

Meeting: People and Places Board

Date: 8 November 2022



Britain's Leading Edge

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper provides background for members about Britain's Leading Edge and a short update on their upcoming work programme.

Is this report confidential? Yes ☐ No ☒

Recommendation/s

Members are asked to note the background and work programme of Britain's Leading Edge. Members are asked to consider opportunities for potential collaboration with the Board.

Action/s

Following a steer from members officers will follow up any opportunities for future collaboration with Britain's Leading Edge.

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Chairman: Councillor James Jamieson OBE **Chief Executive:** Mark Lloyd CBE **President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

Background

1. Britain's Leading Edge is a collaboration of 12 upper tier local authorities on England's periphery without major cities, representing eight per cent of England's GVA (equivalent to English core cities) and 37 per cent of England's renewable energy.
2. Average per capita GVA in peripheral regions without major cities is growing more slowly than England's average, and average median earnings are around £2,600 less than the English average.
3. Britain's Leading Edge was launched in July 2019 amid the UK's exit from the European Union, to provide a platform for its members to contribute to a balanced debate about the future of the UK economy.
4. Over the past three years the group has:
 - 4.1. Co-sponsored, together with the University of Exeter, a PhD student researching sustainable regional development in peripheral regions. The report 'Levelling Up the Periphery: Investing in Our Natural Assets for Prosperity and Growth' will be published this autumn.
 - 4.2. Organised an academic conference on regional development in the UK, which aims to grow into an academic network, looking at the unique advantages and disadvantages of peripheral regions.
 - 4.3. Worked with the Treasury to reduce rural disadvantage in the Green Book. The group continues to be represented through Cornwall Council on the Green Book working group.
 - 4.4. Provided oral and written evidence to multiple parliamentary select committees.
 - 4.5. Organised a roundtable discussion with Britain's Leading Edge political leaders in the margins of the LGA Conference in Harrogate.

Current work programme

5. The group is currently in the middle of a major data collection exercise, examining how Britain's Leading Edge differs from more central parts of the United Kingdom.
6. In addition to this they are developing a new version of their manifesto, fit for the next three years and beyond.

7. Britain's Leading Edge is looking to create a strong network of cross-party MPs who advocate on behalf of peripheral regions without major cities, supported by research and the findings from the '[Levelling up the leading edge](#)' report in collaboration with the University of Exeter, and continue to highlight the place-specific opportunities Britain's Leading Edge areas have to offer to the UK's carbon zero economy.

Opportunities for collaboration

8. Having heard from the National Farmers Union in 2021/22, the Board will continue to explore the need for rural proofing and recognition of rural needs in policy. There is an opportunity for the People and Places Board to hear from other organisations working in a similar space.
9. Cllr Linda Taylor Leader of Cornwall Council, a key member of Britain's Leading Edge, will address the Board to discuss Britain's Leading Edge's priorities and work programme as well as opportunities for collaboration.
10. Members might wish to discuss specific findings from Britain's Leading Edge 'Levelling up the leading edge' report and implications for rural communities as well as how the organisations can better work together to lobby government on rural issues and advocate for investment into rural communities to ensure sustainable growth.

Implications for Wales

11. Many policy areas are devolved, however where the topic allows, we will work with the Welsh Local Government Association and other bodies to ensure issues relating to Welsh councils are properly represented and we are aligning our lobbying work where appropriate.

Financial Implications

12. Any financial implications arising from this work will be met from the Boards' agreed programme budgets and the LGA's improvement grant.

Next steps

13. Following a steer from members, officers will follow up any opportunities for collaboration with Britain's Leading Edge.