

East Midlands Freepport

CASE STUDY

The East Midlands Freepport was announced as a successful Freeport bid by the UK government in March 2021 and received formal government approval in March 2023. It is the UK's only inland Freeport and features three strategically connected main sites: the East Midlands Airport and Gateway Industrial Cluster in Leicestershire; the Ratcliffe-on-Soar Power Station site in Nottinghamshire, and the East Midlands Intermodal Park in Derbyshire.

The Freeport's vision is to drive significant and transformative economic regeneration across the East Midlands through sustainable and inclusive growth, boosting employment and skills opportunities and delivering infrastructure and green investment and innovation, making the East Midlands the destination for focused UK and international investment.

The Freeport is pursuing objectives across ten distinct focus areas, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions in industrial and energy production; developing innovation and enterprise by positioning the East Midlands as a centre of excellence for alternative energy sources and green technologies to drive new market opportunities; and ensuring synergy with key strategic initiatives that are already underway in the East Midlands, such as HS2 and the work of the East Midlands Development Corporation, forming part of an ambitious levelling up package for the region.

Further focus areas including increasing local and regional economic activity; boosting international trade in high-value manufacturing goods; boosting skills levels and opportunities; creating sustainable employment to support the regeneration of local areas; improving connectivity; enhancing labour productivity and supporting levelling up.

There is already plenty of work ongoing within the Freeport area. Uniper's vision for the Ratcliffe-on-Soar site is to transform it into a zero-carbon technology and energy hub for the East Midlands, supporting continued economic growth and helping to meet the East Midlands' decarbonisation goals. These plans have the potential to create employment opportunities based around modern industrial and manufacturing uses.

The Freeport also unveiled plans in November 2023 for a zero-carbon innovation centre focused on progressing research in electrification, hydrogen propulsion systems, and advanced manufacturing for industry use. It will be delivered by the University of Nottingham and Loughborough University, who will be matching the Freeport's investment.

Another key initiative is Midlands Connect's project on Wider Integrated Solutions for Energy, Rail, Road (WISERR). Through three workstreams, it will become an energy and transport impact assessment that supports the case for infrastructure investment at East Midlands Freeport. It will look at building compelling strategic and economic narratives for EMF, developing and modelling growth scenarios, before then leading to a phased green energy infrastructure investment programme.

The approach here will coordinate with the Freeport's Green Energy study and Midland Connect's wider programmes for decarbonising transport. These include the region's network of refuelling and recharging infrastructure. It will also feature a more robust approach to understanding the overall needs of businesses at the Freeport, collaborating with the gas and electricity district network providers – Cadent Gas and National Grid. Data from Cadent and National Grid collated in the second workstream will be used here to help understand the transition to clean energy.

The Freeport is a good example of how different organisations in the Midlands can come together in partnership to invest in a way that drives job creation and decarbonisation.

Credit: <https://emfreeport.com/our-vision-and-objectives>

<https://www.uniper.energy/uk/united-kingdom/projects-united-kingdom/emerge-centre>

<https://emfreeport.com/zero-carbon-innovation-centre-gets-green-light>

