

Minutes of a Public Meeting of the East Midlands Freeport Board
Held on 24 July 2026, at 10am, at Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West
Bridgford, NG2 7YG

PRESENT

Directors

Nora Senior – Independent Chair

Phil Canning – Uniper

Ben Green - Segro

Councillor Harrison Fowler – Leicestershire County Council (LCC)

Edward Highfield – East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA)

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)

Councillor Tony Saffell – North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC)

Councillor Stephen Taylor – South Derbyshire District Council (SDDC)

Councillor Neil Clarke – Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC)

Accountable Body Officers

Tom Goshawk – Head of Investment Strategy and Programmes

Executive Delivery Team

Jonathan Bretherton – Commercial Director (Via Microsoft Teams)

Dan Cooper – Head of Communications and Inward Investment

James Faulconbridge – Executive Personal Assistant

Stacy Ford – Communications and Marketing Manager

Naomi Kwasa – Governance and Committees Lead

Paul Miller – Head of Operations and Programmes

Tom Newman-Taylor – Chief Executive

Also present

Wayne Bexton – NCC (Via Microsoft Teams)

Adam Hill – RBC

Justin Ives – SDDC (Via Microsoft Teams)

Mike Roylance – SDDC (Via Microsoft Teams)

Zafar Saleem – LCC

Allison Thomas – NWLDC (Via Microsoft Teams)

MHCLG Representative

1	<u>Welcome and Introductions</u> The Chair, Nora Senior, welcomed attendees to the first East Midlands Freeport (EMF) public meeting and outlined housekeeping arrangements, including emergency procedures and confirmation that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded. The Chair explained that EMF is a public-private partnership comprising representatives from local authorities, the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA), and private sector partners. The purpose of the meeting was to provide the public with an update on Freeport activity, answer questions submitted by the public, and support open dialogue with local communities. The Chair noted that more than 30 questions had been submitted in advance. In order to manage responses, questions would be grouped by theme to be answered at the meeting and with detailed written responses to be published on the Freeport website.
2	<u>Chief Executive's Update</u> EMF's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Tom Newman-Taylor, provided an overview of the Freeport's purpose, noting that it was established by Government in 2023 to attract investment, create jobs, increase productivity and address longstanding challenges relating to underinvestment, skills levels and economic performance across the region. The Freeport's strategic focus remains on advanced manufacturing, logistics and energy sectors, with the ambition of creating tens of thousands of jobs and generating economic growth that can be reinvested locally through retained tax revenues. He gave a brief update on progress across the Freeport's three tax sites, noting that; • East Midlands Gateway 1 (EMG1) has generated almost 1,000 jobs and several hundred million pounds of investment, attracting businesses including Maersk, Ceva Logistics and Maritime Transport. Development includes a rail freight terminal and training hub. East Midlands Gateway 2 (EMG2) continues to attract significant investor interest, with planning applications currently under consideration. • East Midlands Intermodal Park (EMIP) has seen close collaboration with Toyota, including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Toyota and the Freeport and discussions around decarbonisation, circular economy manufacturing and future site development. The site faces substantial infrastructure and remediation challenges, and work is underway on business cases to secure public investment support. • Ratcliffe-on-Soar: Progress continues on decommissioning, demolition and remediation works following closure of the power station in 2024. The site is considered attractive for future investment due to its location, grid connections and potential role in proposals for an AI Growth Zone. The CEO went on to highlight the importance of ensuring local communities benefit from economic growth through skills development and employment opportunities. He referenced the East Midlands Zero Carbon Innovation Centre (EMZCIC), co-funded by EMF in partnership with regional universities, which has already supported over 70 businesses and contributed to new commercial opportunities in low-carbon aviation and advanced manufacturing. Continued engagement with communities, including through Community Forums and trade unions, remains a key priority. He then outlined several challenges affecting delivery including;

	• Infrastructure constraints, particularly at Junction 24 of the M1. • Grid connection availability and energy capacity. • Site viability and market conditions affecting investment decisions. • Changes in the governance landscape, including devolution, local government reorganisation and Government expectations regarding alignment between Freeports and Combined Authorities. The CEO advised that EMCCA is undertaking a short review of Freeport governance and alignment arrangements over the coming months. Regarding future priorities, the CEO noted that the Board approved a five year Business Plan in April 2026, which prioritises accelerating development across all tax sites, addressing infrastructure barriers and ensuring that local communities have access to future employment opportunities. He noted that investors are seeking to occupy sites from 2028 onwards and reiterated the importance of maximising the benefits of tax reliefs currently scheduled to end in 2031. He highlighted that EMF would continue to promote the region nationally and internationally, including through trade missions and engagement with Government ministers and officials.
3	<u>Communications Update</u> EMF's Head of Communications and Inward Investment, Dan Cooper, presented an update on the launch of EMF's Skills and Communities Equity Fund. He noted that the programme aims to support workforce development and provide pathways into employment. Approximately 3,500 people have participated in pilot schemes during the first year, including Primary Engineer; "If You Were an Engineer, What Would You Do?" schools competition; and Road to Logistics, supporting people from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds into training and employment opportunities. He advised that additional funding is proposed for the coming year to expand the programme and increase its reach.
4	<u>Submitted Public Questions</u> The Chair advised that the next part of the meeting was to respond to questions submitted by the public. She highlighted that over 30 questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting, demonstrating significant public interest in the Freeport and its activities. To make best use of the available time, questions had been grouped into thematic categories: jobs and economic impact, employment rights, infrastructure, planning, environment and land, and governance. She confirmed that responses would be provided under these broad themes during the meeting, with an opportunity for attendees to raise additional questions from the floor afterwards. It was also noted that all submitted questions would receive individual written responses, which would be published on the Freeport website to ensure transparency and public access to the information provided. • Jobs and Economic Impact – The Head of Communications and Inward Investment noted that businesses currently operating at EMG1 have created over 850 jobs and generated around £150 million of investment. These include Maritime Transport, Ceva Logistics, Maersk and DHL. He noted that businesses who come to the Freeport can apply to the local (billing) authority for business rates tax relief for five

years from the point that they become operational (with a deadline of the end of September 2031). Any application undergoes an initial assessment by the Freeport and once a decision is made by the billing authority, EMF will publish the details of those who are granted tax reliefs. He noted that the drive for future investment will focus on priority sectors including advanced logistics, aerospace, automotive and clean energy, with an emphasis on creating high-quality employment opportunities.

- **Employment Rights** – In response to questions regarding workers' rights and trade unions, the Head of Communications and Inward Investment confirmed that businesses operating within the Freeport are subject to all UK employment legislation and regulations. There are no exemptions relating to workers' rights, health and safety, environmental standards or other statutory requirements. EMF continues to engage with trade unions on supporting workforce representation and dialogue.
- **Infrastructure and Transport** – EMF's Commercial Director, Jonathan Bretherton, outlined the work the Freeport is doing to address transport infrastructure challenges. He noted that Junction 24 of the M1 remains a significant strategic constraint for future development and wider regional growth. EMF has approved more than £3 million towards design work and would be considering a commitment of up to £50 million of future funding towards construction, while continuing to work with National Highways, local authorities and private sector partners to secure the additional funding required to address these infrastructure challenges. He advised that an Infrastructure Delivery Plan is being prepared which will identify required infrastructure improvements and funding contributions from developers.
- **Planning and Environment** – EMF's Commercial Director then responded to questions submitted on planning and the environment. He reiterated that the Freeport does not act as a planning authority and owns no land. All developments within Freeport sites remain subject to standard planning and environmental regulations, including biodiversity, sustainability and environmental protection requirements. Local communities continue to have opportunities to engage through statutory and non-statutory consultation processes. Regarding the Freeport designation process he also noted that partners from local government, industry and academia across the region collaborated to develop the Freeport bid and this underwent a comprehensive Government approval process involving multiple stages of formal engagement, progressing through business case development and approval into the current delivery phase. Further information on the designation process is available on the Freeport website.
- **Governance and Accountability** – EMF's Head of Operations and Programmes, Paul Miller, responded to questions regarding EMF's governance arrangements. He noted that EMF operates as a public-private partnership, but with decisions relating to public funding made by the public sector directors only. EMCCA operates as the Freeport's "Accountable Body", the role of which is to ensure decisions are made

	properly by the EMF Board, and that public money is managed and spent well. Progress reports are submitted to Government twice annually and the Government undertakes an annual performance review of the Freeport. He noted that key governance documents are published on the website in accordance with EMF's Transparency Policy.
5	<u>Public Questions from the floor</u> The Chair then invited those in the public gallery to pose any further questions. A member of the public asked how active travel and sustainable transport would be incorporated into infrastructure planning. The CEO confirmed that active travel is an important consideration. Individual developments include requirements for active travel and public transport access, while wider infrastructure planning seeks to align with the Mayor's transport ambitions and encourage sustainable access to employment sites. Another question was raised regarding the Freeport's previously published ambition to create approximately 28,000 jobs by 2031 and whether this remained realistic. The CEO acknowledged that not all of the tax sites would be fully developed and occupied by 2031, but the 28,000 jobs target was a long-term ambition by 2048. He noted that, while development activity is expected to commence across all sites during 2028 to 2029, large-scale regeneration projects take many years to complete. He advised that Freeports and other "Industrial Strategy Zones" are collectively encouraging the Government to consider extending current tax relief periods to reflect realistic delivery timescales. The Chair recognised the concern regarding published milestones and performance expectations and agreed that future communications should provide greater clarity around delivery milestones and realistic timescales. There were no further questions from the floor.
6	<u>Closing Remarks</u> The Chair thanked attendees for their participation and feedback, noting that this was the first public meeting of its kind and that EMF remains committed to maintaining dialogue with communities as the programme develops. Attendees were reminded that detailed written responses to submitted questions would be published on the website. The meeting finished at 10.45am.

24 July 2026, 10am – 10.45am

Chair: Nora Senior

N.B. These minutes have been amended from an initial draft produced by Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools from the recording and transcript of the public meeting, and have been subject to expert human review and quality assurance to ensure an accurate and reliable record of the meeting.