# Reform UK mayors challenge Labour government’s devolution claims at Lancaster House meeting



Reform UK's newly elected mayors recently took their seats at a significant meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner, a moment that sharply highlights the challenges facing local governance under a Labour-led regime. The gathering at Lancaster House saw Dame Andrea Jenkyns, the Greater Lincolnshire mayor, and Luke Campbell, the Hull and East Yorkshire mayor, join a council comprised of 12 other regional leaders. Their attendance marks a critical juncture, particularly in light of the profound need for genuine political accountability as Labour attempts to reshape governance to suit its agenda.

Dame Andrea, a former Conservative MP and ex-education minister, made headlines when she switched allegiance to Reform and achieved a commanding victory in Greater Lincolnshire by over 40,000 votes. Meanwhile, Campbell, who transitioned from a successful boxing career — having represented Team GB and won gold at the 2012 Olympics — secured his position in Hull with a majority of almost 11,000 votes. These electoral successes signify a growing dissatisfaction with the status quo, which Labour now claims to champion through its superficial devolution narrative.

During the discussions, Rayner's emphasis on the new mayors' obligation to deliver results directly reflects the void left by previous administrations. Yet, amid her calls for strategic devolution to counter the outdated ‘Whitehall knows best’ doctrine, the question arises: can this Labour government genuinely empower local leaders when its past track record is riddled with empty promises? The Labour Government’s 'Plan for Change' appears to gloss over the underlying issues rather than truly address them, raising skepticism about their priorities when it comes to improving everyday lives.

The backdrop to this meeting underscores a government strategy that many view as fraught with political gamesmanship. While Rayner previously chaired the Mayoral Council in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, focusing on enhancing regional powers, the actual implementation is yet to be seen. Critics argue that the forthcoming English Devolution White Paper could easily devolve into yet another bureaucratic framework that fails to deliver meaningful change.

However, the push for devolution is not without its obstacles. The postponement of local elections in nine council areas has sparked serious concerns over political manipulation, undermining the integrity of the electoral process. Rayner's defense of this decision rests on the notion of restructuring local government efficiently before elections, but many question whose interests this truly serves.

Under the guise of facilitating swift decision-making, Rayner has proposed new powers for mayors, including measures to expedite planning for significant development projects. While these initiatives are said to be essential for fostering local economic growth and addressing regional inequalities, the efficacy of such measures remains highly debatable, particularly compared to the grassroots engagement and active leadership that Reform UK's mayors have promised.

As Reform UK's mayors navigate this tumultuous political landscape, their ability to hold the government to account will be paramount. They must not only deliver on electoral promises but also challenge the status quo instigated by this new Labour administration. The pressure is mounting for them to demonstrate true leadership and accountability in an increasingly complex local governance environment, positioning them as essential players in the broader political discourse. Their performance in the months ahead will be a critical litmus test for the strength of grassroots principles against the backdrop of a Labour government that will be closely scrutinised for its effectiveness.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14743301/Reform-UKs-new-mayors-centre-stage-Nigel-Farages-troops-join-regional-leaders-talks-Angela-Rayner-Deputy-PM-warns-you-deliver.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deputy-prime-minister-launches-first-ever-mayoral-council> - On October 10, 2024, Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner chaired the inaugural Mayoral Council in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, aiming to discuss the future of devolution and shift power from Westminster to local communities. Regional mayors were invited to share their views on the upcoming English Devolution White Paper, which plans to widen devolution and deepen the powers of existing mayors and combined authorities to boost economic growth. The council will meet quarterly to strengthen the relationship between central government and mayors, ensuring local leaders are involved in discussions concerning devolution.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/devolution-delivery-for-first-mayoral-meeting> - On July 9, 2024, all regional mayors in England convened at 10 Downing Street to initiate a major devolution program aimed at transferring power from Westminster to local communities. The meeting focused on establishing Local Growth Plans to empower regions to deliver change, unlock economic growth, and tackle regional inequality. Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner emphasized the importance of collaboration between central and regional governments to achieve these goals.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/angela-rayner-nigel-farage-liberal-democrats-woking-borough-council-housing-b1209319.html> - The Liberal Democrats criticized the government's decision to postpone elections in nine council areas, calling it a 'disgraceful stitch-up.' Reform UK leader Nigel Farage accused the government of 'sheer cowardice.' Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner explained that the postponements were necessary due to significant work required to unlock devolution and deliver reorganization in these areas, ensuring that elections are not held for bodies that will not exist in the near future.
5. <https://www.cityam.com/delays-to-local-elections-not-a-stitch-up-says-angela-rayner/> - Angela Rayner denied that delays to local elections were a 'stitch-up' after votes in nine council areas were postponed. She stated that the postponements were due to the need for reorganization of local government in England, ensuring that elections are not held for areas that will not exist within 12 months. The decision coincided with a survey reporting Reform UK's joint-highest support at 25%, ahead of Labour at 24% and the Conservatives at 21%.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/dec/16/mayors-to-get-powers-to-stop-planning-delays-in-england-angela-rayner-to-say> - Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner announced plans to grant mayors in England sweeping powers to unblock planning delays for major building projects. This initiative is part of a 'devolution by default' approach, aiming to shift power from Whitehall to local communities. The proposed devolution white paper will give regions more planning powers over housing numbers and identify key developments and infrastructure needed to support growth, including roads, water reservoirs, and logistics.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/videos/cdd6zvyv2mzo> - In a BBC interview, Angela Rayner expressed her desire for mayors across the whole of England. She emphasized that a council of mayors for England would drive growth in local areas, highlighting the importance of local leadership in economic development and decision-making processes.