



# THE BAY

## OUTLINE PROPOSAL FOR A NEW MORECAMBE BAY UNITARY AUTHORITY

PREPARED BY **BARROW BOROUGH  
COUNCIL, LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL AND  
SOUTH LAKELAND DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Morecambe Bay is a unique area with shared opportunities and challenges. We are home to advanced manufacturing of strategic UK importance, and a hub for clean energy generation, with two universities and a world heritage site.

We have a strong, closely-linked community and excellent joint working across the three councils covering The Bay. 96% of the workforce live as well as work in the area. The Bay area is well served by the NHS, sharing a footprint with the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust and have established partnerships with Morecambe Bay CCG and the Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Trust. The Bay is in the same postal and broadcast area and the three councils work together through the Lancaster and South Cumbria Joint Committee.

This outline document has been prepared in response to the Secretary of State's invitation to submit proposals for future local government in Cumbria. We want to seize the opportunity to cement our cooperation and we are mindful of the risks to that cooperation which may be posed by unsuitable reorganisation. This document is an outline proposal only and a full business case is in development. We would welcome engagement with central government over the coming weeks as that proposal takes shape.





# A new council for Morecambe Bay

This is an outline proposal to create a single tier of local government for The Bay, prepared in response to the Secretary of State’s invitation. The new authority will comprise Barrow Borough Council, Lancaster City Council and South Lakeland District Council and consolidate responsibilities from Cumbria and Lancashire County Councils.

“Now in receipt of the Secretary of State’s invitation, we strongly believe that this proposal provides the best local government arrangements for The Bay, meets all of the relevant criteria, best serves local people, and is compatible with locally-driven proposals for the rest of Cumbria and Lancashire.”



**CLLR ANN THOMSON**  
Leader of the Council  
Barrow Borough Council



**CLLR DR ERICA LEWIS**  
Leader of the Council  
Lancaster City Council



**CLLR GILES ARCHIBALD**  
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**SAM PLUM**  
Chief Executive  
Barrow Borough Council



**KIERAN KEANE**  
Chief Executive  
Lancaster City Council



**LAWRENCE CONWAY**  
Chief Executive  
South Lakeland District Council

# Benefits of The Bay

Our proposal will deliver:



## Better outcomes for residents

A new unitary would be able to act more strategically in response to the new opportunities in the area. Compared to other unitary proposals. The Bay would deliver improved decision making, innovation and service delivery. It also offers alignment with NHS services, which already operate on this geography.



## Exceptional environmental outcomes

The Bay is linked by its unique geography, including a number of internationally significant natural assets. The Bay also shares a commitment to tackle environmental challenges, particularly coastal erosion, protecting biodiversity and preventing flooding, as well as addressing climate change.



## Improved democratic accountability

Unitary authorities are easier to understand for electors, with joined-up decision making and clearer accountability. This would also bring important services that are currently delivered from Carlisle or Preston into The Bay and make engagement with the community and voluntary sector (CVS), town and parish councils and delivery partners more effective. It would also form a viable building block for a combined authority and a compelling part of a future devolution deal.



## Jobs and economic growth

The Bay is a functional economic area hosting a range of ‘tier one’ employers as well as thriving SMEs. However, The Bay does not yet speak with a single voice. A new unitary will be in a stronger position to secure supply-chain investment by demonstrating the critical mass to support new business operations.



## Efficiency

A unitary Bay authority offers the efficiency savings targeted by central government, whilst retaining essential local engagement capacity, improving both democracy and local service provision. It means that local people are closely connected to the services that form part of their daily lives, and that these are delivered by, and within, our community.



## A solution that works for all of Cumbria and Lancashire

The boundaries imposed by the 1972 Act divided Barrow-in-Furness and parts of South Lakeland, historically both part of Lancashire, from Lancaster, although the area has retained its common identity. The Bay puts this right, sitting alongside a new unitary for the four northern and western districts of Cumbria and viable arrangements for the rest of Lancashire to the South.

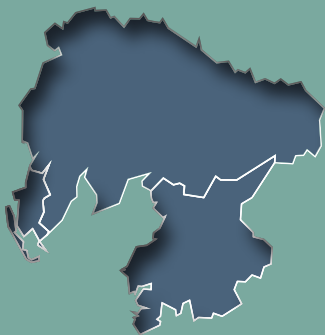
### MHCLG reform criteria

This proposal will:

- ✓ improve local government and service delivery, including giving greater value for money, generating savings, providing stronger strategic and local leadership, and more sustainable structures;
- ✓ command significant public support;
- ✓ serve a credible geography with an aggregate population in the target range.

## Initial options

### Option A



#### THE BAY

- ✓ Improves local government and service delivery:
  - builds on existing close links between the three authorities
  - shares priorities with a Functional Economic Area, a Travel to Work Area and key sector links for energy, education and tourism.
- ✓ Commands significant public support based on strong community and historic links that have survived the artificial disruption of the 1972 Act, which split our community. Early indications show significant public support based on strong community and historic links.
- ✓ Credible geography and appropriate population size as part of a two unitary solution for Cumbria with Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden forming a second unitary of optimum size in the north of the county.

### Option B



#### THE STATUS QUO

- ✗ County services can appear to be remote for our residents.
- ✗ Current arrangement do not best enable service transformation through partnership working aligned with the Functional Economic Area and health services footprint.
- ✗ Given government announcements, is unlikely to enable optimal devolution of powers and resources.

### Option C



#### COUNTY UNITARIES

- ✗ Would not improve local government and service delivery:
  - artificially divide The Bay community, concentrating power in remote and less flexible county halls;
  - move decision-making and service delivery further from local people;
  - would create a democratic deficit and destroy existing arrangements for local community engagement.
- ✗ Do not command significant public support and are opposed by local representatives.
- ✗ Unprecedented in population size and geographic extent.

# Our main assets



## Ports

- 1 Barrow Port
- 2 Heysham Port
- 3 Glasson Port



## Offshore energy assets



## Natural assets

- 4 Lake District UNESCO World Heritage site
- 5 North Walney National Nature Reserve
- 6 Morecambe Bay SSSI
- 7 Arnsdale and Silverdale AONB
- 8 Yorkshire Dales National Park
- 9 South Walney Nature Reserve
- 10 Nationally-recognised coastline



## Higher education

- 11 University of Cumbria
- 12 Lancaster University



## Health facilities

- 13 Furness General Hospital
- 14 Royal Lancaster Infirmary
- 15 Ulverston Community Health Centre
- 16 Queen Victoria Hospital
- 17 Westmorland General Hospital



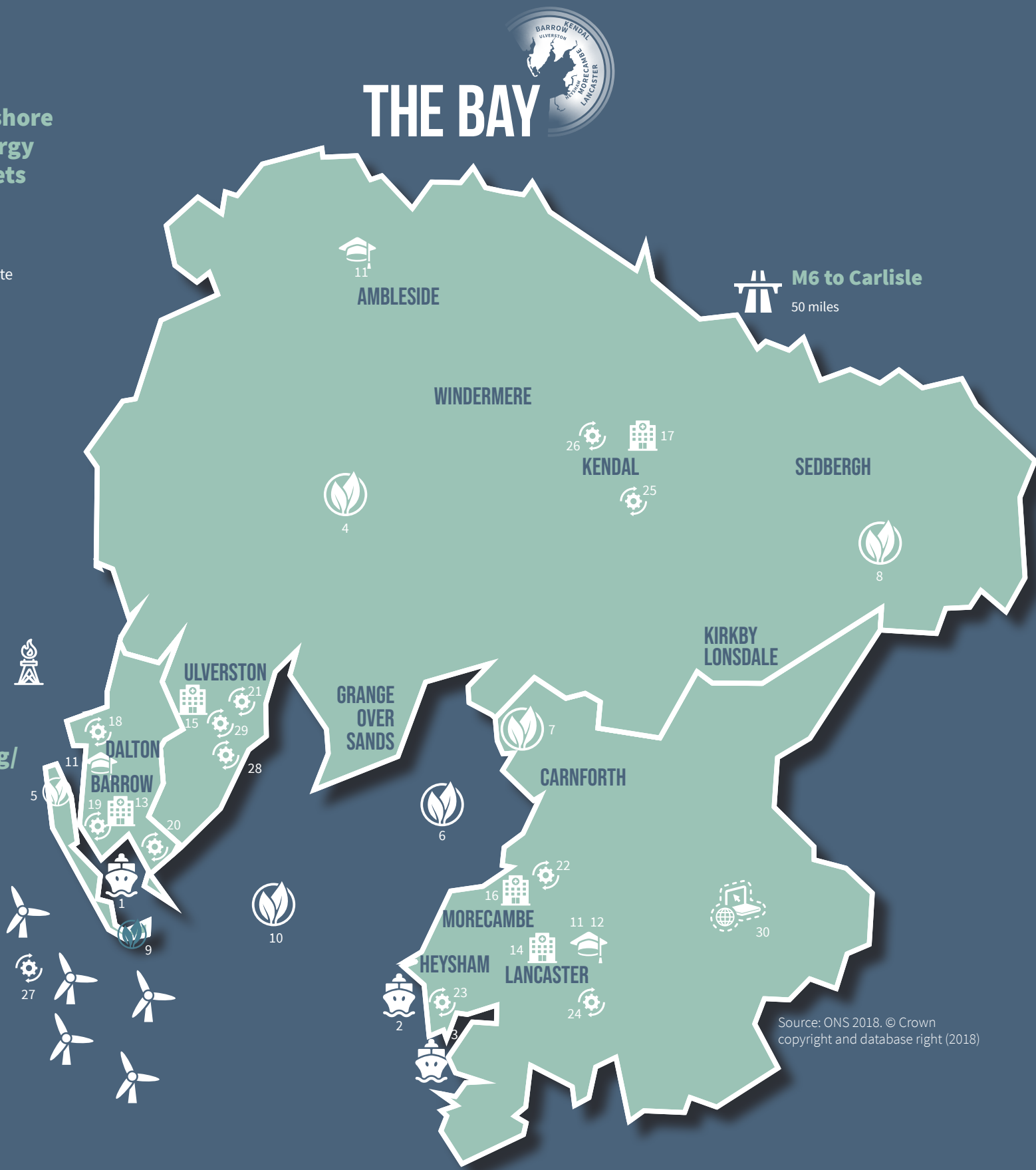
## Advanced manufacturing/ key employers

- 18 Kimberley Clark
- 19 BAE Systems
- 20 Spirit Energy
- 21 GSK
- 22 GVS Filters
- 23 EDF Energy
- 24 GAIST Solutions
- 25 Gilkes
- 26 James Cropper
- 27 Ørsted
- 28 Oxleys Developments
- 29 Forge Europa



## Broadband/digital

- 30 BARN Connectivity



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# The facts

320 000

total population

13 000

businesses

18 000

jobs in advanced manufacturing and engineering (including half of the country's ship and submarine manufacturing jobs)

4 300

jobs in agriculture in our thriving rural communities

30 million

annual visitors to Lancaster and South Cumbria, contributing £2 billion to the economy

Three

international gateway ports

25 000

jobs in tourism

Five

major windfarms, oil and gas operations and two nuclear power stations

Two

universities, both already cooperating across The Bay

# A real community



We are a functional economic geography

96% of the resident labour force work in the area



We are a fully integrated housing market area

75% of all home moves take place within The Bay area



We share a LA postcode

unlike the rest of Cumbria which has a CA postcode, and the rest of Lancashire which uses PR or BB



We are in the same broadcast area

The Bay is served by BBC North West and mostly ITV Granada, with a few areas served by ITV Border. Remainder of Cumbria is served by BBC North East and Cumbria and ITV Border



We are well connected

The Bay is served by direct public transport links and a good road network



We are focused on The Bay

76% of business and 90% of population live and work in The Bay area

# Working together



The three councils already cooperate through the **Lancaster and South Cumbria Joint Committee**

Our cultural assets are recognised by government through a new **Cultural Compact**

The **Morecambe Bay Partnership** deals with environmental and heritage issues

We work together to **promote tourism**

# The Bay healthcare provision

University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

Morecambe Bay Clinical Commissioning Group

Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust

The Bay area is well served by the NHS, sharing a footprint with the **University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust** and have established partnerships with **Morecambe Bay CCG** and the **Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Trust**. **Health Trusts** are working very closely with the three councils through the challenges of COVID-19.



# Our future priorities

As The Bay unitary authority, there is an opportunity to address these challenges together, aligning our priorities. Any unitary arrangement not based on The Bay will be a retrograde step in delivering local government.

Unitary council arrangements are a step forwards to strengthening local government in The Bay. It will prepare us for the next step - devolving resources and responsibilities to enable growth.



## Environment

- Climate emergency
- Transition to a green economy
- Conserving natural assets



## Skills

- Declining workforce
- Low attainment and aspiration
- Skills shortages



## Productivity

- Income inequality
- Retaining resources locally
- Sustaining future jobs



## Connectivity

- Poor digital connectivity
- Physical connectivity east to west
- Local transport systems



## Places and houses

- Housing affordability and suitability
- Housing viability
- Left behind towns



## Health and wellbeing

- Growing dependency and long term conditions
- Health inequalities
- Inactive lifestyles



## Recovery

Maintaining and improving quality of life through recovery



# The facts

17%

decline in working age population 20-39; with recruitment a critical challenge for the NHS locally

65%

of The Bay's businesses say skills and recruitment are their biggest concerns

## Imbalance

in age structures in rural coastal communities

60%

of UK naval shipbuilding design located in Barrow

>5km

distance to work making active travel less popular

4th

most at risk area for jobs lost due to the pandemic was South Lakeland according to the RSA (ONS furlough data)

# Creating opportunity

## Sustainable

Leading a clean and green economy that does more good, not just less harm

## Future talent

Preparing our people for the jobs and opportunities in tomorrow's industries

## Circular economy

Creating value from sustainable jobs and industries that support the local economy

## Connected

Fully integrated digital and physical systems enabling accessibility and connections within, across as well as beyond The Bay

## Building communities

Revitalising towns and places through a stronger Bay identity with an accessible and desirable quality of life

## Active communities

Taking activity further upstream allowing early intervention and prevention that maintain independence for longer

## Growing forward

Using recovery to address challenges through real reform not simply resuming what we do today

# Working together regionally and loud enough to be heard

- Working together to simplify local council arrangements
- Creating a critical mass enabling the needs of The Bay to substantiate change and further investment
- Retaining an outward perspective to support a coherent North West role in the regional powerhouse



# Unleashing our potential

## Renewables and green technology

Few places rival our array of clean energy assets, including the world's largest operational offshore windfarm and a key part of the nuclear supply, linked by a unique combination of private sector expertise and academic excellence.

One unified Bay council will help to attract jobs and investment to The Bay, contributing to meeting the UK's energy needs, in a clean, sustainable way.



## Arts and culture

Our Cultural Compact, across the three authorities of The Bay, has been recognised by central government and the Arts Council. We are home to the UK's largest tourist destination outside London, with a rich cultural heritage.

Eden of the North will be a major new tourist destination which will create jobs across the entire Bay, including reimagining the resort of Morecambe.



Across The Bay we work collaboratively, focused on our shared assets and opportunities. We are delivering for our residents across eight themes. A new unitary would give us the strategic scope and focus to deliver even more strongly.

## Agri-tech and innovation

We combine an important agricultural economy with specialised HE and FE institutions, including Lancaster University's international expertise in plant science, and an engineering and tech sector. We are uniquely well-placed to deliver against the government's ambition to put the UK at the forefront of the move to high-efficiency agriculture.

The three councils are already working together on a bespoke hub to ensure The Bay is recognised as a leading agri-tech location.



## Digital connectivity

Digital connectivity is vital to future economic development and to individuals' socio-economic opportunities. We face two challenges, with some of our rural communities experiencing connectivity challenges and a proportion of our residents still not using the internet.

We will focus our excellent local assets such as Broadband for the Rural North (B4RN) on creating a connected Bay with inclusive economic growth.



## Our ports

Our ports and their hinterlands, serving the offshore energy industry, and at the heart of the Irish Sea RoRo hub, are an important part of our national infrastructure. The port facilities and their industrial land have huge growth potential needing complementary strategic growth strategies.

A new unitary authority for The Bay will champion the ports and maximise their potential for local people and the whole country.



## Attracting and retaining talent

Whilst The Bay boasts many high-quality employment opportunities we know that employers can struggle to fill certain vacancies.

We will work with the education and training sector to make the most of The Bay's exceptional assets and connectivity to make us a lifestyle location of choice. We are proud to work closely with Lancaster University, a top ten UK institution, with strong international links, and also with the University of Cumbria, which has a growing reputation.



## Healthy communities

We have an ageing population and The Bay is impacted by health inequalities, with our poorest communities hit hardest by COVID-19. The Morecambe Bay NHS Trust already works closely with the three councils to achieve better health and care outcomes.

Our proposals will align local government, including social care, with the NHS and improve health outcomes for everyone in The Bay and focus on our distinct social care priorities.



## Resilient and vibrant towns

Our network of towns, and the City of Lancaster, are the fundamental building blocks of a strong local economy.

We are committed to a strategic approach to improving our town centres, increasing housing supply and improving local transport schemes.

The Bay needs strategic housing and planning powers to serve our exceptionally well-integrated economy and deliver high quality affordable and sustainable homes for everyone in our area.





# The Bay is the solution that best meets the invitation's criteria for local government reform

## Improve local government and service delivery



This proposal will catalyse a huge improvement in service delivery. The districts deliver strongly for residents and are in a position to capitalise on the opportunity to operate more efficiently and strategically. In contrast, the services currently delivered at a county level are remote and less flexible, so are unable to meet the needs of our large and diverse area.

### Greater value for money

- The workforce will be centred on a coherent area, avoiding the costs and inefficiencies associated with a remote administrative centre.

### Generate savings

- Efficiency savings will place council finances on a more secure long-term footing whilst retaining necessary capacity.
- The new council would be financially viable, with a stable balance sheet and a better than unitary average level of usable reserves.
- Council tax harmonisation would be straightforward with a minimal difference in current rates.

### Provide stronger strategic and local leadership

- The role of the districts in the response to COVID-19 proves the importance of structures reflecting genuinely coherent communities with decisions taken close to those affected.
- Public sector bodies, including the NHS, already operate across The Bay, aligning local authority boundaries will provide for stronger collaboration and public accountability.
- The Bay shares a broadcast area, enhancing public understanding and awareness of local issues.

### More sustainable structures

- The Lancaster and South Cumbria Joint Committee, which is already established, provides a sustainable framework for delivering efficient and effective reorganisation.
- The Bay would be a credible building block for a future devolution deal and we would be open to exploring options such as the creation of Combined Authorities, with an Elected Mayor, to play a strategic role at the right spatial level.
- The Bay will work with key stakeholders to formulate clear, cohesive modelling for: adult social care, children's services, fire and police services.

## Commanding local support



- The three authorities are grounded in the communities we serve and we are confident that these proposals will command public support.
- We have launched a formal consultation on these outline proposals as well as commissioning independent public opinion research.
- The results of this activity will be reported in our final business case.

## Credible geography and appropriate population size



- The Bay is a credible geography, with shared features, environmental factors and efficient internal communication.
- Within the optimum range for a new authority with an aggregate population of 320 000, The Bay would be the 15<sup>th</sup> largest unitary by population, in the top quartile in England.
- In contrast, a Cumbria unitary authority would be unprecedented in size, with poor internal connections and no natural focus.
- The Bay presents a unique opportunity for local people, local councils and local services to come together as one Bay community.

Alongside this outline proposal for why a Bay Authority is the right solution, we have developed an action plan for the work we are doing over the next month to create a final proposal. We invite you to comment and engage in our development of a proposal that fully meets all your needs.

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