

Minutes of a meeting of the East Midlands Freeport Board  
Held on 26 February 2026, at 1pm, at Clifton Campus, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton  
Lane, Nottingham, NG11 8NS.

PRESENT

Directors

Nora Senior – Independent Chair  
Phil Canning – Uniper  
Mr Harrison Fowler CC – Leicestershire County Council (LCC)  
Ben Green – SEGRO  
Steve Griffiths – East Midlands Airport (EMA)  
Peter Ralston – Goodman  
Councillor Robert Reaney – Derbyshire County Council (DCC)  
Frank Robotham – Maritime Transport  
Julie Rossiter – Etwall Land Limited (ELL) (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Councillor Tony Saffell – North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC)  
Councillor Stephen Taylor – South Derbyshire District Council (SDDC)

Accountable Body Officers

Simone Hines – Director of Finance  
Zafar Saleem – Assistant Chief Executive

Executive Delivery Team

Jonathan Bretherton – Head of Commercial and Development  
Dan Cooper – Head of Communications and Inward Investment  
Lauren Dunn – Business Manager  
Katie Greenhalgh – Head of Green Growth and Inclusion  
Nigel Hudson – Planning & Business Case Lead – For Item 9  
Naomi Kwasa – Governance and Committees Lead  
Tom Newman-Taylor – Chief Executive

Also present

Leanne Ashmore – RBC  
Joe Battye – DCC  
Peter Collins – Sharpe Pritchard (Via Microsoft Teams) – For Items 10 and 12  
Justin Ives – SDDC (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Edward Highfield – East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA)  
Jonathan Turner – Cushman & Wakefield – for Item 12  
Allison Thomas – NWLDC – (Via Microsoft Teams)  
MHCLG Representatives (Via Microsoft Teams)

1.	<p><u>Apologies for Absence</u></p> <p>Apologies were received from Cllr Walker-Gurley, Councillor Clarke, and Andrew Pilsworth (represented by Ben Green).</p>
2.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>The Chair invited members who wished to do so to declare an actual or perceived interest in respect of items on the agenda.</p> <p>The Chair and Councillor Robert Reaney made declarations in respect of Item 10, Accountable Body Governance, in that they are both members of EMCCA's Investment Committee. It was noted that this would not impact their ability to discuss or vote on the item.</p> <p>Julie Rossiter and Peter Ralston made declarations in respect of Item 12, Strategic Update on EMIP, in that ELL is the landowner for EMIP and Goodman is their partner on this site. It was noted that following the introduction to the item, they would leave the room and not take part in the discussion.</p> <p>Councillor Tony Saffell made a declaration in respect of Item 9, Planning Update in that he holds the Planning Portfolio as an elected member of a Local Planning Authority, North West Leicestershire District Council.</p>
3.	<p><u>Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 22 January 2026</u></p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting on 22 January 2026 were <b>AGREED</b> as a correct record.</p>
4.	<p><u>Minutes of the PSDG Meeting held on 22 January 2026</u></p> <p>It was noted that these minutes were presented for information only and would be formally agreed at the following meeting of the Public Sector Directors Group.</p>
5.	<p><u>Chair's Update</u></p> <p>The Chair provided an update to the Board. She presented feedback on a recent meeting with other Freeport Chairs, noting that it was a constructive session, and EMF is considered to be performing well in terms of organisational maturity and progress against objectives. She confirmed that a short summary of the status of each freeport will be circulated to Board members, and members were encouraged to get in touch ahead of the next meeting with any points they wish to explore further.</p> <p>The Chair reminded the Board that the PSDG will meet immediately following the Board meeting to consider two items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A relatively small increase to the EMIP seed capital budget (also referenced later on the Board agenda); and</li> <li>2. A business rates relief application.</li> </ol>

	The Board NOTED the update.
6.	<p><u>Chief Executive's Update</u></p> <p>The CEO provided an update to the Board across several key areas;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strategic Sites Accelerator Fund</b> – Government had recently invited Expressions of Interest (EOIs) to the Strategic Sites Accelerator Fund, announced in last year's Industrial Strategy. EMF has been working closely with EMCCA and OFI in anticipation of this opportunity. Three EOIs have been submitted from the region with support from EMCCA. This stage is primarily about securing a place on the longlist; Government has not yet provided further detail on next steps, though it is expected that OfI will review submissions and then engage bilaterally with areas they deem to be priorities. The CEO thanked all partners for their swift contributions and confirmed that no awards have yet been made under this scheme. It was noted that a previous, smaller fund was not applicable to EMF.</li> <li>• <b>Cross-Whitehall Senior Officials Meeting</b> – EMCCA colleagues and EMF CEO convened a meeting with senior officials from key Government departments including the NISTA, OFI and MHCLG. The meeting provided an opportunity to test EMF's emerging propositions, particularly around M1 Junction 24 and the broader funding required to unlock sites, as well as to confirm alignment with the correct Government teams. The discussion reinforced that EMF is heading in the right direction and helped deepen engagement with officials. The CEO will provide a further written update in the next CEO report.</li> </ul> <p>The Board NOTED the update.</p>
7.	<p><u>Subcommittee Update</u></p> <p>Updates were provided to the Board on the most recent S151 and Delivery Subcommittees meetings;</p> <p><b>S151 Subgroup</b></p> <p>LCC's Finance Director provided a verbal update from the S151 discussion held on 18 February 2026. She confirmed that the Business Rates Relief (BRR) application, together with a change request regarding EMIP, would be considered by the PSDG later today. On EMIP funding, additional information requested by the S151 Subgroup has been shared with the PSDG, and the Group is comfortable with the overall proposal and funding position, subject to a small number of caveats and clarifications. Two ongoing actions were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>BRR income and LG Futures modelling:</b> NWLDC remains committed to resolving this by the end of March.</li> <li>• <b>Interim decisions on BRR applications:</b> Work is underway to consider whether interim decisions can be provided to investors ahead of key investment decisions. This will be discussed further at the next S151 meeting before any</li> </ul>

	<p>recommendation is brought forward, however this would be at the discretion of the Billing Authorities.</p> <p>The Board had the opportunity to discuss the update provided and it was noted that the S151 Subgroup exists to advise the PSDG, and that Board Members already receive PSDG agendas and full PSDG minutes. On that basis, a verbal update to the Board remains appropriate. It was also confirmed that following AB transition, the S151 / S73 Chair from EMCCA will attend EMF Board meetings to provide updates as needed.</p> <p><b>Delivery Subcommittee</b></p> <p>The Chair provided an update from the Delivery Subcommittee. The Subcommittee had considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress across tax sites against baseline</li> <li>• The tax sites delivery roadmap</li> <li>• Business Plan 2025/26: analysis of progress against objectives</li> <li>• The investment programme update</li> <li>• Small-group sessions on risk</li> </ul> <p>Several specific actions were agreed by the Delivery Subcommittee, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening understanding of EMF's progress relative to other freeports</li> <li>• Ensuring realism in delivery timescales and the assumptions underpinning the roadmap</li> <li>• Distinguishing clearly between outputs and outcomes when assessing delivery</li> <li>• Incorporating macro-level scenario testing into the Business Plan</li> <li>• Developing a clear and consistent communications narrative that protects EMF's reputation, acknowledges delivery delays where necessary, and highlights wider investment activity to demonstrate ongoing momentum.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair added that EMCCA is developing its wider place narrative, and it is important that EMF maintains a consistent and aligned message across all sites. Work will also continue on sequencing and timelines for delivery to ensure clarity on pace and progress.</p> <p>The Board <b>NOTED</b> the update.</p>
8.	<p><b><u>Communications Update</u></b></p> <p>The Head of Communications and Inward Investment presented an update to the Board. He noted that the team's focus was on preparations for the Parliamentary Reception on M1 Junction 24 taking place on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026. The Board was informed that there are currently around 58 confirmed attendees, including the Roads Minister, several MPs, and regional stakeholders.</p> <p>The Board had the opportunity to discuss the update, and it was noted that while many attendees are regional representatives, ministerial attendance is ultimately the key driver of influence. The Head of Communications acknowledged this and emphasised that the event is intended both to demonstrate a collective show of regional support and to help</p>

	<p>“shift the dial” with national decision-makers. It was noted that there will be a strong presence from senior Government officials, including Directors and Deputy Directors from relevant departments, which will support this objective.</p> <p>The presentation included an overview of the event positioning, speaking programme and logistics. The aim of the reception is to encourage Government to prioritise the J24 scheme, secure wider recognition of its national significance, and reinforce the freeport's unified regional backing.</p> <p>It was <b>AGREED</b> that the Briefing Pack for the event would be shared with the Board. The Board <b>NOTED</b> the update.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><b><u>Planning Update</u></b></p> <p>EMF's Strategic Planning Lead provided an update on progress with the infrastructure contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and related Local Plan activity across the three Local Planning Authorities (LPA); North West Leicestershire, Rushcliffe, and South Derbyshire.</p> <p>He reminded the Board that the SPD is being prepared to create a legal mechanism for securing developer contributions toward strategic infrastructure required to support EMF, including M1 Junction 24. This will ensure that future developments—both within and outside EMF tax sites—contribute fairly, avoiding a scenario where early schemes avoid costs, and later schemes bear disproportionate burdens. The SPD aims to introduce a retrospective funding mechanism, enabling EMF to forward fund infrastructure with confidence that contributions can later be recovered. He noted that the SPD is technical in nature and will require a formal public consultation, due to take place in March. This will be led by each LPA, though EMF is undertaking much of the supporting work on their behalf. Engagement has been ongoing for nearly a year, and all three authorities remain supportive of the approach. The critical issue is timing: the SPD must be adopted by 30 June 2026, before the shift to the new planning regime removes the ability to adopt SPDs under “old style” Local Plans. The Strategic Planning Lead outlined the status of each Local Plan and the mechanisms through which the SPD will be embedded. He stressed that the SPD provides the policy “hooks,” while the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)—a separate technical document—will continue to develop over the next six months.</p> <p>The Board was asked to note the urgency of the timetable and the need for NWLDC, Rushcliffe and SDDC to prioritise this through their own governance processes. The Chair asked each Authority's representatives to confirm continued support.</p> <p>Following the presentation, the Board sought assurance that each Local Plan includes sufficient policy “hooks” to support the SPD. Officers confirmed this is being worked through, though the timetable remains challenging. LPA representatives noted the tight deadlines and the volume of work still required but confirmed overall support and initial committee dates aligned with the SPD programme. Concerns were raised about capacity, consultation responses and risks associated with Local Government Reorganisation and parallel EMCCA spatial planning work. EMF CEO emphasised that missing the June deadline would likely cause significant delay, as under new planning rules the SPD would have to become a Supplementary Plan, requiring far more extensive consultation and examination. Delay would also weaken EMF's ability to secure</p>

	<p>contributions, increasing the risk of “free riders.” The Chair encouraged partners to support getting it over the line for the benefit of all parties.</p> <p>The Board NOTED the update.</p>
10.	<p><b><u>Accountable Body Governance</u></b></p> <p>EMF CEO introduced the item, noting that the Board was being asked to agree, in principle, the transition of the Accountable Body (AB) role from Leicestershire County Council (LCC) to the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) from 1 April 2026. Under the proposals, EMCCA would also become a Founding Member of East Midlands Freeport, appoint a public sector Director, and provide assurances on regional balance and collaboration to Leicestershire partners. The associated governance changes are subject to Member approval via Written Resolution.</p> <p>It was noted that detailed changes to governance documents had been shared via a Change Summary, with tracked documents available on SharePoint. These will be circulated in full to Member organisations as part of the formal approval process.</p> <p>EMCCA’s Director of Place outlined the proposal which would be submitted to the EMCCA Board on 9<sup>th</sup> March to secure necessary approvals. He emphasised that the transition meets Government expectations and will strengthen regional alignment and confirmed that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all relevant contracts and agreements could be novated;</li> <li>• there are no TUPE implications;</li> <li>• support functions currently provided by LCC will be maintained for up to six months during transition; and</li> <li>• EMCCA is confident the transfer can be delivered by 1 April.</li> </ul> <p>On Board representation, appointing an officer is the recommendation. He noted it is the desire of the Mayor to remain closely involved and that she would hope to attend Board meetings or strategy sessions periodically as a guest of the Board.</p> <p>The Board had the opportunity to discuss the proposals.</p> <p>MHCLG officials welcomed the progress and reiterated the preference for the Board to reach a consensual resolution, avoiding the need for Government intervention. Government remains supportive of transition by the end of March but is open to finalisation within the early part of the new financial year, if required.</p> <p>Following the discussion the Board supported in principle the direction of travel for EMCCA to take on the role of the Accountable Body and to become a Founding Member, subject to an exploration of the further options discussed.</p>
11.	<p><b><u>Associate Membership Update</u></b></p> <p>Due to time constraints, the Chair deferred this item to the next meeting of the EMF Board.</p>

12.	<p><u>Strategic Update on EMIP</u></p> <p>The Chair introduced the item, noting that this discussion was for information and strategic oversight only, ahead of the PSDG funding decisions following this meeting. She noted that the PSDG will be asked to approve a small increase to the existing EMIP due diligence budget, with the main go/no go decision on progressing to the next development phase scheduled for May.</p> <p>The Head of Commercial and Development introduced the representative from Cushman &amp; Wakefield, who have been supporting EMF with this work. An update on the current situation was provided.</p> <p>Directors from Goodman and ELL then left the room and the virtual meeting.</p> <p>The Board discussed the emerging plans for the site and the potential options available for progressing it, outlining the need for a number of separate studies to be carried out at this stage to remove risk of potential timeline delays in bringing the site forward.</p> <p>The Chair reiterated that no further commercial decisions or commitments were being made by the PSDG at this stage.</p> <p>The Board <b>NOTED</b> the update.</p>
13.	<p><u>Action Log.</u></p> <p>The Board <b>NOTED</b> that actions from its previous meeting(s) had been completed, overtaken or were on the agenda and <b>NOTED</b> the list of outstanding and completed actions since the last meeting.</p> <p>EMF CEO highlighted that an update had been provided earlier in the meeting on the BRR income and LG Futures modelling, and that the contracts register would return to the Board in March.</p>
14.	<p><u>Board and Subcommittee Forward Look</u></p> <p>The Board <b>NOTED</b> the Forward Look.</p>
15.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>The Board was reminded to complete the identity verification process for Companies House.</p> <p>The next meeting would be on be on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March, 10am at Rushcliffe Arena. The meeting ended at 4.25pm.</p>