



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology

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Peter Aldous MP
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Dear Peter and Daniel,

Thank you for your email of 27 November 2023, congratulating me on my appointment as Minister for Science, Research and Innovation. I am delighted to be in the role and although it is always a wrench to move government departments there are many synergies with my previous Treasury role in mobilising investment for UK science and technology. I apologise for the late reply.

Firstly, I welcome the work you are doing at the East of England APPG, engaging key partners and government, collaborating to help deliver economic growth across the region. Following your discussion last year with my predecessor you posed a series of questions about support for innovation in the East of England. A response to these is provided below:

- 1. How could the East of England APPG and its partners work with government to develop a narrative that recognises the whole of the East of England not just Cambridge as the Innovation Region – such that this narrative would become better known within government as well as nationally and internationally?**

As a government, we are committed to supporting the growth and development of all the UK's clusters of innovation excellence, and we recently published our new innovation clusters map to help identify over 3,000 clusters. Our objective is to showcase to investors in the UK and abroad the varied innovative clusters that exist across the UK and the opportunities these present for investment and collaboration.

Developing a strong narrative for a region or cluster is vital for showcasing its potential and attracting investment. Local partners and leadership are key to developing such narratives because they understand the local ecosystem, networks and opportunities better than anyone. Through our work with the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and our discussions with investors, we can use that narrative to advertise the region around the world and highlight its unique assets and capabilities. My officials would be happy to have a further



conversation with you about your plans, and you can reach them at innovationclusters@dsit.gov.uk.

- 2. How government could better join up its Science, Innovation and Technology Strategy with the work of other departments responsible for policy relevant to innovation such as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (levelling up); the Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero (decarbonisation); the Department for Education (given critical importance of HE and FE to future skills); and the Department for Transport (given importance of connectivity)?**

The Science and Technology Framework, launched in March 2023, is the UK government's strategic vision that sets out ten priority areas to make the UK a science and technology superpower by 2030. It includes measures on skills and talent, investment in research and development, public and private sector financing, and regulation and standards to boost innovation and economic growth.

Each strand of the Framework has a lead department and ministerial responsibility, with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) taking an overall lead in co-ordinating the strategy.

- 3. How could DSIT best support the UK Innovation Corridor (which links Cambridge and Peterborough to London) through core funding to develop strategic programmes for example to strengthen the innovation ecosystem – with a particular focus on support for the private sector to develop supply chains and on ensuring all communities can benefit from innovation-led regional growth?**

We are committed to unlocking the potential of the UKIC. It is a powerhouse of productivity and a hotbed for innovation, with a workforce of 1.8 million people that is delivering productivity results 16% above the UK average and one in seven UK jobs located within just ten kilometres of the Corridor. We are committed to fostering its growth and have already made strides in this direction. For instance, we have invested up to £7.5 million in the Agri Tech and Food Launchpad encompassing Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This investment will build on innovation strengths to support SMEs to deliver jobs, growth and high productivity.

- 4. How can the government work with Innovate Cambridge to nurture the Cambridge cluster so it continues to grow and deliver for the whole of UK plc? This will include how it develops 'Commons' within the city but also links within East of England, especially the tech corridor to Norwich, and to other parts of the UK e.g. Manchester as well as internationally e.g. Boston and San Francisco.**

Cambridge is already a world-class cluster for research, development and innovation, and has the potential to provide even more jobs, opportunity and prosperity to its residents and the UK. We are committed to understanding what more government can do to unlock barriers to growth in Cambridge, such as a shortage of lab, office and housing space. For instance, we are

working closely with HMT on projects such as East West Rail to understand the potential benefits this could provide for the region.

The UK government has assisted numerous investors and start-up accelerators based in Boston and San Francisco to visit and make connections to the Cambridge cluster. We also fund initiatives such as TenU, where the University of Cambridge is participating with MIT, Stanford, Manchester and other universities to improve their collective approach to research commercialisation. We look forward to engaging with Innovate Cambridge as we advance our efforts to support the growth and development of the Cambridge cluster.

5. Norwich Research Park is already a tremendous (although little known nationally) success story – three BBRSC research centres with 30,000 employees. Its further expansion would not be to the detriment of Cambridge. How will the government support its efforts to scale up innovation opportunities, so they stay in this country when they get to the manufacturing stage?

The government recognises the significant contributions of Norwich Research Park, which is home to a community of 17,000 students and more than 3,000 scientists, researchers, clinicians, and business people. As part of our commitment to support these crucial research hubs, the UKRI Infrastructure Fund announced in 2023 that £317.7 million is set to be invested in The John Innes Centre and The Sainsbury Laboratory at the park over the next seven years.

This investment will fund new pioneering, world class facilities, including the development of a ground-breaking plant and microbial science and innovation hub. It will also significantly enhance the park's capacity to scale up innovation opportunities and ensure that these opportunities remain in the UK when they reach the manufacturing stage.

6. How will DSIT work with DLUHC (its parent Department) to assist Freeport East deliver on its four primary tasks: increasing public and private innovation spending into the Freeport East area; using innovation as an anchor for attracting new investment; strengthening the physical and digital connections that aid innovation activity; facilitating the deployment of innovations to tackle local social and economic disparities?

DSIT is fully committed to working closely with DLUHC to ensure that innovation is at the heart of Levelling Up programmes, such as Freeports and Investment Zones. We recognise the crucial role that Freeports play in enabling innovation clusters to thrive, building local innovation capacity, ecosystems and private sector strength.

As outlined in the Freeport Delivery Roadmap, we are committed to ensuring that future innovation policies consider Freeports as emerging clusters and are keen to work closely with DLUHC to explore how this place-based approach could be incorporated into national policies and funding programmes. Our collaboration with the Freeport Regulation Engagement Network (FREN) will also support businesses within Freeports to overcome regulatory barriers to their innovation objectives.

I recognise that the East of England is a region bursting with innovation, talent and opportunity, and I want to thank the APPG for its role in supporting the region's economy and promoting its potential as a place to work, study, live and invest. I appreciate you taking the time to write and for sharing information regarding your work and look forward to continuing to work with you to realise our shared ambitions.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Griffith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

ANDREW GRIFFITH MP
Minister of State
Department for Science, Innovation & Technology