

Essex County Council
County Hall
Market Road
Chelmsford, CM1 1QH



25th June 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

Publication of the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission's final report

I am writing on behalf of TGSG as I was Chairman of this group while this report was being commissioned.

In March 2016 the previous Chancellor, George Osborne, asked the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission to “develop an ambitious vision and delivery plan for North Kent, South Essex and East London up to 2050”. The Thames Gateway Strategic Group welcomes today’s publication of the Commission’s report. We hope it will spark a renewed commitment by Government and partners to inject pace, resources and energy into the regeneration of the Thames Gateway – a long-term project which has delivered significant benefits over the last 30 years.

The Thames Estuary has much to offer the UK, economically, socially and environmentally. It is a place which is already critically important to the UK economy. The Estuary’s connectivity by road, rail, air and sea is a gateway to the rest of the world, playing a nationally vital role. The Commission’s report proposes ways to build on this and realise the significant potential which remains across East London, North Kent and South Essex. With the right support the Estuary could deliver significantly more jobs and housing, in an outstanding natural environment. Harnessing the Estuary’s full potential is critical to improving productivity and to attracting investment. But we cannot do this on our own. Fundamental to the Estuary achieving its economic potential is the delivery of a small number of critically important transformational projects. We are asking that government collectively works with us to bring these projects forward at pace. These include:

- The extension of Crossrail from Abbey Wood to Ebbsfleet;
- The construction of the Lower Thames Crossing and wider network improvements to realise economic opportunity and to mitigate against local concerns;
- The upgrading of the Estuary’s road and rail networks to make them fit for purpose for current and future growth;
- The delivery of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor to develop the creative economy and maximise its impact on the wider economy;
- Specific, tailored and targeted support to back the Estuary’s existing sectors;
- Accelerated housing delivery, enabled by the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Using these transformational projects as a starting point, we commit to working with Government to drive delivery. We recognise that engagement between the various government departments involved with the Thames Estuary, and the many local partners

across the area, must be streamlined we look forward to addressing this challenge with you.

It is important that we seek out the resources to deliver these transformational projects collectively – whether this is through direct investment, freedoms and flexibilities or new approaches to funding; and this work needs to be delivered in a context of appraisal processes which understand and recognise the wider context and support and enable our shared ambitions.

We look forward to continuing this conversation with you and your officials as you develop the Government's response to the Commission's report. There is much to be proud of in the Estuary, and the scale of regeneration delivered to date has been impressive. But there is the potential to do so much more, which would not just benefit the Estuary, but would benefit the UK economy as a whole. We are eager, committed and ready to work with you to finish the job.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Bentley', written over a faint horizontal line.

Kevin Bentley

Cllr Kevin Bentley
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure