



Thames Freeport

► **Greater Essex:** Globally Connected, Powered by Ambition

A Manifesto for Growth:

By business, for business,
with business.

Foreword

Greater Essex is ready and open for investment.

We have the ambition, the drive, and a strong Business Board championing businesses and giving them a powerful voice. I look forward to working with the Greater Essex Mayor and the future councils to harness the unique opportunity devolution and Local Government Reorganisation offers.

Greater Essex can no longer be perceived as 'only a pass-through' county. It's a beacon of opportunity. Crucially, a Mayor will help ensure that Greater Essex's voice is ever stronger – and will help us to stand out for the right reasons – lending weight to our case for investment to accelerate growth in the area. The Mayor will provide an influential role in selling a narrative to Government and linking Greater Essex with influential partners and contacts.

The Greater Essex Business Board is ready to work with the Mayor to champion business and unlock the barriers which stop Essex and our businesses achieving their full economic potential.

We will act as ambassadors for our region, raising its profile and representing the wider business community.

Our board members, who bring a wealth of experience and expertise, will work tirelessly on the issues that matter most to local businesses.

By coming together behind a common purpose – to encourage and support growth – we will help make Greater Essex stand out and compete for investment, grabbing the attention of policy makers to deliver new jobs and opportunities. Business is well placed to do this, together with our local authority partners.



**Julia Gregory,
Chair**

Julia Gregory has over 30 years' experience leading strategic projects worth billions, working alongside government to boost economic and social outcomes.

Executive Summary

Greater Essex is poised for unprecedented growth.

With a £55 billion economy, home to 94,000 businesses and 878,000 jobs, the region is a powerhouse of innovation, industry, and connectivity. Greater Essex is investment-ready. With billions already being committed, we're seeing real momentum. Over £1.1 billion is being invested in London Stansted Airport, which will see the expansion of airport capacity and the creation of over 5,000 new permanent jobs. DP World is investing up to £1 billion in their colossal London Gateway container port operation in Thurrock. This will create two new berths and a second rail terminal.

The Greater Essex Business Board (GEBB) – created by business, for business, with business – is committed to working with the new Mayor and the future councils created by Local Government Reorganisation to unlock this potential.

This manifesto outlines clear priorities:

- ▶ **Infrastructure for Growth:**
Rail, road and energy investments.
- ▶ **Inward Investment:**
Positioning Greater Essex as a global gateway.
- ▶ **Skilled Workforce:**
Building a workforce fit for the future.
- ▶ **Inspiring Business Growth:**
Supporting SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups.

We will work with a future Mayor of Greater Essex as the voice of business, to champion investment, innovation, and inclusive prosperity – driving Greater Essex to become a national and international economic leader.



1.9m
people



1m
workforce



£55bn
economy



94,000
businesses



878,000
jobs



£1.1bn
investment
in London
Stansted Airport



Up to **£1bn**
investment
in London
Gateway



Kao Data in Harlow, where the UK's largest data centre campus is currently under development.

► We are the Greater Essex Business Board

The Greater Essex Business Board (GEBB) unites leading businesses and major employers from a range of sectors, business membership organisations and higher education partners, to shape policy and champion economic growth.

Our role is clear: provide a powerful business voice that influences local and national decisions – from skills and infrastructure to investment and innovation – delivering measurable impact.

We exist to:

Influence decisions

- Inform economic growth policies at both local and national level.
- Provide strategic advice to political decision-makers in Greater Essex on the issues that matter most to businesses in the region.
- Set the strategic direction for local economic policy.

Deliver impact

- Influence activities that support Greater Essex businesses, including the Growth Hub and business support initiatives.
- Focus on securing new investment in Greater Essex.

Advocate for business

- Provide the authoritative and authentic voice of business in Greater Essex.
- Develop robust mechanisms to engage with businesses across Greater Essex.
- Develop connections with local, regional and national business networks.
- Champion Greater Essex.

► Greater Essex Opportunity and Potential

Greater Essex is an area of huge opportunity and untapped potential. We are one of the largest and fastest-growing economies in the UK. We are a dynamic, thriving entrepreneurial and creative region with significant assets upon which to build.

- We benefit from world-class connectivity to London, Cambridge and Europe. We are a gateway to global trade with two international airports, two Freeports and direct connections to more than 200 worldwide destinations.
- We are home to global businesses and two universities with international reach and reputation.
- We are host to the largest garden communities programme in the UK.
- We have a one million-strong workforce who power businesses locally, and across the capital.
- We have a strong rural economy that supports 175,000 jobs and contributes £5-7 billion annually to local economic output.
- We are home to over 1,000 diverse visitor attractions, making us a national leader in experience-driven leisure tourism.

► Greater Essex is already one of the leading growth economies in the UK, a net contributor to the treasury, the potential to go further is extraordinary, with strong growth focused leadership and targeted investment. Greater Essex will be the growth area of choice for global and SME businesses, seeking a world-class environment to operate in, the future is exciting.

► **Tim Price**, Park City Consulting

And yet Greater Essex has further untapped potential. Although the Greater Essex economy generates c.£55 billion in output per year, the return to the UK economy would be c.£8 billion greater each year if Essex operated at the same level as the wider South East. This is economic value that is permanently lost to businesses, to family incomes, and to the exchequer.

It is this dividend that growth and investment in Essex can deliver.

► When education and enterprise align, we build talent pipelines that unlock opportunity and drive growth.

► **Alison Hartley**, Teledyne E2V

► We bring industry leaders together to champion investment, infrastructure needs and policies that will unlock opportunity and drive sustainable growth for Greater Essex to become a globally connected region.

► **Rupert Wood**, Thames Enterprise Park

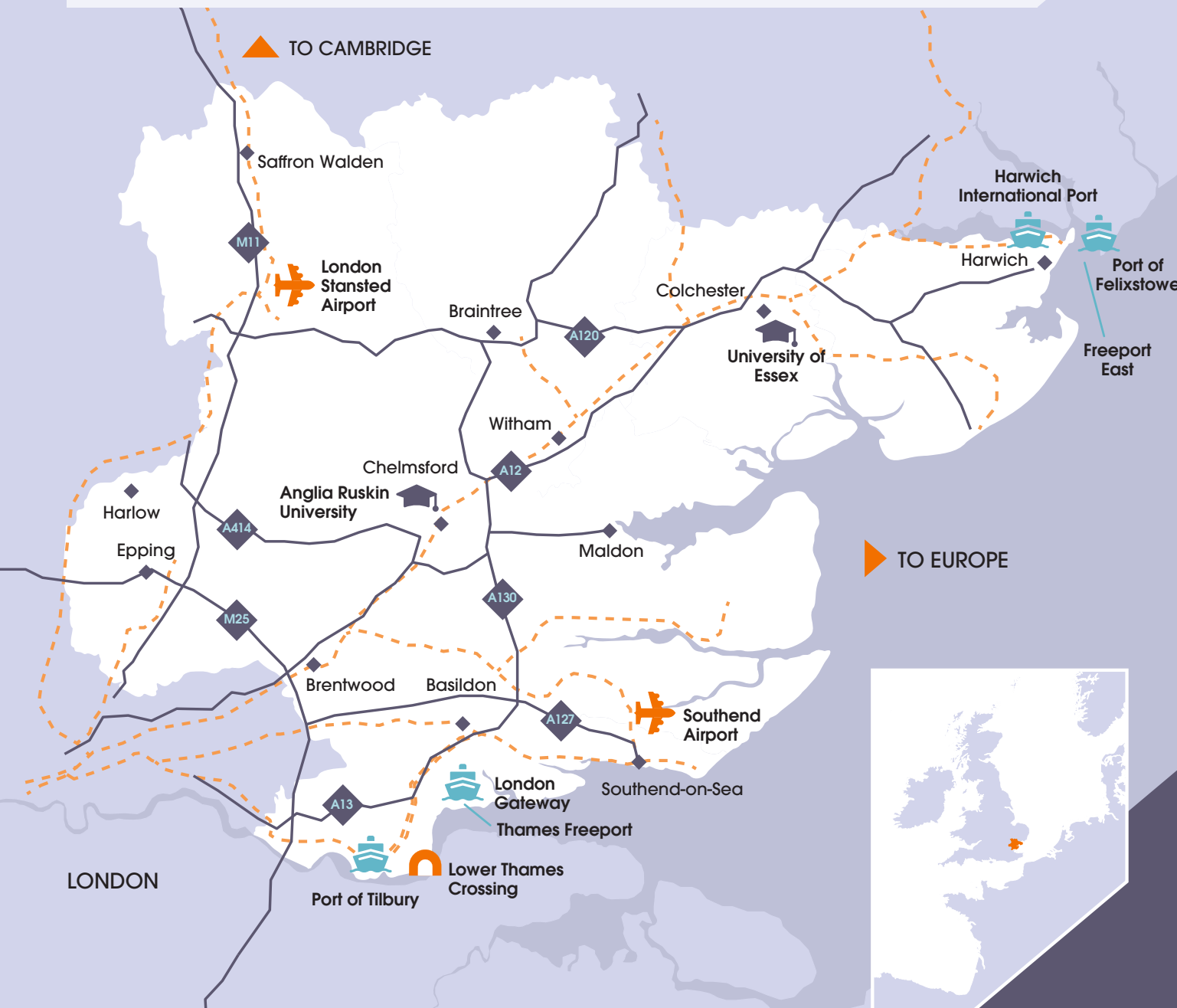
► Essex is alive with energy and ideas. Our mission is to turn ambition into action. Helping innovation flourish and businesses of every kind to thrive.

► **Andrea Cunningham**, Metal Creative

Showcasing Greater Essex - GEBB at UKREiF conference 2025.



► Greater Essex: An International Gateway



Map Key

- ◆ Town/City
- ✈ Airport
- Rail line
- ⚓ Port
- ⚡ Major road
- ⤵ Crossing
- 🎓 University

Infrastructure is the backbone of growth. Essex needs bold investment in rail, roads, and energy to compete globally.

► Alan Shaoul, DP World



Essex is open for business. Our Freeports, airports and global connectivity position us as the gateway to Europe and beyond, and we are building a brand that attracts global investment.

► Bolaji Sofoluwe, ETK Group

► There are already significant investments happening in Essex. This is a time of real momentum with billions committed.

Thames Freeport has 1,700 acres of available development land.



DP World is investing up to £1 billion in their colossal London Gateway container port operation. This will create two new berths and a second rail terminal.

Freeport East, Harwich (Bathside Bay) is on a mission to create a clean energy hub for offshore and green energy projects. Coupled with Freeport tax incentives, it is ideally placed to attract global investors looking to use the UK as a springboard to access European markets and beyond.

The Lower Thames Crossing is a £9 billion investment which would create significant economic growth.

Manchester Airports Group is investing £1.1 billion

in London Stansted Airport, which will see the expansion of airport capacity and the creation of **over 5,000 new permanent jobs.**

Beaulieu Park Station

is the first railway station to be built on the Great Eastern Main Line for over 100 years. Completed within budget and ahead of schedule in October 2025, it will significantly boost economic growth in the north of Chelmsford.

► Our priorities for a future Mayor

Devolution is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to unlock Greater Essex's economic potential.

Our commitment is clear: to work hand-in-hand with the Mayor to make Greater Essex a premier destination for investment and growth that creates opportunities for local communities and businesses.

► **Steve Beel,**
Freeport East

We pledge to work as a trusted partner to the Mayor to:

- Create a Greater Essex Growth & Innovation Fund.
- Champion a confident Greater Essex identity nationally and internationally.
- Support providers in transitioning towards employer-friendly models of modular, flexible training.
- Establish a 'One Essex' front door for business support, investment and skills.

Together, we will ensure Greater Essex is recognised not as a "pass-through" region, but a destination for investment and innovation.

We believe the creation of a new Mayor and the devolution of funding and powers will be a catalyst for sustainable growth and prosperity across our region. We want to work with a Mayor and with councils who champion business, focused on the following priorities:



- **Infrastructure for Growth:**
Rail, road and energy investments.



- **Inward Investment:**
Positioning Greater Essex as open for business.



Anglia Ruskin University.

- **Skilled Workforce:**
Building a workforce fit for the future.



University of Essex Business School.

- **Inspiring Business Growth:**
Supporting SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups.



Harwich Town in Essex and the Port of Felixstowe in the hinterland.

► Infrastructure for Growth

Rail, road and energy investments.

Investments in strategically significant infrastructure, focused on enabling growth at key sites and locations, will provide a catalyst to accelerate growth across Greater Essex, the wider region and the UK as a whole. Priorities must include:

- Building rail freight capacity on key routes – freeing up space on the road network.
- Delivering strategic improvements on our A-roads.
- Enabling the full potential of Greater Essex's ports and airports as gateways to global trade.
- Securing long-term investment in power and utilities to ensure new development can take place, and that we can exploit key growth opportunities (e.g. AI data centres).

We will:

- Provide real-world business expertise and insights to support the Mayor in shaping local strategy and in securing national investment.
- Convene local experts to build the case for change, and to advocate nationally and locally for integrated infrastructure.
- Lobby for immediate enhancements in rail, road and energy infrastructure.

We call on a new Mayor to:

- Be bold in making the case for **greater national investment** in Greater Essex's infrastructure, recognising the vital role the region plays as a gateway to supporting global trade for all parts of the UK.
- Make an early commitment of £2 million to **establish dedicated 'Integrated Transport' and 'Power' Accelerators** in partnership with Essex businesses – bringing together industry leaders and innovators to drive forward critical infrastructure and unlock growth.
- Work with GEBB and the business community to develop an **integrated infrastructure strategy**, backed by a **Growth and Innovation fund** capable of unlocking and leveraging private investment.



Construction of the new Beaulieu Park Station. © Murphy's



► Inward Investment

Positioning Greater Essex as a global gateway.

Greater Essex is open for business offering unrivalled connections, key trade gateways through its ports and airports, and a track record of world-leading innovation. To continue to stand out and compete both nationally and internationally, it needs to articulate a clear vision and a distinct 'identity,' reflecting its current and emerging strengths to draw in investment, visitors and globally significant talent. Key priorities include:

- Securing inward investment in growth locations across Essex – including attracting major new employers.
- Unlocking investment in key growth sectors such as sports and entertainment – supported by hospitality and tourism; clean energy; digital and Artificial Intelligence (AI); life sciences; advanced manufacturing; construction and the creative industries.
- Advocating and promoting outbound trade from Greater Essex, building on the region's existing networks and partnerships.

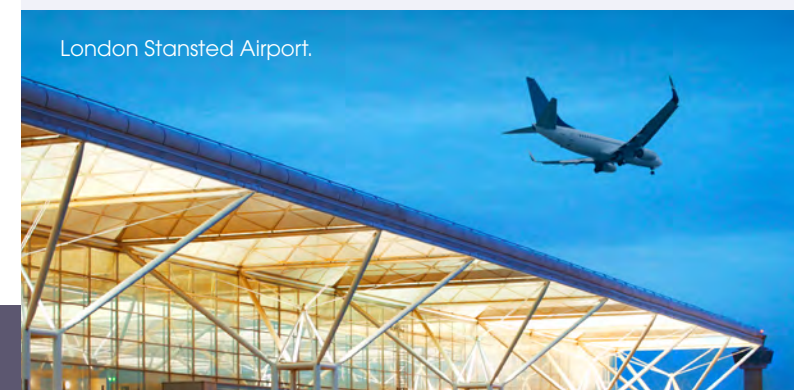
We will:

- Provide advice to shape the development of a Greater Essex vision and 'identity' and the development of a unified inward investment service for Greater Essex.
- Support investor forums and promote Greater Essex projects to potential investors in the UK and internationally.
- Advocate for the development of major event venues and new 'creative enterprise zones'.
- Work with the Local Visitor Economy Partnership to develop Essex's offer for business and leisure visitors, supporting work to make Greater Essex a year-round destination for leisure and business visitors.

We call on a new Mayor to:

- Spearhead the development of a **strong Essex identity**, supported by clear messaging, that enables the region to stand out and compete for investment and talent across our major opportunity sectors.
- Develop a **'deal-book'** drawing together opportunities for investment in development and innovation projects as a focal point for investor engagement.

London Stansted Airport.



- Create an **Investment Promotion Agency** with the ability to align public and private sector funding on place promotion and inward investment.
- Sponsor the creation of **Greater Essex Creative Enterprise Zones** – focused on regeneration and supporting the creative industries as a vital business sector.

► Skilled Workforce

Building a workforce fit for the future.

Businesses need access to a workforce with the right mix of skills to enable growth. Greater Essex's business community is already a major driver of skills development across Greater Essex – funding, designing and delivering programmes, including through partnerships with colleges, universities and training providers. As we position Greater Essex to succeed in the decades ahead, our key priorities include:

- Providing support and guidance to both learners and employers as they navigate what can often be a confusing and fragmented skills system.
- Shaping local skills provision to reflect the future needs of employers in areas such as construction, digital and clean energy.
- Investing in the facilities and learning models required to support excellent technical education and deliver choice and flexibility for employers.
- Using public investment to strengthen skills development through the supply chain.
- Harnessing the potential of our further education colleges and universities as anchor institutions for skills, innovation, and economic development.

We will:

- Work with Essex Chambers of Commerce in support of the Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan – establishing a link between GEBB and the Greater Essex Employment and Skills Board.
- Champion a 'no wrong door' approach to skills support for businesses.
- Convene local businesses to co-design pilot and deliver new skills policy – helping to position Greater Essex as the UK's skills innovation 'test-bed'.

We call on a new Mayor to:

- Launch a 'One Essex Skills Front Door' – a single gateway connecting employers to funded training across all providers.
- Unite developers, colleges and major housebuilders under a Mayoral Compact to train local people for new housing and infrastructure schemes.
- Establish a Digital Essex Standard – investing in flexible digital, AI and cyber-skills bootcamps to equip employees, employers and residents for the modern economy.
- Create a Greater Essex Skills & Innovation Fund to support providers in transitioning towards employer-friendly models of modular, flexible training.
- Embed a 'local jobs and skills pledge' in major investments – requiring every Mayoral infrastructure and investment project to include measurable local training, apprenticeships, and reskilling outcomes.

► Inspiring Business Growth

Supporting SMEs, start-ups and scale-ups.

The environment for business support in Greater Essex is too often complex and confusing. It is vital that we demystify the landscape of support and funding for different business sectors. The underlying principle should be 'smarter, simpler, unified,' drawing from existing initiatives and good practice. Key priorities should include:

- Building insights on Greater Essex business and sector clusters to better understand their operating environments; their development, support and funding needs; and the routes through which they can access support.
- Enabling innovation and providing inspiration for growth.
- Enhancing the Greater Essex Growth Hub to ensure it can connect businesses with the right resources and information at the right time.

We will:

- Champion a 'single front door' for an Essex-wide system of business support – that will enable businesses to access advice, funding, training, and skills support.
- Broker a support service that is fit for purpose, independent of providers and membership organisations, and driven by the real needs of businesses.
- Promote and showcase existing innovation within Greater Essex, including by highlighting success stories and identifying new Business Ambassadors for Greater Essex.

Innovation Knowledge Gateway at the University of Essex.

We call on a new Mayor to:

- Establish a unified 'Single front door' to high-quality, timely business development and funding support across Greater Essex.
- Invest in Innovation Centres to enable collaboration between businesses as a foundation for further innovation.
- Be a proud champion of businesses in Greater Essex, working with the GEBB to promote and showcase the very best examples of cutting-edge innovation from within the region.

► Who are we?



► Our Mission

Ambassadors of Growth. Architects of Opportunity.

We are the voice of business – united, experienced, and ambitious. Our mission is to raise Greater Essex’s profile, unite partners, influence policymakers, and deliver real economic impact.

Our commitment is to work with the Mayor to co-create a bold Economic Strategy, build strong public-private partnerships, engage business ambassadors to deliver seamless business support, and ensure inclusive growth across the region.

Greater Essex:

Globally Connected, Powered by Ambition

Greater Essex Business Board

member of the



supporting and connecting local businesses and leaders to accelerate economic growth in their local economies and across the country.

