

Jim McMahon OBE MP
Minister of State (Minister for Local Government and English Devolution)
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

6 March 2025

Dear Jim McMahon MP

Support for the creation of a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Hampshire and the Solent

I am writing to you in my role as the Vice-Chair of the Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board, to express the support of the Board for the creation of a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Hampshire and the Solent.

The Hampshire Prosperity Partnership was set up following the integration of Enterprise M3 and Solent Local Enterprise Partnerships into Hampshire County Council on 1 April 2024, and is made up of representatives from business, education and local government from across Hampshire.

The Chair of the Partnership Board is Cllr Nick Adams King, Leader of Hampshire County Council and I am aware that he is already engaged with both MPs and Civil Servants in order to bring forward a Combined Authority for area. However, I think it is important that you also hear the views of business and education representatives from Hampshire and the Solent.

The creation of a Combined Authority for Hampshire and the Solent has long been an ambition for the area, strongly supported by local businesses, colleges and universities. However, due to the complexity of current local government structures in Hampshire it has been difficult to drive this through until the clarity provided by the English Devolution White Paper enabled this.

Businesses and education providers do not recognise administrative boundaries, regularly working across more than one local authority area, and in the case of Hampshire and the Solent, across two Local Growth Boards. This fragmented approach makes it harder to join up the strategic priorities for the area, which in turn has resulted in a lack of investment in infrastructure to support growth.

When the Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board was formed Hampshire County Council made a conscious decision not to restrict membership solely to those organisations that were based in the County Council administrative area, recognising that the proximity of the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth meant that to have an impact on local economic growth there needed to be a more inclusive approach. Many of our members cut across the whole of the wider geography, including the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Southampton, the Chief Executive of the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce and the Chief Executive of the Solent Freeport, all of whom are working across the wider Hampshire and Solent geography every day.

As the Regional Director of Associated British Ports (ABP) this is something that affects me directly, with part of our operations sitting within Southampton City Council's administrative area, and part within the Hampshire County Council and New Forest District Council areas. My staff commute from across Hampshire, and my customers from across the whole of UK, and in fact globally. The infrastructure needed for ABP to grow is currently provided by both Southampton City Council and Hampshire County Council and often funded by central government. For the area to recognise its true potential we need to be thinking strategically as one place.

On behalf of Hampshire Prosperity Partnership Board, I thank you for recognising the potential of Hampshire and the Solent and for providing the opportunity for greater join up, powers and funding at a local level. I would like to formally pledge the support of the Hampshire Prosperity Partnership to the Hampshire and Solent proposals for a MCCA and hope that the Government is able to commit to a Combined Authority for the area following the current consultation.

Yours Sincerely



Alastair Welch
Regional Director, Southampton
Associated British Ports

Cllr Nick Adams-King – Hampshire County Council (Chair)
Cllr Phil North – Test Valley Borough Council
Cllr Martin Tod – Winchester City Council
Cllr Gareth Williams – Rushmoor Borough Council
Sarah Greer – University of Winchester
Mike Gaston – Havant & South Downs College
Ross McNally – Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
Nicola Kildunne – Federation of Small Businesses
James Hassett – Solent Freeport
Joanna Butler – Frank Butler Farms Ltd
Barney Ely – Hays Recruitment
Paul West – Marketing Specialist
Laura Read – Marwell Wildlife
Mark Smith – University of Southampton
Fiona Stilwell – PETA
Simon Watson – Milestone Infrastructure