



Marches Forward Partnership Partneriaeth y Gororau Ymlaen



His Majesty The King
Buckingham Palace
London
SW1A 1AA

Guildhall,
Frankwell Quay,
Shrewsbury,
SY3 8HQ

11th May 2026

Sir,

We write on behalf of the Marches Forward Partnership, a forward-thinking collaboration working uniquely cross border between England and Wales to strengthen the rural economy and with a focus on environmental resilience. The Partnership brings together Shropshire Council, Powys County Council, Herefordshire Council and Monmouthshire County Council, alongside businesses, investors and national infrastructure providers.

We were struck by your words in your recent address to the United States Congress, particularly your reflection that the collapse of critical natural systems threatens not only the harmony and essential diversity of nature but also the foundations of prosperity and national security, and that humanity ignores nature's own economy at its peril.

It is in this context that we wish to share the thinking behind the Marches Forward Partnership's proposition to position our cross-border region as the Capital of Rural Britain and to create room for the rural environment in the boardroom.

Our borderland is not only a place of landscape and heritage; it is a concentration of what might best be described as rural capital. Land, water, food systems, energy assets and strategic infrastructure collectively underpin national food security, water resilience and the reliable functioning of critical services. These natural and built systems are not peripheral to the economy; together they form its operating foundation.

The concept of the Capital of Rural Britain is therefore not a slogan, but a practical response to the challenge you describe. It is about treating nature and engineered systems together as infrastructure, recognising that long-term resilience comes from their integration.

Nature-based solutions reduce risk and attract private investment; engineered assets provide certainty, multifunctionality and enduring public benefit. Both require active stewardship, clear governance and long-term investment.

Across the region, flooding disrupts supply chains, water stress constrains growth, and ecological decline increases long-term risk. Equally, restoring and managing these systems creates resilience, stability and new economic opportunity.



This framing enables businesses to better understand and address the biodiversity- and water-related risks they increasingly face, while supporting growth that is resilient rather than extractive.

Through initiatives such as the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme (<https://severnvalleywatermanagementscheme.commonplace.is/en-GB/>), and wider work to align public, private and community effort, we are testing how nature-based and engineered solutions can be embedded into decision-making, investment and long-term planning at scale. Central to this is a place-based approach, led locally, that recognises the need for new institutional arrangements capable of managing natural and built assets holistically and accountably over the long term.

Our ambition is to demonstrate approaches that protect natural systems while strengthening prosperity, and that can be replicated across rural Britain and beyond. In this way, the Capital of Rural Britain seeks to give practical expression to the principle that nature's economy underpins our own – and that safeguarding it is not a constraint on growth, but the basis of long-term security, resilience and wellbeing.

We hope this outline is of interest to Your Majesty and resonates with your longstanding commitment to stewardship, balance and the responsible use of our natural inheritance. We would be happy to discuss our ambitions further and answer any questions you may have.

We have the honour to remain, Sir, Your Majesty's most humble and obedient servants,

Jake Berriman
Leader, Powys County Council

Heather Kidd
Leader, Shropshire Council

On behalf of the Marches Forward Partnership

Marches Forward Partnership – Partneriaeth y Gororau Ymlaen