Y Gwir Anrh./The Rt. Hon. Rhun ap Iorwerth AS/MS
Prif Weinidog Cymru/First Minister of Wales

Ein cyf/Our ref: FM/PO/62/2026

The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street

1 October 2026

Annwyl Andy

I welcome the constructive discussion we had in Glasgow in July, and the positive shared spirit for our governments to work together which is reflected in your letter to me of 21 September. During our conversation at the Commonwealth Games, you invited me to write to set out Wales's priorities for further devolution. These priorities are outlined in this letter.

The recent Senedd election delivered a clear mandate from the people of Wales for positive change that makes a tangible difference to their lives. This mandate includes extending devolution to enable the Senedd and the Welsh Government to have the necessary tools – powers, funding and financial flexibilities – to drive the maximum improvement in outcomes for the people of Wales by integrating and improving public services, and growing the economy. As an underpinning principle to support these reforms, Wales should be able to benefit from the same constitutional and fiscal tools already available in Scotland.

The case for change in Wales is well grounded in evidence through a range of independent, expert Commissions and reports. The cross-party Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales, which reported in 2024, was the latest in a series of studies that demonstrated the need for reform of Wales's constitutional settlement in order to improve outcomes for people in Wales. In particular, the Commission recommended devolution to Wales of policing and justice, rail infrastructure and The Crown Estate, as well as the need to transfer greater financial powers to Welsh Ministers.

We now have an opportunity to translate the Commission's expert analysis and conclusions into a practical programme of reform that can benefit the people of Wales. Given the imperative to make substantive and swift progress on this, we strongly welcomed your commitment that "*The days of Whitehall fighting the devolution of power into the regions and nations are over, for good.*" This ethos is crucial to delivering on the strategic priorities outlined below.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn yr iaith honno ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Policing and Justice

The case for devolving policing and justice is compelling and urgent. The current separation between devolved public services and a reserved justice system creates a recognised "jagged edge" in the devolution settlement, making it harder to design and deliver coherent, citizen-centred services.

While justice is currently largely reserved to the UK Government, responsibility for many of the services – including health, education, housing, local government – that influence offending, rehabilitation and community safety rests with the Welsh Government and our partners in Wales. Moreover, decisions taken by UK Government on justice matters can create significant additional demand and costs for devolved services without any Welsh Government decision-making role on underlying policy or funding. This is not a peripheral issue; the cumulative effect is putting unsustainable pressure on devolved budgets.

The current arrangements create duplication, bureaucracy, confusion and unnecessary cost, while preventing a genuinely joined-up approach to prevention, diversion and rehabilitation. Bringing policing and justice within a single Welsh devolved framework would support more coherent policymaking focused on distinct needs of Wales, improve service delivery and strengthen accountability.

There is significant consensus in Wales behind this position. The case for devolving policing and justice has been examined and supported through successive expert reviews, including the Commission on Justice in Wales, chaired by the former Lord Chief Justice Lord Thomas. The present position is indefensible; not only does Wales lack parity with Scotland or Northern Ireland, but the Mayors of London and Greater Manchester exercise greater control over justice than the national government of Wales.

In particular, devolving policing has consistently been identified by these reviews as a pressing priority, recognising also that more than half of police funding in Wales comes from devolved sources. We therefore welcome your recent comments that you are prepared to look at the devolution of policing to Wales. As you noted, the current programme of policing reform makes this unquestionably the right moment for those discussions, which can build on expert consideration already given within Wales to the practicalities of delivering devolution through work such as Preparing for the devolution of policing in Wales, led by the former Chief Constable for North Wales Carl Foulkes. The upcoming Police Reform Bill therefore presents a vital opportunity for our governments to agree and deliver a clear pathway towards the devolution of policing, and demonstrate the change in mindset around devolution which you have called for within Whitehall.

Devolution of youth justice has also consistently been identified as an important early step, with even higher proportions of funding deriving from devolved sources. Again, the UK Government is initiating a set of reforms across England and Wales; ensuring those reforms give maximum scope to do things differently in Wales is a key immediate opportunity.

Rail Infrastructure

Wales requires full devolution of rail infrastructure to unlock the potential of our rail network and ensure that investment decisions are aligned with Welsh priorities and passenger needs. Wales does not currently have parity with the significantly greater rail powers available in Scotland, and therefore has more limited levers to integrate rail infrastructure and passenger services. Full devolution would enable delivery of a more integrated

transport network, improving connectivity between communities and supporting sustainable economic growth across all parts of Wales.

Transport for Wales has already demonstrated, through the delivery of the Core Valley Lines transformation, that Wales can own, manage and deliver major rail infrastructure, providing a strong foundation for further devolution and improved services for passengers. I was encouraged by your comments in Glasgow that you understood the case for devolution of rail given the outcomes secured by Transport for Wales in this regard in recent years.

We have welcomed the UK Government's recognition of the historical under investment in rail in Wales, and the commitment to a £14 billion programme of rail investment in Wales over the next 15 years is a positive step forward. The need to demonstrate swift progress on this was a key imperative outlined in the letter from the Cabinet Minister for Finance to the Chancellor ahead of the UK Budget. More broadly, it will be important to ensure that full devolution of powers of the Welsh rail network is accompanied by a fair funding settlement which fully delivers on that commitment for additional investment.

Additionally, HS2 should be redesignated as an England-only project to ensure that Wales receives its fair funding consequentials, which we, and previous Welsh Governments, have made clear is essential in order to restore public legitimacy around rail funding decisions. More broadly, Wales should receive its fair share of UK transport investment, with funding arrangements that recognise the role of transport infrastructure in connecting communities, supporting economic growth and improving access to opportunities across Wales.

The Crown Estate

Devolution of The Crown Estate would strengthen democratic accountability and ensure that decisions relating to Welsh assets and natural resources are made in a way that better reflects the priorities of Wales. It would also provide an opportunity to help maximise the economic benefits arising from Welsh assets, supporting investment and communities across Wales. Again, the feasibility and opportunities of devolution of the Crown Estate have already been demonstrated by devolution of the Crown Estate in Scotland.

The Group on the Future of the Crown Estate in Wales has been established to bring together expertise in energy, law, finance, public policy, local government and economic development to consider the practical implications and opportunities associated with devolution. The Group is expected to publish its final report next summer, and I would welcome engagement from the UK Government as that work progresses to agree the best path towards devolution.

Funding Flexibilities and Financial Fairness

Wales requires funding arrangements that are fair, needs-based and reflect Wales' demographic and economic realities. Greater and more flexible fiscal and borrowing powers will strengthen our fiscal resilience and support our ability to plan and invest, improving outcomes for communities across Wales through strengthened public services, infrastructure investment and long-term economic growth.

There are two areas where we can make immediate progress and illustrate how we are re-setting relations between our governments, with a willingness to work together for the benefit of people in Wales.

The first of these is permanently removing all restrictions on our access to the Wales Reserve, bringing Wales in line with Scotland. We will only be able to draw down well under 1% of our budget from the Wales Reserve next year under the current arrangements, which significantly restricts our ability to respond to unexpected pressures and changes in our settlement.

The second is to progress the Welsh Government's request for Senedd competence to introduce a Vacant Land Tax, starting with urgently issuing a joint consultation that the Welsh Government shared with HM Treasury in February this year. The Welsh Government has now entered its eighth year engaging with UK Government in respect of this tax competence and I welcome the recent commitment from the Secretary of State for Wales to make rapid progress.

A Wales Bill

In our view, the most effective means of delivering these reforms would be through a Wales Bill. While certain elements – particularly the financial flexibility and fairness – can be put in place more immediately, such legislation would provide a coherent, structured framework in Wales for strengthening devolution and the future constitutional settlement, which should ultimately be decided by the people of Wales.

This is an important step towards securing fairness for Wales – underpinned by the principle of parity with Scotland – through a practical programme of constitutional reform focused on enabling improved outcomes for the people of Wales. As indicated in our conversation in Glasgow, I would welcome early engagement between our governments on the scope, timing and content of such legislation.

Building on the specific priorities outlined above, Wales's constitutional settlement should continue to evolve to improve democratic accountability, boost growth, strengthen public services and deliver better outcomes for our communities. The ongoing work on water reform demonstrates how our governments can work together to strengthen and simplify devolution, while maintaining effective cross-border cooperation. In this context, discussions around a Wales Bill should include options for further devolution in areas such as, broadcasting, port regulation, air passenger duty, and energy regulation and pricing.

The case for future devolution in relation to welfare should also form part of our discussions, recognising that current separation between welfare policy and many related devolved services can make it difficult to deliver coherent, person-centred support. These discussions can be informed by our work to deliver Cynnal, our flagship new Welsh Child Payment pilot, providing a direct weekly payment for young children in families claiming Universal Credit. We would welcome your support to ensure Cynnal payments remain exempt from tax and benefit calculations, so families receive their full value.

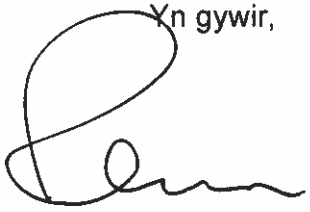
Collective intergovernmental discussions

In addition to the bilateral work between our governments on extending devolution in Wales, we look forward to collective discussions also involving the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive on key issues of mutual interest. This included dealing with the effects of critical current global events, boosting economic growth, mitigating the continuing cost of living crisis faced by households, building a new UK / EU relationship, strengthening resilience and supporting community cohesion. On a cross-cutting basis, we should also

aim to strengthen intergovernmental relations and the operation of the Sewel Convention and address the negative impact of the UK Internal Market Act on devolution settlements.

I look forward to making tangible and swift progress on the key areas outlined in this letter when we meet for bilateral and collective discussions later this month.

Yn gywir,



Rhun ap Iorwerth