



East of England All Party Parliamentary Group

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Wednesday 22nd June 2022

Dear Grant

THE OVERWHELMING CASE FOR INVESTMENT IN ELY AREA CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT IN RNEP 6

We wrote to you on the 29th May making the case that the Government should commit to fully supporting through financial investment overdue improvements at Ely and Haughley Junctions. The reply on 9th June from your colleague Wendy Morton MP, Minister for Transport, included welcome recognition of the “*the benefit of the Ely programme and its strong alignment to the Government’s priorities*” and that “*the programme continues to demonstrate sound decarbonisation and connectivity benefits.*”

However, parts of the letter have most concerned both ourselves and other colleagues from across the East of England, whose signatures are appended to this letter. In particular the following: “*Should the outcomes of the Spending Review impact on the Ely programme, my Department would continue to work with industry to explore opportunities to realise at least some of the desired outcomes, either through wider operational changes to the network or through smaller, targeted investment enabled by future funding settlements*” and “*I am considering the necessary changes to the national enhancement portfolio and some projects will have to be cancelled or indefinitely paused.*”

This change to the national enhancement portfolio is explained in the letter by reference to the fact that after the pandemic “*travel patterns are likely to have changed in the long term.*” However, the majority of the benefits of investment in Ely Junction would be for freight transport, demand for which has a strong growth forecast post pandemic. Also figures from Greater Anglia indicate that increased passenger use would occur if improvements are delivered, irrespective of the post pandemic change in travel patterns: this is because hourly services have been shown to be a ‘tipping point’ for modal shift in the region.

We would therefore strongly urge you to include Ely Junction investment in the current RNEP.

If full funding is not forthcoming through this round of RNEP, we would have significant concerns with the alternative approach as phrased. Achieving “some of the desired outcomes, either through wider operational changes to the network or through smaller, targeted investment enabled by future funding settlements” will not deliver the strategic outcomes the capacity enhancement improvements at Ely are designed to address. As a result, there is a potential and significant risk of non-compliance with Government policy, particularly the legally binding commitment to net zero by 2050.

Just last week, the Department published the Future of Freight Plan which restated the Government's commitment to unlocking the economic and environmental benefits rail freight can deliver. The development of the National Freight Network was specifically referenced as this "would allow HMG and Industry to prioritise strategically important corridors, e.g. those with particular economic, levelling up or decarbonisation benefits".

The Felixstowe to Midlands and North route is one of those strategically important corridors, identified within UKNET in the Union Connectivity Review and considered the highest priority corridor for investment by the freight industry.

It is clear from the work undertaken by Network Rail so far on the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement, that the planned improvements at Ely will deliver substantial national economic, levelling up and decarbonisation benefits through the planned doubling of freight capacity, alongside increased passenger services on poor frequency routes. The benefits spread well beyond the East, supporting access and growth in the Midlands and North as well. It is also clear that scaling back the planned interventions will give a much poorer return on investment and require additional disruptive interventions to be made again in the near future.

The Transport Decarbonisation Plan commits to a net zero railway by 2050 with sustained carbon reductions in rail along the way. Freight trains reduce road congestion, connect markets over long distances and are much less carbon intensive than road freight – currently emitting around a quarter of CO2 emissions of HGVs per tonne mile travelled.

The commitment to a future rail freight growth target is included in the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and the Future of Freight Plan. Great British Railways will also have a statutory duty to promote rail freight. The scheme is also identified in the strategies and investment priorities for both Sub-national Transport Bodies for the East, England's Economic Heartland and Transport East. It is also supported by Midlands Connect, in recognition of the wider benefits to the 'Golden Triangle'.

As a significant contributor to the UK economy this investment would be good for UK plc as well as for businesses and communities in the East of England. It would also help the Government deliver its ambitions to level up the country, achieve net zero, and drive global Britain forward whilst simultaneously increasing the East of England's already net contribution to the Treasury.

As stated in our previous letter ***what is specifically needed now is a commitment to fund the next phase of development work for Ely Junction within Control Period 6.***

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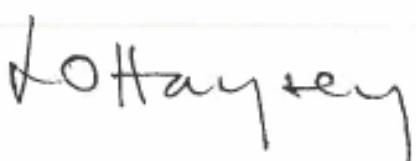
If you or your officials have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Steve Barwick of the East of England APPG Secretariat who has sent this email on our behalf.

Yours sincerely

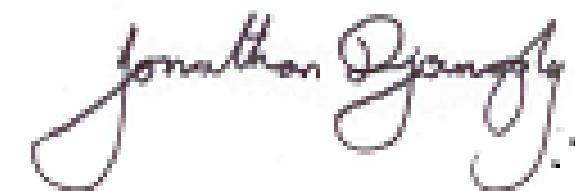


Peter Aldous MP
Co-Chair
East of England APPG

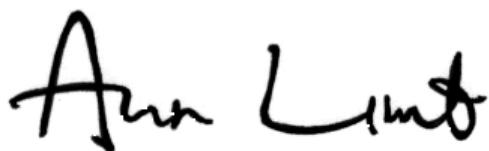
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Co-Chair
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Chair
EELGA



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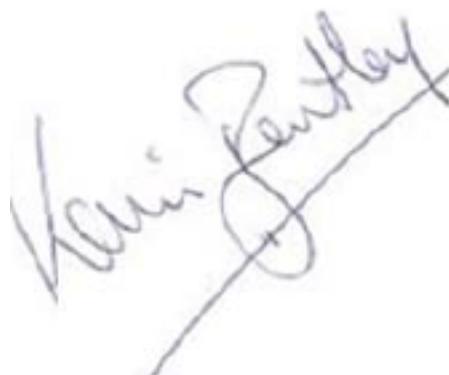
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Vice Chair
East of England



Giles Watling MP
Vice Chair
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James Cartlidge MP
MP for South Suffolk

[No E-signature but approved
by email on 20th June 2022]

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by email on 20th June 2022]

Lord Alan Haselhurst
Vice Chair
East of England APPG

Baroness Janet Cohen
Vice Chair
East of England APPG

CC WENDY MORTON MP, MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT
CC NEIL O'BRIEN, MINISTER FOR LEVELLING UP
CC SIMON CLARKE, CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY

Steve Barwick – steve@devoconnect.co.uk - for the East of England APPG Secretariat.

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