Future Gloucestershire

Jim McMahon OBE MP
Minister for Local Government,
Devolution and Regional Growth
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London
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2nd October 2026

Dear Minister McMahon,

Devolution for Gloucestershire – West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WECA)

We are writing to reaffirm our shared commitment to securing a devolution deal that enables Gloucestershire to play a significant role in re-wiring the state and delivering on the Government's ambitions for sustainable growth, to meet our housing needs, drive public service reform and support a national renewal.

Gloucestershire has consistently shown its willingness to embrace change and continue to work across political and organisational boundaries and engage constructively with Government. We request the Government's support in maintaining momentum on Gloucestershire's devolution ambitions while the review of local government reorganisation continues. Devolution is fundamentally important to achieving the vision and ambition we have for Gloucestershire and as such we should not be left in prolonged uncertainty.

Membership of WECA

The consensus of our authorities and the majority of council leaders is that Gloucestershire must achieve full membership of an enhanced West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WECA).

We recognise that this will require consent, alignment with electoral cycles as well as the negotiation of a bespoke arrangement. For these reasons we propose that establishing a Gloucestershire Foundation Strategic Authority (FSA), with a clear route through interim association to full membership, could provide a realistic pathway to

WECA membership in the coming years. Our ambition remains; we see establishing an FSA for Gloucestershire as a pragmatic stepping stone on our path to full membership of our home Mayoral Authority.

In a world of increasing threats, the economic case and the opportunity for the delivery of our National Industrial Strategy through the enlargement of WECA, is compelling.

Labour markets, supply chains, universities, transport networks, environmental systems and patterns of access to employment, education and healthcare already connect our communities along the M5 and across the Severn Estuary.

An enhanced West of England authority would provide greater scale, coherence and delivery capacity across transport, infrastructure, housing, strategic planning, skills, economic development and public service reform. It would combine major cities, towns and rural communities, reflect the true M5 growth corridor and connect the Bristol and Bath area, Brabazon and the Innovation Arc with the Gloucester-Cheltenham growth corridor and the Midlands.

The proposition is also nationally significant. Gloucestershire's membership of WECA will deliver the National Industrial Strategy faster, generate sustainable growth in every postcode quicker and make our nation safer.

The combined strength of Gloucestershire and WECA would supercharge the South West region and make a critical contribution to our national security and resilience. As Gloucestershire, we bring world class assets such as GCHQ and the associated cyber security cluster, aerospace, defence, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech and applied engineering, and major natural assets including the Western Forest and Severn Estuary.

This is ideally suited to combine with the West of England's capabilities in digital, AI, quantum, creative industries, defence and aerospace. Together, the combination of our public, private and academic strength creates a truly innovative and internationally recognised capability that would make a vital contribution to both the economy, our national mission, and help actively combat the threats we face.

Gloucestershire is part of the South West

Our strong connection to Bristol and the South West dates back over 1,000 years. More latterly, strong institutional and economic partnerships have been built resulting in

integrated public services and an economy that hard-wire Gloucestershire to the South West region.

The NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board are working through a formal cluster, supported by a Joint Cluster Board, joint executive arrangements and shared non-executive leadership.

Other practical partnerships include collaboration between Gloucestershire Constabulary and Avon and Somerset Police, Gloucestershire's inclusion in the South West regional energy planning footprint, Adopt West, the South Western Ambulance Service and Western Gateway the sub-regional transport body. These arrangements demonstrate both the logic of closer alignment and the risk of imposing a strategic geography that cuts across established relationships.

Beyond administrative effectiveness, there is a fundamental reason that these partnerships have developed. For over a century, Gloucestershire has predominantly built its cultural ties to our south. As one example, Gloucestershire County Cricket Club and the Gloucestershire Football Association are both based in Bristol and adhere to the original ceremonial county structures.

The prize of devolution should be to enhance and support our residents to make them healthier, more prosperous but also fit with their own sense of identity and belonging. Devolution should not be a simple re-drawing of a map created through convenience.

We therefore ask the Government to:

- support our ultimate goal of joining an enlarged West of England strategic authority, with the establishment of a Foundation Strategic Authority for Gloucestershire as a potential pathway to that outcome;
- reaffirm Gloucestershire's place within the Government's programme for comprehensive English devolution;
- recognise Gloucestershire's historic, cultural, economic and institutional identity as part of the South West, together with the significance of the emerging health and public service footprint;
- set out a clear timetable and decision-making route, giving certainty to communities, businesses, investors and public sector partners; and
- convene early discussions between Government, Gloucestershire, the West of England authority and its constituent councils on the legislative, governance and electoral steps required.

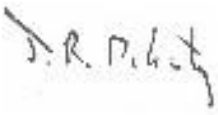
Gloucestershire is ready to move forward. We have a clear South West identity, established partnerships and nationally significant assets that can strengthen the wider region and our nation. A defined pathway to an enlarged West of England strategic authority would align devolved governance with the way people, businesses and public services already operate, while strengthening the South West's contribution to sustainable growth and reform.

We would welcome an early meeting with you to agree on how this proposition can be progressed and to establish a clear, jointly owned route towards Gloucestershire's inclusion in an enlarged West of England Combined Authority.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Lisa Spivey
Leader of Gloucestershire County Council



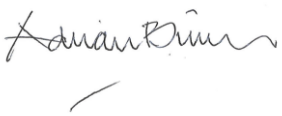
Jon McGinty
Managing Director, Gloucester City Council



Cllr Rowena Hay
Leader of Cheltenham Borough Council



Cllr Mike Evemy
Leader of Cotswold District Council



Cllr Adrian Birch
Leader of Forest of Dean District Council



Cllr Chloe Turner
Leader of Stroud District Council