

Press Release

East of England Key to UK Growth, Say Ministers at Parliamentary Reception

Date: 4 December 2024

Ministers, Members of Parliament, and regional leaders underscored the East of England's pivotal role in driving the UK's growth ambitions at the annual East of England All-Party Parliamentary Reception held last night. Co-hosted by the East of England Local Government Association and the East of England All Party Parliamentary Group, the event spotlighted the critical investments needed to sustain the region's contributions in feeding, powering, and supplying the nation.

A key theme of the evening was the urgent need for safe, warm, and genuinely affordable homes to support the region's growth and prosperity and a pivotal report, 'Healthy Homes in the East of England' was launched by Baroness Sharon Taylor of Stevenage, Lords Minister for Housing and Local Government.

In her speech Baroness Taylor commented that everyone deserved to live in a safe and decent home and that the report would support not only Integrated Care Boards in the East of England but across the country.

Baroness Taylor said "You have our commitment to work with you to get Britain building again. Building communities, not just houses".

A Vital Region Driving National Success

The recently launched Opportunity East report highlighted that the East of England is a key contributor to the UK's economic growth potential. As a net contributor to the Treasury, it boasts the highest R&D spend per capita nationwide and is projected to contribute £220 billion to the economy by 2035.

Jess Asato, MP for Lowestoft and co-chair of the East of England APPG said "The region generates one-third of the country's clean energy, hosts the UK's largest port—handling 48% of Britain's containerised trade—and produces over £1.1 billion in farming income annually, growing over a third of the country's vegetables. Here in the East, we are feeding, supplying and powering the nation".

Gareth Thomas MP, Minister for Local Growth, Department of Business and Trade said "Government has made no secret that we want to go for growth. The East of England has an important part to play in realising our ambitions".

Cllr Graham Butland, Leader of Braintree District Council and Chair of EELGA, who co-chaired the evening said “The Government must address critical infrastructure needs in our region. Projects such as the Ely and Haughley rail junction upgrades are urgent priorities. Connectivity, both physical through roads and rail, and digital, must be a key focus.”

Launch of the Healthy Homes Report

The launch of the ‘Healthy Homes in the East of England’ report underscores the critical role of high-quality housing in fostering societal growth and reducing disparities.

Andrew Pakes, MP for Peterborough co-chair of the East of England APPG said.

“Everyone deserves a safe, warm, affordable, and stable home to live a good-quality life. It’s noted that rising costs and a shortage of quality housing in the East of England have created a challenge but, after hearing what has been said today, I am sure that councils, housing associations and the private sector will work with the region’s MPs and the Government to seize the opportunity for greater collaboration and meet that challenge.”

Cllr Jacqui Taylor, Housing Portfolio Holder, St Alban’s City and District Council and EELA Lead Member for Housing and Homelessness said.

“This report builds on the positive vision built into Opportunity East and aligns with the Government’s missions. The need for safe, warm and genuinely affordable social housing is important. While the region is a net contributor to the economy, there are pockets of deprivation. They are often hidden, where significant health inequalities exist”.

James Francis, Deputy Chair of Build East said

“We wholeheartedly support the principles set out in the report. Energy efficiency is just one part of raising health and wellbeing levels and we need to find ways to move forwards. We welcome the prioritisation of housing by Government”.

Sean Hanson, CEO of IMPOWER, commented “Housing and health must be viewed as interconnected. By focusing on preventative interventions, ICSs can improve health outcomes and reduce long-term healthcare costs, while building sustainable, inclusive communities. We are very proud to have worked with partners on this important research and report.”

A Call for Action: Investment in the East of England

Despite some recognition in the recent November budget, the East of England received insufficient funding to address urgent needs in transport, climate resilience, housing, water scarcity, energy, and digital connectivity.

This event, attended by over 100 Ministers, Members of Parliament, Leaders and Chief Executives, served as a pivotal moment to secure the investment and attention the East of England requires to continue driving national prosperity.

Ends

Note to Editors

Press enquiries about Opportunity East and the Parliamentary Reception should be directed to Sharon Bleese, Head of Communications at the East of England Local Government Association sharon.bleese@eelga.gov.uk 07812 509920

About East of England Local Government Association (EELGA)

The East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) is the cross-party, membership body of the 50 local authorities across the East of England.

Press enquiries about Health Homes in the East of England report should be directed to

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Baroness Sharon Taylor of Stevenage



James Francis, BuildEast



Cllr Graham Butland, EELGA



Andrew Pakes MP



Gareth Thomas MP, Minister for Local Growth



Cllr Jacqui Taylor, EELGA