

**Minutes of a meeting of the East Midlands Freeport Board**  
**Held on 24 April 2026, at 10.00am, at Leicestershire County Council, County Hall, Glenfield**  
**LE3 8RA.**

**PRESENT**

**Directors**

Nora Senior – Independent Chair

Councillor Abby Brennan – Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC) (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Phil Canning – Uniper  
Ben Green – SEGRO (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Stewart Kellie – Etwall Land Limited (ELL)  
Ioan Reed-Aspley – East Midlands Airport (EMA) (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Peter Ralston – Goodman  
Councillor Robert Reaney – Derbyshire County Council (DCC)  
Frank Robotham – Maritime Transport  
Councillor Tony Saffell – North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC)  
Councillor James Walker-Gurley – Nottinghamshire County Council (Via Microsoft Teams)

**Accountable Body Officers**

Simone Hines – Director of Finance (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Zafar Saleem – Assistant Chief Executive

**Executive Delivery Team**

Jonathan Bretherton – Head of Commercial and Development (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Dan Cooper – Head of Communications and Inward Investment  
Katie Greenhalgh – Head of Green Growth and Inclusion  
Naomi Kwasa – Governance and Committees Lead  
Paul Miller – Head of Operations and Programmes  
Tom Newman-Taylor – Chief Executive

**Also present**

James Arnold – NWLDC – (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Leanne Ashmore – RBC (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Joe Battye – DCC  
Edward Highfield – East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA)  
Derek Higton – Nottinghamshire County Council (Via Microsoft Teams)  
Mike Roylance – SDDC (Via Microsoft Teams)  
MHCLG Representative

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| 1. | <p><u>Apologies for Absence</u></p> <p>Apologies were received from Julie Rossiter, who was substituted by Stewart Kellie, Andrew Pilsworth, who was substituted by Ben Green, Steve Griffiths who was substituted by Ioan Reed-Aspley, Cllr Clarke who was substituted by Cllr Brennan, and Cllr Taylor.</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. No declarations were made.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 3. | <p><u>Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 27 March 2026</u></p> <p>The Chair invited comments on the draft minutes. A member of the Board advised that they were not content with how the minutes reflected the Board's discussion on the business plan, particularly in the version due to be published. It was noted that the minutes did not adequately capture the level of challenge and discussion by the private sector and it was requested that the public minutes be amended to record that there had been appropriate debate.</p> <p>One member also highlighted that the minutes did not reflect the exchange which took place regarding customs benefits of the Freeport. It was noted by one member that the value of customs benefits was nuanced for many applicants and that Space Park Leicester had paused their application to become a customs site on this basis. It was requested that this point be captured in the minutes as well.</p> <p>The Chair agreed that the current redactions would be revisited and additional comments included and that the revised minutes would be recirculated and approved at the next meeting of the Board.</p> |
| 4. | <p><u>Minutes of the PSDG Meeting held on 27 March 2026</u></p> <p>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 noted that due to it having been the Easter break she would not be providing an update to the Board.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 6. | <p><u>Chief Executive's Update</u></p> <p>The CEO provided an update to the Board across several key areas;</p> <p>1. <b>Sites and Investors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An update was provided on EMG2. The DCO application process is progressing, with substantial information requests being managed with the Planning Inspectorate.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A draft Statement of Common Ground will be shared with relevant parties before any submission is made.</li> <li>• The CEO confirmed that he and the Chair will be meeting with the Managing Directors of SEGRO and Prologis, following earlier discussions in January, to discuss progress towards a commercial resolution for EMG2.</li> </ul> <p>2. Ministerial Roundtable and Freeport SRO Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CEO reported on the Freeport Chief Executives' and Chairs' roundtable held with Investment Minister Lord Stockwood, alongside senior officials from the Office for Investment and MHCLG. The event was well attended and followed advance coordination across Freeports.</li> <li>• Positive examples of progress were shared, alongside common themes where further Government support is required, particularly in relation to transport infrastructure, energy costs, grid capacity and improved coordination on inward investment.</li> </ul> <p>The Board discussed the need to ensure Government are mindful of the impact on the UK's competitiveness of delays in securing grid connections as well as high energy costs affecting non-logistics occupiers. The CEO reflected that Government messaging is beginning to shift towards the importance of making sites "investor-ready", including speculative investment to allow opportunities to be seized when investors emerge.</p> <p>The Board highlighted the need for realism around ambition, equipment lead times and risk-sharing between the public and private sectors. The CEO noted that work is underway to strengthen cross-Government coordination and to bring together public and private sector stakeholders across Freeports to address these challenges more holistically. It was <b>AGREED</b> that, in developing policy work with Government, EMF will continue to test this with private sector partners.</p> <p>3. Trent Arc Project Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CEO reported that the first Trent Arc Transport Group meeting had taken place earlier that day, jointly chaired by the Freeport and EMCCA.</li> <li>• Work will be aligned on Junction 24 with EMCCA's wider transport investment pipeline.</li> <li>• The group will help formalise relationships with private sector partners and developers and improve clarity and consistency in engagement and communications.</li> </ul> <p>The Board <b>NOTED</b> the update.</p> |
| 7. | <p><u>Subcommittee Update</u></p> <p>The Board received an update on the most recent Section 151 Subcommittee meeting held on 15 April 2026.</p> <p>The Subcommittee had reviewed the draft budget proposals in light of further detail received and had provided robust challenge and constructive discussion in relation to</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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|     | <p>the proposed budget uplift and its implications. The Committee was supportive of the recommendations being brought forward to the Board.</p> <p>The CEO then provided a brief update on recent and upcoming Executive Committee discussions.</p> <p>The Board <b>NOTED</b> the update.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 8.  | <p><b><u>Communications Update</u></b></p> <p>The Board received an update from the Head of Communications and Inward Investment across two key areas;</p> <p><b><u>US Engagement</u></b></p> <p>The Board was informed that EMF had joined a Midlands Innovation-led delegation to the United States with the Mayor, with visits to Boston, Washington DC and Chicago, extending the original scope to include sector-focused engagement. Productive meetings were held with UK Consulates in Boston and Chicago. While contacts were noted to be extremely well connected and open to engagement, awareness of the Freeport offer was relatively low. There was strong interest in establishing closer links going forward. Engagements included a MedTech focus in Boston and an Industrial Strategy session in Washington DC. A broad range of contacts were made across trade and business, providing a strong foundation for future engagement. The visit is being used to inform planning for a combined inward investment visit to Germany later in the year, with preparatory work to commence shortly. The Chair welcomed the positive outcomes from the US visit and emphasised the value of maintaining close relationships with embassy and consular contacts, ensuring they are regularly updated with the latest information.</p> <p><b><u>UKREiiF</u></b></p> <p>EMF is maximising its presence at UKREiiF, supporting the EMCCA pavilion and securing speaker opportunities aligned to strategic priorities. A targeted session focused on Junction 24 will be held with key stakeholders to discuss next steps, collaboration and financial considerations. Board members noted the importance of clarity on the timing of UKREiiF sessions, and it was <b>AGREED</b> that EMCCA priorities, the wider regional programme and the EMF timetable would be shared.</p> <p>The Board <b>NOTED</b> the update.</p> |
| 9.  | <p><b><u>Accountable Body Governance</u></b></p> <p>The Head of Operations and Programmes introduced the item. The Board considered the updates on the final drafting required to support changes to Accountable Body arrangements and associated governance documentation.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 10. | <p><b><u>Update on Trent Arc Delivery</u></b></p> <p>The Board received an update on considerations relating to Trent Arc Delivery. It was noted that this item had been taken earlier in the agenda to provide contextual continuity</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|     | <p>following the Accountable Body transition discussion and ahead of consideration of the Business Plan.</p> <p>EMCCA's Executive Director of Place introduced the paper and emphasised that it was intended as an early discussion document, rather than a set of concrete proposals the purpose of which was to raise awareness, provide transparency, and invite Board input to help shape the next phase of work.</p> <p>The Board was reminded that EMCCA published its Spatial Vision for Growth in May 2025, identifying seven key growth areas, including the Trent Arc, within which the Freeport sits.</p> <p>The Board had the opportunity to discuss the update. Members broadly agreed that the position described across the Trent Arc felt accurate and reflected shared experience, including the tension between aspiration and delivery reality.</p> <p>The Board highlighted the importance of investor confidence, stability and clear alignment between public and private sector partners. They agreed that short-term delivery and longer-term strategic development must proceed in parallel, and that EMF should ensure alignment with private sector partners on the detail when shaping future proposals. Members stressed that EMF must continue to deliver at pace on its existing sites and commitments and should not pause activity while longer-term strategic questions are explored.</p> <p>Members also noted the importance of learning from previous experience, both locally and nationally, and from areas where similar place-based approaches have been applied. Members noted that consultation and engagement will need to involve both Freeport partners and strategic landowners, and welcomed assurance that EMF will be closely involved as the work progresses.</p> <p>The Board <b>NOTED</b> the update.</p> <p>The Board took a short break at 11:38am.</p> |
| 11. | <p><b><u>Business Plan and budget final approval</u></b></p> <p>The meeting resumed at 11.46am.</p> <p>The Board considered the Business Plan and Budget, including the proposed budget uplift.</p> <p>The Board had the opportunity to discuss the report. They noted support for a specialist finance capability, recognising this as a niche skill set not currently available within existing Accountable Body capacity and the need to maintain delivery momentum in a complex funding and assurance environment. The importance of inward investment, communications and relationship-building activity was highlighted, noting long lead-times to results.</p> <p>A number of challenges were raised, including the need for greater clarity on site-specific delivery activity and the role of EMF versus landowners and other public</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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|     | <p>bodies, as well as the risk of duplication with private-sector capability. They discussed the desire for clearer insight into market conditions, investor demand trends, and ongoing monitoring of delivery against agreed metrics (for example, levels and quality of enquiries, investment secured, and progress on key sites), to provide confidence that the proposed investment will deliver meaningful impact. The importance of ensuring that the Freeport continues to focus on working closely with private sector partners to enable and accelerate delivery was noted. The Board also stressed the importance of pace, noting the risk of slowed delivery if approval were withheld pending full resolution of longer-term uncertainties. It was broadly recognised that while not all members were comfortable with all elements of potential future spend, there was consensus that delaying approval would present a greater risk to delivery.</p> <p>Following discussion, the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Noted and discussed the content of the Business Plan and provided reflections;</li> <li>b) Approved the Budget uplift, as set out in the paper on the basis that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• detailed expenditure decisions will continue to be subject to established assurance and gateway processes;</li> <li>• further detail on delivery focus, inward investment activity, and site-level interventions will return to the Board as plans develop;</li> <li>• progress and outcomes will be monitored closely, and the CEO will be held accountable for delivery against outputs within EMF Delivery Team's control.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c) Noted and welcomed the commitment that EMF will make a clearer distinction between delivery-team performance metrics and wider EMF objectives within the Business Plan, in response to feedback from the previous Board meeting.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair noted the strength and depth of the discussion and confirmed that the robustness of challenge, particularly around delivery focus and value for money, should be clearly reflected in the minutes. She emphasised that approval of the budget uplift reflects confidence in the need to maintain pace, alongside an expectation of disciplined delivery, transparency and results.</p> |
| 12. | <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>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 13. | <p><b><u>Future Energy Skills Hub Update</u></b></p> <p>The Board received an update from the Head of Green Growth and Inclusion on progress with the Future Energy Skills Hub (FESH).</p> <p>The Board had the opportunity to discuss the update. They welcomed the progress made and noted that the proposal now demonstrates a clearer strategic case, improved partnership working and shared investment. It was suggested that a short written summary of the proposition be circulated, and members expressed interest in seeing practical examples of the virtual learning offer at a future Board meeting.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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|     | <p>The CEO reflected that the revised approach responds directly to earlier Board challenge and represents a positive example of refining an intervention to improve value for money.</p> <p>The Board NOTED the update.</p>                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 14. | <p><b><u>Action Log.</u></b></p> <p>The Board NOTED that actions from its previous meeting(s) had been completed, overtaken or were on the agenda and NOTED the list of outstanding and completed actions since the last meeting. It was <b>AGREED</b> that the Contracts Register would be shared electronically with members, along with the link to the document on the Board SharePoint site.</p> |
| 15. | <p><b><u>Board and Subcommittee Forward Look</u></b></p> <p>The Board NOTED the Board and Subcommittee Forward Look.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 16. | <p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p>The next meeting would be on be on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May at 10am on Microsoft Teams. The meeting ended at 12.50pm.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

24 April 2026, 10.00 – 12.50pm

Chair: Nora Senior