



**Dorset**  
Council

**Wiltshire Council**



**Somerset**  
Council

Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP  
Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of  
State for Housing, Communities and  
Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE  
Minister of State for Housing,  
Communities and Local Government

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Cllr Nick Ireland, Leader, Dorset  
Council

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Cllr Bill Revans, Leader, Somerset  
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Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader, Wiltshire  
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Dear Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Housing, Communities and  
Local Government,

We are writing further to our previous correspondence regarding devolution. As you know, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire have been clear about our commitment to English devolution and our strong desire to be amongst the first wave of devolution agreements. This ambition has not changed, as we feel that devolution at scale can support our ambition for local government to continue developing its leadership of place, driving key sector growth, infrastructure investments and delivering socio-economic benefits for the residents of the Heart of Wessex.

In the expression of interests that we respectively submitted at the end of September, we made clear that the position regarding preferred governance was being kept under active consideration. Since this time, we have been grateful to the government and in particular to the Minister of State for providing greater clarity and detail regarding the substance and benefits that a directed elected mayoral combined authority could bring to those areas seeking a devolution deal.

As a result, we are writing to you in our capacity as the three leaders of the respective councils with a revised single expression of interest setting out our commitment and intent for a directly elected mayoral governance system for the 'Heart of Wessex' geography, which is attached to this letter. With a population of approximately 1.5 million, we believe the Heart of Wessex offers a realistic and ambitious offer at scale which can redefine local decision-making and partnership across the Southwest, offering the government an opportunity to showcase through partnership what devolution can offer to the region and to the wider UK.



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This offer is made in the spirit of collaboration following further discussions between the constituent authorities in the Heart of the Wessex geography and with the recognition that the Heart of Wessex has a strong growth offer across the region, including in areas such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries and defence, aligned to the new Industrial Strategy.

It is important to note that we do not want to shut the door to our near neighbours should they also wish to 'board the train' of devolution and bring its benefits to residents across a wider geography. As such, our offer to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and Swindon councils to join the Heart of Wessex remains open and we recognise that their inclusion into any geography would bring even greater scale and impact across the Southwest region, with a potential population of over 2 million.

We would welcome the government's confirmation you are content to agree the revised Heart of Wessex mayoral combined authority proposal and would also welcome your consideration that the Heart of Wessex will form part of the first wave of Mayoral Combined Authorities. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal and relevant logistics in further detail should you so wish.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Nick Ireland

Leader, Dorset Council

Cllr Richard Clewer

Leader, Wiltshire Council

Cllr Bill Revans

Leader, Somerset Council