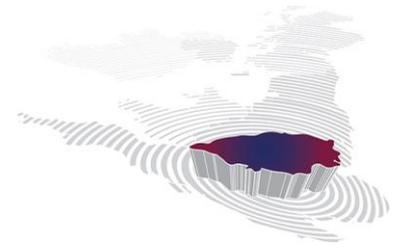




ENGLAND'S
ECONOMIC
HEARTLAND



Trudy Harrison MP
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Date: 4 October 2021

Dear Minister

Enabling the future of mobility through ubiquitous digital connectivity

Congratulations on your new appointment as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport.

I am writing to present you with an investment opportunity that has the backing of political leaders from across the region served by the sub-national transport body for which I am Chair.

England's Economic Heartland (EEH) is the sub-national transport body for the region stretching from Swindon to Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire to Hertfordshire. Our geography incorporates the entirety of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, a government priority. In February 2021, EEH published its vision-led, evidence-based regional transport strategy.

The transport strategy is ambitious in setting out our vision for world class connectivity in the region. Fundamental to this is the decarbonisation of our transport system. Harnessing our region's unique ecosystem of science and technology-based innovation can help us achieve net zero, while also unlocking new opportunities for our businesses.

Our transport strategy also recognises that improved digital infrastructure – through ubiquitous digital connectivity – is critical to delivering user focused transport solutions including connected vehicles and live journey information across both urban and rural areas.

Improved digital connectivity is also essential for enabling continued use of flexible/hybrid working as a means of reducing the need to travel. The need for improved digital connectivity is a well-reported issue for businesses across the region and one that has been a long-standing challenge to resolve.

We believe that there is a need for a fundamental shift towards embedding joined-up 'systems' thinking at the heart of planning future infrastructure needs.

The Department's leadership on the future of mobility, in collaboration with DCMS's role in enabling digital connectivity, is critical in terms of acting as a driver of change in the way we plan for, develop and then implement transport solutions.



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EEH has worked with the Satellite Applications Catapult to develop the strategic case for achieving ubiquitous digital connectivity. The collaboration reflects that for large parts of our region new and emerging space technologies will be a critical component of providing future mobility solutions. We are keen to explore how we might harness the government's investment in the OneWeb system.

I attach a copy of the proposition for investment that the Satellite Applications Catapult has developed for our region, one that we are seeking your support for. We believe that the strategic case, 'Transition', sets out a practical and viable way forward. It will support our shared endeavour for transport, and as importantly it will serve as a pilot with its outputs applied more widely across the UK.

Our response to the pandemic illustrated that change is possible within the way we use our transport system. The evidence underpinning our collective work on decarbonisation demonstrates that change is needed, and that we need to accelerate the pace of change. And we have seen that ubiquitous digital connectivity needs to be at the heart of our communities in much the same way as our highways and byways.

The proposal set out within Transition is worth pursuing and we are keen to work with you to develop the detail of the proposition and to develop the case for securing the funding required to make it happen. The need for the investment to take forward digital connectivity is also central to EEH's proposition for the Comprehensive Spending Review, of which I also attach a copy. The proposal has the support of the Oxford – Cambridge Arc Infrastructure Sub Group, who will work alongside EEH to deliver the work once funding has been secured.

We look forward to having the opportunity to discuss this proposition further with you at the earliest possible opportunity (we have also sent a copy of the proposal to the Secretary for State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport).

Yours sincerely



Cllr Richard Wenham
Chair
England's Economic Heartland