to come.

Counties stand ready to play their part.



THE VOICE OF COUNTIES

CCN is the voice of England's counties. Representing the local authorities in county areas, the network is a cross-party organisation which develops policy, commissions research, and presents evidence-based solutions to issues on behalf of the largest grouping of councils in England.

In total, the 21 county councils and 18 unitary councils that make up the CCN represent 27 million residents, account for 39% of England's GVA, and deliver high-quality services that matter the most to local communities.

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