



DELIVERING FOR NORTH ESSEX



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The North Essex Vision

A proactive, productive and progressive North Essex that advances its economic potential through inward and outward-facing partnerships, with all residents, businesses and visitors benefitting from the region's economic prosperity.

The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) is proud to present our ambitious North Essex vision, ready to collaborate with partners to seize the region's significant and diverse economic opportunities.

Established in 2019, the NEEB represents the economic ambitions of seven North Essex authorities – Braintree District Council, Chelmsford City Council, Colchester City Council, Essex County Council, Maldon District Council, Tendring District Council and Uttlesford District Council – catalysing collective action to drive economic prosperity within all parts of the urban, rural and coastal region. It provides the strategic oversight of North Essex's diverse, inclusive and productive economic priorities, ensuring tangible actions are delivered to support residents' and businesses' goals and aspirations. Promoting the region's potential, the NEEB presents the strong strategic rationale for further central government and private sector investment, needed to deliver North Essex's long-term ambitions.

Much has been delivered by the NEEB to date – including the distribution of critical COVID-19 support funding and career-enhancing business and skills support programmes – and the partnership is now positioned to go even further and deliver even more for North Essex's residents and businesses. The 2-year delivery plan and ambitions presented below have been developed by Henham Strategy, utilising 'North Essex's Strategic Narrative' and 'North Essex's Economic Baseline' to identify the short-term actions and long-term ambitions that will deliver economic prosperity for North Essex's residents and businesses.



Working together, we can leverage North Essex's core strengths...

Our innovative and thriving SME community and cutting edge HE and FE institutions, delivering good, local jobs

Our dynamic and competitive renewable energy generation strengths, driving net zero progression

Our unique strategic location linked to regional and international partners, supporting inward investment

Our proud urban, rural and coastal communities, focused on supporting prosperous residents and businesses

The Economic Context

Much has changed since the NEEB published its 2019 economic strategy, with three critical events in particular shaping the opportunities and challenges of the North Essex economy.

Firstly, the UK's departure from the EU in January 2020 has changed the economic landscape of both North Essex and the country as a whole, with challenges still being worked through as the country seeks to prosper through its new post-Brexit economic position. For North Essex specifically, the region's significant number of SMEs are continuing to adapt to changes in the business and trading environment, changes that Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts suggest could lead to a decline in the UK's long-run productivity, relative to remaining in the EU.

Alongside Brexit, there are lasting impacts caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Whilst Government-mandated lockdowns and restrictions are a thing of the past, their economic impacts remain, including economic inactivity remaining stubbornly high and hybrid working patterns embedded across the country. This national picture mirrors what has been observed within North Essex, with the region's economic inactivity currently 1.9% higher than figures recorded pre-COVID-19 and a much greater proportion of residents working from home¹.

Finally, residents and businesses across the country have, most recently, been significantly impacted by cost-of-living pressures that have eaten away at disposable income and financial reserves. We know the damage inflation has had on many residents and businesses across North Essex – including the need to delay important life decisions² – with support for North Essex's residents and businesses at the forefront of our thinking as we look to progress actions to boost the region's economic growth.

North Essex's Strategic Priorities

Despite recent challenging economic circumstances, the North Essex economy stands ready to build on the fantastic opportunities within the region, with its diverse urban, rural and coastal characteristics differentiating the region from other parts of the country.

With these diverse characteristics in mind, this 'Delivering for North Essex' plan has been founded upon four key strategic priorities.

1. Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

A resilient and outward-facing economy that builds on its incumbent strengths and is positioned to deliver economic opportunities for North Essex's residents, and drive inward investment to support businesses within the region's critical growth sectors.

2. A Green and High Growth Economy

A forward-looking economy that utilises the diversity of its resources in a sustainable way that furthers North Essex's clean energy strengths, boosts growth, and promotes residents' prosperity through net zero commitments.

¹ NOMIS. Labour Market Profiles (Essex) (2022). Source: [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/labour-market-profiles)

² Essex Open Data. Cost of Living Qualitative Research (2023). Source: [Cost of living qualitative research | Essex Open Data](https://www.essex.gov.uk/cost-of-living-qualitative-research)

3. A Dynamic and Connected Region

A well-connected and digitally-linked region that provides residents with quick and reliable access to key services, encourages inward investment, and makes the most of ties to regional and international neighbours.

4. Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

A thriving and inclusive region where all residents and businesses have the opportunity to contribute and prosper, exemplifying the region as a great place to live, work and visit.



North Essex's Opportunities

1. Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

RESIDENTS

We want all North Essex's residents to have the opportunity to:

- Make the most of the region's excellent Higher and Further Education offerings.
- Benefit from good, career-enhancing jobs within the region's key growth sectors – construction and retrofit, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and engineering, digital tech, and life sciences.
- Engage with NEEB-led skills development programmes, building workplace confidence and the region's skills.
- Benefit from living and working within North Essex, with a desire to remain within the region and contribute to its economic prosperity.
- Retrain, ensuring the region's workforce has the ability to pivot towards jobs within the region's key growth sectors.

BUSINESSES

We want all our businesses to have the opportunity to:

- Start and scale up within North Essex, benefitting from cutting edge commercial space.
- Engage with, and benefit from, the opportunities around Freeport East and its associated tax relief.
- Collaborate with other innovative businesses, sharing best business practices and supporting business growth.
- Secure inward investment, implementing cutting-edge innovations within business practices and boosting local economies.
- Employ an appropriately skilled workforce within North Essex, supporting resident and business ambitions and locally-sourced talent.

The North Essex Snapshot

These opportunities reflect the region's incumbent business and skills strengths, with infrastructure and projects already in place that are driving innovative businesses and skilled residents within North Essex. Notably, North Essex benefits from a significant SME community, with current sector strengths including construction and real estate activities. Alongside incumbent sector strengths, the region is making positive strides towards seizing the opportunities associated with key growth sectors. This includes the excellent work being progressed in the Digi Tech sector through the AIXR: Centre for Immersive Innovation and the Life Sciences sector through Chesterford Research Park. Supporting growth sector progression are North Essex's leading Higher and Further Education institutions, including the University of Essex, Anglia Ruskin, University Writtle College, the Colchester Institute, Chelmsford College and Stansted Airport College. Education strengths include the University of Essex's expertise in computer and data science and the 'first of its kind' aviation training offered by Stansted Airport College.

2. A Green and High Growth Economy

RESIDENTS

We want all our residents to have the opportunity to:

- Benefit from North Essex's net zero transition, securing good jobs within a green economy boosted by Freeport East and Bradwell B's potential.
- Positively contribute to current and future steps taken to achieve net zero within North Essex.
- Continue enjoying North Essex's rural and coastal characteristics, in conjunction with green infrastructure delivery.
- Benefit from North Essex's renewable energy strengths – offshore wind, onshore wind and solar power – providing cheaper, long-term energy sources and exciting employment opportunities.
- Benefit from the transition to electric vehicles, with a sufficient number of charge points available across all of North Essex.

BUSINESSES

We want all our businesses to have the opportunity to:

- Form effective partnerships to progress net zero objectives, with a focus on linking national energy suppliers with local North Essex businesses to drive forward the net zero transition.
- Learn from successful green measures adopted by other North Essex businesses, ensuring best practice is adopted across the board.
- Better understand the green jobs required to deliver net zero objectives and how to create them locally.
- Articulate the green skills North Essex needs to fill green jobs identified, ensuring these jobs boost economic growth and attract inward investment.
- Build on North Essex's renewable energy strengths – offshore wind, onshore wind and solar power – benefitting from Freeport East and Bradwell B's potential.

The North Essex Snapshot

These opportunities reflect the region's incumbent green economy strengths, with North Essex positioned to become a leader in several renewable energy sources. This includes offshore wind, onshore wind and solar power, with the region already generating a significant amount of electricity from these sources. Critically, North Essex's green economy strengths will be boosted by Freeport East which will see a 112 hectare area established in Harwich dedicated to the development of green energy. This green energy hub will focus on the manufacture of wind turbine components, as well as incorporating new nuclear sites at Sizewell and Bradwell. Progress is also being made with the East Anglia Green Energy Enablement (GREEN) project, which will reinforce the high voltage power network in East Anglia between the existing substations at Norwich Main in Norfolk, Bramford in Suffolk and Tilbury in Essex. This will also connect new offshore wind generation, boosting North Essex's strengths in this renewable energy source. In addition, CB Heating's partnership with EDF Energy – and the Heat Pump Installer Network's Academy – means Tendring is playing a critical role in the education and delivery of heat pumps across the country.

3. A Dynamic and Connected Region

RESIDENTS

We want all our residents to have the opportunity to:

- Benefit from ultrafast broadband, building on the Superfast Essex programme's successful rollout of superfast broadband.
- Utilise digital services in all parts of North Essex, not simply the region's urban centres.
- Regularly travel between the region's urban, rural and coastal authorities, confident in the reliable and high quality public transport offering.
- Participate widely in active travel schemes, making use of walking and cycling infrastructure where possible.
- Access key public services (e.g. schools and hospitals) in a timely manner, not inhibited by where they live within North Essex.

BUSINESSES

We want our businesses to have the opportunity to:

- Benefit from digital accessibility across North Essex, positioning all parts of North Essex as accessible and attractive places to do business.
- Benefit from quick and reliable transport links, with business decisions not impacted by North Essex's current congestion challenges.
- Feed into discussions on North Essex's transport needs, ensuring alignment with business needs.
- Attract inward investment, with investors having confidence in North Essex's transport infrastructure.
- Develop links with regional and national partners, with infrastructure developed to facilitate links to other parts of the country.

The North Essex Snapshot

These opportunities reflect the region's incumbent infrastructure strengths and the need to go further to enhance some aspects of North Essex's digital and transport infrastructure. Incumbent strengths include the region's outward facing transport terminals – including Stansted Airport and Harwich Port. With 23.3 million passengers passing through Stansted Airport in 2022 and Harwich Port importing and exporting 4.57 million tonnes of freight in 2021, these transport terminals provide North Essex with excellent global links that are vital to supporting the region's economic growth. In addition, the success of the Superfast Essex programme, has resulted in all of the North Essex authorities benefitting from over 90% of their premises having access to superfast broadband – a significant recent improvement in the region's digital connectivity. Despite these strengths, further improvements are required, with North Essex's critical roads – including the A12, A120 and A131 – suffering from high levels of congestion and the region inhibited by rural connectivity blackspots, especially when it comes to ultrafast broadband.

4. Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

RESIDENTS

We want all our residents to have the opportunity to:

- Build closer connections with their local communities, helping boost pride in place.
- Participate more in community activities that help build a sense of North Essex belonging.
- Feed views into community developments, ensuring interventions best deliver for community needs.
- Understand how community progression can support their personal aspirations and goals.
- Benefit from a prosperous North Essex visitor economy through inclusive and year-round employment opportunities.

BUSINESSES

We want our businesses to have the opportunity to:

- Benefit from a confident and proud North Essex workforce, engaged in supporting North Essex's economic growth.
- Engage with local communities, advertising good jobs available to kickstart and restart careers within North Essex.
- Support local residents to secure good jobs, working with community partners and organisations to enhance the region's skills offering.
- Further understand North Essex's local communities, ensuring business decisions reflect local needs.
- Promote themselves as part of North Essex's visitor economy, benefitting from more visitors all year round.

The North Essex Snapshot

The opportunities above reflect the region's recent successes in progressing prosperous and inclusive communities within North Essex. Successes include authorities securing central government support to level up North Essex, with Colchester and Tendring to benefit from £19.7m and £19.9m of Levelling Up Fund round 2 funding. Tendring will also benefit through the Levelling Up Partnerships workstream, with £6.7m of additional funding announced during the 2023 Spring Budget. Alongside critical levelling up funding secured, North Essex benefits from effective initiatives aimed at boosting community cohesion and pride in place. This includes initiatives like Community 360: One Colchester and Chelmsford CVS that encourage communities to take charge of their own destiny, support and strengthen local charities, voluntary organisations and community groups. Further progress is required to enhance North Essex's prosperous and inclusive communities, ensuring all North Essex's residents feel pride in their communities and have the confidence to engage with the region's diverse and progressive economic opportunities.

North Essex's 2-Year Delivery Plan

Delivering against the four strategic priorities – and the associated opportunities that will catalyse economic growth within North Essex – the NEEB will lead on delivering an ambitious delivery plan. This will be delivered **over the next 2 years** in partnership with North Essex's residents and businesses.

1. Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

A. AUDITING DIGITAL SKILLS PROGRAMMES

The NEEB will review the delivery of its previous digital skills programmes, leading resident engagement to understand why some of the programmes previously run failed to stimulate demand. Audit outcomes will be fed into the region's Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Desired Outcome: Further understanding as to what makes a digital skills programme successful in North Essex, therefore adapting them better for the future.

Delivery Date: By Autumn 2023.

B. CONVENING LOCAL BUSINESSES AND SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

The NEEB will establish a 'North Essex Business Forum' which will invite key businesses and support organisations from across the region to quarterly meetings, with discussions to focus on highlighting initiatives underway, support available and business needs, to drive business growth and skills, aligned with ECC's efforts.

Desired Outcome: Increase in partnership working between North Essex's businesses and support organisations, with business needs addressed, and best practices adopted across the region – advertised through business best practice toolkits.

Delivery Date: By the end of 2023.

C. PROMOTING NORTH ESSEX TO GRADUATES

Working with the region's Higher Education and Further Education institutions, the NEEB will develop promotional material advertising the region as a great place to work and live which will target the institutions' skilled graduates.

Desired Outcome: Promotional material on the benefits of living and working in North Essex shared during Further Education and Higher Education careers events and advertised through an online NEEB campaign.

Delivery Date: By the start of the 24/25 academic year (September 2024).

D. DELIVERING THE NEEB'S 23/24 AND 24/25 BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Building on the success of previous business support programmes, the NEEB will deliver its business support programmes planned for 23/24 and 24/25.

Desired Outcome: Continued positive business engagement with the NEEB's business support programmes, with more businesses receiving generalist support that reflects broad business needs within the region.

Delivery Date: By the end of 23/24 and 24/25.

2. A Green and High Growth Economy

A. CONVENING GREEN BUSINESSES

Utilising the CB Heating and EDF Energy partnership in Tendring as an exemplar, the NEEB will convene local and national green economy businesses, highlighting the benefits of partnership working and encouraging further collaboration.

Desired Outcome: Further partnerships established between local and national green economy businesses that support delivery of North Essex's net zero commitments.

Delivery Date: By Autumn 2023.

B. ESTABLISHING 'GREEN CHAMPIONS'

Working with local community and volunteer groups, the NEEB will identify 'Green Champions' within each authority, whose role will involve delivering resident engagement focused on articulating the importance of the net zero transition and how local characteristics can be protected as part of this.

Desired Outcome: At least one 'Green Champion' established within each local authority with increased resident support for net zero actions.

Delivery Date: By the end of 2023.

C. PROMOTING NORTH ESSEX'S GREEN POTENTIAL

The NEEB will position itself as the region's green economy lead, lobbying central government for further funding and positioning the region as a green exemplar through maximising the benefits of Freeport East.

Desired Outcome: Dialogue with Government on the opportunities around securing future funding to deliver the region's net zero commitments.

Delivery Date: By mid-2024.

D. DELIVERING STUDENT GREEN ECONOMY ENGAGEMENT

Working with North Essex's schools, Further Education, and Higher Education institutions, the NEEB will deliver engagement activities promoting the future opportunities available within the green economy, advertising roles that require both academic and more technical strengths.

Desired Outcome: Seminars delivered by leading local green economy stakeholders within schools, colleges and universities, promoting job opportunities within the region's green economy.

Delivery Date: By the start of the 24/25 academic year.

3. A Dynamic and Connected Region

A. ESTABLISHING A TRANSPORT EAST PARTNERSHIP

To better promote and address North Essex's strategic transport needs, the NEEB will establish a strategic partnership with Transport East, providing a North Essex collective voice to shape transport strategic thinking.

Desired Outcome: Strategic partnership with Transport East established, enabling one North Essex voice to be presented within strategic transport thinking.

Delivery Date: By Autumn 2023.

B. CONVENING LOCAL TRANSPORT OPERATORS

The NEEB will convene the region's local transport operators to discuss changes that can be made to service timetables to ensure residents in more rural areas are able to travel more easily across authorities.

Desired Outcome: Dialogue with transport operators around how services can be better tailored to meet all residents' and businesses' needs across North Essex.

Delivery Date: By the end of 2023.

C. FACILITATING EFFECTIVE EV CHARGING ROLL-OUT

To ensure the region's EV charging disparities are not solely considered within authority and county specific strategies, the NEEB will work with regional (e.g. SELEP) and national (e.g. National Grid) partners to articulate the particular challenges North Essex faces when delivering EV charging infrastructure, ensuring these challenges are acknowledged in regional and national EV charging strategies.

Desired Outcome: North Essex's EV charging needs effectively considered within regional and national strategies.

Delivery Date: By mid-2024.

D. LEADING DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To ensure the rollout of superfast and ultrafast broadband is effectively utilised within the region, the NEEB will lead resident engagement to educate and promote the benefits of digital use, focusing this engagement particularly on the region's elderly and digitally excluded population.

Desired Outcome: Increase in resident engagement with digital services available to them and an increase in digital literacy.

Delivery Date: By mid-2025.

4. Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

A. CONVENING LOCAL THIRD SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

The NEEB will convene a 'Third Sector Volunteers Forum' which will invite key third sector organisations from across the region to quarterly meetings, with discussions to focus on highlighting initiatives underway that are being delivered to enhance communities and further support the work of the organisations to help them grow in stature. This forum will include a focus on facilitating intergenerational engagement through a mentorship scheme.

Desired Outcome: Increase in voluntary initiatives delivered across the region, with mentorship programme established to support intergenerational engagement.

Delivery Date: By Autumn 2023.

B. DEVELOPING A NORTH ESSEX PRIDE IN PLACE EVIDENCE BASE

The NEEB will undertake a project to showcase the region's pride in place strengths and where further support can be best delivered. This will include a delivery plan on how North Essex can best improve critical community infrastructure across the region.

Desired Outcome: A well evidenced understanding of how North Essex can improve pride in place considerations, with a clear delivery plan outlining key partners' responsibilities published.

Delivery Date: By mid-2024.

C. DELIVERING A VISITOR ECONOMY PROMOTION AUDIT

The NEEB will undertake an audit of the visitor economy promotional material delivered in other parts of the country with a positive history of attracting visitors (e.g. Scotland, Norfolk and Suffolk), drawing together best practice and working with North Essex partners to implement such practices to boost promotion of the region's visitor economy in alignment with Visit Essex.

Desired Outcome: A well evidenced understanding of best practice implemented within other regions with leading visitor economy offers.

Delivery Date: By the end of 2024.

D. LEADING NORTH ESSEX'S VISITOR ECONOMY PROMOTION

Working with regional visitor economy partners, the NEEB will deliver promotional material that aims to promote the region's mix of urban, rural and coastal characteristics.

Desired Outcome: A coherent North Essex story presented that outlines how key partners will work towards boosting the region's visitor economy.

Delivery Date: By mid-2025.

North Essex's Ambitions

Alongside North Essex's 2-Year Delivery Plan, the NEEB is an ambitious partnership that has a long-term outlook for the North Essex economy. With devolved power ever more present across the country, we have considered our long-term ambitions for the North Essex economy, providing an exciting and aspirational outlook for the region's residents and businesses. We will work collaboratively with our neighbouring Essex partners to make the strong strategic case for further private and public sector investment and support to deliver our North Essex ambitions.

1. Innovative Businesses and Skilled Residents

- A. DELIVERING SKILLS UNIFORMITY** – The NEEB would like skills attainment across the region to become more uniform, with a focus on upskilling authorities currently with a higher proportion of low-skilled workers.
- B. SECURING FURTHER R&D INVESTMENT** – The NEEB would like to have greater influence over – and ability to drive – R&D investment into the region, focusing this investment on the region's key growth sectors.
- C. DEVELOPING COMMERCIAL AND INCUBATION SPACES** – The NEEB would like to be the go-to partnership for business support within North Essex and would like greater funding to deliver further commercial and incubation spaces within North Essex.
- D. AGREEING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS** – The NEEB would like to establish international partnerships with other regional economic development partnerships, universities and local government structures, promoting North Essex's businesses and potential to drive inward investment.

2. A Green and High Growth Economy

- A. FACILITATING FURTHER GREEN INVESTMENT** – The NEEB would like to lead on driving green investment into the region, drawing in more large energy companies and supporting innovative green start-ups within the region.
- B. SECURING LONGER-TERM GREEN SKILLS FUNDING** – The NEEB would like to secure longer-term funding to support green skills initiatives – like the 'I-Construct' programme – ensuring there is clear commitment to green skills investment within the region, giving confidence to businesses that North Essex is serious about delivering and benefitting from the green jobs of the future.
- C. LEADING THE EV CHARGE** – The NEEB would like to play a greater role in the delivery of EV charge points across the region, with further Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding to help achieve these ambitions.
- D. LEADING ESSEX'S GREEN JOBS DELIVERY** – The NEEB would like North Essex to be the region leading delivery of Essex's green jobs, ensuring the county reaches its goal of delivering 18,000 green jobs by 2030.

3. A Dynamic and Connected Region

- A. SUPPORTING SUPERFAST AND GIGABIT BROADBAND UNIFORMITY** – The NEEB would like to see the availability of ultrafast broadband within North Essex’s premises match that currently seen (i.e. 90% plus availability) when looking at the region’s superfast broadband availability, and 85% for gigabit availability.
- B. SECURING MORE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES THAT CONNECT URBAN/RURAL AREAS** – The NEEB would like to see funding made available to deliver more public transport services (i.e. routes) between the region’s urban and rural authorities, making it easier for residents to travel across the region.
- C. ESTABLISHING A NORTH ESSEX EV CHARGING EXEMPLAR** – Building on Braintree’s GRIDSERVE EV Charging forecourt, the NEEB would like to see further EV charging points delivered across the region, positioning North Essex as an exemplar for other regions to follow.
- D. ENHANCING HARWICH PORT’S EU LINKS** – Supporting the UK’s trade ambitions, the NEEB would like to work with Harwich Port to identify ways to boost inward and outward freight trade with the EU, given the port’s incumbent links with this trading bloc.

4. Prosperous and Inclusive Communities

- A. INCREASING COMMUNITY INVESTMENT** – The NEEB would like to see North Essex have further powers over funding to invest in enhancing its prosperous and inclusive communities across, with a focus on local leaders knowing what is best for local areas.
- B. BOOSTING PRIDE IN PLACE** – The NEEB would like to see an increase in residents’ pride in place, with opportunities for residents to have greater input into the ownership and delivery of assets of particular local importance.
- C. CREATING CONFIDENT COMMUNITIES** – The NEEB would like to see further investment focused on increasing ‘soft skills’ across the region, ensuring more of the region’s residents are positioned to engage with North Essex’s economic opportunities.
- D. MATCHING OTHER AREAS’ VISITOR NUMBERS** – The NEEB would like to see North Essex rival other areas in the East of England (e.g. Suffolk and Norfolk) when it comes to the visitor economy, matching the popular visit destinations in terms of visitor numbers.



The North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) is a partnership of district and county councils offering fully funded business support and skills programme to support economic growth across North Essex. The partnership consists of Maldon, Tendring, Braintree, Uttlesford District Councils, Chelmsford and Colchester City Councils, and Essex County Council. Find out more at www.neeb.org.uk Socials @neebgrowth

Henham Strategy is a public policy and economic development consultancy with a focus on local growth, trade and investment and higher education. We aim to connect local, regional and international actors to stimulate economic growth across the UK.