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THE PRIME MINISTER

20 November 2026

Dear Rhun,

Thank you for your recent letter and for the productive discussions we had on 30 October at the National Economic Council (NEC) in Glasgow. It was a valuable opportunity for us to discuss in detail our shared priorities and I am pleased that we agreed to start a process to explore how both the UK and Welsh governments can contribute to regional empowerment, reindustrialisation, and good growth in every Welsh postcode.

As you know, I am determined to ensure that Wales benefits from reindustrialisation and that good growth reaches every community in Wales. This is why this UK Government is investing £2.5 billion to bring nuclear power to Ynys Môn, £500 million in the electric arc furnace in Port Talbot, and £445 million to drive forward a transformational plan for Welsh rail. It is also why, following the recent Budget, we are making available £450 million to the Welsh Government on top of the record devolution settlement ensuring the settlement increases in real terms across this spending review.

In Glasgow, we made clear our desire to work together on these shared ambitions, with a collaborative spirit that puts narrow party politics aside and instead focuses on the tangible benefits that regional empowerment can bring. Local Government is, of course, devolved in Wales, so it is for the Welsh Government to determine the scope and nature of decentralisation. However, I was heartened by the comments in your Rewiring Wales speech about ensuring that powers are harnessed for the benefit of all our communities. That is an ambition that both you and I share - ensuring that where you live, or where you are from, does not determine or limit the opportunities available to you. To that end, I note that the new National Commission you have established will consider a range of devolution priorities. I have asked UK Government officials to be on hand to engage with the Commission's work as appropriate.

Moving forward, I am confident that the series of Policy Sprints we agreed upon will provide a useful forum to discuss this in greater detail. I would like us to be ambitious and consider, alongside local authority partners, how we can empower Welsh regions to use both reserved and devolved powers to drive economic growth. We should be bold, and think about how areas like transport, regeneration, housing, energy, digital inclusion, and innovation can form part of a distinctly Welsh approach to regional empowerment. In Glasgow, I set out my view that devolution should not simply mean transferring powers from one Parliament to another. It should put more power in the hands of places and communities. That is why, at the NEC, I proposed that we explore how more employment support could be devolved to Wales, with greater responsibility reaching Wales's regions and communities.

Alan Milburn's Review makes a related but broader argument. It calls for employment, skills, health and practical support to be brought together around the young person, rather than fragmented across different services. In Wales, delivering that ambition will require the UK and Welsh Governments to work together across reserved and devolved responsibilities. I look forward to developing both strands through the policy sprints we agreed in Glasgow.

I will always seek to work with you to empower local and regional investment to promote good growth, to the best of my ability, whilst maintaining our commitment to the fiscal rules. We discussed a roadmap to further fiscal flexibility and I am pleased that discussions are ongoing with the Treasury.

Turning specifically to the points you raised in your letter on devolution, as I promised when we met, I have been considering each of these carefully alongside my Cabinet colleagues.

Policing

As we take forward our wider programme of police reform, I want the Welsh Government to play a clear role in the governance of policing in Wales. This presents a golden opportunity to strengthen accountability and improve integration between policing and devolved services, ultimately supporting better outcomes for the public and more effective action to prevent and fight crime.

We are not persuaded, however, that legislative devolution is necessary to achieve these objectives. The integrated England and Wales policing system is essential to maintaining interoperability, enabling seamless cross-border working and ensuring forces in Wales can draw on national and specialist capabilities. Retaining that integrated framework helps ensure policing in Wales can respond effectively to threats and to protecting the public.

We are therefore keen to engage substantively with the Welsh Government on how its role in policing governance can be enhanced within the reserved model. Wales is distinct from English mayoral areas: policing forms part of an integrated England and Wales policing and criminal justice system, supporting effective cross-border working with access to national and specialist capabilities. Separating policing from that wider system would create new operational and constitutional boundaries within the single England and Wales jurisdiction. A strategic Wales-wide approach can instead strengthen coordination with devolved services, while retaining the benefits of the wider system alongside local policing and accountability.

The Home Secretary is committed to creating a future policing model that, from its foundations, will build upon local government structures, while ensuring policing remains operationally effective, including strengthening the levers for prevention, demand reduction and operational policing through tackling the wider determinants of crime. This involves considering a new model that will provide coterminous powers and levers to govern local policing, while also giving those vested with governance the powers to oversee specialist capabilities and drive force-wide efficiencies.

Recognising the key role that the Welsh Government has in community safety, wider public service delivery and integration, I would welcome further engagement between the Welsh Government and the Home Office, working closely with the Wales Office, to consider how to secure a stronger Welsh Government voice within the reserved model and shape its role in future policing governance in Wales. I have asked the Home Secretary, the Policing Minister, and the Secretary of State for Wales to take this work forward with you and your Ministerial colleagues.

Significant steps have already been taken by the Home Office, the Welsh Government and policing partners to manage the interface between reserved policing and devolved services, including through the pan-Wales Assistant Chief Constable role and the Policing Partnership Board for Wales. Police reform provides a further opportunity to strengthen these arrangements, to enhance the influence of key stakeholders in Wales and improve joint working, as well as preserving the operational benefits of the reserved model.

Justice

I was pleased the Lord Chancellor, Alex Norris, met with the Deputy First Minister and the Minister for Government Efficiency in Cardiff to discuss the role the Welsh Government and other devolved partners play in addressing the factors that influence justice outcomes, including health, housing, education, and social services. We strongly believe that the current devolution settlement enables Wales to benefit from the resources, expertise and resilience of a shared England and Wales justice system, while allowing for approaches that reflect distinctive Welsh circumstances. Effective partnership working is therefore essential to improving outcomes for victims, reducing reoffending and building safer communities.

The Ministry of Justice and its agencies, in partnership with the Welsh Government, facilitate the Criminal Justice Board for Wales and a variety of Wales-specific justice forums. These forums exist to coordinate justice with devolved services and to facilitate engagement and feedback that improves shared justice outcomes across Wales.

This partnership approach is typified in the youth justice system, where I know our respective ministers and teams are working on an expanded role for the Welsh Government in areas such as funding and oversight. The recent agreement to devolve funding for certain youth justice initiatives demonstrates the flexibility of existing arrangements and the UK Government's commitment to empowering Welsh partners where this supports better outcomes.

Our respective Ministers and teams are also exploring the potential for a bigger and clearer role for the Welsh Government on the funding and oversight of probation services.

I welcome the constructive engagement already taking place across the justice system and remain committed to strengthening collaboration with Welsh partners. There is significant scope to enhance the Welsh Government's role within the current constitutional framework and deliver better outcomes through closer working. As reforms are taken forward through the Rewiring the State agenda, Wales will continue to benefit from improvements across the shared England and Wales jurisdiction, alongside having opportunities to help shape changes from the outset.

The Crown Estate

The Crown Estate has huge potential to deliver economic benefits and prosperity for Wales. It is important that we work together to deliver for Wales on this potential.

The Welsh Government's expert group helpfully identified investment in Welsh ports, offshore-wind supply chains and wider economic development as the principal opportunities for Wales over the next decade. I am proud that the UK Government is already investing heavily in port infrastructure, and I have asked my officials to continue working with yours on ports, supply chains and the skills needed to support good jobs, investment and reindustrialisation in Wales. I am also pleased to see that The Crown Estate has taken steps to improve public transparency around its financial reporting in Wales, including through its dedicated annual Wales Review, which provides financial results for Wales and outlines its activities and achievements during 2025/2026.

There are, as you will be aware, several investments underway on floating offshore wind, and the join up with England for further ventures is crucial for investors. With this in mind, I have considered your proposal closely and concluded that The Crown Estate's current model provides the best means of maximising the economic and social benefits for Wales. Its scale, financial capacity and specialist expertise support long-term investment and allow risk to be managed across a diversified portfolio. These are enduring advantages.

I recognise the importance of Welsh communities having a meaningful voice. The Commissioner with special responsibility for Wales newly introduced Wales-specific reporting and the Wales Forum to provide ways to strengthen consideration of Welsh priorities, whilst retaining The Crown Estate's operational independence, and we look forward to working closely with you to ensure this delivers prosperity for Wales.

For these reasons, we are not persuaded by the case for devolving the management of The Crown Estate in Wales, nor to prepare now for a future transfer. Instead, I want our collective focus to be on securing the greatest possible benefit for Wales from the Celtic Sea opportunity.

Rail Infrastructure

As you know, my colleagues and I recognise the historic underfunding into Welsh rail and have announced a commitment to Welsh rail with support for a pipeline of projects valued at up to £14 billion. This is an area where we can and must work together and I am pleased that the Secretary of State for Wales, the Rail Minister and the Deputy Minister for Transport are having productive discussions on how we take this forward at pace.

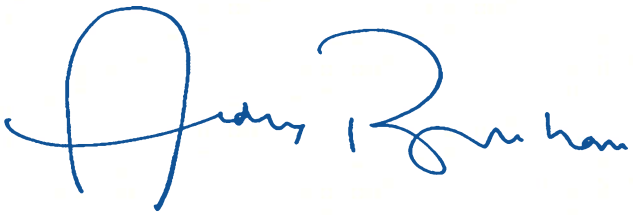
I agree with you that swift progress is imperative so that we can start to deliver on improvements that will benefit passengers and create jobs. We have also agreed to transfer the governance of Welsh rail enhancements to the Wales Rail Board, placing decision making closer to the rail users who will benefit from our investment. Recently, an alliance between Transport for Wales and Network Rail was signed, and work is already underway for partnership delivery of the Burns stations, a significant marker of progress in driving delivery at a more local level in Wales.

We have considered your views on rail infrastructure with interest. As the railway in Wales has a significant cross-border interface with England, managing and maintaining this infrastructure requires consistency and join up on both sides of the border, alongside considering links to the rest of Great Britain, such as rail connectivity between Scotland and Wales. As such, I believe funding and delivery of infrastructure is best done by the new Great British Railways, in collaboration with Transport for Wales and Welsh Government. This will enable better cross-border alignment through co-ordinated investment in passenger services, maintenance, and enhancements. Great British Railways will also be required within legislation to consider the needs of Wales and will be empowered to deliver in partnership with Transport for Wales, making decisions at the level that most impacts the communities that they serve. I am therefore not persuaded by the case for full devolution of rail infrastructure, as it would fragment the current system and affect the service provided to the public by the highly integrated cross-border network.

A key principle of our rail reform programme has been to ensure delivery of the railway in Wales is integrated, not only at a track and train level, but also between the UK and Welsh Governments. The Railways Bill and new Memorandum of Understanding further commit us both to agreeing shared objectives for an integrated railway in Wales and Borders, reflecting the role of the UK and Welsh Governments in the provision of rail infrastructure and train services respectively. I am pleased that a partnering agreement between Great British Railways and Transport for Wales is under development to join up delivery for Wales and Borders, which will align the delivery of passenger services and infrastructure, ensuring benefits from track and train integration.

I will be taking a close interest in the progress of the policy sprint work and very much look forward to discussing this further when we meet again in Cardiff for the next NEC meeting. Finally, in relation to your raising of the Cynnal Child payment pilot when we met, I am aware that following a meeting between UK and Welsh Government Ministers in September, UK Government officials are now working with the Welsh Government to further understand both your proposal to pilot a child payment and the support required from the UK Government to enable this.

Gyda phob dymuniad da,



THE RT HON ANDY BURNHAM MP

The Rt Hon Rhun ap Iorwerth MS