

Jim McMahon OBE MP
Minister for Local Government, Devolution and
Growth

By email: jim.mcmahon.mp@parliament.uk

22 October 2026

Dear Minister McMahon

Devolution for Gloucestershire

I am writing on behalf of Tewkesbury Borough Council to reaffirm our commitment to securing a devolution deal that enables Gloucestershire to play a full role in delivering the Government's ambitions for economic growth, housing delivery, public service reform and national renewal.

Gloucestershire has consistently demonstrated its willingness to work constructively with Government and neighbouring authorities. While the review of local government reorganisation remains paused, it is important that momentum on devolution is maintained and that Gloucestershire is not left in a prolonged period of uncertainty or placed at a disadvantage compared with areas already benefiting from devolved powers and funding.

Tewkesbury Borough Council remains firmly supportive of devolution being delivered for Gloucestershire at the earliest opportunity. We would welcome discussion with Government regarding the most effective route to achieving this, whether through the establishment of a Gloucestershire Foundation Strategic Authority as an interim step or through direct progression to a wider strategic authority arrangement should agreement be reached on an appropriate geography. A Foundation Strategic Authority could provide strategic capacity and governance to support infrastructure investment, housing delivery, skills development, economic growth and public service reform while local government reorganisation progresses. Equally, Gloucestershire should not be prevented from moving directly to a wider strategic authority arrangement where there is sufficient agreement and Government support to do so.

Gloucestershire's strategic position

Gloucestershire occupies a unique position between the South West and the Midlands. This creates credible opportunities for future strategic alignment both to the south, through closer links with Bristol and the West of England, and to the north through the long-established Three Counties relationship with Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

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Both options present genuine opportunities. The south offers strong connections through labour markets, transport networks, innovation and advanced industries. Equally, the Three Counties geography brings together areas with shared strengths in advanced manufacturing, defence, and agri-tech, as well as common economic challenges and opportunities across a largely rural economy. Coupled with long-standing links along the M5 growth corridor, this provides a credible basis for strategic alignment.

At this stage, Tewkesbury Borough Council does not express a formal preference between these potential arrangements. We recognise the significant opportunities in both directions and the need for wider public engagement on the options.

The West of England brings the benefits of an established strategic authority and strong economic connections across a wider city-region economy. Equally, a Three Counties Strategic Authority would provide a real opportunity to create a new institution shaped around the priorities, strengths and ambitions of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire from the outset.

As a founding partner, Gloucestershire would be able to help shape governance arrangements, investment priorities and strategic programmes from day one, ensuring that devolved powers and resources are aligned to local opportunities and challenges. Both options are compelling, albeit for different reasons, and Gloucestershire should remain free to engage constructively in discussions in both directions before determining its future position on the basis of the economic, social, environmental and public service outcomes available through each option.

The importance of aligned public services

As Government develops its devolution programme, we believe a key consideration should be the extent to which strategic authority boundaries align with the geography of major public services. Effective public service reform is easier to achieve where local government, health, policing, transport and strategic planning operate across the same footprint. Such alignment strengthens accountability, simplifies governance and supports more effective partnership working.

Conversely, fragmented arrangements risk creating unnecessary complexity, weakening accountability and making it harder to coordinate investment and deliver joined-up services.

We therefore believe future devolution arrangements should be assessed not only on their economic merits, but also on their ability to support coherent public service planning and delivery across a common geography.

Gloucestershire's national contribution

Whatever strategic geography ultimately emerges, Gloucestershire brings nationally significant assets that can make a major contribution to the Government's missions. These include GCHQ, the wider cyber security sector, aerospace and defence industries, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, applied engineering, and important environmental assets including the Western Forest and the Severn Estuary. Together, they provide a strong foundation for growth, innovation, resilience and national security.

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I therefore ask Government to:

- Reaffirm Gloucestershire's place within the programme for comprehensive English devolution.
- Support early progress towards devolution for Gloucestershire through the most appropriate and deliverable route.
- Enable Gloucestershire to continue exploring future strategic authority options without prejudice towards a particular geography.
- Ensure those options are evaluated against both economic outcomes and the effective alignment of local government, health, policing and other strategic public services.
- Establish a clear timetable and decision-making process that enables meaningful public and stakeholder engagement while providing certainty for residents, businesses, investors and public service partners.
- Facilitate continued discussions between Gloucestershire, neighbouring authorities, existing strategic authorities and Government regarding future strategic alignment.

Gloucestershire is ready to move forward. Early progress on devolution would provide certainty, strengthen our ability to deliver growth and public service reform, and ensure the county can continue making a significant contribution to the Government's wider ambitions.

I would welcome an early meeting with you to discuss how this agenda can be progressed and how Gloucestershire can continue to contribute positively to the Government's devolution programme.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Richard Stanley
Leader
Tewkesbury Borough Council