



Stephen Williams MP

Member of Parliament for Bristol West

The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1 2AA

Date: 14 December 2007

Please reply to: Westminster Office

Dear Prime Minister

South West Regional Development Agency

Like many of my constituents, I was shocked and disappointed to learn yesterday that plans to build a 10,000 seat arena in Bristol have been abandoned by the South West Regional Development Agency. This decision has huge implications for Bristol's economy and cultural development. Yet it has been made by an unelected quango that did not even have the courtesy to inform me of their decision until three hours after they had briefed the press, who by this stage had already asked me for comment. I am sure you will agree that this a disgraceful way for the RDA to behave. They quite obviously hold Members of Parliament in their area in complete contempt.

When you became Prime Minister in July I fully agreed with your decision to replace unelected Regional Assemblies with Regional Select Committees of the House of Commons. It is quite possible that I would have served on the South West Regional Select Committee. It is regrettable that you appear to have put this proposal on ice. A decision such as that made by the South West RDA would be an obvious candidate for detailed scrutiny by Parliamentarians. Please would you let me know when you intend to make RDAs and other regional quangos accountable to democratically elected politicians.

This decision is a real blow to the City of Bristol. However, as things currently stand, there is no clear democratic route either for me, or for elected councillors, to scrutinise this decision let alone reverse it. The people of Bristol in the last ten years have not been granted a showpiece concert hall, have not been given a tram scheme, and now have been disappointed once again. An arena would have attracted major international performers as well as prestigious conferences to Bristol.

I await your urgent response.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Williams MP

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