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Spatial Economics Research Centre

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The West End Commission

The final report of the [West End Commission](#) was published yesterday. As one of the commissioners, I'm not in a good position to provide unbiased comment. It's certainly been an interesting process and both the evidence we received and discussions within the group highlighted the many complex issues that need to be addressed if the West End is to continue to flourish.

From the front page of the Evening Standard, you'd get the impression that the main recommendations were around a [24 hour tube service](#). In fact, that's just one small part of [a much wider set of proposals](#) - the most important of which relate to the need for a revamped governance structure. Without better partnership working across the local authorities, London mayor Boris Johnson and the government it's difficult to see how the range of complex issues facing the West End can be properly addressed.

This focus on governance fits with a wider debate around these issues instigated, in part, by the government's insistence that decentralisation needs to be accompanied by agreements that provide strong governance arrangements. This link is most explicit in the city deals process, but should also play an important part in the negotiations around implementation of the [Heseltine 'single pot'](#). Of course, the government can insist all it wants, but the strongest incentive for better collaboration will come if Local Authorities directly reap the rewards of that collaboration. Without this link, local conflicts can all too easily dominate decision making at the cost of the considerable benefits that would arise from collaboration. Interestingly, on this specific issue, a number of recent government reforms have surprisingly little 'bite' for the West End - hence the commission's recommendation that partnership working would need to be reinforced by some kind of 'city deal' for the area. [As noted by our chairman, Howard Bernstein](#): the success of proposals for the West End will depend on the course of these wider reforms.

Posted by [Prof Henry G. Overman](#) on [Wednesday, May 01, 2013](#)

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