

Your Reference:
Our Reference: LC/LB
Enquiries to: Les Clark
Direct Dial: (01768) 212226
Email: les.clark@eden.gov.uk
Date: 09 December 2020

The logo for Eden District Council features the word "Eden" in a large, elegant serif font. A stylized, wavy line is positioned above the letter 'E', resembling a river or a decorative flourish.

District Council

Town Hall, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 7QF
Tel: 01768 817817

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing
Communities and Local Government

Luke Hall MP
Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government

Paul Rowsell CBE
Head of Government Reform and Democracy Unit
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Dear Sirs

Proposal for a Single Tier of Local Government in Cumbria – Full Proposal from Eden District Council

I have pleasure in attaching here the full proposal from Eden District Council, in response to your invitation received on 9 October 2020. Eden has worked closely with Allerdale, Carlisle and Copeland Councils on the evaluation of a range of options. All four of the districts share the view that the best outcomes for the people of Cumbria would be delivered through establishing two new Unitary Authorities and a Mayoral Combined Authority. The attached submission represents the configuration of the two new Unitary Authorities which Eden District Council and Carlisle City Council propose.

The submission sets out how that proposed Unitary Authority - along with a Cumbrian Mayorality - will improve local government and service delivery, whilst giving greater value for money and providing stronger strategic and local leadership. The document evidences clear and credible geographies for the two new Councils with an evenly balanced population in each, reflecting our peoples' cultural identities and sense of place. I believe our proposal commands a good deal of local support: we have received constructive observations from businesses, third sector, and the wider community, on how a unitary system could and would be of benefit to them.

Dr Neil Hudson, MP for Penrith and The Border, has commented that if we move to a new system of Local Government in Cumbria he would support the model of a Cumbrian Mayorality with two Unitaries; the North comprising Carlisle, Eden and Allerdale, and the South comprising Barrow, Copeland and South Lakeland. I am very pleased that this is our MP's view, as it is also Eden District Council's preferred configuration. Carlisle City Council joins with us in supporting this model, and the attached submission gives analysis and evidence for this choice. I believe the proposal we are presenting offers a significant opportunity to fully realise the potential of our area as well as addressing some of its key challenges.

Eden looks to the City of Carlisle, our bigger northern neighbour, for healthcare, shopping, specialist education, culture, and increasingly cooperation over services. Beyond Carlisle Eden looks to the Borderlands and Newcastle. The A66 road passes through Eden, then skirts the north of the Lake District Massif westward through Allerdale and to Workington and the Energy coast. Closer links between Allerdale and Eden would develop opportunities - connectivity, supply chains, and developing Agritech. The three districts of Eden, Allerdale, and Carlisle are well connected: conversely, the 1hr 45m journey between Carlisle and Barrow (diagram on p28(9) of the submission), intended to demonstrate the undesirable distances in a single county-wide unitary, applies equally to the disconnect in the East-West configuration between remote Alston in the high northeast of Eden, and Barrow in the far west. For Eden, that configuration is very alien; service delivery and devolution in the sense of subsidiarity would be challenging for us.

For although we are proposing a new authority, as Leader of Eden District Council I have to do all I can to ensure that Eden has a more prosperous, efficient, and sustainable future under unitary and mayoral authority than is possible under existing administrations. The upcoming Devolution and Recovery White Paper promises devolution and growth, and I trust that Eden's residents and businesses will not lose out on those goods by responding to the government's present invitation which arrived ahead of the White Paper's publication.

I feel justified in trying to prefigure what that White Paper might offer, and to suggest how the future unitary and mayoralty might 'level up' Eden - along with the other rural areas in the new authority - in terms of investment and growth opportunities. Additionally, I hope that dialogue with Eden's communities will enable them to construct a genuine 'devolution' of decision making and democracy which they can carry with them into the new authority.

Eden has the largest area and sparsest population of any English district. Eden, shaped by a pastoral economy rather than an industrial one, is too small to qualify for most growth deals - for example, calls for 'spade-ready' projects and Towns deals. I would hope that this devolution proposal with its Combined Authority will facilitate and enhance collaboration with sub-regional partners and Government agencies, jointly to find solutions which enable investment across a whole range of scale and enterprise. This would benefit Eden and the other rural parts of the proposed unitary authorities - approaching 70% of the total area of Eden, Allerdale and Carlisle for example. We have much to give back to the regional and national economy, pioneering new approaches in agriculture - potentially key in the delivery of new national agricultural and environmental policy - and contributing to national food self-sufficiency and security. There is space in Eden and beyond for extensive projects improving biodiversity and delivering carbon capture and carbon reduction schemes.

The Covid pandemic has indicated it is possible for there to be a dispersed economy through rural areas which goes beyond traditional land-based industries. Growing the rural economy through investment in innovation and infrastructure will create a modern and sustainable rural economy and community; through homeworking, diversification into knowledge and green economies, biotech and agritech. The services we provide to tourism and culture are important, but investment needs to future proof rural economies away from relying on providing services for visitors. Levelling up will improve health outcomes, skills, address population decline and housing affordability. We in Eden are resilient and resourceful - we cope with floods, snow, foot and mouth. With access to investment we can pioneer the construction of new rural economies, reanimating our

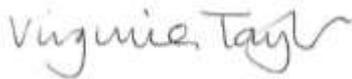
remote small settlements with place-based businesses. We can connect communities better, improve the life chances for all and level up opportunities for young people.

We have commenced planning ahead for improved community engagement and representation. Firstly, this is to mitigate against any democratic deficit which might arise from fewer councillors and administrative centres; and secondly, it is to develop collaboration and working in partnership in order to support decision making at the most appropriate 'level' in the system. As suggested in the Kruger Report and recommended as best practice by Cumbria's Third Sector Network, we aim to improve interrelationships with our people and our places, to recognise and employ the assets and competencies that exist, aiming for sustainable services shaped and designed through co-production where possible.

I look forward to your confirmation that our final submission has been received. I would also be grateful if you could confirm your intentions for how and when consultations upon it will take place.

Finally, in your letter of 12 November you asked whether our Council wishes to postpone the May 2021 local elections on account of the proposed unitary reform. We do not have District Council elections scheduled for next May, but we have two outstanding by-elections which have been delayed due to the COVID 19 restrictions. I confirm that we would like to go ahead with these by-elections as soon as the rules allow, and would appreciate an early decision on this so that everyone can plan.

Yours faithfully



Councillor Dr Virginia Taylor

cc Neil Hudson MP
Cllr John Mallinson, Leader of Carlisle City Council