



Combined authorities and combined county authorities

A **combined authority** (CA) is a type of local government institution introduced in England outside Greater London by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. CAs are created voluntarily and allow a group of local authorities to pool appropriate responsibility and receive certain devolved functions from central government in order to deliver transport and economic policy more effectively over a wider area. In areas where local government is two-tier, both must participate in the combined authority.^[1]

A **combined county authority** (CCA) is a similar type of local government institution introduced in England outside Greater London by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, but may only be formed by upper-tier authorities: county councils and unitary authorities. The members of the CCA are appointed by its constituent councils. In addition, the CCA may appoint additional members and allow another body to nominate members; these members are non-voting unless decided otherwise.^{[1][2]}

CAs and CCAs are predominantly created in areas where they are considered likely to improve transport, economic development, and regeneration, but their creation is encouraged by Government and there has been a substantial increase in creation in recent years. There are currently eleven such authorities, created between 2011 and 2024. A CA or CCA may not cross over to another combined area.

History

Following the abolition of metropolitan county councils and the Greater London Council in 1986, England had no local government bodies with strategic authority over the major urban areas of the country. In 1999, following a successful referendum, the Labour government created a strategic authority for London (the Greater London Authority), but no bodies were established to replace the metropolitan county councils outside London. The Blair government instead pursued the idea of elected regional assemblies, although following an unsuccessful referendum in 2004 in the most positive region – the North East – this idea had few proponents.

Combined authorities and combined county authorities



Location	England
Number	11
Government	Board of indirectly-elected council leaders <u>Directly elected mayors</u> (11)

In October 2010 the Coalition Government introduced measures to replace regional development agencies, which were described as inefficient and costly.^[3] They were superseded by local enterprise partnerships, voluntary groups whose membership was drawn from the private sector with local authority input.

Earlier in 2010, the Government accepted a proposal from the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities to establish a Greater Manchester Combined Authority as an indirectly elected top-tier strategic authority for Greater Manchester.^[4]

Following the unsuccessful English mayoral referendums in 2012, combined authorities have been used as an alternative means to grant additional powers and funding as part of 'city deals'. In 2014, two indirectly elected combined authorities were established covering the ceremonial county areas of South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire, and a further two which each covered a metropolitan county and adjacent non-metropolitan districts: the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for Merseyside and the Borough of Halton unitary authority; and the North East Combined Authority for Tyne and Wear and the unitary authorities of County Durham and Northumberland.

In 2016, a combined authority was formed for the metropolitan county of the West Midlands; as a consequence, all former metropolitan counties are now covered by combined authorities. In 2016, the first combined authority to not cover a metropolitan county was formed. This was Tees Valley, which covers the area of the former county of Cleveland (now four unitary authorities in the ceremonial counties of Durham and North Yorkshire), together with the unitary authority of Darlington. Two further combined authorities which do not cover ceremonial counties or former metropolitan counties were formed in 2017: West of England, comprising Bristol and two of the three adjacent unitary authorities in Gloucestershire and Somerset, all of which had been within the former county of Avon; and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In 2020, it was reported that other combined authorities for non-metropolitan parts of the country – such as Cumbria, Lancashire, North Yorkshire, and Somerset – were under consideration, but the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on governance meant decisions were delayed until late 2021.^{[5][6][7]}

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, announced in his 2023 budget speech that "trailblazer deals" had been struck with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and West Midlands Combined Authority which included reforms to their funding models.^[8] As part of these deals, the combined authorities will be treated in a similar manner to government departments at the next spending review and each will be allocated a multi-year single settlement, replacing a large number of individual grant funding streams for which they must submit individual competitive bids.^[9] In his 2024 budget, Hunt said that the North East Mayoral Combined Authority would have the same trailblazer deal.^[10] In return, the CAs would face greater oversight, including quarterly scrutiny sessions by new committees of local MPs.^[11]

Since the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 was passed, there was an influx of new CAs and CCAs either being created or planned to be created, and further powers to be devolved to existing authorities.

Legislation

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 allowed for certain functions over transport to be delegated from central government. The Localism Act 2011 allowed additional transfers of powers from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and gave combined authorities a general power of competence.^{[12][13]} The powers and functions to be shared are agreed by the metropolitan district, non-metropolitan district, non-metropolitan county or unitary authority councils.

In 2014, the government consulted on changes to the legislation governing combined authorities. Proposed changes included extending the legislation to Greater London, Wales, and Scotland.^[14] The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 received royal assent on 28 January 2016.^[15] The act allowed for the introduction of directly elected mayors to combined authorities in England and Wales with powers over housing, transport, planning, and policing.^[16]

In 2020, the government planned to produce a white paper on 'Devolution and Local Recovery', which was expected to create new combined authorities with mayors – or "county mayors" – for non-metropolitan areas of the country.^[17] These have been tentatively suggested to be a 'Great South West' grouping of Cornwall, Devon, and Dorset^[17] (possibly with Somerset^[18]), and another in Lancashire.^{[19][20]} The white paper was delayed and was eventually published on 2 February 2022.^[21]

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 enhanced devolution and created a new form of authority called a combined county authority. The act allowed for more broader functions to be devolved to new and existing CAs and CCAs, and created the power for CAs and CCAs to be allowed to change the title of mayor.

Powers and functions

CAs and CCAs are bodies corporate and are able to assume the role of an integrated transport authority and economic prosperity board. This gives the authority the power to exercise any function of its constituent councils that relates to economic development and regeneration, and any of the functions that are available to integrated transport authorities. For transport purposes, CAs and CCAs are able to borrow money and can levy their constituent authorities.

CAs and CCAs were (until the United Kingdom left the European Union) encouraged to borrow from European institutions for social and environmental schemes which met EU objectives. Loans were made with conditions attached which furthered EU policies. By 2015, Greater Manchester Combined Authority had agreed loans from the European Investment Bank in excess of £1 billion,^[22] with similar liabilities to the Treasury and private business.

Creation and amendment

CAs and CCAs consist of two or more contiguous English local government areas. The creation of a CA or CCA is voluntary and all local authorities within the area must give their consent before it can be created.^[23] The local authority of any district of England outside Greater London can join a CA, and a county council can become part of a CA even if only some of the non-metropolitan districts that make up the county are within the combined area. A local authority may only belong to one CA.^[24]

CCAs can only be formed by upper-tier authorities: county councils and unitary authorities. The members of a CCA are appointed by its constituent councils. In addition, a CCA may appoint additional members and allow another body to nominate members; these members are non-voting unless decided otherwise.

There are three stages to the creation or amendment of a CA. Firstly a review must be undertaken to establish the likelihood that a CA would improve:

"...the exercise of statutory functions relating to transport in the area, the effectiveness and efficiency of transport in the area, the exercise of statutory functions relating to economic development and regeneration in the area, and economic conditions in the area."

—Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, Part 6^[25]

On completion of the review, the local authorities produce and publish a proposed scheme of the combined authority to be created, including the area that will be covered, the constitution, and the functions. This will include details of membership of the CA or CCA, remuneration, and how meetings will be chaired and recorded. Following a period of consultation and subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the CA or CCA is formally created, dissolved, or altered by a statutory instrument.

Existing

A number of CAs and CCAs were created in 2024, including the North East Mayoral Combined Authority, East Midlands Combined County Authority, and York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Nine CA and CCA mayors were elected during the 2024 United Kingdom local elections, including the newly created Mayor of the North East, Mayor of the East Midlands, and Mayor of York and North Yorkshire.

Authority	Type	Constituent councils	Established	Administrative HQ	Population (2020) ^[26]
<u>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>Cambridge</u> · <u>Cambridgeshire</u> · <u>East Cambridgeshire</u> · <u>Fenland</u> · <u>Huntingdonshire</u> · <u>Peterborough</u> · <u>South Cambridgeshire</u>	2 March 2017 ^[27]	<u>Huntingdon</u>	859,800
<u>East Midlands</u>	Mayoral Combined County Authority	<u>Derby</u> · <u>Derbyshire</u> · <u>Nottingham</u> · <u>Nottinghamshire</u>	27 February 2024	<u>Chesterfield</u>	1,363,000
<u>Greater Manchester</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>Bolton</u> · <u>Bury</u> · <u>Oldham</u> · <u>Manchester</u> · <u>Rochdale</u> · <u>Salford</u> · <u>Stockport</u> · <u>Tameside</u> · <u>Trafford</u> · <u>Wigan</u>	1 April 2011 ^[28]	<u>Manchester</u>	2,848,300
<u>Liverpool City Region</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>Halton</u> · <u>Knowsley</u> · <u>Liverpool</u> · <u>Sefton</u> · <u>St Helens</u> · <u>Wirral</u>	1 April 2014 ^[29]	<u>Liverpool</u>	1,564,000
<u>North East</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>Durham</u> · <u>Gateshead</u> · <u>Newcastle upon Tyne</u> · <u>North Tyneside</u> · <u>Northumberland</u> · <u>South Tyneside</u> · <u>Sunderland</u>	7 May 2024	<u>Newcastle upon Tyne</u>	2,567,000
<u>South Yorkshire</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>Barnsley</u> · <u>Doncaster</u> · <u>Rotherham</u> · <u>Sheffield</u>	1 April 2014 ^[30]	<u>Sheffield</u>	1,415,100
<u>Tees Valley</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>Darlington</u> · <u>Hartlepool</u> · <u>Stockton-on-Tees</u> · <u>Middlesbrough</u> · <u>Redcar and Cleveland</u>	1 April 2016 ^[31]	<u>Darlington</u> ^[32]	667,200
<u>West Midlands</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>Birmingham</u> · <u>Coventry</u> · <u>Dudley</u> · <u>Sandwell</u> · <u>Solihull</u> · <u>Walsall</u> · <u>Wolverhampton</u>	16 June 2016 ^[33]	<u>Birmingham</u>	2,939,900
<u>West of England</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>Bath and North East Somerset</u> · <u>Bristol</u> · <u>South Gloucestershire</u>	9 February 2017 ^[34]	<u>Bristol</u>	950,000
<u>West Yorkshire</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>Bradford</u> · <u>Calderdale</u> · <u>Kirklees</u> · <u>Leeds</u> · <u>Wakefield</u>	1 April 2014 ^[35]	<u>Leeds</u>	2,345,200
<u>York and North Yorkshire</u>	Mayoral Combined Authority	<u>North Yorkshire</u> · <u>York</u>	1 February 2024	<u>Northallerton</u>	820,500

Deals in development

Several new combined authorities and combined county authorities have been proposed. In 2022 a [government white paper](#) was published which included nine areas invited to take part in devolution deals.^{[36][37]}

Agreed deals awaiting parliamentary approval

Short-name	Type	Authority areas
Devon and Torbay	Combined County Authority	Devon Torbay
Greater Lincolnshire	Mayoral Combined County Authority	Lincolnshire North East Lincolnshire North Lincolnshire
Hull and East Yorkshire	Mayoral Combined Authority	East Riding of Yorkshire Kingston upon Hull
Lancashire	Combined County Authority	Blackburn with Darwen Blackpool Lancashire

Proposed cross-county deals

Short-name	Authority areas
Hampshire and the Solent	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Hampshire Isle of Wight Southampton Portsmouth
Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland	Leicestershire Leicester Rutland
One Yorkshire	Authorities of the Yorkshire and the Humber region
South Midlands	Bedford Central Bedfordshire Luton Milton Keynes North Northamptonshire West Northamptonshire

Hampshire and the Solent

- [Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole](#); [Hampshire](#); [Isle of Wight](#); [Southampton](#); [Portsmouth](#)

Previous plans in Hampshire have included a Solent Combined Authority in South Hampshire (potentially alongside the Isle of Wight) and a 'Heart of Hampshire' Deal including the remainder of the county. However, these plans were rejected in the South due to objections from Isle of Wight Council, and in the North of the county due to disagreements and the likelihood of the constituent authorities being reorganised.^{[38][39][40][41]} A Dorset combined authority was proposed by the county's former nine constituent councils, and is being considered by the two unitary councils

(Dorset and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole) which replaced them in April 2019.^{[42][43]} In 2021 a new plan including Hampshire, Isle of Wight, and Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole was being pursued, though lacking appetite for a mayor.^[36]

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

- Leicestershire; Leicester; Rutland

Leicestershire County Council proposed a combined authority in 2015,^[44] with discussions after including an East Midlands deal.^[45] A Leicestershire deal has also been proposed by government but without Leicester; as the whitepaper stipulates a minimum population of 500,000, Leicester or Rutland would not be able to form individual devolution deals; both Leicester and Rutland have been proposed as joining part of a deal. Rutland was previously a district of Leicestershire between 1974 and 1997 before regaining its independence, but is open to joining a Leicestershire deal.^[36]

One Yorkshire

- East Riding of Yorkshire; North Yorkshire; South Yorkshire; West Yorkshire

A proposal for a single Yorkshire Combined Authority, dubbed One Yorkshire, has been proposed for some time, but failed to gain government support, being rejected in 2019.^[46] The proposal had support from 18 of the 20 Yorkshire councils, with Sheffield and Rotherham both preferring the South Yorkshire alternative. The Mayor of the Sheffield City Region, Dan Jarvis, also supported a

One Yorkshire proposal.^{[47][48][49]} A combined authority was agreed for York and North Yorkshire in 2022 (see below), and in the same year negotiations began regarding an authority for East Yorkshire and Hull (also below).

South Midlands

- Bedford; Central Bedfordshire; Luton; Milton Keynes; North Northamptonshire; West Northamptonshire^[50]

Proposed county deals

Short-name	Authority areas
<u>Berkshire</u>	<u>Bracknell Forest</u> <u>Reading</u> <u>Slough</u> <u>West Berkshire</u> <u>Windsor and Maidenhead</u> <u>Wokingham</u>
<u>Cheshire and Warrington</u>	<u>Cheshire East</u> <u>Cheshire West & Chester</u> <u>Warrington</u>
<u>Cumbria</u>	<u>Cumberland</u> <u>Westmorland and Furness</u>
<u>Greater Essex</u>	<u>Essex</u> <u>Thurrock</u> <u>Southend-on-Sea</u>
<u>East Sussex and West Sussex and Brighton and Hove</u>	<u>East Sussex</u> <u>West Sussex</u> <u>Brighton and Hove</u>
<u>Hertfordshire</u>	<u>Hertfordshire</u>
<u>Norfolk</u>	<u>Norfolk</u>
<u>Staffordshire</u>	<u>Staffordshire</u> <u>Stoke-on-Trent</u>
<u>Suffolk</u>	<u>Suffolk</u>
<u>Surrey</u>	<u>Surrey</u>
<u>Warwickshire</u>	<u>Warwickshire</u>

Berkshire

- Bracknell Forest; Reading; Slough; West Berkshire; Windsor and Maidenhead; Wokingham
- Berkshire County Council was abolished in 1998, leaving the districts as unitary authorities. In 2021 the constituent districts agreed to submit an expression of interest in a county deal.^{[51][52][36]}

Buckinghamshire

- Buckinghamshire

Although not included in the 2022 white paper, Buckinghamshire Council hopes to be part of the next wave of county deals, but without a mayor.^[53]

Cheshire and Warrington

- Cheshire West & Chester; Cheshire East; Warrington.

Proposals by Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington underwent a public consultation in Summer 2017^[54] but government permission was still being sought in spring 2020.^[55] All three councils are in favour of a non-mayoral deal, although local Conservative MPs were not supportive.^[56] Warrington's Chief Executive has "received a letter from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities" with hopes for a ministerial meeting.^[36]

Cumbria

- Cumberland; Westmorland and Furness

Original proposal failed in 2017.^[57] A subsequent attempt for a single unitary authority failed in 2019,^[58] leading to a new proposal for a combined authority in late 2019, alongside replacing the two-tier system with two unitary authorities.^{[59][60][61]} As the initial plan for the unitarization was based on the assumption of a county-level combined authority to manage adult and children's services, the deal has been prioritized. There are disagreements between Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness on whether the deal should include a mayor.

Devon and Torbay

In early 2022, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay were selected as one of nine pilot areas in England by the UK government in the Levelling Up White Paper for "County Deal" negotiations. However, Plymouth City Council decided to withdraw from the deal in November 2023.^[62]

Devon and Torbay proceeded without Plymouth with a joint proposal for a Level 2 Devolution Deal, a Combined Authority without a directly elected mayor. The deal was approved by both Devon County Council and Torbay Council^[63] and submitted to the Secretary of State for approval in early May 2024.^[64] The DTCCA is scheduled to be created in the Autumn of 2024 following parliamentary approval.^[65]

Hull and East Yorkshire

- East Riding of Yorkshire; Kingston upon Hull

After the government rejected the One Yorkshire proposal (see above) and a cross-Humber deal with North Lincolnshire failed, a Hull and East Riding alternative has been proposed.^[66] Negotiations have begun with government on a deal, with leaders of both unitary authorities indicating a preference for a rotating chair instead of a mayor.^[36]

Greater Essex

- Essex; Thurrock; Southend-on-Sea

A proposed devolution deal was narrowly voted against in 2016,^[67] but has re-emerged in 2020. A separate deal was also proposed for a "South Essex" Combined Authority, covering Southend, Thurrock, Basildon, Castlepoint, Brentwood, and Rochford. The whole Essex plan also suggested

forming four new unitary authorities, whilst the South Essex plan favoured retaining the current status.^{[68][69][70]} The Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government stated in a letter that he did not favour the plan for a South Essex Combined Authority, but would be willing to discuss it.^[71]

East Sussex and West Sussex and Brighton and Hove

- East Sussex; West Sussex; Brighton and Hove

Seven councils in Sussex including Brighton and Hove have an economic board which coordinated development, skills and collaboration between councils. It is part of a long-term ambition to create a combined authority^{[72][73]}

Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire

- Hertfordshire districts have given support for a deal, but was not included in the 2022 white paper.^{[74][36]}

Lancashire

- Blackburn with Darwen; Blackpool; Lancashire

A proposal for Lancashire failed in 2017.^[75] Council leaders agreed to the concept in June 2020,^[76] with suggestions of reducing the number of districts into three unitary authorities,^[77] or implementing a single unitary authority instead of a combined authority. The three proposed successor authorities would cover the northern and coastal, central and southern, and eastern and Pennine areas.^{[78][79][80]} All potential constituent authorities have reviewed plans created by the county council, and are now "studying the detail of the white paper and its implications for driving forward our devolution aspirations".^[36]

Greater Lincolnshire

- Lincolnshire; North Lincolnshire; North East Lincolnshire

A plan for a Lincolnshire devolution was proposed, which would have included all constituent boroughs as well as the county council.^[81] The proposal failed in 2016 after constituent councils voted against it,^[82] with subsequent discussions of an East Midlands devolution deal.^[83] Currently the councils of Lincolnshire are working on a 10-point plan to submit to government for a Lincolnshire deal.^[36]

Norfolk

- Norfolk

The original proposal was for a Norfolk and Suffolk Combined Authority, before it was replaced with an East Anglia proposal including Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The East Anglia plan failed, reverting to the original two plans. Whilst the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough plan succeeded, the Norfolk and Suffolk plan failed, with King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council voting to reject the deal, and Norfolk County Council cancelling a subsequent planned meeting on the topic.^[84] The District and County Council previously disagreed over the election of a mayor.^[36] The government and the county council signed a devolution agreement on 8 December 2022, which

included the creation of an elected mayor with the title Elected Leader. Subject to consultation, and council and parliamentary approval, the first Elected Leader will be elected in 2024 to coincide with the police and crime commissioner elections.^[85]

Staffordshire

- Staffordshire; Stoke-on-Trent

A leadership board has been formed by Staffordshire County Council and its constituent districts, with an invitation to unitary Stoke-on-Trent. There is some interest in devolution talks, but requiring Stoke-on-Trent's participation.^[36]

Suffolk

- Suffolk

The original proposal was for a Norfolk and Suffolk Combined Authority, before it was replaced with an East Anglia proposal including Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The East Anglia plan failed, reverting to the original two plans. Whilst the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough plan succeeded, the Norfolk and Suffolk plan failed, with King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council voting to reject the deal, and Norfolk County Council cancelling a subsequent planned meeting on the topic.^[84] Suffolk County Council's plans for a county-wide deal have been supported by the constituent district councils with backing from its local MPs, although opposing a mayoral deal.^[36] Suffolk County Council signed a devolution agreement with the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities in December 2022, which included an Elected Leader who will lead the County Council.^[86]

Surrey

- Surrey

Whilst not included in current plans, discussions are ongoing between local authorities and the government on an eventual deal.^[36]

Warwickshire

- Warwickshire

Whilst not included in current plans, discussions are occurring between local authorities and the government on an eventual deal.^[36]

Defunct

Combined authority	Member councils	Established	Abolished	Administrative HQ	Population (2020) ^[26]	Reason
<u>North of Tyne</u>	<u>Newcastle</u> <u>North Tyneside</u> <u>Northumberland</u>	2 November 2018 ^[87]	7 May 2024	<u>Newcastle upon Tyne</u>	839,500	Merged into the <u>North East Mayoral Combined Authority</u> ^[88]
<u>North East</u>	<u>Durham</u> <u>Gateshead</u> <u>South Tyneside</u> <u>Sunderland</u>	15 April 2014 ^[89]	7 May 2024	<u>South Shields</u>	1,164,100	

See also

- [Devolution in the United Kingdom](#)
- [History of local government in England](#)
- [Local government in England](#)
- [Greater London Authority](#) (which operates under different legislation)
- [Corporate Joint Committee](#), similar bodies in Wales
- [Regions of England](#)

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