



Councillor Linda Taylor  
New County Hall  
Truro  
Cornwall TR1 3AY

10 July 2024

**Re: Introducing Britain's Leading Edge**

Dear Secretaries of State,

Many congratulations on your appointments and on your party's election victory. As I mentioned to Sir Keir in my letter of 12 June, I represent Britain's Leading Edge, a network of 12 predominantly rural upper tier local authorities led by Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat administrations. Although located on the geographical periphery, we are united in viewing Britain's Leading Edge as central to the plans of the new Government. Britain's Leading Edge contains a wealth of opportunities to benefit our communities and the country as a whole – if we can work in partnership with Government.

I was delighted to hear Sir Keir say, in his first speech to the nation as Prime Minister, that those with skin in the game know what's best for their communities, and that necessitates being bold about pushing power and resource out of Whitehall. This is the essential message of Britain's Leading Edge: we work closely with our communities every day; we know what they need and what they can offer; and we have a track record of delivery when the appropriate powers and funding are made available to us. Following the Prime Minister's meeting with Metro mayors, sitting down with the leaders of Britain's Leading Edge would provide a powerful example of the Government's commitment to work with elected leaders regardless of the colour of their rosettes.

We would welcome the opportunity to talk about our aspirations to power the UK, feed the UK and be the lungs of the UK, as we have much in common with the ambitions set out in the Labour Party's manifesto. Indeed, Britain's Leading Edge would be an ideal test bed for many of the Government's new policies.

**We can power the UK:** Britain's Leading Edge is central to Labour's long-held ambition to decarbonise the UK power system by 2030 and to double onshore wind, triple solar power, and quadruple offshore wind by 2030: we have the natural capital to make the promise of clean power by 2030 a reality. Many local authorities in our group are already exploring exciting new ways to generate clean energy, such as the deep geothermal wells in Cornwall and the Celtic Sea Power floating offshore wind project – and we can do so much more by working in partnership with Government. The Labour Party's Green Prosperity Plan to invest in future industries, creating new, skilled jobs chimes exactly with our own manifesto call for significant long-term investments in green energy – and the environmental technology skills the industry requires. We see a bright future where such investment in Britain's Leading Edge regions will be wealth-creating, helping with our low-wage economy.

**We can feed the UK:** in our 2023 manifesto, we highlighted that domestic food production was increasingly important in a more geo-politically unstable world, sharing the observation in the

Labour Party's manifesto that "Food security is national security". With nearly 28% of England's agriculture, forestry and fishing businesses in Britain's Leading Edge, we can make an important contribution. Britain's Leading Edge have an extraordinary combination of distinctive growth sectors that can drive decarbonisation, create jobs and improve living standards. But our core sectors of agriculture and agri-tech sit at the heart of our economies. Local authorities in Britain's Leading Edge have good working relationships with farmers, and stand ready to help implement Labour's manifesto commitments of introducing a land-use framework and improving environment land management schemes.

**We can be the lungs of the UK:** I was struck by the Labour Party's manifesto commitments to improve access to nature, promote biodiversity, and protect landscapes and wildlife, as these aims are so similar to the goals of Britain's Leading Edge. We are the custodians of nearly 65% of England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which play such a significant role in naturally sequestering and removing carbon from the air. Members of Britain's Leading Edge, such as Cornwall Council, have declared a Climate Emergency and an Ecological Emergency, and are at the forefront of delivering for nature, working with Local Nature Partnerships to safeguard our natural heritage the next generation.

We would ask for a meeting with officials to explore how we can work with the Government to ensure that we can decarbonise the UK and grow both food and nature – delivering on our Environment Act targets while also improving the UK's food security by growing local food that is produced to higher environmental standards. We offer the perfect testbed to find that balance as pledges turn into policy – and we start centralising the periphery under a Labour administration.

We have recently released a [video](#) setting out our ambitions for peripheral places. Our website, where we explain in more detail how we are reframing the story for Britain's rural regions, can be found here: [www.britainsleadingedge.org](http://www.britainsleadingedge.org)

I look forward to hearing from you both, and hope to welcome you back to Cornwall in your Cabinet roles.

With best wishes, on behalf of Britain's Leading Edge.

Councillor Linda Taylor  
Leader of Cornwall Council and chair of Britain's Leading Edge