



East of England

All Party Parliamentary Group

Chair: Jess Asato MP

Vice-Chairs: Blake Stephenson MP & Marie Goldman MP

Maximising the Benefits of Innovation Across the East of England

2:30 to 4 pm on Monday 26th October, Committee Room 6, House of Commons

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

Overview

This briefing paper is designed to inform the speakers, MPs, Peers and stakeholders attending the APPG meeting on the 26th October about why innovation is already such a key feature of the economy of the East of England, how the innovation ecosystem diffuses across the corridors, and how the benefits of this economy could be maximised.

It reminds attendees of the policy context, highlights key questions to be addressed by our four speakers and sets out case studies from the four innovation corridors that emanate across Cambridge - north to Peterborough, west to Oxford, east to Norwich and south to London.

The aim of the APPG meeting is to bring together and build consensus between Government and key region-wide stakeholders on how the East of England can use its world-class innovation strengths to attract inward investment, scale high-growth sectors and accelerate regional and national growth.

The APPG meeting will be addressed by four speakers:

- **Paul Bristow**, Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
- **Andy Williams**, Chair, Oxford-Cambridge Supercluster Board
- **Roz Bird**, Chief Executive of Norwich Research Park
- **Jackie Sadek**, Chair, UK Innovation Corridor

In addition, a key official from the Government's Office for Investment will address the meeting.

Policy Context

The Government's [Modern Industrial Strategy](#) places a strong emphasis on increasing business investment, supporting high-growth sectors, backing city regions and clusters, and strengthening the links between innovation, infrastructure, skills and investment.



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It also explicitly commits to deeper support for the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, as well as sectors such as digital and technologies, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and clean energy industries, where the East of England is already a leader in innovation.

Central Government has already recognised the significant economic potential of the innovation clusters in and around Cambridge through a share of the £800m investment in the corridor, and the establishment of a centrally led Greater Cambridge Development Corporation.

The [Rewiring the State](#) Cabinet Statement, which makes clear the centrality of Place to the Government's conception of economic growth, suggests they will go further. Mayoral Strategic Authority's (MSAs) are working with Government to create "Good Growth Funds" backed by national Public Financial institutions (PuFins) and the Local Government Pension Scheme; they will also gain a bigger share of later-stage innovation funding. This will empower MSAs to be much more responsive to the needs of innovative regional economies.

Key Questions

The key questions - for national, sub regional and local government as well as for the private sector and wider stakeholders - are:

- **What are the physical and social levers required to enable the four innovation corridors in the East of England maximise the benefits of Cambridge's global brand**, while connecting it more effectively to complementary assets and opportunities across the region?
- **How can innovation investment and incentives be strengthened**, for example through R&D incentives and support for the expansion of innovation assets and Catapult facilities in key clusters and corridors?
- **What is needed to build the skills base for high-growth sectors**, including expanding higher-level technical and STEM pathways aligned with the region's growth sectors and ensuring that innovation translates into skilled employment and wider economic opportunity?
- **What more should the Government do to help the East of England's four innovation corridors** maximise innovation-based growth and support growth in all places?



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Innovation in the East of England

Innovative sectors in the East of England broadly exist across four major corridors, each specialising in complementary key sectors, with Cambridge sitting at the heart of where they intersect. The Triple Helix growth model in Cambridge, linking academia, industry and (local) government creates a dynamic innovative ecosystem, which pollinates across the corridors.

Cambridge is home to the world's leading Science and Technology cluster with over 5,000 knowledge-intensive firms and employing over 250,000 people (the population of Cambridge City is 150,000). The University of Cambridge alone, with its innovative research, spinouts and startups accounts for £30bn of economic impact annually. In the last decade the University has curated nine unicorn businesses, and its spinout companies have raised over £3bn of investment from private venture capital.

More widely, Cambridge is home to 29 billion-dollar companies (unicorns); and Cambridge companies are valued at 20% of the value of all UK tech companies and have produced \$16.9 per dollar returns on investment, more than three times the UK average.

While the Cambridge ecosystem acts as a focal point for the East of England corridors, the dense sector network in the region creates clusters of world leading specialities in sub-sectors of frontier industries. The sector network is interoperable through talent pool and supply chains, which means that innovative advancements in one subsector in one part of the region is naturally driving advancements in another subsector in a different geography.

CAMBRIDGE – PETERBOROUGH CORRIDOR

Bookended by the two of the UKs fastest growing cities, the corridor combines the innovative Cambridge ecosystem with the UK golden triangle of logistics. Access to the A1 and A14 means that businesses within this corridor can reach roughly 90% of the UK population within a standard 4-hour HGV drive time. This makes this corridor an attractive prospect for businesses looking to scale outside of Cambridge.

CASE STUDIES

Paragraf

A spin-off from the University of Cambridge in 2018, Paragraf has raised \$140 million over three rounds of fundraising and is widely recognised as an emerging tech leader. It is the world's first mass-producer of graphene-based electronic devices which are used in a range of applications, including automotive, industrial automation, cryogenics, healthcare and Agri-tech.



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Paragraf has grown from 12 staff in 2018, to over 110 employees with two locations in Huntingdonshire. The proximity and ease of access to world class talent has been a key factor in the success of Paragraf.

CMR Surgical

Founded in 2014 in Cambridge, CMR achieved Unicorn status by 2019 and by March 2026, reported over 45,000 patients treated worldwide with Versius Surgical Robotic System. The Company remains headquartered in Cambridge, with its global manufacturing facility in Lancaster Way, Ely. The founders attribute proximity to the Cambridge ecosystem and its talent pool as a critical factor in the success of the company.

CAMBRIDGE – OXFORD CORRIDOR

The Ox-Cam Corridor is one of the world's most productive science and technology systems, globally recognised for translating research into high-growth companies and real-world impact. Its strength is the full system: Oxford, Cambridge and the places between them, including Milton Keynes, with its exceptional GVA growth, Bedford, the site of the new Universal Resort, and the green-energy accessibility brought by Chelveston Energy and Innovation Park in North Northamptonshire, providing the space, supply chains and infrastructure for companies to scale.

The Corridor is already home to AstraZeneca, GSK, AVEVA, BMW, Mini, Oxford Biomedica, Immunocore, and eight F1 teams including Red Bull and Mercedes. Its reach extends far beyond its boundaries. In the last decade, OxCam-based venture capital organisations have invested over £150 million in UK businesses outside the Corridor, leveraging over £1 billion in total investment. The Corridor accounts for £143bn GVA, £27.5bn in FDI over the past 10 years and 40% faster growth in employment compared to the national average. This innovative demand led growth has been supported by East-West Rail which will enable the high levels of growth to continue in a sustainable way.

CASE STUDIES

Cambridge Biomedical Campus

CBC is Europe's largest life sciences and health innovation cluster bringing together world class research, hospitals and biotechnology companies including AstraZeneca's global Headquarters and R&D centre. The campus combines academic excellence with clinical expertise and commercial innovation, supporting the development and deployment of new medicines, diagnostics and healthcare technologies. Cambridge Biomedical Campus supports over 22,000 workers, and it is estimated that for every 10 jobs on the campus, an additional 9 to 10.3 jobs are supported across the UK. The Campus is expected to grow and create an additional 23,000 jobs onsite over the next 20-30 years.



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The new Cambridge South Station improves access to the campus and strengthens its connectivity across main corridors. The station recorded over 110,000 passenger journeys within its first month. Most traffic is inbound, NHS staff, researchers, and daily visitors traveling to the Campus, primarily journeying from Kings Lynn, Norwich and London lines.

Silverstone advanced engineering cluster

A world-leading centre for advanced engineering and high-performance technology, building on expertise developed through motorsport and Formula 1. The cluster specialises in advanced manufacturing, electrification, autonomous systems and mobility innovation. Silverstone plays a key role in transforming research and innovation into commercial products by providing a real-world test bed environment and specialising in scalable manufacturing. The cluster is collaborating across the East of England through networks and knowledge exchange. An example of this is where businesses within the cluster are providing expertise to the Whittle Laboratory at the University of Cambridge to accelerate UK manufacturing, aerospace, and zero-carbon flight technologies through networks and events.

CAMBRIDGE – NORWICH CORRIDOR

100km corridor spanning from Cambridge to Norwich, crossing West Suffolk. The corridor combines the Cambridge life sciences and technology cluster, with globally unique Norfolk and Suffolk specialisms in agri-tech and clean energy, through pioneering sub sectors such as biotechnology, sensors, AI and robotics. Anchored by institutions such as Cambridge Science Park, University of Cambridge, UEA, and Norwich Research Park, the parks and businesses within the corridor are gaining significant global interest. The corridor offers significant growth potential for the UK economy.

CASE STUDIES

Ikarovic

Established in 2020, an innovative biotechnology Cambridge spin-out which develops gene therapies for common to severe eye diseases, now located at Norwich Science Park. In January 2026, Ikarovec entered a major, exclusive worldwide option agreement with VectorBuilder. Assuming clinical trials and commercialisation succeed, the deal is expected to be valued in excess of \$1 billion.



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Health AI

Founded in 2021 the Ipswich-based digital health start up has been named one of the fastest growing start ups in the UK and Ireland this year. The award winning digital health-tech uses AI assistants to support post-transplant patients and clinicians with a market of \$3 billion annually and used across three continents.

CAMBRIDGE – LONDON UK INNOVATION CORRIDOR

UKIC is the local government-led partnership connecting London, Stansted, Harlow, Stevenage, Cambridge and Peterborough; attracting inward investment, strengthening collaboration and advocating for the infrastructure, skills and commercialisation support needed across the Corridor. Stansted Airport and Eurostar act as global gateways within the corridor. A quarter of England's net new knowledge-intensive jobs since 2016 were created in the corridor, which accounts for £284 billion of GVA a year and 16% of England's output, with target £350bn by 2040. It encompasses two of Europe's top 10 investment locations in Cambridge and London. Key institutions within the corridor include, Wellcome Genome Campus, UK Health Security Agency, Alan Turing Institute, Francis Crick Institute, Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, Google and Microsoft Research.

CASE STUDIES

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) campus

Government has backed a new £3.5bn campus in Harlow which will be home the largest national biosecurity centre of its kind in Europe. The site will combine research that is currently split across UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) sites in Porton Down and Colindale under one roof; aiming to increase the speed and scale of research into dangerous pathogens and life-saving vaccines, boosting healthcare and economic growth, and protecting UK national security

Francis Crick Institute

The Francis Crick Institute is a world leading biomedical research centre in the Knowledge Quarter of Kings Cross. The Institute is a partnership between Cancer Research UK, Imperial College London, King's College London, the Medical Research Council, University College London and the Wellcome Trust, some of which are anchor institutions within the UK Innovation Corridor itself. The institute prides itself on being collaborative, outward looking and aims to pool knowledge, ideas and resources.



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CROSS-UK & INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

The Cambridge x Manchester Innovation Partnership is the UK's first city-to-city innovation partnership, designed to strengthen research commercialisation, attract investment and accelerate innovation-led growth across both regions. Led by universities and supported by local government, the partnership provides a model for how leading innovation clusters can work together to share expertise, talent and investment. Its success has already inspired similar collaborations elsewhere in the UK, including a partnership between Oxford and Liverpool, demonstrating the growing importance of connected innovation ecosystems in driving national growth.

The UK Innovation Corridor Universities Group Agri-tech programme is moving from concept to delivery. The programme connects Anglia Ruskin University, UCL, Middlesex and UEL with Sao Paulo State and Embrapa, and like the Cambridge x Manchester Partnership, it focuses on the commercialisation of research and building cross-institutional networks. This collaboration seeks to share knowledge and expertise and will potentially move beyond Agri-tech to other innovative sectors.

Key Conclusions

- Collaborative industry partnerships and networks play a significant role in supporting innovative industries and cluster growth;
- Industry and academic collaboration within the four innovative corridors across the East of England stretches beyond political and local government boundaries;
- East of England STEM workforce is mobile across all four corridors, evidenced by Cambridge spin-outs scaling out of the Greater Cambridge footprint and demand at Cambridge South Station. Improved passenger transport connectivity across the corridors will support cluster led growth;
- Driving cluster growth is reliant on a STEM workforce pipeline of significant size;
- While each corridor specialises in its own sub-sectors of frontier industries, there is a dense sector network that spans all four corridors. This means that where one sector in one corridor is growing, it supports the growth and development of another through interconnected industries, talent pool and supply chains. This is a virtuous chain reaction, whereby innovative advancements in one subsector spill over, evolving another subsector along another corridor, which in turn spills over and evolves another subsector within another corridor, and so on.



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APPG background briefing compiled by Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority in partnership with UKIC, EEH, Norwich Research Park and the East of England APPG Secretariat

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