

Broads Authority

14 March 2025

Agenda item number 13

Consultation on a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk

Report by Chief Executive

Purpose

To inform members of the consultation seeking views on a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas of Norfolk and Suffolk.

Broads Plan context

Broads Authority governance and constitution underpins the delivery of the strategic objectives of the Broads Plan.

Recommended decision

- i. The Chair and Chief Executive to keep a watching brief on how the devolution deal develops and engage with colleagues in the constituent local authorities as and when appropriate.
 - ii. To agree the Authority's response to the government consultation on a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk.
-

Contents

1.	Introduction	2
2.	The consultation	2
3.	Implications for the Broads Authority	3
4.	The consultation questions	3
5.	The Authority's response	4
6.	Next steps	4
7.	Conclusion	4

1. Introduction

- 1.1. On 17 February, the Government launched its consultation on a devolution deal for Norfolk and Suffolk. The consultation ends at 11.59pm on Sunday 13 April.

2. The consultation

- 2.1. The Government's consultation document says:

This consultation seeks views on a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas of Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council.

The Mayoral Combined County Authority would receive devolved funding from central government, including those relating to the following policies:

- housing and regeneration
- local growth
- adult skills (except apprenticeships)
- local transport

- 2.2. In December 2024, the government published the [English Devolution White Paper](#). This sets out plans to move power out of Westminster and back to local communities, ensuring that every part of England is covered by devolution. The local council leaders from Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council have since written to government expressing their interest in taking forward devolution within their area through the establishment of a Mayoral Combined County Authority, with the first election for a Mayor taking place in May 2026. Before taking a decision on whether to proceed with the making of the necessary legislation, the government is seeking views from interested parties, including those who live and work in the area.
- 2.3. This consultation seeks views, particularly from interested parties, including those who live and work across Norfolk and Suffolk, on the effect of establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority in the area. It includes questions on the proposed geography and how the Combined County Authority will make decisions, together with questions on the effects of working across this geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority.
- 2.4. You can read more and find the link to respond here: [Norfolk and Suffolk devolution - GOV.UK](#).
- 2.5. This consultation does not cover the Government's local government reform programme. You can read more about devolution and local government reform at www.norfolk.gov.uk/devolution.

3. Implications for the Broads Authority

- 3.1. The councils of Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council would be the constituent councils of the proposed Combined County Authority. Each council would appoint two representatives to be constituent members. This means that there would be four constituent council members in total. Constituent councils would each be able to appoint the same number of substitute members as they appoint constituent members to act in the absence of their constituent members.
- 3.2. Norfolk and Suffolk Combined County Authority's constituent members would be able to appoint a maximum of 4 non-constituent and associate members to support the delivery of their work programme. Non-constituent members are representatives of an organisation; for example, a district council, local NHS trust, the Police and Crime Commissioner, or a local registered provider. Associate members are named individuals who can provide particular experience or expertise – for example, on active travel, or local businesses.
- 3.3. The proposals will have limited impact on the Broads Authority. There may well be advantages in providing an opportunity to work with a new Mayoral Authority across Norfolk and Suffolk and new unitary authorities which could provide a more joined up approach to the delivery of services. Probably the most significant implication for the Authority is in the membership of its Board. Currently 9 of the of 21 members are appointed by the eight constituent local authorities. The new arrangements will provide an opportunity to reduce the size of the Board in line with the views from previous discussions with Authority Members. The size of the Board and the number of local authority appointments will depend on the number and boundaries of the new local authorities.

4. The consultation questions

- 4.1. The consultation sets out prescribed questions and responses as follows:

For each question, you can provide the following answers:

strongly agree

agree

neither agree nor disagree

disagree

strongly disagree

don't know

prefer not to say

- 4.2. Respondee are also be invited to explain their answers.
- 4.3. Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority over the proposed geography will deliver benefits to the area?

- 4.4. Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed governance arrangements for the Mayoral Combined County Authority?
- 4.5. Question 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the economy of the area?
- 4.6. Question 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve social outcomes in the area?
- 4.7. Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve local government services in the area?
- 4.8. Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through a Mayoral Combined County Authority will improve the local natural environment and overall national environment?
- 4.9. Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that working across the proposed geography through the Mayoral Combined County Authority will support the interests and needs of local communities and reflect local identities?

5. The Authority's response

- 5.1. Members are asked to provide a response to each of the questions plus any additional commentary they consider appropriate. This will then be submitted as the Authority's formal response to the consultation.

6. Next steps

- 6.1. Following the consultation, the Secretary of State will consider all responses and decide whether to establish a Mayoral Combined County Authority. If the Secretary of State decides to proceed, the government will confirm funding (subject to Spending Review) and provided the constituent councils consent, the necessary secondary legislation will be laid in Parliament. If approved by Parliament, the Combined County Authority would be established in time for the first mayoral election to take place in May 2026.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The government's proposed devolution deal represents the largest change for local government in Norfolk and Suffolk since 1974. Although the implications for the Broads Authority are mainly in the constitution of its Board it will be important for the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Executive to keep a close eye on how the proposals development and engage with the process as and when necessary.

Author: John Packman

Date of report: 21 February 2025

Background papers: [Norfolk and Suffolk devolution – government consultation](#)