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East of England
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GROUND-BREAKING REPORT SHOWS LEVELLING UP HAS LONG WAY TO GO IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND

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Levelling up in the East of England is a welcome ambition but has a “very long way to go”, a ground-breaking report has revealed.

The report has analysed the East of England’s level of confidence in achieving the Government’s twelve levelling up missions, which were announced in a White Paper in February this year with targets set for 2030.

At the launch of the East of England’s [Levelling Up the East of England 2023-2030](#) on 13th December, more than a hundred MPs, Peers, council leaders and regional partners heard that levelling up is a very welcome ambition to address inequality. However, there is still a “very long way to go” in the East of England if all twelve missions are to be achieved in the timescales indicated in the White Paper.

The report was prepared by the East of England All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) and the East of England LGA (EELGA) in conjunction with four universities, NHS partners and a range of private sector businesses including British Sugar, AstraZeneca, Anglian Water and London Stansted Airport. The report revealed there is currently only high confidence in achieving three levelling up missions: employment and pay; research and development (R&D); and wellbeing.

There is medium confidence in achieving four of the missions – those that seek to improve digital connectivity, deliver pride in place, reduce crime and widen devolution. However, there is low confidence in five policy areas, many of which are those most important to the people and prospects of the East of England: improved educational attainment, more skills, better transport, longer healthy living and more affordable housing to buy and rent.

The report examines each of the missions in detail, setting out why each mission is so important to our region; providing an assessment of whether the region is on track to deliver the mission; offering an analysis of the threats and opportunities relevant to the mission; and giving recommendations for the Government to be on track to deliver the mission by 2030. It also charts progress on a key issue for the region which was not explicitly included in the Levelling Up White Paper: sustainability, with particular reference to net zero, renewable energy and water security.

The joint APPG and EELGA meeting was chaired by Peter Aldous MP, Daniel Zeichner MP and Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council and Chair of EELGA, and addressed by DLUHC Minister, Lucy Frazer MP, as well as council leaders from across the party political spectrum:

- Conservative Councillor, Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader Essex County Council and Levelling Up Portfolio Holder
- Labour Councillor, Alan Waters, Leader of Norwich City Council
- Liberal Democrat Councillor, Stephen Robinson, Leader of Chelmsford City Council

Peter Aldous MP for Waveney and Co-chair of the East of England APPG said:

“This ground-breaking report reveals the East of England is an economic success story with high levels of employment and several clusters of R&D and innovation excellence. It is one of only three regions which are net contributors to the Exchequer. However, it is a region where there are also areas of significant deprivation - within our coastal and rural communities and in ‘pockets’ in our towns and cities. Levelling up is as relevant here as it is elsewhere in England. And whilst in some places a good start has been made there is still a very long way to go.”

Daniel Zeichner, MP for Cambridge and Co-chair of the East of England APPG, added:

“Levelling up has to be more than a nice sounding phrase. That is why we advocate urgent Government attention on the five issues where we have found low confidence in meeting the proposed targets: improving education, delivering more skills, better transport, healthy life expectancy and more affordable housing. These sectors are being pushed to the brink, often running simply to stand still. Given the cost of living crisis and current recession, delivering substantial improvements in these missions will be challenging.”

Cllr Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council and Chair of EELGA, said:

“The role of local government is critical to every aspect of levelling up. Local Authorities are the leaders and conveners of place so a strong and financially sustainable local government sector is fundamental to the overall achievement of the levelling up policy. However, this is not all about money. Partnership and devolution will also be key. As an international gateway to the prosperity of the rest of the UK, all partners in the East of England stands ready to work with central government and make progress in 2023 and beyond.”

SOME KEY STATISTICS FROM THE REPORT

The East of England:

- has increased in population size by over 8%, almost 500,000 people, between 2011 and 2021, making it the fastest growing English region
- has the highest percentage of working age people in work than any region in the UK – 79%
- has attainment in reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2 *below* UK average – just 64%. Average is 65% and the Government’s levelling up target is 90%
- has the highest level of owner occupation than any region in the UK – 67% - but homes are more than 9 times median incomes so are less affordable than the English average. Meanwhile 1 in 4 private rented homes are “non-decent” and currently 99,604 people are on councils’ waiting lists for social housing and 14,856 are homeless including those in temporary accommodation
- has (just) above average healthy life expectancy - 65 years for both women and men - but there is a variation of up to 9 years between people living in different places: for women the biggest “gap” is between Peterborough at 59 years and Cambridgeshire at 68 years; the gap for men is also 9 years: between Central Bedfordshire at 68 years and Luton at 59 years.

A short version of the report can be accessed [here](#).

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