



Rt Hon Jim McMahon OBE MP
Minister for English Devolution and Local Governance
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

(sent via email - PSJimMcMahon@communities.gov.uk)

Dear Minister McMahon,

Request to defer Cumbria Mayoral Election to May 2027

We are writing jointly as the Leaders of the two Councils in Cumbria to formally request a deferral of the proposed mayoral election for Cumbria from May 2026 to May 2027. This request is made in the spirit of constructive partnership and with a shared ambition to ensure the strongest possible foundations for a successful new governance model that delivers for the people of Cumbria.

As Government is aware both Councils have yet to make a decision to consent to a Mayoral Combined Authority. This letter is in no way intended to fetter our discretion in that regard, both Councils will make decisions in the Autumn (assuming the Government agree that the statutory tests are met).

A deferral of the mayoral election would allow us to focus on putting in place the strong institutional and partnership arrangements in a timely manner. This would provide the foundations for the establishment of a successful Mayoral Combined Authority in Cumbria, subject to the formal consent of the Councils.

The case for deferral is based on several interlinked considerations:

- **Local Government Reorganisation:** Both of our councils are continuing to implement major programmes of reform following the creation of the two new unitary authorities. Extending the timescale for the mayoral election would ensure that local government capacity is not overstretched and that high-quality service delivery remains our primary focus while preparing for the new combined authority.
- **Democratic Alignment and Cost Efficiency:** A deferral to 2027 would allow for the alignment of the inaugural mayoral election with the scheduled local elections, Town and Parish Elections improving value for money, reducing voter confusion, and supporting higher turnout.
- **Strategic Readiness:** A modest delay would also allow the region to more fully align its emerging industrial strategy with the opportunities devolution offers, ensuring that the combined authority hits the ground running with a coherent

economic agenda.

- Partnership and Governance Development: This additional year would give us the necessary time to further develop governance arrangements, deepen joint working, and foster a strong collaborative ethos across partners — all of which are vital for the long-term success of the combined authority.
- Public Engagement and Legitimacy: A longer run-in will support a more deliberate and inclusive process of public engagement, helping build legitimacy and understanding of the benefits a mayoral model can bring to our communities.

In support of this request, we would also welcome:

- Confirmation of capacity funding for the next two financial years to support the establishment of the Combined Authority and maintain momentum towards the creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority in 2027;
- Early engagement with government on our economic development agenda, including key opportunities linked to clean energy, skills, and innovation;
- Support to bring forward the delivery of key schemes — helping demonstrate the value of devolution through visible impact on the ground;
- A shared commitment to working with us to fund and deliver the economic priorities that matter most to our communities.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and would be happy to meet with you or your officials at your convenience.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Mark Fryer
Leader of Cumberland Council



Cllr Jonathan Brook
Leader of Westmorland & Furness Council