

Brian Johnson
Chairman
Solent LEP
1000 Lakeside North Harbour
Western Road
Portsmouth
PO6 3EN

My Ref:
Your Ref:

Date: 03 February 2021

Dear Brian

I am writing to express the wholehearted support of New Forest District Council for the Freeport bid which is to be submitted by Solent LEP on behalf of the bid coalition, of which the New Forest District Council is a member. The area known locally as “the Waterside” cluster, represents 188 hectares of economically connected undeveloped and underdeveloped land within the Solent bid to become a new Freeport under the Government’s Freeports initiative.

The Council recognises the huge potential a successful Freeport bid has to transform the social and economic fortunes of the local area of the New Forest, the Solent and the county of Hampshire. The bid has the potential to create thousands of new jobs and skills, together with providing local SME businesses with a fantastic opportunity to develop and deliver green growth.

This is particularly welcome at this very difficult time, as we all look towards recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The generous tax reliefs, simplified customs procedures and promise of continued Government support offered by Freeport status would all combine to make “the Waterside” a highly attractive place for investors and developers, along with those who will ultimately manufacture and operate on the site and breathe new life into our coastal communities and support levelling-up.

The resulting projects will, in turn, create countless opportunities for skilled and ambitious supply chain businesses, as well as new hope for our young people. We also see it as a significant catalyst for the ambition to lead a ‘Green recovery’ that we believe the Solent Freeport Bid can support, with unique solutions to the net zero carbon emissions agenda, within the special environmental location of the New Forest and the Solent.

The ability to utilise the retention of our own local business rates for the investment in infrastructure and connectivity needs, both locally to the New Forest and within the region, is recognised as a critical requirement of the bid. As the responsible Billing Authority for Business Rates within “the Waterside” connected tax site cluster, we will utilise this ability to fully support the Solent Freeport Bid, including, if necessary, the pooling of resources for investments aligned with the Freeport Bid, whilst recognising that any pooling would be agreed multilaterally between all the Local Billing Authorities in coordination with the Solent Freeport Board. We would also seek opportunities for this funding to complement private sector investment.

It is hoped that the Solent Freeport Bid is successful, and that Government recognises the significant opportunity that the Solent Freeport proposal presents for the UK and local economy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Rickman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councillor Barry Rickman
Leader
New Forest District Council
Email: barry.rickman@nfdc.gov.uk