**SMALL TOWN ENGLAND REQUIRES *RADICAL POWERS* TO MAKE BREXIT SUCCEED**

Whitehall must grant small town England ‘radical new powers’ to revive moribund local economies if the country is to make a success of Brexit.

A new report from Localis has warned that two-thirds of England has no governance structure with the strength and capacity to help deliver the Government’s national industrial strategy.

Entitled ***The Making of an Industrial Strategy: Taking back control locally***, the report argued the country’s small and rural towns, which have some of the structurally weakest local economies in England, should be granted new powers to revive their areas. These should include devolved control over planning to help towns and cities expand; local transport, tax-setting policy, business incentives and labour market freedoms to help attract the right talent for major local employers.

It further suggested 47 strategic authorities, covering the totality of England, are needed to make use of new locally-held powers to boost economic output.

Liam Booth-Smith, chief executive of Localis, said some of these areas, including cities such as Blackpool, Copeland and Stoke-on-Trent, have never recovered from the economic trauma of the 1980s and make up the ‘heart of Brexit Britain’.

‘These, the most ‘stuck’ economies in the country, are of increasing political importance. Not only are they the beating heart of Brexit Britain, but home to a new wave of battleground parliamentary seats,’ he said. ‘In the aftermath of triggering Article 50, the Government’s industrial strategy has to address a political imperative of how the benefits of growth are fairly shared across the nation to reach these areas.’

Mr Booth-Smith insisted this meant expanding economic policy to focus less on big cities and more on ‘small town England’.