



Our Ref: C15

26th September 2025

The Right Honourable Steven Reed OBE
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Secretary of State

Subject: Response of the North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce to Local Government Re-organisation.

I am writing on behalf of the members of the North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce to express their collective response to the ongoing discussions regarding local government reorganisation in Lancashire.

We acknowledge that these decisions are ultimately political; however, we believe it is crucial to highlight the perspectives and preferences of the local business community, which plays a vital role in the economic vitality of the county.

Through significant consultation with our members, their conclusions strongly favour a three-unitary authority approach for Lancashire. Specifically, they support the following grouping:

- Preston, Chorley, West Lancashire, and South Ribble
- Blackpool, Fylde, Wyre, Lancaster
- East Lancashire

This structure aligns with natural economic footprints within the county and reflects the interconnectedness of these areas in terms of commerce, infrastructure, travel to work and community ties.

Furthermore, our members consider that establishing three unitary authorities would help reach the critical mass requested by the government, enabling more efficient governance, better resource allocation, and stronger economic development strategies. The above

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structure will strengthen existing local identities and allows for coherent regional planning. It avoids the serious pitfalls of the two-unitary model, where one authority would be disproportionately large and the four-unitary model, where population sizes fall outside guidelines with transitional arrangements being highly disruptive. We also understand a model of five unitaries currently favoured by Burnley and Pendle is not under any circumstance a viable model for consideration.

We of course recognise that all options present challenges and trade-offs, including transition costs and service reconfiguration. However, a three unitary structure provides the most practical platform for businesses and communities to thrive.

Lancashire requires clarity, accountability and an efficient local government structure which strengthens our competitiveness. The Chamber considers a three-unitary model will deliver stronger local identity, provide more coherent strategic decision-making and a balance between efficiency savings and quality service.

The many options currently under discussion by local authorities (outside the three unitary model) do not adequately address concerns raised by the business community. Inclusion of the business community's position is vital to ensure that any restructuring benefits the entire community, promotes economic resilience, and supports sustainable growth.

We trust that the government will take into account these perspectives as part of the ongoing review process. We are keen to continue engaging with policymakers to ensure that Lancashire's local government structure best serves its economic future.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours faithfully

Babs Murphy
Chief Executive

cc.

The Right Honourable Alison McGovan MP, Minister of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

NORTH & WESTERN LANCASHIRE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Leaders of:

Lancashire County Council
Preston City Council
Blackpool Unitary Authority
Fylde Borough Council
Wyre Council
South Ribble Borough Council
Chorley Council
West Lancashire Borough Council
Lancaster City Council
Blackburn with Darwen Unitary Authority
Burnley Council
Pendle Borough Council
Rossendale Borough Council
Hyndburn Borough Council
Ribble Valley Borough Council

Members of Parliament for;

Blackpool South
Blackpool North & Fleetwood
Chorley
Fylde
Lancaster & Wyre
Preston
Ribble Valley
South Ribble
West Lancs
Morecambe & Lunesdale
Burnley
Hyndburn
Pendle & Clitheroe
Rossendale and Darwen
Blackburn

Preston Partnership

Members of North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce