

Lord Hogan-Howe QPM
Chair of the Independent Review of Police Force Structures
200 Buckingham Palace Road
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Sent by email

29th July 2026

Dear Bernard

Independent Review of Police Force Structures

I am grateful to you and the team for your engagement since the launch of the review, including the opportunity to contribute to the call for evidence in May and your time when you met with James Vaughan and I recently. As your work progresses and ahead of the submission of your recommendations to the Home Secretary I wanted to share with you the results of my recent public survey on police force mergers and raise some specific points for your consideration.

In late May, I launched a public survey on police force mergers, to raise awareness of the review and to seek the public's views on the benefits and risks that might come from moving to fewer, larger forces. The survey closed on 12th July and a summary of the responses received are attached to this letter for your consideration and are being published on my website.

Over 1600 people responded to my survey, which is indicative not representative, with 72% of respondents stating that they did not wish to see Devon and Cornwall Police become part of a bigger force. This opposition was strongly felt, as when asked about potential merger options if we were forced to merge with other forces, over 54% insisted that they could not support a merger. The survey findings showed that respondents saw little or no benefit from a merger but considerable risks, in particular risks around a loss of focus on local policing, reduced local knowledge and policing being less responsive to local need in a larger force. This is of course against the backdrop of a much wider public engagement on police force mergers undertaken in 2018 when I was considering the option to merge with Dorset Police.



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Whilst the survey is only indicative of views it demonstrates the importance of engaging the public directly in this conversation going forward. The residents of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly contribute 43% of the local police force budget through their council tax and their views on their policing service should be heard. Failure to do so will further damage legitimacy and public confidence in policing.

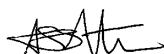
The concerns being raised by the public echo those I am hearing from local authority, business and public sector leaders from across the peninsula. These strategic stakeholders are expressing concern around the scale, complexity and cost of such changes and the risks to effective policing if chief officers and accountability structures become remote. They require strong relationships with a locally accountable Chief Constable and Policing and Crime Lead and they are concerned that this will not be viable or effective in an even larger geographic force.

I have written to the Home Secretary today to share the survey results with her to highlight the need to understand the challenges and costs of reform and the risks in not communicating the benefits. I have asked her to set out her plans for engaging the public in further discussion about the future shape of police forces. A copy of that letter is attached here.

I believe that there are still options to deliver the benefits the government is seeking through a programme of targeted reforms which include mandating regional collaboration for key functions and streamlining the section 22a process as well as limited smaller mergers to deal with specific resilience issues. This approach would be less disruptive for the public, partners and staff, be quicker to achieve and be much less risky.

I would be very happy to meet and discuss these issues and our survey results further. Please note that I have published this letter on my website, as part of my commitment to ensuring transparency to the public and partners on the implications of police reform.

Yours sincerely,



Alison Hernandez

Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

Copied to Chief Constable James Vaughan QPM, Devon and Cornwall Police



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