

**TIM FARRON MP**

*Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for Westmorland & Lonsdale*



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

**LONDON SW1A 0AA**

Mr. Adrian Faulkner  
2 Thwaites Howe  
116 Craig Walk  
Bowness On  
WINDERMERE  
LA23 3AX

Our Ref: Faul003/4/ag  
Your Ref:

20 February 2007

Dear Adrian

Thank you for your recent letter on behalf of the Chamber of Trade with regard to the highly unsatisfactory process for determining the future formation of local authorities in Cumbria.

I entirely share your frustration about the incoherent policy development that has been let loose by the Government. I have watched and indeed been closely involved with the current withdrawal of vital administrative posts in the current re-structuring of Revenue and Customs. I have also written a succession of letters at the request of the County Council to plead for the delivery of reserved funds for Cumbria in keeping with the intention of the Commission of the EU. However I have not experienced significant support for the economic recovery of Cumbria from either the UK Government or the Government Office for the North West. Whilst I can understand the attraction for the County Council of large scale savings in the cost of their delivery of public services, I see this as a reaction to their deficit rather than as a plan for the improvement of services for Cumbria or for the expansion of well paid job opportunities.

I have long held the view that there is a fundamental divide in economic, social and geographical terms between the north of the county and the south. This outlook is shared by many of the constituents, who have written to me to condemn what they see as the unacceptable promotion of one single central authority for Cumbria. The transport infrastructure cements this division with the effect that South Lakeland looks south for its services, whereas the north and the west of the county are better connected to the north and east. Kendal has lost the PCT HQ and is facing the removal of jobs from the Westmorland Hospital. The Police merger would have depleted their administrative presence in Cumbria yet there has been no suggestion of the relocation of public sector Agencies into the County. Thus the logic points to the need for every possible democratically elected Authority to be sustained to protect the endangered interests of local residents and employment seekers.

*Please reply to Constituency Office*

The Cottage, Yard 2, Stricklandgate, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4ND  
Tel: 01539 723403 Email: [tim@timfarron.co.uk](mailto:tim@timfarron.co.uk)



This is not to deny that there are overlapping areas of responsibility as with highways, street lighting and car parking where there is a genuine need to eliminate the confusion of responsibility which can result in unnecessary delays in the delivery of service needs. It is sadly all too typical of the approach of the current Government that it should have approached the question of local government organization by inviting 'bids' for unitary status. This allows for no coherent submission of the shared as well as the different needs of the residents of Cumbria. It also ignores the vital importance of consultation. Worst of all, it cedes the impression that there is only one solution on offer for the improvement of services within the county whereas the different views of the District Councils could not possibly have been reconciled into bids for alternative unitary Authorities within the time allowed.

You can rest assured that I will continue to represent the many constituents who share your negative view of the conduct of the current 'bidding' process. Please report to your members that I agree with all six of their rational and convincing propositions because each of them required development to be in the best interest of the governed of Cumbria. On the point of information, I would have to observe that there is no rationale that consistently explains Government thinking. The Deputy Prime Minister has always been a strong supporter of regional Government but his ideas are now in abeyance. Furthermore there are too few parts of the country with an appropriately sized city upon which to build the local Council.

If it would be helpful and could be fitted around my London commitments, I would be delighted to discuss these issues with the members of your Chamber.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

**TIM FARRON MP**

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