



East of England
All Party Parliamentary Group
Co-Chairs Peter Aldous MP and Daniel Zeichner MP
Vice-Chairs Daisy Cooper MP, Jonathan Djanogly MP, Matt Hancock MP,
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East of England APPG and EELGA Joint Annual Parliamentary Reception

Levelling Up the East of England 2023-2030: The Region's Progress to Delivering the Twelve DLUHC Missions

Wednesday 22nd February 2023, 12:45 – 14:30
The Attlee Suite, Portcullis House

WRITE UP OF THE EVENT

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- **Peter Aldous MP, Co-Chair, East of England APPG**

- *Welcomed all attendees including the Minister MP's, Peers, Council Leaders and Chief Executives, Sponsors and Academic Partners of the APPG and other guests including media*
- *This is a joint East of England APPG and East of England LGA Parliamentary event which had been scheduled for the 13th of December and I am delighted today has not been disrupted by transport issues or bad weather.*
- *It follows on from some quite strenuous activity in the Commons since the launch of the [Levelling Up the East of England report](#). There have been numerous Parliamentary Questions from a range of Parliamentary colleagues and, with their help, I was able to secure a [Westminster Hall Debate on the 31st of January](#).*
- *Today we continue those various conversations but before getting on with the meeting proper there are a number of formalities that need to be noted*
- *These are that Daisy Cooper MP is standing down as Vice Chair due to her health spokesperson responsibilities but Priti Patel MP and Lord Jackson have both offered to take up that position and as there is no limit to the number of Vice chairs I propose both are duly appointed to that role. [Agreed]*
- *Second, Haven Gateway Partnership are ending their sponsorship of the APPG although pleased to see Anita is here, and speaking, today. Thank you for all your support over the last three years. The good news is that both Freeport East and England's Economic Heartland – the region's other Sub-national Transport Body along with Transport East – are both going to be supporting the Group in 2023.*
- *Last but not least I also need to tell you that the University of East Anglia, Anglia Ruskin University and the University of Cambridge have all agreed to be academic partners of the APPG alongside the University of Essex. These are all welcome additions that will further strengthen the APPG's influence.*
- *Now, I am looking forward to hearing what the Minister will be saying but Daniel and then Matthew may I ask you to say a few words first?*

- **Daniel Zeichner MP, Co-Chair, East of England APPG**

- *Thank you, Peter, and a warm welcome from me to you all.*
- *I am delighted that our report which has the support of councils, business and third sector leaders from across the East of England has also been welcomed by the Government*
- *Today I think it is important that we look in detail at the five issues - transport, education, skills, healthy life expectancy and affordable housing - where there is low confidence in the likelihood that DLUHC's missions regarding will be met.*
- *In fact, what would be good to have discussed and agreed by 2:30 today is what tangible and immediate actions are needed that would make a positive difference on those five issues for residents the length and breadth of the East of England.*
- *I know Matthew Hicks, Chair of EELGA and Leader of Suffolk County Council, will have some thoughts regards that. Matthew, please, the floor is yours and then we will hear from the Minister.*

- **Matthew Hicks, Chairman, East of England LGA**

- *Very happy to be here this afternoon and to be joined by such a good range of colleagues and partners to talk about an issue that is so important for our communities and region as a whole.*
- *Thank you to the Levelling Up Minister, Dehenna Davison, for her time with us this afternoon. This shows a clear recognition from Government of the significant assets and future potential of the East of England.*
- *I am the Chairperson of the East of England Local Government Association and Leader of Suffolk County Council. EELGA is the membership body of the East of England's 50 councils. We support our councils to be the best they can be for our people, places and communities.*
- *Since the publication of our Levelling Up report in December, we now know the outcome of the second round of the Levelling Up Fund. Unfortunately, it could have been a lot better for our region.*
- *Across both rounds of the Fund, the East of England received the third lowest share of funding after London and the North East. This indicates that our region is still viewed as not in need of greater support. Our report shows how this is far from the truth and how greater investment in the East of England would lead to economic growth for the country.*
- *The publication of our report and the work of the APPG's Co-chairs also led to a second, successful Westminster Hall debate of MPs on progress towards levelling up in the East of England.*
- *MPs from our region used the debate to highlight the significant opportunities in the East of England and discuss in more detail the areas in which greater support from Government is required for us to level up.*
- *Housing – in terms of affordability, availability and quality – is one of the biggest challenges faced by our residents. It is therefore unsurprising that this issue was raised a number of times in the debate.*
- *Councils are instrumental in achieving the level of housing needed in the East of England:*

- *Our fantastic planning departments are producing the Local Plans and providing the permissions required to deliver the right housing in the right places but more support from Government is required.*
- *There is a critical shortage of planners - more funding is required by councils to help them recruit and retain a high-quality workforce*
- *Currently it is proving too difficult to access the funding required to provide the necessary infrastructure alongside housing. Much more investment is needed in our transport, energy, health and social care and education for these new communities*
- *I look forward to hearing the views of our partners represented here today on the recommendations in our report.*
- *I also look forward to how the Minister will build on what she said at the recent Westminster Hall debate around how the Government will continue to work with us in the East of England on the recommendations we've made.*
- *At the Westminster Hall Debate, the Minister highlighted the Inter-Ministerial Group on Levelling Up that has now been established. We ask now for commitment from the Government for a new, active partnership between central and local government and their partners in the East of England to support the delivery of this crucial agenda.*

2. KEYNOTE ADDRESS

- **Dehenna Davison MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities**
- *Thank you for that kind introduction and for inviting me here today for what should be a really interesting and engaging session.*
- *It was a pleasure to speak to many of the regions MP's just a few weeks ago at the recent Westminster Hall debate on levelling up in the region, and I must say, hearing the commitment of those MP's to the future of the East of England left me feeling pretty inspired.*
- *So I want to start by thanking you all not only for being here tonight to champion the East of England, but for your work with us since we began our efforts to level up the country. Levelling up would never be more than a slogan if people like all of you here today were not there to make it happen on the ground.*
- *This region has long been an unsung hero that does not always get the credit it deserves for what it contributes not only to the Exchequer but to wider public life: whether that's the port of Felixstowe, a hub of activity accounting for some 40% of our national container traffic; or as one of our focal points for clean energy and clean growth, with over half of the UK's offshore wind power produced in the region; or as home to some of our booming life sciences businesses like Astra Zeneca.*
- *I know all of you here today could reel off dozens of things that make the region special and dozens of other things that make you proud to call it your home or your where you work. But I also know that many of you will attest that this remains a region with huge untapped potential. Levelling up – if it is going to mean anything – has to mean finding new opportunities for the region to build on its strengths and identify new ones altogether.*

- *Now, I know it was only a few weeks ago that your APPG published its illuminating report on levelling up in the region. And it's a report that helped shine a light on a number of fundamental issues for the region. Skills, for example, is an area where the region frequently falls below the national average.*
- *And I won't have been alone in being concerned by the findings that participation and achievements were among the lowest of all regions in England. Of course, where there's a lack of skills and too few decent jobs to go around, there is almost inevitably deprivation as well.*
- *And we know that remains a real challenge for our region with pockets of significant poverty in coastal towns like Jaywick, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. Poor connectivity is also holding our region back from reaching its true potential.*
- *Everyone here today knows that a lack of decent rail and public transport connections between towns and cities means a lot of people are forced to drive whenever they leave their home not just for their commute, but to attend hospital appointments, to go to the shops and to visit friends.*
- *Transport East estimates that well over 40% of the region's carbon emissions are down to private car use so we have a lot to do if we're going to change that over the medium to long term. But, as the Minister responsible for levelling up, I believe this report should also be a catalyst for us all to redouble our efforts to level up the region, to collaborate with our partners in local government, and with MPs of all political stripes, and to recognise that no one party has a monopoly on good ideas.*
- *Today I'd like to try and lift the bonnet and look at three areas where the Government is already acting decisively – devolution, transport and local services.*
- *And where better to start than devolution, because there is no such thing as levelling up without devolution. It is how we get more power out of Westminster and into the hands of local leaders who understands the area they represent.*
- *So, without wishing to loudly blow our own trumpet, I would say we are very happy with the progress made in devolution to the East of England in the past year or so. Widening and deepening devolution across the country will always be an ongoing process and your recent APPG report recognised that fact. But last year we really did take some massive steps forward with historic devolution settlements agreed both with Norfolk and Suffolk*
- *At the heart of these deals is a recognition that there are no glass slippers with English devolution; one size does not always fit all. Each one of the deals is bespoke and many of you in the room today will have been involved in these deals intimately. I believe that these are deals that transfer real power and real money into the region.*
- *Investment that will spur on housing, regeneration and skills and powers that will give new directly elected leaders the tools they need to drive local growth and focus on their own levelling up priorities.*
- *And this all comes on top of substantial local growth commitments made through investments like the £600m Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Deal, the £500m City Deal with Greater Cambridge and wider investment across the region through the £111.5m Getting Building Fund and the £1.5bn from the Local Growth Fund.*
- *While we are happy with the progress being made with devolution, there is still much further to go when it comes to transport connectivity.*

- *The Government wholly accepts that a lack of fast, reliable transport connections doesn't just constrain economic growth, it holds communities back and diminishes people's quality of life. And it's not just the case in the East of England, it is the case in many of our regions.*
- *Here again, I think our levelling up agenda can not only make a difference in the short term, but it can have a real and lasting impact on the East of England in the long term. That's one of the reasons why the Government is investing around £3 billion to upgrade our road network, including the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon and a number of new link roads between the A5 and the M1 North.*
- *And it's among the reasons around £7 billion has been invested into Thameslink to increase capacity and speed up rail connections. With Government backing, the East Anglian rail franchise is delivering a fleet replacement programme with new carriages, more trains and more seats for customers. And we're already seeing these, faster, more reliable trains on the Norwich and Ipswich line, the intercity lines between London and Norwich and the Stanstead Express.*
- *As you will no doubt remember, we committed to in the Autumn Statement to use East West Rail as a tool to unlock productivity right across the Oxford-Cambridge region. And that is what we are going to do. We've already provided £1.3bn towards the delivery of Connection Stage 1 of the project, which links Oxford, Bletchley and Milton Keynes – and that is due to be finished in 2025. But we aren't finished there, and I'm sure we will have more to say on support for the project soon.*
- *On top of making the region easier to get to and to get around, we also want to ramp up the flow of goods and services coming through the region. And we want to do it through the two new Freeports in the East – the Thames Freeport and Freeport East.*
- *I don't think we should understate just how transformative these freeports should be for the region. The Thames Freeport is expected to create 20,000 plus well-paid jobs while connecting Ford's world-famous Dagenham plant to the global ports at London Gateway and Tilbury.*
- *Meanwhile Freeport East is expected to add over £5.5 billion in GVA to our economy while creating a highly advanced Green Hydrogen Hub accelerating the shift to green shipping, green transport and green power.*
- *And it should bring a lift to the whole area. Freeport East contains some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the whole region and this project will help to reduce that deprivation with thousands of green new jobs.*
- *Finally, I want to touch on public services - something I know was a cornerstone of your report. What we saw from the Chancellor in his Autumn Statement went some way to delivering on more certainty when it comes to local Government finances with an iron clad commitment to safeguard public finances, backed by an additional £6.5 billion of funding for local government over the next two years.*
- *And my department is playing its part to support the local tier too. Earlier this year we published a two-year blueprint for local government finances to give the sector the clarity it needs to really plan for the long term. And we will shortly follow up with a Settlement which answers the calls from councils for more certainty, more flexibility and more control.*
- *We've also heard the message loud and clear that now is not the right time to destabilise councils with adult social care reforms. Which is why we've delayed the rollout of adult social care charging reform. And as we work towards a long-term solution, local Adult and Children's Social Care we'll see a substantial injection of cash – including £2 billion of funding in 2023/24.*

- *This year's one-off guarantee also means that every council will have at least a 3% increase in resources for the financial year ahead. Our focus is squarely on supporting the public sector not just through the turbulent times ahead but over the next ten years so that we can really deliver on the twelve – and potentially thirteen – levelling up missions in the East of England and beyond.*
- *In conclusion: all of us here know that the East of England is a true economic success story: a net contributor to the Treasury; an international gateway for Global Britain; and some of the highest levels of employment, pay and productivity in the UK.*
- *Our challenge now is ensuring that the benefits of these tremendous assets and opportunities are shared more evenly across our region. Government cannot and should not be run on aspirational rhetoric alone. Our deeds need to match our words, and I believe your report really spotlighted the significant progress being made on our levelling up missions so far but it also clearly shows we need to go further and faster. So, I can assure you that my department will be reviewing your recommendations with a laser-like focus.*
- *I want to work with you every step of the way in building a more connected, more prosperous, more equal East of England in which everyone can go as far in life as their talent and ambition will take them.*

3. QUESTIONS TO THE MINISTER

- **MPs and Peers Only**

- *Lord Haselhurst raised the West Anglian Task Force and the considerable length of time this has been in place (since 2015) and we need this now to be delivered. Rail link between Bedford and Cambridge has stalled.*
- *Lord Naseby raised the Issue new towns and whether the benefits seen in some parts of the region could be extended to other parts of the East of England*
- *Daniel Zeichner MP then asked: “it has been suggested that to accelerate and deliver this crucial agenda a ‘**Levelling Up the East Delivery Partnership**’ between central and local government – and other key stakeholders – is set up. Is this something DLUHC will consider?”*
- *The Minister confirmed she would welcome a proposal about a Levelling Up the East Delivery Partnership and to hold a meeting to discuss it.*

4. PANEL RESPONSES

- **Cllr Anna Smith, Deputy Mayor, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Leader Cambridge City Council**

- *Good afternoon. My name is Anna Smith. I'm been Acting Mayor of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority since last year, and I'm also leader of Cambridge City Council.*
- *I'm delighted to be here with so many people who care about the East of England. Thanks to Daniel and Peter for asking me to speak, and to all those who have contributed to this excellent report.*
- *As a former teacher and leader in schools and colleges I know first-hand how important it is to get skills right. Because it isn't enough to attract jobs into our region if we aren't also equipping our young people and adults with the right skills to take them up.*

- *And that needs the local knowledge and coordinated approach that devolution offers. With the help of so many in this room, and in partnership with local councils, we've been prioritising education and skills at the combined authority. Supporting our fantastic new university in Peterborough, and funding a new training centre in Chatteris in the Fens. Setting up an all-age careers service. Helping meet skills shortages - from HGV drivers to engineering and advanced manufacturing.*
- *I want to tell you why we are doing this, and why we need to have the powers and resources to do more. I want to tell you about Grace, one of my former BTEC students. From a school where too many students ended up not in education, employment or training. With an expensive, 90 minute journey each way to get to us because we were the closest centre for her course. And that's if the bus showed up at all. I discovered she was skipping lunch to pay for those buses. She did it because she knew that opportunities and skills mattered. She should never have had to do that.*
- *People like Grace deserve all the support we can give them. High quality, coordinated, education and skills, embedded in communities, with decent transport links. And they need somewhere to live. Like the 500 beautiful council homes we built in Cambridge city with money from the devolution deal.*
- *We have local needs that we understand, a local context that we understand. We know about the inequalities that our residents face, and we know how to work in partnership to address those inequalities.*
- *We need to tackle the skills deficit, the economic gaps, the poor life chances. And we can't do that if everything is controlled from the centre or if we are constantly fighting with other authorities for one-off funding pots.*
- *The people of the East of England, people like Grace, need increased devolution. And they need meaningful devolution, which provides local leaders with the powers and the funding they need to reduce inequalities, stimulate growth, transform lives. And that, I believe, is when true levelling up will happen.*
- **Gareth Powell, Managing Director, London Stansted Airport**
 - *Good afternoon. My name is Gareth Powell, I'm the MD at London Stansted Airport and I'm delighted to be speaking at the East of England APPG reception here today. For those of you that don't know me, I joined Stansted from Transport for London (TfL), where I spent 19 years and most recently held the post of Deputy Commissioner and Chief Customer and Strategy Officer.*
 - *While I've not run an airport before, the transport sector is one I'm passionate about and I've seen first-hand how high-quality transport infrastructure in the capital enables London's role as one of the most competitive, investable destinations on earth.*
 - *Confident that in this airport, we have another high-quality piece of transport infrastructure that can enable the East of England to succeed; and I'm keen for us to be part of the conversation with Government and local businesses on 'Levelling Up' and partnering to secure growth.*
 - *On a positive note on Stansted's recovery: it is the fastest recovering major airport coming out of the pandemic; back up to 93 per cent of pre-pandemic volumes in Dec 2022 and forecast to hit 28m passengers in the coming year.*
 - *At the height of the summer, despite well-documented challenges across the sector in coping with the surge in demand, we kept average queueing times at security below 15 minutes. We are a resilient, high-performing transport operator and I'm confident we'll maintain high customer standards this summer*

- *Our growth is good for the region – advertising 1000 jobs on campus at the moment, with roles from cabin crew to engineers. And we recently announced the return of a double daily service for Emirates to Dubai – proving long-haul market which can support high-value trips and trade with key markets such as Asia.*
- *Some of you may have attended our summit in Cambridge in October – showing how we want to be in service of our region, helping world-beating industries such as Cambridge’s life sciences cluster become even more competitive by providing better connectivity to markets such as US.*
- *Where airports develop route networks, businesses in their regions tend to benefit from new trade opportunities. For example, we anticipate that just by establishing a direct air bridge with Boston, we could generate £95m in new investment and £45m in exports per annum for the region.*
- *I’m clear on our role in ‘Levelling Up’ the East of England and supporting growth that leads to better living standards: by supplying the international connectivity into key markets that businesses want to trade with; helping promote investment and boost exports.*
- *I have noted the APPG’s suggestion that it has low confidence in the East of England achieving the Government’s transport mission. But a little bit of Government support in East of England could actually unlock significant regional and national gains – given its high concentration of gateways (13 ports and 4 airports) and the role it plays as a strategic gateway for the rest of the UK.*
- *There are two clearly defined interventions that you could make a real difference in the short-term: a commitment to funding the next phase of development work for Ely and Haughley Junctions and restoring 4 trains per hour from Liverpool Street to London Stansted on the Stansted Express.*
- **Anita Thornberry, Chief Executive, Haven Gateway Partnership**
 - *“Today I have been asked to talk about transport and Freeport East and in doing so, I will touch on a couple of points. To begin with, there is the obvious strategic transport picture of ensuring strong transport connectivity.*
 - *If, as the Minister says, the Freeports are to be the catalyst for significant economic growth, and with the emphasis on innovation and energy in the case of Freeport East, the connections to other international hubs such as London Stansted Airport are crucial.*
 - *I remember the co-Chair, Peter Aldous, saying to me once that it takes longer to get to Lowestoft from Stansted for investors than it does for them to travel from another European destination. This is hardly a beacon for investors.*
 - *And as we are focused on innovation, we must consider the impact of the Freeport across a wider geography to include other hubs of innovation such as the geography between London and Cambridge which is also an area with great innovation potential that can link up with Freeport East.*
 - *We must also address the issue of connectivity within the Freeport East area itself, to ensure that local people can access the jobs being created by the initiative. As the Minister says, the public transport connections for residents of Clacton, for example, to access the coming opportunities in Harwich in a population with relatively low car ownership and an area of low skills and deprivation must be considered as part of Levelling Up. It cannot be right that today’s 18-year-olds are already giving up on opportunities and are instead hoping that things improve for their children.*

- *I have focused on the negative but now turn to some positives. Freeport East has an emphasis on innovation in hydrogen and there are other transport issues being considered currently which utilise hydrogen. So, already, innovation and end users are being brought together by Freeport East. For example, with the railways, hydrogen fuel can be an alternative to costly electrification for passenger trains.*
- *But we also ask that attention to this is also given to freight trains for the Felixstowe to Peterborough line. A bid is currently being drafted for a proof-of-concept railway wagon which can carry hydrogen so any support you in the audience can give to get this over the line would be greatly appreciated.*
- *Freeport East is also keen on supporting hydrogen fuel for UK coastal shipping which does not require the conversion of hydrogen to, for example, ammonia which the larger container ships require. In this way, Freeport East is working with hydrogen to reduce the carbon footprint of the shipping and logistics industries as part of its innovation work and has, in fact, already started on this important aspect of freeports – innovation.*
- *In short, there is much to be said about transport and Freeport East. Both in terms of the strategic case for transport infrastructure upgrades as well as an innovation focus for the use of hydrogen in port-related transport activities.*

- **Arnie Craven, Cadent**

- *Good afternoon. First, I want to thank Peter and Daniel as APPG co-chairs, and Steve as their invaluable Secretariat, for putting on this important event.*
- *I know lots of people in this room are united by a shared belief the East needs to start speaking with a common voice – and I believe this APPG, alongside other initiatives like the Eastern Powerhouse, plays a really important role in ensuring the voice of the East is heard in the corridors of power.*
- *I am speaking here on behalf of Cadent. For those of you who don't know us, Cadent is the UK's largest gas distribution network. Simply, we own the gas pipes that connect almost every home and business in the East of England to the gas network.*
- *I'm not here to talk too much about the present, though. I want to talk about our future. And the energy future of the East of England. At Cadent we are doing a lot of work with the Department for Energy and Net Zero on decarbonising transport, industry and home heating.*
- *I am sure some of you will be familiar with the idea of 'industrial clusters' – areas proposed by, as was, BEIS, to lead the way on decarbonisation. These are areas with concentrations of industry which the Government has identified as key targets for investment to reduce carbon emissions.*
- *Cadent is supporting work on the North West (Manchester / Liverpool) and Humber clusters. But I see an additional opportunity in the East. An opportunity not just for energy, but for the skills and investment that energy can bring.*
- *I have taken to referring to the East of England as a, and please excuse the Latin, de facto additional industrial cluster. Whilst the East doesn't have the same concentration of heavy industry as Teesside or Merseyside, it does have two key things: existing energy assets – offshore wind and the infrastructure around Bacton – but also geography; relative proximity to both London and the Midlands.*

- *The East of England is perfectly placed to become a hydrogen powerhouse in its own right – our vision is for the hydrogen produced in the East to be put to work decarbonising homes, transport and industry in two of the UK’s biggest regions: Greater London and the West Midlands.*
- *Think about what that could mean for Levelling Up in this region. Not just the tens of billions of GVA our models suggest it could bring to the East. But the skills and employment.*
- *Some like to talk about the East of England as a place of real prosperity, and no one can deny there is real wealth around the region. But there is also poverty and unemployment, in part driven by a lack of skilled jobs.*
- *Becoming a hydrogen powerhouse means thousands of new, skilled, jobs in some of the parts of the East of England that need them the most. That is a prize I would ask you all to support Cadent in pursuing.*
- *I won’t talk for much longer, but when preparing this speech I started to think about what, if I was in a room with the Minister, would I ask of her. One of the things that has struck me in conversations I’ve had with the public sector in recent years is how much enthusiasm there is on both sides of the public – private dichotomy for closer working on issues like energy.*
- *But I know local authorities find it really difficult to get involved in the delivery of energy projects due to the way they currently bid for funding from central Government. With our energy projects in the east – especially Capital Hydrogen and Hydrogen Valley – we are looking at multi-decade investments. Yet local authorities, when bidding through programmes like the towns and levelling up funds, only get a handful of years to initiate, develop and deliver a scheme.*
- *With a little more financial flexibility I am sure the public and private sector can do even more together to drive growth, investment and the creation of new jobs in the East, turning my vision of the East of England as a hydrogen powerhouse into a reality.*
- **Professor Chiara Di Cesare, Director, University of Essex, Institute for Public Health and Wellbeing**
 - *Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on the progress reported in the ‘Levelling Up the East of England 2023-2030’ against mission VII, health, and VIII, wellbeing.*
 - *I would like to start by commending the ambitious Levelling Up mission in health and wellbeing, set out in the Government’s White Paper. Focusing the mission on a goal such as life expectancy, specifically, healthy life expectancy is ambitious because its achievement involves much more than operational actions, such as for example increasing the number of ambulances; it requires fundamental thinking about the health of the population, about all those complex factors that have an impact on our health at any point during our life, from birth to adulthood. This requires acting on each and every mission and goal listed in the Government’s White Paper.*
 - *The Levelling-up the East of England report provides a detailed picture of the regional progress against mission VII and VIII. There are a series of elements in the report that I think are worth highlighting and discussing here. First there is an urgent need to acknowledge that the East of England is growing faster than any other region with an above average dependency ratio and a rapidly ageing population. Here*
 - *I want to remind everyone that data presented in the report suggest that there are only a handful of local authorities in the region in which the healthy life expectancy exceed the state pension age of 67 years. The demographics of the population cannot be taken away from the decision-making process and needs to be acknowledged consistently and strategically.*

- *Levelling up is possible only if there is a full commitment and understanding across decision makers of the staggering inequalities experienced in the region with situations of wealth and extreme deprivation being just a few kilometres apart. When we think about inequalities, we need to think that there are children that in some way are born with a potential burden of ill-health that goes beyond of their control.*
- *Because we don't have the luxury to choose where to be born, the place where we are born is randomly assigned. Government funding allocation needs to move from the average picture to the granularity of needs within the region to be able so to be ahead of current and future problems.*
- *Being one of the three net contributors to the UK economy does not grant to assume that wealth is equally distributed, otherwise the East would not host the most deprived areas in the country.*
- *There is an urgent need to identify resources that prevent people from getting sick. We cannot increase healthy life expectancy focusing on secondary and tertiary care only. Focusing on disease instead of focusing on health will not allow to increase healthy life expectancy and reduce the gap nationally and regionally.*
- *The country is going through a significant crisis in terms of the care sector workforce availability, and the East of England is among the regions most affected by low levels of retention and high current and predicted needs for sustainable solutions.*
- *Despite the high confidence to achieve an improved wellbeing across the region it is important to acknowledge how easily wellbeing perception can change. This is partly because of the nature of the measure based on perception and partly because of the multiple dimensions contributing to the definition of wellbeing.*
- *Of the 13 missions in addition to health there is low confidence that education, transport, skills, and housing can be achieved; 4 dimensions that have a major impact on our health and wellbeing.*
- *To conclude, the report is in fact providing very strong evidence for systemic changes in which integration, sustainability, and resources are required to ensure success in levelling up the region.*

5. GENERAL QUESTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

- *Biplab Rakshi of the Institute of Directors said he was keen for the IoD to get further involved in the East of England APPG and EELGA and more connected to this work on levelling up.*
- *Cllr Susan Morley, Leader, Mid Suffolk District Council, said 'The statistic raised in the Levelling Up Report – around our region having the lowest adult skills training participation rate – is very worrying. What do the panellists think we can do together in the East of England to improve on this position?'*
- *Cllr Graham Butland, Leader Braintree District Council, said 'We clearly have a long way to go when it comes to improving healthy life expectancy in our region. Better integration across health and care services, supported by the introduction of ICSs, should be an opportunity for us. What can we do as partners across the public and private sector to ensure the best possible health and wellbeing outcomes?'*

- *Priti Patel commented on the lack of integration across central govt departments and the need to tackle this, as levelling up requires an integrated approach across multiple priorities and policies*
- *James Palmer of the Eastern Powerhouse commented it was important to move this agenda forward and that the APPG is clearly doing this. He also commented that the north and midlands have stolen a march on transport investment and we are lagging behind, also that we need to be more vocal and involve businesses more.*
- *Cllr Anna Smith, Deputy Mayor, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Leader Cambridge City Council called for fully devolved skills funding to councils instead of the various fragmented pots, along with capital funding consolidation in support of this, having an all age careers fund, and having a more effective partnership between schools, councils, educational providers and businesses to keep pace with the employment opportunities and skills requirement both for the here and now and for the future skills, technical and educational programmes that need planning now for 5 to 10 years' time*

6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS, NEXT STEPS AND VOTES OF THANKS

- **Peter Aldous MP, Co-Chair, East of England APPG**

- *We need to see a new, active collaboration between central and local government and their partners to deliver on the levelling up agenda, using our report as the baseline to work from.*
- *Via the anticipated 'Funding Simplification Plan' from Government, we need to see a move away from highly competitive, short timescale funding pots to a system where councils are trusted*
- *The report's 13th chapter highlighted the climate change challenges for our region. We look forward to engaging with Ministers at the new Department for Energy Security and Net Zero on these important issues*
- *The APPG will consider everything that has been said today when it looks at the low confidence issues in more detail at its meetings over the course of the year*

- **Daniel Zeichner MP, Co-Chair, East of England APPG**

- *Thanked the Minister, MPs and Peers, Council Leaders and CEXs and all sponsors and academic partners for their attendance and contributions*
- *In particular he thanked the East of England LGA, Cheryl Davenport, Adam Thorp and Jayne Cole, and Steve Barwick of the APPG Secretariat for all their help in making today happen and such a success.*

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