Foundational experiments in Wales

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Overview

Enabling conditions

- FE challenge fund
- Local FE projects

Foundational experiments

Lessons from Wales
Enabling conditions

Limits of conventional regional policy

New, more receptive politicians

Well-being of Future Generations Act

• created new metrics of development
• new conversations among policymakers
## FE Challenge Fund

- £4.5m FE challenge fund invited proposals for novel projects
- Over 200 proposals submitted
- 52 projects funded

The approved projects fell under the following FE themes:

- 14 in public procurement
- 12 in social care
- 10 in social housing
- 7 in construction
- 4 in food
• The positive lessons include the following –
  – first non-prescriptive WG local regeneration scheme (WG said it did not have the answers)
  – localities were encouraged to select projects they had reason to value
  – a theory of change that is transferable (top down state resources + bottom up energy and local knowledge)
• Other lessons –
  – Local projects can generate good practice, but good practice is a bad traveller
  – How do we spread and scale progressive localism?
  – Public procurement has become fashionable, but it is stymied by a combination of professional skills shortages and the lack of political leadership in public bodies
The “devolution era” may be drawing to an end because of the New Centralism
- Boris Johnson’s government is undermining the devolution settlements of the past 20 years
- Central govt engaging in aggressive unilateralism
- First Minister of Wales – who is committed to the territorial integrity of a reformed UK – now says “the Union is over”
- The future is poised between radical federalism or the dissolution of the UK
- Local experiments need an enabling national context to disseminate and embed progressive localism
“Union is over”

• “For the first time since devolution, we are dealing with a UK Government which is aggressively unilateral ... and that there is outright hostility to the fact of devolution at the heart of the Government ... and a belief that the best way to deal with [devolution] is to bypass it, to marginalise it, to act as if devolution didn’t exist.” (Mark Drakeford, First Minister)