

It's easy to take a chip-on-shoulder approach to London, given the big differentials between what the taxpayer gives to its residents compared to the rest of us. Whereas Londoners have £69 each spent on the arts, we get [£4.60](#). This even applies to the "National Lottery" spent: at £165 per person in London, £47 elsewhere. Transport is worse, running at £2,731 per head in the capital and a paltry £134 [here](#).

London is a big economic success story, a global city and the sole driver of the whole UK economy. This is not least because it sucks in talent, both from across the world (hurrah) and the rest of the country (boo). Bringing in ever more people, is the city's official aim: "the only prudent policy" according to London's strategic [plan](#). It is also central government's mantra, as is rebalancing - which is taking place in the sense of a swing away from financial and professional services as underpinning London's growth and towards tech replacing it. At least London has a plan, which includes spatial development. Greater Manchester is still sputtering along with ten of the things, despite [the fact](#) that it is a single functional economic area and labour market.

London's rapidly increasing population needs somewhere to live, and the basic law of supply and demand means that when you have around ten people chasing every house on the market the price rises – and that's without factoring in the upward pressure from a slice of the London property market that the New York Times called a [global reserve currency](#) for the super-elite.

We shouldn't though have a problem with this success, except to the degree that it seems to drive national spending and policymaking: transport, housing and planning policy and [quantitative easing](#) (not good for Manchester) being obvious examples.

There is worse coming down the tracks though, with London using its strong platform of mayoral accountability to argue for raising, and keeping, its own revenues, a case artfully made by the influential [London Finance Commission](#). They have a point. Whereas in Sweden more than 16% of tax revenue is raised locally, in the UK it is less than 2%. Tokyo receives some 7.7% of its income through transfers from central

government, compared to 26% in Berlin, 31% in New York, 37% in Madrid – and a paralysing 74% in London. The next set of political manifestos may well make provision for giving London the sort of tax-raising powers that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland already enjoy, as well as the right to keep its business rates.

This is probably to be applauded as a significant step for devolution – but London's gain is everybody else's loss, especially if government continues to spend more national money on cycling in London than it does on GM's entire [transport network](#).

Chips away then, but only if there's a level playing field, with national policy determined by national need, with powers made available to London also on offer to other metropolitans that can pass whatever capacity and accountability conditions are deemed necessary.

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