

**Subject: MINUTES of the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) meeting held via zoom on 21 March 2023.**

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**Board Member Attendees:**

**KMEP Board Members**

Liz Gibney (KMEP Chairman & Lee Evans Partnership)

Jo James (Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce)

Roland Cooper (Considine Ltd)

Nick Fenton (Fenton Associates)

Carol Ford (Horticultural Taskforce)

Vince Lucas (VA Rail)

Mayer Schreiber (Discovery Park)

Andrew Metcalf (Maxim PR)

Jo Nolan (Screen South)

David Milham (FSB)

Cllr Roger Gough (Kent County Council)

Cllr David Monk (Folkestone & Hythe DC)

Cllr Monique Bonney (Swale Borough Council)

Cllr Ash Ashbee (Thanet District Council)

Cllr Ben Chapelard (Tunbridge Wells BC)

Cllr Ben Fitter-Harding (Canterbury CC)

Cllr Peter Fleming (Sevenoaks District Council)

Cllr Rodney Chambers (Medway Council)

Prof. Jane Harrington (Uni. of Greenwich)

Simon Cook (Mid-Kent College)

**Additional Attendees**

Steve Samson (Kent County Council)

Tudor Price (Kent Invicta Chamber)

Jess Bartindale (Social Enterprise Kent)

Sunny Ee (Medway Council)

Ross Gill (SQW)

**Board Member Apologies:**

**KMEP Board Members**

Prof. Mario Caccamo (NIAB)

Matthew Arnold (Stagecoach)

Bob Russell (Copper Rivet Distillery)

Cllr David Burton (Maidstone BC)

Cllr Trevor Bartlett (Dover DC)

Cllr Matt Boughton (Tonbridge & Malling BC)

Cllr John Burden (Gravesham BC)

Cllr Gerry Clarkson (Ashford BC)

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**Item 1 – Welcome, introduction and apologies.**

1.1 Liz Gibney (the KMEP Chairman) welcomed attendees to the meeting.

1.2 Liz acknowledged that this would be the last KMEP meeting for some board members including Cllr Rodney Chambers who she thanked for his long service on the board. Cllr Chambers was pleased to have been involved in KMEP's inception as a federated area for SELEP and shared his views on the effectiveness of KMEP in prioritising the allocation

of government funding in a fair and efficient way over the years. He wished the board well for the future.

## **Item 2 – Declaration of Interests**

2.1 No interests were declared.

## **Item 3 – Minutes of previous meeting**

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

## **AOB Item – Future LEP Funding**

- Steve Samson explained that the government had confirmed its intention in the Spring Budget Statement to withdraw funding from LEPs from April 2024 with a view to transferring LEP functions to local authorities in the future
- An information gathering questionnaire had been launched by DLUHC & DBT on 17 March inviting views from local authorities, LEPs, Mayoral Combined authorities and other interested parties. The deadline for responses was 14 April 2023
- KMEP would prepare and submit a response to the three questions aimed at other organisations:
  - 6. How do you currently work with your local LEP? What are the key activities for your organisation that the LEP currently delivers?*
  - 7. Without core funding, it is possible that LEPs will reduce or cease their operations. What impact would that have on the following:*
    - a) Your own operations*
    - b) Your stakeholders*
    - c) Your customers*
    - d) Your future plans*
    - e) Any programmes or activities carried out in partnership or via the LEP.*
  - 8. What (if any) impact would you envisage transferring responsibility of LEP functions to local authorities, where they are not already being delivered by a Combined Authority, having?*
- Board members were asked for initial views on the proposed changes:
- Jo James requested that the role of Growth Hubs and their importance in advising businesses and promoting support to local firms be highlighted in the KMEP response as well as the need for government to provide funding for the future
- Jo Nolan mentioned that Screen South had worked on a number of programmes where wider partnerships had been brokered by the LEP. Jo wondered whether the general KMEP view would be whether there would be a preference for a more localised approach or not.
- Cllr Rodney Chambers confirmed an intention for Medway Council to submit a response to the questionnaire and encouraged District Councils to consider responding formally too based on their experiences of working with the LEP. Cllr Chambers believed that there was a place for a LEP and recognised that Essex was pursuing a devolution deal. Medway Council would not be in favour of a single ‘combined authority’ with a ‘metro mayor’ covering the whole of the county including the Medway area [one of several devolution

deal options proposed by government]. Cllr Chambers stated that there was also a very strong case for the retention of KMEP as well as a case for Kent & Medway combining with East Sussex under some kind of LEP arrangement.

- Cllr Roger Gough expressed a view that LEPs had been treated unfairly by government in terms of funding and uncertainty about their future for some time. He could not see any reason why something built around KMEP couldn't step into the space left by the LEP albeit with a need to ensure that it could be funded given financial pressures on local authorities with resource lacking for new activity. Many LEP activities were focused on managing funding streams which has now closed although a number of funded initiatives continue and will require monitoring in future. Several other LEP activities have been shadowed at a Kent & Medway level such as the Employment Task Force. KMEP could step into the LEP space and as a minimum, would need resource provided to fulfil legacy tasks but KMEP could have a much more significant role to play.
- Cllr Peter Fleming was also involved in the initial process to establish a or several Kent & Medway LEPs prior to SELEP being confirmed. He explained that Districts didn't have too much of a voice in LEP activities and would like to see this coming through more prominently in future. He acknowledged that KMEP had enabled districts to work together and sometimes take altruistic decisions regarding funding priorities for the greater benefit of the county. Cllr Fleming would support something like KMEP filling the LEP space for the county.
- Cllr Monique Bonney was unsure about which tier of local authority was being considered in government's thinking for governance. Swale's experience of SELEP hadn't been too positive.
- Vince Lucas referred back to the Kent Economic Board which existed pre-KMEP. Since the LEP was created some of KMEP and the LEPs activity has been driven by funding which has sometimes taken away from a wider strategic focus. He recognised that KMEP itself is not costly to run (with volunteer business members) but that it has a role in making the case for Kent & Medway and informing government policy and interventions.
- Jo James was also involved in discussions about the creation of the LEP and participated in the previous Kent Economic Board. Despite initial scepticism about the LEP, Jo recognised that the areas within SELEP had come together to make it work. From a business perspective, it would be beneficial to have more powers locally to support their needs but that funding behind this to enable action would be very important.
- Liz Gibney concluded that board members had similar views about the future and had unified recently over various strategic issues that had been considered by the board. Delivering key activity and maximising funding allocated to Kent & Medway would continue to be important. Liz felt it was important not to be too reactive but to take on board and collate the views of board members

#### **Agreed Actions:**

- Board members to send any views to Steve/Liz for consideration in the KMEP response to the government questionnaire (a further meeting could be convened to discuss further if required)
- Steve Samson to share draft questionnaire response with board members for feedback as soon as possible

## Item 4 – Update from Business Advisory Board February Meeting

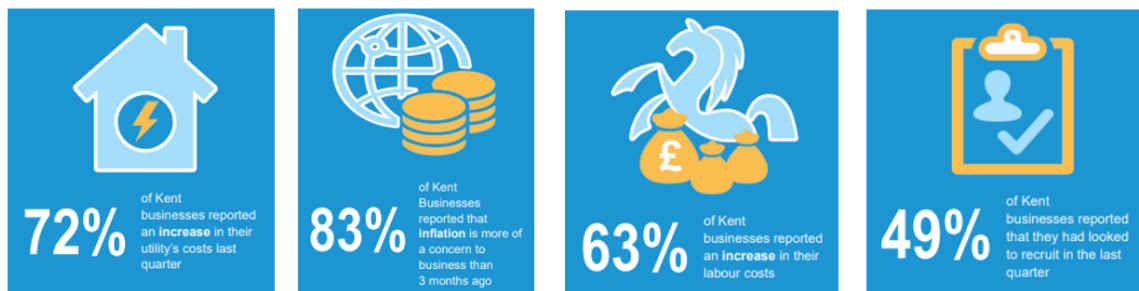
4.1 Due to time restraints, this agenda item was skipped but the information due to be presented by Jo James – an update from the 23 February Business Advisory Board meeting is below:

# BAB Economic Commentary Highlights 23 Feb

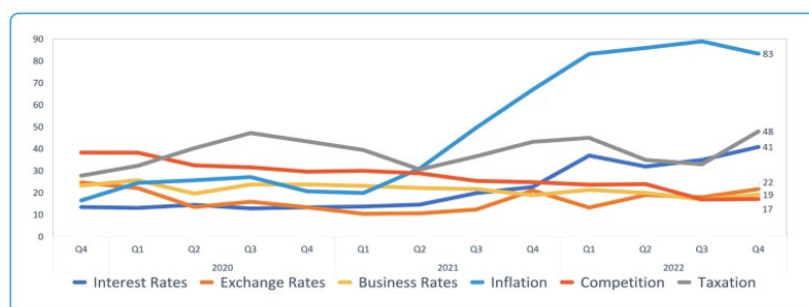
## 1. Factors affecting your financial position and the impact on your business at the moment:

- **Staffing challenges** – high salary expectations due to increased costs of living, high staff turnover, ageing workforce not being replaced by younger workers, managing expectations of younger workers.
- **Skills shortages** – finding people with the right skillset to fill vacancies across many sectors.
- **Inflation, interest rates and price increases** including energy / utilities, materials, travel and business rates
- **General uncertainty and political instability.**
- Delays with and complexity of the **planning system** slowing development.
- **Lack of industrial property** (new and existing) hindering expansion.
- Difficulties with implementing **energy efficiency / decarbonisation** measures
- Some sectors **lacking resource** to invest in innovation

## Findings Supported by KICC Q3 QES



## INFLATIONARY PRESSURES



## BUSINESS CONFIDENCE



### 2. What are you doing to combat these challenges?

- Driving **recruitment activity**, developing **training and staff retention** programmes
- **Investing in staff** (including wage increases) and improving **communication with clients**
- Being **cautious with investments** but **investing in tools / technology** to boost productivity

### 3. What public sector help could alleviate current pressures and contribute to business growth?

- Provide as much **stability** as possible
- **Lobby** on behalf of key sectors:
  - Simplifications in the planning system (construction)
  - 'British first' policies (agri-food)
  - VAT reductions (hospitality)
  - Further tax breaks for investments in new equipment/tech
- **Support for the decarbonisation agenda** and transition to net zero – tackling challenges with infrastructure and planning
- Continue to **give business a voice**

### 4. Free positive comment:

- Signs that inflation is slowing, energy prices are levelling out and consumer and **business confidence and demand is returning**.
- Some businesses are **investing in new technology and people** as developments go ahead and new opportunities open-up.
- Signs that we are heading towards a **resolution of the Stodmarsh** nutrient neutrality issues.
- A number of new business opportunities were being identified linked to the **digital, creative and media sectors** investing in projects in Kent.

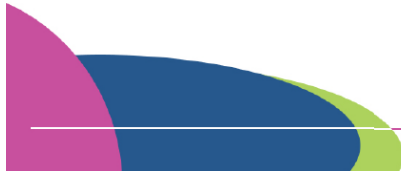
### Item 5 – Update on Business Support in Kent & Medway

5.1 Tudor Price gave an overview of business support available in the county given the number of changes that were taking place with a number of European-funded support programmes in particular reaching their end.

5.2 SELEP had very recently notified the Chamber that funding for the Kent & Medway Growth Hub would be provided by government through SELEP for an additional year to March 2024.

5.3 Headline figures from the Growth Hub in terms of some of the larger programmes of support which have been operating in Kent & Medway are as follows:

- Core service
  1. 1580 unique business engaged (832 < 1hrs, 674 <3hrs, 101 > 12hrs)
- Supplemental services (*Chamber contracts*)
  1. Southeast Business Boost – 215 businesses (134 x 12hrs support, 84 x grants)
  2. Enhanced Business Support – 68 businesses > 36hrs
  3. Import/Export Advice – 52 businesses
  4. UKCRF – 250 Net Zero Audits, £274K in grants
  5. High Street Recovery – 700+ platform registrations, 30 Google listings



[www.askphil.biz](http://www.askphil.biz)

5.4 A number of schemes are now, however, coming to an end (highlighted in red below) which will leave a number of gaps

SCHEME NAME	DELIVERED BY	CLOSES	STATUS
Rebel School Plus ⓘ	The Rebel School	Dec 2023	OPEN
Rebel Business School – How to start a business without money ⓘ	Rebel Business School	Nov 2023	OPEN
Food Accelerator Programme ⓘ	Innovate UK	Aug 2027	OPEN
Net Zero Audit ⓘ	Kent Invicta Chamber	Mar 2023	OPEN
Help to Grow: Management ⓘ	BEIS	Mar 2023	OPEN
Business & IP Centre ⓘ	Kent History and Library Centre	Dec 2023	OPEN
Digital Boost Mentoring ⓘ	Founders4Schools	Dec 2023	OPEN
Attracting Venture Capital ⓘ	NCL Technology Ventures (NCL)	Jun 2023	OPEN
The Expert in Residence Programme – Women in Business ⓘ	NatWest Bank	Mar 2023	OPEN
Kent and Medway Growth Hub Business Support ⓘ	Kent and Medway Growth Hub	Mar 2023	OPEN
Maidstone Business Support ⓘ	Let's Do Business Group	Mar 2023	OPEN
Prince's Trust Support For 18-30 Year Old Starting a Business ⓘ	Prince's Trust	Jul 2027	OPEN
Business Support and Mentoring (18-30 years) ⓘ	The Kent Foundation	Jul 2025	OPEN
EXPERIENCE Project ⓘ	Visit Kent	Jun 2023	OPEN
Swale One To One Support ⓘ	Swale BC	Mar 2023	OPEN
Swale Start Up ⓘ	Swale BC	Mar 2023	OPEN
Future Forward ⓘ	Locate in Kent	Mar 2023	OPEN
Mentoring for Growth Lite ⓘ	Be the business	Mar 2023	OPEN
Mentoring For Growth ⓘ	Be The Business	Mar 2023	OPEN

5.5 Some of the key changes in business support service provision are shown below:

## Changing Provision

- Ending of EU funded programmes
  - ESIF (ERDF, ESF) Leader, Southeast Business Boost, LOCASE, Future Forward, etc.
  - Interreg – ISE, Fusion, HIVE, Impress, 2Seas Trade, etc
- International Trade – departmental re-shuffle followed by sanction support & Brexit
- Innovation – UKRI & Universities
- Localised Funding – 13 variations on a theme

5.6 Funding has not been identified to enable a number of these services to continue with UKSPF allocations quite limited across Kent & Medway compared to other areas. Interreg had been instrumental in supporting Kent businesses with export and green activity.

5.7 Export support had reduced with some (former) DIT resource being targeted to support businesses dealing with sanctions in 2022 and with DIT's internationalisation fund (ERDF) coming to an end. There were no mentions in the Spring budget about any enhancements to the now Department for Business & Trade's export support services.

5.8 Support for innovation is increasing, particularly through UKRI and the universities so there will be a role to play in Kent in helping businesses to access these opportunities.

5.9 UKSPF will provide some business support programmes across certain Kent districts but these will be more localised and on a smaller scale than some of the recent EU-funded programmes of activity.

5.10 Changes in demand from businesses are summarised below:

### Opportunities

- Growth opportunities
- Co-ordination and signposting
- Low Carbon compliance
- Skills (Technology, Green)

### Quieter

- Start Up (investment)
- High Street
- Export

5.11 There will be a role for the Growth Hub in promoting the different UKSPF schemes planned across Kent.

5.12 In summary there is a reduction of funding for business support and therefore a risk of confusion among companies about future schemes. There is still a need for support in several key areas including low carbon.

5.13 Cllr Monique Bonney recognised the difficulties for start-ups and small businesses had been facing with severe disruption to postal services and related technical issues including internationally which have impacted cash flows.

- 5.14 Jo Nolan expressed concern about the lack of future generic business support in Kent & Medway and asked whether this was a wider issue in the UK. Tudor confirmed that the ESIF programme had provided business support activities across the UK but new funding arrangements and allocations had diverted this type of opportunity away from Kent. Kent is home to many small businesses who would benefit from more generic business support. This may lead to the private sector moving into new areas of business support but there will be a cost to this for companies. There would also be gaps and challenges for companies, small businesses especially to access help to grow.
- 5.15 Andrew Metcalf noted that business support would seem to be more vital than ever given the current economic context, imminent corporation tax increases etc.

#### **AOB – M2 Jct 1 and the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC)**

- Sunny Ee from Medway Council explained that Jct 1 of the M2 is particularly vulnerable in the context of the LTC with National Highways having put a holding objection in place on the basis that the junction is already operating at capacity impacting upon the Council's ability to deliver 8,000 homes as part of its local plan. There are other junctions in the county which are facing similar challenges so there is a need for a strategic approach to tackling this in Kent and Medway. Medway would welcome discussions with other colleagues in Kent to develop a longer-term strategic approach to lifting caps, improving junctions and unblocking housing development near vulnerable junctions on the M2 corridor.
- Liz Gibney confirmed that KMEP had written to government on a number of strategic transport issues including LTC. Given the recently announced delays to the scheme, Liz was keen to pursue options for bringing forward other road improvements in Kent and Medway to facilitate traffic flow in future once the LTC becomes operational.
- Cllr Monique Bonney shared concerns about junctions 5 and 7 given that improvements to Jct 5 wouldn't necessarily take into account increased traffic resulting from the LTC and the need for improvements at Brenley Corner which affects neighbouring authorities. She expressed a view that there had been a lack of strategic thinking in Kent around several key transport issues including lorry parks where wider thinking beyond Kent was needed. In addition to this, the LTC did not take into account linked rail connections.
- Cllr Rodney Chambers was concerned about conflicting demands from different government departments around housebuilding and infrastructure leading to issues for planners and highways authorities locally.
- Vince Lucas referred to Transport South East's Strategic Investment Plan which includes package '5.6 Lower Thames Crossing' and '5.7 Kent, Medway and East Sussex Highways' which covers the bifurcation strategy to improve the A2 / M2 and A20 / M20 routes to increase capacity to and from Dover and enable further housing growth. Business cases for these schemes are set out and National Highways co-signed the strategy. This provides some assurance that these key issues have been flagged to government.
- Liz Gibney concluded the agenda item by reminding members that KMEP had previously raised these issues and that the board should continue to consider how to maximise the potential from developments in Kent by ensuring that supporting transportation networks are in place and working.

#### **Item 6 – Funding Update: UK Community Renewal Fund**

- 6.1 Steve Samson gave an overview of Kent's Community Renewal Fund activity.



# UK Community Renewal Fund Kent Update

- UKCRF was predecessor to UKSPF



- KCC was accountable body for Kent programme (Nov 2021 to Dec 2022)
- 10 Projects approved worth £6.7m (30 Kent & Medway projects originally submitted)
- Priority Places identified by DLUHC (based on index of economic resilience):
  - Canterbury
  - Gravesham
  - Medway
  - Swale
  - Thanet



6.2 Ten projects were awarded funding in Kent from November 2021 to December 2022:

Project Title	Topic	Lead Organisation	Funding
<b>Breaking Barriers - Inclusive Employability</b>	Employment support and training for disadvantaged groups	Social Enterprise Kent	£507,938
<b>Bridge The Gap</b>	Employment support and training for disadvantaged groups	CXK	£491,618
<b>Diversity House: Centre for Innovation and Development</b>	Wrap around support for employment and life skills	Diversity House	£491,756
<b>Employment and Support Hub - Canterbury and Thanet</b>	Employment support aimed at families	The Education People	£572,431
<b>Growing Green: A Net-Zero Innovation Pathway for Micro &amp; SME Businesses</b>	Net zero training for SMEs	NIAB EMR	£513,122
<b>Kent and Medway Partnership for Enterprise, Food and Health</b>	Community and business support based around food and health	University of Greenwich	£528,714
<b>Net Zero Pathway for Change</b>	Support for businesses with progress towards net zero	Kent Chamber Invicta	£625,603
<b>Canterbury and Folkestone &amp; Hythe Skills Renewal</b>	Life Skills and digital skills training	EKC Group	£998,668
<b>Swale and Ashford Skills Renewal</b>	Life Skills and digital skills training	EKC Group	£998,668
<b>Thanet and Dover Skills Renewal</b>	Life Skills and digital skills training	EKC Group	£998,668

6.3 The combined outputs and outcomes from the Kent projects included:

Output Name	Outputs Delivered
People supported to participate in education	3680
People supported to engage in life skills	3465
People supported to engage in job-searching	1907
People supported to gain a qualification	1149
People with improved social inclusion	121
People with reduced social barriers	128
People supported to gain employment	493

Outcome Name	Outcomes Delivered
People engaged in job-searching following support	553
People in education/training following support	3660
People engaged in life skills support following interventions	1350
People gaining a qualification following support	1126
Economically inactive individuals engaging with benefits system	208

Output Name	Outputs Delivered
Businesses receiving grants	77
Businesses receiving non-financial support	464
Businesses receiving financial support other than grants	15
Organisations receiving grants	50
Organisations receiving non-financial support	398
Organisations receiving financial support other than grants	15
Businesses receiving grants	77

Outcome Name	Outcomes Delivered
Businesses introducing new products to firm as a result of support	13
Innovation plans developed as a result of support	181
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support	298
Organisations engaged in knowledge transfer following support	38

6.4 Two projects were then presented to the board:

#### **Breaking Barriers – Social Enterprise Kent:**

6.5 Jess Bartindale, Employability Project Manager, started by echoing previous comments about European Social Funding ceasing for the organisation meaning much activity would be ceasing. She also mentioned that feedback from UKCRF wasn't fully taken into account during the development the UKSPF due to overlaps with timings.

6.6 SEK has a good track record of working with job seekers in Kent and East Sussex since 2017, in particular through a number of projects funded by ESF (Building Better Opportunities) and National Lottery Community Fund. Projects have been successful in helping disadvantages people into work as

well as working with businesses to help them to better engage with vulnerable people and provide employment opportunities.

6.7 Jess then summarised the Breaking Barriers project which had 2 workstreams. One focused on job seekers from marginalised backgrounds (Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups; young people (16, 17 and early 18) not engaged in education or training; people with disabilities and older people (50+)). SEK worked closely with DWP to identify people to support. The target areas were Canterbury, Thanet and Folkestone. The second workstream focused on working with employers. The project supported 155 people during the year of implementation.

6.8 Although Breaking Barriers demonstrated the need for this type of support intervention, it was not clear whether this would continue within UKSPF programmes.

6.9 The project took an innovative approach to working with businesses to tackle their recruitment issues by employing people from a wider pool to address labour shortages. SEK worked with businesses to help them understand how to support people from different backgrounds. SEK worked with 63 businesses, each of which had access to an equalities, diversity and inclusion toolkit. SEK's training team is seeking to continue as businesses provided very positive feedback. Grants were also offered to companies to help them improve their equalities and diversity activities.

6.10 SEK was also able to support Afghan refugees through the project to help with understanding the UK labour market. SEK worked closely with the DWP policy team to share learning and recommendations. **The slides are included in Annex 1.**

6.11 Jo James asked whether SEK was planning to continue some of these activities on a commercial basis. Jess confirmed that the toolkit was available for businesses and other businesses have been in contact requesting equalities and diversity training for staff.

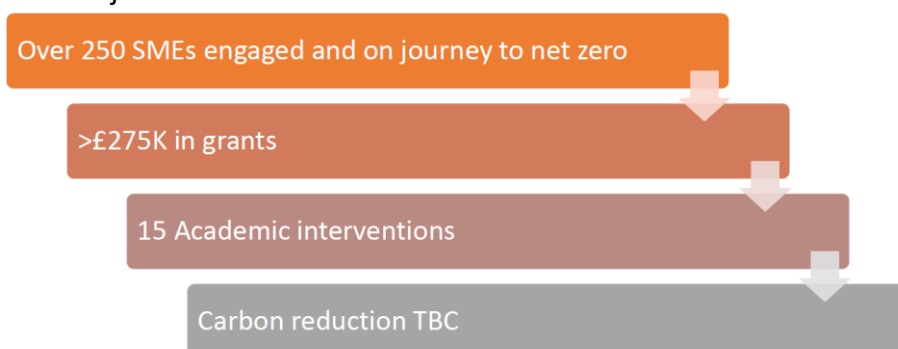
6.12 A key success of the project was in helping businesses understand how to engage with older workers and people from different ethnic backgrounds.

### **Pathway to Net Zero Project – Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce:**

6.13 Tudor Price introduced the project. Implementing the project in such a short space of time was a challenge as there was uncertainty and delays at the start of the programme.

6.14 The Net Zero project was supported by the University of Kent which ran workshops and provided innovation vouchers to beneficiary businesses. The project also offered net zero audits, climate change challenge grants and ran a student business challenge.

6.15 Project outcomes included:



6.16 The project also faced a number of challenges. There was a need to connect with planning officers and regulations, particularly in retro-fitting listed or heritage buildings.

Communal workspaces / serviced offices

Conservation areas / listed buildings

Downstream supply chain challenge

Working from home / hybrid working

6.16 The project wanted to find out what the motivation was for companies to transition to a net zero approach and found the following factors contributed:

- Tenders
- Grants & loans
- Supply chain demands
- Electricity & gas prices
- Green ethos

6.17 Lessons learned showed that businesses were keen to operate in more environmentally-friendly ways but weren't sure what actions should be undertaken. There is a lot of confusing information out there and carbon offsetting schemes were unclear due to the lack of regulation. Energy prices were seen as a barrier but businesses were reluctant to make significant (capital) investments in the current climate.

6.18 Steve then concluded the agenda item by sharing some recommendations and lessons learned from the wider UKCRF scheme. The Independent Evaluation Reports for the 10 projects were helpful and could be made available to colleagues interested.

## Lessons Learned & Recommendations

- Independent Evaluation Reports shared with District Councils to help shape implementation of new UKSPF activities
- Continuation of EKC's Skills Renewal Programme in Canterbury under UKSPF

Future programmes should allow a longer timeframe for aftercare and progression

**Essential to Address Local Needs and Differences:** each local authority area, and localities within those areas, have their own distinctiveness and needs and solutions have to take account of this local variety. The local focus could have been taken further to include a much stronger element of 'co-development' of solutions with the target local communities.

Delays in receiving a Grant Funding Agreement from DLUHC held up the process of issuing contracts to external partners. This led to delivery beginning later than anticipated and created logistical challenges for some stakeholders, particularly around recruitment of project staff

Recommendations for consideration on future initiatives include:

1. to consider a wider geography at the outset of any future project. Focusing on individual local authority areas limits the pool of potential beneficiaries thereby making recruitment more challenging. It also excludes many businesses from within the wider area who could benefit significantly from support and who may not be able to access support elsewhere. Any future project should consider adopting a Kent and Medway wide geography at the start;

### UK Shared Prosperity Fund Update:

6.19 Steve then provided an update on progress with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund across Kent and Medway. Although some of the district investment plans had not yet been fully

finalised or signed off, a number of areas of activity were being planned. The total funding across Kent is £14.6m which can be allocated to programmes of activity supporting 3 main priorities:

- Local Businesses
- People & Skills
- Community & Place

All UKSPF needs to be spent by March 2025.

6.20 Activities planned in Kent fall under a number of categories including:

#### **Business Support Activity:**

- **Canterbury:** SME Growth Programme (scale-up) – measures to support high growth companies (40 SMEs receiving intensive support) and developing a business growth plans
  - **Swale:** ‘Step-up Digital’ support for 100 business – training on digital skills, marketing, e-commerce
  - **West Kent Business Support Programme** across 3 Districts providing mentoring and financial support for SMEs and start-ups:
    - Full-time business adviser to work with 60 businesses (8 hours mentoring and advice)
    - Micro-grants of £500 to businesses that engage with mentoring for business development
    - Events and training (annual conference and procurement event)
- 

#### **Business Grants:**

- **Dover:**
    - Town centre empty property grants. 50% of costs up to £10,000
    - Town centre shopfront grants. 50% of costs up to £1,000
    - Green energy grants. 50% of costs up to £10,000
  - **Sevenoaks:** Seed funding for creative businesses to showcase cultural and experiential offer
  - **Swale:** (REPF) £7K max. match-funded grants for small and micro businesses for capital projects and promoting the visitor economy
  - **Tonbridge & Malling and Sevenoaks** Green Business Grant Scheme:
    - Match funded grants up to £5,000 for businesses in the green economy
    - Match funded grants up to £5,000 to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon
- 

#### **Town Centres:**

- **Markets:**
  - Gravesend Borough Market developments including food-led strategy and events programme
  - Feasibility studies to develop 4 markets in Swale
  - New open-air market in Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre
- **Gravesham:** Town Centre Improvements to promote and improve accessibility
- **Swale:**
  - Town Centre Action Plans for Faversham, Sittingbourne & Milton Regis, Sheerness & Queenborough
  - Town Centre Capital projects – ANPR or Wayfinding in Faversham, Greening of Sittingbourne High Street
- **Tonbridge & Malling:**

- Shopfront Improvement Grant Scheme
  - Tonbridge Town Centre Review
  - Digital Information Boards
  - **Sevenoaks:**
    - Capital project for small public realm and greening improvements in key centres
    - Events and promotions to support town centre development and grow cultural offer
  - **Tunbridge Wells:**
    - Bringing vacant retail back into use
    - Royal Tunbridge Wells street scene improvements
- 

### **Skills & Training:**

- **Canterbury:** East Kent Skills Renewal Programme (Building on EKC Group's 3 UKCRF projects) targeted at Economically Inactive People, Existing Employees, Digital Skills and Green Skills including a capital pot to provide ICT equipment – possibility of linking with wider EK & Swale districts to pool SPF resources
  - **Gravesham:**
    - Employability Support Initiatives including basic skills, ESOL courses and digital skills; support for transitions into work for individuals with specific needs including work experience
    - Jobs & Career Fairs
  - **Sevenoaks:**
    - 'Growth Gurus' mentoring community hub pilot
    - Outreach programme for economically inactive adults
    - Digital training to fill skills gaps.
  - **Swale:** Employment & skills support including digital inclusion and upskilling existing staff
  - **Tonbridge & Malling:** West Kent Life Skills programme
  - **Tunbridge Wells:** Breaking Down Barriers to Employment Programme
  - **Sector Skills Analyses** in Gravesham and Sevenoaks
  - **Green (Retrofit) Skills Development** in Tonbridge & Malling, Sevenoaks and Gravesham
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### **Visitor Economy:**

- **Canterbury:** 'Visit Canterbury' coastal marketing
  - **Gravesham:** Visitor Development Activity building on recent experiential tourism initiatives
  - **Swale:**
    - Visit Swale Photo/Video – marketing collateral to support the visitor economy
    - Wayfinding on the Isle of Sheppey
  - **Tonbridge & Malling:** Tonbridge Wayfinding
  - **Sevenoaks:**
    - Alternative and pop-up Visitor Economy Accommodation programme
    - Feasibility study to utilise AR & VR to promote heritage visitor economy assets
  - **Tunbridge Wells:** Marketing Plan to support visitor economy businesses
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### **Other Measures:**

- Support for vulnerable residents in fuel poverty with cost of living crisis through energy efficiency and upgrades
- Activities to support Young People
- Culture & Heritage activity

## **Levelling Up Fund Round 2 Update:**

6.21 Steve then gave a short update on the 5 LUF2 projects worth a total of £123m that had recently been awarded funding in Kent. The slides are included in Annex 2.

### **Item 7 – Update on the Emerging Kent & Medway Economic Strategy**

7.1 Ross Gill provided an update on the strategy which is due to be finalised shortly prior to final endorsement from KMEP.

7.2 The draft strategy builds on the 2020 Kent & Medway Economic Renewal & Resilience Plan. The new strategy will be a high-level framework for action which partners will be able to adopt and make use of.

7.3 The new strategy is being developed in the context of a changing funding environment. A number of consultation workshops took place with KMEP and BAB colleagues as well as other stakeholders in Kent. KCC's cabinet also reviewed the initial draft in 2022.

7.4 Feedback included the need to start from a positive perspective by emphasising the county's strengths and opportunities, focusing on opportunities for innovation and growth, making use of the strategy as a framework for local intervention and finally in linking the health of the economy and the population. The strategy was originally intended to focus on the time period ending in 203.

7.5 The strategy aims to tackle some of the blocks to development such as skills shortages and constraints to growth. The draft will focus on opportunities that exist with certain sector, effective partnership work in Kent etc. and will recognise the diversity of the county.

7.6 The logic behind the strategy starts with identifying issues, setting objectives to tackle these, developing ambitions for the future and putting forward concrete actions. An evidence base will also be published alongside the strategy.

7.7 Three main objectives were identified to make the economy more productive, sustainable and inclusive, supported by 5 ambitions to:

- Enable innovative, productive and creative businesses
- Widen opportunities and unlock Kent
- Secure resilient infrastructure for planned, sustainable growth
- Place economic opportunity at the centre of community renewal and prosperity
- Create diverse, distinctive and vibrant places

These should lead to wider economic, environmental and health outcomes.

7.8 An example of more detail from the ambition to enable innovative, productive and creative businesses would include growing skills and talent and investing into areas where Kent is at the leading edge, supporting innovation etc. A number of existing workstreams such as the Local Skills Improvement Plan and Employment Task Force could feed into this.

7.9 Next steps include a final refresh of the framework, conclude the draft strategy as a framework for action for consideration by leaders and then making use of the document to support investment proposals with strategic monitoring over time.

7.10 Cllr Monique Bonney emphasised the need to underpin the strategy with having a healthy population by linking into the ICP (Integrated Care Package) and bringing industry, councils and residents to improve the medical infrastructure in the county. Key would be improving the skills and workforce in this area and ensuring that the right services are commissioned in Kent by working together. Ross confirmed that health colleagues had been consulted on early drafts and the draft framework included references to links between the economy and wider population health. As chair for the LEP's coastal communities group, Liz Gibney echoed the importance of this issue.

7.11 Jo James highlighted the impacts of poor health and waiting times for appointments was having on staff resources within local businesses. The point should be added to a future meeting agenda for further discussion.

#### **AOB – KMEP Business Member Recruitment 2023-24**

- Steve Samson explained the process for recruiting new business members to the KMEP board for a 2 year term starting in 2023.
- The KMEP Board consists of 33 members:
  - 14 Local Authorities (Leaders of KCC, MC, 12 Districts)
  - 2 Education Reps (FE & HE)
  - 17 Private Sector Reps (FSB, IOD, KICC + 14 Business Leaders)
- The board should provide a balanced representation of Kent's geography, sectors and diversity
- The 2021-22 term was ending for Roland Cooper – Considine (Civil Engineers), Jo Nolan – Screen South, Bob Russell - Copper Rivet Distillery & Beams International, Troy Barratt – Contracts Engineering Ltd and Mayer Schreiber – Discovery Park Ltd.
- All of these members would be welcome to apply for another term.
- Under-represented sectors included: Wholesale & Retail, Visitor Economy/Hospitality & Leisure, Health & Life Sciences, Manufacturing, ICT, Professional Services
- The current business member gender split was 69% male, 31% female
- The following districts were not represented by business members: Ashford, Dartford, Gravesham, Sevenoaks or Swale.
- Eligibility Requirements for potential candidates:
  - Business or industry leaders
  - Firm operates in Kent and/or Medway
  - Commitment to attend the KMEP board meetings and become a member of the Business Advisory Board.
  - No significant conflicts of interest or reputational concerns
- Timetable for recruitment process:
  - **27 March 2023** – Advertise opportunity on [KMEP](#) and [SELEP](#) websites with support from Board Members (FSB, IOD, KICC and District / County / Unitary authority networks).
  - **17 April 2023** - Deadline for applications from both potential new board members and current board members wishing to serve another 2-year term
  - **21 April 2023** - Applications sifted
  - **27 April 2023** – Selection Panel Meets (KMEP Chairman, KMEP Vice Chairman, 1 BAB Member, 1 KMEP Skills Commission Member (FE/HE Rep), 1 FSB Rep, 1 IOD Rep, 1 SELEP Secretariat rep, KMEP Strategic Programme Manager)
  - **28 April 2023** – Applicants notified
  - **Early May 2023** – Induction / briefing meetings
- Board members were asked for their support in advertising the opportunity.

#### **Close**

- The KMEP Chairman thanked members for their participation and closed the meeting.
- The next meeting would take place in person in Ashford at the Jasmin Vardimon Company, 20<sup>th</sup> June at 10am.





# Social Enterprise Kent UK Community Renewal Fund

## Breaking Barriers Project



**Key Facts:**

Funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund

A £220 million project, investing in skills, community and place, local businesses and supporting people into employment. 100 priority areas nationwide. 8 projects across Kent.

Pilot programme running 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 – 30 June 2022 (16 December 2022 extension)

**Breaking Barriers**

Inclusive employability, Breaking down prejudices, stigmas and hidden biases that exist within employers and individuals.

Canterbury - Thanet – Folkestone

Four focus groups: Black, Asian and ethnic minority groups; young people (16, 17 and early 18) not engaged in education or training; people with disabilities and older people (50+)

**BREAKING BARRIERS** SEK Social Enterprise Kent  
Inclusive Employability for Employers & Job Seekers

"The Breaking Barriers project has given our own diversity and inclusion agenda a boost. The training was relevant and real and it is something all employees in all organisations should be doing regularly to raise awareness of others and of how systems and people can prevent inclusion if they're not aware. We now want to replicate it ourselves. Can't praise it enough! The audit similarly gave us improvements to focus on so that we can support a diverse workforce whether that is shadowing, trial shifts, mock interviews, work experience through to real interviews, jobs and people thriving. All top of the list of considerations."

- Disability or Health Condition
- 16-24 Year Olds
- Black, Asian, & Minority Ethnic
- Over 50's

This project is funded by the UK Government through the UK Community Renewal Fund. #UKCOMMUNITYRENEWALFUND



*"Breaking Barriers has helped me as I am now getting the support and know there is light at the end of the tunnel. I no longer feel I am on the scrap heap or that my age is a barrier."*



When Sandra came to the Breaking Barriers project, she described her day-to-day life as "pretty bleak" & said she had no help or support.

Sandra used to work in the NHS & had a wealth of experience to offer, but after moving halfway across the country to be near to her family, she found herself more alone than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic added to this, leaving her isolated & lonely, her anxiety meant she had been unable to access public transport for over two years.

After meeting with her ESA, Sandra has been able to connect with others remotely & has also begun venturing out into the community again. She has returned to job searching and secured herself an interview!

Over 50's

People without additional barriers

Disability or Health Condition

Black, Asian, & Minority Ethnic

16-24 Year Olds

## BREAKING BARRIERS

Inclusive Employability for Employers & Job Seekers



*"It was a very good and informative course that will help us in our lives in England. It was good and positive job training to keep us alive and working in England and it will raise our understanding and knowledge regarding living and finding jobs in UK" - Ahmad*

*"I feel confident with knowing how to write a CV and a cover letter" - Fatima*

*"Outcome of this course is outstanding and useful, I learnt first time how to use google maps, which is very essential that give me the confidence to go anywhere" Anon*

*"I needed confidence and found it through Breaking Barriers, I shall use the skills that I now know I have inside me to get work" - Fawzia*

*"I can manage bus travel now and use the different apps, I use Google Maps all the time!" - Anon*

*"The practical skills have been really useful, I called a taxi by myself which I could never have done before" - Jala*

*"The seminar that was held was very effective for our information" - Mohammad*

Black, Asian, & Minority Ethnic

Over 50's

16-24 Year Olds

Disability or Health Condition

## Outcomes

	Target number of participants	Actual participants supported (as of 30/9/2022)	% of target achieved by 30/9/2022
Participants signed up and completed the project (unemployed job seekers and Economically inactive individuals)	120	156	130%
Exits into training	20	32	160%
Exits into job search from being Economically Inactive	10	78	780%
Exits into increased life skills	70	129	184%
Businesses completing EDIB Reviews and training	60	63	105%
Exits into employment (not actually a target)	0	4	400%

# Round 2 Levelling Up Funding Secured

- 5 Projects Approved worth £123m
- (111 approved nationally worth £2.1bn)
- Priority Topics: Town Centre Regeneration, Transport, Culture
- Projects to complete (spent and closed) by March 2025
  - Connected Canterbury: Unlocking the Tales of England - £19.9m
  - Dover Beacon - £18.1m and Dover Access - £45m
  - Folkestone – a Brighter Future - £19.8m
  - Sheerness Revival - £20m

## Folkestone A Brighter Future – KMEP Update

Predominantly infrastructure led project - £19.8m LUF Funding

Work packages x 3

1. Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections
  - Improving the “arrival” experience
  - Additional planting opportunities
  - More intuitive wayfinding
2. Improved Town Centre Gateway
  - Overhaul of legacy highway system
  - Introduction of more green space
  - Relocation of bus station to linear bus stops
  - Restoration of public square with green space and play area
3. Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm
  - Refurbishment and separation of former department store to enable occupation
  - New public realm in pedestrianised area (seating, paving and planting etc.)
  - Animation to enable/support new uses

*Public realm, wayfinding will be subject to artistic input and uplift adding to Folkestone's USP*

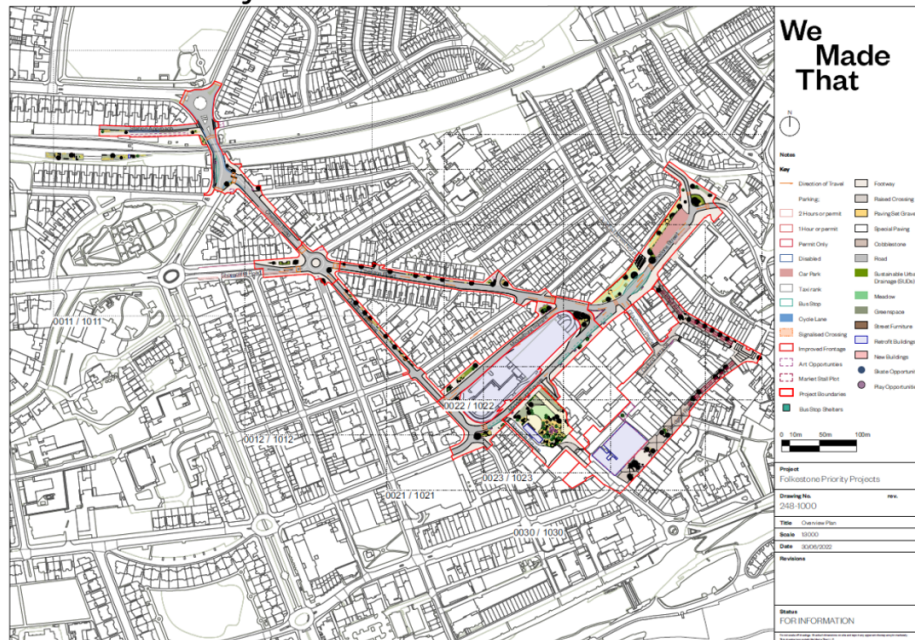


## Folkestone A Brighter Future – KMEP Update

- Deliverability of projects required by 31 March 2025
- KCC are the delivery partner for highways /public realm works
  - Appointed **Aecom** design consultant for all Highways/public realm works
    - Phase 1 design feasibility expected early May
    - Programme schedule expected by end June '23
  - Appointed **Pellings** a building consultant for Folca works
    - Phase 1 condition surveys almost complete
    - Next steps - schedule of works for phase 2 initial works



# Overall Project Area



## Dover Beacon - £18m LUF Investment

Focus on renewing **Bench Street** (derelict / brownfield site) to include:

- A 2000m<sup>2</sup> **Creative Campus** to provide digital & creative training and curriculum expansion at Dover Technical College.
- A 690m<sup>2</sup> **business centre for start-ups**
- Expansion of the current **Dover Cycle Scheme** - 6 additional cycle hub locations - rentable standard and e-bikes
- 450m<sup>2</sup> of **public car parking** retaining four EV charging points.
- 800m<sup>2</sup> of **riverside parklet**, an accessible green space

Then longer-term high-quality town centre housing and increased commercial opportunities on the western side of the site.

**Benefits:** increased employment 52 FTE, 133 qualifications p/a, 7.5% land value and active travel uptake.

### Before & After





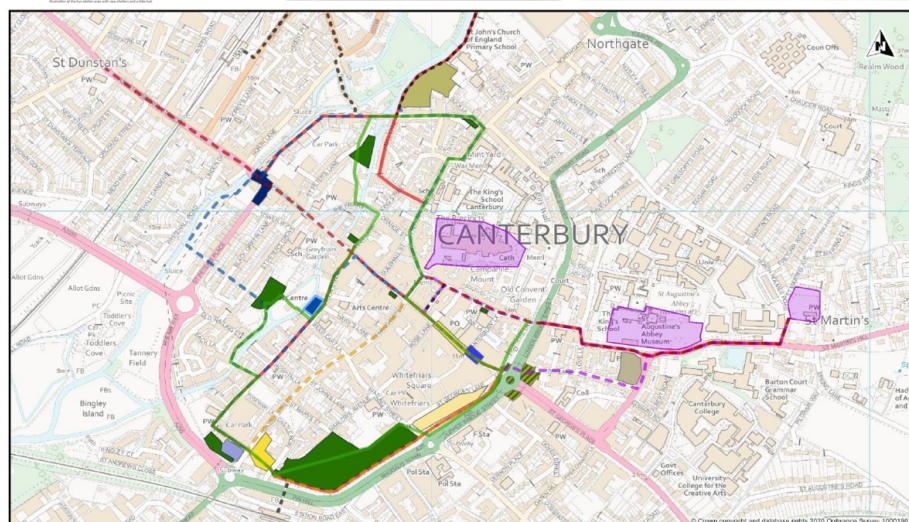
## Connected Canterbury: Unlocking the Tales of England £19.9m

### Part of the wider 'Tales of England' Masterplan:

- **Canterbury Castle & grounds** – stabilisation / restoration for event space
- **Marlowe Kit** (former Poor Priests' Hospital) – restoring mediaeval Great Hall & Chapel for creative learning centre, heritage destination, riverside café
- **Occasional events space** in Westgate Square and Clock Tower
- Transforming bus station & St George's Lane as **green entry points**
- Investing in **car parks** (EV charging, docked cycle hire, trees, lighting)
- **'Story gardens'** and **heritage routes**



Scheme map



Connected Canterbury Levelling up Bid  
 Scale: 1:7,300  
 World Heritage Site (For reference)

**Green Arrival Points**  
 Bus station  
 Castle Row Car Park  
 Gateway Garden  
 Longport car park  
 St George's St  
 St Radgunde Car Park

**Heritage Asset Restoration**  
 Canterbury Castle and garden  
 Clock Tower  
 Poor Priest hospital  
 Westgate Square

**Connecting our Heritage**  
 The complete Story Garden Route  
 Pilgrims mile and a bit walk  
 Links to additional arrival points  
 Castle route  
 World heritage route  
 Riverside Walk  
 Story Gardens  
 Main LUF interventions on routes

**canterbury city council**  
 Military Road  
 Canterbury  
 Kent  
 CT1 1YW

# Before & After



## Sheerness Revival - £20m

### 1) **Beachfields regeneration** – a prominent town centre & seafront site.

- Expanded and reconfigured Healthy Living Centre – new GP facilities, consolidated space for the VCS, new café, soft play, and facilities specifically targeted at teenagers. Outdoor adventure golf and gym.
- Enhanced public realm from the train station to sea front area

### 2) **Sheppey College extension** (working with EKC Group)

Expansion to Sheppey College, with new FE courses, a new Junior College (age 14 – 16) and increased community and adult learning provision. The curriculum offer is being developed with the support of local employers.

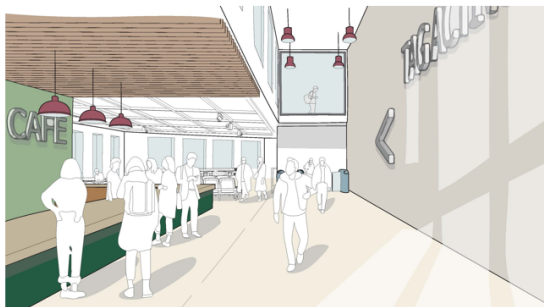
### 3) **Masters House workspace**

New workshop units targeted at creative and cultural industries.

### 27 targeted outputs and outcomes including:

- Environmental performance upgrades to existing buildings
- Increased visitor numbers
- Enhanced progression of learners to HE / employment
- 750sqm educational floorspace
- 82sqm workshop space
- Additional 449sqm leisure / health footprint

## Sheerness Revival: Concepts



**Expected outcomes:** increased employment, increased health & wellbeing, visitor numbers, increased no. of qualifications gained

## Dover Access - £45m

- Additional (5 to 10) & enhanced **border control points** at the port – change in border control sequence (including pre-arrival check in for HGVs with carriers)
- Increasing **pre-check in capacity** and **enlarging buffer zone** (taking some queueing off road network to reduce the need for TAP and Brock)
- **New exit route** from the docks for HGVs unable to proceed to crossing the Channel

