



Heritage Party – Formal Opposition to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill

Submitted for the public record

To:

Members of Parliament
House of Commons

CC:

House of Lords
Secretary of State for Levelling Up
Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
Local Government Associations

Date: 11.07.2025

Dear Members of Parliament,

The Heritage Party formally opposes the *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill*, introduced in July 2025. We submit this objection for inclusion in the public record and as a matter of urgent parliamentary scrutiny.

A Structural and Constitutional Concern

This Bill proposes to grant central government the power to restructure local government without requiring the consent of local authorities or the electorate. It removes existing democratic safeguards and enables reorganisation to proceed without full council approval or public consultation, bypassing local accountability entirely.

While the Bill is presented as a step toward empowering communities, its mechanisms would in practice centralise power, replacing local democratic institutions such as parish, town, and district councils with combined authorities, appointed boards, and regional mayors. These governance structures are analogous to the existing Greater London Authority model and closely resemble EU administrative models where public decision-making is delegated to unelected entities with limited transparency.

Historical Parallels: A System Repeating Itself

The system proposed by this Bill bears striking similarity to models imposed in former Eastern Bloc countries under communist regimes - where local governance was nominal, and real power resided in regional assemblies acting under central instruction.

Many members and supporters of the Heritage Party have direct experience of such regimes, including in Poland, where these structures led to decades of democratic suppression and economic hardship. The British people decisively rejected these governance principles in the 2016 referendum. Reintroducing them, under a different label but with the same structural consequences - is deeply concerning.

Legal Protections Being Undermined

Under the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007*, *Localism Act 2011*, and *Human Rights Act 1998*, reorganisation of local government must be:

- Initiated and approved by full councils, not solely by cabinets or executives.
- Subject to meaningful public consultation.
- Supported by legal advice, made available to those affected.

Through extensive FOI disclosures and direct correspondence with local authorities, we have gathered significant evidence of legally questionable practices, including:

- Election postponements executed without full council resolution.
- Reorganisation plans prepared prior to any consultation or vote.
- Legal advice withheld under “privilege”.
- Strategic implementation already underway before the public was informed.

These practices raise serious concerns of procedural impropriety and ultra vires decision-making. Rather than addressing these concerns, the Government has now introduced legislation that would retroactively authorise such conduct, while shielding future actions from legal challenge.

The Heritage Party’s Position

We consider this Bill:

- Incompatible with the UK’s constitutional tradition of consent-based governance.
- Contrary to established principles of administrative law and public accountability.
- Structurally aligned with centralised governance models historically associated with undemocratic regimes.

It is constitutionally indefensible for any government to legislate in order to authorise itself to override democratic consent and impose structural political changes by

decree. Introducing legislation that removes the public's right to be consulted on how they are governed cannot be described as reform. It is, in effect, an attempt to entrench unaccountable power in statute.

The Heritage Party therefore opposes this Bill in full. We urge Members of Parliament to reject the proposal in its current form, and to initiate thorough scrutiny of the reorganisation processes already taking place under questionable legal and constitutional circumstances.

If enacted, we will support all lawful avenues, including judicial review, available to residents and local authorities resisting imposed or unlawful changes to local government.

Respectfully submitted,
Madeleine Hunt

General Secretary Heritage Party
On behalf of the Heritage Party and the Heritage Party supporters