

What will the devolution settlement mean for Manchester?

As well as providing an opportunity for the people of Scotland to have their say on the prospect of being an independent country, September's historic referendum also opened up the debate amongst some English cities calling for further powers from Westminster. Following the announcement that Greater Manchester has now agreed a devolution settlement with the government – a move which will aim to give 'greater powers to the area's combined authority working in partnership with a directly-elected mayor' – we ask industry insiders what it will mean for the city.



It's clear that more of a focus is being put on transport and infrastructure and the region's politicians have a good track record when it comes to this – we have an excellent transport network set to be boosted by HS2, which is in turn leading to global investors' attraction to the city and growing demand for new offices.

If more funding is made available for infrastructure and housing in the deal, as it appears to be the case, then there is no doubt that Greater Manchester will stand to benefit.

The city region doesn't want to stop here. Sir Richard Leese says his ultimate aim is to have full control over the total £22bn of annual spend. These new funds are a drop in the ocean compared to this. I think that this goes to show that it is a step in the right direction but isn't quite the transformational move it's been made out to be.

David Lathwood, lead director, North West at JLL

It's between significant and momentous. This is a milestone in a long journey, but an important one. It builds on existing initiatives like 'Earnback', which enables the city region to reinvest £30m a year of value raised locally, pushing new boundaries and bringing the power of decision to Manchester.

Recognising this step-change needs a new level of accountability, the



agreement also allows for an elected mayor to be added to the combined authority, a governance scheme made in Manchester.

Given the evidenced benefits that having a metropolitan mayor has brought London, this is hugely to Manchester's advantage – so we welcome what will be a nationally-significant institution to galvanise and deliver Manchester's agenda, from HS2 and HS3 to changing the health, benefits, planning and business support systems.

These new powers need study and support, and we will play our part in helping to use them to advance the local economy and strengthen the gateway that the north of England is to the world, connecting people and business with more opportunity, trade and investment.

Baron Frankal, strategy director, Manchester Airports Group

Devolution for the North West is a rare opportunity. The Scottish referendum on independence appears to have accelerated public and political disenchantment with centralised Whitehall governance. Regional devolution may not be a panacea for all, and there are potential issues in ensuring that those areas outside Greater Manchester are included, but it can promote stakeholder focus and ownership over the region's economy. Even a small increase in regional fiscal and policy autonomy will prove exciting and stimulating, both for those with money to invest and those in a position to provide support and services for that investment. Greater Manchester and the North West have a chance to jump ahead of regional rivals, not only in the potential for developing sensible strategic governance on



crucial issues like economic growth and transport but also in terms of developing media coverage and brand marketing.

Siobhan Fraser, director of valuation advisory, CBRE Manchester



There's still a bit of detail about how government or opposition parties are going to deliver devolution through new legislation, but anything that puts the region in control of its own destiny has to be a good thing.

Giving local control in policy areas such as transport, for example, will have a major impact on the city centre retail economy, which is already worth £3.4bn a year.

Skills is another area of interest to retail, as the sector is such a huge employer in the city – around 25,000 people.

Manchester is growing in reputation and popularity as an international visitor destination so it is encouraging to see the city region being given the powers to steer that global growth at a local level.

Simon Binns, Heart of Manchester BID manager, CityCo