



National Audit Office

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Reference FOI-1552

Date 08 November 2022

## AUDIT COMMISSION AND NAO REPORTS ON REGENERATION

Thank you for your request of 09 October 2022 in relation to the Audit Commission and NAO reports on regeneration.

I apologise for the delay in responding to your request. Unfortunately, we required more time than expected to ensure we provided the information you requested.

Your request was considered in accordance with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). Your specific request is reproduced at Annex A for your reference along with the information you requested.

We have carried out a thorough search for the information you requested. Your specific request and our response are set out in Annex A.

We hope you find this response helpful. Annex B sets out the steps you may wish to take if you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your request.

Yours sincerely

**NAO FOI Team**

## Annex A

### Request for information about the Audit Commission and NAO reports on regeneration

(Your request is in italics, NAO response in plain text)

- 1. From 1985 to 2015, how many reports/investigations were completed by the Audit Commission on regeneration programmes delivered by local government and funded by UKG or EU funding programmes? (I have a note of 5 from this period based on the incomplete information on the AC archived webpages)*
- 2. From 2015 onwards, how many reports/investigations on the same subject have been completed by the NAO? (I have a note of only 2 since March 2020, based on a search of the NOA website)*
- 3. Has either the AC or the NAO completed any reports/investigations into the impact of culture-led regeneration programmes in England/Wales (for example, impact of UK City of Culture, London Borough of Culture, cultural regeneration projects funded by the Single Regeneration Budget which ran from 1994-2002)?*
- 4. Has either the AC or the NAO completed any reports/investigations into the impact of rural regeneration schemes in England/Wales?*
- 5. Is any information available on how the AC/NAO assessed risk factors for regeneration programmes, in determining whether or not to include scrutiny of such programmes in their Audit Plans?*

### **NAO Response**

We have carried out a thorough search for information within the scope of your request and can confirm:

1. In terms of the Audit Commission and its previous work, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) is the official custodian.

However, any reports/investigations completed by the Audit Commission from 1985 to 2015 may be available on an archived version of the Audit Commission website, which has a searchable list of reports (it's not the last version, hence it is not obvious).

There is a 4 December 2012 version of the Audit Commission website with an excel spreadsheet that allows you to search for topics, one of which is 'economic development and planning'. This spreadsheet can only be downloaded, so any links it contains no longer work.

Once you have identified the report names, you will need to search for the reports on the website using the A to Z listing.

[\[ARCHIVED CONTENT\] Past publications - Audit Commission \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](#)

2. From 2015 onwards, we found two reports completed by the NAO which touch on the topic of 'regeneration programmes delivered by local government'. We have copied the link and conclusion for both below:
  - [Local economic growth](#) published in 2022
    - 'The Department recognises that its spending decisions should be based on robust evidence about what works for stimulating local economies. However, it has not consistently undertaken formal evaluations of the impacts of its past interventions. As a result, although it has now committed both effort and money to evaluate new interventions from the start, its evidence base for effective interventions is limited. The

Department therefore lacks evidence on whether the billions of pounds of public funding it has awarded to local bodies in the past for supporting local growth have had the impact intended. And it has wasted opportunities to learn which initiatives and interventions are most effective.'

- [Local authority investment](#) in commercial property published in 2020 – this report only has a secondary focus on regeneration
    - 'The acquisition of commercial property can enable authorities to generate income in the context of financial pressure, while also supporting regeneration. However, the scale of investment of public funds in this activity in the last three years, the concentration of this activity in a relatively small group of authorities, and the use of borrowing to finance such investments is striking. The benefits from this investment therefore must be considered against the potential financial sustainability and value-for-money risks that have emerged.'
3. The NAO has not published anything specifically on the examples given in this question, but there have been some reports looking at cultural regeneration:
- [NAO millennium Dome](#) (2000)
  - [English Partnerships – Regeneration of the Millennium Dome and Associated Land](#) (2005)
  - [How European cities achieve renaissance](#) (2007, a research companion piece to the Thames Gateway report)
  - [The Regeneration of the Greenwich Peninsula: A Progress Report](#) (2008)
  - [Regenerating the English Coalfields](#) (2009)
  - [Investigation into the Culture Recovery Fund](#) (2021)
  - [Unboxed Festival - National Audit Office \(NAO\) work in progress](#)
4. To find out if the Audit Commission had completed any reports/investigations into the impact of rural regeneration schemes in England/Wales, you will need to search the Audit Commission website as set out in the response to Q1 above. In terms of the NAO, the reports we think are relevant to the question are:
- [The rural broadband programme](#) (2013)
  - [The Superfast \(Rural\) Broadband Programme: update](#) (2015)
5. We are not able to answer this in respect of the Audit Commission. In terms of the NAO, our role requires us to understand the activities of the bodies we audit and the wider policy areas in which they sit. We do this through regular conversations with people in those bodies, and through analysis of documents and data. We also gather intelligence from wider stakeholders, including the Committee of Public Accounts in Parliament, service users and other commentators. We bring together and discuss this knowledge within teams and use this to identify and prioritise issues we think we should pick up in our future work. This includes the aims, objective and scope of any audits, studies or other work we do. Proposals for work (whether proposed by teams within the NAO, or correspondents and stakeholders external to the NAO) are considered by our executive team and ultimately it is the C&AG's decision as to what work is carried out.

Regeneration is a topic that spans multiple areas of government and is included in consideration of funding relating to growth, transport, business, skills, education, health and the built environment to

name a few. As such, there is no one team that considers this topic and it is for the executive team and C&A G to ensure that the organisation as a whole has a balanced programme of work.

## Annex B

### Statement of Policy

Our policy is to respond to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as helpfully and promptly as possible, having regard to the principles set out in the Act. I therefore hope you are happy with the way we have handled your request. If you are not, then you should take the following steps.

In the first instance, within 40 working days, write to the National Audit Office Freedom of Information (FOI) Team at [FOI.requests@nao.org.uk](mailto:FOI.requests@nao.org.uk) or by post to:

FOI Team, Green 2, National Audit Office, 157-197 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SP

The Head of FOI will arrange a review, which will be conducted by a senior member of staff who was not involved in decisions relating to your original request. Once the review has been completed, we will write informing you of the outcome.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

<https://ico.org.uk/> or Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF