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

Responding to the Climate Change Challenge:
The East of England's key role in making Britain a clean energy superpower
17:00 – 18:30, Tuesday 17th March 2026
Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House (NB Change of Venue)

OVERVIEW

Today the East of England already powers nearly a third of UK homes through nuclear, offshore wind and gas. Over the next decade, with Sizewell B & C, expanded offshore wind, hydrogen and carbon capture, it has the potential to become the UK's integrated clean energy corridor — generating power, retaining supply chains and anchoring long-term industrial growth.

But the region is not simply a contributor to Britain's clean energy future — it is the only region where nuclear, offshore wind, gas infrastructure and carbon storage capability already coexist at national scale and which can deliver growth and opportunity. *The vital importance of this energy capacity is made all the more clear by the current conflict in the Middle East which has led to a massive increase in the price of oil.*

However, the region is severely challenged by climate change: with 20% of it below sea level the region is highly susceptible to flooding, drought and coastal erosion. Despite this the public sector in the East of England receives the *lowest* share of strategic net zero delivery funds from Government (£6.00 per capita) compared to the North East and Greater London (which secured £51.90 and £34.05 per capita respectively).

The opportunity is clear. If Government backs a coordinated East of England energy corridor — aligning ports, grid, skills, water and secure domestic production — the East can become the demonstrator region for Clean Power delivered at scale, with community consent and supply chain retention.

The question is not whether the East can deliver, it is whether we choose to treat it as a national strategic asset and capitalise on what is already here through government support for improved grid connectivity, progress towards transport decarbonisation, a greater focus on relevant skills growth and attention to the region's critical water requirements to support these energy needs.

If the UK wants to demonstrate that clean power, energy security and industrial growth can be delivered together, the East of England is where that model can be built first.

KEY POINTS

- **Future energy**: the UK risks losing offshore wind supply chains through a lack of mega-scale port capacity. We urge Government to support the Bathside Bay development as a key construction and marshalling hub for the OSW sector and other regional energy projects including Sizewell C. Bathside Bay would create an East Coast industrial corridor (across Great Yarmouth-Lowestoft-Harwich ports), and it is a fully consented major development with investor backing that acts as an ideal location to serve North Sea and European markets. We therefore request a) urgent development of a revenue guarantee model to support this project and b) commitment through the Contracts for Difference (CfD) mechanism for OSW developers to use UK ports such as Bathside Bay.

- **Secure energy*:*** While scaling offshore wind and nuclear, it should also be recognised that domestic gas production remains critical to energy security and supports many of the same supply chains that will deliver carbon capture and hydrogen. A just transition must retain capability, not prematurely hollow it out.

- **Grid connectivity:** To meet HMG's Clean Power targets, the region needs to construct pylons and energy infrastructure which are often unwelcome to residents. We must ensure grid projects support communities in three ways. First, we need mechanisms to compensate those impacted by infrastructure, ensuring projects contribute to infrastructure pressure through the CIL or equivalent (including local employment metrics). Second, we must ensure local supply chain opportunities are maximised for the region. Third Government should support the transitional Regional Energy Strategic Plan (tRESP) report which sets out 2.9 GW of regional connectivity needs over 2028-2033, including proactive investment for 0.87 GW in three priority Freeport and growth areas under the ED3 price control.

- **Transport decarbonisation:** The East is a trade gateway for freight transport to the rest of the UK. Transport drives emissions and other freight pressures, for example congested roads, noise and disruption to residents. Transport decarbonisation is good for the environment and improves lives across the region. Driving modal shift, from road to rail, is the first step in easing the burden and upgrading the Ely-Haughley rail junction remains a key priority in decarbonising freight from major freight ports such as Felixstowe, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. Similarly, the setup of EV charging points along national highways will support green freight corridors between major UK logistics hubs (such as the Green Freight Corridor being advanced by Freeport East and East Midlands Freeport). Access to grid power is a critical barrier and expediting delivery against the tRESP is critical.

- **Skills:** The new West Suffolk College as a Technical Excellence Centre is welcomed and there is support for Colchester College's wave 2 application for TEC status as a hub for clean energy skills. Freeport East and Sizewell continue to support skills across the region with Sizewell already hiring 100 apprentices and looking to hire 1,500 overall. But more could and should be done to encourage other local companies and skills stakeholders to collaborate to support regional growth and reduce brain drain. Moreover, we must ensure the teaching capacity exists to support these new skill centres, ensuring lecturers and FE staff match the investment into capital infrastructure. One option is to create a Clean Energy Skills Coordination mechanism to ensure regional alignment.

- **Water:** The East's clean energy ambitions on nuclear, hydrogen and carbon capture need access to water. But the region is the driest and one of the lowest lying, making it vulnerable to water scarcity and flooding. Private investment is required to develop strategic water infrastructure—including major reservoirs and desalination capacity to improve access to water. Government will need to create an environment (via the Water Reform Bill) that encourages investment and supports the argument to invest in UK water.

DETAILED BACKGROUND

The East of England is a critical energy hub for the UK. Its current mix of renewable and low-carbon energy sources power approximately 32% of UK homes. This includes 5 GW of **offshore wind** capacity (equal to 52% of the UK's capacity), with nearly 10 GW in development. **Nuclear power** at Sizewell B provides energy to 2.5 million homes while the new generation at Sizewell C will add a further 3.2 GW, powering approximately 6 million homes.

The East is an integral part of the UK's ability to deliver its net-zero targets. Nevertheless, government net-zero funding often goes to other areas, the 2025 Ibex Earth report (see link) highlights that the East was the lowest funded region nationally with only £6 per capita received across four key funding programmes, in comparison to the North East at £51.90 per capita. The East's share of net-zero programmatic funding was just 2.92% in comparison to Greater London which received 22.87%. This is brought into further relief as the East is disproportionately impacted by climate change with 20% of its land below sea level, making is susceptible to both droughts and flooding.

To add to the above, energy requirements are only increasing with the exponential growth of AI and other technologies. The East remains well placed to support increasing energy needs but it needs government to make the right decisions and invest in the region.

Future Energy

The East of England already offers key offshore wind port capacity including in Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Harwich. However, the reality is that the OSW industry across the North Sea continues to grow and there is a risk of losing OSW supply chain business to other non-UK competitors primarily due to a lack of major port capacity.

Furthermore, Europe and the UK have growing energy requirements and we must ensure a pathway to deliver clean energy. The government should demonstrate its financial support for projects such as Bathside Bay which aim to build a largescale construction and marshalling hub for the growing OSW and clean energy industry across the East Coast and North Sea.

The Government has committed to ambitious clean-energy goals. Delivering 43–50GW of operational or committed offshore-wind capacity by 2030 requires a step-change in port capacity to handle larger turbines, foundations, and installation vessels. The UK needs substantially more laydown space at ports to build the wind farms that will meet the 2030 objective. Moreover, the designs for the Bathside Bay development include an increase in port capacity so the region can compete with other port areas across the Northern European area. This would arguably create an East Coast Industrial Corridor by providing additional container port capacity following on from recent investment into other regional ports around Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth.

Bathside Bay is one of very few fully consented, strategically located and technically capable site that provides the port capacity the UK needs to deliver its offshore-wind ambitions. With a targeted guarantee for a short list of ready-to-go ports and a requirement within CfDs that developers use those ports, Government can provide the certainty the private sector needs to invest — unlocking immediate delivery, accelerating Clean Power 2030, and regenerating one of the country's most disadvantaged coastal communities.

Furthermore, while scaling offshore wind and nuclear, we should also recognise that domestic gas production remains critical to energy security and supports many of the same supply chains that will deliver the clean energy transition. To this end, a clean and secure transition must retain certain capabilities and not prematurely hollow them out.

Secure energy

While scaling offshore wind and nuclear, it should also be also recognised that domestic gas production remains critical to energy security and supports many of the same supply chains that will deliver carbon capture and hydrogen. In fact the East of England is not simply a contributor to Britain's clean energy future, energy security must remain central to the UK's transition. While offshore wind, grid, carbon storage, hydrogen and nuclear scale up, domestic gas production continues to provide flexibility, resilience and the engineering capability that will underpin carbon capture and hydrogen.

A just transition must also retain capability, not prematurely hollow it out.

Grid Connectivity

The East of England will need to make a significant contribution to the Government's Clean Power targets with the construction of hundreds of miles of pylons and clean energy infrastructure. This is understandably unwelcome to many residents in the area. We need to set out ways to ensure communities benefit as we expand grid connectivity across the region.

The first is the inclusion of fair and effective mechanisms at a regional level to compensate communities impacted by new infrastructure, which should include appropriate contributions from renewable energy projects to support local infrastructure pressure through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or equivalent mechanisms (including monitoring local employment metrics).

The second is to ensure local supply chains opportunities are maximised for the region – Freeport East have held discussions with a range of parties who manufacture electrical equipment including cables, solar panels and various offshore wind components.

Third we must ensure our local economy benefits from better grid access. The recent tRESP report set out 2.9 GW of connectivity requirements across eight grip supply points areas in the East region over 2028-2033. The evidence identified increase in capacity largely associated with Industrial decarbonisation (such as factories and manufacturing facilities), Freeports and data centres, as well as housing and commercial development, including for example new offices and shops. The report also specifically indicated that a subset of the areas with strategic needs should be considered for proactive investment in the ED3 price control. This included the 0.12 GW in Tilbury and 0.5 GW in Bramford to support Thames Freeport and Freeport East areas respectively and 0.25 GW in Norwich to support industrial decarbonisation and water utility. Government should support these priority areas for proactive investment in the ED3 price control.

Transport Decarbonisation

As the main gateway for trade to and from the UK, the East of England has a critical role in facilitating freight transport to the rest of the country. As a result, transport is a key driver of carbon emissions in the East of England but it is also an indicator of other freight transport pressures. These include congestion on main roads, noise emissions and disruption to many communities and local residents in their daily activities.

Targeting transport decarbonisation is good for the environment but also improves the lives of communities across the region. One of government's key pillars is to decarbonise and deliver Net Zero in a way that supports growth and captures economic opportunities. Driving modal shift by enhancing rail connections can help to reduce road congestion, lower carbon emissions while meeting the needs of a growing workforce, with higher frequency passenger rail services demonstrating a significant increase in passenger footfall (and related economic activity).

It should be noted that work is already ongoing to increase transport decarbonisation, particularly for freight. Sizewell C is currently installing a railway that will help deliver materials to its construction site, and Sizewell is also building a jetty so that materials can be delivered from sea – representing active steps to decarbonise the construction of the UK's new Nuclear Power plant.

However, the Ely and Haughley rail improvement is a crucial project for the East of England. This package of rail measures includes a double track junction at Haughley aimed to facilitate enhanced rail freight capacity and capacity enhancement through Soham and Ely. Beyond this the designation of a Green Freight Corridor between the East Midlands Freeport and Freeport East is actively driving potential solutions to realising electric HGV re-charging facilities. This "greening" of the road corridor also requires suitable access to grid power which remains a critical barrier, and therefore an expedited delivery of the tRESP is critical.

Skills

The reality is that the East of England's clean energy ambitions will only succeed if infrastructure delivery is matched by a coordinated and sustainable skills strategy. Major projects including Sizewell C, offshore wind expansion and grid reinforcement create an opportunity not simply for training activity, but for long-term regional economic transformation.

There are positive foundations on which to build. A number of regional actors are investing in clean energy skills to build a pipeline of talent that not only supports the growing renewable energy sector but also gives back to local communities by contributing to people based economic growth. Sizewell C already has 100 graduates in place with a plan to deliver 1500 apprenticeships. Sizewell C also- announced plans in July 2025 to build a new college on the coast, education campus, and surrounding facilities, to boost access to skills, remove barriers and ensure access to learning remains.

West Suffolk College's Technical Excellence Centre designation and Colchester College's Wave 2 application demonstrate institutional ambition. Freeport East in partnership with mid-Suffolk district Council has furthermore established the new Stowmarket Innovation Gateway which has the potential to be an iconic and market-leading hub for innovation and skills in green sectors within the eastern region.

However, capital investment in facilities must be matched by workforce capacity and coordination. The East of England already faces constraints in further education lecturer recruitment, particularly in engineering, construction and technical disciplines. Without careful planning, new facilities risk diluting scarce teaching talent rather than expanding effective delivery. Strengthening and connecting existing colleges may in some cases offer greater value than establishing parallel structures. The region would benefit from a coordinated Clean Energy Skills Framework that:

- Aligns projected labour demand from nuclear, offshore wind, grid, hydrogen and carbon capture with realistic training capacity
- Publishes transparent data on apprenticeship progression into sustained, skilled employment within the region
- Prioritises long-term skilled roles rather than short-term construction demand
- Reduces duplication between institutions and supports lecturer recruitment and retention
- Encourages collaboration between local employers, FE, HE and training providers to minimise brain drain

The objective should be clear: infrastructure investment must translate into durable, high-value employment for local people. Success should not be measured solely in apprenticeship starts or new buildings, but in sustained regional prosperity, supply chain capability and retained expertise.

A structured regional coordination mechanism, working alongside industry and government, would help ensure that skills development supports not only Clean Power 2030, but also long-term energy security and industrial competitiveness.

Water

The East of England is disproportionately impacted by climate change compared with the rest of the UK[1]. It is both the driest region in the country and one of the lowest-lying, leaving it uniquely vulnerable to the combined risks of water scarcity, flooding and coastal erosion. Climate change is no longer a future challenge. Its impacts are felt now, with direct consequences for communities, infrastructure and economic growth.

Since 2020, the region has experienced a series of extreme weather events, including the severe drought of 2022—when the highest temperatures ever recorded in the UK were experienced in the East of England—followed by an unprecedentedly wet winter and successive storms during 2023 and 2024. These extremes highlight the growing volatility of the climate and the urgent need to strengthen resilience.

While historic investment, smart metering and demand management have helped mitigate recent drought impacts, significant challenges remain. New strategic water infrastructure—including **major reservoirs and the consideration of desalination capacity**—will be essential, alongside continued action to improve efficiency, resilience and environmental protection.

However, infrastructure alone will not deliver resilience. Cross-sector collaboration is critical. The East of England is home to nationally significant clean energy and industrial assets, including Sizewell C and the South Humber Bank, a leading UK hub for hydrogen and Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage. All rely on secure and resilient water supplies.

A key issue is the lack of a mechanism to create infrastructure capacity until individual projects are confirmed – this therefore calls for a more risk-based approach to ensure water infrastructure is delivered in time. Water underpins the region's ambitions for clean energy, decarbonisation and economic growth, and must be embedded in strategic decision-making from the outset.

The East of England APPG is kindly supported by:

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[1] See 'Opportunity East: One Year On' Report