



## East of England All Party Parliamentary Group

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13<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear Rt Hon Alok Sharma, Secretary of State, BEIS and Rt Hon Steve Barclay, Chief Secretary to the Treasury

We are writing to you both as each of you responded to our last letter sent to you as Co-chairs of the East of England APPG regarding our region's potential contribution to the great recovery. These were discussed at the latest meeting of the East of England APPG on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June. Before relaying a number of concerns raised at that meeting, we did want to welcome various statements made in your letters, as well as, of course, thanking you for them, including:

- The recognition that many of the UK's strengths in science, international relations and ease of doing business, can be found in the East of England.
- The commitment to continue to work on the levelling up agenda, including in parts of the country that have been worst affected, some of which are in the East of England
- The prioritisation of achieving Net Zero and noting that the East of England, with its wealth of low carbon assets, will have a key role to play in this area
- The inclusion of two key East of England leaders - Cllr James Jamieson and Mark Bretton - on the MHCLG Government-led Economic Recovery Working Group
- The acknowledgement of the importance of clarity for businesses of all sizes and in all sectors
- The £95m funding allocated to Cambridgeshire & Peterborough for local transport investment through the Transforming Cities Fund, and the share of £117m that Norwich may receive

The key points raised at the meeting were:

1. **Aviation:** Aviation is a key driver of economic growth across the whole of the UK and is vital to the country's recovery. Within the East of England, London Stansted Airport is our largest single site employer and provides the connections that businesses and individuals rely upon to travel and trade. As the third largest freight airport in the UK it is also a vital import/export lifeline for the East of England, London and the South East. If our region is to recover, the Government must do what it can to support British aviation in its sustainable recovery and ensure its airports have every advantage when seeking to attract airlines, routes and passengers. *Will the Government re-consider business rate relief for those industries hardest hit by Coronavirus and improve rail services to the airport as part of the Government's pledge to 'build'?*

2. **Water:** Water companies have many “shovel ready” opportunities for further investment that would create jobs and help achieve the government’s net zero and nature recovery goals. Water company investment plans like Anglian Water’s in the east of England meet strict carbon and environmental criteria, raising finance through green bonds rather than adding to public debt. Water bills are set to fall between now and 2025, creating the headroom to invest more and still achieve lower water bills. *Working with the Environment Secretary there is the potential to announce a water sector-specific package of public and private funding to create green jobs and strengthen local supply chains.*
  
3. **Green recovery:** there were calls for guidance on the pathway to 2050 to be published and to ‘build back better’ not simply return to the old ‘normal’. Clearly there are huge opportunities for electric vehicles, carbon capture and storage, battery power and hydrogen but we are still awaiting the outcomes of the Infrastructure Finance Review alongside the publication of the National Infrastructure Strategy and the White Paper on Energy which has been deferred. There is also the related question of what support the Government should give to ensure the region has the skills it requires to meet the needs of future employers. *When will there be progress on these key issues?*
  
4. **Broadband:** The increasing importance of digital infrastructure to the current and next economy was highlighted but so were the problems in rural areas. We are aware of the Government’s investment and commitment to support the rollout of gigabit broadband to the hardest to reach areas, the introduction of new legislation to help accelerate the delivery of fast, reliable broadband to millions of homes and, through the Shared Rural Network, that the Government is matching a £500 million investment by mobile network operators – which will see high-quality 4G coverage across 95% of the UK by the end of 2025. *Are you satisfied this is sufficient in light of Coronavirus and will you publish a clear plan from on how to achieve the government’s target of Fibre to the Home by 2025?*
  
5. **Local Government:** The EELGA is playing an important convening role bringing together CEX, LEPs, businesses and transport boards. They have established a number of key lines of inquiry including hospitality and night time economy. There is clearly a role for action at the East of England level – not least in galvanising public private partnerships - but local councils’ funding must be secure so they can continue and build upon their great work for the recovery rather than worry about their finances. *Will you please make representations to your colleagues at MHCLG regards long term and adequate funding for local authorities as well as further support for them to help deliver a recovery?*

We trust you will consider these points. If you or one of your Departmental colleagues would like to attend the next meeting to discuss these issues in person you would be most very welcome to do so. The date of the next meeting – which will be held by Zoom or similar – is Tuesday September 15<sup>th</sup> from 4pm to 530.

Yours sincerely



**Peter Aldous MP**



**Daniel Zeichner MP**

**Co-Chairs, East of England All Party Parliamentary Group**

*Sent on behalf of the Co-Chairs by the Secretariat*

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