



Nesil Caliskan MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Minister for Devolution, Local Growth and Communities

By email

Linden Kemkaran
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21 July 2026

Dear Minister,

Re: KCC expression of interest in establishing a Foundation Strategic Authority for Kent and Medway

On 11 March 2026, I wrote to your immediate predecessor, Miatta Fahnbulleh MP, following the invitation issued by her and Matthew Pennycook MP on 12 February 2026 for expressions of interest in establishing Foundation Strategic Authorities in areas outside the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP).

At that point, Kent County Council decided that it would not be right to support an expression of interest while the Government was still considering proposals for local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway.

That decision was necessary and right at the time. It was a direct response to the uncertainty created by the Government's changing position on the relationship between LGR and FSAs outside the DPP. Councils were asked to produce major reorganisation proposals without a clear or settled timetable for when devolution would be offered.

KCC had to protect the integrity of its own proposal while Ministers decided what LGR structure they wanted. Our position did not prevent any other council from acting. The other 13 councils in Kent and Medway submitted an expression of interest on 20 March 2026.

Throughout this process, KCC has remained clear that Kent and Medway should secure the greatest possible devolution of powers, responsibilities and funding. KCC has always supported strong strategic leadership across the whole of Kent and Medway.

Our Option 1A proposal made that clear. It set out a single unitary authority for Kent and Medway because there was no accepted approach for delivering devolution, either as an FSA, mayoral strategic authority or any other body able to provide one clear voice or oversee the strategic functions that need to be managed across the whole area.

Kent and Medway need strong countywide leadership, joined-up decision-making and a single, credible voice to Government. That was the purpose of Option 1A, and it is also the case for an FSA.

I have now considered the Secretary of State's decision on local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway, announced in the House of Commons on 16 July. I remain disappointed by that decision. However, it now gives us a clearer basis on which to move forward.

KCC will pursue any concerns about the LGR decision through the appropriate channels. Those concerns should not hold up now making fast progress on delivering devolution.

Work on an FSA should now begin without delay. Kent and Medway need the maximum powers and funding available from Government. After LGR, the area will also need a strong strategic body that can represent residents and businesses, coordinate activity across council boundaries and speak to Government with authority.

An FSA is the necessary first step. It should be developed alongside LGR, not be considered an afterthought. Delivering both an FSA and LGR together would allow the new system to be designed properly from the start. It would also avoid the disruption of breaking up strategic services and functions between new unitary councils, only to bring them back together again later.

KCC is therefore ready to support the establishment of an FSA for Kent and Medway. Please treat this letter as formal confirmation that KCC endorses the expression of interest submitted by the other 13 councils on 20 March 2026 and joins them in seeking early, serious and substantive engagement with the Government.

I hope the Government can respond positively and move quickly to support the establishment of an FSA for the whole of Kent and Medway and give the county the powers, resources and strategic voice it needs.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linden Kemkaran". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Linden Kemkaran
Leader of Kent County Council

Cc:

The Rt. Hon. Angela Rayner MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

Matthew Pennycook MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning