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Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Rt. Hon. Greg Clark MP
Secretary of State
Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

28 September 2018

Dear James and Greg,

Re: Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships

We are writing this joint letter as the chairs of the two Local Enterprise Partnerships, Enterprise M3 and Solent, to demonstrate our agreed approach to the alignment of boundaries across our areas and our desire to press ahead quickly to secure the benefits that will support building the prosperity of these important areas.

We have reviewed our geographic boundaries following the publication of “Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships” in July 2018, with a view to ensuring that the areas of Enterprise M3 and Solent LEP are based on a geography that best reflects the real functional areas. As you are aware our current geographies do not overlap but uniquely we do have a situation whereby four of our lower tier authorities are split across the two LEPs, reflecting the real functional economies of Enterprise M3 and the Solent.

Government has set out the case for change to ensure LEPs are fit for purpose as our roles and responsibilities are expanded once again and are looking for geographies that provide simplicity, accountability and practicability. Together, Enterprise M3 and Solent have addressed an approach that maximises efficiency and effectiveness. We have worked closely together to come forward with a set of proposals which best reflect our real functional economic areas, thereby ensuring that all businesses and communities are represented by one Local Enterprise Partnership. **We therefore propose that the Enterprise M3 LEP boundary should be extended to incorporate East Hampshire, Test Valley and Winchester and the Solent LEP boundary is extended to incorporate the New Forest.**

Supporting this proposal will enable **Enterprise M3** to strengthen their knowledge, digital and design-based economy and it opens up further opportunities for deeper collaboration with Thames Valley Berkshire, where there are symmetries with their growing digital economy. The positioning of the New Forest and the strategic road network of the M27, M271 and the city to city rail connection with **Solent** provides a powerful coastal economy and world class maritime hub that builds on the extensive waterside opportunities along the Solent, including the New Forest Waterside and paves the way for further collaborative opportunities with Dorset LEP in the future.

We recognise the importance of working across boundaries and we will work closely with key delivery partners, notably Councils to ensure there is participation in the development of wider LEP strategies that build prosperity for the wider area. The transport links along the Solent Corridor are important and we agree that Solent LEP take the lead with government on the strategic network that links the eastern part of the Solent Corridor with the West.

Additionally, we are now working on the development of a forum to strengthen working across boundaries. Work on this will be developed in conjunction with local councils and business through both LEP boards to inform our implementation plan response and additional funding requirements which will be submitted in October 2018.

We have reassured our partners that we will continue to honour financial commitments within these split areas and we look to Government to commit to our ongoing programme of investment through the transition period including critical schemes such as North Whiteley, Station approach in Winchester and the Centre for Social Innovation in New Forest.

The great strength of LEPs is our ability to provide strategic direction and clear priorities that create impact for a functional economic area, working with our business leaders, local authorities, academia and other key stakeholders, such as voluntary and community-based organisations. We are both already developing the initial stages of our Local Industrial Strategies and are well advanced in our plans to take forward other aspects of the LEP Review. We now ask Government to support these proposals and demonstrate a continued commitment and recognition of the work we have put in place by ensuring that both LEPs form part of the next wave of LIS proposals.

Yours sincerely,



Dave Axam
Chair
Enterprise M3



Gary Jeffries
Chairman
Solent Local Enterprise Partnership

cc. Stephen Jones, Director, Cities and Local Growth Unit