



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

**Department for Levelling up, Housing and
Communities**

2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Cllr Jim Anderson
Chair
Association of Charter Trustees & Charter
Town Councils
Email: mrjimanderson162@gmail.com

Tel: 030 3444 0000
Fax: 020 7035 0018
Email: correspondence@levellingup.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dluhc

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Dear Cllr Anderson

Thank you for your email of 8 November to the Secretary of State and Minister of State for Minister for Levelling Up Communities attaching a submission sent on behalf of the Association of Charter Trustees & Charter Town Councils. This has been passed to me for reply as I work in the unit in the department which is responsible for local government reorganisation. Please accept my apologies for the delay in my reply.

Your submission urges the Government to ensure that the history and traditions of our cities and towns is preserved and secured for future generations to enjoy and appreciate, especially in the context of the forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper and any current priorities it sets out for devolution and local government reorganisation.

The Levelling Up White Paper will be published shortly, setting out plans for strengthening local leadership through devolution to give local politicians control of the levers they need to level up and deliver better outcomes and services for local residents. Devolution must be locally-led, not imposed by Government. We look forward to working constructively with areas interested in a devolution deal over the coming months.

Similarly, the Government will not impose top-down restructuring of local government; reorganisation will remain a locally-led avenue available where there is broad local support but will not be a requirement for devolution deal. The Government intends to follow an incremental approach, using existing legislation to work with areas which are seeking to establish reformed local governance structures..

I can assure you that the Government attaches great importance to the history and traditions of this country. Our history helps to define who we are and where we come from, and we are stronger as a nation when we cherish and champion our local traditions. Understanding the past and how we have developed helps us to face the future with confidence and as a shared experience.

In relation to Charter Trustees, officials work closely with local areas to ensure local identities are protected through local government reorganisations, including through creation of Charter Trustees where necessary. For example, the consequential legislation for the reorganisation of Dorset and council merger in Somerset established Charter Trustees for the unparished parts of the Boroughs of Bournemouth, Poole and Taunton, which were abolished on 1st April 2019, ensuring that any historic rights and privileges associated with local government areas which will be abolished could be maintained in the new unitary and merged areas and vest in the Charter Trustees for the relevant areas. The Government has no current proposals to amend the existing legislation.

Thank you again for sending Ministers the Association's submission, I hope this reply is helpful in addressing the issues it raised.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Scanlan