



To Lancaster businesses

By e mail

March 2021

### **Local Government reorganisation in Cumbria: The Bay and North Cumbria**

As you may be aware, last year the Secretary of State for Local Government invited proposals for creating unitary local councils. Over the last few months, we have been engaging with local businesses and communities to seek your views on our proposal for the Bay and North Cumbria, which we were pleased to submit in December.

The Secretary of State has now launched consultation on four options that were submitted, including the Bay and North Cumbria proposal. The eight-week consultation runs until 19 April.

We wanted to make you aware of the consultation and to explain how to make your views known. We hope you will feel able to respond positively in relation to our proposal.

#### **Our proposal**

In October 2020, the government asked all councils in Cumbria to develop a proposal for unitary local authorities, including any choice which included other relevant areas. A unitary council means there would be a single council supplying all local council services, unlike current arrangements where a county council supplies some services and district councils provide others.

In December 2020, Barrow, Lancaster, and South Lakeland Councils asked the government to agree to set up two unitary councils where:

- The Bay Council would cover the area of Barrow, Lancaster, and South Lakeland; and
- North Cumbria Council would cover the area of Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland, and Eden.

We think the Bay and North Cumbria is the best option because:

- The Bay is a functional economic area, where 96% of people who live here also work here. We have deep connections across the local areas, and already work in partnership on issues like tourism and heritage. Last year, we established the Lancaster and South Cumbria Joint Committee to promote economic, social, and environmental wellbeing. We have developed a strong Prosperity and Resilience Strategy for the Bay that builds on our economic, social and environmental opportunities to create local wealth and jobs and to lever in investment. Becoming a unitary council would build on our proven record of collaborative working and delivering results, such as the innovative Cultural Compact bid, award-winning joint Local Plan submission for Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB and initiatives



to tackle poverty and the climate emergency. It would also help us join up with our local NHS, the Bay Health and Care Partners, with whom we share a similar footprint.

- North Cumbria Council would be able to build on the Borderlands growth deal, unique strengths of the energy coast across Copeland and Allerdale and shared interests north of the Lakes. It would also be aligned with the local NHS, North Cumbria Integrated Care.

### **Explaining the choice**

All local councils agree current arrangements are not ideal. Most of us recognise things could be better organised. All four proposals would result in a single council for every resident regardless of where they lived.

Cumbria County Council are proposing One Cumbria which will abolish local districts and continue their model. We think a single authority in Cumbria based on the Cumbria County Council proposal weakens local government, lacks local support, represents a challenging geography and will not best enable the future devolution of powers and resources from Government.

There is merit in considering a two unitary model, but only by including Lancaster is it possible to create unitary councils that will be independently viable and meet the credible geography test set out by government.

The challenge during this consultation is to decide which division of areas work best. To help decide, the government is asking you to consider six questions. Recognising the potential for confusion, we have developed the attached annexes to explain our position.

We attach additional information.

### **Show your support**

Having said local support is a key factor in the Government's decision, we are asking you to support us now so that we can help you better in the future. The decision will not lead to immediate change. There is a lot of detail still to decide and we want to work with you during transition, should we be successful, to design the best council possible together.

Please do engage in the consultation and make your preference clear. We would be delighted to help explain our proposal to you and want to hear your views.

Further information on our proposal and how to respond to the Government consultation is available on all three council websites at:

- Barrow Borough Council: [www.barrowbc.gov.uk/thebay](http://www.barrowbc.gov.uk/thebay)
- Lancaster City Council: [www.lancaster.gov.uk/thebay](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/thebay)
- South Lakeland District Council: [www.southlakeland.gov.uk/thebay](http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/thebay)



We hope this letter provides you with the information you need to pledge your support. If you have specific queries or would like to meet to discuss, please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely

**CLLR ANN THOMSON**  
Leader of the Council  
Barrow Borough Council

**CLLR DR ERICA LEWIS**  
Leader of the Council  
Lancaster City Council

**CLLR GILES ARCHIBALD**  
Leader of the Council  
South Lakeland District Council

**SAM PLUM**  
Chief Executive  
Barrow borough Council

**KIERAN KEANE**  
Chief Executive  
Lancaster City Council

**LAWRENCE CONWAY**  
Chief Executive  
South Lakeland District Council