



East of England
All Party Parliamentary Group

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Secretary Clive Lewis MP

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Dear Minister

Thank you so much for your time in addressing the East of England All-Party Parliamentary Group meeting on levelling up roads connectivity on 12 September.

Attendees welcomed your comments regarding the strategic importance of the East of England region, particularly its crucial role as key international gateway for the rest of UK and as an engine for economic growth, in science, technology and green energy.

While rail services in the East provide a vital connection to those places that are served by it, roads remain the primary method of travel for most residents and businesses in the region. Indeed, nine out of ten trips take place on roads, with eight out of ten households owning a car. The region's road network is therefore crucial to levelling-up both in the region and the UK.

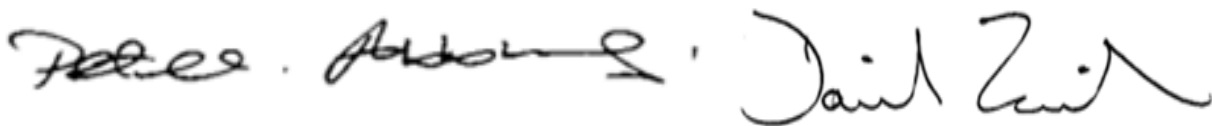
Following your remarks, the meeting heard from the East's two sub-national transport bodies, England's Economic Heartland and Transport East, alongside Matt Palmer, the Executive Director of Lower Thames Crossing for National Highways. We thought it would be helpful to summarise some of the key points to arise from the ensuing discussion.

- Whilst recognising the national decision to move improvements planned for RIS3 into RIS4, the region has historically seen multiple schemes delayed through RIS periods. Schemes such as the A47 improvements (Blofield – Burlingham, Easton-Tuddenham and Thickethorn) and A12 Chelmsford to A120 were originally identified in RIS1 and are not yet started. *We ask the Department commits to maintaining momentum on the development of the five current SRN projects to ensure delivery early in the RIS4 period to allow the East to realise its economic potential, support national growth and manage significant freight movements and planned housing development:*
 - *A12/A14 Copdock Interchange (Junction 55)*
 - *A120 Braintree to the A12*
 - *A11 Fiveways junction*
 - *M11 Junction 13*
 - *A47 Wisbech*
- In the England's Economic Heartland region, we understand that the National Highways' Oxford to Cambridge roads study, for which the Department and EEH were sponsors, is awaiting Ministerial sign-off. *It is crucial that the Department provides the funding to progress the interventions identified in the study.*
- We look forward to positive funding announcements for the region's MRN projects which already have business cases submitted to Government. These schemes are essential for managing localised capacity constraints, and support improvements to public transport and active travel. *We ask for clarity on these MRN funding decisions to be accelerated.*

- We noted that local authorities are finding the requirement for a financial contribution of 15% towards the total cost extremely challenging in the context of delays to decision making and wider pressures on local government services and finances. Local authority funding pressures and short-term settlements are also impacting maintenance programmes for our region's road network, impacting all road users and reducing value for taxpayers' money. *Multiple competitive funding pots act as a strain on local authorities' limited capacities and risk unequal service levels across the region.*
- At the same time, Departmental decisions on rail infrastructure can have a major impact on the region's already congested road network. The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement project is one of the most important rail freight schemes in the UK. Providing increased capacity from Felixstowe to the Midlands and North, the scheme is set to reduce congestion by 5.6m hours per year by removing 98,000 HGVs a year on the A14 and other roads. *The impact of not investing in the Ely scheme will merely mean more funding is needed to alleviate pressure on the region's road network and reduce our ability to support the decarbonisation of freight in the UK.*
- If we are to decarbonise road vehicles over the next decade then leveraging continued private sector investment in electric vehicles charging infrastructure is essential. Transport East and England's Economic Heartland have collaborated to develop an 'EV: Ready' mapping tool to enable partners to prioritise infrastructure investment into the most impactful locations. Across the region we need to increase public charging infrastructure by 10 times by 2025 to be on track for long-term targets. *The STBs are working with industry and partners including local authorities and National Highways to accelerate the roll-out of new charging stations.*
- The current financial climate means securing investment in major infrastructure is challenging. However, roads are relatively simple to plan, construct and operate. In this regard, *the APPG seeks clarification of the Department's view on securing alternative, private investment for new connections or improvements to strategically-important roads, including tolling which is an approach used in other countries.*
- Sub-national transport bodies play a pivotal role in ensuring investment is joined-up. *We therefore hope the DfT gives serious consideration to the recommendation of the Transport Select Committee to update National Highways' licence to include a formalised engagement process with STBs.*

We hope this is helpful and look forward to your response. Meanwhile if you or your officials have any questions regarding the contents of this letter please contact Steve Barwick of the APPG Secretariat who has sent it on our behalf.

Yours sincerely



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Sent on behalf of the co-chairs by Steve Barwick – steve@devoconnect.co.uk - East of England APPG Secretariat.

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