

Consultation response



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Blea Tarn, South Lakeland

Introduction

Copeland Borough Council is delighted to be able to respond to the Government's consultation on Local Government reorganisation in Cumbria. As an authority we believe that local government reorganisation is necessary in order to provide our residents with the quality services they deserve.

Purpose of this document

This document provides Government with the views of Copeland Borough Council in response to the consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in Cumbria.

We have sought to address the relevant questions for each proposal.

Consultation questions

- 1) Is the councils' proposal likely to improve local government and service delivery across each area? Specifically, is it likely to improve council services, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and create more sustainable structures?
- 2) Where it is proposed that services will be delivered on a different geographic footprint to currently, or through some form of joint arrangements is this likely to improve those services? Such services may for example be children's services, waste collection and disposal, adult health and social care, planning, and transport.
- 3) Is the councils' proposal also likely to impact local public services delivered by others, such as police, fire and rescue, and health services?
- 4) Do you support the proposal from the councils?
- 5) Do the unitary councils proposed by the councils represent a credible geography?
- 6) Do you have any other comments with regards to the proposed reorganisation of local government in each area?

East and West Cumbria



Improve local government and service delivery

1) Is the councils' proposal likely to improve local government and service delivery across each area? Specifically, is it likely to improve council services, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and create more sustainable structures?

Yes, the East and West proposal provides the right combination of change, to enable improvement, transformation and new ways of working, with stability to avoid disruption to residents. It establishes government structures with local leadership that can deliver services locally, maintain a strategic perspective and provide high quality sustainable services.

Key points

Improve services: Service delivery will be local, focused and aligned with the needs, assets and infrastructure of the communities of Cumbria. Services will still operate at scale but at a scale appropriate to the size, infrastructure and connectivity of the area. The proposal will replace the current patchwork of layers of government and locality teams that prevent efficient service delivery, designed around what the people of Cumbria want. Bringing services closer to communities in the East and West respectively will enable delivery to be more local, agile and responsive to their communities. By integrating and reflecting place, rather than all of Cumbria, services can be designed to be more efficient and more effective.

Give greater value for money: The proposal is focused on quality improvement and would establish local government structures that enable local, efficient and targeted services. Making savings by removing layers of government, inefficient structures and establishing authorities that are local and relevant will drive investment in modern, data-driven services that meet the needs and expectations of the people of Cumbria. The implementation costs of reorganisation (estimated between £17.6 and £23.8m) will be paid off within two years enabling further savings to be invested in service quality.

Generate savings: unitary government in East and West Cumbria would save over £19.1m per year. The exact savings made are subject to the ambition and decisions of the new unitaries but could go well beyond that, if they take transformation opportunities. This proposal would provide net savings of at least £70m over the first five years which represents a practical and achievable base case. There is also opportunity for more transformative change to increase efficiencies that can be reinvested in improving local services.

Improve local government and service delivery (cont'd)

Provide stronger strategic and local leaders: The two unitary model is required to provide clarity to residents regarding the role of unitary and Combined Authorities. Unitary authorities need to be local to deliver services that address the needs and expectations of residents and they need local leadership. A mayoral Combined Authority will drive strategic leadership and enable collaboration on strategic issues. Clearly these roles cannot both be delivered effectively on the same footprint.

Create more sustainable structures: Running costs of East and West Cumbria unitaries will be at least 7% lower than current local government in Cumbria enabling investment in services that can sustainably support the population. Cumbria will also benefit from strong devolved leadership as a voice for Cumbria to attract investment strengthening the economy and growing the tax income of local government. This investment can be evenly targeted across Cumbria through constructive competition between the authorities, rather than some areas consistently missing out on investment opportunities.

Delivery on different geographic footprint

2) Where it is proposed that services will be delivered on a different geographic footprint to currently, or through some form of joint arrangements is this likely to improve those services? Such services may for example be children's services, waste collection and disposal, adult health and social care, planning, and transport.

East and West unitaries and a Cumbria Combined Authority enable form to follow function regarding services. Two authorities closely aligned with communities will enable local, integrated service delivery that works for those communities which will improve understanding, responsiveness and effectiveness in those services. The Combined Authority operating across Cumbria will enable a joined up approach to strategic issues such as skills and productivity, strategic planning and strategic transport.

Local services that will be improved through local knowledge, understanding and planning

Highways: Local and responsive services will ensure that roads are maintained and fit for purpose, a key concern for local people. Under the current system highways are already managed under structures that align with an East and West footprint (Copeland and Allerdale and Barrow and South Lakeland). There is also a structure in the north of Cumbria that can be integrated into the two unitary model representing a consolidation of service delivery.

Waste services: Rubbish collection and recycling require local knowledge to develop more efficient routes and adapt to local events and requirements. Two unitaries enables scale and efficiency through the integration of District services retaining the local knowledge of District teams. Waste services could be integrated under a Joint Waste Authority for management overseeing the waste disposal facilities located in the East and West. This strategic oversight will enable waste services to deliver changes to help combat climate change. Delivery units can use local knowledge and data to consolidate, integrate and improve the efficiency of routes and operations.

Adult social care: As two unitaries will be closer to the communities, culture, demographics and geography of their population they will be better able to stimulate community support and to provide services that promote resilience and independence for older adults. This will reduce some pressure on adult social care as well as promoting the wellbeing and quality of life of residents. In line with the place-based principles of Integrated Care Systems two unitaries will also provide more targeted commissioning arrangements for vulnerable adults and people with learning disabilities enabling services tailored to local needs and facilities.

Delivery on different geographic footprint (cont'd)

Local services that will be improved through local knowledge, understanding and planning (cont'd)

Children's services: children's services will be integrated with many of the District services that enable safe, healthy childhoods, such as housing, public health and leisure. This approach enables planning to be more effective and services to work in harmony provided integration is sufficiently local. The proposal will also enable collaborative working and remove disruptive transition points between services and organisations in children's lives. Improvement has been slow in children's services and will be put further at risk due to financial pressures on councils which will put services and children at risk. A two unitary model will provide an opportunity to reset the leadership and culture of the services and provide a more sustainable financial footing.

Children's safeguarding: The Cumbria Local Safeguarding Children Board operate through three locality groups and the East & West model maintains two (Allerdale and Copeland and Barrow and South Lakeland) within single unitaries. The group that covers Carlisle and Eden would be split but a two unitary structure is likely to negate the need for locality structures as unitaries will be an appropriate size to manage services.

Looked after children: If managed through a two unitary model caseloads for both unitaries would be, on average, in the middle third of authorities and spread over a smaller area, enabling more focused care and support.

Strategic services that require a pan-Cumbria approach and delivery model through a Combined Authority

- Strategic transport planning including bus franchising and network subsidy under a Passenger Transport Executive to better meet transport needs across the region and connect local travel infrastructure with tourism planning
- Integration of police and fire services, emergency planning and the Local Resilience Forum to enable integrated operations
- Strategic spatial planning to coordinate and inform local plans
- Strategic approach to education and skills including a regional productivity and skills plan
- Relationship with the LEP to reset the approach and provide a strategic approach that works for both authorities. This will include focus on a sustainable agricultural sector and coordination to become a trailblazer for climate change in the UK.

Impact on local public services

3) Is the councils' proposal also likely to impact local public services delivered by others, such as police, fire and rescue, and health services?

Police, fire and rescue

Will not change boundaries: Two unitaries based on East Cumbria and West Cumbria would not impact on the boundaries of the police, fire and rescue services which operate across Cumbria. Ambulance services are administered across the North West so would also not be affected.

Retains strategic direction through Combined Authority: Police, fire, rescue, emergency planning and the Local Resilience Forum will operate across the Cumbria Combined Authority enabling integrated strategic planning.

Consolidating services and intelligence: Other public services require local authorities to have detailed knowledge and intelligence regarding their communities e.g. safeguarding. Many current local authority services are structured through three locality teams or the six Districts and this model consolidates these services into two local authority counterparts for data sharing and joint working.

Healthcare

Driving local place-based working: The current healthcare geography of Cumbria does not align with District boundaries and is currently split between the North Cumbria Health and Care System and the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System. Integrated Care Systems will rely on place-based partnerships to deliver effectively; these require local knowledge and understanding which will be delivered through East and West unitary authorities that reflect the communities and dynamics of local places.

Support for the proposal

4) Do you support the proposal from the Councils?

This model is the Council's preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation in Cumbria. We recognise that Local Government Reorganisation in Cumbria is essential but it must be undertaken in a form that presents the residents of the county with the greatest benefits. We believe that this proposal is the best way forward for Cumbria because:

- It provides the right level of change and transformation leading to improved services for residents
- It creates local authorities to achieve an appropriate scale for service delivery but remains embedded in the local economy
- It presents an opportunity to unlock further investment and service improvements through the creation of a Combined Mayoral Authority
- It represents the most credible geography for the county and builds on existing cultural and economic areas

Credible geography

5) Do the unitary councils proposed by the councils represent a credible geography?

Yes, establishing unitary local government in East and West Cumbria reflects the social, cultural and economic geography of the area. The authorities will be naturally supported by transport infrastructure connecting communities respectively to the east and west of the Lake District National Park. Having populations below 300,000 will enable more local service delivery despite the size, rurality and low population density of the area and they will still be in the top half of English unitaries by population size.

Key points

Reflects cultural geography: West Cumbria is strongly interlinked through sports leagues and the manufacturing, industrial and mining history of the region. There are strong links between towns such as Whitehaven and Workington on the west coast regarding education, nightlife and retail. East Cumbria culture is grounded in agriculture and the strong tourism industry as well as towns like Kendal that operate as hubs across the region.

Supported by transport routes: transport infrastructure connects communities down the east and the west of Cumbria. East Cumbria is connected by the A590, M6 and A6 and local train lines and a strong travel to work zone between Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland. West Cumbria is linked by the Cumbria Coast Line, A595 and the A66 and there is a strong commuter relationship between Allerdale and Copeland and between the north of Allerdale and Carlisle

Powered by economic geographies: both authorities will have a GVA over £5.6bn, business rates are evenly balanced between the two and both have a healthy economic sector mix

The right population size for our geography: Cumbria has fewer than one person per hectare and transport infrastructure largely operates as a doughnut around the Lake District National Park and the Scafell Massif. While East Cumbria will have a population of 225k this is substantial in the context of delivering services effectively and efficiently over such a large rural area.

The Bay proposal





Improve local government and service delivery

1) Is the councils' proposal likely to improve local government and service delivery across each area? Specifically, is it likely to improve council services, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and create more sustainable structures?

The challenges presented by this proposal will impact on services across two counties. The proposal does not consistently identify, at this moment in time, how the model will secure service improvement or deliver the proposed savings. The complexities involved in the implementation of the Bay proposal arise from the requirement to bring together services from across Cumbria and Lancashire. These challenges have the potential to cause significant delay in the Local Government Reorganisation process and potentially incur additional costs relating to service delivery.

This complexity is reflected in the implementation costs for the proposal. The costs relating to the establishment of the Bay authority alone is more than the entire proposal for the East West model. This has clear implications for the model with regards to creating greater value for money within a reasonable implementation timescale. Inevitably, this will have an impact on improvements within the overall service delivery.

Whilst the proposed authorities would create councils of a notable size, it is likely that the Cumbria element of the proposal will face many of the same challenges presented to the existing upper tier authority, Cumbria County Council. Issues relating to the provision of services across large distances would still be a major consideration.

The impact of this may result in services that are not responsive or representative of the local communities they are intended to serve. Services are also likely to be provided further from the residents they are intended to benefit when compared to the East West model.

This increased scale of council could also have implications for local leadership in that, once more, the geographical size has the potential to weaken democratic representation when compared to the East West model.



Delivery on different geographic footprint

2) Where it is proposed that services will be delivered on a different geographic footprint to currently, or through some form of joint arrangements is this likely to improve those services? Such services may for example be children's services, waste collection and disposal, adult health and social care, planning, and transport.

The potential impact the Bay proposal could have on the geographic footprint of service delivery across Cumbria and Lancashire could be significant. Separating Lancaster from Lancashire has the potential to create a myriad of difficulties in the model's implementation. This in turn may impact on service delivery and the speed at which services can be realigned and improved. High implementation costs could also impact on potential service improvement, especially in the short to medium term. This is an unfavourable aspect of the proposal when compared to the Council's preferred East West model

Whilst none of the proposed models align perfectly with the Integrated Care Systems, the Bay model presents the closest overall alignment. This could have a positive result on population health and wellbeing, however, it will still require place-based partnerships to mitigate misalignments and therefore, doesn't have significant benefits in comparison to other proposals for Cumbria.

It is also unclear how this model will implement devolved government and manage strategic services, such as transport, at the proposed scale and geographical coverage. The challenge of operating services across two existing county areas could impact on the potential for a meaningful Combined Mayoral Authority. This is an unfavourable element of the proposal when considered directly with the East West model.



Impact on local public services

3) Is the councils' proposal also likely to impact local public services delivered by others, such as police, fire and rescue, and health services?

The impact of this proposal on services such as police and fire and rescue could be far reaching. Blue light services in Cumbria and Lancashire would need to be extensively remodelled to unpick existing geographical boundaries for delivery. This is a complicated and, seemingly, not well supported element of the Bay proposal. It is likely to result in considerable implications for service delivery and costs associated with the proposal. Successful implementation would, therefore, require prolonged time, effort and resources that are not matched by service improvements when compared to other proposals.

As previously stated, this model does provide the closest alignment with ICS boundaries when compared to other proposals. This could potentially have some longer terms benefits for population health and well being but it would still require placed based partnerships to realise the benefits. These benefits, may also therefore, be realised utilising the East West model for example. None of the proposals submitted to Government align perfectly with the ICS boundaries.



Support for the proposal

4) Do you support the proposal from the Councils

The Bay model is an aspirational proposal that offers a strong vision for the Bay area but is less comprehensive on the benefits for the rest of Cumbria. At this moment in time, the proposal does not adequately address the structural challenges regarding police and fire boundaries, how it will provide a viable footing for devolution and the difficult challenge of separating Lancaster from Lancashire.

The implementation of the proposal would therefore, present a number of complex issues. This complexity will undoubtedly elongate the overall implementation process. So, whilst the proposal is sympathetic to existing cultural, geographical and functioning economic areas such as West Cumbria, it does not compare favourably to the East West model due to the large implementation costs and the length and value of potential service transformation.



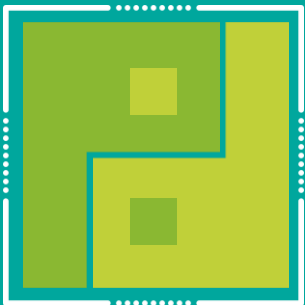
Credible geography

5) Do the unitary councils proposed by the councils represent a credible geography?

The Bay proposal is able to demonstrate public and political support from within the bay area but currently includes little public support and little analysis of the northern districts as a credible geography. The scale of the authorities this model will create has the potential to encounter geographical delivery issues. Whilst services would be offered closer to residents than many existing services, the authorities under this proposal would face many of the same issues that are faced by Cumbria County Council, the current upper tier authority.

The proposal goes some way to recreating historical cultural and geographical boundaries that align to an established sense of place. It maintains the critical connection between Allerdale and Copeland Council areas, however, the scale of the proposed authorities are larger than the East West proposal and therefore potentially do not capitalise on the opportunity to create strong democratic representation in services embedded within local communities.

Cumbria County Council proposal





Improve local government and service delivery

1) Is the councils' proposal likely to improve local government and service delivery across each area? Specifically, is it likely to improve council services, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and create more sustainable structures?

Whilst this model may appear attractively simple to implement, it offers limited potential for transformation and service improvement due to the continuity aspects of the proposal. The size and scale of the county makes it very difficult to provide effective services at a countywide geography. The reduced opportunity for truly transformational change may ultimately have an impact on the model's ability to deliver the forecast level of savings.

The removal of district level authorities and the creation of a single countywide unitary will result in services that will be less local and responsive than existing services. Cumbria covers a huge geographical area and services operated on this scale risk losing the all-important connection with residents.

This proposal could also limit the potential for a Combined Mayoral Authority and the opportunities for further devolving powers to the area. This may have an impact on the future of key strategic services and the ability to secure additional investment into the county.

A single authority for the whole county geography may provide an opportunity to develop a more streamlined strategic view for the whole of the county but this approach often fails to recognise the various nuances at play in Cumbria. The county often has competing and conflicting interests which can be difficult to blend into a universally supported position. For example, the nuclear industry is hugely important for West Cumbria but is not universally supported across the rest of the county.



Delivery on different geographic footprint

2) Where it is proposed that services will be delivered on a different geographic footprint to currently, or through some form of joint arrangements is this likely to improve those services? Such services may for example be children's services, waste collection and disposal, adult health and social care, planning, and transport.

Under this proposal the majority of services move from a district level to a countywide geographical footprint. We believe that this could have a negative impact on service provision across Cumbria. Services delivered at a countywide level have been notoriously difficult to manage and implement with services often being disaggregated to provide a greater local input. Cumbria County Council have had limited success in service improvement over a long period of time.

The East and West proposal, for example, is positioned as a balance between some stability (existing county boundaries) and change (two unitaries) to achieve local delivery at appropriate scale.

There is no plan for mayoral devolution as part of this proposal. This could result in the lack of a clear and differentiated role for a Combined Authority, affecting the ability of the area to attract additional investment into the area.



Impact on local public services

3) Is the councils' proposal also likely to impact local public services delivered by others, such as police, fire and rescue, and health services?

This proposal would have minimum impact on public services delivered by other organisations due to the existing geographical scope of services such as police and fire and rescue services. This is also true however for other models, such as the East West model, in which Police and fire and rescue services would continue to be delivered on a countywide basis and services such as the ambulance service would continue to be delivered by the North West Ambulance Service.

This model would not align with the health authority but none of the proposals submitted achieve perfect alignment.



Support for the proposal

4) Do you support the proposal from the Councils?

We are not supportive of a proposal to create a single unitary authority for the whole of Cumbria. This model represents a race to the bottom to save money and will not bring about the improvements in services that our residents require.

A single, countywide, authority would offer a remote form of local governance for many residents given the scale and size of the county. Cumbria is a large and complex county that presents numerous difficulties in service delivery. It is also incredibly difficult to provide effective strategic leadership at that scale due to the number of different interests across the county. The creation of smaller unitary authorities such as the East West model would be better positioned to represent local interests.

This model does not facilitate the creation of a combined authority and is not clear on the potential for devolution in the county.



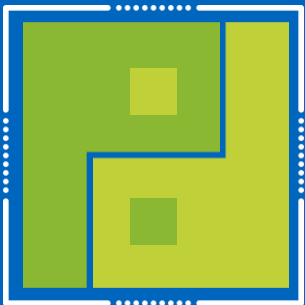
Credible geography

5) Do the unitary councils proposed by the councils represent a credible geography?

We believe that this proposal does not represent a credible geography for unitary governance in Cumbria. Cumbria is a very large and complex county. This often results in difficulties for service delivery, local leadership and remoteness of decision making. Cumbria has numerous competing or conflicting issues. For example, the nuclear industry which makes up the majority of employment in West Cumbria is not wholly supported throughout the county. This has the potential to be detrimental in the long term to the functioning geographical economy of West Cumbria.

Whilst the population of the county is 500,000 and therefore meets the ideal population size for unitary authorities, it would not serve the best interests of the county as a whole. Whilst the population of the proposed east west split is below 300,000, this proposal would allow for more local service delivery and both authorities would still be in the top half of English unitaries by population size.

North and South Proposal





Improve local government and service delivery

1) Is the councils' proposal likely to improve local government and service delivery across each area? Specifically, is it likely to improve council services, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and create more sustainable structures?

The North South proposal is likely to lead to some improvements in service delivery across the area. However these benefits will be lessened by splitting West Cumbria into two separate authorities. Many existing services, particularly those provided by the existing upper tier authority are provided on a West Cumbria footprint. Therefore the opportunity to capitalise on this existing delivery footprint would be lost under this model.

Key points

Improve services: Similar to the East West proposal, this model creates the potential for service delivery to be local, focused and aligned with the needs, of Cumbria. Services would also be delivered on a scale that is appropriate to Cumbria. However, the separation of the existing delivery footprint of West Cumbria will mean that services will not be necessarily aligned with infrastructure and community assets. Existing service alignment will also need to be reconfigured on differing footprints which will not enable the existing patchwork of service delivery to be integrated more effectively to benefit the needs of residents. Many existing services currently provided by the upper tier authority in the county are delivered on a west Cumbria (Allerdale and Copeland) footprint.

Give greater value for money: This model would create the potential for the delivery of more effective services than the existing structures are able to provide and unlock investment in council services that would benefit the residents of Cumbria. These investments could be made within a timescale that provides greater value for money across the county.

Generate savings: The proposed savings generated under this proposal are similar to those within the East West model and are likely to be realised over a similar time period.



Improve local government and service delivery cont'd

Provide stronger strategic and local leaders: This proposal creates the opportunity to create a Mayoral Combined Authority that can drive strategic leadership and enable greater collaboration on strategic issues. In addition to this, it will create local authorities of a scale that can provide leadership at a local level. Critically however, it would see the separation of the West Cumbria functioning economic area at that local level. This could have implications for issues such as nuclear policy, around which the West Cumbria functioning economic area is based.

Create more sustainable structures: The long term running costs for a two unitary council model will be lower than the current local government. The potential to create a Combined Mayoral Authority could also attract additional funding for services in the county.



Delivery on different geographic footprint

2) Where it is proposed that services will be delivered on a different geographic footprint to currently, or through some form of joint arrangements is this likely to improve those services? Such services may for example be children's services, waste collection and disposal, adult health and social care, planning, and transport.

North and South unitaries will allow for close alignment with communities in the delivery of services but key aspects of service delivery in areas such as Adult Social Care will potentially be delivered on different geographic footprints to existing service delivery because of the splitting of the West Cumbria area. Whilst this model may potentially take full advantage of the Combined Mayoral Authority Model to enable joined up services across the county in areas such as skills and transport more localised services will see existing delivery footprints replaced.

For example, under the current system highways are managed under structures that align with an East and West footprint (Copeland and Allerdale and Barrow and South Lakeland). The proposed North South model will result in key transport corridors falling within different authorities.

In addition to this, much of the existing Adult Social Care and Children's Services are delivered on a West Cumbria footprint. This proposal would see assets within West Cumbria fall between two differing authorities which may affect service delivery for local residents



Impact on local public services

3) Is the councils' proposal also likely to impact local public services delivered by others, such as police, fire and rescue, and health services?

Police, fire and rescue

Will not change boundaries: Two unitaries based on North Cumbria and South Cumbria would not impact on the boundaries of the police, fire and rescue services which operate across Cumbria. Ambulance services are administered across the North West so would also not be affected.

Retains strategic direction through Combined Authority: Police, fire, rescue, emergency planning and the Local Resilience Forum will operate across the Cumbria Combined Authority enabling integrated strategic planning.

Consolidating services and intelligence: Other public services require local authorities to have detailed knowledge and intelligence regarding their communities e.g. safeguarding. Many current local authority services are structured through three locality teams or the six Districts and this model consolidates these services into two local authority counterparts for data sharing and joint working.

Healthcare

Driving local place-based working: The current healthcare geography of Cumbria does not align with District boundaries and is currently split between the North Cumbria Health and Care System and the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System. Integrated Care Systems will rely on place based partnerships to deliver effectively. This will require local knowledge and understanding which will be delivered through East and West unitary authorities that reflect the communities and dynamics of local places.



Support for the proposal

4) Do you support proposal from the Councils

We are supportive of the principle of two unitary authorities in Cumbria. However, as outlined in the responses to previous questions, we believe there is a better model that will improve the long term sustainability of those councils and their delivery of services for local residents. We believe there are implications arising from this model that will significantly limit the potential strategic benefits from Local Government Reorganisation in the county.

The dividing of West Cumbria into two separate unitary authorities results in the separation of a strong cultural and economic functioning area. West Cumbria provides a strong existing footprint for delivery across a range of services but it is also home to an internationally significant nuclear cluster, which provides a significant proportion of the areas employment and economic future. Dividing this area's local governance into two different authorities would therefore miss an opportunity to provide real strategic and long-lasting benefits.



Credible geography

5) Do the unitary councils proposed by the councils represent a credible geography?

This proposal presents a credible geography in terms of the appropriate size of the proposed authorities to create the potential for service improvements in Cumbria. However, the proposal would see the key functioning economic area of West Cumbria divided into two different authorities.

This proposal doesn't build on the strong cultural, economic and historical links in West Cumbria. There are strong bonds between the towns of Workington and Whitehaven, for example. The public infrastructure of West Cumbria is often shared with the area being served by a single further education college and hospital.

It would be difficult to maximise the potential of the economically dominant nuclear sector in West Cumbria if the area was represented by two authorities, especially if those authorities had different policy positions on the future of nuclear in the UK. The flow of people and services between the two existing authorities make a compelling case for single unitary governance that the North South proposal does not satisfy in terms of geography.

