

# **England's Economic Heartland Board**

18 June 2026

## **Agenda Item 3**

### **Three Year Business Plan and 2026/27 Work Programme**

*Recommendation:*

**It is recommended that the Board:**

- a) Agrees the Three-Year Business Plan, set out in Annex 1.**
- b) Agrees the final work programme for 2026/27, set out in Annex 2.**
- c) Agrees the proposed annual contribution from partners to EEH for the financial year 2026/27, and notes that letters seeking contributions will be sent following the meeting.**

#### **1. Purpose**

1.1. The paper provides Board members with the draft three-year Business Plan for EEH, reflecting the Board's agreed submission to Government for future funding in December 2025. It also sets out the proposed programme of activity for 2026/27 and seeks Board agreement to proceed with collection of local contributions.

#### **2. Key points to note**

- 2.1. EEH has secured £1.35m for 2026/27 and an indicative settlement for the following two financial years (subject to agreement). This provides the certainty needed to develop the draft three-year Business Plan (2026–2029). The draft Business Plan has been based on the Board's agreed submission to Government in December 2025.
- 2.2. The Business Plan includes a new commitment for annual meetings with individual Board members to ensure work priorities are closely aligned. It also includes a commitment to develop a Quality of Life vision for the Growth Corridor, working alongside key national and regional stakeholders.
- 2.3. A proposed 2026/27 work programme has been developed and is set out in Annex 2.
- 2.4. Local partner contributions (now linked to inflation) will be sought following the meeting. These are a vital part of supporting EEH's role as a flexible, locally led organisation that leverages significant national funding.



### **3. Three Year Business Plan**

- 3.1. Between September 2025 and December 2025, the EEH Board considered DfT's ambition to work collaboratively to develop successor arrangements that would enable transport connectivity and integration as well as wider partnership working to continue in the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor. This work followed confirmation from DfT of its intention to provide longer-term funding to support EEH, reflecting our "respected convening ability, along with our valuable specialist local knowledge on how to improve integrated transport along the corridor".
- 3.2. The commitment from DfT means EEH will continue to play an important role in supporting partner authorities – and the wider region – to achieve their ambitions for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.
- 3.3. As a result of this work, in December 2025, the EEH Board agreed a final submission to Government regarding future programme activity and funding for EEH.
- 3.4. EEH has now had confirmation that DfT is to provide £1,350,000 in 2026/27. This is higher than initially mooted, reflecting the importance and value of some of the key projects that would have been unable to proceed without a further uplift.
- 3.5. DfT's commitment to EEH is to be welcomed. It is on the back of this funding certainty and the extensive work completed by the Board and Subgroup that a three-year Business Plan can be developed.
- 3.6. The draft Business Plan 2026-2029, based on the Board's submission to Government in December 2025, is attached at Annex 1.
- 3.7. It is worth noting two additional commitments in the draft Business Plan, these include:
  - *To ensure this is achieved in the most effective way, a key initiative for the next three years will be annual priorities setting meetings. Agreed between individual Board members and the EEH team, the priorities setting meetings will ensure individual partners are able to set out the issues and opportunities that they need to see progressed within the financial year and allow a mechanism for reporting against them.*
  - *There is a need for a stronger narrative and evidence base of what the Growth Corridor should look like through the lens of quality of life. As the partnership of local and combined authorities, England's Economic Heartland has been asked to lead this work on behalf of government, the Science Supercluster, the Universities and key infrastructure providers, including East West Rail.*
- 3.8. Both of these activities have been important priorities for this Board and will ensure that EEH Officers can continue to provide a tailored approach, capturing issues and opportunities most prominent to our elected leaders. Subject to Board agreement, there will be some small flexibility within the EEH budgets to accommodate new requirements.

### **4. Programme of Work 2026/2027**

- 4.1. On the back of the draft Business Plan, Officers have prepared a programme of work for 2026/27. This is set out for approval by the Board in Annex 2.

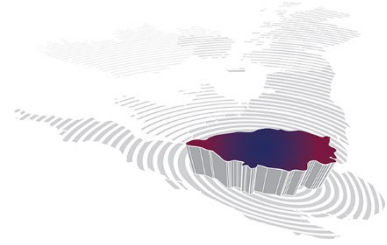


4.2. The work programme represents the commencement of many projects that will evolve over the coming three-year period. Alongside these new initiatives, a number of projects funded in 2025/26 remain underway. The result of this is that, while new funding is being used to support the three-year plan, there is existing work that will come to fruition over the coming months, for example, the Tourism Strategy.

## **5. Local contributions**

- 5.1. Local partner contributions have remained an important part of the EEH approach since its inception. Reflecting the pressure on local government finances, these have remained static for the past three years.
- 5.2. However, during discussions by the EEH Board and its Sub Group, it was agreed that local contributions should be aligned to projected inflation (RPI) going forward. This has been assumed to be c.3% in 2026/27 and 2% from 2027/28 onwards.
- 5.3. Recognising the continued pressure on local government finances, EEH does not take the request for local contributions lightly. By investing in EEH, local partners retain the organisation as a locally-led body with flexibility to deliver local priorities. At the same time, EEH's local contributions have been an important lever for the significant programme funding that DfT has provided.
- 5.4. The staff within the EEH team are a regional resource that all partners are able to work with and benefit from. During 2026/27, EEH staff will continue to maintain a tight focus on how we can further support local partners to bring added value – aiming consistently to bring added value well in above the level of local contributions that have been leveraged.
- 5.5. Letters relating to local contributions will be sent following the Board meeting, with a deadline for receipt of contributions by end of August 2026.

**Naomi Green**  
**Managing Director**  
**June 2026**



## Work Programme 2026/27

Work Area	Specific Workstream	Deliverables
<b>Staffing (overall staff costs)</b>		<b>£1,145,000</b> Includes staff costs, NI and pension. Reflects an assumed increase in staff costs of 3% in line with inflation. Assumes a staffing establishment of 13.5 FTE posts.
<b>Business Management &amp; Partnership Support</b>		<b>£135,000</b> Staffing – 3 FTE Includes accountable body fees, travel, training, professional body fees, office costs and IT. Staffing includes Managing Director.
<b>Data, Analysis and Knowledge</b>		<b>DfT Programme Spend £200,000</b>
<b>Technical capability and analysis</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collecting and processing housing and employment site data as well as infrastructure scheme data, working closely with the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor team (HMT) and NISTA.</li> <li>- Providing targeted support and analytical capability for site-specific and local-authority-wide transport and land-use decision-making, enhancing the functionality of our land use and transport modelling capability to enable that.</li> <li>- Exploring the need for an integrated regional data hub, with CPCA, EWR Co and the OxCam Team in HMT, ensuring ongoing alignment with government data standards not just in transport but across the board.</li> <li>- Ensure regional data and analytical capability is available to support third party and National Wealth Fund investment decision-making – speeding up the process for securing funding for priority investments.</li> <li>- Explore the use and application of AI to improve local authority analytical capacity and capability.</li> <li>- Servicing local authority data and analysis requests, including monitoring the effectiveness of our approach (via Centre of Excellence and Knowledge Hub).</li> <li>- Explore UTC/UTMC regional integration offer to local partners and government, acting as a precursor to a possible digital twin.</li> <li>- Using existing data platforms to support wider pan-regional infrastructure issues, such as power.</li> </ul>

<b>Driving the Regional Agenda</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DfT Programme Spend £60,000</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Funding will be used to support modelling and targeted consultancy support and in house support</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working collaboratively to address “wicked” challenges that operate as barriers now, or as risks in the future, to delivery. This includes: The cumulative impacts of growth near the M40 (junctions 9 and 10), the cumulative impacts of growth on the A1 (south of Huntingdon). Continuing to develop proposals for a coherent bus offer across the Bedfordshire/Marston Vale area, extending to Milton Keynes.</li> <li>- Supporting New Towns - providing targeted support and analytical capability for site-specific transport and land use decision making, enhancing the functionality of our land use and transport modelling capability to enable that.</li> <li>- Support the delivery of a new tourism corridor - using public transport (including East West Rail) as a core part of the offer - the investment in Universal United Kingdom Resort, alongside other initiatives such as Puy Du Fou and Silverstone 2035 are creating the most exciting new visitor economy opportunity in the UK at the moment (Funded from the previous year’s budget).</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Connectivity</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DfT Programme Spend £50,000</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Much of the work in this area is undertaken in house and through engagement with National Highways and Network Rail/Great British Railways</i></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensuring EEH priorities are captured in Network Rail long-term Strategic Advice as part of informing GBR priorities.</li> <li>- Establish a plan with Network Rail and Great British Railways to support the delivery of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The Northampton-Old Oak Common corridor (including the Aylesbury link)</li> <li>o The Bletchley chord</li> <li>o Ely Area Capacity Enhancement</li> <li>o Released-capacity priorities arising from HS2 and East West Rail</li> <li>o OXRail ambitions, including Cowley Branch Line</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Support delivery of key stations and station upgrades as prioritised by local partners, for example Luton Station.</li> <li>- Supporting and advocating for strategic roads investment; working with National Highways to inform and shape future Roads Investment Strategy (RIS) periods. We will also seek to update the Oxford to Cambridge Road Study.</li> <li>- Early-stage work to consider how to maximise surface connectivity to, and between, airports most notably Luton, Stansted and Heathrow.</li> </ul>

<b>Integration</b>	<b>DfT Programme Spend £200,000</b>
<b>Integrated Transport (Strategy and Implementation)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rolling out integration delivery plans in a phased approach, sequenced to align with timing of decisions for East West Rail (Marston Vale Line and Tempsford) as well as other live issues/opportunities (Universal/Bedford and Silverstone) in 2026/27.</li> <li>- Development of the Integration Toolkit.</li> <li>- Work alongside Active Travel England and other infrastructure providers to make the strongest case for investment in active travel routes across the region.</li> <li>- Make the strongest case for investment in mass transit solutions in major economic areas of the Growth Corridor including the: Milton Keynes Mass Transit, the Hertfordshire and Essex Rapid Transit (HERT), Oxford Metro proposals and a mass transit solution to support growth plans in Cambridge, and future new towns.</li> <li>- Develop solutions to address some of the most important barriers to integration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Transport information provision across a wide area, designing a system that can align with current and future devolution geographies and approaches.</li> <li>o Timetabling – minimising interchange penalties (within the same mode, and across modes).</li> <li>o Ticketing and pricing – working with national agencies and DfT.</li> <li>o Explore how future mobility solutions – even at the smallest scale (such as QR codes on bus stop – region-wide roll-out) – can bring transformation and improve the transport experience for users.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Programme Spend £30,000</b></p> <p><i>Much of the work in this area is undertaken in house with small levels of funding often used to support a wider partnership approach. Local contributions are used to fund this work.</i></p>
Priority Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensuring scheme priorities are coordinated and developed in order to support EEH’s and the region’s objectives.</li> <li>- Exploring future funding models to draw on wider expertise and support test beds for innovative funding approaches.</li> </ul>
<b>Convening</b>	<b>Programme Spend £30,000</b>
Priority Activities	Funding primarily to support supporting pan-corridor activity such as Regional Leaders Summits, annual events, Parliamentary activity and increased coordination of our partners’ roles at key events such as UK REiiF.