

# Minister: devo white paper will be ‘seminal document’

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Simon Clarke has promised that the upcoming English devolution white paper will “unlock devolution” not only at the macro level of mayoral combined authorities but down to the town and parish councils.

The government’s new minister for devolution said that “in the next few weeks” the ministry will go through the process of writing and then publishing the white paper and that he has been having “a lot of discussions with officials on this”.

Speaking at the launch of a new OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) report, [Enhancing Productivity in UK Core Cities](#) in one of his first public engagements since taking over the devolution brief at the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government last month, Mr Clarke said he hopes the white paper will be a “genuinely seminal document” which will “help the process of unlocking devolution everywhere and empowering communities on a scale never seen before”.

“We will do that not only at the macro level of mayoral combined authorities but down to the town and parish council level so we can get that genuine balance if you like, so things that can be done truly locally are done at that level, things which need to be done more strategically can be done at one removed,” he said.

Mr Clarke described “levelling up” as “not just an expression” but “a serious statement of intent” and “the whole purpose which underlines our devolution agenda”. “That means going much further and faster in

devolving power away from Westminster to the level at which it most appropriately sits and we must build on the great progress we have already made by creating eight metro mayors who have the power to drive strong economic growth," he said.

The Middlesbrough and South East Cleveland MP reflected that "as someone from the Tees Valley" the issue of "places that haven't benefited from the opportunities that the rest of the country has enjoyed" was a "very personal issue" to him. "I know this very much from my own region," he added.

Mr Clarke also described the OECD report, which highlights the growing productivity gap between London and the UK's 11 core cities, as an "important milestone". "We will be looking closely at this report to see how we can better connect our towns, cities and communities to make sure all our core cities have to offer is realised in full," he added.

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