



East of England

All Party Parliamentary Group

Co-Chairs
Vice-Chairs
Secretary
Treasurer

Daniel Zeichner MP and Peter Aldous MP
Heidi Allen MP, Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP and Sandy Martin MP
Clive Lewis MP
Dr Dan Poulter MP

East of England All-Party Parliamentary Group Budget Submission Parliamentary Launch

Wednesday 5th September, 14:00 - 15:30, Attlee Suite, Portcullis House

Non-Verbatim Minutes

Daniel Zeichner MP, APPG Co-Chair, opened the launch event by thanking all attendees and remarking upon how far the Group had come since its inaugural meeting in December 2017. His fellow Co-Chair, Peter Aldous MP, said that the East of England's potential was finally being realised, thanks to the 'blue sky thinking' featured in the Group's Budget submission.

Steve Barwick of DevoConnect, the APPG's secretariat, presented to the attendees the submission's findings and four principal conclusions. The report divided the focus of the APPG into three sections: Transport and Growth; Infrastructure, Investment and Housing; and Industrial Strategy. He then detailed the report's nine recommendations, which have been submitted to the Treasury for further consideration. Daniel Zeichner thanked Mr Barwick for his presentation on behalf of the APPG.

Lord Gary Porter, the Chairman of the Local Government Association (LGA), then introduced himself. Praising the report, he said that the East of England should fight hard for its fair share of funding from the Treasury, as it is one of just three UK regions to contribute more in tax than it receives in public money. Lord Porter said that the region makes a very strong case for getting more funding as not only will extra funding improve the lives of those who live and work in the region, it will be great for business too. He also praised the APPG for its co-operation and hard work in producing the Budget submission.

Sandy Martin MP, a Vice-Chair of the APPG, asked Lord Porter if the LGA is planning to put forward a submission to the Budget. Martin argued that they should lobby for more funding for local government services, as local government is often more efficient than central government, as well as being essential and great value for 'left behind' areas like the East of England. Lord Porter responded that the LGA are unable to influence the government's decisions and simply have to respond to them. He added that the government cannot keep taxing people at a local level for national services, and suggested further devolution would be beneficial in solving regional problems such as deprivation.

Devolution was subsequently the topic of much discussion at the launch. Daniel Zeichner MP said that he sees devolution as a way around centralisation, in agreement with Lord Porter's earlier remarks. He also said the lack of rural mayors in England was a 'huge mistake' on this government's part. Alex Plant of Anglian Water said that devolution could deliver massive improvements in health, housing, education and infrastructure. Mr Plant also raised the issue of Brexit, believing it to be one of the region's greatest challenges.



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Discussion then turned how to implement the demands of the Budget submission. Daniel Zeichner asked Steve Barwick how the APPG might proceed with this; the secretariat recommended selecting ‘key players’ from the East of England and then seeking to influence them directly. A Parliamentary debate at which a wide selection of MPs could show their support for the submission might also be helpful.

Peter Aldous mentioned that many of the region’s Members of Parliament sit in the Cabinet, and this could be useful for lobbying purposes. He praised the Budget submission for its positive attitude and the fact that it is not simply a list of complaints. He felt that had the document been available two years ago, the East of England’s devolution process would have been managed better.

Kwasi Kwarteng MP, Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, then addressed the meeting. He emphasised his personal connection to the region (he attended the University of Cambridge), but was keen to stress that he was speaking in a personal capacity. Mr Kwarteng said that there is a huge constraint on funding at the moment, as the Chancellor is committed to reducing the deficit. However, he said the Chancellor knows that money will have to be spent on investments and infrastructure. Phillip Hammond is for example very keen on strengthening the Oxford-Cambridge link. Kwarteng said he is willing to help the APPG in securing infrastructure funding from the central government.

Clr James Jamieson, Leader of Central Bedfordshire Council, suggested that localised funding is usually spent more efficiently than centralised funding, and that the Treasury should consider this when allocating money. Mr Kwarteng replied that the government is committed to regionalism and further devolution. The Chancellor is particularly interested in innovation, and Cambridge is very strong in this area. The East of England should use this to grab the Treasury’s attention and secure more funding. He suggested that smaller, more focused submissions are more likely to be approved. He also suggested that a list of specific policy priorities would be effective.

James Palmer, the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, said if the government does not invest in infrastructure in the region now, the economy will start to go backwards. He suggested a metro system in Cambridge could be funded by local taxes (possibly by retaining business rates). Mr Kwarteng did not agree that such a system could be funded in this way, calling it a ‘political minefield.’

Peter Aldous summed up the meeting by calling the report ‘a good starting point.’ Digital connectivity must be the highest priority for the East of England, as the population of the region is very scattered. Skills must also be a priority in order to unlock the area’s potential. Alex Plant then thanked the Co-Chairs, secretariat, local leaders and stakeholders for their attendance and assistance in creating the Budget submission. He said the East of England has previously done itself a disservice in not uniting for its own good, and it is great to finally have some cooperation.



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Attendee List

Name	Organisation
Peter Aldous	House of Commons
Daniel Zeichner	House of Commons
Sandy Martin	House of Commons
Kwasi Kwarteng	House of Commons
Lord Porter of Spalding	House of Lords
Mayor James Palmer	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
Alex Plant	Anglian Water
Jacob Wallace	Anglian Water
Daniel Johns	Anglian Water
Hannah Shah	East of England LGA
Ruth Day	British Sugar
Andrew Marshall	British Sugar
Anita Thornberry	Haven Gateway Partnership
George Kieffer	Haven Gateway Partnership
Andy Williams	AstraZeneca
Steve Barwick	DevoConnect
Giles Ellerton	BT
Gareth Elliott	Mobile UK
Doug Field	New Anglia LEP
Sarah Finnegan	National Housing Federation
Aaron Cohen-Gold	University of Cambridge
Rob Smart	Turner and Townsend
Tom Hunt	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority
Richard Tunnicliffe	Confederation of British Industry
Ian Mather	Cambridge Ahead
Cllr Linda Haysey	East Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr James Jamieson	Central Bedfordshire Council
Duncan Symonds	IFM Investors
Rosy Roche	Office of Daniel Zeichner MP
David Leaf	Office of Priti Patel MP
Lily Sheehan	DevoConnect

NB The Parliamentary launch of the EEAPPG's Budget submission was the lead story on [BBC Look East \(West\)](#) on the day of the event, and it was also featured in the [Eastern Daily Press](#).