**Southampton City Council Leader has hit back at claims from HCC Leader that area is 'underperforming'**

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THE leader of [Southampton](http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/search/?search=Southampton&topic_id=7090) City Council has hit back at claims Hampshire is being let down by underperformance in the south of the county in the latest devolution row.

The city is one of eight councils working to bring new powers and £900million of funding to the Solent area. But these plans have been condemned by [Hampshire County Council](http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/search/?search=Hampshire+County+Council&topic_id=6987) leader, Cllr Roy Perry, who said the responsibilities shouldn’t be given to an “underperforming area”. The accusation comes after the latest economic figures revealed the strength of the area following Hampshire devolution plans.

City council leader Cllr Simon Letts said: “At almost £95million, Southampton generates more [business](http://dailyecho.co.uk/business) rates income than any other local authority in Hampshire. The cities in the south of the county create the jobs that people living in the wealthier rural and urban areas of Hampshire commute to every day.

“But we are the poorest part of Hampshire - which is why government wants to invest in the area to raise living standards and provide even more opportunities. It is a shame that for his own selfish reasons Roy Perry is seeking to stop this. The Government has recognised the Solent region as a viable economic area and seen the potential it has to grow even more. It would be nice if the county could support us in getting the best outcomes for residents and businesses rather than looking out for its own interests.”

Portsmouth City Council Leader Cllr Donna Jones has backed Cllr Letts following the claims. She added: “It is ridiculous for Roy Perry to claim the south of Hampshire is underperforming. We have an opportunity to make a real difference for our area and Roy is blatantly trying to prevent that happening because he wants to safeguard his own position as leader of the county.”

Joining Portsmouth and Southampton in the united authority plans are East Hampshire, [Eastleigh](http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/district/eastleigh/), [Fareham](http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/district/fareham/), [Gosport](http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/search/?search=Gosport&topic_id=1066), Havant and the Isle of Wight councils, who are working to bring greater power to the area, along with the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership.

It is believed the government would give a Solent Combined Authority control of roughly £30million of additional funding per year to improve the infrastructure in South Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

This will allow decisions to be made locally rather than in Westminster and the combined authority would also keep all business rates generated in the area, meaning it would have better control of its financial future.