

NEW FRONTIERS

RELOCATION OF PUBLIC BODIES



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Context

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly provides the ideal location for the Government's ambition to relocate more public bodies outside London³⁵, including new national agencies that will need to be established to carry out functions currently delivered by the European Union.

The relocation of public agencies and functions outside London will particularly benefit rural and peripheral areas of the UK

Unlocking barriers

The Rationale for Change

Our beautiful peninsula is a great place to live and work, offering excellent digital connectivity, the fastest growing regional airport, enhanced road and rail networks, and appropriate premises for occupation in key strategic locations.

The Industrial Strategy proposes relocating Government agencies to different regions across the UK in order to support local clusters and private sector growth³⁶. The relocation of Government agencies and/or elements of their functions to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly would send a strong message that the Government is genuinely committed to re-balancing and driving economic growth in all parts of the UK.

The Cabinet Office estimates that over 20 new public bodies will need to be created to manage functions repatriated to the UK following EU exit. One Cabinet Office Minister has already expressed a preference for the new bodies to be based in locations outside London³⁷. The relocation of public agencies and functions outside London will particularly benefit rural and peripheral areas of the UK, where communities can feel removed from national decision-making. Situating public agencies and functions in rural and peripheral areas at the sharp end of change and innovation, such as Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, has potential for positive impact on national policy development as well as our local economy.

³⁵ *Industrial Strategy Green Paper, p124*

³⁶ *Industrial Strategy Green Paper, p124*

³⁷ *Civil Service World 28/07/17, <https://www.civilserviceworld.com/articles/news/over-20-public-bodies-will-be-created-brexit-says-cabinet-office-minister>*

Our Ask

We seek Government commitment to support the relocation of at least one Government agency, arms-length body, and/or functions to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly by 2020 through ongoing dialogue with senior decision-makers.

Our Offer

- **Excellent Connectivity:** Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly is one of the best connected rural areas for superfast broadband in the UK. Cornwall Airport Newquay is the fastest growing regional airport in the UK, with regular and direct flights to London, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Belfast and beyond³⁸. We have a direct rail link to London Paddington, with plans to introduce upgraded trains to provide more services and reduce journey times from 2018³⁹. Improvements to road and rail networks have enhanced connectivity between North-East Cornwall and Exeter.
 - **Suitable sites:** Appropriate existing sites in Launceston, Bodmin, Liskeard and Cornwall's administrative centre in Truro can be made available to host relocated public bodies, with future developments capable of being shaped to meet the requirements of relocated bodies.
 - **Support local economic growth:** Cornwall and Isles of Scilly's long term growth strategies have improved its position within the UK economy through a focus on smart specialisation areas and high value, knowledge based sectors. However, public sector employers are still the largest in the region. Locating the public sector where the economy is most reliant on it would lever in procurement opportunities for rural local businesses, provide employment and career opportunities, and create an important stimulus to the local economy. There is opportunity to reinforce established and emerging clusters
- in areas such as energy, environment, creative & digital and space through the relocation of relevant Government agencies.
- **Opportunities to rural-proof new policies:** Cornwall is a good test-bed to trial new policy initiatives to assess their impact on rural and coastal areas. One-fifth of the population of England and a quarter of England's registered businesses are situated in rural areas;⁴⁰ however, rural areas face specific challenges concerning distance, sparsity and demography that the Government must take fully into account when developing policy. Public bodies relocated to Cornwall would be able to work with local businesses and communities on the ground to co-develop, pilot and rural-proof new programmes before rolling them out more widely in other parts of the UK.
 - **Outstanding track record of partnership-working:** Cornwall can boast a long track record of proactive and constructive collaboration between public, private and third sectors. This is most recently exemplified in the establishment of the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Leadership Board and the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly LEP's prominent role as a founding member of the South West Rural Productivity Commission. The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Nature Partnership is also noted regionally for the diversity of partners it brings together and unified strategic approach.



³⁸ <https://www.cornwallairportnewquay.com/press/press-releases/cornwall-airport-newquay-still-the-uks-fastest-growing-regional-airport>

³⁹ *Railway Upgrade Plan – Western* (Network Rail), <https://cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Railway-Upgrade-Plan-Update-2017-Western.pdf>

⁴⁰ *Rural Proofing* (DEFRA/DEFRA), 16 March 2017 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-proofing>

Benefits

Relocating Government agencies, arm's-length bodies and/or functions to Cornwall would provide the opportunity for highly skilled employment opportunities and personnel to work in one of the poorest regions of the UK. Matched to the historical investment that Cornwall has made into its connectivity, the resulting economic gain to the area would be significant and add value to the UK economy moving forward. Relocation to Cornwall would also send a strong message that the Government is delivering its commitments set out in the Industrial Strategy to re-balance the UK economy and develop place-based strengths in all parts of the UK.

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