



4 March 2020

Dear Chancellor,

Next week's Budget is a unique opportunity for this Government to demonstrate its commitment to boosting economic prosperity across the country.

We have now heard from successive governments about the importance of investing in the Midlands and the North of England to help rebalance the economy. We fully support this much-needed investment and it is good news for people and businesses in those regions – and for the country as a whole – that the investment there is starting to bear fruit.

However, 'levelling up' shouldn't be just a way of dealing with our country's historic north-south economic divide. In the Prime Minister's own words, 'levelling up' needs to "spread opportunity to every corner of the UK".

The South East is already a powerful motor for national prosperity, adding more than £200 billion to the UK economy – more than any region outside the capital. It is a huge economy in its own right, home to 7.5 million people and more than 300,000 businesses from FTSE100 giants to nimble and innovative start-ups. It boasts world-leading universities and research institutes, dynamic towns and cities, beautiful coasts and countryside and is our nation's key international gateway for people and goods.

When the South East prospers, so does the whole UK. Our knowledge-based digital economy is an innovation engine that creates high-skilled jobs across the country. Whether it's advanced engineering in Surrey, maritime and defence in the Solent or creative industries in Brighton, the innovation that takes place in the South East enables the UK to remain globally competitive.

But we face a real challenge. Despite these enviable foundations – and in some cases because of them – our transport network is operating beyond capacity and can't sustain ongoing growth. Roads are congested and rail travel is often unreliable. Urgent investment is needed to meet existing demands and cater for future growth and to help unlock new housing, attract inward investment and support deprived communities.

Our thirty-year transport strategy sets out a vision for the South East that is better for people, better for business and better for the planet. With the right investment in a more sustainable transport network, we can more than double the South East's economy to almost £500bn, create an additional 500,000 jobs, boost quality of life and access to opportunities for everyone and cut the region's carbon emissions to net-zero.

And we can do this while delivering significant benefits for the millions of people and thousands of businesses across the UK who rely on the South East's unrivalled connections with Europe and the rest of the world.

From cars made in the Midlands to Scotch whisky and Welsh steel, goods worth hundreds of billions are exported each year from the South East's ports, airports and international rail connections to all four corners of the globe. These busy international gateways also support the movement of millions of people between the UK and the rest of the world.

- Nearly 15% of all UK trade passes through the Port of Dover, Europe's busiest ferry port
- Air freight at Heathrow alone accounts for 31% of the UK's non-EU trade by volume
- Port of Southampton is the UK's principal port for non-EU exports – the UK's biggest growing market – handling goods worth more than £70bn a year
- Nearly 50 million passengers use Gatwick Airport each year, making it the second-busiest single runway airport in the world
- More than 20 million passengers a year travel between the UK and Europe on Eurostar and Eurotunnel shuttle services, alongside 23 million tonnes of freight

That is what we mean when we say the South East is the UK's window on the world, offering unparalleled reach and access to global markets. It's why investment in the South East is a powerful enabler for growth across the UK, supporting the money already being spent in the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine to ensure those areas have strong access to supply chains and consumers across the world. And it's why investment in a better transport network is so important for people not just here in the South East but across the UK.

Transport for the South East has emerged as a powerful and effective partnership for our region, bringing together civic and business leaders to speak with one voice on our transport investment priorities. We stand ready to work with this Government to unlock the incredible potential of our region and support growth and prosperity throughout the country.

SIGNED:

Cllr Keith Glazier

East Sussex County Council – *Leader*
Transport for the South East – *Chair*

Cllr Alan Jarrett

Medway Council – *Leader*

Cllr Rob Humby

Hampshire County Council – *Deputy Leader*

Cllr Jacqui Rayment

Southampton City Council – *Deputy Leader*

Cllr Lynne Stagg

Portsmouth City Council – *Cabinet Member for Transport*

Cllr Ian Ward

Isle of Wight Council – *Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Transport*

Brian Johnson

Solent Local Enterprise Partnership – *Interim Chair*

Adam Bryan

South East LEP – *Chief Executive*

Jonathan Sharrock

Coast to Capital LEP – *Chief Executive*

Louise Punter

Surrey Chamber of Commerce – *Chief Executive*

Ana Christie

Sussex Chamber of Commerce – *Chief Executive*

Jo James

Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce – *Chief Executive*

Cllr Tony Page

Berkshire Local Transport Body – *Chair*
Transport for the South East – *Deputy Chair*

Cllr Colin Kemp

Surrey County Council – *Deputy Leader*

Cllr Michael Payne

Kent County Council – *Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport*

Cllr Anne Pissaridou

Brighton & Hove City Council – *Chair of the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee*

Cllr Roger Elkins

West Sussex County Council – *Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure*

Cllr Dan Humphreys

Worthing Borough Council – *Leader*

Richard Tyndall

Thames Valley Berkshire LEP – *Chief Executive*

Ross McNally

Enterprise M3 LEP – *Director*
Hampshire Chamber of Commerce – *Executive Chair*

Paul Britton

Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce – *Chief Executive*

Steven Holbrook

Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce – *Chief Executive*