

# KEEPING TRADE ON TRACK

Why rail capacity improvements at Ely junction are vital for the UK economy, levelling-up and net zero



## Summary

When you think of Ely, images of its impressive cathedral may spring to mind. But perhaps what is less well known about the ninth smallest city in the UK is the crucial role it plays in the moving of goods (and people) around Britain and to the rest of the world.

This is because **Ely sits on the cross-country route of the 'Felixstowe to the Midlands and the North' (F2MN) freight corridor, which is the most intensively used and nationally important intermodal rail freight corridor on the network, connecting Felixstowe - the UK's busiest container port - and key destinations across the Midlands and the North.**

However, a mixture of single track sections, restricted speeds, signalling limitations and level crossings in the Ely area act as a barrier to meeting increased demand for freight paths on the routes to and from the UK's industrial heartlands.

It means **goods are needlessly transported long distances to the Midlands and the North by road.** Moving goods by rail offers many advantages including reliability, speed and cost-effectiveness, while also relieving congestion and cutting emissions.



**This is a corridor vital for global Britain's trade with the world, served by a Victorian railway. It is no longer fit for purpose. In railway terms the cost of upgrading Ely - less than half a billion pounds - is relatively low. However, its benefits are far-reaching.**

The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement (EACE) programme covers the railway through Ely and a number of lines radiating across Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. It has been developed by Network Rail to boost network capacity from 6.5 trains per hour to 10 - an increase of nearly a third.

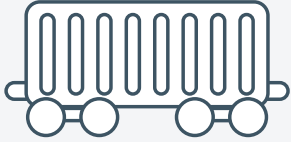
Under Network Rail's preferred service configuration (balancing freight and passenger rail needs) this would result in an extra six freight trains per day to and from the Port of Felixstowe - that is the **equivalent of more than 450 lorries, stretching more than six miles on our motorways, every day!**

The benefits are not just confined to freight. Network Rail's proposals would also see the **doubling of passenger services** on the Ely-King's Lynn and Ipswich-Peterborough routes.

### Reasons why investment in Ely is crucial for the UK

1. It boosts economic growth in the Midlands, North and East
2. It has a remarkably high benefit-cost ratio
3. It cuts emissions and congestion
4. Rail Freight is a national priority
5. It unlocks better passenger services
6. It has an unprecedented level of support from across the UK
7. It supports the government's Freeport East initiative
8. The time is now

# The Ely upgrade at a glance



Allows **2,900** extra freight services to operate to and from Felixstowe every year

Removes **98,000** lorry journeys off the road every year



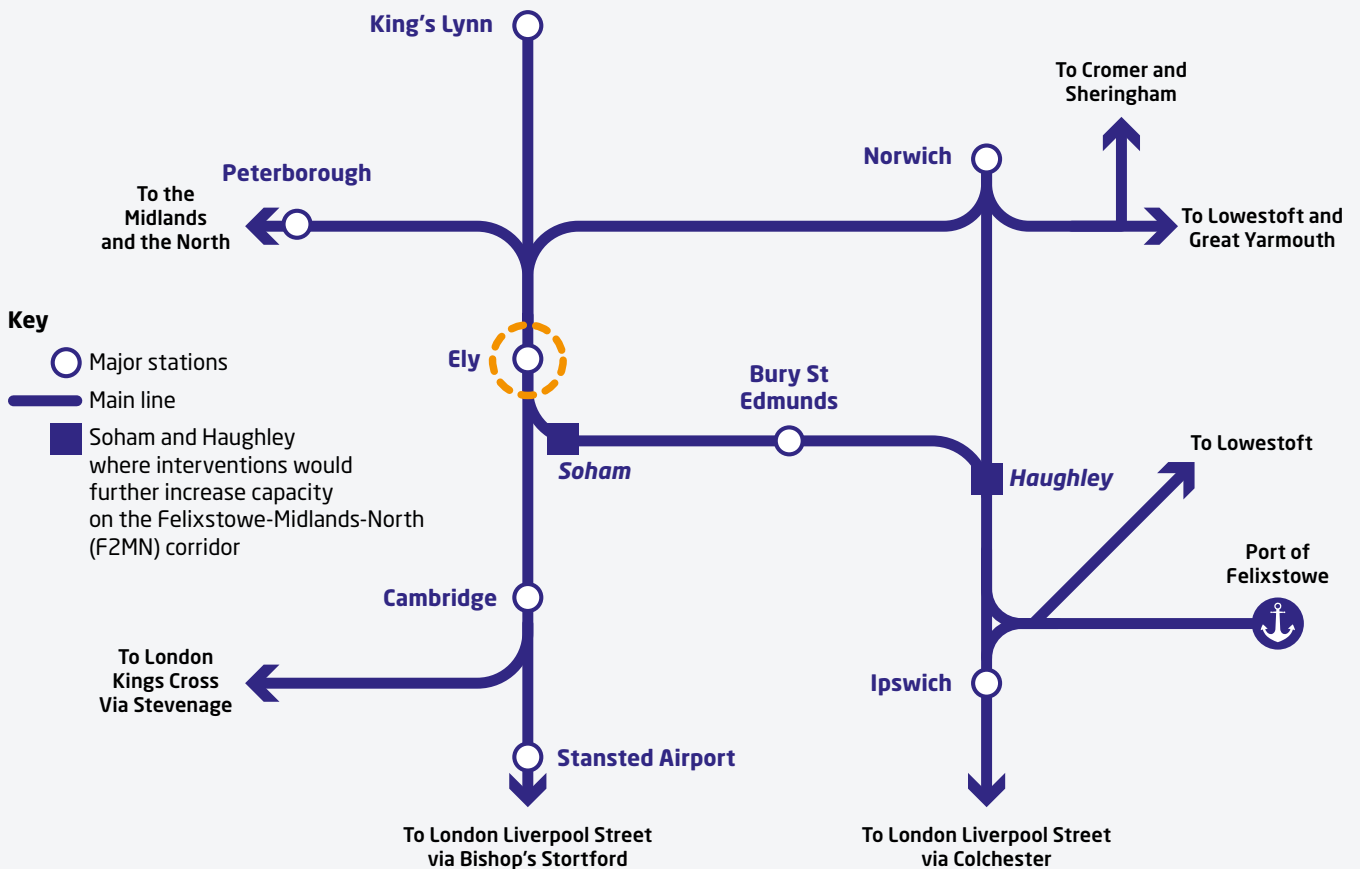
Reduces carbon emissions by **1.7m tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>** over **60 years**

Stimulates **277,000** extra rail passenger journeys



Reduces congestion by **5.6m** hours per year

Returns **£4.89** in benefits for every **£1** invested, a very high ratio for this type of scheme

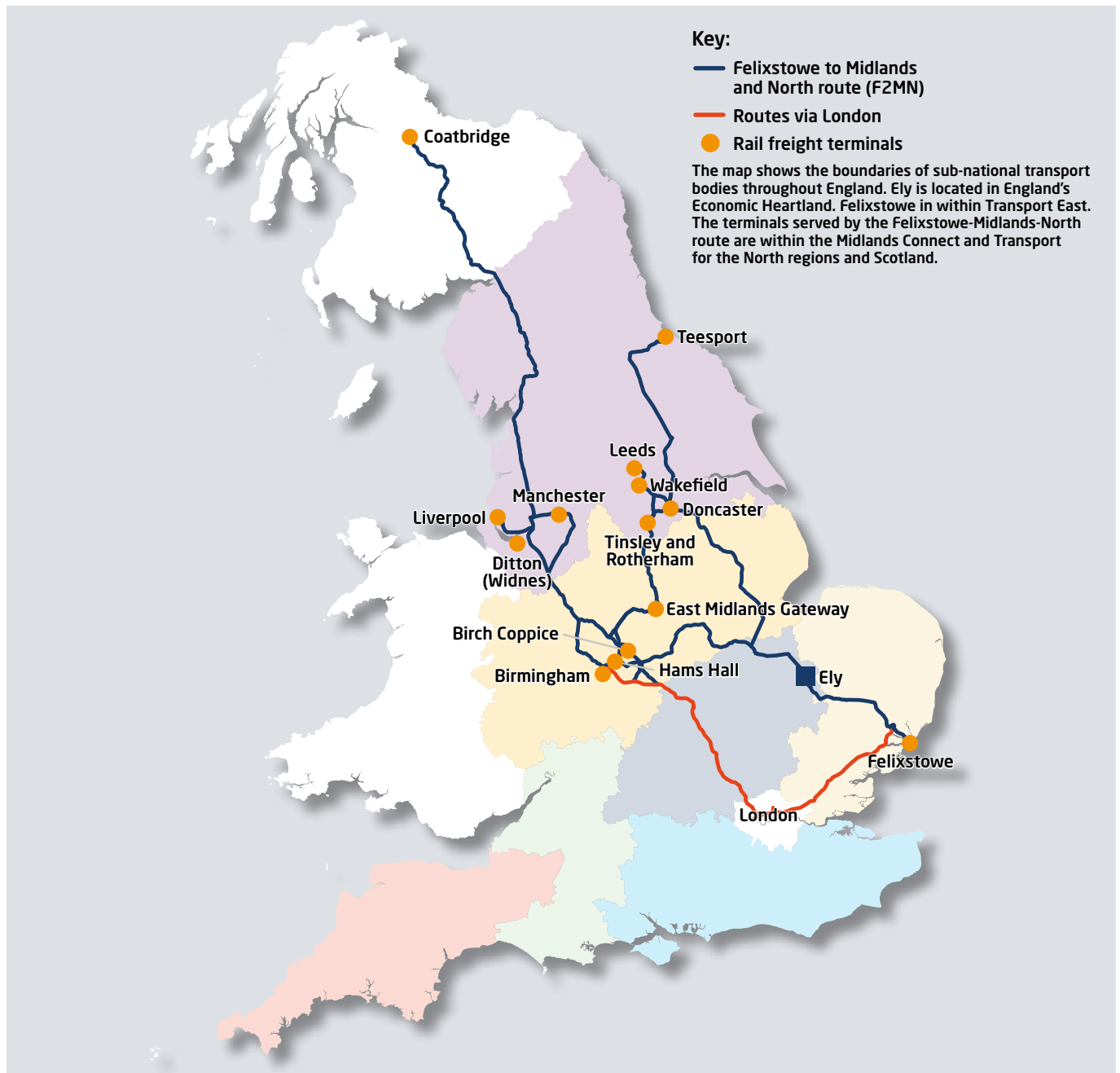


# Eight reasons why investment in Ely is vital for the UK

## ONE: It boosts economic growth in the Midlands, North and East

Investment in Ely supports economic growth in the Midlands, North and East and increases the productivity of businesses across the UK. **Indeed, 70% of containers coming into Britain through the Port of Felixstowe are destined for a high-concentration belt of distribution hubs stretching across the Midlands and the North of England.**

The port serves the Golden Triangle of logistics: an area in the Midlands which is the epicentre of UK distribution. Whether it's the Midlands, North-West, North-East or South Wales, the origins and destinations of rail freight into and out of Felixstowe is spread right across the country.





## **TWO: It has a remarkably high benefit-cost ratio**

The recently completed Ely Area Capacity Enhancement outline business case by Network Rail indicates a return of **£4.89 for every £1 invested**, based on a configuration which would see an extra six freight trains per day to and from Felixstowe and the Midlands/North, alongside doubling passenger frequencies on the Ely-King's Lynn and Ipswich/ Peterborough routes. This represents a very high benefit cost ratio for a scheme of this scale.

**Did you know?** In Network Rail's Eastern Region Freight Strategy (2022), Ely is listed as a 'committed and highest' priority while Soham Area and Haughley are also identified as high priorities.

What Network Rail's Outline Business Case says about Ely Area Capacity Improvements:

- Costs £466m.
- Takes around six years to deliver.
- Will return £4.89 in benefits for every £1 invested, which compares favourably to many other rail schemes (based on recommended service configuration).
- Reduces carbon emissions by 1.7m tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> over 60 years, helping to meet the net zero target.
- Removes 98,000 lorry journeys off the road every year, including across the Midlands and the North.
- Stimulates 277,000 extra rail passenger journeys.
- Reduces congestion by 5.6m hours per year.
- Allows 2,900 extra freight services to operate to and from Felixstowe every year

**Did you know?** 90% of rail freight's benefits occur outside of London and the South East (source: Rail Partners).

### THREE: It cuts emissions and congestion

Network Rail estimates that, under its preferred service configuration, the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement would take 98,000 lorry journeys off the roads every year.

This would not only reduce emissions by 1.7m tonnes over 60 years, **but also reduce congestion by 5.6 million hours per year.** Given rises in demand, without intervention at Ely, volumes of freight

to and from Felixstowe will be increasingly transported by road, further congesting critical routes like the A14 and the motorway network across the Midlands and the North.

**Did you know?** A single freight train can replace up to a mile of lorries on a stretch of motorway.



#### Benefits of rail freight

Rail freight can carry anything from construction materials, petrol, waste and manufacturing components, through to cars, laptops, beds, toys and jeans.

Its benefits include:

- Rail freight delivers £2.45bn in economic benefits each year.
- Rail freight reduces CO2 emissions by up to 76% compared to road.
- Rail produces up to 10 times less small particulate matter than road haulage and as much as 15 times less nitrogen oxide for the equivalent mass hauled.

- Each freight train removes up to 76 lorries from the roads, resulting in 1.6 billion fewer HGV kilometres every year.
- Rail produces around 1% of Great Britain's transport emissions despite carrying almost 10% of all passenger miles and nearly 9% of freight.
- Rail freight operators achieve 97% reliability on the premium services they run for retailers and, in general, rail freight can match or better road freight reliability.
- Rail freight companies continue to invest and reduce costs for customers. For instance, they have increased the payloads they can carry, with tonnage per train up by 80% in the last decade.

Source: Rail Partners (top bullet) and Rail Freight Group (other bullets).



## Maggie Simpson OBE

Director General, Rail Freight Group

A fit for purpose rail network for freight is essential for a successful economy, particularly one that is pursuing zero carbon goals. It is widely accepted that rail is by far the most environmentally benign form of land transport for long distance movement of freight. Rail has a 76% lower carbon footprint per unit load moved compared to road transport, a figure that improves to almost 100% with electrification.

It is also safer and achieves better health outcomes with few of the particulate emissions associated with road in the form of brake dust and tyre wear. The rail route through Ely is currently underperforming due to its infrastructure limitations. More freight could be sent by rail with improvements along the Felixstowe to the Midlands and North line. **The Ely Area Capacity Enhancements are the essential first step to achieving a positive outcome for the UK economy.**



## Blake Jones

Rail Managing Director, Freightliner

Ely Junction is one of the principal bottlenecks restricting the growth of rail freight volumes from the Port of Felixstowe. Unblocking this pinch point will also increase capacity on the London orbital routes, supporting growth from the ports of London Gateway and Tilbury. Growing rail freight volumes will further increase rail's significant economic and environmental benefits. Rail is the most sustainable means of moving freight around the UK, with each tonne of freight moved by rail instead of road reducing carbon emissions by 76%, as well as improving air quality and reducing congestion on the UK's road network.

Rail freight is also a key driver for economic growth – linking British businesses with markets across the world and moving construction materials and other bulk goods into own towns and cities. The highest economic benefits of moving freight by rail accrue across the North of England, in the Midlands, Scotland and into Wales. **Levelling-up is not about where the concrete is poured, but where the benefits will be realised and therefore unblocking Ely will help unlock economic growth across the country.** As we look to the future, unblocking the bottleneck at Ely Junction is a prerequisite to realise an ambitious rail freight growth target.



## Giles Watling

MP for Clacton and Chair of the Great Eastern Main Line Taskforce

The cost of essential investment in Haughley and Ely is relatively low and it would pay the Treasury back 5-fold. It is a crucial investment that would benefit not just the people and businesses of the East, but those in the Midlands, North and all the way up to Scotland. It would **unblock the blockage; it would take the cork out of the bottle of the entire east-west connection.**



## John Smith

CEO, GB Railfreight

Rail freight is vital for the UK economy. It transports the consumer goods we all have in our homes, delivers building materials for construction projects and moves the fuel which keeps our lights on. **Ely would create significant capacity to grow rail freight, by removing a bottleneck for freight volumes from the Port of Felixstowe, and unlocking further capacity elsewhere on the network.** Increasing national rail freight capacity would help the government on its path to net zero, as goods moved by rail use 76% less emissions per tonne than those moved by road.

## FOUR: Rail Freight is a national priority

The Felixstowe to Midlands and North (F2MN) route is considered the **highest priority corridor for investment by the freight industry**. Demand for rail freight has seen strong growth following the Covid pandemic. The Department for Transport's own 'Future of Freight Plan' restated the government's commitment to unlocking the economic and environmental benefits of rail freight and there was a commitment to prioritise strategically important corridors.

Ely was referenced in the 'Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail'. The F2MN corridor also appears in the proposed UK strategic transport network produced as part of the 'Union Connectivity Review'.

**Did you know?** Scottish salmon, whisky and shortbread is transported by rail to Felixstowe for export across the world.

### What recent government publications have said about rail freight and Ely...

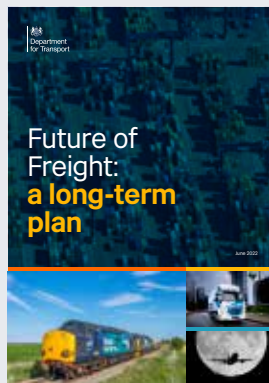
#### Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail (2021):



The pandemic has highlighted the importance of freight to our country and economy. National co-ordination, greater opportunities for growth and strong safeguards will put rail freight on the front foot. The government will work with the market to consider vital network enhancements that increase capacity for freight or help to grow the rail freight market. This could include the long delayed remodelling of the Ely North junction to improve freight journeys across

East Anglia and from the Port of Felixstowe to the Midlands and northern England.

#### Future of Freight Plan (2022):



Government remains fully committed to unlocking the economic and environmental benefits rail freight can deliver, including supporting decarbonisation and reducing congestion on Britain's roads. Government continues to invest to support rail freight growth, and will set out our priorities in the forthcoming publication of the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline.

#### Decarbonising Transport (2021):



We are committed to introducing a rail freight growth target for all areas of the network DfT oversees, to encourage the continued growth of rail freight. Great British Railways will also have a statutory duty to promote rail freight. A rail freight growth target will help provide private operator investment confidence and galvanise action across local partners and industry.





### Daniel Zeichner

MP for Cambridge and co-chair of the East of England All-Party Parliamentary Group

No other changes to the network will deliver the strategic outcomes the capacity enhancement improvements at Ely or the upgrade at Haughley Junction are designed to address. If the Government does not commit to funding these projects there is a potential and **significant risk of non-compliance with its own policy**, particularly the legally binding commitment to net zero by 2050.



### Peter Aldous

MP for Waveney and co-chair of the East of England All-Party Parliamentary Group

The upgrading of Ely junction and the improvement of Haughley junction will have a beneficial knock-on impact that will cascade right across East Anglia. These schemes will not only increase capacity, but will also facilitate the transfer of freight from road to rail, will enable passenger services to be increased and will help achieve our legally binding decarbonisation targets. **These projects must be funded as a priority.**



### Cllr Liz Leffman

Vice-Chair, England's Economic Heartland

Improving the capacity for rail freight along the Felixstowe-Midlands corridor is a priority in our regional transport strategy, which has been agreed by local partners and accepted by national government.


**Our conversations with the freight industry have only reinforced that there is significant unmet demand for increased levels of rail freight.** The rail capacity improvements needed at Ely are of national significance. The scheme is an important connector for the economies of the Midlands and North and provides significant potential to relieve congestion on strategic roads while reducing emissions caused by HGV journeys which could more appropriately be made via rail.



### Cllr Kevin Bentley

Chair of Transport East

Upgrading Ely and Haughley junctions are immediate priorities for the region. **Solving these rail pinch-points would help connect our growing places, energise our rural and coastal communities, and unblock our international gateways.** All while helping achieve net zero transport and bringing into the Treasury five times the required investment. We must get these moving.



**Did you know?** Peterborough Station has recently received nearly £50m in levelling-up funding from the government which will transform an important gateway to the city and wider region. (artist's impression).

## FIVE: It unlocks better passenger services

Network Rail's preferred service configuration would not only result in more freight paths, but the ability to run extra passenger services between **Ipswich and Peterborough** (from one train every two hours to one train per hour); and **King's Cross-Ely-King's Lynn** (from one train per hour to two trains per hour). Network Rail predicts that by increasing frequencies and making commuting more attractive, the new services will facilitate **277,000 extra rail passenger journeys** every year and cut total journey times (due to the increase in frequency).

Increasing services between Ipswich and Peterborough would significantly improve connectivity from East Anglia to the Midlands and the North. In addition, **improving service frequencies across the East of England will support the region's strong economic growth and sustain the range of high-value industries clustering in Cambridge.**

Extra capacity at Ely will also support the realisation of **passenger services on the East West Main Line** from Suffolk and Norfolk through to Swindon, Bristol and south Wales, and to Reading and Southampton. This maximises the opportunity unlocked by government's investment in East West Rail between Cambridge and Oxford.

## Space to Innovate

The Space to Innovate Enterprise Zone comprises 10 sites across Norfolk and Suffolk. This multi-site zone will help to create 18,500 jobs over the next 25 years in high-skilled innovative sectors including food and agri-tech, digital, life sciences and health. Six of these sites are in towns served by the Ipswich-Peterborough corridor.

### Cllr Alexander Nicoll



Chair of the East West Main Line Partnership's Eastern Section Board

The upgrade of Ely and Haughley junctions are essential if we are to deliver a true East West Main Line running from the Suffolk coast all the way to Bristol and south Wales. **Challenging the historic north-south rail dominance while connecting growing places, igniting innovation and accelerating progress to a net zero economy.**

### Jamie Burles



Managing Director, Greater Anglia  
**Rail infrastructure upgrades along the Felixstowe to Peterborough corridor are essential to the delivery of further passenger service improvements across our region,**

most notably an hourly Ipswich to Peterborough service, which is a key stakeholder aspiration and one which would enable more cross-country rail journeys and a more convenient alternative to the A14. We're committed to that aim, and we leased the necessary new trains to operate such a service, so we're keen to see the Ely, Haughley and level crossing upgrades needed to fulfil that objective delivered as soon as possible. Such enhancements would be beneficial for passengers, for freight, for our region, for the Midlands and the North too, and for the sustainable development of the wider UK transport system in support of net zero targets.



## James Tierney

General Manager – Intermodal, Maritime Transport

Maritime Transport is the UK's leading road and rail transport company. We employ over 2,700 dedicated people across 40 depots, eight rail terminals running a network of 1,700 trucks and 13 dedicated trains plus cargo space on a further five daily trains. We provide both container and distribution logistics services for the major shipping lines and retailers from and to ports and distribution centres, many of which are located in the Midlands and north of the country.

One of Maritime's key strategies, which is being driven by customer demand, is modal shift moving more cargo by rail to remove road congestion and reduce emissions and allowing the use of alternative-fuelled road vehicles. In 2022, 20% of our container movements are being carried by rail. This percentage has increased year on year from 6% in 2019.

**We are seeing strong demand for modal shift from importers and exporters who see the environmental benefits in their supply chains using rail over road.** Therefore, we believe that the Ely 'F2MN' strategic link is essential, not only for services for Felixstowe, but also as a project to release additional capacity from London and the West Coast Main Line south congested infrastructure, is in place to support UK trade growth.



## Chris Starkie

Chief Executive, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership

**Ely Area Capacity Enhancements are significantly important both nationally and internationally** in terms of enabling growth in the efficient transport of goods for trade between Britain's biggest and busiest rail freight port at Felixstowe, through the Midlands' golden triangle, to the north and elsewhere on the national rail network. The scheme would also support a range of new passenger routes and services from Ipswich and Norwich through Ely to destinations across the East of England and beyond, reducing journey times and improving access to both economic centres and housing. This will help maintain all scales of economic growth, as well as relieve congestion on our roads and reduce carbon dioxide emissions across Norfolk and Suffolk.



## Stephen Britt

Chair, Transport & Infrastructure Group, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce

The Suffolk business community is fully behind the programme of rail enhancements proposed for Ely and Haughley Junctions – indeed they remain puzzled as to why such schemes haven't been approved before now. The benefits of improved freight and passenger flows through Suffolk to other parts of the country make this **a project of vital national importance both in terms of our local and national growth and net zero ambitions.** Suffolk Chamber will continue to campaign for this vital project until it is delivered.



## Andy Bagnall

Chief Executive of Rail Partners

The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement scheme, and the wider Felixstowe to the Midlands upgrade, is a vital project that will create significant additional capacity for new passenger services as well as for freight trains destined for locations across Great Britain – both **crucial to the government's wider economic and environmental ambitions.** The scheme is **an essential building block to achieving the target that Rail Partners and its members are calling for of 'trebling rail freight by 2050'.** Delivering this target would mean rail freight contributing over £5.2bn in annual economic benefits and removing 20 million HGV movements every year.

## SIX: It has an unprecedented level of support from across the UK

There is a remarkable level of support for increasing capacity for freight on the Felixstowe-Midlands corridor from across the country, public and private sectors and political spectrum.

It is included in the strategies of four sub-national transport bodies – **England’s Economic Heartland, Transport East, Midlands Connect and Transport for the North** – and supported by train operating companies, local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

There is cross-party political support for the proposals. The East of England All Party Parliamentary Group has led the regional political advocacy, making the case to the DfT and Treasury. The Eastern Powerhouse body



has also – with the support of MPs and businesses – raised the importance of the scheme to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who stated support for the scheme during the Conservative leadership contest in summer 2022.

**The Ely upgrade also enjoys public support: in Network Rail’s public consultation in 2021, 76% of respondents supported the proposals.**

**Did you know?** The Ely Taskforce brings together local authorities, LEPs, Network Rail, train operators and three sub-national transport bodies to make the strategic case for the Ely upgrade.



### Jonathan Walker

Head of Cities and Infrastructure Policy, Logistics UK

Logistics UK is one of Britain’s largest business groups, providing a voice for more than 20,000 members across the entirety of the UK’s logistics sector – road, rail, sea and air. Rail freight is key for the UK’s transport efficiency and provides a significant carbon reduction via modal shift, from the road. Logistics UK supports the government’s plans for a growth target for rail freight, but to achieve this, we need to ensure that bottlenecks are removed from the network. We therefore strongly welcome the proposals to upgrade the railway in the Ely area. **This is an important route for rail freight from the Port of Felixstowe to the Midlands and beyond, and members report that this is one of the most significant bottlenecks in the system.** The proposed enhancements will free up capacity to enable more freight services.



### Dr Nik Johnson

Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

**Ely means business. Open up Ely, and you open up a world of opportunity for Global Britain.**

Unblocking Ely will enable passengers and freight to move freely not just through the East but through the Midlands and the North, with benefit surging throughout the UK. Nearer home, the junction is pivotal to squeezing the most out of the investment already made in new stations at Soham and Cambridge South, and in regenerating the Fenland train stations. It is a must for any reopening of the Wisbech line, for boosting services between King’s Lynn and London, Norwich and Cambridge, and getting Newmarket looped in.

**There’s tremendous public backing for this high-reward and climate-friendly investment which would make life better for hundreds of thousands of people in many parts of the country.**

For too long, UK growth has been fettered by this problem and now is the time for action. Open Ely and open all the world.

## What regional transport strategies say about Ely and rail freight

### Transport for the North

Freight and Logistics Strategy (2022): "Investment in Ely in Cambridgeshire will **enable the North to benefit** by improving access to a rail freight terminal that could result in extra freight trains from the South East to the North."

### Midlands Connect

Strategic Transport Plan (2022): "We need to take a **cross-boundary approach to thinking about where key freight and logistics sites should go**.

We also need to work with other sub-national transport bodies to identify and improve capacity pinch points throughout the UK, for example at Ely for rail freight travelling from Felixstowe to the Midlands and the North."

### England's Economic Heartland

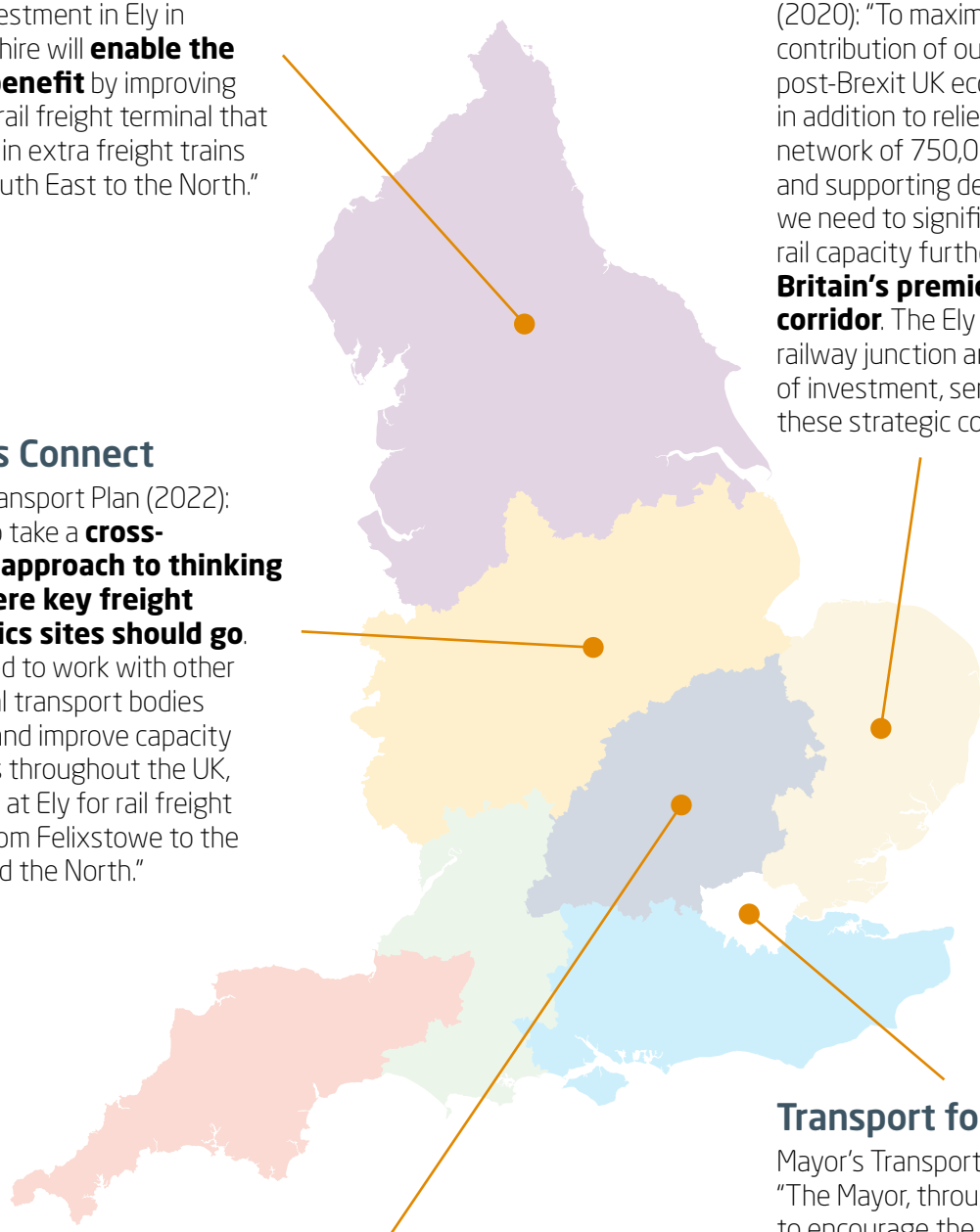
Transport Strategy (2021): "Demand for rail freight is forecast to grow exponentially in the long-term, driven by continued growth in deep-sea shipping markets, particularly at the Port of Felixstowe. Bottlenecks on the Felixstowe-Nuneaton line mean that a significant proportion of containerised freight travels south along the Great Eastern Main Line, across North London and onward to multiple destinations. This leads to conflict with the need to provide additional capacity for rail passenger services, particularly along the North London line. The constraints on rail connectivity between Felixstowe and the Golden Triangle of Logistics places additional pressure on our strategic road infrastructure, with consequential implications for their operation and carbon emissions. **Investment in rail freight will realise benefits on the strategic road network.**"

### Transport East

Investment and Delivery Plan (2020): "To maximise the contribution of our ports to post-Brexit UK economic growth, in addition to relieving the road network of 750,000 lorries by 2030 and supporting decarbonisation, we need to significantly enhance rail capacity further on what is **Britain's premier rail freight corridor**. The Ely area and Haughley railway junction are the main focus of investment, serving both of these strategic corridors."

### Transport for London

Mayor's Transport Strategy (2018): "The Mayor, through TfL, will work to encourage the DfT and Network Rail to **upgrade rail freight routes outside London** so that non-London rail freight can be taken around London, thereby freeing up rail paths through the capital for additional passenger services and freight trains that serve London."





## SEVEN: It supports the government's Freeport East initiative

By providing improved links to Felixstowe, the EACE programme will help ensure the success of the government's freeports programme. Felixstowe and Harwich are part of Freeport East, one of eight new freeports created in England. The Ely area capacity enhancements will enable the freeport to take advantage of the new opportunities enabled by Brexit, **support the new trade deals being struck with overseas** countries and help drive innovation. By connecting the coastal communities of the East with the Midlands and North it will also contribute to the levelling-up agenda at both ends of the route. Freeport East is expected to create 13,500 new jobs and generate £5.5bn over 10 years.



**Did you know?** Pictured above an A class vessel calling at Felixstowe. If laid end to end, its containers would stretch for 91 miles and if each container went by road the lorry convoy would be 500 miles long.



**Mark Taylor**  
Hutchison Ports'  
Logistics Director

The Ely area capacity scheme is of **huge national importance**. It will support the UK's growth agenda by improving the capacity, efficiency and resilience of essential supply chains, it will reduce road congestion on the A14 and across the Midlands and North, and it can help achieve net-zero emissions targets.



**Steve Beel**  
Chief Executive,  
Freeport East

The Ely Capacity Improvements are vitally important to delivering the full potential of Freeport East. Optimising freight movements through modal shift to reduce carbon emissions allows us to deliver economic growth in a sustainable way. This is central to the vision of Freeport East as an **internationally significant transportation hub** that drives UK ambitions on net zero and facilitates innovation and productivity.

## Port of Felixstowe

The Port of Felixstowe is Britain's biggest and busiest container port and one of the largest in Europe. It plays a pivotal role in keeping the UK's trade moving and delivering real benefits to customers, the community and the industry.

The port handles approximately four million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) and welcomes approximately 2,000 ships each year, including the largest container vessels afloat today. Crucially, the port provides some of the deepest water close to the open sea of any European port.

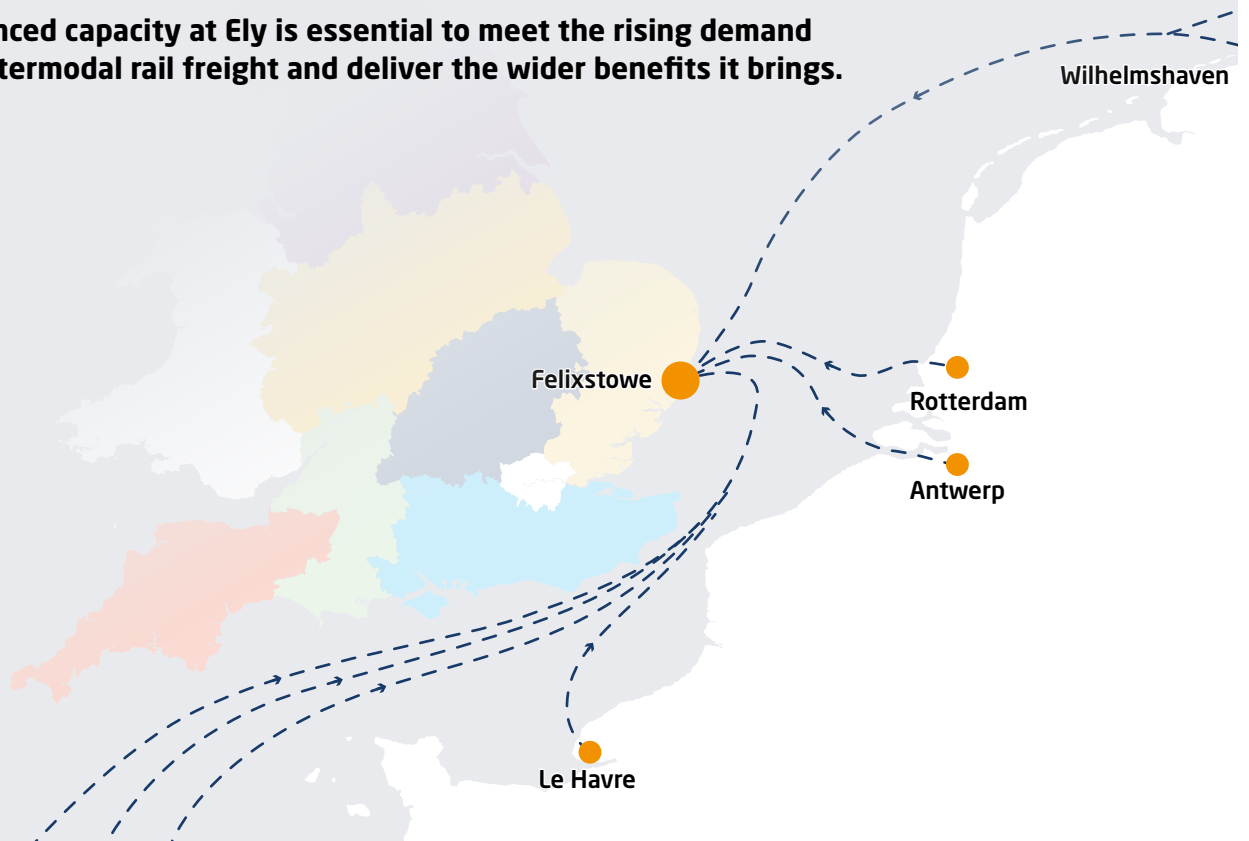
The Port of Felixstowe provides the best location in Britain for importing and exporting goods. It is the country's only port in the top 50 largest container ports worldwide and handles trade with over 200 countries and overseas territories each year, including 60% of all the UK's trade with the fastest growing economies of Asia. Ultra-large container ships only want to call at one UK port and Felixstowe is closer than any other to the main European shipping lanes within the Hamburg – Le Havre range.

**Seventy per cent of containers coming through Felixstowe use the A14/Felixstowe to the Midlands and North (F2MN) corridor. Many are destined for the 'Golden Triangle', a region in the middle of Britain where many of the country's businesses have their national distribution centres and for which Felixstowe is the natural route-to-market.**

The port has three intermodal rail terminals offering connections to 16 inland destinations throughout Britain. There are currently up to 76 daily arrivals and departures, moving around a million standard containers annually by rail. This saves over 100 million HGV miles each year, reducing road congestion and improving environmental performance.

Rail volumes account for around 29% of the port's total UK domestic throughput, rising to 50% of traffic to the North and West Midlands. There is demand for that figure to increase, subject to the capacity of the network. Currently, around half of rail freight into and out of Felixstowe travels on the direct line via Ely, while the other half travels a more circuitous route via London – one which is constrained and lacks capacity to grow further.

**Enhanced capacity at Ely is essential to meet the rising demand for intermodal rail freight and deliver the wider benefits it brings.**



## **EIGHT: The time is now**

The Ely upgrade will maximise the benefits of both past and future investment along the Felixstowe to Midlands and North corridor.

Previous government and private investment in the Ipswich Chord, Trimley Loops and Bacon Factory Curve enabled the expansion of services between Felixstowe and the rest of the UK, however pinch points further along the line mean that not all this capacity can be utilised.

Meanwhile, Network Rail has identified interventions alongside Ely which would provide an increase in total paths on the F2MN corridor from 42 to 48. These are made up of Haughley Junction doubling and Soham Area Capacity Enhancement. Longer-term interventions would provide an increase in total paths from 48 to 60, with an average of 45 that run via Ely.

**Critically, due to the future proofing provided by the EACE programme, no more work would be required in Ely.**

Conversely, should these other interventions be delivered without the Ely upgrade, the capacity uplifts realised would be far more modest and limited.

**Delivering Ely, Haughley, Soham and long-term interventions would prevent over 394,000 avoidable HGV journeys every year, and 3.9 million between 2029 and 2045; reducing rail freight demand forced onto HGVs over this period from 28% to 0%.**

### **Haughley Junction**

The Haughley Junction scheme provides additional track capacity at what is an important junction near Stowmarket. The scheme, backed by Transport East and Suffolk County Council, would see an existing single lead track junction replaced with a twin lead track arrangement principally to provide for additional rail freight services from Felixstowe to the Midlands and the North. The junction is already a performance constraint, leading to delays and reduced flexibility to restore normal running during disruption. It would also support the increased frequency of Ipswich to Cambridge and Peterborough services. The scheme could cost as little as between £10 and £20 million.

Subject to funding, it could be delivered in the next three years. Indeed, completing the scheme in advance of the Ely improvements would maximise the value of both that investment and the value and underutilised capacity of previous investment into the Felixstowe branch line, by ensuring the additional services are not sat stationary at the mid-point on the line.

### **Soham Area**

This project was formerly known as the Ely to Soham Doubling Project and was paused as part of the Hendy Review in 2016. The scheme would address the capacity and performance constraint posed by the single line section of track between Soham and Ely Dock Junction.



#### **Ian Kapur**

Head of Strategic Access Planning,  
GB Railfreight

The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme (EACE) is a much-needed multi-purpose scheme to ease existing junction speeds and restrictive track layouts, also remove the severely reduced speed for freight trains over Ely Bridges. These items, taken together, would unlock much needed capacity through the Ely

station area to permit one additional freight train, between the Port of Felixstowe and the Midlands/North in each direction, to be pathed through Ely, robustly, each hour. Not enhancing Ely is just not tenable.

**The real prize is to add value to other enhancements as they come forward such as the Soham Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme (SACE), for doubling Soham to Ely Dock Junction, which will further unlock the route's potential for increasing modal shift from road to rail for Felixstowe Port traffic.**





This train conveys sand for glass making from the quarry at Middleton Towers, near Kings Lynn, to Goole in Yorkshire. It is on its way to Ely where it has to negotiate the single lead junction

No other changes to the network will deliver the strategic outcomes the capacity enhancement improvements at Ely are designed to address.

**Scaling back the planned interventions will give a much poorer return on investment and require additional disruptive - and costly - work again in the future.**

Rail freight from Felixstowe to the Midlands also travels on a more circuitous route via London – but the capital’s network is already heavily congested. Longer-term, it may be that upgrading the Felixstowe-Midlands-North route could potentially unlock capacity for rail freight serving freeports in the south such as London Gateway and Tilbury.

**Did you know?** The Mayor of London’s Transport Strategy (2018) promotes ‘improvements to the rail network outside London’ so ‘that freight trains could avoid using the London Overground network, as much of the rail freight that currently travels through London is not bound for the capital, with a large proportion of that freight being transported from the Port of Felixstowe to the Midlands and beyond’.

In addition, several substantial rail infrastructure assets in the Ely area need to be replaced in the coming years, regardless of whether the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements are carried out. It will be far more efficient and cheaper to renew them at the same time as the EACE works. **If renewal is carried out beforehand, it is likely that these new assets would have to be removed when the Ely upgrade did take place - an unattractive use of public funds.**

And of course, not investing in Ely means not realising the benefits it would unlock for the UK-wide economy, levelling-up and achieving net zero.



## Sizewell C

In 2022, the government approved the proposals for Sizewell C power station in east Suffolk. This huge infrastructure project is promoting an integrated freight management solution, utilising road, rail and sea. It is planned for 60% of construction materials (by weight) to be transported to the main development site by rail and sea.

**With construction of the plant likely to take more than a decade, there is an opportunity for the Ely improvements to be completed in time to support the ongoing construction at Sizewell.**

In addition, EDF predicts that there will be up to 700 cumulative HGV movements a day to and from Sizewell, placing a further strain on roads such as the A14 which Ely could help mitigate by reducing needless HGV movements from Felixstowe.



### James Palmer

Chair, Eastern Powerhouse

The need to deliver improvements to the rail junction just north of Ely is not just of local, but national importance. **The main freight line from the Port of Felixstowe to the industrial heartlands of the Midlands and the North should not be compromised by a bottleneck in the Fens.** Any comprehensive policy for rail in the United Kingdom should and must include an upgrade at Ely. Locally the impact from the investment would be huge. The ambition to deliver a half hour service between Cambridge and the major centres of Ipswich, Norwich and Peterborough plus a new link to deprived Wisbech cannot be imagined without an upgrade to Ely. If you want a 21st century rail network in the East that will match the burgeoning economy here, you have to deliver Ely.

If the benefits to the UK economy and the whole of the eastern region are not large enough to sway the argument in favour of investment of Ely, then surely hitting net zero is? Here we have an actual infrastructure solution that will save tens of thousands of lorry journeys per year. Getting freight off the road and onto rail is government policy, so not funding this vital scheme is to go against government policy. **The time is now.** The Eastern Powerhouse recognises the importance of an upgrade to Ely North Junction and on behalf of its members, urges government to commit to this vital scheme.



### Cllr Anna Bailey

Leader of East Cambridgeshire District Council

**The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement programme will enable additional rail improvements which East Cambridgeshire District Council is supporting.** Building on the successful opening of Soham station, doubling of the track between Ely and Soham and construction of the second platform at Soham station will enable an hourly Ipswich to Peterborough service and an hourly passenger service from Soham. Reinstating the Snailwell Loop would unlock a direct service from Ely to Soham and Cambridge, via Newmarket. Both projects would **result in modal shift of both passengers and freight, contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions and remove traffic from already congested roads.**



### Cllr Richard Smith MVO

Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste, Suffolk County Council

Upgrading the rail infrastructure at Ely and Haughley have the potential to **bring real change to freight and passenger services** here in the East of England. The benefits will enhance our aspirations for growing the Suffolk economy whilst helping to achieve our goals of reducing carbon emissions and congestion along Suffolk's strategic road network.



### Cllr Alex Beckett

Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee at Cambridgeshire County Council

We are very supportive of the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme because of the benefits it will bring to Cambridgeshire and the wider region. **The scheme is crucial in delivering our aims in terms of economic growth, sustainable travel and net zero, by getting more freight on to rail and less on our roads.** We will continue to work with all partners to secure Government commitment to this vital project.

## Ely is key to the country's ambitions

### National economic growth

Removing constraints in and around Ely means removing barriers to Britain's trade with the rest of the world. Our manufacturing heartlands in the North and Midlands need to receive components and get their goods to global markets as efficiently as possible. Scotland uses Felixstowe to export its world-famous whisky, shortbread and salmon. Government has ambitious plans to make the UK the next Silicon Valley and an economic and science powerhouse while Brexit has put an even greater spotlight on the need for Britain to reach out and trade with all parts of the world.



### Achieving net zero

The UK has a legally binding requirement to reach net zero by 2050. Nationally transport is the single biggest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions and HGVs are responsible for 19% of these emissions. On the other hand, rail produces around 1% of the country's transport emissions despite carrying almost 10% of all passenger miles and nearly 9% of freight. According to Network Rail, based on its preferred service configuration, the Ely scheme will reduce carbon emissions by 1.7m tonnes over 60 years, helping to meet the net zero target.

### Levelling-up

Levelling-up the Midlands and the North is a major focus for the UK. And while Ely may be located in Cambridgeshire, there is no doubt the benefits of improving rail infrastructure there will be felt right across Britain's industrial heartlands.

That's why Ely features in the strategies of both Midlands Connect and Transport for the North. In addition, increased passenger services will unlock economic opportunities for more deprived communities across East Anglia, including in Peterborough and Ipswich.



### Dame Ann Limb DBE CBE DL

Chair, UK Innovation Corridor

To maintain sustainable economic growth throughout the Innovation Corridor, businesses need to be able to move domestic and international goods as efficiently and swiftly as possible – which is why unlocking the railway 'bottleneck' at Ely Junction is so vital to delivering low-carbon, regional and national prosperity.



### The Rt. Hon. Lord Haselhurst

Chair of the West Anglia Taskforce

Improvements at Ely junction will benefit not just freight moving east-west but also passengers travelling north-south along the

West Anglia Main Line. Improving connections between King's Lynn – an area identified as in need of levelling up – and Cambridge, our region's innovation centre will spread growth and prosperity.

Spring 2023

[www.englandseconomicheartland.com](http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com)

[www.transporeast.org.uk](http://www.transporeast.org.uk)