



East of England
All Party Parliamentary Group
Co-Chairs: Jess Asato MP and Andrew Pakes MP
Vice-Chairs: Blake Stephenson MP & Marie Goldman MP



Dear the Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP

Opportunity East report highlights how East of England can help deliver Government's Missions

This letter has been written jointly by the East of England All Party Parliamentary Group and the cross-party East of England Local Government Association with the support of Transport East, England's Economic Heartland, Freeport East and Chambers East. With the understanding that a three-year Spending Review is underway, and will be concluded next year, we wanted to set out how the East of England could be instrumental in ensuring that the Government's Missions are delivered.

As a region, we have jointly published a report, [Opportunity East](#), launched at the East of England Net Zero and Climate Resilience Summit on 18 July. Daniel Zeichner MP, DEFRA Minister of State, addressed the audience and welcomed the report's launch which outlines how to maximise the economic growth our region offers the UK. It also sets out a comprehensive overview of the infrastructure investment and support required to unlock this potential. This agenda is essential for understanding how money committed to the East of England by the Spending Review can deliver a return on its investment.

The East of England is an economic success story. With a £163bn economy, it is one of the only regions in the UK that acts as a net contributor to the Exchequer. However, it is not just about raw GDP. We power, feed, and supply the UK. Our offshore wind farms currently power the equivalent of 32% of all UK homes, we have 15% of England's total farmland, and half of the UK's containerised goods move through the region. Not only is the East of England economically indispensable, but it's also vital to protect the UK's strategic interests in the decades ahead.

We also have specific strengths in priority sectors for the Government – including life sciences, advanced manufacturing, creative industries, renewable energy, digital and agri-tech – and the research and development that takes place in the east powers the rest of the economy. The East of England has the highest R&D expenditure of any region in the UK; £1,106 compared to the £577 average. As the Industrial Strategy states, it is important to start with areas with a proven track record of success, and the East of England meets that criterion as a region.

All this has been achieved despite underinvestment in our region. In total, the East of England receives £8bn less per year than the national average in public expenditure. Our infrastructure has experienced chronic under-investment for decades and, as a result, we are in danger of failing to maximise our growth potential. We have significant problems with east-west rail connectivity, our 5G and gigabit coverage is below the national average, water scarcity issues are hindering housing and business growth, and our region is the most susceptible nationally to the impacts of climate change.

There were, however, a number of actions taken in the Budget that will help us deliver the Government's Missions. £1.3bn in grant funding for local authorities will help us plan developments and encourage growth across the region, and a clear commitment to East West Rail is a welcome promise, helping to connect our region more fully with the rest of the UK. In addition, the funding for education is most welcome, and will help address skill gaps across the East. As was the funding to support growth in Cambridge. Lastly, the £520m Life Sciences Manufacturing Fund is a great first step towards supporting the important Life Sciences sector in the East, and we look forward to the publication of the Sector Growth Plans in Spring.

However, we are eager to work as partners of Government to do more than what has been set out so far. We want to boost growth, create opportunity and build a sustainable future. Here are some examples of how we can do just that:

1. The recently published Industrial Strategy Green Paper makes the Government's Mission around trade and growth clear. Therefore, as the gateway to the UK, we want to play our part as a region. **If funding were released to upgrade Ely and Haughley rail junctions**, it would not only directly assist the transport strategies of the Transport for the North and Midlands Connect areas, but it would also unlock 2,900 extra freight train services to and from the Port of Felixstowe every year, helping the UK trade network become greener and more sustainable in the process. More information on this scheme [can be found online](#).
2. We support the Government in their ambitions around housing and, given the extremely high affordability ratios in the East of England, we are aware of the need to increase the supply of genuinely affordable homes. The scale and ambition that this administration is showing around housing is without precedent, and as a result, we ask that the **Government provide the support that planning departments desperately need to keep up with this ambition, and the resources for local authorities to once more take part in the construction of more, affordable, and better-quality housing**.
3. In order to get Britain building locally, especially given the rural nature of our area, there is a need for enabling infrastructure. We could use a **simpler, longer-term funding mechanism to facilitate stable regional transport investment pipelines to make this happen**. This could support priorities set out in the strategies of the region's two Subnational Transport Bodies (STBs), and help local authorities plan for growth and housing. Likewise, maintaining the **national Wireless Infrastructure Strategy to boost the reliability of mobile and internet connectivity in rural areas** will do much to increase the attractiveness of the region to Foreign Direct Investment, and encourage domestic investment, in this highly research-focussed region.
4. Our region is host to the largest number of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) in the country, many related to making Britain a clean energy superpower including Sizewell C, the Bathside Bay Remediation and Regeneration Project and the Lower Thames Crossing. **If local skills funding were devolved, and the funding situation of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) were confirmed**, we could assist Government in ensuring that the maximum opportunity is found through these infrastructure projects. This will maximise the added value from your investment, help local workers in the rural and coastal communities where this infrastructure is often built, and keep Government connected to key businesses in the region so that it can better understand business needs locally.
5. Finally, we have written separately to the Minister with responsibility for local government finance to urge the Spending Review to put councils on a strong and financially sustainable footing including providing the sector with stability, multi-year settlements and a revised funding formula as well as for local authorities to be trusted with greater powers around income generation. We have also written to the Minister for Investment urging the Office for Investment to work with regional partners to maximise the East of England's potential to secure private inward investment and deliver growth.

In conclusion, we believe that [Opportunity East](#) provides the regional evidence base required for the development of the Government's Industrial Strategy and a framework for Local Growth Plans in the East of England. We also think that its contents are relevant to the Spending Review, making a strong case for investment in the region. As a region, we are speaking with one voice, and we are eager to help the Government Deliver on its Mission for cleaner, fairer growth.

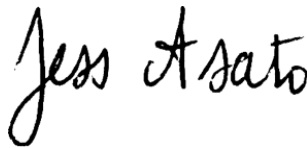
For us to discuss these issues in more detail, we would like to request that we meet with you, or another member of your Ministerial team, and/or senior officials from the Treasury. Please may we ask your officials to liaise with Steve Barwick of the East of England APPG Secretariat – who has sent this email on our behalf – regarding when may be most convenient for us to do that.

Yours sincerely,



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Cllr Graham Butland

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Chair of England's Economic Heartland



Charlotte Horobin

Chambers East

**Cc The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government;
The Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP, Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero;
The Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology;
The Rt Hon Louise Haigh MP, Secretary of State for Transport
The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education and the Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills and
The Rt Hon Jonathan Reynolds MP, Secretary of State for Business and Trade.**