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AMBITIOUS VISION SET OUT FOR INNOVATIVE NEW FREEPORT IN EAST OF ENGLAND

Public and private sector leaders have set out their joint vision for a new Freeport on the East Coast.

Freeport East would focus on the Port of Felixstowe and Harwich International Port – both owned by Hutchison Ports – and be a strategic hub linking UK importers and exporters with suppliers and customers across the globe, situated as it is at the heart of vital trading routes to Asia and Northern Europe

Pioneering the next generation of Ports which will drive and support the government's local and national regeneration strategies, Freeport East will build on the existing ports' excellent road and rail links to the Midlands and the North of England – the destination for almost a third of Felixstowe's current throughput.

It will create a manufacturing, green energy and innovation hub that capitalises on the unique qualities of the Eastern Region, the latest advances in digital technology and the Internet of Things, the excellent credentials of the partners involved and the as-yet untapped technological and scientific centres on Freeport East's doorstep. With its existing links to the clean energy sector, such as the Galloper Windfarm maintenance base at Harwich, Freeport East is ideally positioned to lead on decarbonisation of the country's energy needs.

Bringing these elements together, alongside the ports' situation at the heart of European and global trade flows, will deliver a strong economic proposition capable of boosting UK PLC in these difficult times, and to support growth plans of the future throughout the UK.

The vision has been set out jointly by business and local government leaders from Essex, Suffolk, and the wider region, and work is now underway to develop a detailed bid following the publication of the Government's Freeports prospectus this week.

George Kieffer, Chairman of the Project Board, said: "I am excited to be leading such a professional and expert team to drive forward a bid that will attract major investment and lead to increased economic prosperity not only locally, but nationally.

"The area is home to some of the most deprived wards in the UK and by bringing lasting regeneration and creating new job opportunities to the region the project will support the government's levelling-up agenda.

"We look forward to working with universities in the region to make Freeport East a hotbed of innovation in the technologies of the 21st Century."

Mr Kieffer added his thanks for the strong support already received from MPs in the region.

Clemence Cheng, Executive Director of Hutchison Ports and Managing Director of Hutchison Ports Europe, added: “The combination of the ports of Felixstowe and Harwich offers the UK a unique opportunity in the post-Brexit world, sitting as they do at the main junction point between the UK's principal trade route to and from the Far East and key freight links to and from northern Europe.

“Together with the leading edge technical skills that come with the partnership with universities, this combination can serve as a powerful magnet to bring new investment into the UK and in particular to the area around this unique junction point.”

Detailed plans will be set out in a formal bid document.

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For further information on this news release contact Will Lodge, Communications Manager at Tendring District Council in the first instance, on 01255 686338 or wlodge@tendringdc.gov.uk.

Notes to editors

Freeport partnership:

The Freeport partnership includes Hutchison Ports UK, Harwich Haven Authority, Trinity House, Haven Gateway Partnership, New Anglia and South East Local Enterprise Partnerships, Suffolk and Essex County Councils, East Suffolk Council and Tendring District Council.

The agreed vision is:

A Global Freeport for the 21st Century, the combined strength and unrivalled size of Felixstowe and Harwich provides the perfect Gateway between Britain and the rest of the world. With its strong and unique transport connections, this Freeport gives as much benefit to the Midlands and Northern Powerhouse of the UK as it does to the East of England, through its unparalleled access to the wider world. Already the UK's biggest container port, with deep sea and European Ro-Ro services, the Freeport will grow further through shovel-ready sites and an ongoing pipeline of land to become an innovation testbed for cutting-edge port technology and clean energy. Through its links with world-class research-intensive universities and global digital innovators, this Freeport will develop emission-free Smart Port benefits for all – enabling the UK to meet the Government's carbon agenda for ports earlier than 2050, and becoming a leader on the world stage.

The Port of Felixstowe and Harwich International Port:

The Port of Felixstowe is the UK's largest container port – accounting for more than 40% of container imports to and exports from the UK, handling more than 4 million TEUs each year – with excellent road links and the best rail connections of any port to the Midlands and the North of England.

Harwich International Port on the Essex side of the estuary is a major ferry terminal with twice daily services to the Netherlands and a dedicated passenger rail station with frequent services to London. Harwich is also the operations and maintenance base for the Galloper Windfarm, part of the Suffolk and North Essex Energy Coast, and Trinity House in Harwich is the research centre for the UK's General Lighthouse Authorities.

The Government's Freeports policy:

The government has confirmed bids for sea, air and rail ports in England to get Freeport status will be invited before the end of the year, with the government aiming for the first of the new sites to be open for business in 2021.

Freeports will benefit from:

- streamlined planning processes to aid brownfield redevelopment
- a package of tax reliefs to help drive jobs, growth and innovation
- simplified customs procedures and duty suspensions on goods

Seizing on the opportunities presented by leaving the EU, Freeports will be created across the nation to help drive Britain's post-Brexit growth.

Designed to attract major domestic and international investment, the hubs of enterprise will allow places to carry out business inside the UK's land border but where different customs rules apply. They have been successfully used in countries around the world to drive prosperity and boost trade. Read the Government's Freeports consultation response at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-new-plans-for-freeports-to-turbo-charge-post-brexit-trade>, while the Freeports Prospectus can be read here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/freeports-bidding-prospectus>.