



PROJECT ROME

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Editorial

The devolution deadlock in South Yorkshire may be over, after Mayor Dan Jarvis announced that he and the region's four local authority leaders had finally reached agreement on the way forward and have written to the Secretary of State asking for powers and resources to be unlocked.

After years of impasse and, at times, bitter exchanges between the four Labour leaders, Dan Jarvis has come good on his election pledge to get them around the table to hammer out a deal. Under the terms of the proposals, the Sheffield City Region devolution deal would run until the end of Jarvis's current mayoral term in 2022. Crucially, the letter to the Secretary of State confirms that after that date, "those councils that do not see their future in a South Yorkshire arrangement must be free to join an alternative devolution group."

If the government agree to these terms, this would give the green light for the start of negotiations on a wider One Yorkshire devolution deal. The government has consistently ruled out talks about One Yorkshire whilst the South Yorkshire deal remained unsigned.

This is welcome news for One Yorkshire campaigners and the 'coalition of the willing' – the 18 local authorities supporting a One Yorkshire deal – after the government last month rejected their detailed devolution proposals out of hand.

Secretary of State James Brokenshire recently met with Yorkshire local authority leaders in the historic Ripley Castle; a meeting brokered by the government's Chief Whip and Yorkshire MP, Julian Smith, after he came under pressure from Conservative local authority leaders in Yorkshire, furious at Brokenshire's initial refusal to attend the meeting.

What was agreed at the meeting however has become a source of debate. At the insistence of both sides no officials were admitted to the meeting. West Yorkshire Combined Authority staff pleaded with

leaders to allow at least one official in to the meeting to take notes. Their pleas fell on deaf ears. The result was several different accounts of what was agreed. One insider told Northern Agenda, "Ask Susan [Hinchcliffe] what was agreed, and she tells you one thing; ask Judith [Blake] and you get a different story, ad infinitum. And none of their versions tally with what government officials say was agreed."

However, Northern Agenda has learned that the One Yorkshire campaign will now focus on implementing interim devolution deals for West, North and East Yorkshire until 2022, on the condition that they would not be required to elect Mayors. Stage two of the campaign would be for a One Yorkshire deal with an elected Mayor in 2022.

However, a One Yorkshire insider told Northern Agenda that these issues could be made redundant by current events in Westminster. "It looks like we're heading for a general election one way or another. We may have a new government in a few months' time, and almost certainly a new Prime Minister. Then everything could be back on the table for Yorkshire. Or not."



James Brokenshire



Julian Smith





It's a tragic loss for Yorkshire. He would have been a very strong independent candidate and I'm not sure either of the major political parties had anyone who could have beaten him.



If Yorkshire does finally succeed in electing a Mayor, that person won't be Sir Gary Verity. The former Chief Executive of tourism agency Welcome to Yorkshire was forced to resign from his high-profile role following an internal inquiry into his alleged bullying of staff and issues relating to his expenses. Verity was seen by many as the ideal candidate for Mayor; business friendly, charismatic, and with an international reputation following his work in bringing the Grand Depart of the Tour de France to Yorkshire in 2014. His sudden and spectacular fall from grace will be a blow to Yorkshire Conservatives, who were hoping to persuade him to be their candidate in any future mayoral contest. However, he was also known to be considering a third-party, independent bid for the role. A friend of Verity's told Northern Agenda, "It's a tragic loss for Yorkshire. He would have been a very strong independent candidate and I'm not sure either of the major political parties had anyone who could have beaten him."

Meanwhile, the anxious eyes of Labour moderates in Yorkshire and the North West turned to the North East following the selection of Labour's candidate for

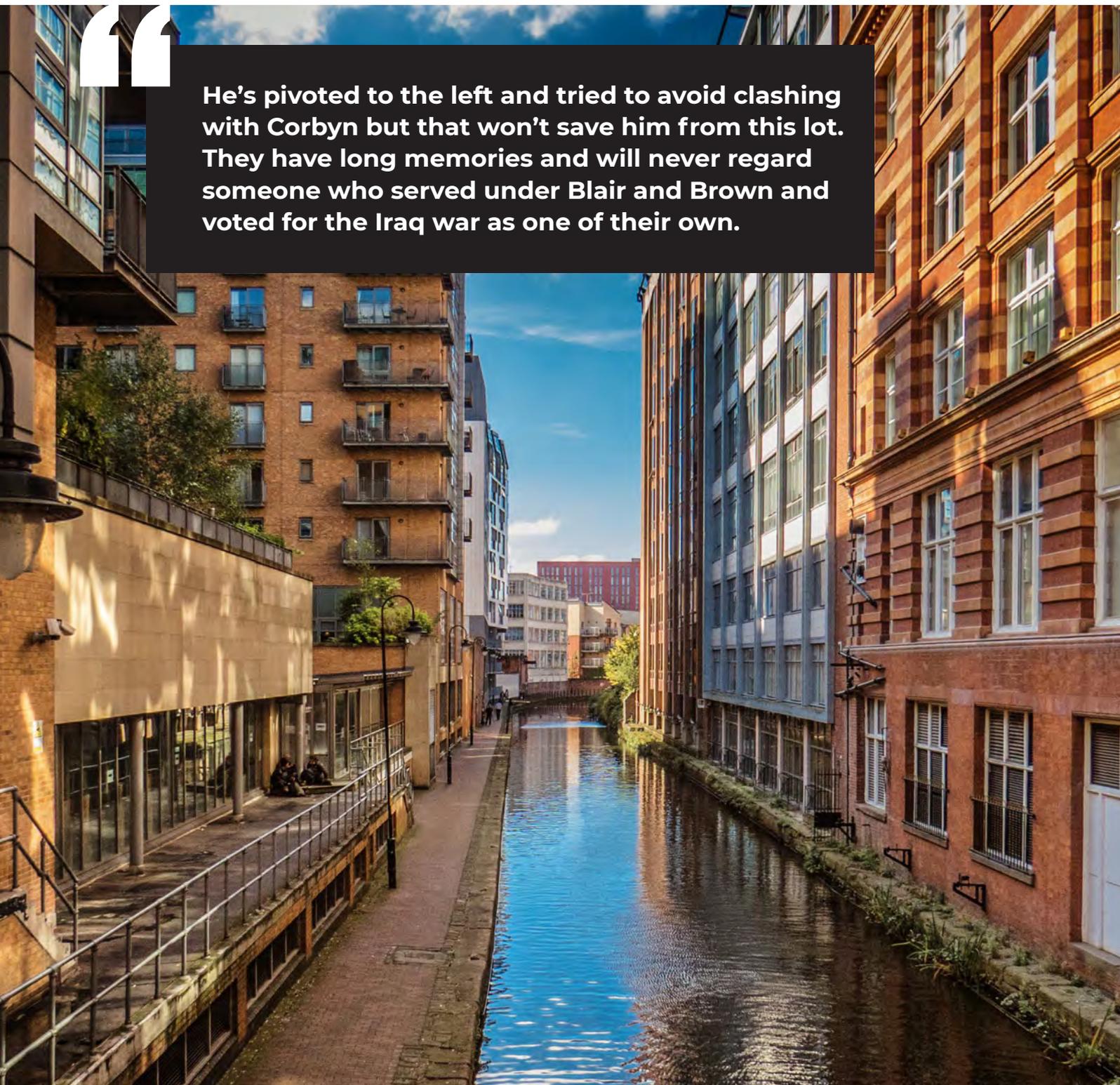
the inaugural North of the Tyne Mayoral election. Nick Forbes, the long-term leader of Newcastle council and the national leader of Labour councillors on the Local Government Association, was expected to comfortably win the nomination. However, he was easily beaten in a vote of North East party members by his rival, Jamie Driscoll, who has less than a year's experience as a councillor in Newcastle. A prominent Jeremy Corbyn supporter in the region, Driscoll was backed by Momentum and personally endorsed by Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell.

The internal election result demonstrated the extent to which supporters of Jeremy Corbyn have taken control over every level of the party. It sent shock waves through the party in Yorkshire and the North West and raised questions about future Mayoral elections in the region. One Labour veteran told Northern Agenda, "We're spending a lot of time campaigning for a One Yorkshire Mayor with little thought about who the Labour candidate is likely to be in a future Mayoral election. Given the way the party is going, and the result in the North East, it's not going to be a media friendly, business friendly Labour moderate. It's going to be a full-on

Corbynista and that could open the door to a Tory Mayor of Yorkshire; if they're sensible in their choice of candidate."

The North East result may also have caused sleepless nights for Andy Burnham. The Greater Manchester Mayor appears to remain popular with party members and has been reluctant to criticise the national Labour party leadership. However, the far-left have been making ground in local constituency

parties in Manchester and may fancy their chances of challenging Burnham in a reselection contest scheduled for later this year. Our Labour insider had few words of comfort for the Greater Manchester Mayor. "He's pivoted to the left and tried to avoid clashing with Corbyn but that won't save him from this lot. They have long memories and will never regard someone who served under Blair and Brown and voted for the Iraq war as one of their own."



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