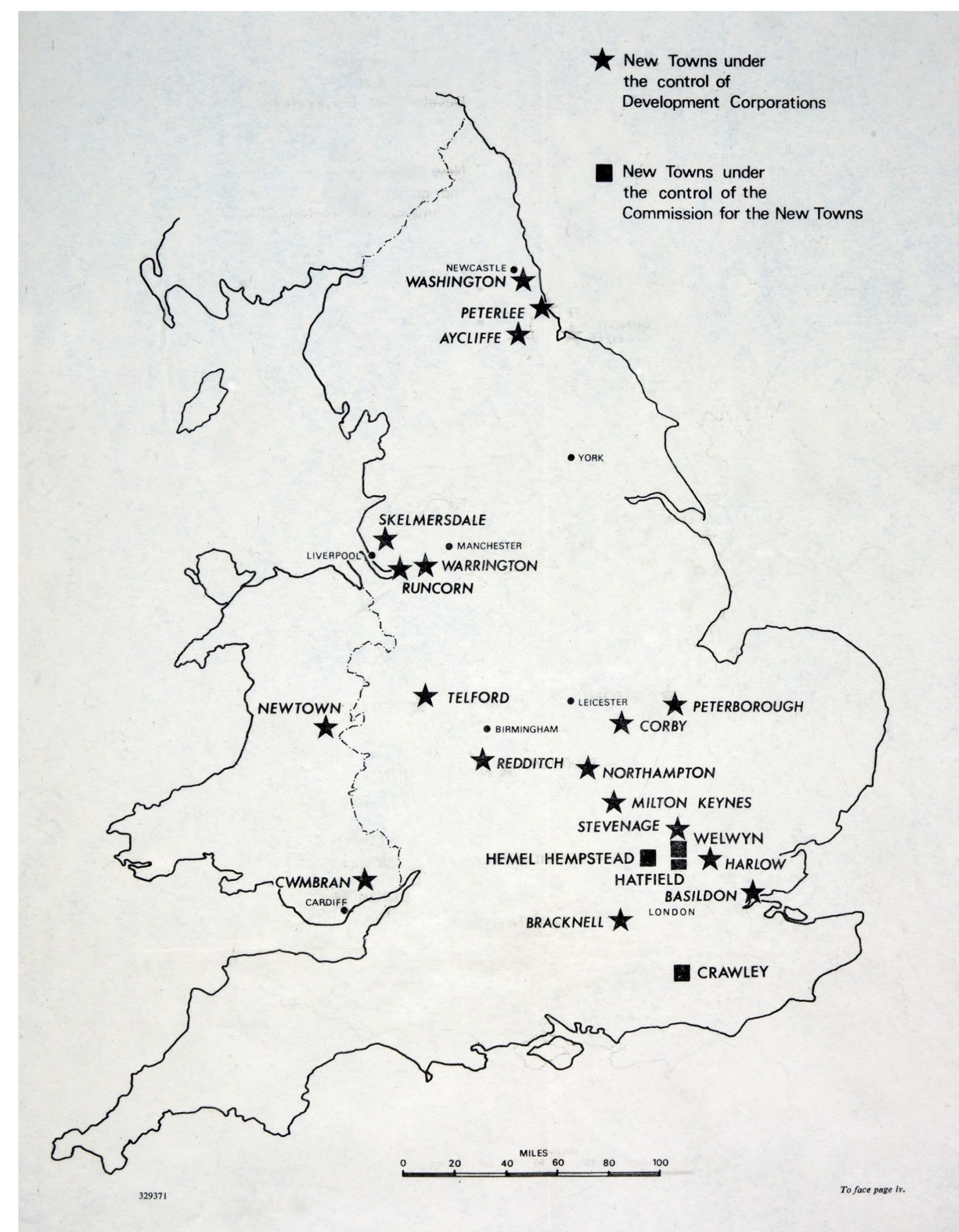


# Social infrastructure in new towns: learning from history

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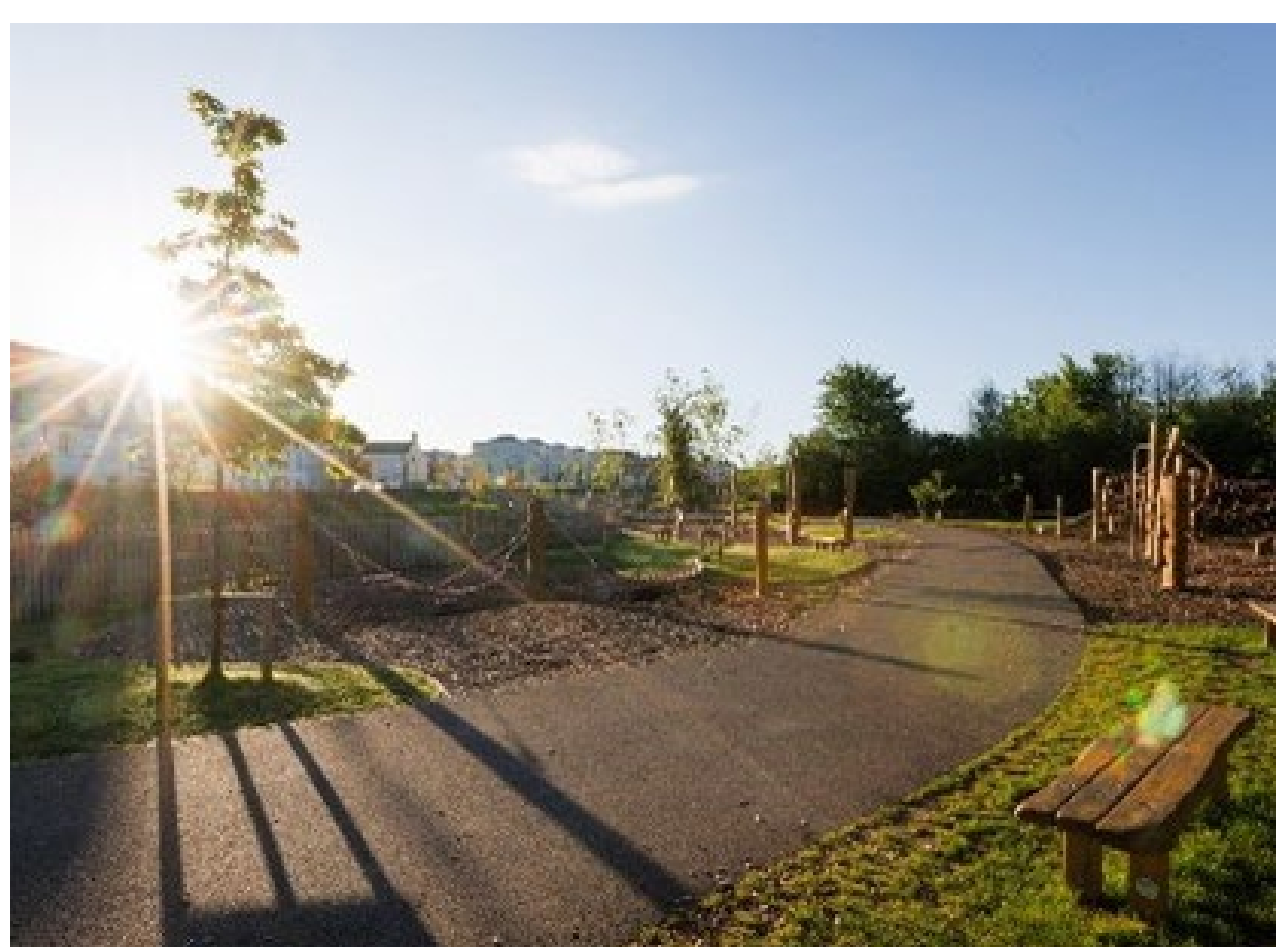
## History of New Towns

In July 2024, the new Labour Government announced its plans to deliver **the next generation of new towns**, making it the latest in a long line of UK governments that have sought to create new towns. The most famous and successful of these attempts was the **post-war new towns programme**, which was initiated by Clement Attlee's Labour Government in 1946, in part as a result of the destruction caused by the Second World War. By the early 1970s, **32 new towns had been designated** in the UK, which are now home to over **2.5 million people**. But these new towns consist of far more than just houses – **social infrastructure has been critical**. This report explores what we can learn from Britain's post-war New Towns programme to ensure the **successful delivery and long-term maintenance of social infrastructure in new towns**.



### Lesson 1: A range of social infrastructure should be provided from the early stages of development

In the post-war new towns, the delivery of community facilities was often slow, though residents were quick to adapt and make use of alternative spaces. Today, social infrastructure and the necessary transport infrastructure to enable it are still too often provided too late, if at all, in new developments, with negative impacts on residents.



### Lesson 2: Cross-sector collaboration, particularly between the public and private sectors, is crucial

In Britain's post-war new towns, some of the most successful privately-owned social infrastructure (especially pubs) were the result of close cooperation between stakeholders. Other spaces, such as shops and restaurants, were slower to emerge, though in the long-term, many new towns developed flourishing retail and leisure facilities.



### Lesson 3: Community participation and ownership are key to the provision of social infrastructure

Fostering a sense of community and accounting for the long-term management of social infrastructure present two critical challenges. But community involvement in planning and community stewardship of assets can generate a sense of belonging while ensuring social infrastructure is safeguarded in the long-term.



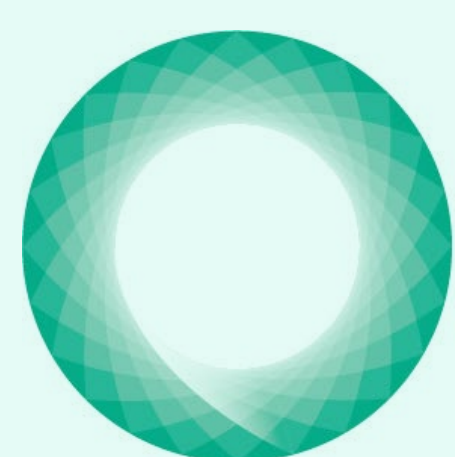
## Recommendations

#### For central government:

1. Guarantee sufficient, long-term, upfront investment in infrastructure, including social infrastructure.

#### For local government:

1. Engage with the private sector and provide incentives to move to new towns.
2. Meaningfully engage both existing and new residents.
3. Provide flexible social infrastructure that can adapt to the needs of the community.
4. Adopt a community stewardship approach to infrastructure.



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