

Vikki Slade MP



Member of Parliament for Mid Dorset & North Poole

Nesil Caliskan MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Devolution, Faith and Communities
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our Ref: VS13615

19 June 2026

Dear Minister Caliskan,

Re: Wessex Foundation Strategic Authority

We are writing to you urgently, and following the letter sent by Zoe Franklin MP as Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Communities and Local Government, regarding concerns that have been relayed to us about the proposal for the Wessex Foundation Strategic Authority. This letter is also copied to Zoe Franklin and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Prior to yesterday, our understanding as MPs with constituencies within the footprint, had been that Wessex had received approval to proceed as an FSA, and would be announced in the next wave of FSAs on Monday 22nd. We have now been made aware, that a Labour MP representing a constituency within the Wessex footprint has been campaigning privately – using his position as a PPS – to undermine the Wessex proposal and to instead promote a BCP and Dorset Council authority. This suggestion is entirely inappropriate, does not have the support of the councils and threatens the ongoing Wessex proposal.

The idea of a Wessex FSA has been in discussion since 2023, with the relevant councils all agreeing on this as the preferred way forward at the end of 2024. This agreement was come to collectively and directly preceded the submission of an application to be a first wave FSA. As you will be aware, many of us were disappointed that the first wave application was rejected due to a judgement that the programme was not sufficiently advanced, but discussions have continued with Ministers since, and we understood the project was well on track for the second wave.

To ensure readiness, Wessex had created a formal partnership complete with the appropriate materials and working groups, which again we understood had receive in principle approval in late 2025, all underpinned with a roadmap to a Mayoral Strategic Authority in due course.

Wessex has well-established grounds for coming together as an FSA. The councils already share an ICB area footprint and an ambulance service. Dorset and Wiltshire Councils share a fire and rescue service. The Wessex area formed parts of the Western Gateway sub-national transport group. All of this is indicative of the commonalities across the region, in demographics, culture and outlook. This too is underlined by shared priorities around security, as judged by military presence, energy production and food production, with the region combining well to ensure the presence of universities, an airport and sea ports. Wessex

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makes logical sense as an FSA proposal on this basis.

As per previous letters, the working groups have already calculated that residents within the footprint have missed out on over £300million in potential funding due to exclusion from the earlier waves. This only exacerbates the challenging financial position of our areas which sit at the very bottom of the funding scales for councils, fire services, policing and education. Urgent steps need to be taken to address this, through the FSA formation process.

The suggestion that we understand has been made privately does not appear to have taken into account any of the points raised above. It does not have the backing of the constituent councils. It also seems to take advantage of the privileged position awarded to this MP, serving as a PPS.

Council leaders within our area have made clear that they are unhappy with this development, and with any obstacles that may now be in the way of the announcement for a Wessex FSA as expected on Monday. We expect that they will also be contacting you directly today.

It is absolutely imperative that Wessex is included in the second wave to be announced, so that local leaders can be given the means they require to increase economic growth, community wellbeing and ensure stability for our region as we look to the future.

Yours sincerely, the undersigned,

Vikki Slade MP
Mid Dorset & North Poole

Gideon Amos MP
Taunton and Wellington

Adam Dance MP
Yeovil

Sarah Dyke MP
Glastonbury and Somerton

Sarah Gibson MP
Chippenham

Brian Mathew MP
Melksham and Devizes

Edward Morello MP
West Dorset

Anna Sabine MP
Frome and East Somerset

Roz Savage MP
South Cotswolds