Minutes of a meeting of the East Midlands Freeport Board
Held on 18 June 2026, at 1pm, at Clifton Campus, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham, NG11 8N

PRESENT

Directors

Nora Senior – Independent Chair

Phil Canning – Uniper
Councillor Harrison Fowler – Leicestershire County Council (LCC) (Via Microsoft Teams)
Edward Highfield – East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA)
Derek Higton – Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) (Via Microsoft Teams)
Councillor John Lawson – Derbyshire County Council (DCC)
Peter Ralston – Goodman
Ioan Reed-Aspley – East Midlands Airport (EMA)
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)
Councillor Roger Upton – Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC)

Accountable Body Officers

Ann Carruthers – Director of Growth, Environment and Transport
Simone Hines – Director of Finance
Zafar Saleem – Assistant Chief Executive (Via Microsoft Teams)

Executive Delivery Team

Jonathan Bretherton – Head of Commercial and Development (Via Microsoft Teams)
Dan Cooper – Head of Communications and Inward Investment
James Faulconbridge – Executive Personal Assistant
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

Karl Apps – DCC (Via Microsoft Teams)
Andy Barton – NWLDC
Peter Collins – Sharpe Pritchard
Adam Hill – RBC
Justin Ives – SDDC (Via Microsoft Teams)
MHCLG Representative

1	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> Apologies were received from Steve Griffiths who was represented by Ioan Reed-Aspley, Cllr Neil Clarke who was represented by Cllr Roger Upton and Cllr Walker-Gurley who was represented by Derek Higton. Apologies were also received from Andrew Pilsworth.
2	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> The Chair invited the Board to declare any real or perceived conflicts of interest. None were received.
3	<u>Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 15 May 2026</u> The minutes of the Board meeting held on 15 May 2026 were **APPROVED** as a correct record.
4	<u>Chair's Update</u> The Chair provided a brief update to the Board. She advised that the Accountable Body transition to EMCCA has now completed and welcomed Edward Highfield as EMCCA's Director on the Board. She noted that this would be the last meeting with LCC performing the Accountable Body role on the Board and that EMCCA will take on this responsibility from the July Board onwards. She confirmed that final updated governance documents would be circulated to Members shortly. The Chair thanked Leicestershire County Council (LCC) colleagues for their contribution to the Freeport during their time as Accountable Body. The Chair also advised the Board that Nesil Caliskan MP has been appointed as the new Freeports Minister within MHCLG and engagement will continue with both the Minister and Lord Stockwood across the Freeports programme. The Chair then proposed that Board meetings move from monthly to every six weeks to allow sufficient time for partner engagement ahead of Board discussions. The Board **AGREED** this proposal and it was noted that this would be implemented from the Autumn, subject to scheduling and alignment with EMF's subcommittees. The Chair also noted the risk of reliance on a single point of leadership and therefore proposed that the Board appoint a Deputy Chair to lead the meetings in her absence. She suggested this should be Councillor Stephen Taylor. The Board indicated support for this approach and it was **AGREED** that Councillor Stephen Taylor be named Deputy Chair. The Board **NOTED** the update.
5	<u>CEO Update</u> The CEO provided a brief update to the Board on a number of topics; • **Planning** – EMF is responding to Local Plan consultations across the Freeport geography, with draft responses shared with relevant partners.

	Progress is also being made on Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), particularly those relating to infrastructure funding contributions, which are currently progressing through the three planning authorities. • Trent Arc – An update was provided on early-stage work through EMCCA's Trent Arc Liaison Group, to consider appropriate future delivery structures. The Board noted that discussions remain at an early stage, and EMF will continue to engage closely as proposals develop. The Board **NOTED** the update.
6	<u>Subcommittee Update</u> The Board received an update from the Chair of the S151 Subcommittee, following its meeting on 10th June 2026. She highlighted that feedback on the quarterly report had been included within that item. In response to a query regarding the level of detail from S151 Subcommittee discussions, it was confirmed that where formal recommendations are made, these are reported to the Public Sector Directors Group (PSDG) through written updates. No recommendations had been brought forward from the most recent meeting. The Board **NOTED** the update.
7	<u>Communications Update</u> The Board received an update from the Head of Communications and Inward Investment. He noted that EMF's presence at UKREiiF this year had again been productive, with participation across a number of panels and live sessions which have helped to raise the profile of Freeport opportunities. Looking ahead to next year, EMF intends to increase its presence, with a shift in focus toward positioning the Freeport as a nearer-term investment opportunity as greater site clarity is achieved. Partners will be engaged to help shape EMF's approach and presence at the event. The Board was also advised that an updated Inward Investment Plan will be brought forward for consideration in Q3. Quarterly reporting on inward investment enquiries received by EMF directly and through TSOs will also recommence, providing greater visibility to the Board on the pipeline, including sources of enquiries, sector interest, and trends – suitably anonymised given confidentiality issues. While the overall volume of enquiries has reduced compared to previous averages, the quality of enquiries has increased. The Head of Communications and Inward Investment thanked landowners for their continued support in facilitating site presentations. The Board discussed the approach to handling inward investment enquiries. It was noted that while EMF manages enquiries received directly, some enquiries are also made directly to landowners. Members highlighted the value of providing greater visibility of enquiries across the Board to support a shared understanding of demand, inform local authority narratives, and support wider engagement with stakeholders. The Chair sought clarification on whether landowners were sharing enquiries which came to them directly and advised that in order to have a clear overview of investor interest and trends, it was

	important that this information was shared, particularly if public funding is required . It was agreed that further discussion would take place on how best to share this information appropriately. The Head of Communications and Inward Investment also noted that a revised Communications Plan will be brought to the Board shortly, subject to final internal approvals. The Board **NOTED** the update.
8	<u>EMF Public Meeting Update</u> The Head of Communications and Inward Investment provided an update on preparations for the upcoming EMF Public Board meeting, scheduled for 10.00–11.00am on 24th July 2026 at Rushcliffe Arena, ahead of the private Board meeting. He noted that the proposed format and agenda have been shared within the Board pack. Members were asked to engage with their respective communications teams to: • Prepare responses to potential public questions received in advance; and • Develop brief verbal updates on site progress The Board received further detail on the proposed format of the public meeting, noting: • Opening remarks from the Chair; • An overview of the role and vision of the Freeport delivered by the CEO; • Short verbal updates/overview on sites and • A structured Q&A session. It was confirmed that questions will primarily be submitted in advance (deadline of 10 July), allowing responses to be prepared, reviewed, and, where appropriate, grouped by theme. Any additional questions raised on the day will be managed to ensure an orderly session. The Board discussed practical arrangements, including: • Supporting slides • Ensuring accessibility considerations are addressed (including format and language where required); and • The public meeting being a standalone session, with a formal private Board meeting to follow after the break The Board **NOTED** the update and the approach set out.
9	<u>Quarterly Financial Update</u> The S151 Subcommittee Chair presented the Quarterly Financial Update and provided feedback from the most recent S151 Subcommittee discussions. The Board **NOTED** the update.
10	<u>Skills Plan Update</u>

The Head of Green Growth and Inclusion presented the Skills Delivery Plan update, setting out a proposed programme of work focused on further phases of the Skills and Community Equity Fund, strengthened community engagement, and enhanced partnership working—particularly with private sector partners.

She noted that the Skills Delivery Plan, approved the previous year, was designed to address persistent regional socio-economic challenges including deprivation, low qualification levels, low pay, and increasing numbers of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). She also highlighted the continued policy and economic context, including challenges reported in the recent Milburn review.

The Board was advised that early delivery has been positive, with:

- Approximately 3,500 individuals reached through pilot Skills and Community Equity Fund projects;
- £80,000 deployed across three projects in the initial phase; and
- Ongoing engagement with regional stakeholders, including education providers, employers, and community organisations.

Further activity is planned, including scaling the Skills Fund, strengthening community insight and communications, and expanding collaborative delivery with partners. A full evaluation of the pilot projects would follow once concluded.

The Board had the opportunity to discuss the report, with strong support for the direction of travel and a clear appetite to build on existing activity. The importance of demonstrating meaningful impact was emphasised, in particular;

- Moving beyond headline numbers to capture qualitative insight and case studies; and
- Providing clearer evidence of how activity supports Freeport delivery and investor confidence.

There was broad agreement that EMF should act as a funder, facilitator, and convenor, bringing together activity across partners. Members highlighted opportunities to:

- Develop joint initiatives (for example, cross-partner work experience programmes);
- Focus on common priority areas such as logistics, construction, and planning skills;
- Address barriers to access and reflect changing policy landscape;
- Update mapping of existing activity across public and private sector organisations;
- Explore alignment with local authority programmes and EMCCA's expanding role in skills commissioning and delivery; and
- Explore collective delivery approaches, including co-sponsored initiatives and shared programmes.

The importance of maintaining a clear strategic focus was noted, ensuring activity is targeted where EMF adds most value and the Board noted that current focus has largely been on private sector skills gaps, however, there may be some value in considering public sector capacity, including planning and delivery roles. The Board felt that greater emphasis should be placed on barriers to access for young people and disadvantaged groups, and sector-specific challenges should be reflected in the approach.

	The CEO reinforced that skills and inclusion are integral to the Freeport's "licence to operate," demonstrating tangible benefits to communities alongside economic growth. This was baked into the original business case and subsequent business plans. There was a good case for stepping up activity in this area. The Board NOTED the update and that further work is being undertaken to refine the approach ahead of a more detailed proposal being brought forward to Board and PSDG in July.
11	<u>Associate Membership Discussion</u> The Head of Operations and Programmes introduced the paper, which sought to reintroduce the discussion on Associate Membership and present a proposed draft application form. The Board was invited to provide strategic direction on the framework for Associate Membership. He highlighted the principles and purpose of Associate Membership, including the potential value of bringing partners more closely into the Freeport to align with strategic objectives and providing a structured engagement route for organisations not currently represented within governance arrangements. The Board had the opportunity to discuss the report and a number of key considerations were raised, including: • The importance of establishing robust criteria for admission, including the organisation's contribution to Freeport delivery and wider regional impact; • The risk of conflicts of interest, particularly if Associate Members were granted participation in subcommittees or access to sensitive information; • Ensuring that any proposals do not undermine existing governance structures or create ambiguity; • Complexity of potential new governance arrangements for the Freeport in light of EMCCA plans as new accountable body, which may impact on EMF board membership • Whether progression should be linked to key milestones (e.g. planning outcomes); • The importance of maintaining fairness and transparency, particularly if opening Associate Membership more widely; and • The need to consider how Associate Membership might relate to other stakeholders, including occupiers. It was noted that Associate Membership could operate as an engagement mechanism rather than a governance role, with participation rights limited (for example, attending relevant meetings by invitation), and without decision-making authority. Following the discussion the Board AGREED that: • Further work is required to develop a clear overarching policy and criteria for Associate Membership, including how conflicts of interest would be managed, limits on numbers and clarity on progression routes; • This should be considered alongside wider governance discussions before progressing individual applications;
12	<u>Managing Governance and Conflicts</u>

	The Chair introduced the item, which summarised recent discussions on EMF governance. The Board discussed the proposals and the options going forwards.
13	<u>Trade Union Engagement Update</u> Due to time constraints the Chair deferred this item to the next meeting of the Board. She requested that TU representatives be invited to attend the meeting for this item to ensure a full discussion can take place and invited any comments from Members in writing ahead of the meeting.
14	<u>Action Log.</u> This item was not considered due to time constraints.
15	<u>Board and Subcommittee Forward Look</u> This item was not considered due to time constraints.
16	<u>Any Other Business</u> The Chair noted that the next meeting will be on 24th July at Rushcliffe Arena starting at 10am.