

To: Linda Taylor (Leader of Cornwall Council)  
Kate Kennally (Chief Executive, Cornwall Council)  
Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP (Deputy Prime Minister)

Cc: Andrew George MP  
Perran Moon MP  
Jayne Kirkham MP  
Ben Maguire MP  
Noah Law MP  
Anna Gelderd MP

As Mayors of the larger towns in Cornwall, we wish to express our personal support for the following position statement on devolution of powers from central government, and intend to take it back to our respective councils for approval at the earliest opportunity.

\* \* \*

### **POSITION STATEMENT ON DEVOLUTION BY THE MAYORS OF CORNWALL**

We support the principle of widespread devolution of powers from Whitehall to Cornwall.

But we are convinced that **the one and only devolution option for the Duchy is to devolve powers to Cornwall, and not to a broader combined region alongside other large authorities in the south-west.**

The Deputy Prime Minister's letter to local authorities on the "devolution revolution" refers to "sensible economic geographies".

We believe that the existing boundaries of Cornwall – fundamentally the Tamar to the east, and the sea on all other sides – constitute the basis for just such a "sensible economic geography". The economic challenges and opportunities of our Celtic land are unique to us – and not shared with our neighbours in Plymouth, Devon or the "Greater South West". While we do face some serious challenges, we also have many opportunities such as our mineral wealth and potential for green energy – as well as our resilient and resourceful people.

Cornwall is characterised by a pattern of many historic market towns, each serving as the business and services hub for a more dispersed rural area. This is a vastly different pattern of settlement from other English regions; there is no parallel with our neighbours in Devon, which includes large conurbations in Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter.

The government's current position as indicated to the County Councils Network is to favour a combined-authority model. Among the options suggested are a combined "Plymwall" authority (Plymouth + Cornwall) and a "Greater South West region", potentially including Devon and Somerset and parts of Dorset as well as Cornwall.

The "**Plymwall**" option would be to the disadvantage of both Cornwall and Plymouth. The two communities are chalk and cheese. Cornwall is home to over half a million people, but spread over a vast area. Plymouth by contrast is a conurbation of over a quarter of a million people concentrated in a relatively small area, with a population density over ten times that of Cornwall. What works for Cornwall will most likely not work for Plymouth, and vice versa.

The "**Greater South West**" option would marginalise Cornwall, especially given our geographical remoteness: we are quite literally at the end of the line. Developing and applying "regional" policies for a disparate area stretching 200 miles from east to west, including many places with very poor road and public transport links, would be extremely challenging, and potentially create a lack of focus and even internal competition within the broader region.

**We believe that either of those options – Plymouth or the Greater South West – would be strongly opposed by the people of Cornwall.**

And while “sensible economic geographies” are important – and Cornwall fits the bill – we also need to think about devolution in terms of areas and regions that local people truly identify with.

We in Cornwall have a huge affinity with the history, culture and identity of the place we call home – an identity recognised in our status as a protected National Minority, and in the revival of interest in our language and heritage.

Devolving powers to Cornwall would strengthen local democracy, and lock in support for the “devolution revolution”.

By contrast, devolving powers to a hybrid authority with which local people feel no affinity risks undermining local democracy.

While we believe that Cornwall alone is a “sensible economic geography”, we also note that the government’s current position as indicated to the County Councils Network is to favour a combined-authority model and not a single-authority model, which is said to be “not in line with the government’s approach to English devolution”.

Such a position would appear to rule out a “Cornwall-only” solution.

However, devolution to a **combined Cornwall + Isles of Scilly authority** would be aligned on the preferred “combined-authority” model: the Council of the Isles of Scilly is legally separate from Cornwall Council under the Local Government Act, and there are existing precedents such as the combined Cornwall + IOS Local Enterprise Partnership.

**The seat of devolved powers has to be on our own territory, where local people know their voices can be heard.**

We are encouraged that Cornwall Council’s Devolution White Paper strongly advocates a Cornwall-based devolution solution, and urge the Council to resist any pressure to combine with neighbouring large authorities.

We also welcome the White Paper’s aspiration for powers to be devolved by Government “to enable Cornwall to develop improved funding arrangements for town and parish councils”, which would “enable them to support their communities in an effective and sustainable way”.

And finally we urge the government to **grant a devolution settlement that respects the uniqueness of the economy, geography, culture and identity of Cornwall.**

**\*\*\* ENDS \*\*\***