Building the future
UK Freeports

FREEPORT EAST
FELIXSTOWE
GATEWAY 14
HARWICH
A GLOBAL FREEPORT FOR A GLOBAL BRITAIN

Freeport East Ltd Business Plan 2026 – 2027

www.freeporteast.co.uk

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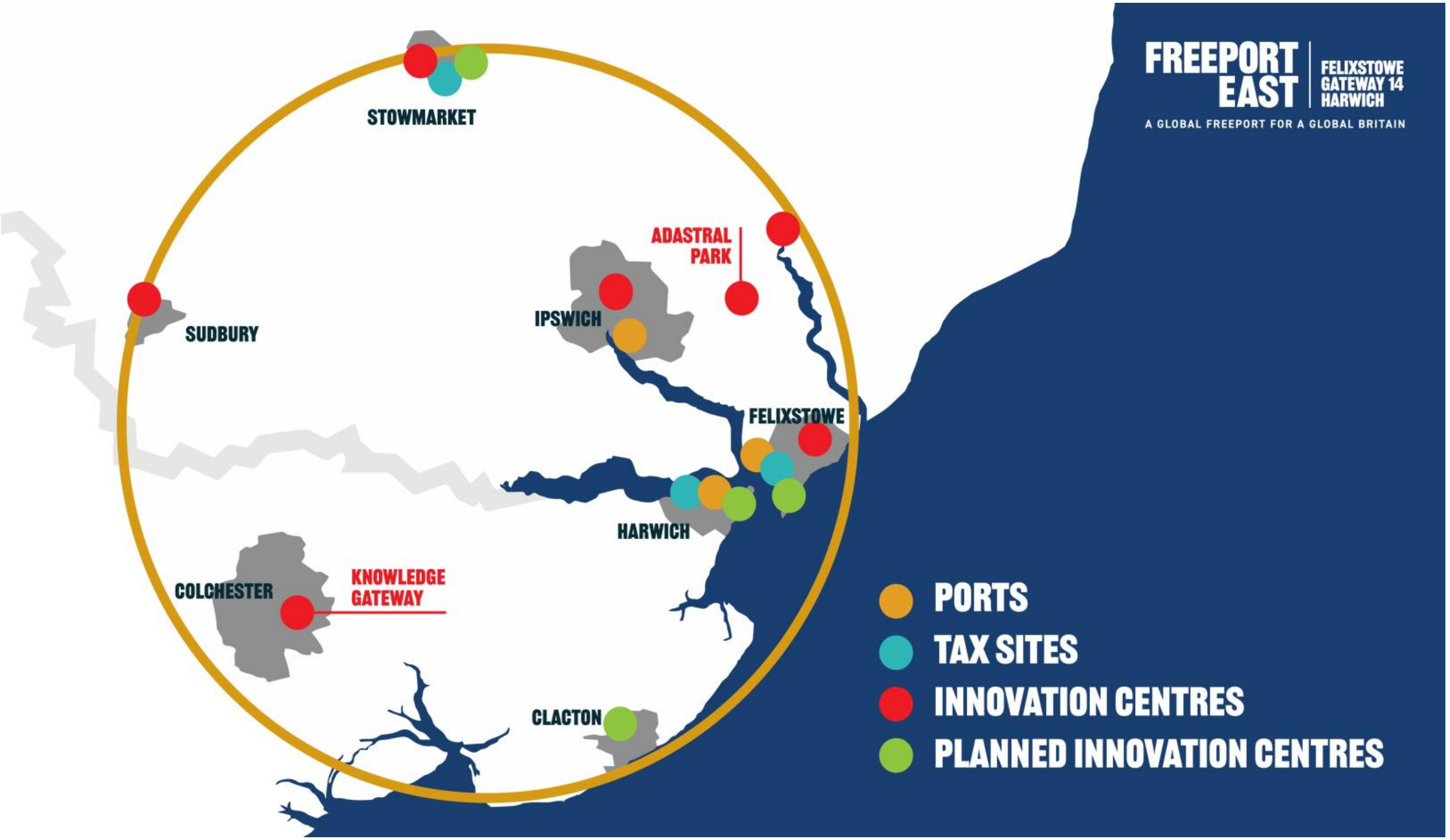
1.0 STRENGTHENING THE REGION WITH BENEFITS FOR ALL

Freeport East is designed to be a key driver in creating opportunities for all across Suffolk and Essex, as well as the wider East of England – helping to tackle those inequalities and barriers that impact on job opportunities, access to education, health outcomes and more.

A full test of the success of Freeport East will not only be judged in terms of inward investment and job creation figures, but also our ability to impact on these inequalities and specific areas of deprivation.

We endeavour to retain a balance between our focus on the collective economic strengthening of the freeport region, whilst targeting change in known areas of deprivation to ensure our impact is felt in places of greatest need.



2.0 VISION AND PURPOSE

4.1 What is Freeport East

Freeport East is one of 12 Freeports across the UK. It is designed to be a hub for global trade and national regeneration as well as creating a hotbed for innovation that will have an impact across the UK.

With its unique global links and existing innovative sectoral clusters, Freeport East will attract inward international investment and drive domestic growth, propelling the country's economy forward.

Covering Britain's busiest container port, a major ferry port and the largest business, innovation and logistics park in East Anglia, Freeport East offers a unique combination of advantages to benefit traders, manufacturers and clean energy suppliers, creating 13,500 new jobs and generating a Gross Value Added (GVA) of £5.5 billion.

Freeport East received final Government approvals in January 2023, triggering the release of specific funding support and enabling kick-off of wider activities and communications.

4.2 Our Vision

Freeport East aspires to be the UK's leading centre for trade, green energy and innovation - a Global Freeport for a Global Britain.

We will deliver unique opportunities for investment, business-led growth and innovation that will deliver benefits at the local, national and international level

4.3 Key Priorities for 2026/2027

1. Deliver local growth through our strategies on Innovation, Skills, Clean Energy, Transport Connectivity and Trade
2. Deliver Public and Private Sector Investment
3. Make the most of our Partnerships and Voice
4. Develop Freeport East Ltd as a high performing organisation

4.4 The role of Freeport East Ltd

Freeport East Ltd was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee in December 2022 and established by a range of local public and private partners to act as the main counterpart to Government for delivery of the freeport policy for Freeport East.

Areas of our role include:

- Facilitating skills, innovation, net zero, trade and investment and regeneration within the freeport boundary through development of plans aligned to partner strategies, project proposals and securing funding for projects
- Facilitating delivery of tax and customs sites, monitoring site infrastructure progress and supporting Tax Site owners in their development of plans to secure funding
- Working with partners to support regional and economic growth in the Freeport East area
- Monitoring and reporting on the performance of Freeport East
- To promote Freeport East opportunities to local, national and international investors and engage with local communities and stakeholders within the freeport boundary to raise awareness of the freeport's vision and objectives
- Maximise the benefits of the full freeport toolkit

3.0 UK FREEPORT POLICY OBJECTIVES

Freeports in the UK are designed to contribute to delivering across a range of different policy areas.

- Address long-term economic challenges through the UK's Industrial Strategy
- Skills
- Access To (higher paid) Jobs
- Regeneration
- "Hubs Of Innovation" = Productivity
- Net Zero and Decarbonisation
- Trade
- Investment

A growth model of global relevance

The UK helping to tackle global challenges

4.0 OUR AMBITIONS

Freeport East aims to deliver:

3 new development sites designed to influence wider **economic change**

275 hectares of new business, innovation and employment space

13,500 Higher Level Jobs created

Greater access for **everyone** to employment and education opportunities

New centres and resources for **innovation** and **skills** delivery

£5.5 billion in economic growth

Up to **£300m** of business rates over 25 years ploughed into the local economy

New **economic opportunities** For our whole region

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5.0 INNOVATION AT THE HEART OF FREEPORT EAST

- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) recognises innovation as “the application of knowledge of ideas for the development of products, services or processes - whether in business, public services, or non-profit sectors”.
- Innovation doesn’t have to be high-tech or even new - it can be the adoption, adaption or application of existing innovations that are not presently being exploited in a particular organisation, sector or geography.
- Economies and regions that are innovative tend to create more and higher-paying jobs, are more resilient to economic change, place themselves at the forefront of new opportunities and create greater economic value.
- A more innovative Freeport East region will therefore create a range of benefits for local communities and businesses and position it more effectively for the opportunities and challenges of the future.
- The Government has set Freeports the challenge of becoming “hubs of innovation” and we have placed it at the centre of how we are seeking to deliver the vision of Freeport East.
- Freeport East already has many amazing local assets to support innovation, including world-class universities and research institutes, internationally-recognised centres of excellence in areas such as clean energy, telecoms, Artificial Intelligence and agri-tech, full of trail-blazing SMEs and start-ups and well-established corporate innovation leaders.
- Our job is to work with a range of partners to make more of these assets, strengthen connections and access to funding and then ensure the benefits in terms of employment, skills and applications of innovation are shared across our communities.
- To date, our successes include new partnerships (such as with Innovating for Transport Energy Systems (ITES)), new physical facilities (such as the Stowmarket Innovation Gateway development), successful innovation funding projects (such as those on green hydrogen R&D) and support for new innovation-focused business collaborations, such as the Clean Energy & Maritime cluster in Harwich.

5.1 OUR APPROACH TO INNOVATION

We will focus on four separate areas to deliver on this ambition to be the most innovation-driven UK Freeport

FUND

1. Increase public and private sector innovation spending in the Freeport East area

We will proactively facilitate the creation and support of industry / academic collaborations to secure innovation funds. We will allocate Freeport East funds to support businesses to innovate and drive growth. We will use our access to Government and private firms to maximise opportunities for local businesses.

CONNECT

2. Strengthen the physical and virtual places and connections that aid innovation thinking and activity

Freeport East will deliver new innovation centres and strengthen the connections between innovation centres. We will work with both HE & FE institutions and Local Authorities. As a vital new node of the Connected Innovation Network, we will provide local businesses with better opportunities to network, innovate, grow and succeed.

ATTRACT

3. Use innovation as an anchor for attracting new investment to Freeport East

We will showcase opportunities in new sectors to attract new businesses into our region. We will ensure that inward investors can link into existing innovation networks and build a new dedicated Freeport East Innovation Cluster.

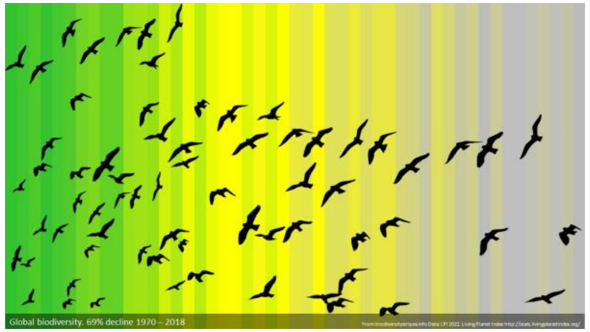
DEPLOY

4. Facilitate the deployment of innovations to drive productivity and tackle social/economic disparities

We will explore how new innovations in mobility, clean energy, healthcare and education can be connected into local service delivery. We will work with national bodies to enhance local impact, including Innovate UK Business Growth, Innovate UK Business Connect, selected Catapults, DWP, and the third sector.

6.0 DELIVERING THE UK'S GREENEST FREEPORT

- Freeport East has an important role to help drive our region towards net zero. We believe this reflects the interests of all our local stakeholders as well as playing an important role in supporting UK Government policy.
- Delivering against net zero creates competitive advantage for inward investment for Freeport East, Suffolk, Essex and the wider East of England region.
- Our existing corporate partners, as well as many other businesses in the region, already have very strong commitments on net zero and biodiversity (e.g. Hutchison Ports, Gateway 14 Ltd and other developments such as Port One).
- Many of our priority, high-growth sectors align with the industry response to net zero ambitions, including areas such as green hydrogen, offshore wind, zero-emission vehicles and local energy solutions (e.g. maximising rooftop solar for new developments).
- Our communities and local authorities are at the forefront of recognising and delivering on sustainability and rightly expect us to be ambitious and creative on biodiversity and sustainable growth.
- Freeport East, through inward investment activity and international partnerships provides a significant opportunity to influence current and new employers and inward investors on net zero ambitions as well as strengthening export opportunities for local businesses.
- Net zero, decarbonisation and clean technologies are at the heart of presenting our region as a modern economic model of global relevance – balancing the needs of people and the environment and understanding our local role in global challenges.
- Playing our role in enabling our region to deliver net zero objectives is therefore a key part of our approach. As well as delivering investments and infrastructure that support net zero sectors, we will look to be ambitious in how we can support our local authorities in delivering their own climate change plans, building partnerships in areas such as biodiversity and ensuring green skills are a core part of how we will help local communities benefit from the changing economy around us.
- In the last 12 months, plans for a new Green Energy Hub at Bathside Bay in Harwich which will support the growing offshore energy sector have continued to progress. Our work with the REA has identified 500MW of future power demand that can be served by the regions growing renewable energy production. And our new Green Freight Corridor Initiative, in partnership with the East Midlands Freeport has continued to take shape in order to help drive decarbonisation of freight transport.



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7.0 SUPPORTING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Developing the skills of the future and enabling local people to access the opportunities facilitated by Freeport East, is a critical aspect of ensuring that new investment and economic growth delivers wider benefits across our area.
- We are currently focusing our activities on skills and aspiration through our **Skills Escalator**. This is a partnership programme delivered through a consortium of skills experts, led by Suffolk New College. Three other Suffolk and Essex colleges together with the Universities of Suffolk and Essex are also involved and ensure coverage across the Freeport East area.
- These colleges and universities are working to help students and employees access opportunities across the Freeport East area with an ambitious programme of events, resources and training.
- In addition, we work closely with all new businesses being set up across Freeport East to help them maximise opportunities for local people in terms of accessing employment and developing skills.

The Skills Escalator: Inspire, Upskill, Escalate

8.0 HOW WE WORK

8.1 OUR STRUCTURE

We are governed by a Supervisory Board, which is our principal decision-making body. It makes decisions on our core plans and strategies. The board is comprised of 11 directors which includes our founding members and is led by an independent chair, supported by the Chief Executive of Freeport East Ltd.

The Supervisory Board also includes observers, who provide advice and support to the Board, including East Suffolk Council as the Accountable Body and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

All meeting dates, papers, agendas and minutes of Board meetings are available at www.freeporteast.co.uk.

8.2 SUB-GROUPS

We will work with a coalition of stakeholders to deliver our work programme, through collaborations in the following areas:

- Inward Investment
- Transport
- Skills
- Innovation

8.3 OUR WIDER PARTNERSHIP

Our wider partnership includes a wide range of businesses, education providers and partnership groups, including Transport East and skills bodies.

We will organise events and outreach to strengthen our connections with local stakeholders and ensure we broaden the understanding of how Freeport East can support and work with businesses and communities.

8.1 HOW WE WORK

The role of Freeport East Ltd is multi-faceted and varied. We seek to deliver effectively across five key areas:

Lead Strategic Thinking

- Strategic direction and thought leadership for delivering the full vision of Freeport East
- Lead development of studies and strategies relevant to the Freeport East geography and vision
- Connect local opportunities for our people and businesses to regional, national and international trends and movements

Act as Counterpart to Government

- Be accountable to Government on delivery of the Freeport objectives
- Lobby for appropriate support across Government departments and Whitehall
- Monitor and evaluate performance across the freeport

Lead and Facilitate investment and funding mechanisms

- Targeting and managing efficient funding processes for business rates income
- Engage with and secure potential investors for our sites and region
- Position investment opportunities in our region to maximise public and private sector investment
- Accelerate outcomes by unblocking / accelerating progress on our freeport
- Adding capacity and capability to our partners

Influencer

- Champion the East of England and Freeport East partnerships
- Listening and understanding across local, and national partners
- Support stronger regional voices at a national level
- Collaborate with like-minded partners to deliver initiatives across the region

Elevate work with partners

- Understand and engage with priorities of our partner organisations
- Add our voice and support to key policy and investment opportunities
- Build effective and collaborative partnerships that deliver outcomes at a local level
- Focus on complementary relationships to avoid overlap / duplication

9.0 THE FREEPORT TOOLKIT

Each freeport has a toolkit that is based on core freeport mechanisms and funding streams, backed by wider opportunities and levers that all contribute to delivering a modern freeport in a mature, knowledge-based economy. Freeport East Ltd will take the lead in maximising the combined benefits of these mechanisms for the Freeport East economic area.

- 5 unique development opportunities across 3 tax sites
- A bespoke customs model

- £25m capital funding for tax sites
- Retained rates local spending (£millions within Freeport outer boundary)
- Tax and duty benefits within the tax & customs sites

- Regulatory testing/ sandbox capability
- Innovation support and prioritisation
- A voice and access to Government

- Collaborations and partnerships
- Focus on the “region”, with the “port” as economic anchor
- UK and overseas platform for the region (e.g. marketing)
- Other development sites and opportunities across our region

10.0 PROGRESS TO DATE

We are making good progress against our ambitions. Highlights of our achievements to date are as follows:

Our Ambitions	Progress to Date
3 new development sites in Felixstowe, Harwich & Stowmarket designed to influence wider economic change	One site nearly 50% complete with £250m of private sector investment to date. Other sites under development
275 hectares of new business, innovation and employment space in Gateway 14, Port of Felixstowe and Bathside Bay	Over 40 hectares of new high quality highly sustainable business and innovation and employment space created
13,500 Jobs created	Attracted nearly 2,000 direct job opportunities, as well as facilitating growth in indirect opportunities such as in construction and logistics supply chains
Up to £300m of business rates over 25 years ploughed into the local economy	Nearly £20m of funding already allocated across skills, innovation and local business growth with further sizeable investment funds in the pipeline
New centres and resources for innovation and skills delivery	Brand new £18m Skills and Innovation Centre being developed at Gateway 14 and new cluster emerging in Harwich with dedicated new innovation space.
Greater access for everyone to employment and education opportunities	New job opportunities created on Freeport East tax sites for surrounding towns and villages, as well as employees in Ipswich, Clacton and Stowmarket. Skills programmes supporting others into work including those out-of-employment.

10.0 PROGRESS TO DATE (cont...)

Our Ambitions	Progress to Date
New economic opportunities for our whole region	Freeport East is working with a range of partners to drive new economic opportunities in cleaner fuels, clean energy, transport decarbonisation, sustainable building and digital innovation, whilst also building on established strengths such as in ports and logistics.
£5.5 billion in economic growth	With over £250m of private investment, over £30m of enabling public sector investment and almost £20m of freeport funds allocated to date, Freeport East is already driving significant figures in investment which are expected to translate into sizeable economic benefits for the region.

11.0 OUR WORK PROGRAMME

Based on a review of delivery against our work programme for 2025/26, we have identified the following priority work areas for the 2026/27. Priorities 1 to 3 are our main delivery areas and, with our organisation fully established, are now underpinned by an ongoing focus on having a high-performing organisation:

Priority 1 (P1)
Deliver Local Growth through our strategies on Innovation, Skills, Clean Energy, Transport Connectivity and Trade

Priority 2 (P2)
Deliver Public and Private Sector Investment

Priority 3 (P3)
Make the most of our Partnerships and Voice

Priority 4 (P4)
Develop Freeport East Ltd as a high performing organisation

11.1 DELIVER LOCAL GROWTH THROUGH OUR STRATEGIES (P1)

HIGH LEVEL OUTCOME

- Deliver an ambitious yet coherent and focused vision and strategy for Freeport East that is widely communicated and understood, and builds momentum, interest and opportunities for our economic area, whilst complementing other programmes and initiatives already underway across the wider freeport area.

BACKGROUND

- Our proposals to Government provide the basis for a more widely communicated vision and strategy. Our emergent work on a Green Hydrogen Hub have demonstrated the value of our platform and positioning to build productive and collaborative partnerships to deliver.

Key Priority 1	2026/27 Business Plan Task	Business Plan Outcomes &/or Deliverables
Deliver local growth through our strategies on innovation, skills, clean energy, transport connectivity and trade	1.1 Deliver a Freeport East transport & connectivity masterplan and investment pipeline in partnership with Transport East and Local Authority planning and highways teams.	Published masterplan and investment pipeline for enhanced Freeport East connectivity. Key transport interventions identified and clear advocacy and/or funding strategies in place. At least one bi-annual transport forum held.
	1.2 Build on the recognition of our grid demand analysis in the tRESP by the NESO to support UKPN to develop timely delivery plans for new grid infrastructure for the Freeport East region.	Inclusion of 500MW of new local grid capacity delivery plans in Business Plan submitted by UKPN for approval by Ofgem.
	1.3 Continue to progress development of our vision for a Green Freight Corridor with East Midlands Freeport including identified new capital investments.	At least one identified investment in GFC progressed with FPE/EMFP support. Bespoke GFC analysis shared with industry to allow broader implementation.
	1.4 Continue to maximise value of key international partnerships to facilitate UK trade connections and increased trade and investment activity in the Freeport East area.	Six international partnerships identified and in progress based on relevant local strengths and opportunities.
	1.5 Continue to deliver and build effective partnerships around a Freeport East Innovation Cluster (locations, connections, opportunities, funding).	Freeport East support helps deliver at least three successful innovation funding bids; new innovation centres continuing to progress; new innovation funding support attracted into the Freeport East area.
	1.6 Support Harwich Innovation Cluster working closely with Tendring District Council and other partners.	2 Harwich clean energy and maritime cluster events held in the year; new local innovation centre established with at least 6 tenants; develop plans for new commercial manufacturing and office spaces to support growth of Harwich clean energy and maritime opportunities.
	1.7 Support the development of the Stowmarket Innovation Gateway working closely with Mid Suffolk District Council and other partners.	New centre successfully opened in 2026. First new tenants in situ and first innovation cluster events hosted at the centre.
	1.8 Work with Freeport East-based employers and education providers to deliver targeted and effective skills support programmes, maximising value of Skills & Innovation Fund	Establish strong partnerships with Freeport East employers to maximise opportunities for local communities and address skills gaps. Ensure that current funded projects complement wider skills delivery
	1.9 Work in partnership with the Business Boards for Suffolk and Essex to influence economic growth policies at a local and national level and help shape the provision of future Government programmes.	Freeport East is recognised as a key enabler of connectivity and economic growth. Continue to push Government on strategic transport investments, including Ely/Haughley junction and long-term resilience for the A14 Orwell Bridge.

11.2 DELIVER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT (P2)

HIGH LEVEL OUTCOME

- Demonstrable progress on delivering of each of the three tax sites including infrastructure works and new inward investment
- A pipeline and delivery plan for wider investment priorities to deliver on Freeport East vision and how retained business rate model and other funding sources can be utilised to support their delivery

BACKGROUND

- Following final approvals and agreements in place with MHCLG, we now have a mandate to progress seed capital delivery and strengthen marketing of all our site opportunities, through our own mechanisms and in partnership with the Department for Business & Trade.
- All seed capital has now been allocated and delivery is central to enabling further investments.

Key Priority 2	2026/27 Business Plan Task	Business Plan Outcomes &/or Deliverables
Investment Planning and Delivery	2.1 Deliver inward investment into Freeport East tax sites, customs sites and the wider economic area, including through provision of our dedicated Investor Concierge Service.	At least 3 new investments into Freeport East sites with Freeport East opportunities widely communicated in relevant sectoral and geographic markets. Wider impact of Investor Concierge Service captured through user quotes.
	2.2 Delivery of seed capital funded projects across our tax sites.	Complete delivery of seed capital projects on each of Gateway 14, Felixstowe and Harwich tax sites.
	2.3 Build a public-private strategy for further development of the Bathside Bay Green Energy Hub.	Clarity on participation of key public and private partners in further financing and delivery of the Bathside Bay Green Energy Hub.
	2.4 As part of Freeport East wide infrastructure strategies, establish a prioritised pipeline of all future Freeport East investments, including on tax sites and in the wider geography to maximise the potential of the economic area.	Prioritised pipeline of investments focused on transport and grid infrastructure that will maximise the overall impact of Freeport East
	2.5 Maximising benefits derived through our Innovation and Skills and Clean Growth Funds.	Strong performance across all grant recipients with clarity on jobs, skills and other outcomes recorded. Lessons learned used to inform future grant programmes.
	2.6 In accordance with the Freeport East Retained Rates Strategy, develop, maintain and implement a pipeline of funding priorities.	Indicative Capital Investment Plan in place. Pipeline of wider funding priorities developed for funding through Pot C.
	2.7 Maximise opportunities through the Industrial Strategy Zone Action Plan to create investable sites, attract investment and strengthen local supply chains, working with Government departments and other key stakeholders.	Progress against each of the ISZAP items with identifiable benefits for the Freeport East region
	2.8 Develop programme of support for local businesses focused around trade-enabled growth	Programme of support for local export opportunities identified and funded Initiative to support emerging markets increase trade-flows with the Freeport East region and wider UK impemented with at least one emerging market.

11.3 MAKE THE MOST OF OUR PARTNERSHIPS & VOICE (P3)

HIGH LEVEL OUTCOME

- Awareness of Freeport East has increased across a range of stakeholder groups that provide basis for investment and partnership opportunities and ensure strong local buy-in
- Freeport East speaks as a strong and respected voice, alongside and in support of key partners to make the case for investment in our area and to build high-value private and public sector partnerships

BACKGROUND

- We use specialist comms and marketing resources to strengthen our presence and output. We have attracted increased followers and engagement through our social media, PR and media activity whilst continuing to build on our partnership work and events by targeting key sectors and political influencers.

Key Priority 3	2026/27 Business Plan Task	Business Plan Outcomes &/or Deliverables
Make the most of our partnerships and voice	3.1 Develop and deliver an ambitious communications and marketing plan for 2026/27, including Freeport East-hosted events and wider engagement activity targeted at building connections with a range of stakeholders including local communities.	Develop and deliver the Freeport East comms and marketing plan for 2026/27 Development of a range of marketing collateral to use at regional and international events. Invest in presence at UKREiiF tos trengthen visibility of Freeport East as key element of regional ambition
	3.2 Build high-value partnerships with third party private sector organisations to deliver collaboration in areas relevant to delivering the Freeport East vision.	One or more new successful partnerships that promote specific trade and investment related opportunities. Other high-value partnerships enhanced/established that provide demonstrable benefits in areas such as inward investment, innovation, decarbonisation/green energy and opportunities for local people.
	3.3 Work alongside and in support of other partners to make the case for key investment priorities across transport, education, health, regeneration, skills, business investment and other areas of need to deliver the Freeport East vision.	Secure consistent and meaningful support from key partners, both public and private sector, to aid on demonstrable recognition that Freeport East priorities are increasingly recognised regionally and nationally.
	3.4 Develop and publish our Annual Report.	Annual Report presented to stakeholders at our Annual General Meeting in September 2026 and published thereafter.
	3.5 Cement regional and national partnerships, building on those partnerships already in place including APPG.	Take advantage of opportunities to promote the role and activities of the freeport.
	3.6 Engage young people around the opportunities that Freeport East offers, through our Skills Fund grants and participation of FE/HE partners.	Positive two-way engagement with young people around opportunities of Freeport East and positive feedback that Freeport East is enabling ways to support their future opportunities.

11.4 DEVELOP FREEPORT EAST LTD AS A HIGH PERFORMING ORGANISATION (P4)

HIGH LEVEL OUTCOME

- Freeport East Ltd is recognised as a high-performing, well-respected and productive organisation that builds and capitalises on strong collaborative partnerships with a wide range of organisations. Freeport East is considered as a leader amongst UK freeports and deploys models of delivery that are used as templates by others.

BACKGROUND

- Freeport East Ltd was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in December 2022. It has an effective Board of 11 Directors including an Independent Chair. It has an established relationship with East Suffolk Council as the Accountable Body. As the lead counterpart to Government and a platform for local partnerships, it is central to successful delivery of the Freeport East vision.

Key Priority 4	2026/2027 Business Plan Task	Business Plan Outcomes &/or Deliverables
Develop Freeport East Ltd as a high performing organisation: • Is effective at making and executing critical decisions • Is adaptable in the face of change • Has clearly defined roles and sufficient resources in place to execute and deliver its vision and objectives	4.1 Develop and implement a flexible and efficient resources plan, maximising commitment of resources from partners and minimising costs to the freeport, ensuring appropriate resources and skills are in place to deliver the freeport's vision and objectives in line with government's freeport delivery plan.	Supportive Audit outcomes over the year following Annual Performance Review with Government and Financial Audit.
		Judged internally and externally to be an effectively run organisation.
		Efficient and flexible resources plan in place alongside commitment of resources from partners, to successfully deliver against the freeport's vision and objectives.
	4.2 Implement findings of governance review and enhance the Company's governance structures and mechanisms to enable the Supervisory Board and the Company to maximise its resources in the most efficient manner.	Governance structures and mechanisms updated in line with Government policy updates and Governance review.
		Transparency of key information judged positively by Government and Member organisations.
	4.3 Develop a Social Value Charter and implement social value principles into the Company's procurement practices.	A Social Value Charter is developed and published and woven throughout the company's procurement procedures.
	4.4 Provide accountability through delivery of effective Monitoring and Evaluation, fraud and risk management across the freeport with efficient and accurate reporting to the Board and government.	Monitoring and evaluation processes are in place providing accountability to government and the Board on delivery against the freeport's objectives which includes monitoring of progress of seed capital projects. Development of a cyberfraud risk assessment, in partnership with the Accountable Body.
	4.5 Produce a 5-year plan for the evolution of Freeport East Ltd as an organisation designed to be a place-based driver and enabler of inclusive economic growth, through alignment with evolving local governance mechanisms and opportunities.	High-level 5-year plan developed for Freeport East Ltd which takes account of the relevant local priorities of key stakeholders, as well as seeking explicit support and buy-in from them – particularly from our billing authorities.
	4.6 Build strong connections and collaborations with other Freeports in the United Kingdom to maximise collective benefits for the UK.	Freeport East has contributed to a healthy, collaborative and productive freeports network that represents local and regional interests to Government building on formal and informal pan-freeport networks.

13.0 FUNDING AND RESOURCES

OVERVIEW

- Our operational costs are covered by retained business rates collected across our three tax sites.
- In addition, we endeavour to be creative and innovative in how we deliver our outcomes and balance scarce resources. This includes being highly collaborative and open to a range of partnerships across the public and private sectors.
- We work closely with a range of partners, including local authorities and skills institutions, to target new funding streams that support our ambitions, for example on regeneration, innovation, decarbonisation and skills. The Cyber Innovate to Elevate project currently underway, is one such example of our success in securing funding from Innovate UK through our joint bid with the University of Essex.
- Through being an innovative and engaging organisation, we endeavour to build positive partnerships with the private sector to pool resources and maximise our impact.
- We will look to bring in new resources and fresh thinking from local organisations, particularly our local Universities. We will specifically look to establish a means of giving opportunities for current students and alumni from the Universities of Suffolk and Essex to work with Freeport East through consulting projects, paid-internships and sandwich placements, maximising value for money in our delivery model whilst delivering enhanced education and skills benefits for our local partners.
- We will continue to explore other ways of enabling us to have an impact above and beyond the extent of our immediate human and financial resource envelope.

13.1 PROPOSED BUDGET FOR 2026/27

Expenditure	2026/27 Budget £	2026/27 Explanatory Notes
Wages and Salaries	905,000	Includes existing 10.2 FTE plus limited flexibility to increase resources to support delivery of key priorities
Staff Training	5,000	
Specialist Consultancy	60,000	
Legal and Professional Fees	95,000	Includes Comms Agency, Auditors fees and legal advice
Project Delivery	250,000	Ring-fenced to deliver stronger partnerships to support inward investment opportunities, expand trade opportunities for the local region and address well-defined skills enhancement initiatives.
Marketing and Local Engagement	96,000	Includes marketing and promotion, events and room hire, memberships and subscriptions
Other Expenses	83,000	Includes office costs including lease costs, printing and stationery, broadband, company insurance premiums and travel and subsistence
Recharges from East Suffolk Council	87,600	East Suffolk Council services for IT, HR and Finance.
Payroll Charges	18,000	Suffolk County Council charge for administration of payroll.
Contingency	50,000	Contingency for unforeseen costs, released through agreement with the s151 Officer/Finance Cttee.
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,650,000	

13.2 USE OF RETAINED BUSINESS RATES in 2026/27

- Our approach to use of retained business rates collected from the freeport tax sites is set out in the Freeport East Investment & Growth Strategy, available on our website.

- Freeport East is able to collect any growth in business rate income on freeport tax sites, above a baseline figure, and utilise those funds to support local growth.

- The process for calculation and distribution of retained business rates is governed by an agreement between the Billing Authorities and Freeport East Ltd (the Business Rates Agreement).

- The **current forecast of total cumulative retained business rate income to the end of 2025/26 is approximately £8m**. This is based on forecasts provided to us by the Billing Authorities and includes income generated across all three tax sites over the last three years.

- Up to £1.25m per annum has been allocated to cover Freeport East Ltd operating costs for the first five years of operation. The remaining funds will be utilised to provide:

  - Some funding back to relevant Local Authorities to cover local costs in supporting the freeport (referred to as Pot A).

  - Investment in freeport tax sites to enable them to drive growth and attract inward investment. In 2025/26, this primarily relates to funding approved to support the development of the Stowmarket Innovation Gateway (referred to as Pot B).

  - Wider investment in the local economy, for example local infrastructure, skills interventions and innovation support (referred to as Pot C) including capital project investments. Pot C is expected to have reached **£3.8m** by the end of the financial year 2025/26. This is expected to grow by at least £1.5m per annum. By the end of FY25/26, approximately £500K of income from Pot C is allocated to the Suffolk Investment Fund as a result of arising from the Gateway 14 former Enterprise Zone plots.

- Over the course of 2026/27 we will develop proposals for our Board to consider in line with our Freeport East Investment & Growth Strategy with the main focus of enabling private sector investment which remains the core purpose of the freeport model.

- Funding allocations approved by our Board will be recorded in a Decisions Register available on our website.

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14.0 MEASURING SUCCESS

- Delivery Progress against our annual Work Programme is regularly monitored by our Supervisory Board.
- We also utilise data collected as part of the Government-led Freeports Monitoring & Evaluation programme, as well as a range of other data and information to monitor our progress.
- Our annual report 2024/25 was presented at our Annual General Meeting in September 2025 which highlights our delivery priorities and achievements for the year.
- Freeport East and the Accountable Body undergo an Annual Performance and Assurance Review with Government as part of their Monitoring and Evaluation of the Freeports Programme, with the findings published in the Government's Freeports Programme Annual Report.
- The Company is also subject to an annual financial audit undertaken by the Company's independent auditors.

KEY OUTPUTS

- Completion of our agreed work programme across the four priority areas, with regular reports on progress delivery to our Supervisory Board throughout the year.
- Submission of detailed data monitoring reports to Government on a six-monthly basis.
- Tangible progress and investment delivered across all three tax sites and through key initiatives on innovation, net zero, jobs and economic growth.

KEY OUTCOMES

- Continued and broad-based support, both locally and nationally, based on Freeport East delivering benefits across all policy objective areas.
- Increased recognition of the role and opportunities for partnership-working with Freeport East Ltd.
- The needs of the whole Freeport East economic area demonstrably becoming recognised at regional and national levels and incorporated into relevant planning, policy and investment priorities.

15.0 DEPENDENCIES

- Delivery of the Freeport East vision is based around partnership working and therefore there are many aspects of our business plan which have a reliance on dependencies from Members within our governance structure.

- In addition, for the general support and engagement from our Members and nominated Directors we rely on for delivering Freeport East, other specific dependences include:

  - **Government** – ensuring efficient reporting mechanisms, timely release of government funding and clear direction on government policy.

  - **Local Authorities** – coordination on planning matters; business rate relief process development and communication; Accountable Body role.

  - **Tax Site Owners** – leading on delivering infrastructure and vision for sites; sharing information required for marketing and financial forecasts.

  - **Tax Site Occupiers** – committing to working in partnership with Freeport East to deliver the freeport vision and objectives.

  - **Further and Higher Education Establishments** - Open, constructive collaborations, working together on key initiatives, such as skills and innovation partnerships.

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