## Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Item 17

## 24 June 2025

# Cumbria Devolution

### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with an update on devolution in Cumbria.

### Recommendation

2. That Members note the report.

### Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and support the strategic planning framework:
    - **Corporate Plan Objective 30**:
      Operate Governance Arrangements that are fit for purpose, as reported through the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Governance Report.

### Background

4. In December 2024, the Government published the English Devolution White Paper which sets out plans to transfer some powers from Westminster to local communities, ensuring that every part of England is covered by devolution.

5. Westmorland and Furness Council and Cumberland Council expressed an interest in taking forward devolution within their area through the establishment of a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA), with the first election for a Mayor taking place in May 2026. The Government subsequently confirmed that Cumbria is in its priority programme of areas for devolution.

6. MCAs will have defined areas of competence, set out in law, covering:

    - transport and local infrastructure
    - skills and employment support
    - housing and strategic planning
    - economic development and regeneration
    - environment and climate change
    - health, wellbeing and public service reform
    - public safety

7. MCAs will also have a seat on the Council of Nations and Regions and the Mayoral Council, offering an opportunity to influence the future development of devolution in England.

8. The Government launched a public consultation to seek views on a proposal to form an MCA for the local government areas of Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland from interested parties, including those who live and work there, which ended on 13 April.

**Westmorland and Furness Council's response to the consultation**

9. Westmorland and Furness Council's full response to the devolution consultation can be found here. In summary, the Council's response to the consultation acknowledges the benefits devolution can bring to the area, but is dependent on the necessary level of funding, suitable governance framework, appropriate powers and sufficient investment support both in the short and long term. The Council also distinguishes Cumbria as a large rural area in contrast to those larger urban and metropolitan areas that have mostly already been devolved and would like further discussions with Government on how devolution can positively impact on the area.

**Cumberland Council's response to the consultation**

10. For completeness, Cumberland Council's response to the consultation can be found here. In summary, the Council broadly supports the proposal for a Mayoral Combined Authority. The Council also emphasises that devolution for Cumbria may be different to that established in larger City regions, seeking early confirmation of funding to cover the costs of holding mayoral election and of medium and longer term capacity funding.

**Impact of devolution on the Authority**

11. It is difficult to predict the full extent of devolution on the Authority until it is clearer what form of devolution has been implemented. However, we can say that there will be an impact as many of the major agenda issues already identified by Westmorland and Furness Council, and pertinent to this National Park and our colleagues in the Lake District NPA, will also be on the agenda of any MCA.

**Next Steps**

12. Following the consultation, the Secretary of State will consider all responses and decide whether to establish an MCA. If the Secretary of State decides to proceed, the government will confirm funding (subject to Spending Review) and provided the constituent councils consent, the necessary secondary legislation will be laid in Parliament. If approved by Parliament, the Combined Authority would be established in time for the first mayoral election to take place in May 2026.

**Financial Implications**

13. None known at present.

**Legal Implications**

14. None.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

15. None.

**Clare Burrows**
**Director of Corporate Services**

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