

**The region's firms remain confident that they will raise output in the year ahead as investment plans, new contracts, and the launch of new products and promotions reflect their optimism, says a key survey of purchasing managers.** The Lloyds Bank regional PMI for the East of England showed that although business activity in the region grew at a slightly slower rate in April, it was above the national average and job creation increased.

The index dipped to 57.3 from 58 in March but remained well above the 50 level which denotes growth. Firms recruited extra staff to cope with greater workloads from new orders although inflationary pressures mounted, with increases in petrol and labour costs.

Steve Elsom, regional director for the East of England at Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking, said: "It's encouraging to see the East of England outperforming the UK as a whole in terms of both output and new order growth. Buoyant demand for goods and services continues to translate into job creation across the region too, which is why many are feeling confident about the year ahead. Despite cost pressures, the regional economy maintains strong momentum, and signs point to this upturn lasting well into the summer."