

2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

**Ashford Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)
Extraordinary General Meeting - Wednesday 30 July 2025**

TWO DIFFERENT BUT PARALLEL AGENDAS

Devolution

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**Local Government
Reorganisation**

Clarity of intent from Government

- Elected Mayors & Strategic Combined Authorities for **all** parts of the country
- Unitary Councils for **all** parts of the country
- To implement as quickly as possible

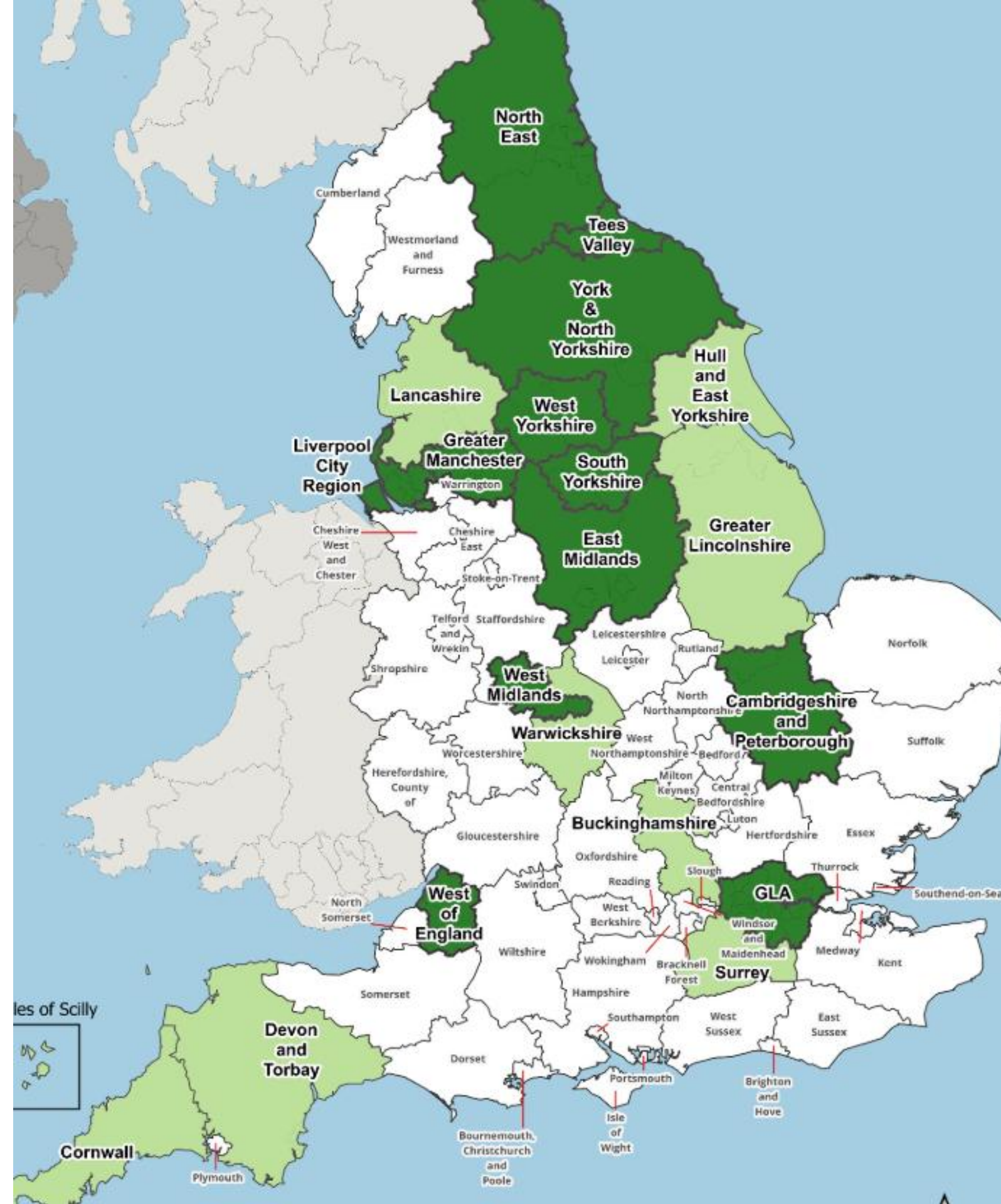
Strategic Combined Authorities

- A new layer of local government sitting above existing structures
- Covering a population of at least 1.5 million
- Headed up by an Elected Mayor with executive powers
- No other elected roles created for this top tier
- New powers, funding & flexibility
- Would also take on Police and Crime Commissioner Role
- Opportunity to work towards an integrated financial settlement

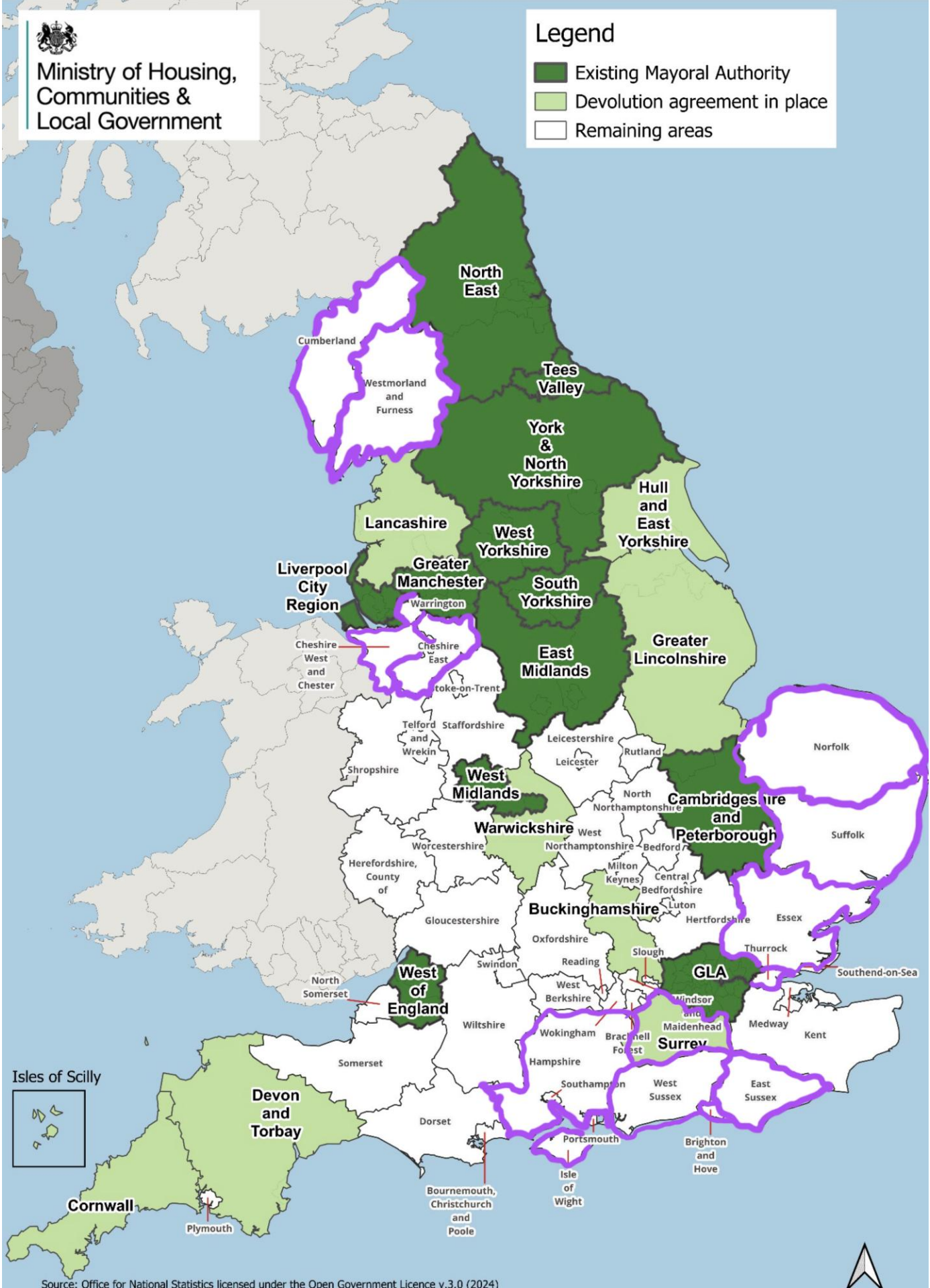
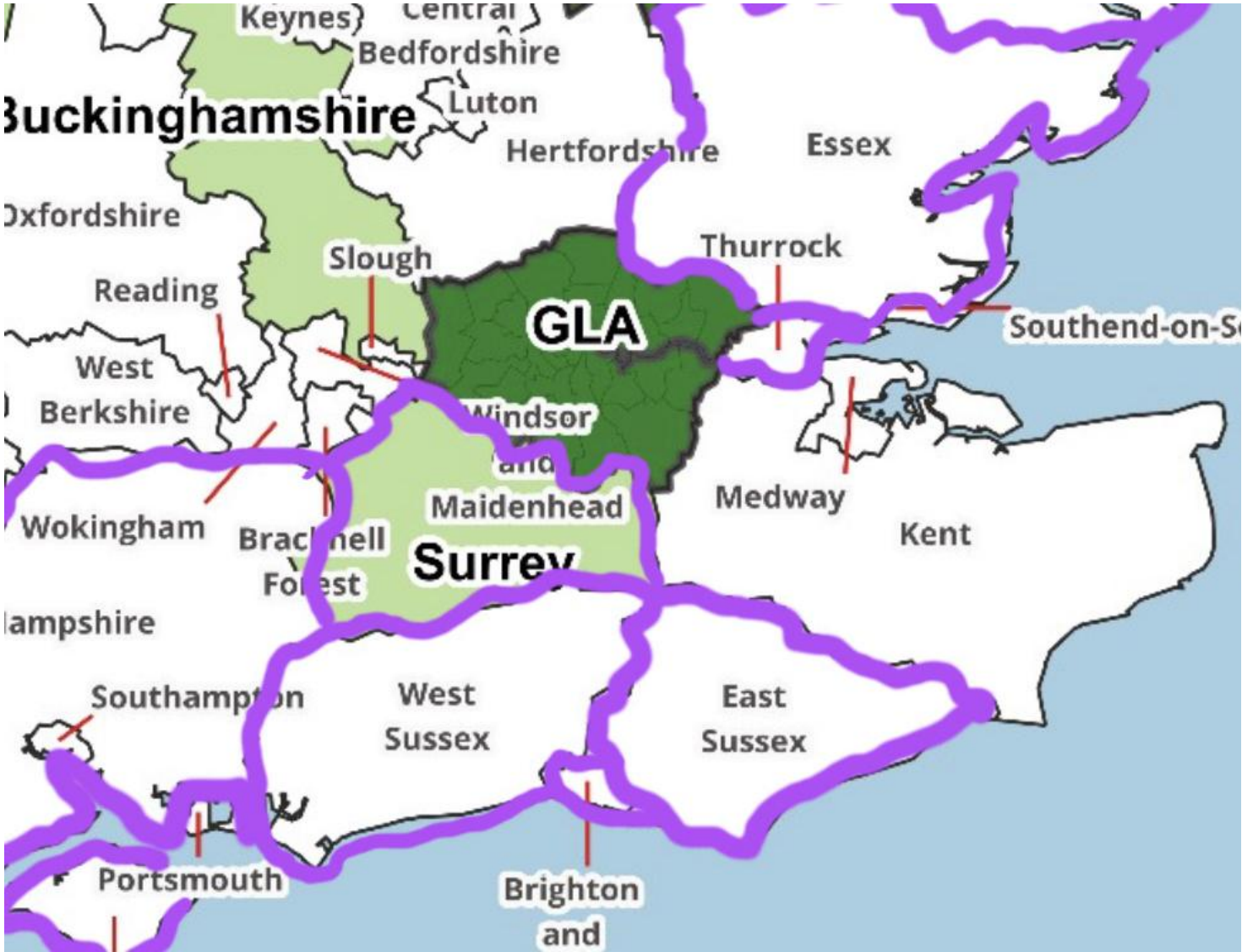
Current Landscape of Mayoral Authorities and Devolution Deals

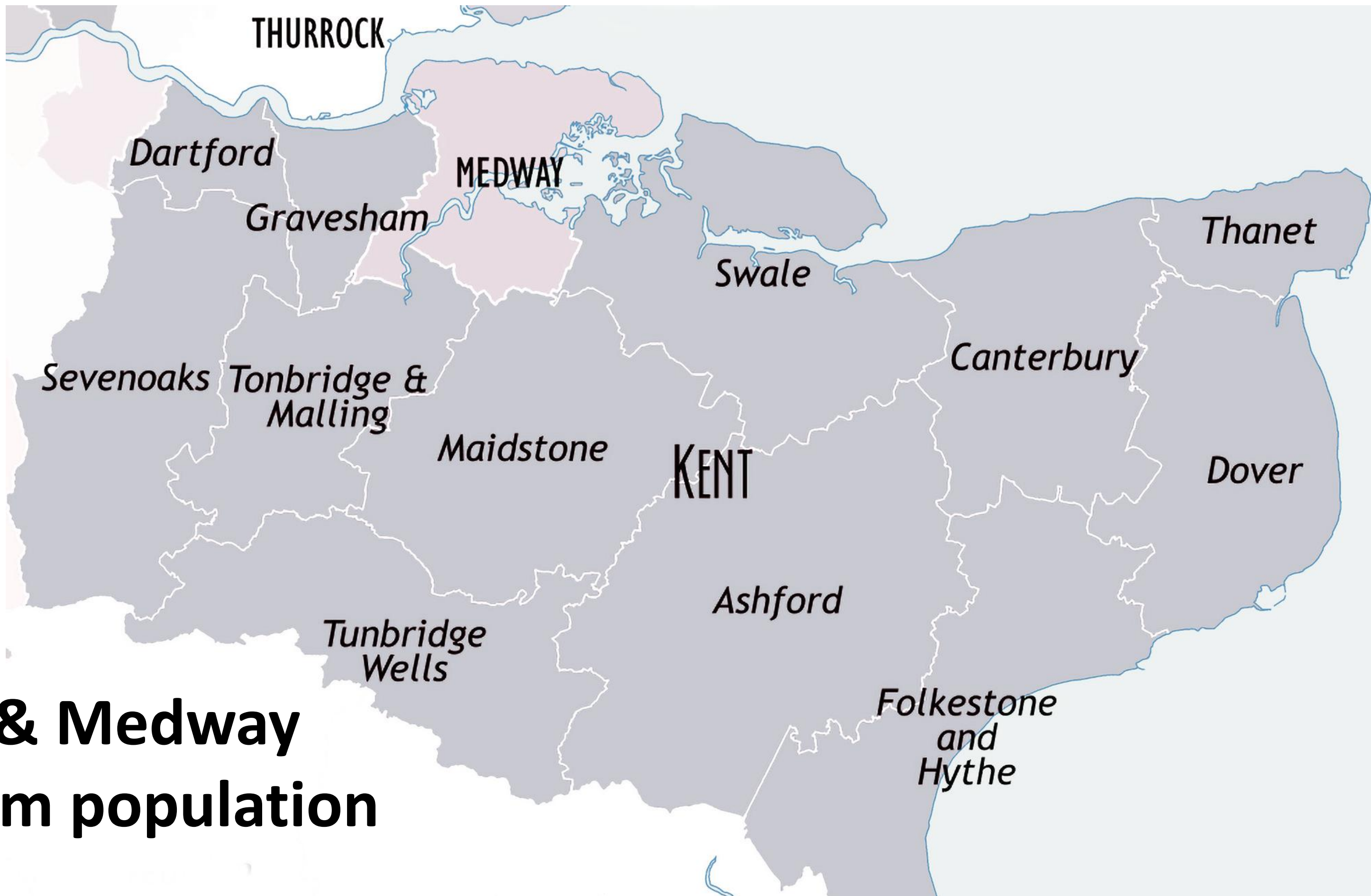
Legend

- Existing Mayoral Authority
- Devolution agreement in place
- Remaining areas



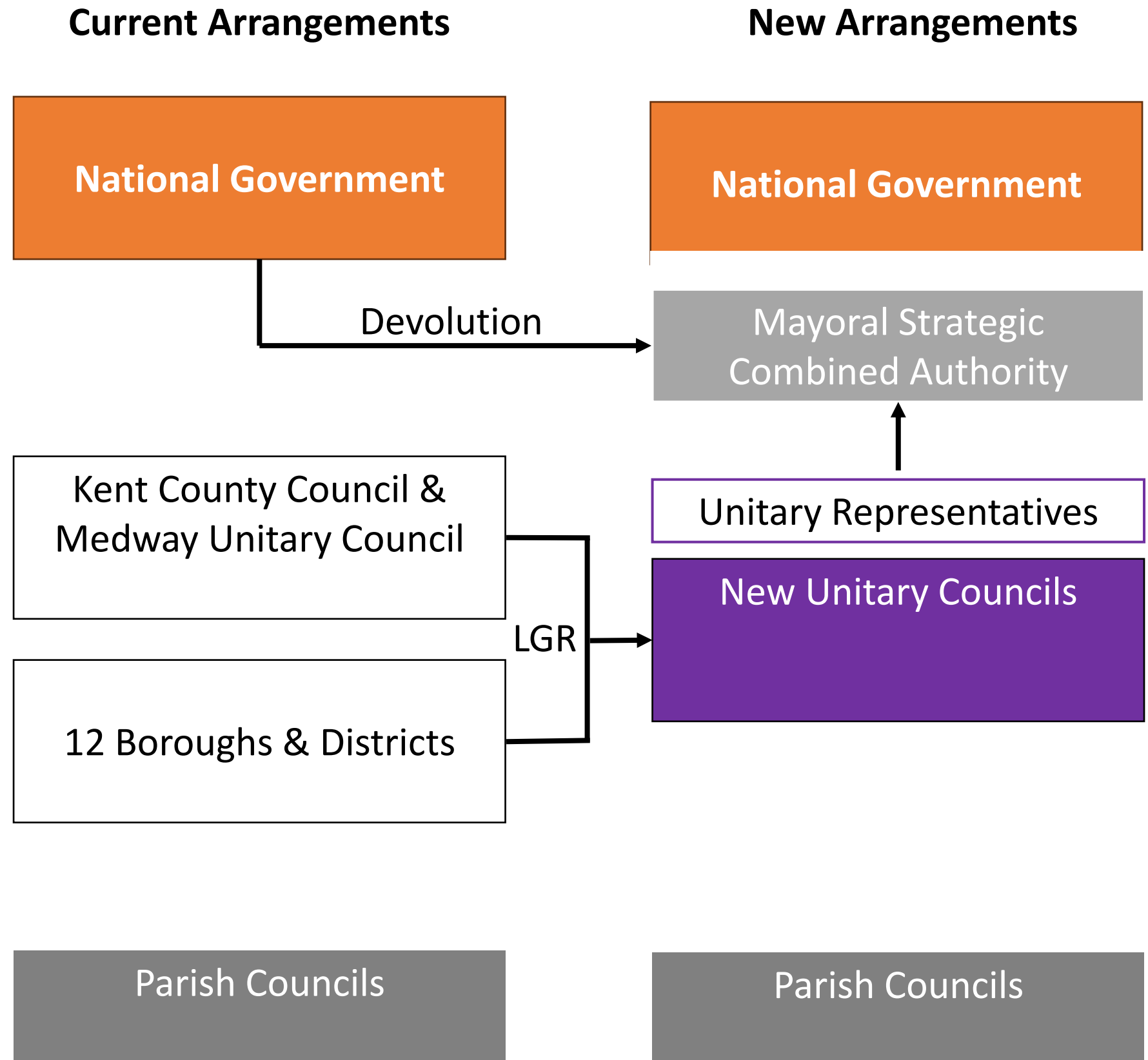
Devolution Priority Programme





**Kent & Medway
= 1.9m population**

Local Government Reorganisation & Devolution



Unitary Councils

- Covering a population of at least 500,000
- A sensible geography ideally reflecting existing district boundaries
- Created from **bringing together** existing Councils and functions
(ie County, Unitary, Boroughs & Districts)
- Reflects local identity, aligned to other public services
geography, economic areas, travel to work etc.

The journey so far

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| 30 Sept 2024 | Upper tier Councils submit initial expression of interest |
| 16 Dec 2024 | Devolution White Paper Published |
| 10 Jan 2025 | Deadline: Upper tier request for Devolution Priority Programme |
| 5 Feb 2025 | Government confirms Councils in Devolution Priority Programme |
| 21 Mar 2025 | Deadline for Interim Plan for new Unitary Councils |
| 1 May 2025 | Kent County Council Elections proceed as planned |
| 15 May 2025 | Government feedback on Interim Plan |
| | Continued stakeholder engagement including KALC |

Recent updates

Strategic partner KPMG appointed following a competitive procurement exercise

Expertise in consultation and engagement, both politically and with residents

Initial meeting held with Kent Leaders and Chief Executives last week - meet the team

Visioning event planned in September with Kent Leaders & Chief Executives - set the agenda

Work on the business case for the future structure of local government in Kent

Soon be launching an awareness raising campaign to inform residents/other stakeholders

Potential timetable ahead

28 Nov 2025 Deadline for full proposals for new Unitary Councils

**Early 2026 Government confirm choice of model for the Kent region
Government may indicate timescale for Devolution**

Managing the transition (Early 2026 to April 2028)

May 2027 Potential timescale for elections to new shadow Councils

April 2028 New Unitary Councils go live – Vesting Day

Aug 2029 End of this Parliament

Budget for preparing full proposals

Government have allocated £7.6m nationally to assist areas with the preparation of full proposals.

Earlier this month Government confirmed allocation to the Kent and Medway region of £514,410

Government also confirmed that no other funding would be available to support the costs of transition.

Strategic Business Partner

Recently appointed a single Strategic Partner (KPMG) for the whole area

Two phases:

- 1. Identify the options (ie number of new Unitary Councils, size geography, democratic arrangements)**
- 2. Prepare the detailed business case**

Latest feedback from Government

Each Council to submit a single final proposal covering the full Kent and Medway area

Be based on clear, consistent assumptions and data

Offered no steer on number or geography of new Unitaries

500,000+ population for the new Unitary Councils is “more is a guiding principle, not a strict target”

Latest Feedback from Government

Government have not weighted the criteria used for assessing proposals

Set out the number and geography of new Unitary Councils

Demonstrate how the proposal will help unlock Devolution

How will deliver effective neighbourhood democratic arrangements eg Area Committees that complement Town and Parishes

Parish Councils (1)

- Very little reference in the original White Paper
- Assumption that existing Towns and Parishes continue to have a vital role:

“We will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal local authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice.”

- Feedback from MHCLG this week confirms Towns and Parishes seen as important independent elected organisations operating locally but no direction to establish new ones in non parished areas.

Parish Councils (2)

- **Unclear how the Government's spirit of "Devolution" applies to Parishes**
- **Opportunity to redefine the role of Parishes in the new Local Government landscape.**
- **With move to much larger Unitary Councils, Parishes provide an even more important local presence**

Challenges

- 1. No Government Funding for the significant costs of transition**
- 2. New Unitary Councils to inherit existing debt**
- 3. Maintaining core Council services during the transition**
- 4. Recruitment and retention through the period of uncertainty**
- 5. Government driven spending constraints coming**
- 6. Government capacity to deliver at their proposed scale & pace**

Opportunities

- 1. Devolution potentially still on offer**
- 2. Greater influence nationally**
- 3. Economies of scale**
- 4. Streamlined and more efficient local government structures**
- 5. Better integration of services**
- 6. Simpler engagement with partners**
- 7. Scope for greater transformation and public service reform**
- 8. A more prominent role for Towns and Parishes in the local area**

Thank You