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Rayner promises mayor for every region of England



Angela Rayner: I want the whole of England to have mayors

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Angela Rayner has said she wants every region of England to get a mayor, as she outlined plans for a major redesign of local government.

The deputy prime minister told the BBC giving regional mayors more powers over housing, transport, education and employment would help drive economic growth.

Under the proposals, the government also wants to merge areas where there are currently two tiers of local authority - smaller district and larger county councils - in a bid to streamline services.

But the body representing district councils has warned the plans could spark "turmoil" and argued "mega-councils" could undermine local decision-making.

In a speech announcing the plans, Rayner said devolution would be the "default" rather than "at the whim of a minister in Whitehall".

She described the UK as the "most centralised" country in Europe and pledged to end "micromanaging by central government".

Rayner said the government would work with local leaders to deliver its plans but where they are unable to agree on a way forward, ministers would get the power in law to "knock heads together" and create larger authorities.

In an interview with the BBC, the deputy PM said these larger groupings were better placed to scale up and tackle issues which crossed different areas.

The government will announce the parts of the country it is prioritising for devolution "in due course", with the aim of holding mayoral elections for these areas in May 2026.

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Other proposals **set out in a paper published on Monday** include:

greater powers for mayors to manage rail networks and introduce London-style public transport, where buses, trains and trams are integrated into one system with pay-as-you-go fares and joined-up services

the ability to regulate bike hire schemes and tackle the "scourge" of badly parked e-bikes

giving local groups the right to buy under-threat community assets such as youth clubs, pubs, libraries and sports facilities

Local government in England is currently covered by a complicated patchwork of arrangements that has changed a lot in recent years.

In some places, responsibility for local services is shared between county councils, which manage areas including social care and education; and district councils, which cover smaller areas and are responsible for services such as bin collections.

Some areas, particularly larger towns and some cities, have "unitary" authorities responsible for both - while the regions surrounding big cities are increasingly covered by multi-council "combined" authorities with greater powers in areas such as transport policy, planning and housing.

The Conservatives created 11 such areas, which have an elected "metro" mayor, and set a target that every part of England that wanted greater powers in some form would get a devolution deal by 2030.

Despite this, around half of England's population live in an area not covered by a devolution deal.

The Labour government pledged to extend the use of local powers before the election, as a key part of its wider targets to grow the economy and build more homes.

What are the different types of councils?

Town or parish council



The smallest type of council. Responsible for local issues like allotments and play areas.

District council



Responsibilities include bin collections, parks and local planning. Other services are provided by a county council.

County council



Provides services across the whole county: such as road maintenance, schools and libraries.

Unitary authority



A type of council that provides all local government services, including housing.

BBC

It has now outlined its ambition to move towards unitary councils across all of England, with areas that currently have two tiers being asked to draw up merger proposals.

Ministers see streamlining local government as a way to enable the creation of more powerful local mayors, in an attempt to unblock infrastructure and attract greater investment.

Elected mayors would then oversee areas representing two or more councils, and be handed more powers over things such as planning decisions and public transport.

Dozens of district councils could be abolished as a result – prompting some to claim it would deprive people of genuinely localised decision-making.

It would require a series of deals nationwide emulating North Yorkshire, which now has a unitary authority after eight councils were **merged together last year**.

This would mark a scale of reorganisation that goes beyond what Labour promised in its election manifesto, and amount to arguably the biggest shake-up of local government since the 1970s.

Labour argues the overhaul will make local government simpler and produce savings by making the delivery of services more efficient.



Angela Rayner was joined by England's regional mayors for the announcement

The plans are opposed by the District Councils' Network, an umbrella group for such councils, which says there is "little evidence" from past reorganisations that taxpayers' money will be saved.

Hannah Dalton, vice-chair of the network, said the "creation of mega councils" could prove "the opposite of devolution".

She also warned the reorganisation could spark a "period of turmoil which will prevent councils from focusing on the local services that drive new homes, jobs and reduce pressure on the NHS".

The Conservatives said Rayner's announcement was part of a plan to "strip councils of their powers" and to impose reorganisation from Westminster "without local consent".

The Liberal Democrats said council budgets were "on the brink" and without properly investing in social care more vital services would disappear.

However, the proposals have been welcomed by the County Councils Network, which says its members "now recognise the need to embrace the benefits" of devolution in the face of "significant financial challenges".

Cllr Louise Gittins, chair of the Local Government Association, said "genuine devolution of powers and resources can play a huge role in promoting inclusive economic growth, creating jobs, and improving public services".

She said her members were "open to change" but "remain clear that local government reorganisation should be a matter for councils and local areas to decide".

Since returning to office in July, Labour has announced four devolution deals: Greater Lincolnshire, Hull and East Yorkshire, Devon and Torbay, and Lancashire.

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What do you think about the new proposals?

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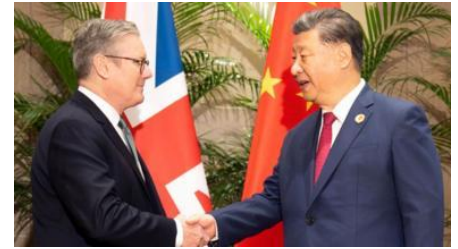
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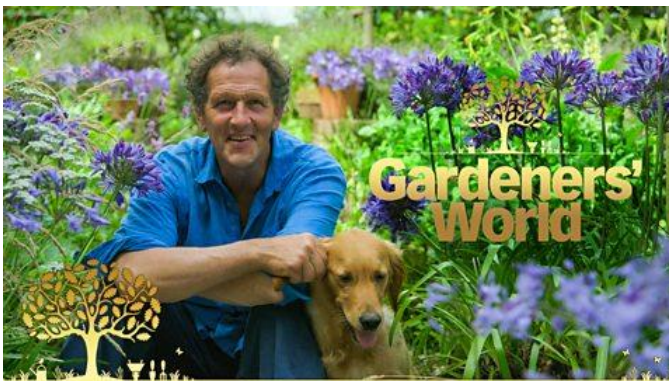
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