



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

1 August 2016

Andrew Percy MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Andrew,

As part of the Local Growth Fund Round 3 submissions to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, two projects in my constituency have been submitted; first, the Leigh Flood Storage Area (including Hildenborough) and works to the East Peckham scheme, and second, the NIAB East Malling Research Biotech Hub. I would like to emphasise how important both are to the community in Tonbridge and Malling.

At Christmas 2013, Tonbridge, Hildenborough, East Peckham and many other smaller communities were severely impacted by flooding when the River Medway and its tributaries burst their banks. Houses had to be evacuated and villages became cut off during the festive season. Over two and a half years later, we are still seeing the consequences with many residents unable to get sufficient insurance, and others still rebuilding their homes and lives.

Securing sufficient flood mitigation has become a priority for the local community, and should funding be forthcoming this will contribute significantly towards ensuring that some more dependable solutions can be put in place. This area has a history of flooding over the past few decades making it absolutely vital that urgent work take place to invest to increase storage capacity and prevent it happening again. As Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council embarks on its Local Plan process, many sites for allocation lie on the flood plain and without these measures going ahead in full, growth in the area will be exceedingly difficult.

In the Malling area, East Malling Research (EMR) provides essential research and development for the regional fruit industry and to agriculture across the world. The need for this scientific support will only continue to grow with margins from retailers narrowing, and labour costs increasing. Internationally, the centre is a renowned hub for expertise and as both prestige and an important knowledge resource to the UK. As productivity must improve, so must product development with the potential for fresh fruit, biotech and engineering products an opportunity for export growth.

Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling

130 Vale Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1SP

01732 441 563 - tom.tugendhat.mp@parliament.uk - www.tomtugendhat.org.uk



NIAB EMR's growth potential is constrained by a lack of funding for capital investment. They address the weakness in the national economy in bridging the gap between fundamental research and commercial business propositions. Funding for capital infrastructure would deliver an additional £2.5 million in research and development products and services to businesses. Investment here in East Malling would complement NIAB EMR's work in Cambridge as there is a strong concentration of fruit growers in Kent, making East Malling ideally located to support the industry with the work in Cambridge primarily focused on grain crops due to the cluster of arable businesses in the region.

I hope you understand the importance of both these schemes to the Kent economy, and hope that they will both be looked upon favourably. They are essential to the economic security of our community and offer a major opportunity for further growth.

Best wishes,

Tom Tugendhat

TOM TUGENDHAT