

Press release: Brokenshire backs 2050 vision for the Thames Estuary

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- The government pledges support for the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission's vision to create 1.3 million new jobs in the area by 2050
- £1 million committed to set up a new Thames Estuary Growth Board to drive economic growth in the region
- £4.85 million committed to support local partners to develop proposals for enhancing transport services between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet

A multi-million pound package of commitments to drive forward growth in the Thames Estuary has been announced today (25 March 2019) to create jobs, build new homes and boost local economic growth.

In its [response](#) to the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission's 2018 report, the government backs the Commission's ambitious plans to create 1.3 million new jobs and generate an extra £190 billion for the local economy.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP also put forward a number of new measures as part of a wider government support to realise the 2050 growth vision for the Thames Estuary. These include a commitment to give:

- £1 million to establish a new Thames Estuary Growth Board oversee and drive economic growth plans for the area
- £4.85 million to support local partners to develop low-cost proposals for enhancing transport services between Abbey Wood and Ebbsfleet
- a Cabinet-level Ministerial Champion will be appointed to act as an advocate and critical friend for the region within government will also be appointed

Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, said:

The Thames Estuary has long been a gateway to the UK economy and has enormous untapped potential, which has the power to benefit those that live and work in the area.

Having considered the recommendations of the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission, I have announced a number of steps we are taking to unlock an even brighter future for the Estuary's economy, marking the beginning of a new and bolder approach by this government to support the area.

The government's response sets out its priorities for the Thames Estuary, including the delivery of jobs and homes, addressing local skills challenges and agreeing fully-evidenced Local Industrial Strategies.

Encompassing East London, North Kent and South Essex, the Thames Estuary has the potential to support growth right across the country. Served by international airports and seaports, it is home to an internationally-significant financial services cluster at Canary Wharf and is achieving huge success as a cultural and creative powerhouse.

Despite its strengths, the economic growth is slower and unemployment levels are higher in the Thames Estuary compared to the country's averages. That is why in 2016 the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission was tasked with developing an ambitious vision for growth in the area.

Grateful for the expertise and independent challenge provided by the Commission, the government welcomed the [Commission's report](#), published on 25 June 2018. After considering its recommendations in detail, the government has now [responded](#) with its commitments to the Estuary, which marks an important first step towards delivering the Commission's vision.

The government worked with local partners in preparing its response to set out its measures boost the region.

[Press release: Britain's biggest road just got bigger](#)

The A1, Britain's longest road, has been boosted with 7 miles of new lanes today (Monday 25 March) after an improved section of it opened to traffic.

[Press release: Britain's biggest road](#)

just got bigger

3.5 miles of the A1 in Cambridgeshire has been widened from two to three lanes in each direction as part of Highways England's £1.5 billion project to upgrade the A14, the country's biggest road upgrade.

Today, the extra lanes are open to traffic and the A1's 70mph speed limit has been restored, benefiting the 31,000 drivers who use it every day.

Highways England is upgrading 21 miles of the A14, the east of England's major trunk road, between Cambridge and Huntingdon. The improvements include creating seamless links between the A14 and the A1, with a redesigned junction and widening of the A1 either side of it.

The improvements the A14 scheme is delivering will boost the local and national economy, upgrade a key link between the east coast and the midlands and save up to 20 minutes for the 85,000 drivers who use it every day. And, with a decision due soon on designating part of the improved A14 and A1 as motorways, the project could create a continuous motorway from London to Peterborough for the first time.

Highways England Executive Director for Major Projects and Capital Portfolio Management Peter Mumford said:

Today is a great step forward for people living, working and driving in and around Cambridgeshire as we open the first section of this ground-breaking road upgrade. The A14 sets the standard for how Highways England is delivering the first class infrastructure that the country needs to be successful, and it is great to see this new section of the A1 opening for traffic. It is just a taste of the huge benefits that the A14 upgrade will bring.

Highways England Project Director for the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme David Bray said:

This is a big step in delivering a new, improved A14, and drivers can see just how much work has been done over the last couple of years. The upgraded A1 will fit seamlessly together with the new A14 and improve journeys on both roads.

The A1 is a vital road for England, just as the A14 is for the East, and we'll have transformed both in this area into three-lane, 70mph roads, making journeys safer and faster. The A1 is just one of six phases of the overall A14 upgrade project, and our 2700-strong team is working tirelessly to deliver the rest of this huge scheme, with work expected to be complete by the end of next year.

Part of the new Brampton interchange, with the A1 running left to right and the future A14 running over it before rejoining the old A14 at Ellington.

At 410 miles the A1 is Britain's longest road, connecting London to Edinburgh. The A14 meets the A1 at Brampton in Cambridgeshire and, as part of the A14 project, Highways England has widened it from two lanes to three in both directions between Alconbury and Buckden and built a redesigned junction at Brampton Hut.

Alongside the upgraded A1 there will also be a new local access road to help drivers making local journeys to get around. This will run from the new Ellington junction alongside the A1 northbound and is in addition to the new five-mile long local access road running parallel to the new A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon, the first section of which opened to traffic last week (18 March). Together, they will strengthen local links between villages, improve access to Cambridge for local communities and will become part of the local road network when the new A14 opens.

Councillor Ian Bates, Cambridgeshire County Council's Chairman of the Economy and Environment Committee, said:

This is more great news for the residents and drivers of Cambridgeshire and another milestone achievement. These improvements to the A1, between Alconbury and Buckden, will provide a smooth link into the A14 avoiding the Brampton Hut roundabout and improve journey times. There will also be a local access road alongside the improved A1 from the new Ellington junction connecting local communities without them needing to use the A14. We're looking forward to the opening of the whole A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon upgrade.

Councillor Graham Bull, Leader of Huntingdonshire District Council, said:

The new A14, and the improvements to this section of the A1, are key to ensuring that Huntingdonshire can fulfil its potential as a truly great place to live, work and invest, and we are delighted to see new sections of the road beginning to open. It is part of an important wider network, including the A428 and the A1 between Buckden and Black Cat, which we are keen to work with partners to continue to improve.

There will still be some finishing works on the A1 such as completing the Woolley Road access, commissioning the gantries to help share real time information with drivers, and completing the links to and from the new A14 later this year. This work will require some overnight closures and information will be shared in advance so people can plan journeys.

The [A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon](#) project is now more than half way through construction. Nine of the project's 34 bridges and structures have already

opened to traffic and the longest one, the half-mile long River Great Ouse Viaduct, was completed in February. The team has worked hard to protect and enhance the natural environment, and made incredible archaeological discoveries including a 100,000-year-old woolly mammoth tusk and woolly rhino skull, and more recently the earliest evidence of beer brewing in Britain, dating back to 400BC.

The A14 project is due to be completed and fully opened by December 2020.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: PHE publish investigative report on increasing crack use](#)

Public Health England and the Home Office have published an investigative report on the rise in crack cocaine use in 6 areas of England.