

Western Morning News

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'Mayor for the West' devolution warning

Former top doctor is struck off

The former top doctor in Cornwall's main hospital has been struck off.

Dr Robert Fitcher failed to stop a disgraced gynaecologist dubbed "The Butcher", the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service said. He showed "blatant disregard" for patient safety in allowing the gynaecologist - who was part of a team which delivered David Cameron's daughter - to continue to operate.

Full story **PAGE 2**

Arsonist is given 14 life sentences

A serial arsonist has been given 14 life sentences after she was convicted of murdering a pensioner in a care home fire.

Karen Pedley, a care assistant, had developed a fascination with fire after a childhood incident, which caused a "warped sense of heroism".
Trawstow Crown Court heard.
She must serve a minimum of 27 years for murder.

Full story **PAGE 7**

Region told to 'get a plan'

BY HANNAH FINCH

The Westcountry will need to have a regional elected mayor if the Government is going to hand over powers for investment, transport and infrastructure, Sajid Javid, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, said.

Speaking in Plymouth, Mr Javid said a credible figurehead would have to be in place for devolution to go ahead.

Earlier he told the South West Growth Summit that the only way to take back powers was to have a coherent strategy with a mayor at the centre. Devon and Somerset council chiefs and business leaders want a "devolution revolution" but say an elected mayor is a sticking point.

Full story **PAGE 5**



Keels the 'Aqua Dog' in action. The water-loving Springer Spaniel will even swim underwater to fetch a stone

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Mayor for devolution

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Sajid Javid, the Communities Secretary, at the South West Growth Summit in Reed Hall, at the University of Exeter. The event was hosted by Pennon and the Western Morning News

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Devolution proposals 'need elected mayor'

BY HANNAH FINCH
@GardenerFinch

Ambitious devolution plans for Devon and Somerset need an elected mayor, the region's economic leaders have been warned.

Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government said there had to be a credible figurehead for economic growth for the Government to be prepared to hand over powers for investment, transport and infrastructure.

He made the stark statement at yesterday's South West Growth Summit, a major meeting of business leaders, politicians and academics from across all sectors in the South West.

The assertion comes as all 17 Devon and Somerset councils reach a critical stage in their bid for devolved powers - and the sticking point is the need for an elected mayor.

Mr Javid said that only an elected mayor could bring the kind of ambitions devolution that the region is calling for.

To a packed Reed Hall at the University of Exeter, the minister, who is an alumni, said: "If you want an ambitious devolution deal then you have got to have a mayor."

He argued that Cornwall's Devolution Deal without an

elected mayor was not ambitious and did not involve any hand over of money. "What's the point of going down that route?" he said.

Mr Javid called for the region to have one voice on its plans for economic prosperity. In a region that is challenged by disparate communities and historical rivalries.

He said: "If you are going to make a success of the south west that whole attitude has to change.

"A region of collaboration

'It is essential that we have a clear unified voice'

Chris Loughlin

and co-operation can make a difference. It has to happen," he said. The beauty of the region means as strong reliance on tourism, but it is a double edged sword, he warned.

"It perpetuates the idea that this is a low skill and part time economy. It is not just a sunny playground for the rest of the country nor a retirement community for Britain's pensioners." He said the three million population of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset were leading the way in


aerospace and creative industries and it is a question of taking that message to the rest of the country and the world.

The South West Growth Summit was hosted by the Pennon Group in conjunction with the *Western Morning News* and the region's Local Enterprise Partnerships. The debate will go on to help form a Growth Charter for the South West, a document that will be presented to the Government ahead of next month's Autumn Statement. The region's MPs joined business leaders to discuss a number of key issues facing the region, including keeping the brightest talent and attracting investment.

Connectivity in terms of mobile and broadband coverage and investment in the road, rail and air routes continue to be high on the agenda.

Chris Loughlin, chairman of the Pennon Group, called for the region to embrace the digital revolution, the kind of business that makes a virtue of working in remote communities. He said that the region must decide what the South West is and formulate a concept to rival the Northern Powerhouse to capture the collective consciousness. "It is essential that we have a clear unified voice to stand up strong for the South West," he said.

COMMENT PAGE 10



South West Summit in Reed Hall, at the University of Exeter. The event was hosted by Pennon and the Western Morning News

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THE VOICE OF THE WESTCOUNTRY

Elected mayors or not, we need one powerful voice

Directly-elected mayors are officially back at the top of the devolution agenda in the South West.

Sajid Javid, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, used his speech in Exeter yesterday to make clear that the link remains between elected power moving to regional and local level, and a top elected person picking up the reins.

There had been media reports that what was seen as a key policy of the George Osborne and David Cameron partnership, as Chancellor and Prime Minister, was undergoing a re-think with new occupants at Numbers 10 and 11 Downing Street.

Clearly not.

The talk of one mayor for the whole region puts the Government at odds with many voters and councils in the South West, and is hard to grasp.

In May this year the electors of Torbay voted to scrap the single powerful position. Back in 2002 Plymouth voters chose a cabinet system for their city. Cornwall Council has said it does not want a mayor chosen directly by the people.

So that puts the Government and many in the South West on opposite sides.

However, what everybody in the region must agree with is Mr Javid's call for the South West to have one voice on its plans for eco-

nomie prosperity. He told the South West Growth Summit - hosted by the Pennon Group, with the *Western Morning News* and the region's Local Enterprise Partnerships - that we need to put disparities and rivalries aside.

It is easy to talk about what divides us: there are concentrations of population and employment in the three cities in the south of the peninsula, and the scattered communities of the three big moors.

There are areas of affluence and pockets of poverty.

Mr Javid is right to single out the fact that tourism is one industry that is important right across the four counties, but to be applauded, too, for cautioning about over-emphasis and over-reliance on the visitor economy that "perpetuates the idea that this is a low-skill and part-time economy".

Yes, there are great differences across the region and the population is unevenly distributed, but together, Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset has three million people which, if we can think and act as one, makes us the biggest "city" other than London.

Thinking that way, "we" lead the way in aerospace and creative industries.

We certainly have the offer; what we need is the united voice.