# GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, 10th November, 2026**

**10.00 am**

**Council Chamber**

Kent County Council
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# AGENDA

# GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, 10 November 2026 at 10.00 am**
**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.**

Ask for: **James Willis**
Telephone: **03000 417831**

**Membership (13)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Reform (8): | Mr J DeFriend (Chair), Mr T Mallon (Vice-Chair), Mr M Paul, Mrs B Porter, Mr R Waters, Mrs M Lawes, Mr A Thorp and Mr D Sian |
| Liberal Democrat (1): | Mr T Prater |
| Restore Britain (1): | Mr P Thomas |
| Green (1): | Mr M Hood |
| Conservative (1): | Mr N Williams |
| Labour (1): | Mr A Brady |

## UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

1 Introduction/Webcast announcement

2 Apologies and Substitutes

3 Declarations of Interest

4 Minutes of the meeting held on September 9 2026 (Pages 1 - 24)

5 Verbal Updates

6 Petition : KCC to Review and Improve their response to 5th September Dover protest - Papers to Follow

7 26/00050 - Adoption of the Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan (Pages 25 - 164)

8 26/00052 - Kent County Council (KCC) Energy Strategy (Pages 165 - 188)

9 26/00066 - Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy - Strategic Planning Board (Pages 189 - 202)

10 Plan Sea - Report (Pages 203 - 244)

11 Water Strategy Update - Report (Pages 245 - 250)

12 26/00061 - Joint Transportation Board (JTB) Future Arrangements (Pages 251 - 264)

13 26/00062 - Contract CN260764 - Provision of Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) Resource (Pages 265 - 280)

14 Winter Policy Service Policy 2026/27-Report (Pages 281 - 288)

15 26/00063 - Reallocation of Getting Building Funding to A249 Bearsted Road Project (Pages 289 - 304)

16 26/00065 - A226 Galley Hill Road - Future progression and delivery (Pages 305 - 328)

17 Work Programme (Pages 329 - 330)

**Motion to Exclude the Press and Public**

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

## EXEMPT ITEMS

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Benjamin Watts
Deputy Chief Executive
03000 416814

**Monday, 2 November 2026**

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**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**

# GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 9 September 2026.

PRESENT: Mr A Brady, Mr M A J Hood, Mr T Mallon (Vice-Chair), Mr M Paul, Mrs. B Porter, Mr T Prater, Mr R Waters, Mr A Thorp, Mr D Sian, Mrs. M Lawes, Mr P Thomas and Mr H Rayner

ALSO PRESENT: Mr Richard Palmer (Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services), Mr Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), Mr Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport , Mr Spencer Dixon (Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport),Chris Burwash (Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services) , Mr Mark Mulvihill (Deputy Cabinet Member Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health) , John Yates (Head of Delivery), Mrs E Fairbairns (Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce) Mike Russell (Stakeholder Engagement Manager) and James Latter (Pathfinder Manager).

IN ATTENDANCE: Simon Jones (Corporate Director for Growth Environment and Transport), Stephanie Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities), Matthew Wagner (Interim Chief Analyst),), Helen Rowe (Interim Head of Highways-Assets), Helen Shulver (Assistant Director Resource Management and Circular Economy), Victoria Soames (Senior Project Manager) , Whitney Gee (Programme Manager) , Elizabeth Milne (Head of Environment) , Liz Davidson (Partnership Director) and James Willis (Democratic Support Officer).

## UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

### 101. Apologies and Substitutes
*(Item 2)*

Mr Defriend sent Apologies. Mr Rayner was present for this iteration of the Committee.

### 102. Declarations of Interest
*(Item 3)*

No declarations of interest were received.

### 103. Minutes of the meeting held on 07/07/2026
*(Item 4)*

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held July 7th, 2026, were a correct record and that a paper copy be signed by the Chair.

**104. Verbal Updates**
*(Item 5)*

*Richard Palmer (Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services), Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), and Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) Provided an update on the Following:*

1. Mr Osborne discussed the following aspects:

a) The Committee received an update on the Dover Border Access Improvement Scheme (DBAIP). It was reported that £20 million funding had been secured through the Levelling Up Fund to support the project.

b) Members were advised that the project would reconfigure the border control facilities within the Port of Dover's Eastern Docks. The works would provide additional processing space and vehicle queuing capacity for the equivalent of more than 500 heavy goods vehicles.

c) It was reported that the Port of Dover would deliver the works. The project would be funded through a combination of Government funding and investment from the Port, and no financial contribution would be required from Kent County Council (KCC).

d) Members were informed that, under normal operating conditions, the improvements were expected to reduce the frequency and duration of traffic management measures associated with Dover Traffic Assessment Project (TAP) and Operation Brock by up to 80%.

e) The Committee received an update on Kent County Council's active travel rewards app (WeRoam). The app would encourage residents to record journeys made by walking, cycling, or using a wheelchair or mobility aid in return for rewards. The initiative aimed to improve health and wellbeing, reduce car use, and support climate objectives. A strong early response to the scheme had been observed with 1,859 downloads recorded shortly after launch. It was also reported that the app had attracted interest from other local authorities and received positive media coverage, including on BBC Radio Kent.

f) Members were advised that the Bearsted Road scheme had entered fully into the construction phase, with major gas and water utility diversions completed. Retaining wall works at Newnham Court had progressed and work continuing on new access roads and associated infrastructure had continued. Additional funding had been secured, and the scheme remained on track for completion in winter 2026/27.

g) Between April and August, approximately 628,000 square metres of Kent's road network had been improved through resurfacing, and 425,000 square metres of preventative maintenance works had been undertaken, including

significant completed schemes at Burham Green, the A249 Detling Hill, Forest Hill and East Sutton Road in Maidstone.

h) Members joined in congratulating Mr John Farmer on his retirement and thanked him for his 56 years of dedicated service to Kent County Council.

2. Mr Henderson presented the following:

a) The Committee received an update on work being undertaken with partners across Kent and Medway through the Pathways2Resilience programme (P2R). Members were advised that the programme was developing a long-term, evidence-led approach to water resilience and climate adaptation, considering both current pressures and the future impacts of climate change on communities, businesses and public services.

b) It was reported that evidence had indicated that summer rainfall could reduce significantly in future decades, while Winter rainfall events could become more intense. It was highlighted that this presented challenges for a growing county, where reliable water supplies were essential to support residents, businesses, agriculture, the environment and economic growth.

c) The Committee was informed that work had been undertaken to review current and future water demand, assess climate-related risks and examine a range of potential scenarios to inform long-term planning. investment and resilience measures. The next phase of work would look to bring local authorities, water companies, environmental organisations and local communities together to shape a shared vision.

d) Members were advised that proposals to improve resilience had included South East Water's plans for a desalination plant at Reculver, capable of producing up to 30 million litres of water per day, and the progression of the Broad Oak Reservoir project, with completion anticipated in 2033.

e) Members were advised that Thanet Earth had secured an extension to its Environment Agency (EA) licence to increase abstraction from the aquifer, helping to reduce demand on the wider water network during periods of network pressure.

f) The Committee received an update on waste and recycling initiatives, including the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme and the forthcoming (due to launch Oct 1st) Deposit Return Scheme (DRS). Members were advised that these measures, alongside new opportunities to convert waste into fuel, would help improve resource efficiency, support environmental objectives and reduce waste management costs to taxpayers.

g) Members noted that food waste recycling had increased by 28% since April, with more than 2,100 additional tonnes collected. This had generated savings of over £290,000 in disposal costs and reduced the volume of waste requiring

disposal. It was further reported that this progress was being supported through clearer recycling guidance and communications to encourage positive behavioural change.

h) The Cabinet Member closed out the discussion by highlighting the continued expansion of the Maya's Community Support Centre reuse network, with a free shop warehouse in Herne Bay, a shop in Canterbury High Street and the recent opening of a new facility in Cliftonville, providing valuable support to local communities.

3. Mr Palmer presented a portfolio update to the committee:

a) Members were informed of the outcomes of Trading Standards Operation Judicial, a multi-agency enforcement initiative undertaken in Canterbury on the 28th of august and had targeted six retail establishments. More than 10,000 counterfeit, unsafe and non-compliant products had been seized, including illicit vapes, toys and electrical items.

b) The Cabinet Member reported that Trading Standards had recently secured £30,000 for victims of fraud following a successful investigation and court proceedings. Additional safeguarding activities in August had prevented losses totalling approximately £127,000 through interventions relating to scams and doorstep crime.

c) Updated the Committee on public events delivered by officers. This had seen 251 residents attend with an additional 169 of KCCs staff attending a delivered scam training session.

d) The Committee was advised of a national Trading Standards acid awareness campaign relating to corrosive substances and public awareness activity with retailers. Trading Standards had discussed the risks to merchants and who maybe buying hazardous substances.

e) An update was provided on the work of the Community Safety Team, including delivery of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and a recent learning event attended by more than 150 frontline professionals.

f) Members were updated on the work of the Community Warden Service and the Water SMART programme. The Cabinet Member paid tribute to Community Warden Giles Barnard following his recent death in July. Members from across the Committee recorded their appreciation for his service to local communities.

g) The Committee was informed of the continued success of Kent's libraries service, including strong participation in the Summer Reading Challenge 2026 and customer satisfaction levels of 95% from 7894 responses received. Further updates were provided regarding the work of Active Kent and Medway

and the ongoing delivery of programmes supporting health and physical activity.

4. In the absence of Mr Wimble, Mr Henderson delivered the following update on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects:

a) Members were informed that 76% of learners participating in Wave 6 of the Skills Bootcamps programme had achieved a positive employment or skills outcome, exceeding the national average. Additional funding had been secured to deliver construction-focused training opportunities.

b) The Committee was advised that the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIPs) for Kent and Medway had recently been launched and identified future skills priorities across a range of sectors. Updates were provided on the No Use Empty programme (NUE), which had supported commercial developments expected to deliver additional business units across Kent.

c) Members noted the recent appointment of Mrs Sarah Roots as Non-Executive Chair of Grow in Kent and received an update on the Kentish Wine Way campaign. The Kent and Medway Business Fund (launched 2024) had now loaned in excess of £5 million to support local businesses. Members were informed that demand for the fund had remained strong.

d) The Cabinet Member's update included progress relating to the campaign for enhanced international rail services through Kent. Members were informed of recent announcements from potential rail operators and ongoing work to demonstrate demand for future services. Residents and businesses were encouraged to back the campaign by completing a demand survey.

e) Members were advised of continued engagement through the Straits Committee and a recent visit by a delegation from Zeeland and representatives of the Dutch Embassy to explore regeneration and economic development opportunities.

5.Members and officers discussed the following points:

a) Questions were raised regarding timescales and performance monitoring associated with the Dover Border Access Improvement Project. Officers advised that delivery was expected within approximately two years and that the project's success would be measured through reductions in traffic management interventions, including Operation Brock.

b) Members welcomed the work of the Community Warden Service and sought assurances regarding opportunities to expand coverage across Kent. Officers advised that additional funding opportunities, including contributions from parish councils and commercial sponsorship arrangements would be explored.

c) Members discussed water resilience challenges, including concerns regarding water leakage and repair timescales. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the issue would continue to be raised with water companies and highlighted the importance of residents and Members continuing to report leaks. Representatives present also referred to ongoing investment in major water infrastructure projects and reductions in leakage across their networks.

d) Members requested that information on future water infrastructure projects across Kent be shared and highlighted concerns regarding future housing growth and water supply capacity in parts of the county. Members highlighted ongoing frustration on the way water infrastructure issues are addressed.

e) Members discussed support for community-led reuse initiatives and welcomed ongoing work between officers and local groups to reduce waste and increase reuse opportunities. The ongoing work with Maya's reuse was commended and members suggested that greater access be given to items from KCCs own waste transfer station. The Chair acknowledged this point and the Cabinet Member advised that the matter would require further investigation before a response could be provided. It was therefore agreed that the issue would be considered outside of the meeting and a response provided to members in due course.

**RESOLVED** to note the verbal updates

**105. Southern Water: Installation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Six-Monthly Update**
*(Item 6)*

*John Yates (Head of Delivery), Emma Fairbairns (Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce) Mike Russell (Stakeholder Engagement Manager) and James Latter (Pathfinder Manager) were in attendance for this item.*

1) Mike Russell opened the presentation with the following points:

a) The representatives from Southern Water introduced the six-monthly update and provided the Committee with an overview of progress made in delivering Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and storm overflow reduction measures across Kent. Members were advised that the Clean Rivers and Seas Task Force had expanded significantly, with more than 120 officers now engaged in storm overflow reduction programmes across the region.

b) Members were informed that Southern Water (SW) was delivering a £1.5 billion storm overflow reduction programme across its region, with approximately £300 million currently being invested in North Kent. The

programme focused on reducing storm overflow activity, improving water quality and creating more sustainable catchment management solutions.

c) SW officers provided an update on works underway within the principal North Kent catchments, including Whitstable, Queenborough, Sittingbourne, Faversham and Herne Bay. Members were informed that the approach combined traditional engineering solutions with sustainable drainage measures, smart infrastructure and surface water removal schemes

d) In relation to Whitstable, Members were advised that surface water separation and intelligent gate systems had reduced storm overflow events and that additional improvements, including the development of a new treatment works, were under consideration to address historical issues within the catchment.

e) The Committee heard that an 82% reduction in storm overflow events had been achieved within Queenborough through the installation of additional storage capacity, smart network controls and surface water removal activity. Members were informed that similar work in Sittingbourne had delivered an 85% reduction in spills by reducing groundwater ingress into the sewerage network.

f) SW officers outlined progress on a number of SuDS projects, including rain gardens and public realm improvements within Herne Bay town centre, attenuation and drainage schemes at Beacon Hill and Victoria Park, Herne Bay; a proposed SuDS scheme at Cobbers Bridge Road; a series of linked SuDS interventions throughout Faversham town centre; works at Cornwallis Circle, Beckley Street and Cromwell Road, Whitstable; and projects being developed within Sheppey and Queenborough.

g) Members were advised that investigations had also commenced within future catchments, including Bidborough and Tunbridge Wells, to identify surface water connections and opportunities for intervention. Officers explained that a substantial programme of investigative work was required before solutions could be designed and implemented.

h) The Committee noted the importance of partnership working and heard that Southern Water was working with local authorities, schools, major landowners, health organisations and commercial partners to identify opportunities for sustainable drainage and surface water management. Officers highlighted examples of successful collaboration through SuDS in Schools projects, public realm schemes and discussions with significant landowners and infrastructure operators.

i) Members were informed that Southern Water continued to operate its Rivers and Seas Watch platform, which provided real-time information on storm overflow activity and enabled residents and stakeholders to monitor performance and hold the organisation to account.

2) In discussion, Members raised the following matters:

a) Concerns were expressed regarding discharges from the Edenbridge Wastewater Treatment Works and the potential impact upon the forthcoming

Hever Castle Triathlon. Members requested assurances that every effort would be made to avoid storm overflow discharges ahead of the event. Officers acknowledged the concerns and undertook to investigate the issue further and provide a direct response. It was explained that storm overflow events were automated safety mechanisms and could not be manually activated; however, the organisation recognised the importance of continued investment to reduce such events.

b) Members sought clarification regarding the reduction targets for storm overflows and how improvements would be measured. Officers advised that regulatory targets required storm overflow activity to be reduced to fewer than ten events annually at designated locations and that performance would continue to be published through annual reporting and public data platforms.

c) Questions were raised regarding partnership working and whether drainage schemes already being delivered through wider regeneration initiatives were being reflected within the programme. Presenters confirmed that Southern Water was supporting a range of projects outside the specific storm overflow programme and that lessons learned from these initiatives would continue to inform wider delivery.

d) Members discussed opportunities to work more closely with farmers and landowners to create natural drainage features and on-farm water storage. Officers confirmed that engagement with the agricultural sector was ongoing and that catchment-based approaches formed an increasing part of future delivery plans.

e) Clarification was sought regarding rainfall thresholds and the circumstances in which storm overflows became operational. Officers confirmed that further work was underway to present this information in a more accessible format and acknowledged the importance of communicating such measures more clearly.

f) Members raised concerns regarding future maintenance responsibilities for SuDS infrastructure. It was explained that maintenance obligations would be determined through agreements with local partners and that appropriate maintenance funding would form part of the arrangements for each scheme.

g) Questions were raised regarding monitoring arrangements for inland river outfalls and the availability of data to local residents. Officers advised that information relating to monitored outfalls was available through Rivers and Seas Watch and that residents could continue to use that platform to access operational information.

h) The Chairman thanked the representatives of Southern Water for their attendance and welcomed the offer for continued engagement with Members regarding water resilience, storm overflows and sustainable drainage initiatives across Kent.

**RESOLVED** to note the Southern Water SuDS installation updates.

**106. Performance Dashboard**
*(Item 7)*

*Matt Wagner, ( Chief Analyst ); and Simon Jones, (Corporate Director for Growth, Environment &Transport) were in attendance for this item.*

1) Mr Wagner updated Members on the following KPI movements:

    a) Introduced the report and explained that it contained data up to the end of June 2026. Members were advised that of the 58 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) included within the dashboard, 40 had achieved target and were rated green, three had achieved performance above the floor standard and were rated amber, and four were below the floor standard and rated red. Four KPIs were not reported during Quarter 1 due to occurring at differing times of the year and the remaining seven were unable to be reported as planned.

    b) The Committee was advised that the four red-rated indicators related to: *HT02 – All Highways and Transportation enquiries requiring a response that were responded to within 28 days, HT08 – Emergency incidents attended within two hours, EW4 – Percentage of local planning authority requests for advice from the Heritage Service responded to within 21 days;* and *EW5 – Percentage of local planning authority requests for advice from the Ecological Advice Service responded to within 21 days.*

    c) Members were informed that a number of new Highways and Transportation KPIs had been introduced for 2026/27. Officers explained that several new indicators had not been reported due to ongoing validation work, system integration changes and the introduction of the new Highways Term Maintenance Contract.

    d) In relation to HT02 and HT08, officers advised that performance had been affected by a combination of adverse weather conditions, high service demand and the transition from the previous highway's contractor to the new provider, Ringway. Members were informed that systems and reporting arrangements continued to be embedded and that performance was expected to improve as those arrangements matured.

    e) The Committee noted that all emergency incidents had been attended, however system integration issues had affected the ability to fully validate performance reporting during the quarter. Officers confirmed that work continued with Ringway to improve reporting accuracy and confidence in the data being presented.

2) Members discussed the following matters:

    a) Questions were raised regarding the introduction of the new highway's contractor and the comparability of performance data with figures produced under previous contractual arrangements. Officers explained that KPI definitions remained largely unchanged and that validation work was being

undertaken to ensure consistency and reliability of future trend analysis. Members were advised that additional clarification could be provided once the new systems had become fully established.

b) Concerns were expressed regarding performance against highway enquiry response times, emergency attendance times and pothole repairs. Members highlighted examples from their local divisions where highway defects remained unresolved and queried whether improvements reported within countywide data were being experienced consistently across Kent.

c) In response, officers acknowledged the challenges associated with mobilisation of the new contract and advised that Ringway had inherited a significant backlog of work. Members were informed that considerable effort was being directed towards validating completed works, improving workflow management and reducing outstanding cases. It was reported that early operational indicators suggested improvements were being made and that performance was expected to improve in future quarters.

d) Members queried when the transition period associated with the new contract should be considered complete and sought assurances that performance expectations would continue to be robustly managed. Officers advised that ongoing performance monitoring remained in place and that the Cabinet Member had requested a detailed timetable for resolving outstanding performance reporting issues and embedding the new contract arrangements.

e) Discussion took place regarding the amber-rated Household Waste Recycling Centre mystery shopper assessment KPI (WM08). Members sought assurance that the reduction in performance represented a genuine change in service standards rather than a change in methodology. Officers confirmed that a new provider had been appointed to undertake the mystery shopping programme and that changes in scoring methodology had influenced the result. A review of the methodology was underway to ensure future results remained comparable and any relevant changes would be highlighted to Members at the next committee.

f) Members raised concerns regarding the performance of the Heritage Service (EW4) and the Ecological Advice Service (EW5). Officers explained that increasing planning activity, the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and capacity pressures within specialist teams had contributed to delays in responding to planning consultations. Members were advised that recruitment and administrative support arrangements were being implemented to improve performance and reduce backlogs.

g) Questions were raised regarding the staffing levels required to improve performance within both services. Officers advised that the Ecological Advice Service was currently managing a vacancy and that work was underway with local planning authorities to review funding arrangements, ensure sufficient capacity and improve service resilience. Members were further advised that the expertise provided by both services remained highly valued by district and borough councils.

h) Members requested that future reports continue to contain explanatory information when KPIs are rated red, together with details of any actions being taken to address underperformance

i) The Committee discussed the possibility of introducing a KPI relating to repeat pothole repairs undertaken within the two-year warranty period provided under the new highways contract. Officers agreed to consider the suggestion as part of future performance monitoring arrangements.

j) Members highlighted both positive and negative experiences of highway maintenance works within their divisions. Examples of successful resurfacing schemes were noted, and officers were asked to pass Members' appreciation on to operational teams where appropriate.

k) Members welcomed the overall position that 85% of those KPIs reported in Quarter 1 had achieved their target and recognised the work ongoing to improve both highways performance and specialist planning consultation services.

**RESOLVED** to note the performance dashboard

**107. 26/00045 - Transition of Active Kent & Medway to an independent legal entity and conclusion of hosting arrangements**
*(Item 8)*

*Richard Palmer (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services) and Liz Davidson (Partnership Director) were in attendance for this item.*

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the report:

a) Explained that Active Kent & Medway was currently hosted by Kent County Council, which acted as the accountable body for funding, employment and governance arrangements. Members were advised that the existing hosting arrangements were due to conclude in March 2027 and that, following a structural review, the independent Board of Active Kent & Medway had determined that its preferred future operating model was to become an independent legal entity.

b) Members were informed that the proposed transition would enable Kent County Council to conclude its role as host authority while supporting the transfer of functions, funding arrangements, governance responsibilities and staffing arrangements to an independent organisation. The Committee heard that the proposed model would provide clearer accountability, stronger governance arrangements, greater organisational resilience and improved opportunities to secure and manage future external funding

c) The Cabinet Member advised that, having reviewed the proposal in detail, particular consideration had been given to the impact upon existing staff, service users and delivery partners. Members were informed that engagement had been undertaken with staff and stakeholders and that the proposed

arrangements were expected to support the continued development of sport and physical activity services across Kent and Medway.

d) Officers explained that the proposal related solely to Kent County Council's role in concluding the hosting and accountable body arrangements and providing appropriate transition support. Members were advised that the independent organisation would be responsible for its own governance, funding and operational arrangements following the completion of the transition programme

e) Active Kent & Medway currently received significant external funding, including investment from Sport England and Public Health, which Kent County Council administered as accountable body.

f) Kent County Council did not provide core revenue funding to the organisation, and the transition would be supported through a structured programme covering governance, funding, legal arrangements, workforce matters, ICT, finance and contractual responsibilities; and the preferred model reflected the position adopted by the majority of Active Partnerships operating nationally

2.In discussion, Members raised the following matters:

a) Questions were raised regarding references within the report to potential overcapacity within certain support services and whether the transfer arrangements could result in staffing implications for KCC. Officers advised that no redundancies were anticipated as a consequence of the proposal. It was explained that any impact upon central support functions would be minimal and related primarily to wider corporate arrangements currently supporting the hosted service.

b) Members sought clarification regarding whether the decision constituted a key decision or non-key decision, noting differing references within the report documentation. The Clerk advised that regardless of the classification, the decision would remain subject to the Council's governance arrangements and could be called in if required. It was acknowledged that the inconsistency would be reviewed and clarified. *(Clarified: Item was a Non-Key Decision that would be subjected to the same level of scrutiny)*

**RESOLVED** to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

CONFIRM the cessation of Kent County Council's role as host authority for Active Kent & Medway (AKM).and the conclusion of the current hosting arrangements.

APPROVE the transition arrangements to support a transfer of functions, resource and staffing to an independent legal entity.

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport and the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services and the Cabinet Member for Public Health, to implement the necessary arrangements arising from the cessation of hosting, and

to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision

**108. 26/00046 - Specialist Highway Support Services Framework**
*(Item 9)*

*Richard Palmer (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services), and Victoria Soames (Senior Project Manager) were in attendance for the item.*

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the report:

a) Explained that the current Independent Cost Consultancy contract used by the Major Capital Programme Team would expire in March 2027. The report sought approval to procure a new Specialist Highway Support Services Framework to provide independent cost consultancy, specialist utility support and programme review services to support the delivery of highway and transportation projects across Kent.

b) Members were advised that independent cost consultancy services had been utilised by Kent County Council for more than fifteen years and provided an important independent assessment of project costs, programme delivery and financial assurance. Officers explained that the independence of these services from the design function offered additional confidence in project budgets and business cases.

c) The Committee heard that the proposed framework would be structured into three lots*: Lot 1 – Independent Cost Consultancy, Lot 2 – Specialist Utility Support; and Lot 3 – Programme Review Support.*

d) Members were informed that the framework would provide access to specialist expertise on a call-off basis and would support improved cost certainty, programme assurance, governance and risk management across the Council's highways and transportation capital programme. The framework was worth (maximum value) £4 million over the contractual period with an option for an additional year and would replace the current arrangements when they expired in March 2027

2.Members raised the following points:

a) A Member queried whether the framework presented an opportunity to employ specialist quantity surveyor expertise directly within the authority rather than commissioning external consultants. Officers advised that demand for the service fluctuated considerably and that retaining sufficient specialist expertise in-house would be difficult. It was explained that the framework provided flexibility and access to specialist skills only when required.

b) Members sought clarification regarding how the authority would measure whether the framework delivered value for money and achieved the objectives

outlined within the report. Officers explained that the procurement process itself would ensure that suppliers were competitively assessed against quality and price criteria. In addition, individual call-off commissions would contain clear statements of work, performance expectations and monitoring arrangements to ensure that the required outputs were delivered.

c) Questions were raised regarding whether savings generated by the use of specialist support services could be quantified. Officers advised that the primary purpose of the framework was to provide independent assurance, strengthen project governance, improve cost certainty and reduce financial risk. While direct savings could not always be easily quantified, Members were informed that the services provided assurance that projects represented value for money and that cost estimates and commercial decisions had been independently scrutinised.

d) Members discussed the balance between externally commissioned expertise and the use of in-house resources. Officers advised that the specialist nature of the services, together with the requirement for independence and the variability of workload, meant that an external framework arrangement remained the preferred and most practical solution.

e) The Committee recognised the importance of maintaining independent technical and commercial assurance across major infrastructure projects and supported the proposed framework as a mechanism for providing specialist expertise, strengthening programme delivery and reducing project risk.

**RESOLVED** to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

APPROVE the procurement and AWARD of a Specialist Highway Support Services Framework to provide independent cost consultancy, specialist utility support and programme review services to support the delivery of highway and transportation schemes across Kent.

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to take relevant actions necessary to implement the decision, including but not limited to undertaking the procurement process, awarding the framework agreements, finalising the terms of, and entering into the relevant contracts and any associated legal agreements

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to exercise any extension option(s) provided for within the framework agreement.

**109. 26/00051 - Chestfield Tunnel Ventilation Replacement**
*(Item 10)*

*Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport), Helen Rowe (Head of Highways-Assets) and Whitney Gee (Programme Manager) were in attendance for the item.*

1.The Cabinet Member presented the following:

a) Explained that the proposal concerned the replacement of the ventilation system within Chestfield Tunnel on the A299 Thanet Way. Members were advised that the ventilation system was a safety-critical asset which had reached the end of its serviceable life and required replacement to ensure the continued safe operation of the tunnel.

b) The Committee was informed that failures within the existing ventilation system during 2024 had resulted in significant disruption to the highway network and had necessitated the implementation of traffic management arrangements. It was further explained that the existing jet fan system had exceeded its expected operational lifespan and that the risk of further failures would continue to increase without intervention.

c) Members were advised that the preferred solution was the replacement of all 32 jet fans with modern equivalents fitted with angled louvre deflectors and the relocation of Fan 2 within each bank to improve maintenance access to associated lighting infrastructure. Officers explained that this option had been identified as offering the best balance of safety, operational effectiveness, constructability and value for money.

d) The Committee heard that the estimated cost of the preferred option was approximately £2.8 million and that funding would be met through the Department for Transport Highways Maintenance Block allocation. Members were advised that the option represented a significantly lower cost than alternative solutions which had been assessed during the options appraisal process.

e) Officers explained that the replacement system would: improve smoke control capability and tunnel safety; increase system reliability and resilience; reduce the likelihood of unplanned closures and emergency maintenance activity; improve access for maintenance works; and extend the operational life of the tunnel ventilation infrastructure.

2.Committee discussion raised the following points:

a) Members sought clarification regarding the contractual arrangements and whether the works would be delivered on a fixed-price basis. Officers advised that a competitive procurement process would be undertaken through the Council’s existing contractual arrangements. Members were informed that the design work had already been substantially developed, helping to reduce delivery and cost risks. Officers further advised that while some uncertainty remained regarding fixing arrangements within the tunnel structure, overall project risks had been substantially mitigated through the design process.

b) Questions were raised regarding whether the Equality Impact Assessment correctly reflected the preferred option. Officers confirmed that although one document referenced Option 2A, the preferred solution progressed through the decision report was Option 2B and that this represented the option under consideration.

c)) A Member queried whether contractual timescales and potential penalties could be applied in order to ensure timely delivery of the scheme. Officers explained that while contractual mechanisms could be considered, applying financial penalties often resulted in increased tender costs. Members were advised that the preferred approach was to manage delivery collaboratively through robust project management and contract administration arrangements.

d) The Committee recognised the importance of ensuring that the tunnel continued to operate safely and reliably and supported the proposed investment in replacement infrastructure.

**RESOLVED** to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

PROCEED with the replacement of the Chestfield Tunnel Ventilation System.

AUTHORISE the associated financial commitment, subject to the completion and approval of a satisfactory commercial business case demonstrating affordability, value for money and compliance with KCC procurement requirements.

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to take all necessary actions to implement the decision, including the procurement and award of contracts, subject to approval of the commercial business case.

**110. Extended Producer Responsibility Activity and Updates-Report**
*(Item 11)*

*Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), Helen Shulver (Assistant Director Resource Management and Circular Economy) were in attendance for the item*

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the report and discussed the following:

a) Provided Members with an update on the national waste reforms and their implications for Kent County Council's waste disposal function. Members were advised that the report focused on Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (PEPR), the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) and the future implications of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

b) Members were informed that PEPR had already generated significant additional funding for local authorities. The Committee noted that Kent County Council had received £13.3 million during 2025/26 and had been allocated £11.6million for 2026/27, with future allocations continuing to be dependent upon national funding methodologies and scheme development

c) The Cabinet Member advised that the DRS would be introduced nationally in October 2027 and would focus on collecting plastic drinks bottles and metal beverage cans through a dedicated producer-funded collection system. While the scheme was expected to reduce the amount of material entering Kent's municipal waste stream, Members were advised that it could also reduce income generated from the sale and processing of recyclable materials currently managed through local authority contracts.

d) The committee heard that the ETS continued to represent a potential future financial pressure for waste disposal authorities. Officers explained that, although the UK ETS Authority had recently confirmed that waste incineration would not be brought into the scheme from January 2028 as previously anticipated, the policy remained under development and could still create significant future cost pressures associated with Energy from Waste facilities.

e) Members noted that Kent County Council and the Kent Resource Partnership were continuing to prepare for future legislative changes through service planning, financial modelling, behavioural change campaigns and partnership working to increase recycling rates, reduce residual waste and improve resource efficiency.

2.Members raised the following points

a) Members discussed the operation of the forthcoming DRS and queried whether there would be opportunities for local authorities to benefit from the collection of deposit-return materials. It was suggested that containers returned to retailers through collection machines could potentially be incorporated into local authority recycling arrangements rather than relying entirely on separate collection networks. Officers advised that discussions on this issue were ongoing nationally through local authority and government engagement channels. Members were informed that the issue had been raised through the Kent Resource Partnership and with Defra.

b) Questions were raised regarding whether glass bottles would be included within the DRS. Officers clarified that the current proposals related only to PET plastic bottles and metal drinks cans and did not include glass containers. Glass containers continue to be collected through all kerbside waste collection services for households.

c) The committee welcomed initiatives that sought to encourage the return and recycling of drinks containers and discussed the wider opportunity presented by producer responsibility measures to encourage more sustainable packaging design and improved environmental outcomes. Officers highlighted that EPR would increasingly place financial pressure on producers to consider recyclability and sustainability when designing packaging.

d) Members raised the need for additional recycling infrastructure and discussed concerns about the future management of waste processing capacity, including materials recovery facilities and the handling of appliances such as refrigerators and freezers. Officers advised that market challenges continued to exist nationally but confirmed that Kent had not been required to refuse household refrigeration items at its Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Members were informed that work continued with partners and contractors to manage capacity requirements and ensure appropriate disposal arrangements remained available.

e) Discussion took place regarding the importance of minimising the amount of waste sent for disposal through Energy from Waste facilities and increasing levels of reuse, recycling and recovery. Officers advised that reducing residual waste remained a key priority and that future reforms would continue to incentivise recycling and resource efficiency across Kent.

f) The Committee welcomed the progress made through the Packaging EPR scheme and recognised the significant financial and operational implications associated with the forthcoming DRS and future emissions trading scheme arrangements. Members further acknowledged the importance of continuing to improve recycling performance and reduce residual waste across Kent.

**RESOLVED** to note the Extended Producer Responsibility Activity and Updates Report.

**111. 26/00054 - Procurement for Waste Transfer Services Contract - Folkestone & Hythe - CN260748**
*(Item 12)*

*Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), Helen Shulver (Assistant Director Resource Management and Circular Economy) were in attendance for this item.*

1.The Cabinet Member introduced the report and discussed the following:

a) Explained that Kent County Council, as the Waste Disposal Authority, had a statutory duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to provide arrangements for the disposal of household waste collected by district councils. Members were advised that the existing temporary waste transfer arrangements serving Folkestone and Hythe would expire in January 2028 and that a long-term solution was therefore required.

b) Members were informed that KCC currently operated an interim arrangement at Ross Way, Folkestone. The Committee heard that the facility was unable to accommodate all waste streams arising within the district and that residual and food waste currently had to be transported to Ashford. Officers advised that the current arrangements were operationally inefficient, generated additional costs and would cease when the existing contract expired in January 2028.

c) The Cabinet Member explained that the report represented an update to the previously approved Junction 11 Waste Transfer Station scheme. Members were advised that material changes had occurred since the original decision had been taken, requiring a reassessment of the preferred approach.

d) Officers outlined the principal issues affecting the Junction 11 project and explained that a critical additional parcel of land required to discharge planning conditions had not been secured. Despite efforts by KCC to acquire the land independently, negotiations had been unsuccessful. Members were informed that without the additional land the planning conditions could not be discharged and the project could not be delivered within the required timescales.

e) The Committee heard that progression of the Junction 11 scheme would expose the Council to further financial and delivery risks, including land acquisition risks, programme delays and the potential requirement to commit additional expenditure before certainty regarding deliverability could be established.

f) Officers advised that a market engagement exercise had since identified the availability of a viable alternative solution through the procurement of a commercial waste transfer service within the district. Members were informed that such an approach would provide a deliverable solution within the timeframe required while maintaining KCC's ability to meet its statutory obligations.

g) The Committee noted that the proposed procurement would seek to secure a commercial provider capable of receiving, bulking and transporting waste arising from Folkestone and Hythe. Members were advised that the procurement exercise would include consideration of value for money, environmental performance, contract flexibility, social value and future Local Government Reorganisation requirements

2. The following aspects were discussed:

a) Concerns were expressed regarding the financial implications of ceasing work on the Junction 11 scheme. Members noted that approximately £722,000 had already been incurred in developing the project and queried whether those costs would become abortive. Officers confirmed that the expenditure already incurred would be treated as abortive costs should the project not proceed. Members were advised that there was also a risk that some Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding may need to be returned if an alternative compliant use could not be identified.

b) Questions were raised regarding why the land acquisition issues associated with the Junction 11 proposal had not been identified earlier in the process. Officers explained that the land parcel for the footprint of the waste transfer station had been secured and that the additional land requirement emerged through the planning process. KCC had reasonably anticipated that the land would be available through wider acquisition arrangements. It was only later that it became apparent the necessary land could not be secured in the required timescale.

c) Members sought clarification regarding whether the future transfer station service would remain within the district boundary. Officers advised that the intention of the procurement exercise was to secure a solution within Folkestone and Hythe wherever possible and that a solution outside the

district would create additional operational and financial consequences, including tipping-away costs.

d) Concerns were raised regarding the potential location of any future facility and the impact of increased heavy vehicle movements on surrounding communities and local roads. Officers explained that the proposal was not to build a new facility but to procure a commercial contract and therefore the procurement process and any associated planning requirements would consider traffic management, routing and operational impacts of contracting with an existing facility.

e) Members queried whether the existing Ross Way site could simply continue operating beyond the expiry of the current arrangement. Officers advised that Ross Way is a privately owned facility and the current contract to process waste on behalf of KCC could not be extended. The infrastructure at the site was ageing, and substantial investment would be required if any future contractual arrangement were to be considered however the operator of the site would be welcome to respond to the procurement opportunity if they wished. Members were also informed that the site currently accepted only certain waste streams and therefore could not meet the district's full operational requirements.

f) Questions were raised regarding the availability of alternative providers within the district and the extent to which a competitive procurement exercise could be achieved. Officers confirmed that market engagement had demonstrated the existence of a viable solution, although competition within the market remained relatively limited. Members were advised that a compliant procurement process would be undertaken to ensure value for money and transparency.

g) Additional concerns were raised on the original decision-making process and the cost that had ultimately resulted in the non-securing of the parcel of land targeted. The Member highlighted that the previous administration had already begun discussions on a similar site in Otterpool and that the current endeavour had simply wasted tax payers' money.

h) Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that waste services continued without interruption during the period of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Officers advised that contract provisions would be designed to permit transfer or novation to successor authorities where required and that continuity of service remained a primary consideration.

i) Discussion took place regarding food waste management arrangements. Officers advised that market engagement suggested food waste could present additional challenges and explained that alternative arrangements at an existing KCC facility may be required should a commercial solution not be available through the procurement process.

j) Members acknowledged the challenges that had arisen in relation to the Junction 11 proposal and recognised that the recommended procurement route represented the only viable and deliverable solution within the timescales available. The Committee further noted the importance of

maintaining continuity of statutory waste disposal services and ensuring that future contractual arrangements remained flexible in the context of LGR.

**RESOLVED** to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

CEASE activity related to key decision 25/00068 and halt the continuation of development of the Junction 11 waste transfer station scheme

APPROVE the procurement and award of a Transfer Services contract to secure a commercial waste transfer solution through a compliant competitive process.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy to undertake all relevant actions to facilitate the procurement process.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision: and

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, to award extensions of the contract in accordance with the relevant clauses within the contract.

**112. Environment Achievements and Updates - Report**
*(Item 13)*

*Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), and Elizabeth Milne (Head of Environment) was in attendance for this item:*

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the report and explained that it represented the first annual update on the delivery of the Kent County Council Environment Plan.

a) Members were advised that the report summarised progress made during 2025/26 against the six environmental goals established within the Plan and also set out priorities for the year ahead.

b) The Committee was informed that positive progress had been made across all six goals and that environmental activity continued to contribute towards operational efficiency, service resilience and environmental improvement throughout Kent. Members were advised that achievements included reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, the expansion of renewable energy generation, improvements in recycling performance, support for water resilience projects and continued investment in nature recovery initiatives.

c) Members were advised that amendments would also be made to the published Environment Plan to reflect the adoption of Kent County Council's Energy

Efficiency Plan. Officers explained that the principal change involved shifting the emphasis from the previous net-zero target approach towards improving energy efficiency, reducing operating costs and lowering emissions across council services and assets.

2. Members discussed the following:

a) Members welcomed the work undertaken by officers and the progress reported against the Environment Plan. Particular recognition was given to the collaborative work undertaken through the Environment Plan Cross-Party Members Group and the range of projects delivered across the authority.

b) Questions were raised regarding the financial benefits generated (1.2 million KW) through solar energy projects and renewable infrastructure. Officers advised that additional financial information had subsequently become available and confirmed that the energy generated from KCC solar installations represented a significant financial benefit to the authority.

c) Members expressed concern regarding the substantial reduction in tree planting activity compared with previous years and sought assurances that opportunities would continue to be pursued to expand tree cover across Kent. Officers explained that the reduction largely reflected the loss of external grant funding streams previously available through national tree planting schemes. Despite this, Members were advised that officers continued to pursue alternative funding opportunities and had recently secured additional funding to support future planting activity.

d) Discussion took place regarding the need to ensure that newly planted trees were resilient to increasingly dry climatic conditions. Officers advised that future planting programmes would continue to consider climate resilience, species suitability and long-term sustainability. Reference was also made to work involving disease-resistant elm varieties and opportunities to increase biodiversity benefits through future planting initiatives.

e) Members highlighted the importance of securing additional investment to support both Plan Tree and Plan Bee ambitions. Officers advised that a future Green Finance Strategy would seek to identify and secure wider funding opportunities for environmental projects and longer-term delivery of Environment Plan objectives.

f) The Committee discussed the relationship between biodiversity objectives, nature recovery and wider planning and mineral extraction matters. Members reflected upon the importance of balancing environmental considerations with economic and infrastructure requirements across the county.

g) Members welcomed the achievements delivered during the first year of the Environment Plan and recognised the importance of maintaining momentum across all six environmental goals. The Committee further acknowledged the challenges associated with securing external funding and supporting long-term environmental improvement across Kent.

h) Additionally, Members raised further opportunities of private sector funding with discussions closing on the point of the NIAB site in hermitage lane site and the option to quarry on its land to prevent the issue faced by the Oaken Wood site.

**RESOLVED** to:

a) note the Environment Achievements and Updates Report and the priorities identified for 2026/27; and

b) note the proposed amendments to the published Environment Plan to align it with the Kent County Council Energy Efficiency Plan.

**113. Work Programme**
*(Item 14)*

The work programme was noted.

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**From:** David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Special Projects
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport

**To:** Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 10 November 2026

**Subject:** Adoption of the Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan

**Decision no:** 26/00050

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Electoral Division**: All KCC electoral divisions

**Is the decision eligible for call-in?** Yes

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**Summary:** This report sets out the rationale for approving the Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan as a long-term, evidence-led, sector-focused growth plan for Kent and Medway and to support its use in informing future economic and sector development activity, investment opportunities and engagement with Government, businesses and partners.

The decision will enable Kent County Council, through its role within the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP), to formally support the adoption of the Local Growth Plan and the continued development of associated investment propositions and delivery activity.

**Recommendation(s**): The Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE**, or make **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects on, the proposed decision to adopt the draft Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan and its future implementation by the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership as shown in Appendix B.

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, set out the Government's ambition to transfer greater powers, responsibilities, and funding from Whitehall to local areas, with the development of ambitious Local Growth Plans (LGPs) at the heart of this approach. This commitment to devolution and local decision-making has since been reaffirmed by the new Government, with the Prime Minister stating his intention to *"take power out of Westminster and carry it into every postcode in the country"*.

1.2 Local Growth Plans provide a long-term 10-year strategic framework for economic growth in their region.

1.3 The Government wants Local Growth Plans to be produced and owned by Mayoral Strategic Authorities, focused on the holistic needs and opportunities in their region, and should set out the priorities where the authority will focus its devolved powers and funding to drive productivity and growth. The Government states *'Local Growth Plans should be "the guiding star" that provides strategic direction for other relevant plans and strategies and the wider work of Mayoral Strategic Authorities, their constituent Local Authorities, and local partners'.*

1.4 The Government has published guidance for Mayoral Strategic Authorities on developing Local Growth Plans, and this can be found here.

1.5 In short, Local Growth Plans should at a minimum:

a) be a **single, joined-up vision** for local economic growth in the area, which all interested parties (including business, universities, colleges and local authorities) have been able to contribute to.

b) provide an evidence-based overview and analysis of the region, identifying **distinctive regional sector strengths**, informed by the Government's Industrial Strategy.

c) highlight the areas that will benefit from collaboration and joint working between Mayoral Strategic Authorities and central government, with the plans identifying **"shared priorities"** to underpin joint working.

d) include a **short investment pipeline** of priority projects that have specific significance for enabling growth – the Government has specified between 4 to 10 projects per region.

## 2. A Kent and Medway Approach

2.1 While there is not yet a mayoral strategic authority in our region, there is a united lobbying effort by all 14 local authorities to see the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority for Kent and Medway. A Government response to this request is expected shortly.

2.2 This lack of Mayoral Strategic Authority has placed Kent and Medway at a disadvantage because firstly, a significant proportion of national spending is being diverted towards Mayoral Strategic Authorities, and secondly, the Government is engaging with stakeholders and focussing on the delivery of shared ambitions set out in local growth plans.

2.3 The Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) is the recognised Local Growth Board for the functional economic area of Kent and Medway. KMEP's mission is *"to drive economic growth and prosperity"*. The partnership was created back in the early 2000s to provide a single forum through which business representatives, all 14 local authority leaders, university and college leaders, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Department of Work and Pensions, could collectively identify economic opportunities, influence

investment decisions and advocate for the area's needs. David Wimble sits on the KMEP board representing Kent County Council.

2.4 In late 2025, KMEP agreed that, despite the absence of a Mayoral Strategic Authority, it should be proactive and develop a local growth plan, as many national funding programmes now require places to demonstrate a clear understanding of their distinctive economic strengths and investment priorities. Secondly, a Local Growth Plan provides a stronger basis for engagement with Government, investors and other stakeholders, and there was a hope that some national spending could be diverted towards delivery of LGP priorities. Finally, it provides a clear and shared long-term vision for economic growth that can help align activity across local authorities, businesses, universities, colleges and other partners.

2.5 Following a procurement exercise, consultants (Metro Dynamics) were commissioned to work with KMEP and local partners to develop a local growth plan and evidence base.

2.6 Martyn Saunders and Megan Russell of Metro Dynamics, alongside Sarah Nurden (the KMEP Manager), will attend the Cabinet Committee on 10 November 2026 to present the key findings of the draft Local Growth Plan to the committee.

## 3. The Local Growth Plan evidence base

3.1 KMEP commissioned Metro Dynamics to undertake a comprehensive evidence-based assessment of the Kent and Medway economy in November 2025. The purpose of the evidence-base was to identify the area's distinctive economic strengths, growth opportunities and competitive advantages, and to assess these against the eight priority sectors identified within the Government's Industrial Strategy. The resulting evidence base provides the analytical foundation for the Local Growth Plan and helps ensure that future interventions are focused on areas where Kent and Medway can make the greatest contribution to local and national economic growth.

3.2 The evidence base assessed the relative scale, concentration, specialisms and growth potential of local economic activity. The analysis identified four economic sectors of particular strategic significance where the county possesses nationally important assets, established business clusters, research and innovation capabilities, and strong alignment with Government priorities. These sectors were identified as offering the greatest opportunity to support both local economic growth and wider UK objectives relating to productivity, resilience, security and innovation.

3.3 The analysis highlighted particular strengths in the following sectors:

- **Agri-tech and Agri-food:** Kent and Medway has one of the UK's most significant concentrations of food production, horticulture and agricultural activity, earning its reputation as the "Garden of England". The sector plays a nationally important role in supporting food security, agricultural innovation, sustainable food production and the adoption of new technologies. Importantly, the economic impact of the sector extends far beyond farming

and food production alone. Kent and Medway's food system underpins activity across manufacturing, packaging, logistics, distribution and trade. For example, packaging manufacturers are located in the area in part because of the strength of the food and drink supply chain, while the region's ports and freight infrastructure play a critical role in importing, exporting and distributing food products across the UK and internationally. The sector therefore acts as a catalyst for growth across multiple parts of the economy, creating a highly integrated food system that supports employment, innovation and investment well beyond the traditional agri-food sector.

- **Energy:** Kent and Medway occupies a strategically important position within the UK's energy infrastructure. The area hosts nationally significant assets, including the Isle of Grain LNG terminal, the UK's largest LNG facility and the key entry point for aviation fuel supplying Heathrow and Gatwick airports. It is also home to major electricity interconnectors linking the UK with continental Europe, alongside substantial offshore renewable energy generation in the Thames Estuary and English Channel. The planned decommissioning of Dungeness, alongside emerging waste-to-hydrogen projects and new energy technologies, presents opportunities for investment, innovation and economic diversification. Together, these assets make Kent and Medway a critical contributor to the UK's energy security and resilience ambitions, while supporting future growth in clean energy generation, storage, transmission and associated supply chains.

- **Digital:** Kent and Medway has a diverse and growing digital economy spanning electronics manufacturing, advanced technology businesses, cyber security, artificial intelligence, data-driven industries and digital creative sectors. The area has particular strengths in electronics and advanced manufacturing, with firms such as BAE Systems in Rochester developing advanced electronic and sensing technologies for defence and security applications. It also benefits from a well-established digital and creative cluster, supported by initiatives such as Create Kent and the South East Creative Economy Network, alongside strong university research capability and a pipeline of skilled talent. Together, these assets create a highly innovative digital ecosystem that is driving the growth of high-value industries and positioning Kent and Medway as an important centre for digital growth.

- **Ports, Transport and Logistics:** Kent and Medway is the UK's principal gateway to continental Europe, handling 59% of the nation's trade flows to the EU. The area hosts internationally significant assets including the Port of Dover, Eurotunnel, Medway and Isle of Sheppey Ports and extensive strategic road and rail connections, creating one of the UK's most specialised logistics and freight economies. These assets support the efficient movement of goods, people and services between the UK and international markets, while playing a vital role in national supply chain resilience and border operations. As a result, the sector makes a major contribution to UK trade, economic security and future growth, while providing opportunities for innovation in logistics, freight and transport technologies.

3.4 It should be noted that agri-tech, energy, ports, and digital sectors align with the Government's Industrial Strategy, either as one of the eight priority sectors, recognised sub-sectors within priority sectors, or as foundational sectors that support wider economic growth.

3.5 The initial evidence base analysis also identified strengths in a number of other important sectors in Kent & Medway, including construction, life-sciences and medtech, and the visitor economy, all of which make significant contributions to employment and economic output across Kent and Medway. These findings are consistent with the recently published Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which highlights ongoing workforce demand and skills challenges within these sectors. However, while important to the local economy, these sectors do not sufficiently align to the Industrial Strategy's priority sectors or identified sub-sectors and have therefore not been taken forward as priority sectors within the scope of the Local Growth Plan. That being said, there is a page within the draft plan to make clear the ongoing contribution from these sectors to employment, productivity, place-making and economic growth across Kent and Medway.

3.6 The completed evidence base was considered and approved by KMEP earlier in 2026 and is published separately at: Final-Report-revised-.pdf. The evidence base confirms that Kent and Medway's economic significance extends well beyond its local economy, with nationally important contributions to food security, energy security, trade and logistics resilience, and digital innovation.

## 4. The Local Growth Plan

4.1 Building on the economic evidence base, Metro Dynamics undertook an extensive programme of stakeholder engagement to shape the development of the Local Growth Plan and the shared ambitions to sit within it.

4.2 During May 2026, five workshops were held across Kent and Medway involving local authority officers and elected members, businesses, universities, colleges, infrastructure providers and other key partners. In total, more than 120 stakeholders attended the workshops and in excess of 125 project ideas and investment opportunities were gathered. In September 2026, a further round of engagement took place with a further 100 organisations and individuals consulted.

4.3 This collaborative approach has helped ensure that the Plan reflects the priorities and ambitions of organisations across the functional economic area and aligns with the Government's expectation that Local Growth Plans should be developed in partnership with local stakeholders.

4.4 Alongside the workshops, Metro Dynamics undertook targeted engagement with industry leaders from each of the priority sectors, as well as representatives from universities, colleges and business membership organisations, including the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. The Kent and Medway Economic Development Officers Group (KEDOG) also supported the process by helping to identify businesses and stakeholders to ensure a broad and representative range of views was captured.

4.5 Furthermore, the KMEP Manager met with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) devolution team, the MHCLG area representative, and the Department of Business, Innovation, Science and Trade representative, to brief them on the creation of the Local Growth Plan and request their feedback.

4.6 This engagement identified a series of cross-cutting opportunities and barriers affecting economic growth across Kent and Medway, as well as the sector opportunities. These findings have informed five strategic priorities that underpin the draft Local Growth Plan:

- **Strengthening collaboration and coordination** across sectors and organisations to improve connectivity, amplify the area's economic voice and simplify access to support and opportunities.
- **Developing a business-focused innovation ecosystem** that enables businesses to access expertise, facilities, research and investment to accelerate innovation and growth.
- **Building a future-ready workforce** with the skills, talent and employment pathways required to support long-term economic competitiveness.
- **Investing in enabling infrastructure**, ensuring that transport, utilities, digital networks and strategic assets support future economic growth and investment.
- **Creating the conditions for business growth**, helping businesses to start, scale and access new markets through improved support, investment and opportunities.

4.7 The latest draft Local Growth Plan is attached at **Appendix A**. This document will be considered by the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership on 4 November 2026, and verbal feedback from KMEP will be provided at the Cabinet Committee meeting.

4.8 The purpose of presenting the draft Plan to the Cabinet Committee is to seek Members' views and comments on the proposed vision, priorities and opportunities identified within the document. Feedback received will be shared with KMEP to inform consideration of the final version of the Plan.

4.9 Subject to any feedback received today, it is hoped to formally publish the LGP in December 2026.

## 5. Investment pipeline of opportunities

5.1 In 2025, KMEP undertook a comprehensive public call for capital investment projects across Kent and Medway, inviting proposals from businesses, further and higher education institutions, local authorities and other partners seeking Government capital funding support. More than 80 project submissions were subsequently put forward to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for consideration, underpinned by significant partnership engagement and project development work to establish a robust regional investment pipeline.

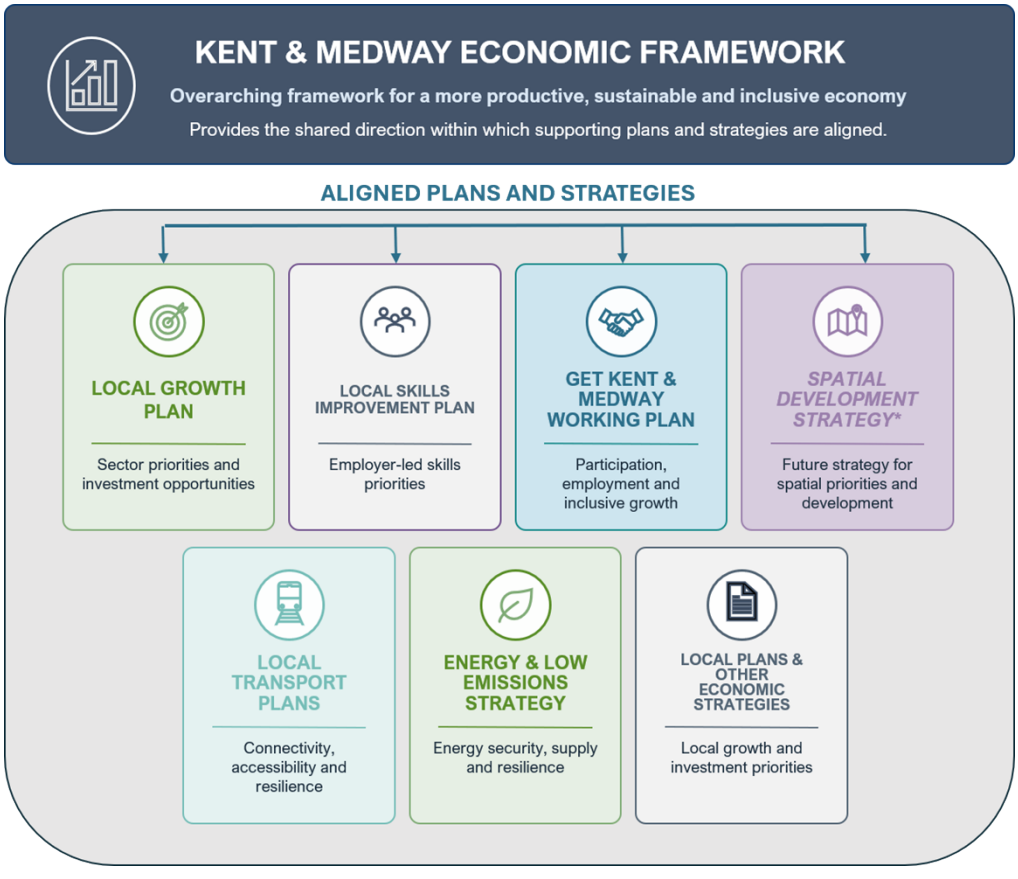
5.2 As part of the Local Growth Plan process in 2026, stakeholders were again invited through workshops and engagement meetings to identify strategic capital investment priorities. These proposals were combined with the 2025 investment pipeline to create a long list of potential projects.

5.3 In assessing this long list, priority was given to projects that would support the growth of the Local Growth Plan's priority sectors and deliver benefits across Kent and Medway as a whole, rather than addressing the needs of a single business, town or locality. Consideration was also given to the extent to which projects could unlock transformational economic growth, demonstrate deliverability and readiness, leverage private sector investment, and generate significant economic returns. This process enabled the identification of a smaller number of strategically important projects with the greatest potential to accelerate sustainable growth across the Kent and Medway economy.

## 6. Wider Strategic Fit

6.1 The Local Growth Plan complements, rather than replaces, existing economic strategies and plans for Kent and Medway. It forms part of a broader strategic framework overseen by KMEP, with each document serving a distinct but complementary purpose.

6.2 The diagram below illustrates how these strategies and plans align and support one another:



6.3 The **Kent and Medway Economic Framework (KMEF)**, approved by KMEP in March 2024, provides the overarching strategic framework for economic development across Kent and Medway. It sets out a programme of actions across five ambitions: business growth, skills, infrastructure, economic opportunity, and place. Progress updates on delivery of the KMEF were shared with this committee through a series of five papers, concluding in July 2026..

6.4 The **Local Growth Plan** sits beneath the KMEF and adopts a sector-based approach aligned to the Government's Industrial Strategy. It focuses on those sectors where Kent and Medway has the strongest competitive advantages and greatest potential to contribute to national growth ambitions.

6.5 The **Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan** sets out the skills priorities that will help shape the future workforce of Kent and Medway over the next three years.

6.6 KMEP also supports the delivery of the **Get Kent & Medway Working Plan**, which focuses on increasing labour market participation, addressing barriers to employment and supporting residents into good-quality work.

6.7 The KMEP Manager is working with colleagues from both Kent County Council and Medway Council to support the development of the forthcoming **Spatial Development Strategy** – which is the subject of a separate report elsewhere on today's GET Cabinet Committee agenda. It should be noted that the Local Growth Plan and Spatial Development Strategy are complementary documents. The Local Growth Plan provides the economic rationale for growth, identifying priority sectors, investment opportunities and economic outcomes. The Spatial Development Strategy translates these ambitions into a spatial framework, identifying the locations, infrastructure and land requirements needed to support business growth, housing delivery, skills provision and strategic investment.

6.8 Transport planning is a key component of the strategic framework and a core function of any future Mayoral Strategic Authority. Kent County Council adopted **Local Transport Plan (5)** in December 2024, while Medway Council is developing a replacement for its current plan, which concludes in December 2026. In the event of devolution, these plans would need to be brought together within a single strategic transport framework.

6.9 Energy and environmental planning is another important component of the strategic framework and a core policy area for any future Mayoral Strategic Authority. A separate report on the development of a new Kent Energy Strategy is also being considered by the GET Cabinet Committee today. Should a Mayoral Strategic Authority be established, it would be expected to develop a strategic approach to energy and the environment across Kent and Medway.

6.10 Collectively, this suite of documents provide a coordinated approach to driving economic growth, improving productivity, strengthening infrastructure, developing the workforce, and creating the conditions for long-term prosperity across Kent and Medway.

6.11 Further information on these KMEP strategies and activities can be found on the KMEP website (https://www.kmep.org.uk/).

## 6. Future Governance and Delivery

6.1 The Local Growth Plan is intended to be a long-term strategic document that can evolve alongside changes in governance arrangements.

6.2 Should a Mayoral Strategic Authority be established for Kent and Medway in the future, KMEP envisages that responsibility for the Local Growth Plan would transition into the new governance arrangements, enabling the Plan to become the strategic sector-led economic framework for the authority and supporting the delivery of devolved powers and funding across Kent and Medway.

6.3 In the meanwhile, KMEP will seek the delivery of the actions within the local growth plan. Theses areas for action apply across Kent and Medway and they are intended to have county-wide significance. The proposed actions do not imply a funding commitment from Kent County Council. In some cases, Kent County Council may have a leading role. But others will be led by KCC's partners, such as higher and further education, businesses, Kent districts and others, with KCC in a supporting role.

6.4 The Local Growth Plan will provide a material support for proposals for external funding and for new powers where appropriate. It is anticipated that KMEP will have the significant role in overseeing delivery of the Plan.

## 7. Implications

7.1 *Financial* - There are no direct financial implications for KCC arising from adoption of the Local Growth Plan. The Plan may, however, influence future priorities for economic development activity across Kent and Medway, including areas where KCC has a strategic role. Any future funding commitments or resource implications arising from the Plan would be subject to separate business cases and the Council's standard governance and approval processes.

7.2 *Legal* – The Plan does not impose new legal obligations on KCC.

7.3 *Equalities* - An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached at Appendix C. This has not identified any negative equalities impacts at strategic level (although individual initiatives taken forward with reference to the Local Growth Plan will be subject to further impact assessments).

7.4 *Data protection* - There are no data protection implications.

## 8. Next steps

8.1 Following the incorporation of any agreed feedback from today and the final endorsement by KMEP it is anticipated that the Local Growth Plan will be launched later this year.

## 9. Recommendations

9.1 The Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to

- **Consider and provide comments** on the draft Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan (LGP), attached at Appendix A.
- **Note and endorse the adoption of the Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan and its future implementation** by the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) as the long-term, evidence-led and sector-focused growth plan for Kent and Medway, recognising that the final version will be subject to agreement through KMEP's governance arrangements.
- **Delegate authority to the Director of Growth and Communities** to take any actions necessary to support the implementation of this decision, including, but not limited to, entering into contracts and other legal agreements.

**Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft Local Growth Plan
Appendix B - Proposed Record of Decision
Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment

**Contact details**

| | |
|---|---|
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Metro——Dynamics

KMEP Kent & Medway Economic Partnership

# A Local Growth Plan for **Kent and Medway**



**Draft for feedback**

**December 2026**









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KMEP Kent & Medway Economic Partnership

# A Statement of Our Ambition

This Local Growth Plan was commissioned by Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP), the area's Local Growth Board, which brings together representatives from business, local government, and further and higher education.

This plan represents a statement of ambition and intent.

Kent and Medway is an area that already plays an important role in the national economy, but it is also one that could be much more. We have real and distinctive strengths across our economy and asset base, yet there are also real challenges facing people living, working and running businesses in Kent and Medway. Despite our scale and importance, this is a place that has sometimes struggled to articulate a clear and shared story about its economic opportunity.

## At A Moment of Opportunity

This plan is intended to support real change in that position by articulating Kent and Medway's economic opportunity and setting out a shared vision for growth.

It comes at a moment when there is new momentum behind the area's future, providing an opportunity to establish a clearer and more coherent growth narrative as Kent and Medway looks to the future, including towards a potential Mayoral Strategic Authority.

The purpose of the plan is not simply to identify projects or priorities. It is to provide a framework for how we can build on our distinctive strengths, respond to long-standing challenges and make a stronger contribution to regional and national growth.





# Expanding Our Vital Role in a Growing, Prosperous UK

A more prosperous and faster-growing UK economy will depend on secure and affordable energy, stronger international trading relationships, enhanced digital infrastructure and capabilities, and more innovative approaches to food production that boost productivity while supporting better health, sustainability, and economic resilience.

Kent and Medway have a vital and necessary role to play in delivering these ambitions.

Our contribution to growth is dual in nature as both a large sub-region with clear ambitions and opportunities for growth, and an enabler of growth elsewhere.

**As arguably the UK's main gateway to Europe for people and goods, and increasingly for energy, Kent & Medway provide nationally significant infrastructure, connectivity and capabilities that support economic activity far beyond its boundaries. UK trade, food, and energy security are reliant on Kent & Medway. Our growth is not only important for the area itself, but for the wider UK economy.**

## As A Place with Distinctive Strengths

Kent and Medway's opportunity is rooted in a combination of assets and advantages that few places can match.

Located on the doorstep of London and at the UK's closest point to mainland Europe, we combine a strategic location with extensive coastal assets, a strong food production base, a rich industrial heritage, innovation strengths, rail infrastructure, distinctive cultural assets and a diverse economy.

The challenge is not identifying strengths. It is bringing them together into a coherent vision for growth and ensuring that they translate into greater prosperity, higher productivity, increased investment and improved opportunities for residents and businesses. The Local Growth Plan is intended to help achieve that.





# A Vision for Our Economy

By 2035, Kent & Medway will be recognised as the UK's gateway growth economy: ***the one place to do it all***. A world-class place to live, work, invest and thrive, driving high-growth opportunities, employment, and investment in agri-food, energy, digital innovation and trade, and creating prosperity, aspiration and resilience for our communities and the nation.

Our ambition is to capture more social and economic value from the strengths, assets and opportunities that already exist, translating our strategic importance into greater local prosperity, productivity and opportunity. This will mean turning nationally significant infrastructure, sector strengths and connectivity into higher productivity, stronger local supply chains, better jobs and clearer routes for businesses to scale.

## The Journey to Get There

Through implementing our Local Growth Plan, we will create a more dynamic, productive and connected economy that captures greater value from its assets, infrastructure and economic strengths.

We will foster a competitive and business-friendly economy through modern infrastructure, access to skilled labour, efficient planning systems, reliable energy capacity, strong digital connectivity, effective transport networks, vibrant supply chains and a policy environment that supports enterprise. These are the fundamentals that allow businesses to grow with confidence, create jobs and invest for the future.

Achieving this step change in growth will require action across our priority sectors alongside targeted interventions to address the cross-cutting challenges that influence how the economy functions. Together, these priorities will help create better jobs, attract investment, support innovation and strengthen Kent & Medway's contribution to regional and national growth.

As Kent & Medway works towards a future Mayoral Strategic Authority, this Local Growth Plan provides a shared framework for growth and a common set of priorities around which partners can align investment, activity and decision-making.

# Kent & Medway
# One place to do it all

Unique in its position between the UK's largest trading markets of London and the European Union, Kent and Medway combines economic ambition, global connectivity and a strong sense of place, bringing together innovative businesses, skilled people and strong partnerships with the infrastructure, support and strategic leadership needed to turn opportunity into growth.

**Understanding the place behind the opportunity.**










## 71,000 Businesses

**Over 99% of our business base is SMEs**





## 767,000 employment

**16% of those employed work in priority sectors**

# Our Place

Kent and Medway spans a large geographic and economic footprint.

Covering an area around 2.25 times the size of Greater London, our economy generates over £50 billion in GVA, supports roughly 767,000 jobs and over 71,000 businesses.

We are formed of a collection of cities, urban centres, villages, rural and coastal communities with varying strengths and challenges. Connecting these places more effectively will help businesses access skills, markets and opportunities across the county, enabling more of our residents and businesses to benefit from growth.

Our location and assets give our region a role that extends beyond Kent and Medway's borders. We are the UK's Gateway to Europe and on the doorstep of its capital. Proximity to London connects our businesses and residents to a major concentration of markets, investment, skills and research. High speed rail links put Ebbsfleet and Ashford at just 19 and 38 minutes respectively from London St Pancras, strengthening attractiveness as a place to live, and as a location for business and investment.

Our connections to mainland Europe place us at the heart of the UK's trade with the continent, giving businesses access to European markets and international supply chains. This position means investment in Kent and Medway can deliver benefits far beyond our borders.

Nationally strategic ports and transport infrastructure, high-quality agricultural land, extensive coastal and energy assets, universities, innovation assets and a diverse business base further support economic activity, supply chains, growth and competitiveness all across the UK.



## £50bn Gross Value Added

**Larger than 14 of the 22 current strategic authorities.**





## Productivity £65,672

**Slightly below the national average**

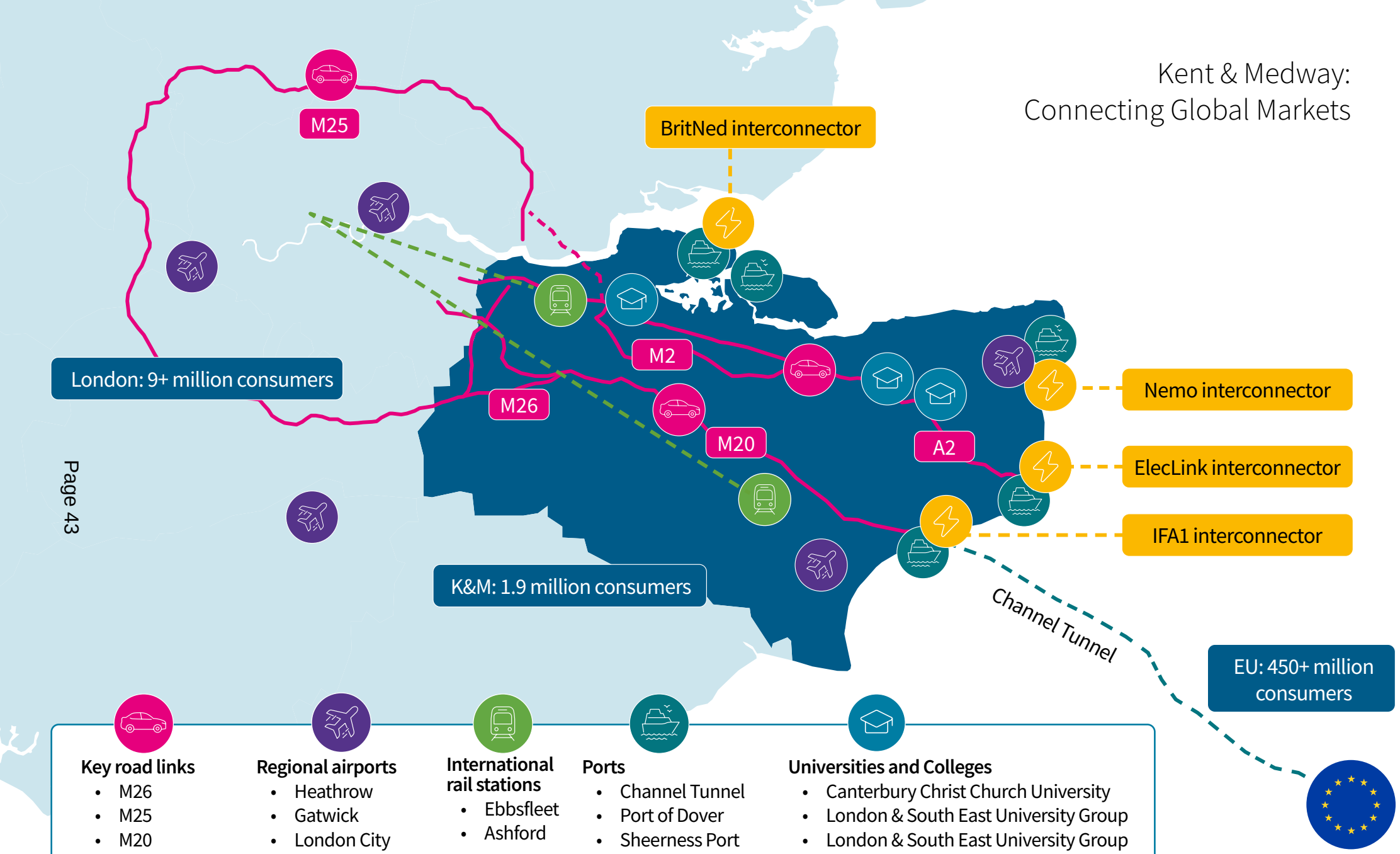
Our distinctive economy is grounded in a combination of assets and economic strengths that few places can match.

We have long been recognised as the Garden of England, but the strength and significance of our economy extends beyond this identity. Our natural assets and agricultural land support nationally important food production, a globally significant horticulture cluster and growing strengths in agri-tech, food innovation, health and nutrition. Our coastline together with our ports, the Channel Tunnel and strategic transport connections, means we operate at the heart of the UK's relationship with Europe and makes us critical to national trade and supply chains.

We are one of the UK's most important energy gateways, hosting infrastructure that supports innovation and the security and resilience of the national energy system. Our strengths in the creative industries and digital manufacturing and specialist technologies provide high value capabilities to inform innovation and transform activity across those sectors upon which our national economy relies.

Investment in Kent and Medway can improve the performance of the wider UK economy. More efficient transport connections, simpler border processes and sufficient, competitively priced energy would strengthen national supply chains and help businesses trade with European markets. Our ambition is to translate our gateway role into greater productivity and investment nationally, while creating more opportunities for businesses and residents locally.

# Kent & Medway: Connecting Global Markets




**Key road links**
- M26
- M25
- M20
- M2
- A2
- Dartford Crossing (A282)
- LTC

**Regional airports**
- Heathrow
- Gatwick
- London City
- Manston (potential future reinstatement)
- Lydd – Centre for Future Flight

**International rail stations**
- Ebbsfleet
- Ashford

**Ports**
- Channel Tunnel
- Port of Dover
- Sheerness Port
- Thamesport
- Ramsgate Port
- Ridham Port

**Universities and Colleges**
- Canterbury Christ Church University
- London & South East University Group
- London & South East University Group (Medway Campus)
- North Kent College
- Mid Kent College
- East Kent College

# Our People

## Targeting growth to deliver prosperity across Kent and Medway

Our 1.9 million residents are at the heart of our ambitions. Growth can improve people's lives by creating good jobs, raising incomes and expanding access to opportunity, and these opportunities will come from across our diverse economy.

While this Plan focuses on four priority sectors that build on our distinctive local strengths and offer significant growth potential, prosperity will also be supported by the wider economy, including sectors such as health and social care, life sciences and medtech, construction, tourism and the visitor economy and defence-related activity.

Core to the ambitions driving this plan is making sure that the nationally significant infrastructure located in Kent delivers more benefit to local communities through employment, training and supply chain opportunities. Growth, health and the environment are mutually reinforcing: successful economies depend on healthy people, and healthy people are more likely to live, work and thrive in attractive, well-connected and high-quality places. The quality of our natural, built and local environments therefore plays an important role in supporting wellbeing, attracting and retaining talent, and making Kent and Medway an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest.

Kent and Medway faces significant challenges, including economic inactivity, deprivation, health inequalities and uneven access to opportunity, particularly in some coastal and rural communities. Around 250,000 residents are economically inactive, with 6.7% of the working-age population inactive due to long-term sickness, compared with an average of 5.6% across Great Britain. Poor health can limit workforce participation and productivity, while preventing residents from benefiting fully from economic growth.





**1.9 million people**

2.9% of GB population



**844,733 dwellings**

Around 2.3 people per household



**45% qualified to RQF4+**

Of working age residents

Health outcomes are also influenced by the wider environment in which people live, including access to green space, active travel opportunities, quality housing and the condition of local places.

Addressing these challenges will require coordinated action across economic development, skills, health, housing, infrastructure and place, creating clearer pathways into good work, supporting healthier working lives, improving the environment people experience every day, and enabling more residents to participate in and benefit from the opportunities growth creates.

Growth that is felt across Kent and Medway also depends on the infrastructure that shapes access to opportunity. This means connecting homes and jobs through transport and digital infrastructure, providing the energy and workspace businesses need to grow, and ensuring investment in places and communities keeps pace with economic development.

Widening opportunity will also require clear pathways into good jobs through careers support, work experience, training and apprenticeships that respond to employer needs.

Improving the lives of our 1.9 million residents is a central objective of the Local Growth Plan. Success should be reflected not only in productivity, investment and business growth, but also in labour market participation, progression into good work, healthier working lives and rising prosperity across Kent and Medway.

The Local Growth Plan therefore forms part of the strategic framework for Kent and Medway, complementing the Skills Delivery Strategy, the Local Skills Improvement Plan, the Get Kent and Medway Working Strategy, health and wellbeing initiatives, wider sector strategies, and investment in housing, infrastructure and communities, to deliver greater prosperity locally. This includes building on the Kent Marmot Coastal Region initiative which brings partners together to tackle the underlying social and economic causes of health inequalities in coastal communities.





**£40,000 median annual earnings**

For full-time employees living locally



**Healthy life expectancy of 62 years**

1.1 years above England average

*HLE = the average number of years a person can expect to live in“good” general health

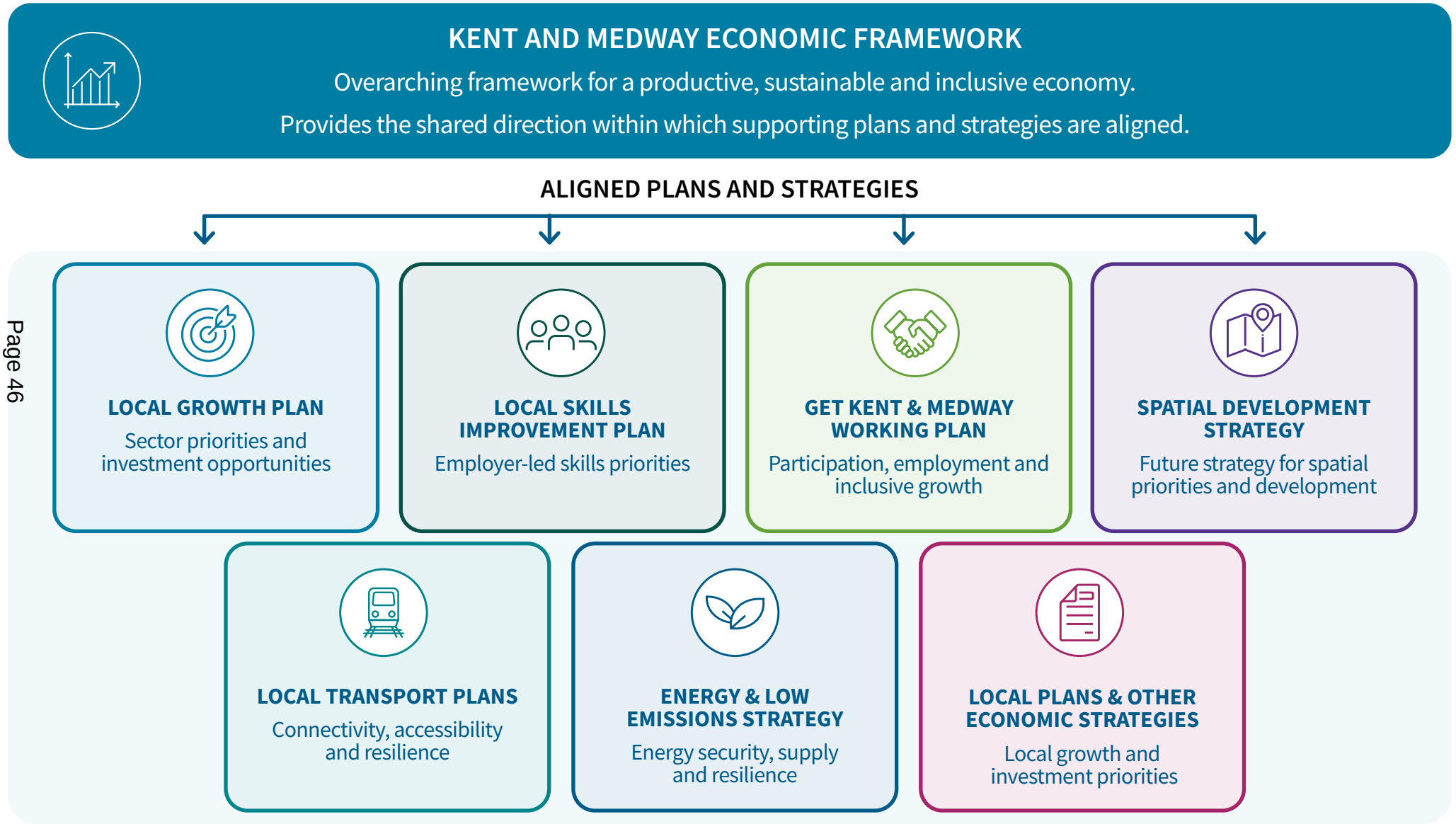


**6.7% of inactivity due to long-term sickness**

Above the GB average of 5.6%

# Our Strategies

## A Pillar Within A Wider Strategic Framework



# A Pillar Within A Wider Strategic Framework

Kent and Medway's economic ambitions are supported by a range of complementary strategies and plans.

The Kent & Medway Economic Framework (KMEF) is the overarching framework for a more productive, sustainable and inclusive economy, focused on five 'thematic' ambitions:

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

The Local Growth Plan sits beneath the KMEF and provides a targeted, sector-led approach aligned to the Government's Industrial Strategy. It focuses on the sectors where Kent and Medway has the strongest competitive advantages and greatest potential to contribute to national growth ambitions:

- Agri-food and agri-tech
- Energy and clean growth
- Digital technologies and digital creative
- Ports, trade and logistics

The Local Growth Plan is complemented by a range of other strategic plans and programmes which help shape the conditions for growth, including:

- The Local Skills Improvement Plan, which sets priorities for developing the future workforce.
- The Get Kent & Medway Working Plan, which focuses on increasing labour market participation and supporting residents into employment.
- The emerging Spatial Development Strategy, which will translate economic ambitions into a spatial framework for housing, employment land, infrastructure and investment.
- Strategic transport planning through Local Transport Plans.
- Energy and environmental planning, including the development of a new Kent Energy Strategy.

Together, these strategies provide a coherent and connected approach to growth, ensuring that economic development, skills, infrastructure, transport, energy and place-making are aligned across partners and support the long-term prosperity of Kent and Medway.



## Our Business Support Offer

### FOR BUSINESSES

Business Kent

Kent and Medway's dedicated business support service, connecting entrepreneurs, SMEs and growing businesses with the advice, information and opportunities they need to thrive. **Part of the UK Business Growth Service.**

### FOR INVESTORS

INVEST KENT
One place to do it all

Connecting business and investors with the opportunities, locations, partners and support they need to invest, locate, and grow.

### FOR VISITORS

VISIT KENT
Garden of England

Our destination management organisation, championing the visitor economy and promoting the region as a premier place to visit, explore and experience.

## Our Regional Partnerships

KMEP Kent & Medway Economic Partnership

The Local Growth Board bringing together councils, universities, colleges and businesses to drive economic growth

**INNOVATION**
Kent and Medway Innovation Partnership (KMIP)

**SKILLS**
Kent and Medway Employment Taskforce

**BUSINESS**
Kent and Medway Business Advisory Board (BAB)

**HEALTH & EMPLOYABILITY**
Kent and Medway Strategic Partnership for Health & the Economy (SPHE)

**A Connected Growth System**

Until a Mayoral Strategic Authority is established, Kent and Medway's growth system is co-ordinated through a clear regional partnership structure. KMEP is the area's Local Growth Board, bringing business, local government, universities and colleges together – with DWP and MHCLG input. Its thematic partnerships provide focused leadership and support co-ordinated action.

For businesses and investors, this is matched by clear, outward-facing routes to practical accessible support. Business Kent, Visit Kent and Invest Kent provide advice, support and guidance on a plethora of subjects from accessing finances and grants, to skills advice, to where to invest. Where needs cut across organisations, KMEP can help bring partners together and co-ordinate the right response.

# Sector **Opportunities**

A place-based set of growth opportunities, selected for their relevance to our assets, capabilities and national role.











# Our Sectors

## We have taken a place-based approach to identifying our sector growth opportunities






The Government's Local Growth Plan framework challenges places to articulate a clear economic vision and identify the sectors with the greatest potential to drive future growth. For Kent and Medway, this means building on the area's distinctive strengths, assets and competitive advantages to create a more productive, innovative and resilient economy that delivers benefits both locally and nationally.

Kent and Medway is home to a diverse economy, with nationally significant strengths across sectors including health and life sciences, construction, the visitor economy, defence-related industries and public services. These sectors will remain important contributors to prosperity and growth. The purpose of this Local Growth Plan, however, is to identify where targeted investment and intervention can unlock the greatest latent potential for future economic growth and maximise Kent and Medway's contribution to the UK economy.

To inform this approach, a comprehensive evidence base was developed in 2026, analysing economic performance, business specialisms, strategic assets and emerging opportunities. This analysis identified four sectors where Kent and Medway combines distinctive competitive advantages, strong growth potential and clear opportunities to contribute to national priorities:

- **Agri-food and agri-tech**
- **Energy and clean growth**
- **Digital technologies and digital creative**
- **Ports, trade and logistics**

These sectors have been prioritised not simply because they are important today, but because they represent the areas where Kent and Medway is best placed to strengthen its competitive position, attract investment, support innovation and increase productivity over the long term.





The opportunities identified are rooted in the area's unique geography, natural assets, infrastructure, business base and international connectivity. Together, these characteristics provide advantages that cannot easily be replicated elsewhere, creating the conditions for businesses to grow, innovate and access national and global markets.

Collectively, these sectors also support areas of national significance, helping to strengthen the UK's food security, energy security, digital and trade resilience while creating new opportunities for investment, innovation and growth.

The priority sectors identified in this Plan are strongly aligned with the Government's Industrial Strategy and its growth-driving sectors. However, they have been defined through the lens of Kent and Medway's economy, assets and opportunities, resulting in a broader and more place-based interpretation of national priorities. For example, agri-food and agri-tech draws together elements of advanced manufacturing, life sciences and innovation; energy and clean growth supports the transition to clean energy; digital technologies and digital creative underpin productivity and innovation across multiple sectors; and ports, trade and logistics provide the connectivity and supply chain capabilities that enable growth across the wider economy.

This Plan is therefore shaped by a simple principle: national growth is most effectively achieved when places build on their unique strengths. The priority sectors identified for Kent and Medway reflect where the area has the greatest opportunity to create competitive advantage, attract investment and raise productivity, while making a distinctive contribution to the UK's future prosperity.





# Our Wider Economy

## Growth beyond priority sectors

The purpose of identifying priority sectors is not to suggest that growth should occur only in these areas. Rather, it is to identify those sectors where targeted action has the greatest potential to accelerate high-value growth, stimulate innovation, attract investment, and strengthen competitive advantage.

The sectors highlighted here will not account for all future economic growth in Kent and Medway. Taken together, they represent only a proportion of total employment and economic activity. Many other sectors will continue to play a vital role in the area's economy, including public services, the visitor economy, life sciences, construction, and other important local industries.

Our broad-based economy is one of our great strengths, creating a wide ranging set of opportunities for our people and businesses and emphasising that Kent and Medway is a place to do it all.

We have strengths and important assets across high value, knowledge-based sectors, all of which are and will remain important to our economy, including:

- **Construction**
- **Life Sciences, Medtech, Health and Social Care**
- **Knowledge-Intensive Business Services (KIBS)**
- **Aviation and aeronautical engineering**
- **Defence-related activity**
- **The Visitor Economy**





# Construction:

Construction is a large and strategically important sector, supporting approximately 53,000 jobs, 13,700 businesses and £5.2bn in GVA. It makes up the largest share of businesses in our economy, underlining its importance to enterprise and employment across the county.

Its importance extends beyond its scale, as it provides the foundations for growth across other sectors of our economy, fundamental to delivering the specialist workspace, production facilities, energy infrastructure and transport connections businesses and our communities need to grow. It also delivers the homes and resilient infrastructure needed to support a growing workforce and vibrant places across our diverse geography. Realising the opportunities across our four priority sectors will therefore depend on construction's capacity to deliver.

Investment across our priority sectors will, in turn, create opportunities for construction businesses and their supply chains, helping retain more of the benefits of growth locally.

Capturing these benefits will require attention to the barriers facing construction businesses themselves. Smaller firms and specialist trades can face difficulties accessing training, recruiting skilled workers and finding the capacity to adopt new technologies, alongside the costs of meeting regulatory requirements.

The Plan's cross-cutting actions on skills, innovation and SME growth will support construction businesses in addressing these challenges.

A strong construction workforce will be essential, with clear routes into the sector and opportunities to develop new skills. Building on the Local Skills Improvement Plan, our actions to build a future-ready workforce will support closer collaboration between construction employers and education providers, strengthen access to industry placements, work-based learning and apprenticeships, and develop the capabilities needed for modern construction. Connecting these pathways with forthcoming housing and infrastructure projects will help local people access employment and enable businesses to benefit from the supply-chain opportunities that investment creates.





## Life Sciences, Medtech, Health and Social Care:

Health and social care is a foundational part of Kent and Medway's economy, and its largest employer, supporting 114,000 jobs, across 2,900 businesses. The NHS acts as an anchor institution through training, procurement and local supply chains, and health and care services help residents enter and remain in work. Related strengths in life sciences, including assets such as Kent and Medway Medical School, Discovery Park, Maidstone Innovation Centre and Kent Science Park, provide opportunities for research, skills development and health-related innovation, linking the sector to the Plan's wider ambitions for innovation and business growth.

## Knowledge-Intensive Business Services (KIBS):

Digital, consultancy, engineering, professional, and innovation-support firms, are a source of high value employment and a cross-cutting enabler of all four priority sectors. These firms can generate important knowledge spillovers, supporting technology adoption, management innovation, commercialisation, skills development, and supply-chain upgrading across the wider economy.

## Aviation and aeronautical engineering:

Existing engineering and technical capabilities offer potential for higher-value activity in aircraft systems, future-flight technologies and testing, supported by links with industry and education.

## The Visitor Economy:

Our coast, countryside, historic places and cultural attractions make Kent and Medway an attractive place to live, work and visit. These assets also underpin a visitor economy that supports 91,300 jobs, 7,800 businesses and local supply chains across hospitality, accommodation, leisure and food and drink. Its continued success contributes to the vitality of our towns, rural areas and coastal communities, alongside the growth opportunities set out in this Plan.

## Defence-related activity:

Capabilities in advanced manufacturing, electronics and cybersecurity, as well as the presence of significant firms, such as BAE systems, provide opportunities for local businesses to access defence markets and supply chains. As much of the area's defence activity centres on manufacturing electronic components, it is captured within our Digital and Technologies priority sector.





## The collective opportunity for Kent and Medway

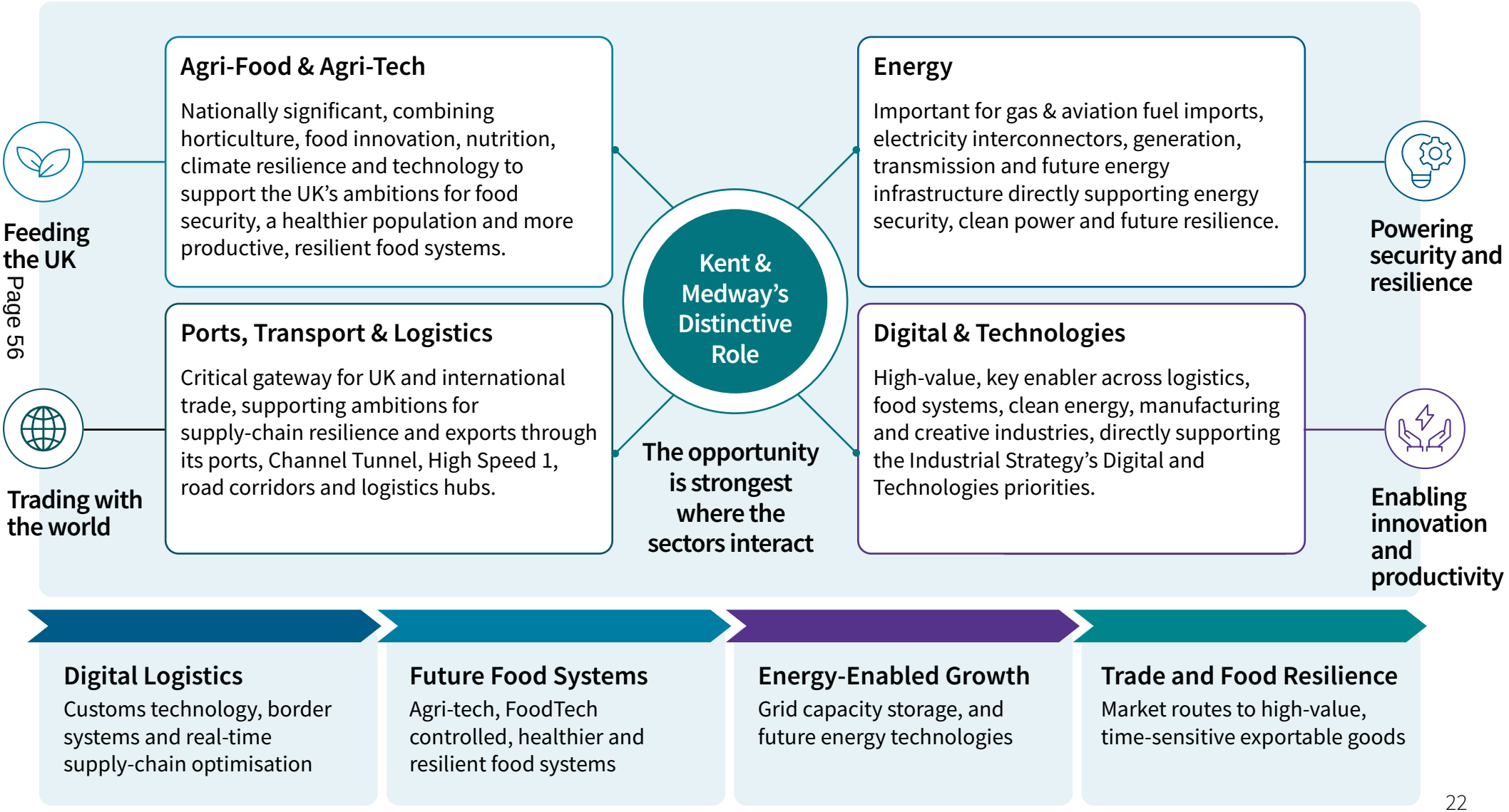
The priority sectors should be understood as a connected set of opportunities. Their importance lies not only in their individual growth potential, but in the way they reinforce one another through shared infrastructure, supply chains, skills, innovation and markets.

A strong example is transport and logistics. While not an Industrial Strategy priority sector in its own right, it is a critical enabling capability. As the UK's gateway to Europe and a major node in national and international supply chains, our logistic assets support trade, exports, and business activity across multiple sectors. Growth and innovation in logistics therefore have the potential to strengthen the performance of many other priority sectors and, as a large and growing market for digital solutions and technologies, support the expansion of our digital sector. Similarly, connections between energy, digital technologies, manufacturing, and agri-food create opportunities for innovation, productivity improvements, and new business models that cut across traditional sector boundaries.

Taken together, these sectors form a portfolio of opportunities that can support a more productive, innovative, and export-oriented economy. They represent not only individual growth opportunities but also a set of interconnected strengths that can collectively contribute to long-term economic transformation.

**Health and social care** is a foundational part of Kent and Medway's economy, and its **largest** employer, supporting **114,000** jobs, across **2,900** businesses

# National role of our opportunity sectors




**Digital Logistics**
Customs technology, border systems and real-time supply-chain optimisation

**Future Food Systems**
Agri-tech, FoodTech controlled, healthier and resilient food systems

**Energy-Enabled Growth**
Grid capacity storage, and future energy technologies

**Trade and Food Resilience**
Market routes to high-value, time-sensitive exportable goods

# A Vision for Our Key Sectors

| Agri-Food and Agri-Tech | Digital and Technologies | Energy | Ports, Transport & Logistics |
|---|---|---|---|
| We will strengthen our position as the UK's leading region for food and drink production and innovation.<br><br>New opportunities will emerge around health and horticulture, agri-tech, viticulture, local procurement and circular economy activity.<br><br>By strengthening collaboration across growers, businesses, researchers and public partners, the sector will move beyond production alone.<br><br>We will capture more value through research, product development, commercialisation, processing, sustainable production and stronger local supply chains - whilst making an increasingly important contribution to food security, resilience and sustainable food systems. | We will build on our strong foundations in digital manufacturing and the digital creative industries to become a recognised hub for applied digital innovation, helping businesses develop, adopt and commercialise new technologies that improve productivity, create new products and services, and drive growth across the economy.<br><br>Stronger digital clusters, improved access to finance and the development of scale-up space will support the growth of new and existing firms.<br><br>By combining strengths in digital technologies and digital creative industries with opportunities across the wider economy, the sector will drive innovation, support business transformation and create new commercial opportunities. | We will use our nationally significant energy assets as a platform for innovation, investment and economic growth, capturing more local value from the energy sector whilst meeting the future energy needs of businesses, infrastructure and communities.<br><br>Future investment in energy infrastructure, hydrogen production, nuclear decommissioning and new technologies will create opportunities for new business activity, innovation and supply chain growth.<br><br>Growing energy demand from ports, logistics, industry and food production will support the development and deployment of new energy solutions, strengthening Kent and Medway's position as a centre for energy expertise, infrastructure and innovation. | We will become a more innovative, resilient and higher-value trade economy, capturing greater value from our role as the UK's gateway to Europe through smarter logistics, stronger supply chains and trade infrastructure.<br><br>Investment in major infrastructure, including the Lower Thames Crossing, will create new opportunities to access markets, expand productive activity and strengthen supply chains.<br><br>Our ports, freight corridors and logistics assets will support the movement of goods into, out of and through the UK, with opportunities to grow rail freight, strengthen multimodal connectivity and develop the trade, customs and logistics services that sit around these flows.<br><br>Resumed international rail services will unlock regional economic growth and strengthen UK-EU trade. |

Growth across each of these sectors will be accelerated through creating the conditions for greater levels of interactions across businesses in these sectors, enabling new growth opportunities to be realised and developing new solutions to challenges for our place, people and businesses.

Activities from across the priority sectors, and the wider economy also connect to create wider opportunities for growth in the circular economy. The scale of construction, agricultural production and industrial activity, alongside our energy and logistics assets, provide strong foundations for a circular economy in which materials, by-products, energy and waste heat from one activity can support another.

# Agri-Food and Agri-Tech











# Defining Our Sector

Agri-food and agri-tech is one of our most distinctive economic strengths, combining world-class food production, nationally significant supply chains and a diversity of innovation strengths in a growing ecosystem.

The Agri-food and Agri-Tech sector in Kent and Medway sector covers four broad activities:

- **Primary production:** such as agriculture, forestry and fishing, centred around farming of crops, as well as assets in bioengineering, alternative proteins and viticulture – enabled by the quality of the agricultural land, climate and market access.
- **Processing & manufacturing:** transforming raw agricultural outputs into food and drink, as well as packaging activity for onward sale or use – grown around the production strengths and the strategic location.
- **Import, wholesale and value-added logistics:** importing food products from global markets and preparing them for UK consumers through specialist value-added activities such as cold storage, controlled-environment ripening, grading and finishing. Distributing food and beverage products sold as goods to households, businesses and export markets.
- **Agri-tech and food-tech:** enabling technologies that boost efficiencies in agriculture and food processing.

As a whole the sector accounts for around 65,000 jobs, 4,200 businesses and £2.4bn in GVA across Kent and Medway, equal to 2.3% of the UK sector total.

Uniquely positioned across the entire farm-to-market value chain, our area is at the forefront of next-generation food system technologies, with a growing base of businesses pioneering advances in precision breeding, AI, robotics, smart agriculture and climate resilience. This concentration of expertise, assets and innovation creates a powerful platform for developing, testing and scaling the technologies that will shape the future of food production, strengthen food security, and unlock growth across the economy.

**Agri-food and agri-tech accounts for around 65,000 jobs, 4,200 businesses**




# Our National Significance

**Our county is central to producing, innovating and moving food that underpins national food security.**

Long recognised as the Garden of England and home to 27% of the nation's vineyards, 40% of British soft and stone fruit production, and 80% of UK apple and pear tonnage, the county continues to play a central role in feeding the nation.

As global supply chains face increasing disruption from geopolitical instability, trade volatility, climate change, and events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, Kent and Medway's contribution to food security is becoming ever more important.

Furthermore, emerging consumer trends, including the impact of GLP-1 obesity treatments on dietary habits, are reshaping demand for healthier, nutrient-dense and fortified food – particularly fruit and vegetable-based products, creating new opportunities for Kent and Medway to become a national centre for nutrition innovation and next-generation food products. With poor diet and nutrition contributing significantly to ill health and economic inactivity, advances in agri-food innovation can play an important role in improving health outcomes, extending healthy working lives and expanding labour market participation, addressing a key constraint on economic growth.

Our area is well placed to help the UK respond to the intertwined challenges of food resilience, sustainability, climate adaptation, and public health.

**Garden of England is home to 27% of the nation's vineyards**

# Kent & Medway in numbers

## Scale

**40%** of the UK high-value horticultural production

**80%** of British **apples** and **pears** tonnage

**Agri-tech** and **food-tech** is **45%** more specialised than 5 years ago

## Future Trends

Warmer temperatures support growth in ripening grapes. Kent and Medway is home to **27%** of the UK's vineyards, with a **125%** increase since **2010**

Region is **1st** for hours of sunshine

**2nd** for temperature after Essex

## Enterprise

Agri-food businesses are **50%** more likely to be exporting in the region

**10** equity funding rounds per **1,000** agri-food businesses, **8 in the UK**

## Infrastructure

Low vacancy rates for food processing property types at **2%**

**18%** of occupied industrial space is Grade A, lower than regional average

Average delays of **80** seconds per vehicle mile on the Dartford Crossing

## Innovation

Kent and Medway have secured **£21.1m** in Innovate UK funding

**88%** higher concentration in precision breeding than nationally

**58%** higher concentration in FoodTech than nationally.

## Human Capital

**20%** of occupations are high-skilled

**45%** higher demand for farmers, **33%** higher for biological scientists, **28%** less demand for process operatives

**19** job vacancies per **100** jobs, compared to **15** in the UK





# Our Assets

Kent and Medway combines natural, commercial and innovation assets that have created one of the UK's most complete agri-food ecosystems. We benefit from some of the UK's highest-quality agricultural land, the highest levels of sunshine in the country, and immediate access to major consumer and export markets through London, the English Channel, and the wider gateway infrastructure. These advantages have helped create a globally significant horticulture cluster centred on fruit, vegetables and viticulture, alongside food and drink manufacturing, packaging and distribution activity.

What distinguishes Kent is the breadth of activity that sits alongside its large scale production strengths.

The county contains the full value chain, from research and cultivation through to processing, packaging, distribution and export. Major firms such as PrepWorld, DS Smith, and Smurfit WestRock sit alongside leading growers, vineyard operators, food manufacturers and specialist agri-tech businesses. The county is also home to the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale Farm, near Faversham, one of the largest collections of fruit crops. Curated and maintained by the University of Reading with FAST on behalf of Defra, it conserves genetic diversity and provides material and data for research and fruit breeding.

Commercial growers and producers are an important part of this innovation ecosystem. The evolution of soft fruit production and the growth of viticulture demonstrate how entrepreneurial businesses continue to adapt Kent and Medway's agricultural strengths to changing markets and growing conditions. Connecting this commercial expertise more closely with research and innovation assets can support wider adoption of new technologies and production methods.

The challenge is that these strengths do not always operate as a connected system. While we have world-class production, research capability and routes to market, there remains significant scope to strengthen the connections between businesses, innovation assets, supply chains and infrastructure, enabling more of the value created by the sector to be captured locally.





# Our Assets

The sector is supported by nationally significant research and innovation assets, including

- **Niab & the East Malling Trust,**
- **Discovery Park,**
- **the Medway Food Innovation Centre,**
- **the Biotechnology Hub for Sustainable Food and Drink, and**
- **the EDGE Hub,**

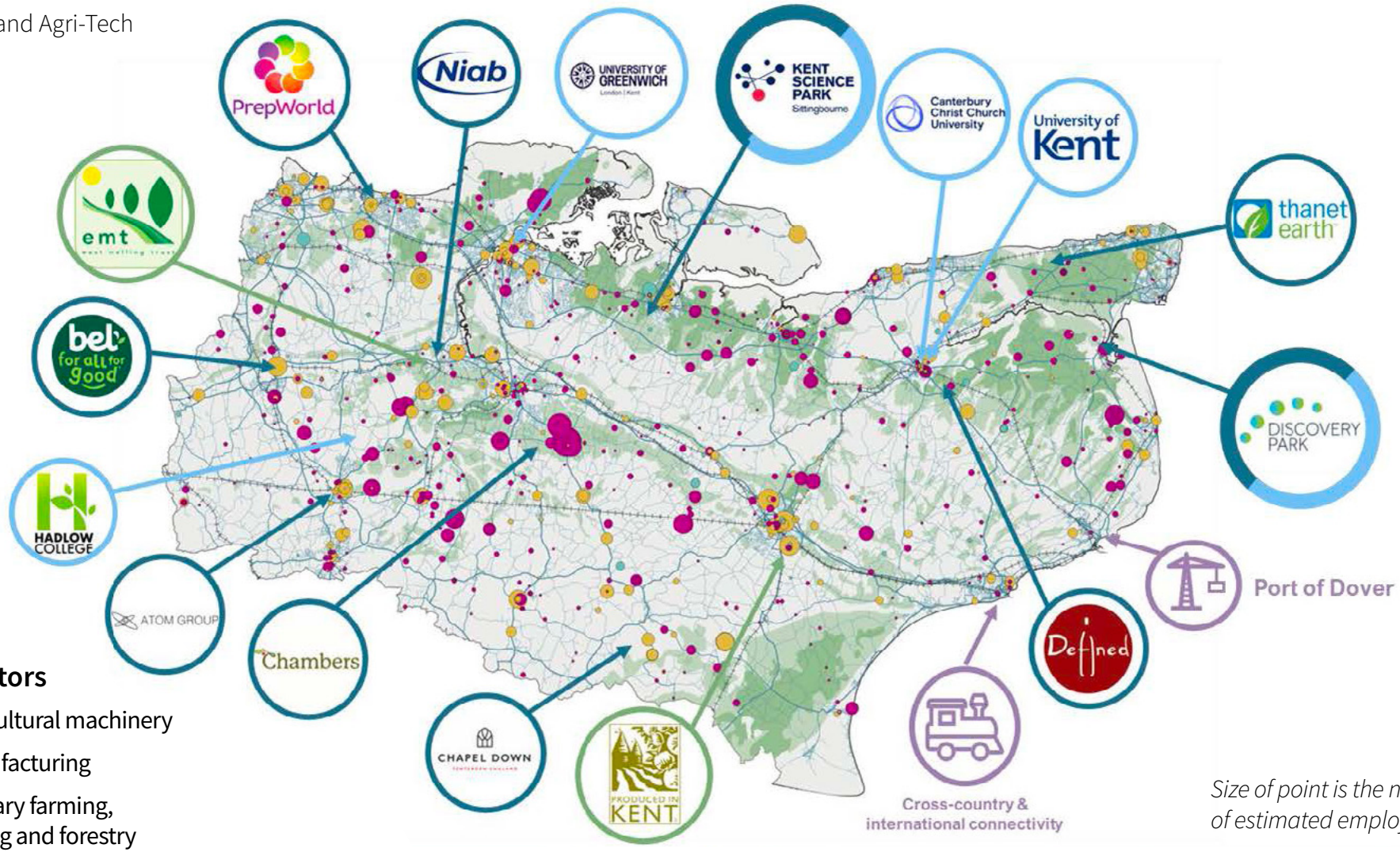
assets which have contributed to established strengths in areas including precision

- **breeding,**
- **FoodTech,**
- **climate resilience,**
- **controlled environment agriculture**
- **and bioengineering.**

These are complemented by further education and skills facilities such as Yarrow's commercial kitchens, which provide a space for businesses to develop and test new food products while inspiring the next generation of talent by giving young people practical exposure to careers and innovation within the food sector.

Hadlow College, Kent's land-based college, and its Centre for Horticulture Excellence operated with Thanet Earth also support practical training and career pathways into horticulture and wider food production.

The challenge is that these strengths do not always operate as a connected system. While we have world-class production, research capability and routes to market, there remains significant scope to strengthen the connections between businesses, innovation assets, supply chains and infrastructure, enabling more of the value created by the sector to be captured locally.




## Sub-sectors

- Agricultural machinery
- Manufacturing
- Primary farming, fishing and forestry

*Size of point is the natural log of estimated employment*

| Actors and Assets | | Infrastructure | Enablers |
|---|---|---|---|
| A critical mass of geographically and economically proximate firms with many specialising in emerging sectors | Key anchor, HE and FE institutions and supporting organisations and a supply of talent, skills and knowledge | Physical (transport, road networks, energy systems) and digital assets that support the flow of ideas | Investment capital to take risks and to fund research/expansion and a supportive policy environment |
| Networks to share information and knowledge, coordinate activities and promote a shared innovation culture and wider regional linkages. | | | |

***Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Data City Data***

A key growth opportunity is to strengthen Kent and Medway's position as a national centre for food production, precision horticulture, agri-tech and food innovation, building on existing strengths in technologies, and the advantages conferred by the presence of the existing sectors and the county's natural endowments. While Kent already plays a nationally significant role in production, there is an opportunity to capture more value locally through greater activity in food processing, packaging, manufacturing, branding and export. This would enable the county to benefit not only from what is grown here, but from a greater share of the value created across the wider food system. Changing growing conditions create opportunities for diversification, alongside greater risks to established production. Water availability is a direct constraint on crop production, productivity and business expansion. Realising the sector's growth potential will therefore depend on investment in climate adaptation, including irrigation, water storage and efficiency, pest management and production methods that respond to heat, drought and extreme weather.

Strengthening the skills pipeline will be central to growth. Employer-led training, apprenticeships and structured work experience can support recruitment and progression, connecting food production and horticulture with engineering, digital and business careers. Provision should respond to the equipment, working practices and skills needs of local businesses.

Future growth could also be driven by expanding high-growth specialisms including viticulture, controlled-environment horticulture, vertical farming and alternative proteins. Kent and Medway's combination of research capability, production expertise and natural assets also provides an opportunity to develop and test climate-resilient approaches to food production, bringing together researchers, education providers, growers and businesses. Combined with proximity to London and European markets, these strengths could position the county at the forefront of the future of food production while making a stronger contribution to food security, supply-chain resilience and wider economic growth.



## What's holding growth back?

Whilst the sector has substantial strengths, several barriers continue to limit growth and value capture:

- Fragmentation across growers, producers, public bodies, educators, investors and support organisations makes collaboration more difficult and limits the sector's collective voice.
- Access to specialist infrastructure, including processing facilities, storage, glasshouses, energy and reliable water supplies for irrigation and food production, remains a constraint on expansion and diversification.
- SMEs can struggle to access finance, procurement opportunities and investment needed to scale and commercialise innovation, challenges made particularly acute by low profit margins characteristic of the sector.
- There remains a gap between research and widespread business adoption of new technologies and production methods.
- Seasonal and permanent labour shortages, workforce retention and skills shortages span engineering, automation, digital, management and operational roles. Businesses also identify gaps in work readiness, communication and teamwork, while careers information does not always reflect the technology involved or the breadth of progression opportunities across food production and horticulture.
- While Kent and Medway produces a wide range of high-quality food and horticultural products, businesses can face barriers accessing local procurement opportunities and reaching new customers. As a result, opportunities to strengthen local supply chains and retain more value within the local economy are sometimes missed.

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# HORTICULTURE + INNOVATION CAMPUS

## Project details:

A horticulture science and innovation building at The Malling Horticulture and Innovation Campus at East Malling will deliver an additional 1,000 sqm of specialist laboratory and innovation space within a nationally significant innovation ecosystem. Planning consent is currently being pursued, and delivery is anticipated from early 2027.

**Alignment to principles of LGP:**

The facility has strong alignment with the LGP's focus on innovation-led growth and supports Kent and Medway's growing health and horticulture strengths. The facility will also reinforce Malling's role as a nationally significant innovation cluster.

**The ask:**

Delivery of the facility requires £4.5m funding contribution, matched by £4.5m from The East Malling Trust.

**The impact/benefits:**

The facility will provide additional specialist innovation space, expanded research and commercialisation capacity, and support for growth in knowledge-intensive sectors.







**Contact Information:**
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# Our actions to support growth



**Kent and Medway's agri-food and agri-tech sector benefits from world-class production, nationally significant research assets and strong routes to market. However, innovation, investment and business support activity often remains fragmented across a large and diverse ecosystem. Unlocking growth will require stronger collaboration across businesses, researchers, public bodies and investors to capture more value from the county's production strengths, accelerate innovation and strengthen Kent and Medway's role in the future of food production.**



## To do this, key priorities include:

**A1: Create a shared innovation and commercialisation hub.** The sector is characterised by a large number of businesses, organisations and support mechanisms, but information is often fragmented and difficult to navigate. This can make it harder for businesses to identify opportunities, understand value chains, access funding and collaborate effectively. Brokerage, demonstrations and trials would help growers, producers and SMEs assess and adopt technologies that respond to their commercial needs.

**We will explore the development of a shared innovation and commercialisation hub, acting as a front door to existing expertise, facilities, funding opportunities and business support across the ecosystem. The hub would strengthen access to sector intelligence, support innovation and commercialisation, improve understanding of local value chains, and help businesses navigate an increasingly complex landscape of funding, finance and support.**

**A2: Develop the specialist workspace and infrastructure the sector needs.** Future growth will depend on access to the right mix of workspace and specialist infrastructure. This includes facilities for processing, packaging, manufacturing, storage, research and development, commercialisation, controlled environment agriculture and agri-tech businesses. There is currently limited visibility of whether the existing offer aligns with the future needs of the sector.

**We will map existing provision and capabilities, identify gaps and opportunities, and develop a more proactive approach to promoting existing assets and ensuring the right types of space are available to support new and scaling businesses across the sector.**

**A3: Champion a planning system that supports food production, rural growth and resilience.** Planning and regulatory processes are frequently identified as barriers to investment, innovation and diversification within the rural economy, and to the delivery of strategic infrastructure, such as reservoirs and water storage, that will be increasingly important to the future resilience and productivity of the sector. This can limit the ability of businesses to respond to new market opportunities, invest in modern facilities and adopt new business models.

**We will work with businesses, local authorities and sector stakeholders to identify priority barriers and develop a shared advocacy programme that supports food production, sustainability, farm diversification and investment in the infrastructure required for the future of the sector.**

## To do this, key priorities include:

**A4: Strengthen local procurement and value chains.** Public sector food procurement represents a significant opportunity to support local businesses, strengthen supply chains and increase the amount of economic value retained within Kent and Medway. Whilst the county benefits from a nationally significant food production base, there remains scope to improve connections between producers, processors, distributors and institutional buyers, creating stronger routes to market and more resilient local supply chains.

**We will build on planned procurement pilot activity to test practical approaches that connect local producers and institutional buyers, including NHS organisations, identify barriers to participation, and generate evidence on how public sector procurement can better support local business growth, supply-chain resilience and wider economic, health and sustainability outcomes.**

**A5: Build a multidimensional health and horticulture specialism.** Kent and Medway is uniquely placed to explore the links between food production, nutrition, health and economic activity and growth. The region combines nationally significant horticultural production, leading research assets, innovation expertise and health institutions, creating opportunities to develop new products, services and business models that respond to changing consumer demand and public health priorities. Kent and Medway has a growing ecosystem of businesses, researchers, public bodies and health partners that can help shape the future of the food system, with opportunities spanning nutrition, preventative health, plant-based foods, food innovation and sustainable production.

**We will build on existing partnerships and emerging activity, working with clinical, academic and public-health partners, including Kent and Medway Medical School to develop a coordinated health and horticulture programme, identifying opportunities for innovation, investment and partnership development that strengthen both health outcomes and economic growth.**

## The Yarrow Innovation Kitchen

The Yarrow Innovation Kitchen provides specialist facilities and expertise to help food and drink businesses develop, test and commercialise new products.

Located at EKC Broadstairs College and developed by East Kent Colleges Group in partnership with Produced in Kent, the £250,000 facility gives businesses access to professional-grade equipment and support that can often be difficult or costly to access independently.

The facility supports businesses at different stages of growth, from recipe development and product testing through to scaling production and exploring commercial viability. Alongside specialist kitchen facilities, businesses can access support on areas including product costings, food safety, labelling and production processes.

By bringing together education, enterprise support and specialist infrastructure, the Innovation Kitchen provides a practical route from innovation to commercialisation. It also demonstrates the importance of shared facilities and support mechanisms in helping businesses overcome barriers to product development, access new markets and strengthen their position within local and national food supply chains.

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## National Institute for Agricultural Botany (Niab) and East Malling Trust

East Malling has been at the forefront of horticultural research and crop innovation for more than a century. Established in 1913, the site is owned by East Malling Trust and is home to a long-standing partnership with NIAB, the UK's largest horticultural and agricultural research organisation. Together, East Malling Trust and NIAB have created one of the UK's leading centres for fruit and horticultural science, combining world-class scientific expertise with an extensive research estate to drive innovation across the sector.

The site combines more than 200 hectares of research and commercial land with specialist infrastructure including laboratories and field-trial facilities. Distinctive capabilities allow researchers to investigate horticultural innovation from the laboratory through to real-world growing conditions, including the East Malling Rhizolab, a unique underground research facility which enables scientists to observe and sample crop roots under real growing conditions and the £11.3 million GreenTech Hub for Advanced Horticulture opened in 2022. The Hub provides 2,000 $m^2$ of specialist glasshouses, 14 polytunnels, controlled growth rooms and cold-storage facilities, supporting research in areas including plant genetics, fruit breeding, crop management and pest and disease control.

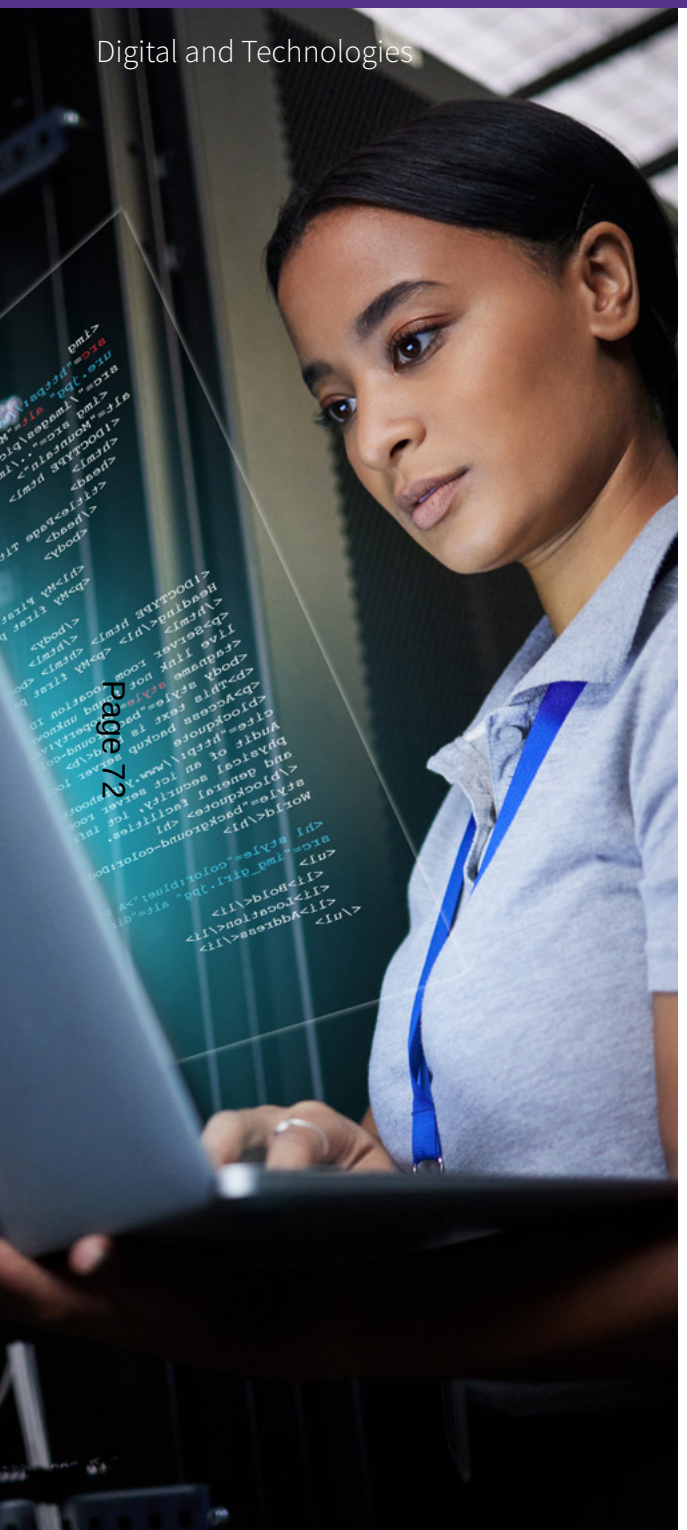
Niab works closely with regional universities, local growers, researchers and the horticultural industry partners, to develop, test and bring new crop varieties, technologies and production methods into commercial use. It has played a central role in strengthening the wider innovation network across Kent and Medway, leading the £42.1 million Growing Kent & Medway innovation cluster, which brought together the Universities of Kent, Greenwich and Canterbury Christ Church to provide horticultural and plant-based food businesses with technical research and innovation support. It created 262 partnerships between industry and academia, invested over £8.6 million in cutting-edge facilities and academic expertise, and provided more than £3 million in grants for innovation and R&D. With the initial UKRI Strength in Places Fund programme now complete, a new entity will build on this legacy and provide a foundation for further investment and business-led innovation in one of Kent and Medway's most distinctive sectors.

# Digital and Technologies











# Defining Our Sector

Digital and technologies is one of Kent and Medway's most productive and fastest-growing sectors. As a broad sector it is characterised by a distinctive combination of three key sub-sectors:

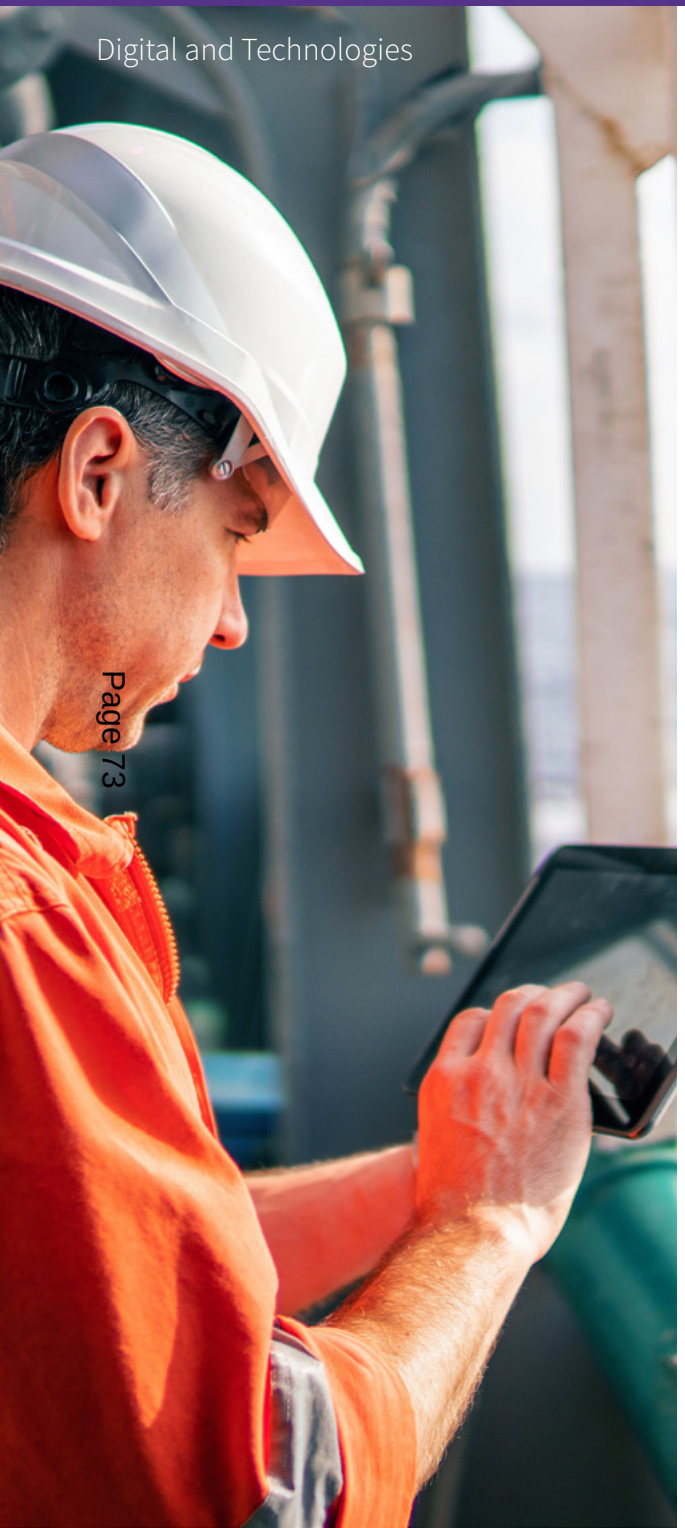
- **Digital manufacturing:** Manufacture of electronic components, instruments and digital hardware, supporting sectors ranging from advanced manufacturing to defence.
- **Digital creative:** The reproduction and creation of digital media, including digital content and video game production and creative services that rely on digital tools.
- **IT and technology services:** Technical services and digital infrastructure that underpin and support the operation of digital systems, including software development, data processing and hosting, and telecommunications services. It includes businesses developing and applying technologies across cybersecurity, communications, cloud services, electronics, creative production and data-driven services.

Together these activities generate £2.1bn in GVA and support more than 25,000 jobs, 77% of which are in high-skilled occupations.

What makes the sector distinctive in Kent and Medway, particularly compared to other parts of the South East is the combination of capabilities it brings together.

Kent and Medway has strengths in advanced electronics manufacturing, specialist digital services and creative technologies, creating a broad digital ecosystem capable of supporting innovation across the wider economy.

**Digital and technologies is one of Kent and Medway's most productive and fastest-growing sectors.**





# Our National Significance

Digital technologies increasingly underpin productivity, innovation and competitiveness across the UK economy. Kent and Medway's digital sector can enable transformation across nationally important industries including food production, logistics, energy, manufacturing, health and the creative industries.

The county hosts three government-recognised innovation clusters, around 40 creative and digital micro-clusters, and concentrations of activity in electronics manufacturing, cloud computing and cyber-related activities. This creates a distinctive environment where technology can be developed, tested and applied within real-world operational settings.

Kent and Medway's role as a gateway location also creates opportunities that many technology clusters cannot offer. The presence of major logistics assets, energy infrastructure, research organisations and large operational businesses provides opportunities to trial and deploy digital solutions at scale. As sectors such as logistics, energy and agri-food become increasingly data-driven, the demand for digital capabilities will continue to grow.

**the demand for digital capabilities will continue to grow.**

# Kent & Medway in numbers

## Scale

**Digital manufacturing is 22% more concentrated locally than nationally**

**Roughly 40 micro-clusters of creative industries activity span the county**

**10 of the 13 local authorities are experiencing overall growth in the sector**

## Future Trends

**Digitalisation is a cross-cutting skills priority across all LSIP priority sectors**

**Growing demands and requirements for digital capabilities across other focus sectors, and large local employers**

## Enterprise

**44% of businesses established in the last five years**

**62% of businesses at seed/venture stage, and just 15% established**

**Average and median deal size 25% smaller than national sectoral average**

## Infrastructure

**0% of occupied office space and 13% of industrial space is Grade A, significantly lower than regional averages of 30% and 47% respectively**

**Only 79.8% of premises have gigabit availability across the county**

## Innovation

**53% higher concentration in Electronics manufacturing than nationally**

**Many businesses engaging in emerging economy activity, with strengths in cloud computing and cyber activity**

## Human Capital

**77% of occupations are high skilled**

**29 job vacancies per 100 jobs, compared to 25 in the UK**

**Computer system, and telecoms equipment installers and servicers highly concentrated locally**



# Our Assets

Kent and Medway has developed a diverse digital ecosystem built around businesses, research assets, educational institutions and a growing network of creative and technology clusters. The sector combines a significant base of digital services and creative businesses with nationally distinctive strengths in electronics and digital manufacturing. Local businesses operate across cybersecurity, cloud computing, telecommunications, software development, creative media, screen technologies, advanced electronics, and Createch at the intersection of creative industries and technology, creating a broad and increasingly interconnected business base.

The ecosystem is supported by a range of innovation and skills assets including:

- the Institute for Cyber Security for Society (iCSS),
- the Engineering, Design, Growth & Enterprise (EDGE) Hub,
- Innovation Centre Medway,
- the Bench (Dover),
- Discovery Park (Sandwich) and
- the forthcoming Docking Station (Chatham).

These assets provide research capability, commercialisation support, production workspace, and routes into skilled employment.

Our county's network of colleges also support the sector's technical skills and talent pipeline, with North Kent College's creative media and computing provision at Dartford.

Kent and Medway's digital strengths are complemented by a growing creative and screen economy, with creative clusters across the county, including notable strengths in the Thames Estuary Production Corridor and Tunbridge Wells. Assets such as the Kent Film Office and Maidstone Studios help support production activity, attract investment and strengthen the convergence of creative industries and digital technologies.





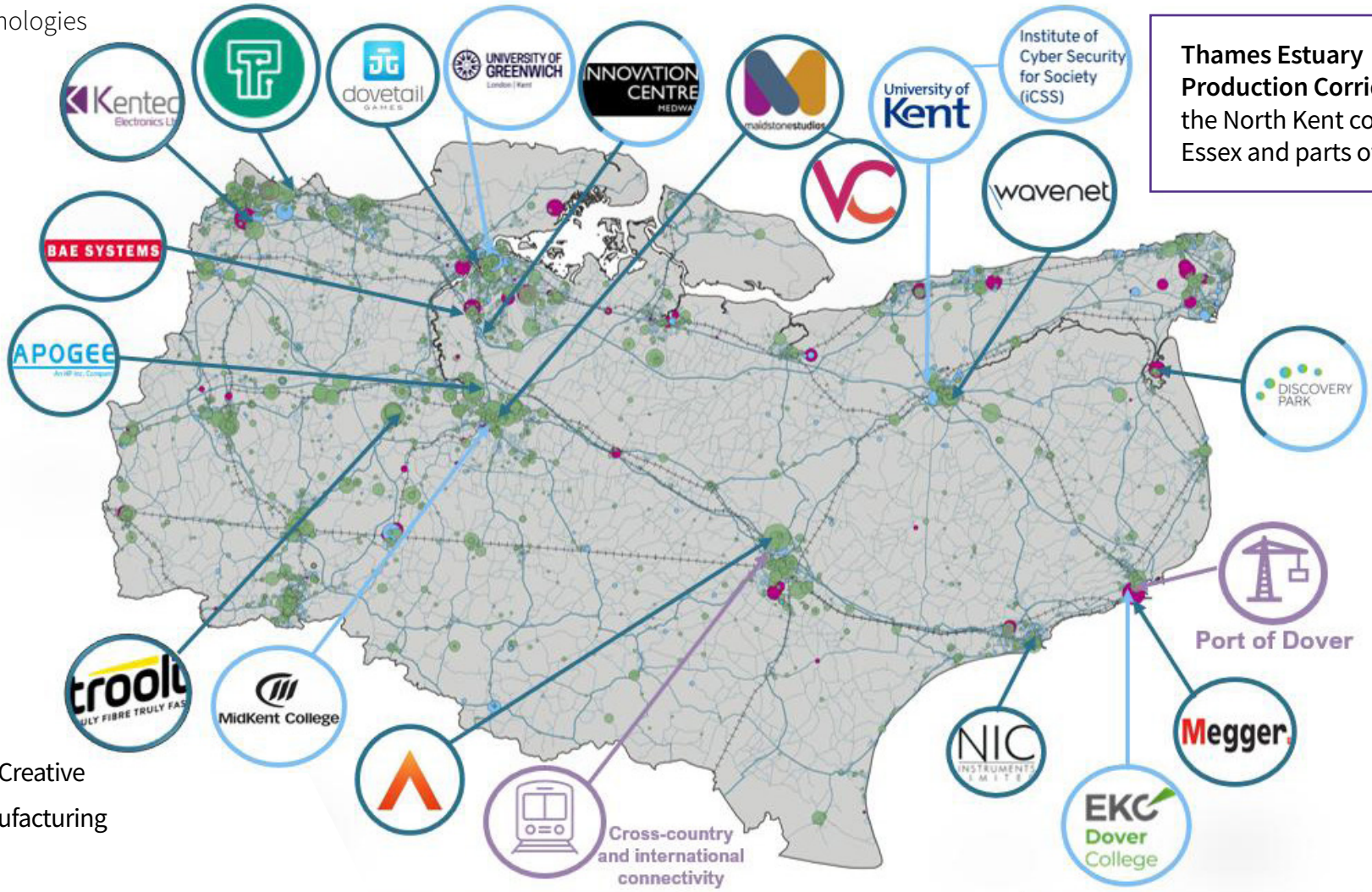
# Our Assets

The wider ecosystem is also supported by specialist organisations such as the Kent and Medway Cyber Cluster, the recognised cyber-security cluster, which contributes to the development of cyber skills across sectors, innovation and capability development.

What is particularly distinctive is the relationship between the digital sector and the wider economy. Kent and Medway's major strengths in agri-food, energy, logistics, transport, ports and manufacturing create significant local demand for digital technologies and services. This provides opportunities for businesses to develop, test and commercialise products and services in live operational environments rather than in isolation.

For example, Lydd Airport's proposed Centre for Future Flight Innovation offers potential to support testing and development of drones and other future-flight technologies, subject to securing the necessary regulatory approvals. The airport's operational environment and strategic location also provide an opportunity to establish a real-world testbed for emerging aviation technologies, helping to accelerate innovation, commercialisation and deployment of future flight solutions in the UK.

The challenge is ensuring that the sector's strengths are sufficiently connected, visible and supported to translate into larger businesses, greater levels of innovation and stronger spillovers across the wider economy.




**Thames Estuary Production Corridor** spans the North Kent coast into Essex and parts of London



## Sub-sectors

- Digital and Creative
- Digital Manufacturing
- IT services

| Actors and Assets | | Infrastructure | Enablers |
|---|---|---|---|
| A dispersed mass of SMEs and major digital and technology employers anchoring activity across the value chain within Kent and Medway | Key anchor, HE and FE institutions and supporting organisations and a supply of talent, skills and knowledge | Strategic gateway and rail infrastructure linking digital and technology activity to the rest of the UK and enabling export-facing growth | Networks, collaboration and knowledge exchange that connect dispersed micro-clusters and support business formation and growth |
| Digital and technology ecosystem organised around multiple, locally embedded micro-clusters, supporting the complete value chain. | | | |

***Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Data City Data***





A key opportunity is to establish Kent and Medway as a leading location for applied digital innovation, building on existing strengths in digital manufacturing, cybersecurity, digital creative technologies, cloud computing and specialist digital services. Unlike many established technology clusters, our local advantage does not lie in competing directly with places such as London or Cambridge. Its opportunity lies in applying digital innovation to solve real-world challenges in nationally important sectors including food production, logistics, energy and manufacturing. By connecting technology businesses more closely with major industrial users, Kent and Medway can create a distinctive proposition centred on practical innovation, adoption and commercialisation.

Future growth will depend on helping businesses scale, increasing the flow of investment into the sector and strengthening collaboration between businesses, universities and innovation assets. Alongside this, accelerating digital adoption across the wider economy would create new demand for local digital products and services whilst increasing productivity in other sectors. Artificial intelligence will create opportunities for productivity, new products and business growth, while also disrupting established roles, skills requirements and ways of working, particularly across the digital and creative economy.

Supporting businesses to adopt AI effectively and responsibly will be important, alongside helping workers and smaller firms develop the technical, commercial and creative capabilities needed to adapt. This will help ensure that AI complements human expertise and supports higher-value activity, rather than weakening the distinctive creative strengths of the sector.

Growth in digital and technology-intensive activities will increase demand for electricity infrastructure. Opportunities associated with AI, data-intensive businesses and developments such as the proposition for an AI Growth Zone and data centre at MedwayOne highlight the importance of ensuring that energy capacity keeps pace with economic growth. The realisation of these opportunities could further strengthen Kent and Medway's position in digital and technology related activities, subject to future investment and power availability. Without sufficient network capacity, opportunities for investment, business expansion and associated employment growth may be constrained.

The ambition is for Kent and Medway to be recognised not only as a place with a growing technology sector, but as a place where digital innovation is applied at scale to transform major industries, improve productivity and create higher-value economic activity.

## What's holding growth back?

Whilst the digital and technologies sector has clear strengths, several barriers continue to constrain growth:

- Businesses and clusters are often dispersed across the county, making collaboration and visibility more difficult and contributing to a fragmented ecosystem.
- The county lacks a sufficiently clear and compelling collective proposition for investors, government and businesses, despite the presence of significant assets and activity.
- Access to scale-up finance, investment and specialist growth support remains challenging for many SMEs.
- Digital connectivity is uneven across parts of the county, particularly in rural areas and there are challenges for employment premises, only 52% of which had gigabit capable connectivity in 2025, while the availability of high-quality workspace remains limited in some locations.
- Businesses struggle to access digital, AI, technical and commercial skills, while education and training provision does not always keep pace with changing technologies.
- Although strong research and innovation activity exists, there remains an opportunity to strengthen links between universities, innovation assets and businesses so that ideas are translated more consistently into commercial growth.





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# TECH@MEDWAY

**Project details:**

A phased programme to create 3,642 sqm of teaching, training and research space at the London and South East (LASE) University Group's Medway Campus, supporting around 1,000 learners across health, engineering, computing and natural resources.

**Alignment to principles of LGP:**

The facility will directly contribute to digital manufacturing and bio-medical sectors, with potential links to agri-tech through the neighbouring Medway Food Innovation Centre.

**The ask:**

A £15 million funding contribution, alongside £15 million committed by the University.

**The impact/benefits:**

The expanded technical education and simulated clinical training, supporting growth in Medway learner numbers from 1,660 to 1,850 and responding to employer and NHS workforce needs.



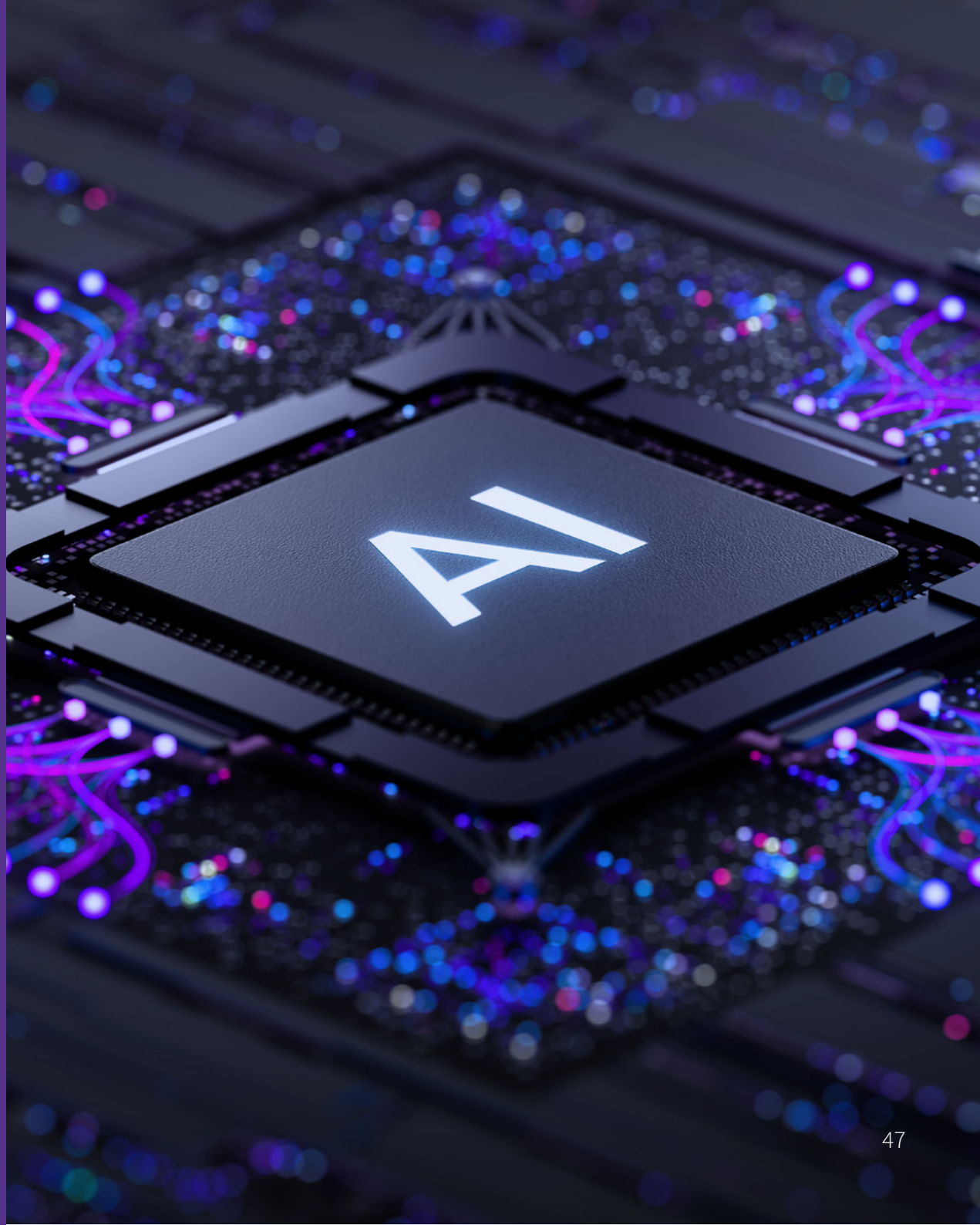


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# Our actions to support growth



**The digital and technologies sector is one of the county's most productive areas of activity, with strengths spanning manufacturing, services, creative industries and emerging technologies. Unlocking growth from the sector will require purposeful cultivation of stronger connections within the sector and from the sector to the needs and opportunities in the wider economy.**



## To do this, key priorities include:

**A6: Create a central hub for digital and creative businesses.** The digital and creative sector is characterised by a diverse mix of businesses, networks, support organisations and innovation assets, but businesses can find it difficult to navigate available opportunities and identify potential collaborators. At the same time, businesses in other sectors may be unaware of the digital capabilities that exist locally.

**We will explore the development of a central hub that acts as a focal point for the sector, improving signposting, supporting collaboration and connecting businesses with opportunities, expertise and partners across Kent and Medway's digital ecosystem.**

**A7: Develop a stronger shared identity for Kent and Medway's digital and technologies sector.** Kent and Medway has significant strengths in digital technologies, creative industries and innovation, but these are not always visible externally or recognised as part of a coherent proposition. A stronger shared identity could help attract investment, talent and new business opportunities while strengthening the profile of existing strengths.

**We will work with businesses, universities, innovation assets and public partners to develop a clearer proposition for the sector and promote Kent and Medway as a leading location for digital innovation and creative enterprise.**

**A8: Ensure growing digital businesses can access the right space.** The future growth of the sector will depend on access to the right mix of flexible, scalable and innovation-focused workspace. There is currently limited understanding of whether existing provision meets the needs of growing businesses, particularly those looking to scale beyond start-up stages.

**We will review existing workspace provision, identify current and future gaps, and develop a proactive approach to ensuring that businesses have access to the facilities and environments they need to grow and commercialise innovation.**

## To do this, key priorities include:

**A9: Strengthen connections across Kent and Medway's digital ecosystem.** Kent and Medway already benefits from a network of digital and creative clusters, but these can operate in isolation from one another and from related strengths across the wider economy. There is an opportunity to create stronger connections between businesses, researchers and innovators working in complementary areas. This is particularly important for micro-businesses and freelancers, whose access to collaborators, clients and specialist support can depend on networks beyond their immediate locality. This includes using the Creative Opportunity Zone model as a means of concentrating intervention in high-growth digital creative clusters.

**We will build on existing cluster activity to strengthen connections between digital and creative micro-clusters, support collaboration across the wider technology sector and create stronger links with businesses operating in other priority sectors.**

**A10: Use local challenges to drive digital innovation.** One of Kent and Medway's key advantages is the opportunity to develop and deploy technology solutions in nationally significant sectors including ports and logistics, agri-food, energy and manufacturing. Challenges such as border innovation, next-generation food production, energy transition and place promotion create opportunities for local businesses to develop new products and services while helping address local needs.

**We will work with businesses and partners across priority sectors to identify shared challenges that can be addressed through technology, creating opportunities for innovation, commercialisation and business growth within the digital sector.**

## BAE Systems

BAE Systems' Rochester site is a thriving hub which develops and delivers advanced technologies for commercial and military markets. The business is the largest private employer in Medway with more than 1,900 employees at Rochester, growing to over 2,000 people in the next two years. Rochester is a flourishing global business centre with customers in 44 different countries.

The site specialises in electronics for high integrity controls, active inceptor systems, head-up displays, helmet-mounted displays, power and propulsion solutions as well as an avionics aftermarket service centre. The Rochester site is also home to the Faraday Test Centre which supplies world class testing support to projects and companies in the U.K, the U.S and around the world.

£220 million is being invested into the site to create a new state-of-the-art factory. The new facility will combine manufacturing and engineering – providing a refreshed, modern and flexible working environment. The investment also includes improvements to utilities, car parking and office refurbishments across the site. The investment reflects the strategic importance of Kent and Medway's manufacturing sector, which combines advanced engineering, electronics and software expertise to develop technologies used across global aerospace, defence and commercial markets.

Building on more than a century of aviation technology development in Rochester, the site highlights how the region continues to attract investment in high-value industries and supports the UK's ambitions in advanced manufacturing, digital technologies and national security.



## The Bench

The Bench is a hub for learning, creative enterprise and business growth, located in Dover. Opened in 2026, it brings together East Kent Colleges Group's Creative Campus, flexible business space provided by Benchworks and creative industry space delivered by Screen South, alongside hospitality uses within a single development.

Its offer combines skills development with workspace and business support. Students can gain industry-relevant skills through the Creative Campus, entrepreneurs can access high-quality workspace, and growing businesses can connect with a wider network of creative, educational and commercial partners. Bringing these activities together creates opportunities for collaboration between learners, freelancers and established businesses.

For Kent and Medway's digital and creative sector, The Bench provides a focal point for developing talent and supporting businesses to establish and grow. It aims to retain skills within East Kent, strengthen links between education and industry, and support innovation and higher-value employment. Its combination of teaching, creative facilities and flexible workspace helps address the sector's need for places where businesses can access expertise, build networks and develop commercial opportunities.

Delivered through the Dover Beacon Project, the development brought together £18.1 million of Levelling Up Fund investment, £3.2 million of Future High Streets Fund investment and £3.4 million from Dover District Council.  It is expected to generate more than £90 million in economic benefit over 60 years and plays an important role in retaining and developing talent within East Kent.

## Create South East

Between 2022 and 2026, Kent County Council led a partnership across Kent, Essex and Sussex to support creative businesses to become investment-ready and develop the capabilities needed to scale. Participating businesses spanned a wide range of activities, including film, publishing, fashion, architecture, games and immersive technologies.

Enabled by funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the programme provided up to nine months of intensive, tailored support. This included one-to-one mentoring, specialist workshops and peer-to-peer learning, helping businesses strengthen their business plans and investment propositions, develop the skills needed to secure investment and access potential sources of finance. The programme also worked with more than 50 equity investors, in partnership with organisations including the UK Business Angels Association and British Business Bank, to improve access to growth finance for creative businesses.

Before the programme concluded in March 2026, Create South East had directly supported 156 companies and engaged with more than 800 organisations across the region. One success story was Margate-based A+C Studios, which expanded and opened a large-scale animation studio in Cliftonville in 2026. Its legacy and the connections established through the programme are continuing through the South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN). The programme demonstrated the demand for specialist, sector-focused support and the value of connecting a dispersed creative business base with expertise, peer networks and potential investors.



## Maidstone Studios

Maidstone Studios is one of the UK's largest independent regional television and film facilities. Operating for more than 40 years and located within easy access of London, it is an established centre of the South East's screen industries, with a production history spanning entertainment, drama, children's television, live broadcasting and film.

The site homes two main studios of 12,000 and 6,000 sq ft, an extensive backlot and more than 35 production and support spaces, accommodating large sets, live audiences and complex productions. Its credits include nationally recognisable programmes such as Catchphrase and Deal or No Deal, alongside Wes Anderson's Academy Award-winning The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar.

## Kent Film Office

The Kent Film Office promotes Kent as a premier filming destination, supporting film, television, advertising and photography productions to locate and film across the county. It provides a single point of contact for productions, helping them identify locations, secure permits and navigate local requirements. This activity brings inward investment into Kent, generating expenditure for local businesses, accommodation providers, hospitality venues and supply chains. The Film Office also helps raise Kent's profile nationally and internationally, strengthening the region's creative industries and visitor economy. More details at: kentfilmoffice.co.uk

# Energy











# Defining Our Sector

Energy is one of Kent and Medway's most strategically important sectors. Small in employment terms, it plays a critical enabling role across the wider economy, underpinning industrial activity, trade, digital infrastructure, manufacturing and future growth. The sector spans the generation, import, distribution and management of energy, alongside the infrastructure, technologies and specialist businesses that support the UK's energy system.

It accounts for around 2,800 jobs and around 80 businesses, but generates almost £200,000 GVA per job, making it one of the highest-value sectors in the local economy.

What makes the sector distinctive is the scale and significance of the assets located in Kent and Medway.

The county sits at the heart of the UK's energy system, hosting nationally significant gas import infrastructure, electricity interconnectors, ongoing nuclear decommissioning, generation assets and a growing pipeline of clean energy investment. It also has the natural endowment of the coastline, and the highest levels of solar irradiance in the UK. This is attracting significant investment interest across a range of energy typologies, including from hydrogen production and harnessing tidal power.

Kent's energy assets are spatially dispersed, from import terminals in North Kent, to established renewables in Mid and West Kent, and to offshore energy infrastructure in East Kent.

**Energy accounts for around 2,800 jobs and around 80 businesses but generates almost £200,000 GVA per job**

This creates economic opportunities of the energy sector to be captured in a range of locations and drive benefits for multiple communities.

These assets mean that Kent and Medway's role extends far beyond the local economy, contributing directly to national energy security and resilience.






# Our National Significance

Kent and Medway is one of the UK's most important energy gateways. The county hosts major international electricity interconnectors linking Britain to European markets and Grain LNG, one of Europe's largest liquefied natural gas terminals with the capacity to import and regasify 33% of UK annual gas demand. Together, these assets play a critical role in the security, resilience and flexibility of the UK's energy system.

The county's role is becoming increasingly important as the UK uses new technologies to transition towards a more electrified economy. Existing and emerging assets support offshore wind, solar generation, electricity interconnection, energy storage and future technologies such as hydrogen and new nuclear generation at Dungeness. Future investment in energy infrastructure in Kent and Medway will therefore influence not only local growth, but the ability of the wider UK economy to meet its energy security and resilience ambitions.

Kent and Medway's significance in the energy sector and system comes not from a single asset, but from the combination of import infrastructure, generation, transmission, storage and international connectivity. Together, these create a diverse energy ecosystem of national importance.

**The region's role is becoming increasing important as the UK transitions towards a more electrified economy**

# Kent & Medway in numbers

## Scale

The sector has an average productivity of nearly **£200,000** GVA per job.

Strong in the production of electricity, which has a **57%** higher concentration.

Growing number of businesses at **4.2%** Compound Annual Growth Rate.

## Future Trends

Hydrogen technology has started development in 2025.

Offshore wind expansion creates a **40GW** of wind energy target.

## Enterprise

Just **70%** of businesses are classed as 'micro', which is less than comparators.

**16 rounds** of equity funding per 1000 businesses, higher than the **11** average, but median value is almost **half** the national.

## Infrastructure

**34%** of space occupied by energy businesses are classed as **Grade A**, nearly double the regional average.

Key projects include **Nemo Link Interconnector** and **Richborough energy park.**

## Innovation

**1.61%** of businesses report spending on R&D, compared to **0.35%** on average. **1.15**% have received an R&D grant, compared to **0.61%** on average.

A high share of innovate UK projects in Kent and Medway relate to energy.

## Human Capital

**58%** of workers are **high-skilled**, more than the national average for energy.

Jobs demand is high, with energy job adverts accounting for **35%** of all jobs.

High concentration of **production managers** and **electrical engineers.**





# Our Assets

Kent and Medway is home to a significant concentration of national energy infrastructure. This includes Grain LNG, major electricity interconnectors including BritNed, Nemo Link, ElecLink and IFA1, nuclear assets at Dungeness B, significant offshore wind and solar assets, Richborough Energy Park, Wallend Substation and a range of power generation and energy distribution infrastructure. Together, these assets span import, generation, storage and transmission activities.

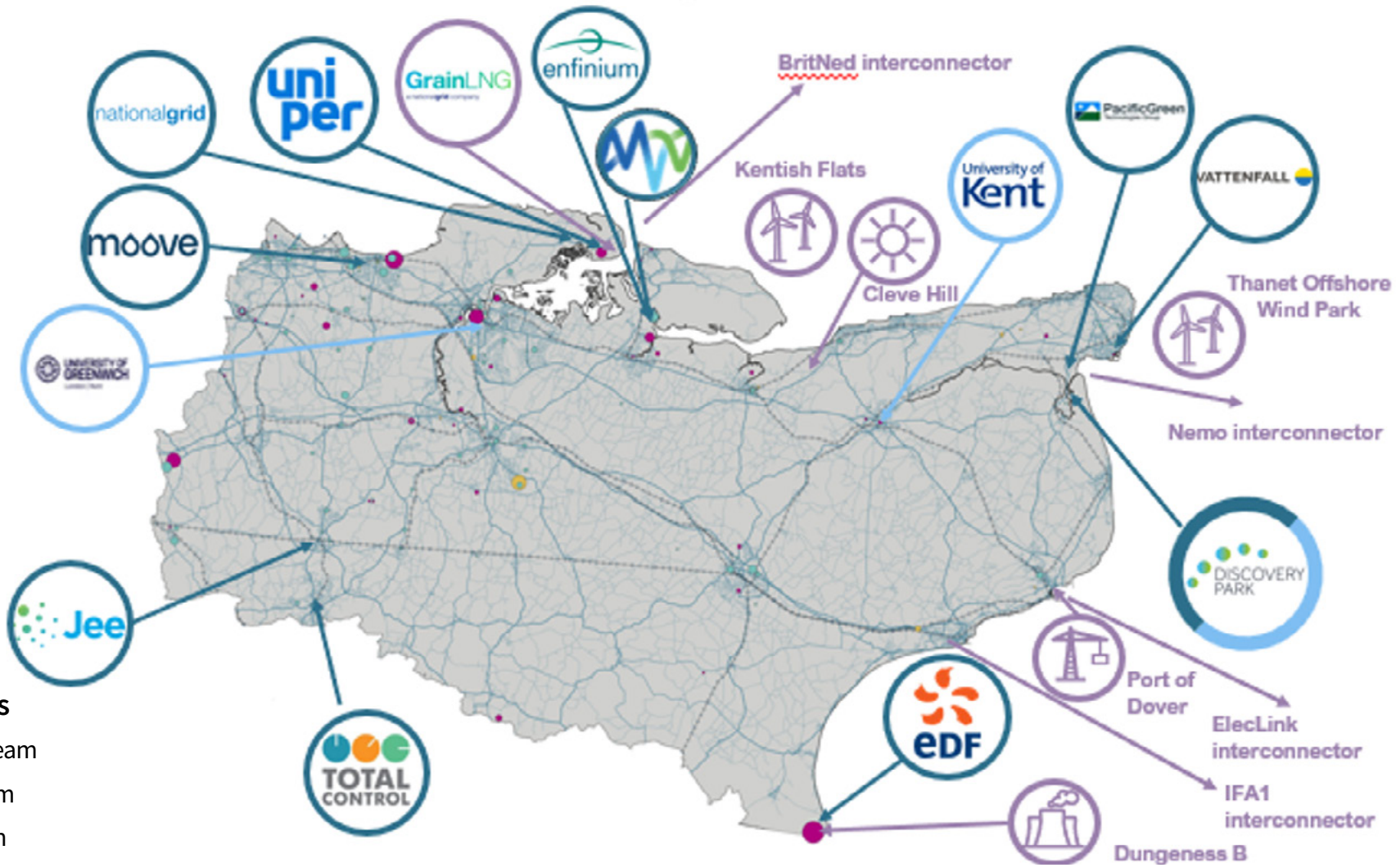
Kent and Medway is developing a distinctive base of emerging energy technologies, including tidal energy, sustainable fuels and hydrogen. Combined with assets such as Discovery Park and the area's coastal and transport infrastructure, this provides opportunities to develop, test and commercialise new energy solutions. East Kent's ports in particular offer potential to support innovation and new investment in emerging energy technologies, alongside associated manufacturing and skilled employment.

The region also benefits from natural and locational advantages including having some of the highest levels of solar irradiance in the UK and an extensive coastline. These provide opportunities for offshore wind and solar generation in appropriate locations, including rooftops, car parks and previously developed land, while recognising the need to protect high-quality agricultural land and balance the needs of other sectors and communities. MidKent College provides an example of this approach, with a major solar carport installation making productive use of existing car-parking space to generate electricity and hot water for the College. The installation has a combined output of 303 kWp and incorporates photovoltaic-thermal (PVT) technology.

Alongside these physical assets, Kent and Medway has a growing ecosystem of businesses, skills and expertise supporting the energy sector. This includes activity in renewable energy, energy storage, engineering and emerging technologies, creating opportunities to strengthen local supply chains, attract investment and develop specialist skills. Established industrial locations such as the Kemsley Cluster and Discovery Park provide further opportunities for businesses, infrastructure providers and research partners to collaborate.

Existing clusters provide a basis for bringing businesses, infrastructure providers and research partners together around shared energy, skills and sustainability projects. Industrial symbiosis offers opportunities to use waste heat, materials and by-products from one business as inputs for another, improving resource efficiency and creating new commercial opportunities.

Kent and Medway is also home to emerging energy innovation initiatives, including the University of Kent research for HS1 renewable energy, which has explored a private electricity network along the high-speed rail corridor to facilitate renewable electricity transmission, connecting renewable generation with business demand to help address power constraints and enable growth. The project demonstrates the potential for innovation in addressing energy capacity challenges and developing solutions that could have wider application.






**Sub-sectors**

- Downstream
- Midstream
- Upstream

| Actors and Assets | | Infrastructure | Enablers |
|---|---|---|---|
| A critical mass of geographically and economically proximate firms with many specialising in emerging sectors | Key anchor, HE and FE institutions and supporting organisations and a supply of talent, skills and knowledge | Physical (transport, road networks, energy systems) and digital assets that support the flow of ideas | Investment capital to take risks and to fund research/expansion and a supportive policy environment |
| Networks to share information and knowledge, coordinate activities and promote a shared innovation culture and wider regional linkages. | | | |

***Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Data City Data***

Kent and Medway's growth opportunity lies in moving beyond its role as a host of nationally significant energy infrastructure and capturing greater economic value from the transition to a secure and more electrified energy system.

The county is uniquely positioned to capture growth from offshore wind, solar generation, interconnection, energy storage and emerging technologies across generation and industrial modernisation. Building on our strategic location and existing infrastructure, Kent and Medway can become a place where new energy technologies are deployed, tested and commercialised at scale.

There is an opportunity to use energy assets to unlock wider economic growth. Increased energy capacity, improved network resilience and greater local generation could support growth in manufacturing, logistics, digital technologies, controlled environment agriculture and other energy-intensive sectors. Energy can therefore act as both a growth sector in its own right and an enabler of transformation across the wider economy.

Future growth could also be driven by strengthening the local supply chain around major projects, supporting innovation in emerging technologies and creating stronger links between energy assets, businesses and research organisations. Combined, these opportunities would allow Kent and Medway to capture more of the value generated by the transition to a cleaner, more resilient and more secure energy system.

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## What's holding growth back?

Whilst Kent and Medway possesses nationally significant energy assets, several barriers limit its ability to maximise the economic value created by them.

- Grid capacity and wider network constraints are increasingly limiting development and future energy-intensive investment.
- Large energy assets do not always generate the level of local supply-chain activity, innovation spillovers or business growth that their scale would suggest.
- SMEs often struggle to access opportunities within large energy projects and supply chains.
- Skills shortages exist across engineering, electrical, installation and specialist technical occupations, with competition from large national infrastructure projects further intensifying demand.
- The energy ecosystem remains fragmented, with opportunities to strengthen collaboration between asset owners, businesses, universities, colleges and public partners.
- Emerging opportunities around hydrogen, carbon capture and storage industrial symbiosis are yet to be fully realised and require coordination, infrastructure and investment.

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One place to do it all

# KEMSLEY CLUSTER



## Project details:

The Kemsley Industrial Cluster is the largest industrial cluster in Kent and Sussex, bringing together major businesses in energy generation, manufacturing, recycling, waste management and logistics. Through Innovate UK's Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plan initiative, partners have developed proposals combining carbon capture, green hydrogen, and greater energy and steam integration to reduce emissions while maintaining industrial competitiveness. Further investment would enable these proposals to progress towards delivery and support Kemsley's transition into a low-carbon industrial hub.



## Alignment to principles of LGP:

Significant direct impact on energy sector growth and represents a scalable model that could be applied elsewhere.

## The ask:

An initial £5 million of government funding to move the cluster's proposals from feasibility and modelling into Pre-FEED and FEED. This would fund the technical, engineering, environmental, regulatory and financial work needed to refine the proposed technologies, identify shared infrastructure requirements and develop the business case required to reach Final Investment Decision and unlock approximately £550 million of capital investment. A further £10 million of public funding is anticipated at a later stage to support implementation.

## The impact/benefits:

Transform Kemsley from a carbon-emitting cluster into a net carbon remover, with the potential to remove more than 500,000 tonnes of $CO_2$ annually. Investment could also retain around 1,100 existing jobs, create approximately 400–600 additional jobs, improve energy resilience and establish a model for industrial symbiosis that could be replicated elsewhere in the UK.

**Contact Information:**
investkent@kent.gov.uk

# Our actions to support growth

**Kent and Medway's energy assets already play a nationally significant role in energy security, generation and international connectivity. Unlocking growth will require stronger coordination around future energy demand, infrastructure investment, innovation and supply-chain development so that more of the value associated with the energy transition is captured locally.**

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Photography Credit Visit Canterbury, Josh Carter

## To do this, key priorities include:

**A11: Use the energy transition as a platform for innovation.** The transition to an electrified economy will create significant new energy demands across Kent and Medway, from the electrification of the Port of Dover and freight transport through to controlled environment agriculture, food production and industrial modernisation. This creates opportunities to drive innovation, attract investment and develop new technologies and supply chains, while making more strategic use of energy infrastructure to support economic growth. This could include opportunities to co-locate energy generation, infrastructure and energy-intensive businesses, enabling economic activity to benefit from locations where energy capacity is available.

**We will work with major energy users, infrastructure providers, innovators and government to identify future demand hotspots and opportunities for co-location, and develop projects that position Kent and Medway as a testbed for next-generation energy solutions.**

**A12: Strengthen the Grain energy cluster.** Grain is already home to nationally significant energy infrastructure and is well positioned to support future investment in energy generation, storage, distribution and industrial modernisation. The concentration of existing assets creates opportunities to attract complementary activities and derive greater economic value from large-scale infrastructure investments.

**We will work with asset owners, businesses, infrastructure providers and government to explore opportunities to strengthen the Grain and Isle of Grain energy cluster, including initiatives such as the Medway Capture Cluster and other activities that can support business growth, innovation and supply chain development.**

## To do this, key priorities include:

**A13: Explore opportunities in hydrogen and energy storage.** New and emerging technologies, including tidal energy, sustainable fuels, hydrogen, solar, small modular reactors and energy storage, have the potential to play an important role in the future energy system while creating opportunities for innovation, manufacturing and investment. Kent and Medway's strategic location, industrial assets and energy infrastructure provide a strong platform from which to explore these opportunities.

**We will work with businesses, research partners and infrastructure providers to identify commercially viable opportunities for new forms of production, transmission and deployment, alongside wider energy storage technologies that support energy security and economic growth. We will pursue opportunities that deliver economic benefits, create and safeguard high-quality jobs and support existing industries, while recognising the importance of balancing new development with community priorities, landscape considerations, and the protection of productive agricultural land.**



**A14: Develop opportunities for industrial symbiosis and resource sharing.** The concentration of energy, industrial and logistics assets across Kent and Medway creates opportunities for businesses to share infrastructure, energy, resources and by-products in ways that improve productivity and reduce costs. Greater collaboration between businesses could help unlock new forms of economic activity whilst supporting wider objectives.

**We will work with businesses and infrastructure providers to identify opportunities for industrial symbiosis, resource sharing and collaborative innovation, building on existing proposals and emerging initiatives across the county.**

**A15: Maximise local economic benefits from major energy investments.** Major energy projects create significant opportunities for local businesses and residents, but these benefits are not always fully captured within the local economy. There is an opportunity to strengthen local supply chains, improve access to contracts and create clearer routes into employment within the sector.

**We will work with businesses, education providers and project sponsors to identify where Kent and Medway has the strongest opportunities to participate in energy supply chains, including the capabilities, skills and technologies that will be needed as major projects come forward. This will provide a basis for targeted action to strengthen local supply chains and connect local people and businesses to emerging opportunities.**

## Grain LNG

Europe's largest liquified natural gas terminal is located on the Isle of Grain in Medway, and provides an important connection between international energy markets and the UK's gas network, making it a nationally significant asset for energy security and resilience.

Liquefied natural gas is transported by ship after being cooled into liquid form. At Grain, it is unloaded, stored and converted back into gas before entering the national transmission network. The terminal has 1.2 million cubic metres of tank storage capacity and sufficient delivery capacity to meet up to one-third of UK gas demand.

The terminal extends across more than 600 acres and incorporates two cryogenic unloading lines and two jetties capable of receiving the world's largest LNG carriers. Around £1.1 billion has been invested in the site, including successive phases of expansion that have increased its storage and regasification capacity. Its large storage tanks provide flexibility to store LNG and adjust the delivery of gas in response to changing market conditions.

**£1.1bn**
**invested so far**

**33%**
**of the UK's gas capacity can be delivered**

**1.2m**
**cubic metres of tank storage**





# Ports, Transport and Logistics











# Defining Our Sector

Ports, transport and logistics is one of Kent and Medway's most strategically important sectors, bringing together the infrastructure, businesses and services responsible for moving goods, people and information into, out of and across the UK.

The sector spans ports, freight, warehousing, logistics operations, customs and border activity, rail freight and passenger services, maritime services, and the wider transport networks that support trade and economic activity, alongside emerging opportunities for commercial aviation, flight testing and drone innovation. It accounts for around 32,000 jobs, 1,640 businesses and £1.5bn in GVA across Kent and Medway.

Kent and Medway's gateway geography makes this activity fundamental to both the local and national economy. The county sits at the UK's closest point to mainland Europe – a mere 20 miles away – and hosts the country's most concentrated collection of international trade gateways, including the Port of Dover, the Channel Tunnel, Peel Ports, ThamesPort, and a wider network of maritime assets stretching around the coast and into the Thames Estuary.

The county is home to High Speed 1, the UK's only high-speed rail line, and to international stations at Ashford and Ebbsfleet that are ready to support the future return of international passenger services, creating a unique opportunity to strengthen business connectivity with European markets and inward investment. As a result, the sector is not simply an economic strength in its own right, but an enabling capability that supports growth across almost every other sector of the economy.

Logistics activity has grown significantly, with major investment along key transport gateways, including Panattoni's £350 million developments at Aylesford and Sittingbourne. Established and emerging logistics locations around Dartford, Sittingbourne and the Lower Thames Crossing corridor provide further opportunities for investment and growth, aligned with infrastructure capacity, appropriate land use and local benefit considerations.

What makes the sector distinctive is not just the volume of activity that passes through Kent and Medway, but its role within national supply chains. The county combines internationally significant port infrastructure, strategic road and rail connections and proximity to London and European markets, creating an asset base unmatched elsewhere in the UK.






# Our National Significance

Kent and Medway is one of the UK's most important trade economies. The county sits at the heart of the UK's relationship with Europe, providing critical infrastructure that enables the movement of goods, people and energy between the UK and international markets. Much of the country's trade, particularly with Europe, depends upon assets located within Kent and Medway.

Taken together, freight through Kent accounts for approximately 59% of UK-EU trade. The Port of Dover alone handles approximately £144 billion of trade annually, including around a third of all UK-EU trade in goods. Alongside the Channel Tunnel, it forms part of the highest-volume and fastest freight corridor between the UK and mainland Europe.

Kent and Medway's roads are a critical part of the UK's freight infrastructure. The Dartford Crossing carries between 150,000 and 180,000 vehicles a day, almost 40% of them freight vehicles or HGVs, underlining the crucial need for the additional capacity to be provided by the Lower Thames Crossing.

The Thames Estuary ports also form a critical part of the UK's freight infrastructure. The Port of Sheerness is a nationally significant gateway for vehicles, construction materials and industrial freight, providing a key entry point for the aggregates, timber, steel and other materials needed to deliver homes, major infrastructure projects and economic growth across the South East.

**The Port of Dover alone handles approximately £144 billion of trade annually**

The Port of Ramsgate is also emerging as a centre for maritime, coastal and energy-related innovation, supporting new business activity, skills development and investment in East Kent.

The wider network of ports, rail infrastructure and freight corridors further strengthens Kent and Medway's role in national trade, economic resilience and supply chain security.

# Kent & Medway in numbers

## Scale

**95%** of space is industrial, with rent costs roughly **15%** cheaper

**15%** of space is Grade A, compared to **20%** nationally

Lower warehouse vacancy rate than comparators at **6.8%**

## Future Trends

Business numbers growing at a rate of **6%** Compound Annual Growth Rate

**5 of the 6** sectors with more than twice the national concentration are in water transport

## Enterprise

Ports, transport and logistics businesses are **40%** more likely to be exporting in the region

Mature business base with **73%** of businesses established, compared to **64%** nationally

## Infrastructure

The Lower Thames Crossing to more than double road capacity connecting to Essex.

Ashford International reopening could inject **£534** million a year into the visitor economy, and up to **£2.7** billion over five years. Reopening Ebbsfleet International would unlock additional growth opportunities.

## Innovation

**112%** higher concentration in Supply chain logistics than nationally

**90%** higher concentration in Marine and Maritime than nationally

Significant strengths (~**70%** more concentrated) in tracking technologies

## Human Capital

**22%** of occupations are highly-skilled

**27** job vacancies per **100** jobs, compared to **22** in the UK

High concentration of road and rail transport offers, with lower concentration of employment linked to road transport






# Our Assets

The county is home to the Port of Dover, the Channel Tunnel, Port of Sheerness, Thamesport, Port of Ramsgate, High Speed 1, Ashford International, Ebbsfleet International, the Dartford Crossing and the Lower Thames Crossing corridor, Manston Airport, Lydd Airport's Centre for Future Flight Innovation and strategically important road networks including the M2, M20 and M25, as well as close proximity to Gatwick Airport. Together these assets provide unparalleled access to London, international markets and European supply-chains.

Alongside and because of this infrastructure, Kent and Medway hosts a growing business base spanning freight operations, logistics services, maritime activity, customs expertise, supply-chain management and transport technologies.

As logistics systems are becoming more digital, more automated and more closely linked to national priorities around productivity, modernisation, resilience and economic security our trade gateways provide opportunities to develop and deploy the technologies, infrastructure and business models that will shape the future of trade and logistics. The University of Kent also houses the Centre for Logistics and Sustainability Analytics, investigating a wide range of transport and logistics problems, and leading research projects on the future of the road and maritime transport sectors.

We also have unrealised opportunities linked to strategic infrastructure and future investment.

International stations at Ashford and Ebbsfleet, underused rail freight capacity, Manston Airport, potential river passenger services from Gravesend to London, and parts of the wider port network represent assets that could play a greater role in future growth.

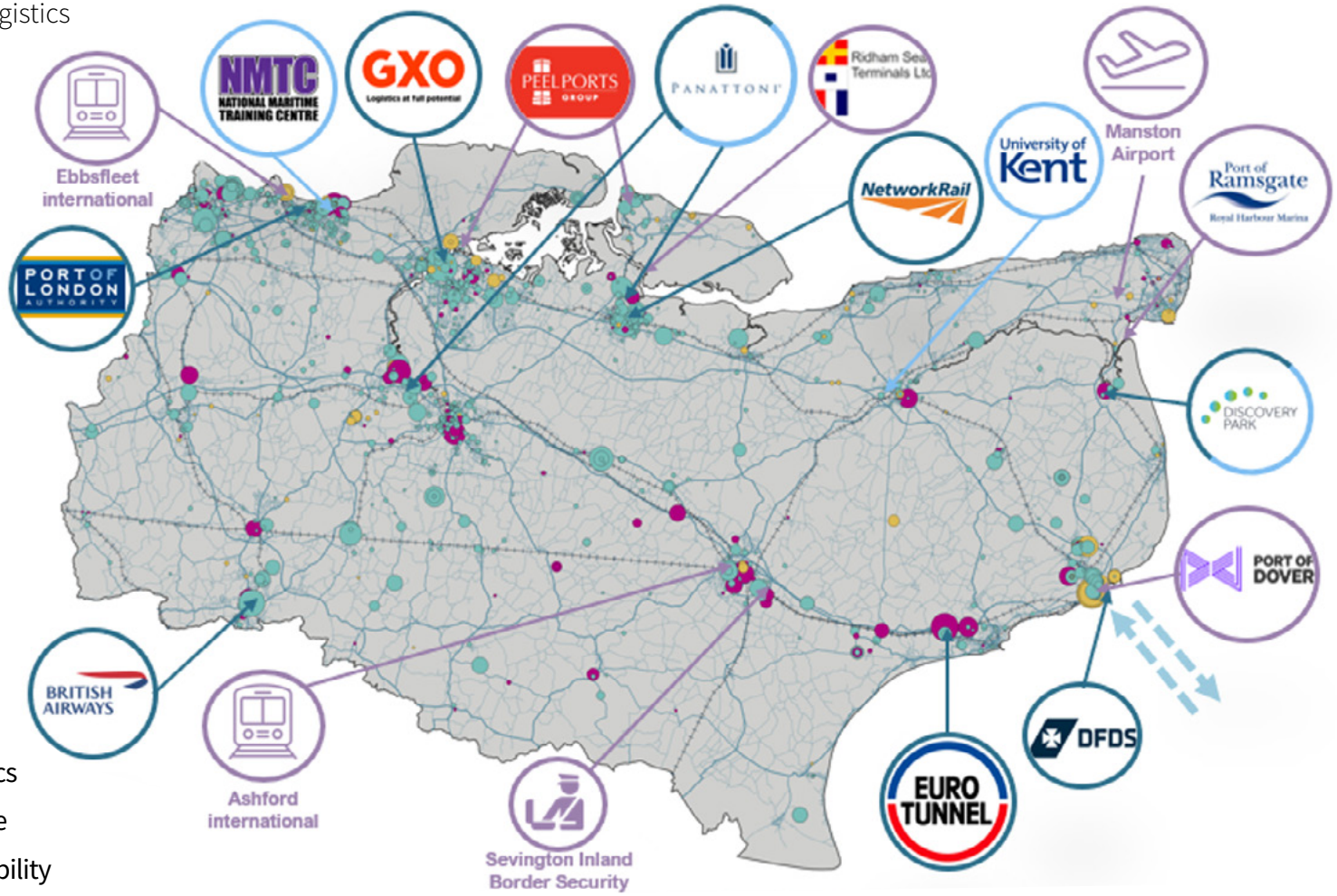
Major investments and infrastructure proposals, including:

- the Lower Thames Crossing
- improvements to the A229 Blue Bell Hill corridor
- A2 Brenley Corner and
- the dualling of the A2 near Dover

have the potential to improve capacity, reliability and connectivity across the county.

Collectively, these investments, alongside opportunities around rail freight, freight gauge enhancements, border innovation and digital logistics, could provide the foundations for significant future expansion.

The challenge is connecting this infrastructure and business base more effectively, so that investment in our gateways supports the growth of local firms and creates clearer opportunities for residents to access skilled employment.






## Sub-sectors

- Freight and logistics
- Ports and Maritime
- Transport and mobility

| Actors and Assets | | Infrastructure | Enablers |
|---|---|---|---|
| A critical mass of major ports, logistics, and transport operators and employers providing operational capacity to underpin sector activity at scale. | Interconnected employment sites, operational hubs and specialist training facilities clustered along key gateways and strategic transport corridors. | A unique concentration of nationally significant physical anchors that support high-volume, cross-border movement of goods and people, with significant latent capacity across underutilised port, airport and international rail assets. | Coordination and operating conditions that allow dispersed assets and employers to function together across Kent and Medway's transport corridors. |

Networks that link assets, employers and infrastructure across the county, supporting coordination, resilience and efficient movement. 69

***Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Data City Data***

Kent and Medway's growth opportunity lies in capturing more of the value created by the movement of goods, people and trade. Future growth should focus on increasing the value generated and retained locally through innovation, technology adoption, logistics services and higher-value business activity.

Kent and Medway's ports are more than strategic transport gateways. They are catalysts for wider economic growth, supporting employment, innovation, skills development, manufacturing, professional services, digital technologies, visitor economies and inward investment. Our ambition is to create the conditions for more businesses to locate, grow and invest here, with stronger local supply chains and clearer routes for residents into skilled employment.

The county has the potential to become a leading centre for the future of logistics, combining trade infrastructure with digital technologies, border innovation and smart freight solutions. Strengths in supply-chain management, tracking technologies, logistics software and customs expertise provide opportunities to develop new products and services and increase productivity across the wider economy.

Realising this potential also means making better use of existing assets. Greater use of rail freight, international rail connectivity, airports and coastal infrastructure could unlock new economic activity while improving resilience and sustainability. Combined with major investments such as the Lower Thames Crossing, this provides a platform for trade, logistics and supply-chain innovation, with success reflected in the business growth, investment and employment opportunities created within our communities.

The ambition is for Kent and Medway to become the UK's leading location for trade, logistics and supply-chain innovation:  a place where nationally significant infrastructure not only enables growth elsewhere, but acts as a platform for creating higher-value local economic activity.

## What's holding growth back?

Whilst the sector is a major economic strength, several barriers limit the ability to translate national importance into local economic benefit.

- Much of the value generated by trade flows is captured elsewhere in supply chains rather than within Kent and Medway itself.
- Congestion, capacity constraints and gaps in multimodal connectivity reduce efficiency and resilience across the network, and can inhibit business operations and growth.
- Important assets, including international rail stations, rail freight infrastructure and some port assets, are underutilised relative to their potential.
- The sector is increasingly dependent on digital, engineering and technical skills, creating workforce challenges as logistics becomes more technology-driven.
- Businesses face difficulties accessing innovation support and there is potential to strengthen connections between ports, universities, technology firms and wider supply chains.
- National policy, regulatory frameworks and investment decisions around transport, border systems and freight infrastructure can constrain local opportunities.








# The Channel Tunnel and International Rail

The Channel Tunnel and High Speed 1 (HS1) connect the UK directly to continental Europe, supporting international passenger services and the movement of freight. As the UK's only fixed link to the continent, the Tunnel provides significant capacity for expanding international travel and rail freight. Connecting directly with the Tunnel at Folkestone, HS1 carries international services onwards through Kent to London, alongside domestic high-speed services.

Around 64,000 passenger trains operated on HS1 in 2024/25, and international high-speed rail services carried 11.8 million passengers through Kent and the Channel Tunnel in 2025. High speed capability significantly reduces journey times between Kent and London, bringing Ashford within 36 minutes, and Gravesend within 23 minutes of London, compared with journeys more than twice as long on conventional services.

Kent and Medway's international rail terminals at Ashford and Ebbsfleet connect the region directly to this network but have not been served by international trains since the pandemic in 2020, with services instead travelling directly to London. This leaves significant existing capacity available that could be used to strengthen connections with European markets, shift more passenger and freight journeys from air and road to rail, and enable Kent and Medway to capture more of the economic value generated by international activity passing through the region. Restoring services would unlock regional growth that has been stymied since the suspension of services by Eurostar. International Rail can grow the economy through multiple channels.

Firstly, resumption of services is expected to encourage more international visitors to stay in Kent and Medway, increasing demand across the Visitor Economy and retaining more spending locally. Projections estimate that this could attract up to 493,000 new visitors, generate £315 million in spending and contribute £2.67 billion to the UK economy over five years.

International services could also create international opportunities for Kent and Medway's business base and strengthen the inward-investment proposition. Direct access to Europe, alongside fast connections to London, could reduce friction and costs for businesses here and make the region more attractive to European businesses seeking a UK location and UK companies requiring stronger access to continental markets. Easier connections with customers, suppliers, investors and skilled workers could influence where businesses establish, retain or expand their operations.






Ashford and Ebbsfleet serve distinct but complementary markets and opportunities.

Ashford is well placed to support the visitor economy across Kent and the wider South East, with onward rail connections extending its potential catchment into Sussex, including Hastings. It could also play a wider strategic role within an increasingly competitive international rail market. Its existing passenger-handling capacity could support future operators, complement capacity at St Pancras and increase the resilience of the UK's international rail network.

As an international terminal outside London, with potential land for supporting rail infrastructure such as a servicing and maintenance depot, Ashford could provide an alternative point for international services during disruption affecting access to the capital, helping to maintain UK–European connectivity. Emerging interest in establishing such a facility at Ashford could also generate direct employment and supply-chain activity.

Ebbsfleet, meanwhile, provides access to a substantial resident and business market around the M25 and Thames Estuary, including nearby employment locations such as Crossways Business Park. Its future market will be strengthened further by the growth of Ebbsfleet Garden City, where Ebbsfleet Development Corporation is leading the delivery of up to 15,000 new homes, expanding the potential customer base for domestic and international rail services.

Realising these opportunities will require continued work with London St. Pancras Highspeed, station owners and prospective operators to develop a viable proposition for renewed services and associated investment. There is growing interest from prospective operators, including Virgin and FS Group Trenitalia, in serving Ashford and Ebbsfleet as part of future international services. Kent and Medway partners are working alongside industry stakeholders to help realise this opportunity and support the return of international services to both stations.



**International high-speed rail services carried 11.8 million passengers through Kent and the Channel Tunnel in 2025**



**Around 43% of the UK's existing international rail station passenger-handling capacity sits idle**

# SHEERNESS STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE (SRFI)

**Project details:**

Development of a planning-approved rail freight terminal at the Port of Sheerness, integrating deep-water shipping, inland water freight, rail and road within a single logistics hub.

**Alignment to principles of LGP:**

Supports Kent and Medway's ports, transport and logistics strengths, while enabling sustainable freight movement, resilient supply chains and investment in energy, construction and manufacturing.

**The ask:**

Approximately £4.5 million of government infrastructure funding to accelerate delivery and unlock further private investment.

**The impact/benefits:**

A more efficient and resilient freight gateway serving London and the South East, supporting major housing, infrastructure and energy projects. The terminal is expected to create construction jobs and permanent skilled roles, with each freight train potentially removing around 75 HGV movements from the road network.






**Contact Information:**
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# Our actions to support growth



**The ports, transport and logistics sector is one of Kent and Medway's greatest strategic strengths, underpinning national connectivity, international trade and economic resilience. However, the full economic potential of these assets is not yet being realised. Unlocking future growth will require greater coordination across infrastructure, operators, businesses, key local stakeholders and public partners to maximise the value generated by our nationally significant gateways, ensuring that the benefits of trade support business growth, investment, innovation and high-quality employment across Kent and Medway.**



## To do this, key priorities include:

**A16:** **Develop a collective voice for the sector.** Develop a stronger collective voice to influence national decisions around transport, border and trade infrastructure that are critical to Kent and Medway's future growth. There is a need for a stronger mechanism through which the sector can articulate shared priorities, advocate for investment and policy change, and ensure that national decision-making recognises both the strategic importance of Kent and Medway and the impacts associated with fulfilling this role.

**We will bring together existing clusters, key stakeholders and local policymakers to develop shared priorities, advocate for the investment and policy changes the sector requires, and identify opportunities to leverage nationally significant infrastructure to deliver greater local economic benefits. We will also become a more innovative, resilient and higher-value trade economy, capturing greater value from our role as the UK's gateway to Europe through smarter logistics, stronger supply chains, trade infrastructure and the growth of the businesses, skills and services that support these activities.**



**A17:** **Position Kent and Medway as a testbed for border and freight innovation.** Build on the concentration of international trade activity to establish Kent and Medway as a testbed for border innovation, customs technologies and smart freight solutions. The county's unique position at the heart of UK-EU trade creates opportunities to develop and deploy solutions that improve the efficiency, resilience and sustainability of freight and border operations.

**We will seek to work with national innovation and infrastructure partners to support businesses to develop, test and commercialise customs systems, border management, digital trade and smart freight solutions, leveraging planned investment in the Port of Dover's digital programme and proposed Borders Digital Sandbox to allow local firms to access development and commercial opportunities and extend benefits across Kent and Medway.**

**A18:** **Strengthen rail freight and international connectivity.** Expand rail freight capacity, including multimodal links with ports and waterborne freight, and strengthen the use of highspeed/international rail infrastructure to improve connectivity, resilience, trade and sustainable growth. Greater use of rail could support economic growth, help reduce pressure on the strategic road network and strengthen links with domestic and international markets.

**We will establish a taskforce bringing together infrastructure owners, operators, key local stakeholders and public-sector partners to define the economic opportunity, identify infrastructure requirements and coordinate the case for future investment in rail freight, waterborne freight and international rail connectivity, ensuring growth opportunities are realised within Kent and Medway as well as across national supply-chains.**

## To do this, key priorities include:

**A19:** **Unlock the potential of strategic transport and trade assets.** Strategic assets including the Lower Thames Crossing, international rail stations, airport infrastructure and the wider port and rail networks have the potential to support additional trade, investment and economic activity. Realising their value will depend on complementary investment that strengthens connections between them, addresses constraints across the wider transport network and enables more of the economic value associated with trade flows to be retained locally.

**We will work with relevant stakeholders to define the opportunities associated with these assets and identify the steps required to better leverage their potential. This will include making the case for improvements to the A229 Blue Bell Hill, Brenley Corner and the A2 towards Dover to maximise the benefits of the Lower Thames Crossing. We will also continue to work with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for International Rail to make the case for the restoration of international rail services at Ashford and Ebbsfleet, strengthening Kent and Medway's connectivity with European markets.**

**A20:** **Use future freight technologies to drive innovation and growth.** Position Kent and Medway at the forefront of greener logistics through rail freight, port electrification, green shipping corridors and alternative fuels. There is also potential to develop our ports and coastal assets as green and blue energy hubs, bringing together energy generation and infrastructure with maritime and coastal innovation, and creating opportunities for new investment, technologies and supply chains. The transition towards electrified freight presents both a significant challenge and an opportunity to drive innovation, attract investment and create new supply-chain activity. In particular, electrification at Dover could act as a catalyst for wider growth in energy, engineering and logistics-related activities, strengthening the area's role as both an international gateway and a location for investment and innovation .

**We will work across the transport, logistics and energy sectors to identify and push forward opportunities where future energy technology investments can support new business activity, innovation, higher-value employment and local supply-chain development.**

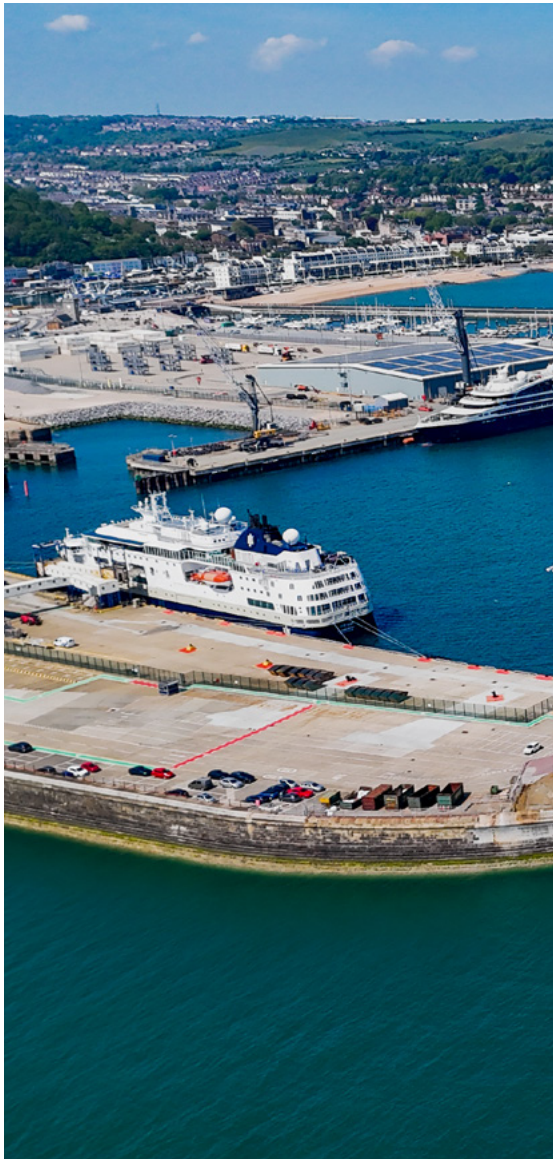
## The Port of Dover

The Port of Dover is the UK's busiest international ferry port and closest gateway to mainland Europe. Its speed, scale and strategic location make it critical to businesses and supply chains across the country, meaning investment in Dover's future has implications for national trade and competitiveness, alongside growth in Kent and Medway.

Located on the Short Straits, the Port of Dover is a critical part of the UK's trade infrastructure. It alone handles approximately £144 billion worth of trade annually, including 33% of all trade in goods with the EU, and 30% of all ro-ro ferry arrivals to the UK. The scale, frequency and speed of its connections make Dover crucial to international supply chains, including the movement of fresh food, medicines and other goods that depend on reliable access between UK and European markets. It supports roughly 57 arrivals and departures per 24 hours, based on 12 ferries. It is also a major transport gateway, transporting around 1.8 million tourist vehicles, nine million passengers and 2.1 million freight vehicles in 2025.

The UK's first net zero port for its own direct operations and purchased energy, its model clears traffic 18 times faster than competitor ports and saves British businesses and consumers around £3 billion annually compared with alternative routes. The port provides a strong platform to testbed digital automation and clean energy opportunities and pursue its ambition to become the world's first high volume Green Shipping Corridor. The transition to electric ferries and supporting energy infrastructure could place this nationally important trade route at the forefront of maritime decarbonisation, but will require sufficient grid capacity and commercially viable electricity.

The Port's 2050 masterplan sets out its long-term development ambitions, providing a significant pipeline of investment in infrastructure, transport management, border innovation and energy. This programme has the potential to increase the value of trade handled through Dover by 20%, to £173 billion annually, while creating opportunities for construction, engineering and technology businesses involved in its delivery. Building on this investment, there is an opportunity to strengthen Dover's role as a centre for enterprise, innovation, skills and business investment. Connecting local firms to contracts and creating routes for residents into skilled employment will help ensure that growth in trade translates into lasting economic benefits for Dover and communities across Kent and Medway. Growth in trade would also generate further demand for transport and logistics services across Kent and Medway, extending the economic benefits beyond the port itself.



## Lower Thames Crossing (LTC)

The Lower Thames Crossing is a nationally significant strategic infrastructure project to deliver a new high-capacity road crossing east of London, including a twin-bore tunnel beneath the River Thames and approximately 14 miles (23 km) of new roads connecting the M2/A2 in Kent with the A13/M25 corridors in Essex.

Within Kent and Medway, the scheme is intended to enhance the reliability and resilience of the UK's principal trade and logistics corridor, reducing reliance on a single Thames crossing and strengthening connections between Kent's strategic gateways, London, the Midlands and the North, and the wider national economy. The scheme has a broad national policy mandate and has secured Development Consent and government approval in 2025.

The economic benefits projected have the potential to be transformative, with independent studies suggesting the project could deliver up to £200 million annually in productivity gains by cutting congestion, reducing delays, and creating more reliable connections between ports, logistics parks, and inland hubs. The government has forecast that the scheme could generate as many as 22,000 jobs during construction and provide a long-term boost for regional economies that rely heavily on efficient movement of goods.

However, the full transport benefits depend on improvements elsewhere in Kent's strategic road network. Constraints at the A229 Blue Bell Hill, Brenley Corner and the A2 towards Dover will remain on routes connecting the crossing with Dover and the Channel Tunnel. Without these improvements, additional traffic could increase pressure on existing bottlenecks rather than improving movement across the county.

There are additional opportunities to emerge from employment space enabled by the delivery of the scheme. Logistics-linked real estate and last-mile facilities near new junctions provide opportunities for new commercial and industrial development, including logistics parks and warehousing growth.



## The Kent coastline

Kent and Medway's coastline forms one of the UK's most important interfaces with Europe and a critical point of connection for the UK. At the Short Straits, the Port of Dover and the Channel Tunnel provide the country's closest and most intensive connections with the continent, supporting the rapid movement of passengers and freight and supporting supply chains across the country. Extending north around the coastline and into the Thames Estuary, a wider network of working ports including Ramsgate, Sheerness and Thamesport on the Isle of Grain provides specialist capacity for automotive trade, construction materials, aggregates, freight and logistics, while supporting offshore energy activity.

Off the north-east Kent coast the Thanet, and Kentish Flats wind farms operated from Ramsgate harbour generate enough electricity annually to supply more than 400,000 UK homes. The coastline also plays an increasingly important role in the movement and generation of energy. Kent hosts electricity interconnectors with France, Belgium and the Netherlands, including the 1 GW Nemo Link at Richborough and the 1 GW BritNed connection at the Isle of Grain. The Isle of Grain is also home to Europe's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal.

This combination of ports, energy infrastructure and access to major shipping routes also creates opportunities to support the transition to a lower-carbon energy system through opportunities for carbon capture and storage at the Medway Capture Cluster. Proposals around the Medway power stations have explored capturing and liquefying carbon dioxide before transporting it by ship to permanent offshore storage. While these proposals are not yet committed, they demonstrate how the region's maritime and energy assets could work together to support lower cost, more resilient industrial energy supply.

# Cross-Cutting Strategic Priorities

Kent and Medway has distinctive sector strengths, nationally significant assets and considerable potential for growth. However, realising this potential depends on addressing the wider conditions that shape how our businesses, institutions, places and people effectively work together and operate.

In developing the Local Growth Plan, five cross-cutting challenges were identified through analysis of the local economy and engagement with businesses, institutions and partners. These challenges are experienced differently across our sectors and places, but collectively limit productivity growth, access to investment and the ability to capture more value within our county.

Five strategic priorities will create conditions for transformative growth across our economy. These priorities address constraints that impact across businesses, sectors and place:

- **Fragmentation limits collaboration and collective impact.**
- **Innovation opportunities are not consistently translated into business growth.**
- **SMEs face barriers to starting, scaling, accessing finance and competing.**
- **Infrastructure is not always aligned with current and future economic need.**
- **Skills provision does not consistently meet employer demand.**

Addressing these constraints will enable our priority sectors and strategic assets to realise more of their potential and act as catalysts for wider growth, accelerating innovation, attracting investment and supporting expanded high-value economic activity across Kent and Medway.

# Build a connected economy with strong, visible networks

**Kent and Medway will operate as a connected economic system. It will be a place in which our collective strengths are visible, priority sectors act with shared purpose and greater collaboration, and businesses can readily access opportunities and support wherever they are located.**

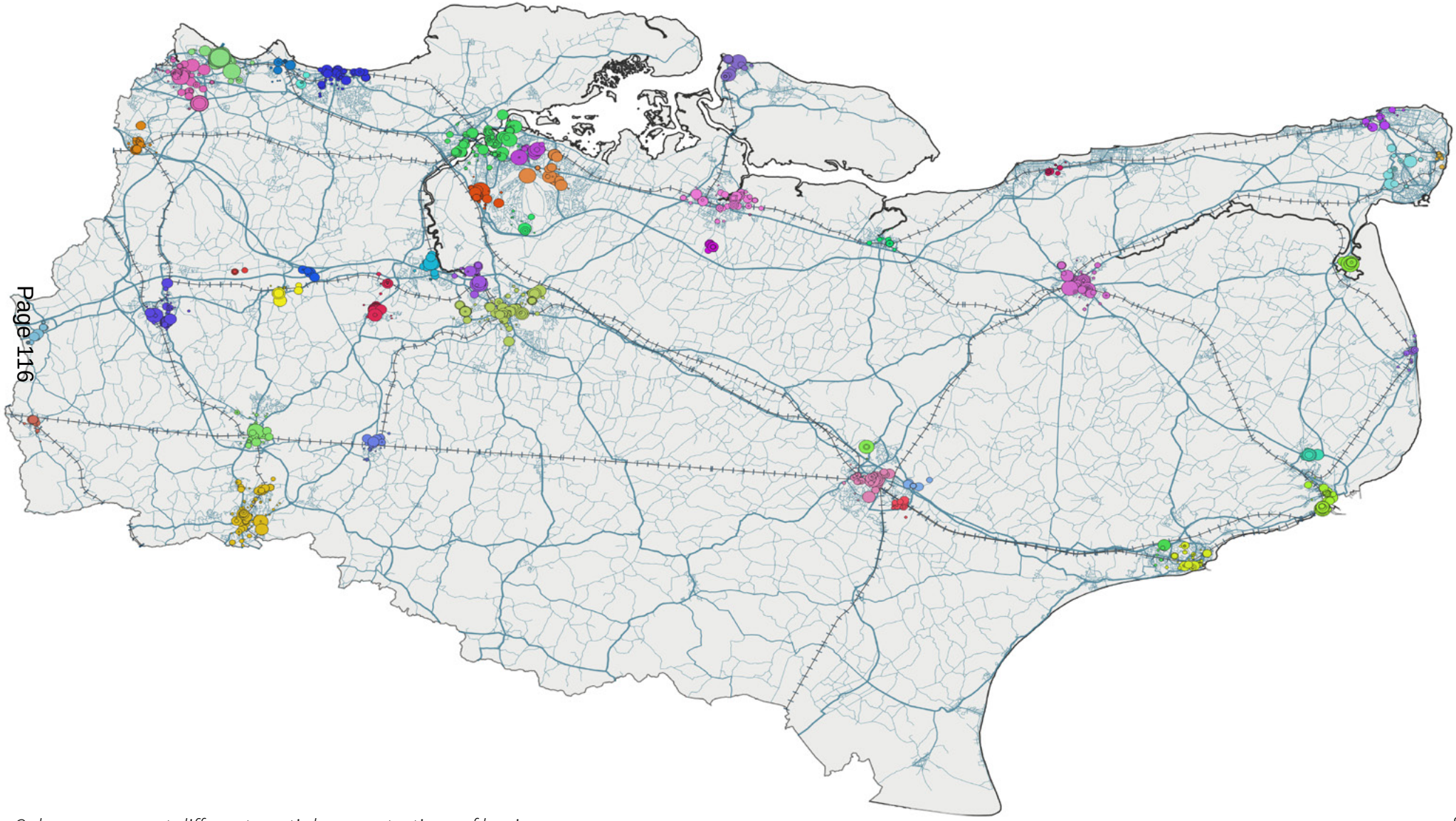
Kent and Medway's scale, polycentric geography and diverse business base are important characteristics of our region, but they do not naturally produce the concentration and connectivity found in major city economies that drive growth with greater ease. This means that our economic capabilities are distributed across different places, sectors and organisations, and opportunities to combine complementary strengths and generate greater value from our existing capabilities are not yet being fully realised. This makes purposeful coordination essential to achieve greater scale, influence, and recognition.

Across our county, our businesses, universities, colleges and key assets each hold pockets of capability, but operate in parallel rather than as a connected system. This disconnect limits collaboration within and across our sectors and means that the collective strengths and assets are working at less than the sum of their parts. This fragmentation is reflected in business support with limited sector-specific provision, unclear routes into skills and research expertise, and weak connections between major assets, anchor organisations and local businesses, meaning opportunities to develop clusters and new international links to Europe, strengthen local supply chains and generate wider economic benefits are not being fully realised.

Our dispersed economic geography means that there is no single commercial or innovation centre of gravity around which activity naturally concentrates. Without purposeful coordination, it is difficult to build the critical mass needed to form clusters, sustain collaboration and realise economies of scale. Several of our priority sectors consequently lack the shared voice and clear proposition needed to attract investment and gain external recognition.

For businesses, fragmentation means that the support landscape that can be difficult to navigate, spread across different organisations and places, making it harder for businesses to identify and access what they need. This is particularly challenging for our broad base of innovative SMEs with limited time and capacity, making strong networks, opportunities for collaboration and brokered connections essential to opening routes into support, expertise, funding and new markets.

# Spatial concentrations of emerging economy businesses in Kent & Medway



*Colours represent different spatial concentrations of businesses*

## Short Straits Maritime Cluster

The Short Straits Maritime Cluster (SSMC) is an industry-led network connecting businesses, education and research institutions, and government across the maritime sector. The cluster provides a platform through which members can share knowledge and good practice, combine expertise and develop joint initiatives around the opportunities and challenges facing the Short Straits region. Established in 2025 by the Port of Dover, DFDS and the University of Kent, the cluster grew out of earlier collaboration on clean-maritime projects.

The cluster creates regular opportunities for members to meet, exchange knowledge and explore shared challenges through networking, workshops and engagement with policymakers. These relationships help connect industry needs with research expertise and skills provision, allowing organisations to identify areas where they can combine their capabilities and develop projects together. Its work is centred on decarbonisation, digitalisation and the skills the maritime sector will need in future.

The cluster is successfully creating connections between organisations that contribute different expertise, and provides a basis for coordinated action across the sector. It strengthens the sector's collective voice and helps partners respond jointly to technological change, skills requirements and future investment opportunities.



## Business Advisory Board (BAB)

The Business Advisory Board provides a direct link between Kent and Medway's business community and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP). Working closely with the region's prominent business membership organisations (such as KICC, FSB, IOD), the Board gathers market intelligence, identifies emerging opportunities and challenges, and ensures business perspectives inform economic decision-making. In turn, it provides a mechanism for sharing information on policies, programmes and investment opportunities back to businesses, helping to strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors and ensuring KMEP remains responsive to business needs.

# Our actions to support growth

**Kent and Medway has significant economic assets, sector strengths and supporting innovation capabilities, but these are dispersed across a large and polycentric area. Unlocking growth will require stronger coordination across places, sectors and organisations so that our region operates as a more connected economic system that can pursue shared opportunities and better communicate our strengths.**



## To do this, key priorities include:

**B1: Strengthen the visibility of Kent and Medway's sector strengths and economic offer to businesses, investors and government.** We have a wealth of nationally significant assets, sector strengths and economic activity, but these are not yet sufficiently visible as a collective regional proposition. This limits external recognition and makes it harder to communicate a compelling proposition to businesses, investors and government.

**We will work with Invest Kent, Kent and Medway's principal investment promotion and inwards investment service, and local partners to enhance the visibility of Kent and Medway's offer and strengths, through development of a compelling regional investment offer and sector-specific propositions for government and investors. This will build on relationships with London, neighbouring counties and European partners to attract investment and support business growth.**

**B2: Establish formal cluster groups for priority sectors.** Businesses, assets and institutions within priority sectors are often connected informally, but sectors lack the organisational capacity to align activity, unite ambition, collaborate, and pursue shared opportunities, leading to duplication and loss of opportunities to arise from a collective voice.

**We will create formal cluster groups for priority sectors to align activity, uniting ambition and building support and collaboration mechanisms across industry, academia and civic partners to ensure our sectors are operating as more than the sum of their parts.**

## To do this, key priorities include:

**B3: Strengthen the 'Business Kent' as a single, coordinated gateway to business support across Kent and Medway.** Businesses can struggle to identify and navigate the range of grants, advice, innovation support and sector opportunities available, particularly where they lack the time or established relationships needed to find the right support.

**We will work with Business Kent, Invest Kent, business membership organisations, local authorities, universities, colleges and other delivery partners to better align how business support is communicated and accessed across Kent and Medway. Rather than creating new structures, we will build on, align, and strengthen existing services, including Business Kent, and encourage partners to signpost businesses consistently to clear entry points into the support system. Behind this, partners will work together to connect businesses to the most appropriate local, sector-specific and specialist support, making the existing offer easier to navigate and more visible to businesses.**

**B4: Develop a Local Growth Fund to support enterprise growth across key sectors.** Access to growth capital remains a persistent challenge for businesses seeking to scale, innovate and commercialise new ideas. A locally controlled investment fund could focus on priority areas such as providing seed and equity investment for start-up and scale-up activity in priority sectors; support economic infrastructure such as workspace delivery in the right places; and support cluster development and growth. This would provide greater flexibility to target investment where it can have the greatest impact and align capital more closely with growth ambitions.

**We will work with businesses, government, delivery partners and potential investors, including the Kent Local Government Pension Fund, to develop the proposition and identify investment priorities, delivery models and funding opportunities, enabling greater local influence over investment in enterprise growth and innovation.**

# Develop a dynamic and innovative ecosystem

**Kent and Medway will be an accessible, well-connected and business-facing innovation ecosystem that connects businesses with the expertise and investment to test, adopt and scale new ideas.**

Our priority sectors are being moulded by technological change, making innovation central to the growth and resilience of our economy. Our combination of nationally significant infrastructure, specialist research assets and established sector strengths create opportunities to develop and apply innovation in real-world settings, meaning Kent and Medway is particularly well positioned to benefit. Opportunities across our agricultural land and food-production businesses can support the application of robotics, AI and health related research and application; our ports and border infrastructure provide an environment for new freight, customs and logistics technologies; and the electrification of the Short Straits can unite our strengths in energy, digital technology and transport. These intersections create opportunities for innovation in one part of the economy to generate new markets, supply chains and productivity benefits across several others.

We are well positioned to support innovation-led growth across our economy. We have a track record securing national investment, including almost £21.1 million of Innovate UK funding across 139 projects since 2022/23, spanning a wide range of sectors, technologies and disciplines. The benefits of connecting our businesses, research institutions and specialist assets can be seen through the success of the £42.1 million Growing Kent & Medway innovation cluster, led by Niab and working with our research anchors in the Universities of Kent, Greenwich and Canterbury Christ Church.

Despite having strong foundations, connections between our businesses, universities, research institutions and specialist assets are not consistently established or easy to navigate, particularly for SMEs. Businesses can struggle to identify the right expertise, facilities, and investment or to find a clear point of entry into the support available.

The circular economy provides another opportunity across sectors. Food and agricultural by-products, construction materials, industrial waste, energy and logistics flows could be used more productively through reuse, recovery, reprocessing and industrial symbiosis. Connecting businesses, researchers and infrastructure operators around these opportunities could reduce resource costs while supporting new products, services and supply chains.

# Develop a dynamic and innovative ecosystem

The challenge extends beyond research into supporting application. Routes through which businesses can develop, test, demonstrate and commercialise innovation remain limited, and constraints around access to finance, specialist space, digital connectivity and internal capacity further increase the cost and risk of innovation. This means that our existing capabilities are not translating into impact. Although Kent and Medway has a higher proportion of innovation-active businesses than the UK overall, it remains behind regional comparators and has lower proportions of businesses undertaking specific activities such as internal R&D, process innovation and introducing genuinely new products.

We want to ensure that all of our businesses, regardless of size and growth stage are consistently able to innovate to improve productivity, enter new markets or respond to transition pressures, from developing new products, bespoke solutions and processes to adopting existing technologies faster.

***There is a gap between agricultural research and the application of innovative solutions on farms and in food businesses. Technologies such as precision farming, AI, drones, robotics and bioscience offer key opportunities to improve productivity and sector resilience, but adoption is limited by cost, risk and funding.***

### Case Study: Discovery Spark

Discovery Spark supports early-stage science and technology companies from across the UK, with a particular focus on life sciences and health innovation. Based at Discovery Park in Sandwich, it helps founders build the commercial capabilities and connections needed to progress their ideas and prepare for investment.

Businesses receive specialist support on commercial strategy, finance, intellectual property, legal and governance requirements and investment pitching, across seven in-person sessions. They also benefit from mentoring, peer learning, connections to investors and sector experts, a final pitch day and six months' free access to shared laboratories and coworking space.

Since successfully launching in 2023, the first six cohorts have supported 62 companies and 96 founders, with alumni securing £5.5 million in UKRI funding.

# Our actions to support growth



**Kent and Medway has a strong base of universities, colleges, research expertise and innovation assets, but there are opportunities to better connect our capabilities and create the conditions for a more innovative ecosystem. Businesses can find it difficult to identify and access the expertise, facilities and investment they need, while opportunities to commercialise research and collaborate around shared sector challenges are not being fully realised.**



## To strengthen our capacity to develop, test, adopt and scale new ideas, key priorities include:

**B5: Strengthen collaboration between businesses, universities and colleges around the specific needs and opportunities of our economy.** Closer and more systematic relationships are needed to ensure that research and innovation activity responds to business demand and translates into new products, processes and commercial opportunities.

**We will bring businesses and research institutions together around shared sector challenges and areas of comparative advantage, including logistics innovation, agri-food systems, industrial symbiosis, capture and energy, creating stronger routes from research through to application and commercialisation.**

**B6: Develop a proposition for a shared technology transfer function.** Kent and Medway benefits from a diverse research and innovation base, but businesses can find it difficult to navigate expertise, intellectual property, facilities and commercialisation support across different institutions. At the same time, there is broad recognition that stronger mechanisms may be needed to help translate research and innovation activity into new products, services and business growth.

**We will work with universities, research organisations, businesses and innovation partners to explore the case for a shared technology transfer function, develop a clear proposition for the investment pipeline and identify opportunities to strengthen commercialisation support across Kent and Medway.**

## To strengthen our capacity to develop, test, adopt and scale new ideas, key priorities include:

**B7: Build stronger relationships with Innovate UK and other national innovation funders.** Kent and Medway has a strong track record of innovation activity and nationally significant assets, but there are opportunities to increase awareness of funding opportunities and strengthen the pipeline of businesses and projects ready to access support, including clearer routes into R&D funding for freelancers, microbusinesses and SMEs.

**We will continue our work with Innovate UK, universities, innovation assets and business networks to improve awareness, increase innovation readiness and strengthen connections to national funding and support programmes**.

**B8: Develop and promote a coordinated network of innovation facilities, demonstrators and testbeds across Kent and Medway's priority sectors.** The county possesses a range of specialist assets, but their collective offer is not sufficiently visible, connected or accessible to businesses.

**We will map and connect existing facilities, address gaps in provision and develop a pipeline of demonstrator and testbed opportunities that enable businesses to develop, trial and validate technologies in real-world settings, particularly across the agri-food, digital, energy, manufacturing and transport and logistics sectors.**

INVEST KENT
One place to do it all

# DOVER: BORDERS DIGITAL SANDBOX

**Project details:**

The Port of Dover is exploring the potential for a borders digital sandbox, building on its Ignite digital transformation programme. The sandbox will be developed with the ambition to bring technology businesses and process specialists together to develop and test solutions to customs, immigration and freight-processing challenges.

**Alignment to principles of LGP:**

Leveraging 'strategic assets' to create greater local benefit Applied digital innovation in a key sector

**The ask:**

The Port is developing the next phase of its digital programme. Potential public co-investment could broaden the opportunity and support proof-of-concept and demonstration activity alongside the Port's own investment, extending the benefits beyond its immediate operational requirements to create wider access and seed a new cluster of high value added activity. The sandbox's scope, delivery arrangements and funding requirements remain under development.

**The impact/benefits:**

More efficient border processes could reduce administrative friction for traders, including SMEs, while creating opportunities for businesses to develop and demonstrate new products and solutions with wider national and international applications.



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# Build a future-ready workforce

**Kent and Medway will develop, attract and retain the skilled workforce needed to support growth, innovation and long-term economic resilience. We will create the conditions that enable people across the county to build fulfilling careers locally, with clearer pathways connecting residents to skills, employment and progression opportunities.**

Our ability to realise the growth opportunities across Kent and Medway's economy relies on having the skilled workforce with the capabilities and capacity to deliver them. This means enabling people to develop their talents, access good careers locally and benefit from the opportunities created by our strategic economic assets. Without the right skills and pathways, businesses will not be able to capitalise on opportunities for growth and investment, while our residents miss out on the local jobs and progression routes those opportunities should create.

Kent and Medway has a strong education base spanning further and higher education. Our further education colleges including East Kent Colleges Group, MidKent College, North Kent College and Hadlow College are strategic partners in the growth system, central to delivering technical education, apprenticeships and workforce development. Their specialist facilities and employer partnerships also support business innovation, technology adoption and clear pathways into local employment. Specialist facilities, support technology adoption and business innovation, and connect employers with learners and local communities. Canterbury Christ Church University and London and South East (LASE) University Group add further research, higher-level skills and specialist teaching capabilities and together provide an important foundation for workforce development, innovation and business growth across Kent and Medway. Specialist skills providers also exist across the county, supported by organisations such as KATO (Kent Association of Training Organisations).

However, perceptions of some industries make it harder to attract young people into key careers, limiting the pipeline of new entrants into priority sectors. The increasingly technical and higher-skilled nature of careers in areas such as agri-food, logistics, energy and advanced manufacturing is not always widely understood or desirable to our young workforce, while the breadth of opportunities and the routes into them are not sufficiently visible.

# Build a future-ready workforce

Retaining skilled workers is also an ongoing challenge. Cost-of-living pressures, competition from London and neighbouring labour markets and limited visibility of local progression opportunities can make it harder for people to establish and develop their careers within Kent and Medway. This reduces the pool of experienced workers available to local employers and can leave businesses competing for the same limited talent, particularly in technical, digital, engineering and management roles. Our relationship with London also creates opportunities through commuting, access to clients and demand for specialist services. Stronger local career pathways and connections between employers and education providers can help residents and businesses benefit from this market while retaining more talent and economic value within Kent and Medway.

Demand for future-facing skills, including AI, automation and robotics is growing. Provision is responding to these changes, aligned to the refreshed Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), however, access and alignment remain uneven across sectors and places, and provision cannot always adapt at the pace or level of specialism required by employers.

Some businesses also struggle to navigate the skills system or articulate their future requirements.

This is especially challenging for SMEs, which often lack the time and capacity to participate in curriculum development, release staff for training, provide placements or take on apprentices.

# Our actions to support growth



**Kent and Medway has a diverse workforce and a strong base of further and higher education provision. Building on the Local Skills Improvement Plan, addressing persistent skills shortages will require stronger connections between employers, education providers and residents. Employers continue to report difficulties recruiting people with the capabilities they need, and provision does not always keep pace with changing demand. At the same time, many young people and residents lack visibility of the breadth of careers available locally, contributing to weak talent pipelines and the loss of skilled workers to London and elsewhere. Addressing these challenges will require stronger connections between employers, education providers and residents.**



## Key priorities include:

**B9:** **Develop a coordinated careers and talent retention campaign focused on priority sectors.** The campaign will raise awareness of the breadth of local career and progression opportunities, challenge outdated perceptions of key industries and demonstrate that residents can build rewarding careers within Kent and Medway.

**We will** **bring employers, education providers and sector partners together to promote priority-sector careers and communicate clearer pathways into the jobs shaping our future economy.**

**B10:** **Create clearer pathways connecting local people with employers across the priority sectors.** Greater visibility of careers must be matched by practical opportunities for residents to gain experience, develop relevant skills and enter employment.

**We will** **build on the cross cutting themes identified through the Local Skills Improvement Plan, working with employers and education providers to strengthen routes into priority-sector jobs through employer encounters, work experience, industry placements, training and apprenticeships.**

## Key priorities include:

**B11: Building on the Local Skills Improvement Plan, establish employer-led sector skills partnerships in identified priority sectors.** Skills provision needs to respond more closely and quickly to changing business requirements, particularly as new technologies and ways of working reshape demand.

**We will establish focused partnerships through which employers can articulate shared skills needs and work directly with further and higher education providers to shape relevant provision aligned to the Local Skills Improvement Plan cross cutting themes, and drawing on lessons from previous partnership models.**

**B12: Deliver a Lecturer in the Community programme to strengthen links between education providers and employers.** Direct engagement between lecturers and industry helps providers understand current workplace practices, technologies and skills requirements, while giving businesses a clearer route into the education system.

**We will continue the programme, enabling lecturers to spend time with local employers and translate that experience into more relevant teaching, careers information and curriculum development.**

# Deliver infrastructure that unlocks growth

**Kent and Medway will have the infrastructure required to enable growth and alignment with economic priorities, while maximising the value of strategic assets to unlock investment and opportunity locally.**

Kent and Medway's infrastructure is fundamental to both our own growth and the functioning of the wider UK economy. Our infrastructure connects businesses with national and international markets and enables the movement of goods, people and energy across the country. However, the infrastructure supporting this role does not consistently provide the capacity or connectivity for businesses and sectors to locally grow, and underutilised assets are holding back the growth potential of our priority sectors. There is a strong opportunity to leverage existing assets and address key gaps to unlock growth and improve connectivity across the region and beyond.

## Transport and connectivity

Our strategic transport network provides exceptional connectivity to London, Europe and international markets, making Kent and Medway the best place in the UK to trade, but it also places sustained pressure on our key networks. The volume of freight and passenger movement through the county contributes to congestion, unreliable journey times and disruption for businesses and communities. When Cross-Channel disruption and Operation Brock place additional pressure on the M20 and surrounding areas this can result in significant disruption to operations and movement across our county. Looking beyond road transport, the ability to make greater use of rail and waterborne freight is similarly constrained. Network pinch points, gauge and capacity limitations and fragmented responsibility for investment maintain reliance on road freight.

Our dispersed geography creates distinct local labour markets and business clusters, but can make collaboration and access to opportunity more difficult.

Stronger connections between our towns, businesses and innovation assets are necessary to help widen access to skills, employment and markets, and spread the benefits of growth. The nature of our economy and our close proximity to London means that passenger connections are often stronger towards London and the Ports than between our own towns, resulting in weak orbital connectivity. This limits access to education, jobs, training and business opportunities. These gaps in public transport and east-west connectivity particularly affect young people, apprentices and lower-paid workers who depend on affordable public transport, while making it harder for businesses to recruit from across the county, limiting the workforce available to employers, and job opportunities for residents.

## Underutilised assets

Despite these constraints, there remains untapped capacity across Kent and Medway's underutilised transport and port assets. International passenger services have not stopped at Ashford or Ebbsfleet since 2020, despite both stations retaining international infrastructure and a UK-French treaty agreeing the deployment of French Police Aux Frontières (PAF) officers at both stations. Existing rail freight connections and parts of the wider port network also have scope to support greater activity, while Manston Airport remains unopened.

## Workspace availability

Access to suitable workspace and specialist business facilities is uneven across Kent and Medway. Across our county there are a number of innovation and industrial assets, however there are gaps in the availability of the types of space needed to support growth, collaboration and innovation. These challenges are particularly evident in sectors that require specialist facilities, including digital and technologies businesses seeking access to innovation and collaborative workspace, and agri-food businesses requiring processing, storage and production capacity. Limitations on the availability and accessibility of these assets influence where businesses can locate, invest and expand, impacting on labour mobility, supply chains and broader regional disparities.

Growth will also depend on enabling new homes in locations that connect residents with employment opportunities. This requires timely investment in transport, energy, water, digital and community infrastructure so that residential development near centres of economic growth is viable, well connected and supported by the services communities need.

Spatial planning will need to align homes, employment space and infrastructure with our economic priorities, while protecting the natural assets that contribute to Kent and Medway's attractiveness as a place to live, work and invest.

## Energy

Access to sufficient and timely power capacity is increasingly shaping where growth can take place across our region. Grid constraints are particularly acute in East Kent and parts of Medway, where limited network capacity is affecting housing, industrial development, digital infrastructure and transport modernisation. Some major projects face connection dates beyond 2034, while the cost of network upgrades creates additional barriers for smaller industrial developments.

Electricity capacity is a significant constraint on economic growth across Kent and Medway. Limited grid capacity and lengthy connection times are affecting the timing, viability and location of business investment, housing development and infrastructure modernisation, including major opportunities like industrial growth in Medway, prospective data-led development at MedwayOne, and electrification of the port at Dover. At the Port of Dover, securing the power capacity required for electrification is important to future competitiveness as well as economic growth. Aligning energy investment with the port's development plans will help ensure that network constraints do not delay improvements to operations and services. Coordinated network planning and investment will be needed to unlock these opportunities and meet future demand.

## Digital connectivity infrastructure

Reliable fixed and mobile connectivity is critical enabling economic infrastructure that supports business productivity, inward investment, innovation, automation, remote and hybrid working, access to skills and markets, and the resilience of essential services. It is also a prerequisite for realising many opportunities across our priority sectors. However, access is uneven across Kent and Medway. In 2025, only 52% of business premises had access to gigabit-capable broadband, compared with 82% of residential premises. Gaps in fixed connectivity and the coverage, capacity and reliability of mobile networks create an uneven platform for growth, particularly for rural businesses, business parks, industrial estates, transport corridors and emerging growth locations.

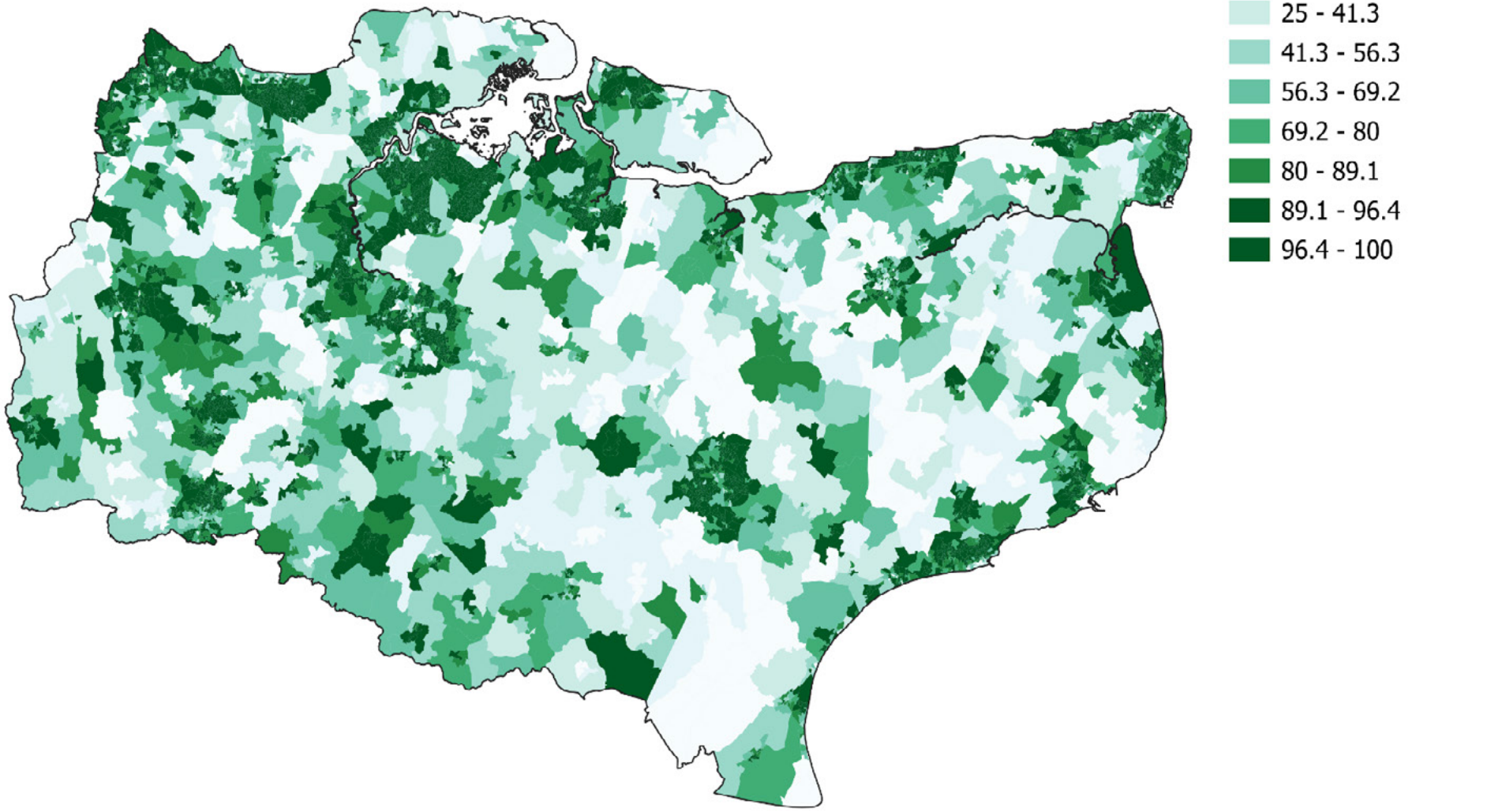
Digital infrastructure must therefore be planned and delivered alongside transport, energy, housing and commercial development. Future spatial and investment decisions should identify connectivity requirements at the outset and ensure that new growth does not embed avoidable digital infrastructure deficits.

## Water

Water availability and resilience is also a fundamental component of the infrastructure required to support our growth ambitions. Kent and Medway is recognised as one of the driest regions in England, with parts of the county experiencing moderate to serious water stress. Recent supply disruptions have further demonstrated the potential consequences for residents, businesses and public services, while climate change, population growth and increased economic activity are expected to place additional pressure on the county's water resources, making this both an immediate concern and a long-term constraint on growth.

Without sufficient capacity and resilience, water availability could become a barrier to business investment, site development and the sustainable growth of strategically important industries, including across our priority sectors. It will determine the location and pace of business expansion, particularly in water-dependent activities such as horticulture and food processing.

# % of premises with Gigabit availability






*Source: Connected Nations, 2025*

# Our actions to support growth



**Kent and Medway's infrastructure is fundamental to both its own growth and the functioning of the wider UK economy. However, constraints in digital connectivity, energy capacity, transport networks and suitable commercial space are limiting business investment and expansion, while several nationally significant assets are underperforming relative to their strategic potential. Unlocking growth will require infrastructure investment to be more closely aligned with economic priorities and used deliberately to open up new opportunities for businesses, sectors and places.**



## Key priorities include:

**B13: Treat fixed and mobile connectivity as critical enabling infrastructure and accelerate its delivery across Kent and Medway.** Reliable, resilient and high-capacity digital connectivity is essential to business productivity, investment, innovation and the successful development of growth locations. Kent and Medway will require a coordinated approach that addresses current gaps while anticipating future business, housing, transport and public service needs.

**We will maintain a strategic evidence base for fixed and mobile connectivity; embed digital infrastructure requirements within spatial, transport and development planning; and work with government, Ofcom, BDUK, mobile and fixed network operators, developers and local partners to secure timely delivery.**

**B14: Address grid capacity constraints and prepare for future power demand.** Limited electricity network capacity is already constraining development and investment in parts of Kent and Medway, while demand will increase as businesses, transport systems and major infrastructure transition towards electrification.

**We will engage with energy infrastructure providers, DSIT and wider government to ensure that Kent and Medway's future economic and infrastructure requirements are reflected in network planning and investment decisions, and also look at novel or innovative ways of addressing energy challenges.**

**B15: Support strategic freight, logistics and transport improvements that reduce congestion and enable growth.** Kent and Medway's gateway role places significant pressure on local transport networks, affecting communities and businesses as well as the efficiency and resilience of national supply chains.

**We will support priority transport and logistics projects that improve freight movement and minimise local congestion, including improvements to the A2 towards Dover, Blue Bell Hill and Brenley Corner that will help maximise the impact of the Lower Thames Crossing.**

## Key priorities include:

**B16:** **Plan for the water capacity and resilience needed to support growth.** Water availability and wastewater capacity are increasingly important considerations for business investment, expansion, housing and site development. Existing pressures, alongside climate change and increased demand, could constrain economic growth unless future requirements are identified early.

**We will work with water companies, the Environment Agency, local authorities, businesses, and other infrastructure providers to identify water capacity constraints in priority growth locations and make the case for timely infrastructure investment. This will align with the emerging Kent Water Resources Strategy and support greater water efficiency, reuse and resilience.**

**B17:** **Increase the economic value generated by underused strategic transport assets.** Kent and Medway contains nationally significant port, rail, airport and international connectivity infrastructure, but some assets including Ashford and Ebbsfleet international stations and Manston Airport are currently underused relative to their potential. Collaboration across the rail network has strengthened in recent years but there are cross-modal opportunities which call for broadening this work.

**We will convene asset owners, operators, businesses and public partners across modes to define the economic opportunities associated with these assets and identify the investment, policy and delivery steps needed to better leverage, repurpose or reactivate them.**

## Key priorities include:

**B18:** **Ensure that businesses can access the right space in the right place.** To start, grow and remain in Kent and Medway businesses need to have access to the right type of space in the right locations. Gaps in the availability of suitable premises can prevent businesses from scaling, adopting new technologies or locating close to relevant supply chains, research capabilities and infrastructure.

**We will undertake a strategic assessment of current and future commercial space requirements, identifying gaps in specialist facilities, affordable workspace and grow-on space. This will inform the development of projects aligned with the needs of priority sectors, including opportunities to adapt existing buildings and bring underused premises back into use.**

**B19:** **Use Kent and Medway's infrastructure challenges and future infrastructure needs as a platform for innovation.** The scale and complexity of the area's transport, energy, digital and environmental infrastructure needs create opportunities to develop and demonstrate solutions with wider commercial potential.

**We will identify priority challenges that can be opened to businesses, universities and infrastructure providers, enabling new technologies and approaches to be developed, tested and deployed in real-world settings.**

# Create clearer pathways for SME growth

**Kent and Medway will have a strong business environment that enables SMEs to start, scale and compete more easily, with fewer barriers, clearer support and improved access to markets and opportunities.**

Our ability to deliver growth across Kent and Medway depends on the strength and success of our SME base, which accounts for more than 99% of businesses across the region. Smaller businesses have less capacity to absorb the costs and risks involved in developing new skills, entering markets and investing for growth, limiting their ability to pursue new opportunities and scale. Supporting these first is therefore essential to delivering growth across the whole economy and ensuring that benefits are felt locally, strengthening economic resilience and opening future opportunities to a wider range of businesses across the county.

In Kent and Medway there is a wide range of business support available to help SMEs develop and grow. However, fragmentation means that accessing this support can be challenging, with provision spread across different organisations and programmes. For businesses with limited capacity to engage beyond their day-to-day operations, this landscape can be difficult to navigate and limit the willingness and ability of businesses to access support. Accessing specialist advice on regulation, compliance, procurement and entering new markets can require considerable time and effort, making it harder for SMEs to identify and secure the support and expertise relevant to their growth.

Access to finance also remains a constraint for smaller businesses with routes into funding not always clear, awareness of available opportunities can be limited, and finance is not always well aligned with the scale and needs of our smaller enterprises. Some businesses also lack the capacity and experience needed to develop a credible investment proposition or put in place the plans and governance required to use external finance effectively and translate it into sustainable growth.

Many of our priority sectors are shaped by large employers and established supply chains, creating significant contract opportunities that smaller businesses can find difficult to access. Requirements to supply at scale, demonstrate consistent delivery, hold specific accreditations or commit resources before income is secured can create particular barriers for SMEs. This is compounded when emerging opportunities are not visible early enough, leaving businesses with less time to build capacity, form partnerships or prepare a competitive bid. This means that many capable local businesses can miss out on contracts generated by growth and investment within the region.

# Our actions to support growth



**SMEs make up more than 99% of Kent and Medway's businesses and are fundamental to employment, innovation and growth across the economy. However, many lack the capacity, connections and routes to market needed to participate fully in the opportunities generated by the county's priority sectors and strategic assets. Unlocking their potential will require clearer pathways into skills, support, finance, innovation, procurement opportunities and supply-chains.**



## Key priorities include:

**B20: Develop a shared higher education apprenticeship model that enables SMEs to access skills and talent they could not support individually.** Many smaller businesses lack the capacity to recruit, manage or provide a sufficiently broad experience for an apprentice independently.

**We will help to bring together higher education providers, SMEs and relevant partners to develop a shared model through which businesses can collectively access apprentices and higher-level skills. Alongside this, we will make the case to government for changes to the apprenticeship system that give employers greater flexibility to meet their workforce needs, support the development of existing staff and reduce barriers to participation for SMEs.**

**B21: Create clearer routes for SMEs to access business support, grants, mentoring and specialist advice.** The existing support landscape can be difficult and time-consuming to navigate, particularly for businesses with limited internal capacity.

**We will ensure the wider business support offer and hub-and-spoke model provides SMEs with a clear route into relevant support – working alongside Business Kent.**

**B22: Establish accessible routes connecting SMEs with innovation expertise, university capabilities and specialist facilities.** Kent and Medway possesses significant research expertise and innovation infrastructure, but these capabilities are not always visible or readily accessible to smaller enterprises.

**We will strengthen brokerage between SMEs, universities and innovation assets, helping businesses identify and access the expertise, facilities and partnerships needed to develop, test and commercialise new products and processes.**

## Key priorities include:

**B23:** **Provide enhanced support for SMEs seeking external finance.** Access to finance is constrained not only by the availability of funding, but by the capacity of businesses to demonstrate a credible proposition and prepare for external investment.

**We will explore options to improve access to investment and develop support that helps SMEs strengthen their business plans, financial information, governance and investor propositions so that more viable businesses are ready to secure and make effective use of external finance.**

**B24:** **Create practical mechanisms that enable SMEs to access procurement opportunities and major-sector supply chains.** Smaller businesses can struggle to identify forthcoming opportunities, meet procurement requirements and establish relationships with major employers and strategic projects.

**We will connect SMEs with buyers and supply-chain opportunities, helping more local businesses compete for contracts and ensure that major investment and infrastructure projects generate greater value within the county.**

**B25:** **Give SMEs a stronger voice in cluster development and economic decision-making.** Smaller businesses are not always able to participate in the networks and governance structures that shape sector priorities, despite forming the majority of the business base.

**We will embed meaningful SME representation within cluster groups and relevant decision-making structures, ensuring that sector development reflects their needs and enables them to contribute to and benefit from growth.**

# Delivering the plan

# Delivering the Plan

This Local Growth Plan provides a shared framework for action across Kent and Medway's priority sectors and cross-cutting growth priorities. Delivery will depend on collaboration between businesses, local authorities, universities, colleges, infrastructure providers, government and wider partners, recognising that many of the opportunities identified in this plan extend beyond the remit of any single organisation. KMEP will play an important role in championing the Plan, bringing partners together around shared priorities, supporting the development of projects and propositions, and providing a forum through which progress can be reviewed and new opportunities can be identified.

## From Strategy to Action

The priorities set out in this Plan are intended to provide a clear direction of travel rather than a fixed programme of activity. Individual actions will be developed and delivered through existing partnerships, strategies and delivery mechanisms, alongside new projects and collaborations that emerge over time.

The Plan will inform investment promotion through Invest Kent, connecting our sector strengths and strategic opportunities with activity to attract businesses and investment. Invest Kent will be a principal partner in presenting the area's investment offer and connecting prospective investors with relevant local opportunities and support.

Many of the priorities identified in the Plan will require continued partnership working, investment and support from government and national agencies. The Plan therefore provides a shared platform through which Kent and Medway can make the case for future investment, policy support and devolution.

# Monitoring Progress

**Progress will be reviewed through KMEP and its partners on a regular basis. This will include:**

- Tracking progress against the action areas identified in the Plan.
- Reviewing the development of projects, programmes and investment propositions.
- Monitoring wider economic outcomes and indicators related to inclusive growth.
- Identifying new opportunities and emerging challenges.
- The Plan will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to changing economic conditions, opportunities and policy priorities.

## Supporting a New Era of Governance

Kent and Medway is entering a period of significant change, with ambitions to become a Mayoral Strategic Authority. While future governance arrangements continue to develop, growth cannot wait.

This Local Growth Plan provides a shared set of priorities that can guide activity during this transition period and help ensure continued progress towards Kent and Medway's long-term economic ambitions. It is intended that the Plan can provide a foundation for future strategic leadership, informing investment decisions, economic priorities and partnership working under future governance arrangements. Governance and delivery arrangements should also enable innovation, helping partners develop and progress ambitious growth propositions across administrative and sector boundaries, with clear ownership and routes to delivery.

As governance arrangements evolve, closer coordination across economic development, spatial planning and infrastructure investment will be important to provide businesses with clearer routes to decisions and strengthen Kent and Medway's collective engagement with government.

By establishing a clear and widely supported growth agenda now, Kent and Medway can prepare to make effective use of the powers, funding and investment opportunities that future devolution may bring. Developing investible projects, strengthening delivery partnerships and establishing a shared evidence base will position the area to respond quickly as new opportunities emerge. The Plan provides a foundation for aligning future decisions on economic development, skills, transport and infrastructure around our agreed growth priorities.

# Appendix: Actions

## Agri-Food and Agri-Tech

**A1:** Create a shared commercialisation and innovation hub

**A2:** Develop the specialist workspace and infrastructure the sector needs

**A3**: Champion a planning system that supports food production, rural growth and resilience

**A4:** Strengthen local procurement and value chains

**A5:** Build a multidimensional health and horticulture specialism

## Digital and Technologies

**A6:** Create a central hub for digital and creative businesses

**A7:** Develop a stronger shared identity for Kent and Medway's digital and technologies sector

**A8:** Ensure growing digital businesses can access the right space

**A9:** Strengthen connections across Kent and Medway's digital ecosystem

**A10**: Use local challenges to drive digital innovation

## Energy

**A11:** Use the energy transition as a platform for innovation and growth

**A12:** Strengthen the Grain energy cluster

**A13:** Explore opportunities in future technologies and energy storage

**A14:** Develop opportunities for industrial symbiosis and resource sharing

**A15**: Maximise local economic benefits from major energy investments

## Ports, Transport and Logistics

**A16:** Develop a collective voice for the sector

**A17**: Position Kent and Medway as a testbed for border and freight innovation

**A18:** Strengthen rail freight and international connectivity

**A19:** Unlock the potential of strategic transport and trade assets

**A20:** Use future freight technologies to drive innovation and growth

## Build a connected economy with strong, visible networks

**B1**: **Strengthen the visibility of Kent and Medway's sector strengths and economic offer to businesses, investors and government**

**B2: Establish formal cluster groups for priority sectors**

**B3: Strengthen the 'Business Kent' as a single, coordinated gateway to business support across Kent and Medway**

**B4: Develop a Local Growth Fund to support enterprise growth across key sectors**



## Develop a dynamic and innovative ecosystem

**B5: Strengthen collaboration between businesses, universities and colleges around the specific needs and opportunities of our economy**

**B6: Develop a proposition for a shared technology transfer function**

**B7: Build stronger relationships with Innovate UK and other national innovation funders**

**B8: Develop and promote a coordinated network of innovation facilities, demonstrators and testbeds across Kent and Medway's priority sectors**

## Build a future-ready workforce

**B9: Develop a coordinated careers and talent retention campaign focused on Kent and Medway's priority sectors**

**B10: Create clearer pathways connecting local people with employers across the priority sectors**

**B11: Building on the Local Skills Improvement Plan, establish employer-led sector skills partnerships in identified priority sectors**

**B12: Deliver a Lecturer in the Community programme to strengthen links between education providers and employers**

## Deliver infrastructure that unlocks growth

**B13: Accelerate the rollout of gigabit broadband and improve mobile coverage, as critical enabling infrastructure**

**B14: Address grid capacity constraints and prepare for future power demand**

**B15: Support strategic freight, logistics and transport improvements that reduce congestion and enable growth.**

**B16: Plan for the water capacity and resilience needed to support growth**

**B17: Increase the economic value generated by underused strategic transport assets - including Ashford and Ebbsfleet International Railway Stations.**

**B18: Ensure that businesses can access the right space in the right place**

**B19: Use Kent and Medway's infrastructure challenges and future infrastructure needs as a platform for innovation**

## Create clearer pathways for SME growth

**B20: Develop a shared higher education apprenticeship model that enables SMEs to access skills and talent they could not support individually**

**B21: Create clearer routes for SMEs to access business support, grants, mentoring and specialist advice**

**B22: Establish accessible routes connecting SMEs with innovation expertise, university capabilities and specialist facilities**

**B23: Provide enhanced support for SMEs seeking external finance & improve linkages to investors**

**B24: Create practical mechanisms that enable SMEs to access procurement opportunities and major-sector supply chains**

**B25: Give SMEs a stronger voice in cluster development and economic decision-making**

# Appendix: Project Pipeline

**HORTICULTURE + INNOVATION CAMPUS:** The proposed Horticulture and Innovation Campus facility at East Malling will deliver 1,000 sqm of new specialist laboratory and innovation space within a nationally significant horticulture research and innovation ecosystem. Supported by a £4.5 million investment request, matched by £4.5 million from The East Malling Trust, the project will expand research, innovation and commercialisation capacity, strengthen Kent and Medway's growing horticulture and health innovation strengths, and reinforce East Malling's role as a nationally significant innovation cluster. Planning consent is currently being pursued, with delivery anticipated from early 2027.

**TECH@MEDWAY :** A phased programme to create 3,642 sqm of teaching, training and research space at the LASE University Group Medway Campus, supporting around 1,000 learners across health, engineering, computing and natural resources. The expanded technical education and simulated clinical training, supporting growth in Medway learner numbers from 1,660 to 1,850 and responding to employer and NHS workforce needs.

**KEMSLEY CLUSTER:** The Kemsley Industrial Cluster brings together major businesses in energy generation, manufacturing, recycling, waste management and logistics. Partners have developed proposals combining  capture, green hydrogen and greater energy and steam integration to support its transition into a low- industrial hub. Further investment could unlock approximately £550 million of capital investment, retain around 1,100 existing jobs, create 400–600 additional jobs and remove more than 500,000 tonnes of $CO_2$ annually.

**SHEERNESS STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE (SRFI):** Development of a planning-approved rail freight terminal at the Port of Sheerness, integrating deep-water shipping, inland water freight, rail and road within a single logistics hub. This will develop a more efficient and resilient freight gateway serving London and the South East, supporting major housing, infrastructure and energy projects, with wider links across other sectors and supply chains. The terminal is expected to create construction jobs and permanent skilled roles, with each freight train potentially removing around 75 HGV movements from the road network.

**LOCAL GROWTH FUND:** A locally controlled investment fund to support business growth, innovation and enabling infrastructure across Kent and Medway's priority sectors.

**SHARED TTO:** A shared technology transfer function to connect businesses with research expertise and help translate research and innovation into new products, services and commercial opportunities.

**DOVER: BORDERS DIGITAL SANDBOX:** Dover is exploring the potential for a digital border sandbox, building on its Ignite digital transformation programme. The sandbox could bring technology businesses and process specialists together to develop and test solutions to customs, immigration and freight-processing challenges. More efficient border processes could reduce administrative friction for traders, including SMEs, while creating opportunities for businesses to demonstrate solutions with wider national and international applications

KMEP Kent & Medway Economic Partnership

The Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) is the local growth board for Kent and Medway which aims to drive forward economic growth and prosperity throughout the region.

KMEP is governed by a Board and chaired by the private sector, with membership drawn from business, local government, further and higher education.

KMEP is made up of 33 members: 17 business representatives (including reps from the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, FSB, and IOD), 14 local authority leaders, 1 representative from higher education and 1 representative from further education.

Our belief is by taking a 'Team Kent and Medway' approach, we can achieve more together than acting alone.


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Metro——Dynamics

Metro Dynamics works at the leading edge of place-based economic development, continually developing new approaches that help our clients shape stronger places and better outcomes. Combining technical expertise with trusted partnerships, we turn insight into confidence and ambition into lasting economic outcomes.

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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

| DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: | DECISION NUMBER: |
|---|---|
| David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects | 26/00050 |

**Executive Decision – Key 26/00050 Adoption of the Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan**

**Decision:**

As Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects, I agree to:

**APPROVE and ADOPT**, on behalf of Kent County Council, the Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan as a long-term, evidence-led, sector-focused growth plan for Kent and Medway

**ENDORSE** its use as a strategic framework to inform the Council's economic development activity and its work through the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership.(KMEP)

**DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects, to agree any non-material amendments to the Plan and take the actions necessary to support its publication and implementation,

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth & Communities, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision

**Reasons for decision:**
The Government's English Devolution White Paper introduced Local Growth Plans as a mechanism for supporting place-based economic growth and investment.

Whilst Kent and Medway are not currently required to produce a Local Growth Plan as a non-devolved area, KMEP has chosen to develop one proactively to ensure Kent and Medway is well positioned to support future engagement with Government and investors and to articulate the area's economic strengths, opportunities and priorities.

The proposed decision is required to enable formal adoption of the Local Growth Plan and to support its use in future economic development, partnership and investment activity across Kent and Medway.

The Local Growth Plan is intended to complement the Kent and Medway Economic Framework and other emerging strategic planning and growth initiatives across Kent and Medway and should be viewed as part of the wider strategic framework supporting sustainable economic growth and investment in the area.

**Financial Implications**
Approval of the Local Growth Plan does not in itself commit Kent County Council or its partners to specific expenditure.

The Plan identifies growth opportunities and emerging investment propositions. Any future projects requiring KCC or future Unitary or Strategic Authority funding, procurement activity, commissioning activity or capital investment will be subject to separate business case development and governance approvals where required.

The investment pipeline remains under development and further stakeholder engagement is planned.

**Legal Implications**
There is currently no statutory requirement for Kent and Medway to produce a Local Growth Plan as it is not a devolved area.

The decision provides formal governance approval for Kent County Council's support of the Plan through its role within KMEP.

Future activity arising from the Plan will be subject to separate legal, financial, procurement and governance requirements where applicable.

**Equalities implications**
An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) accompanies this decision.

The Local Growth Plan is expected to support inclusive economic growth through improved employment, skills and business opportunities across Kent and Medway.

No significant adverse equality impacts have been identified at this strategic planning stage. However, as the Local Growth Plan develops and future actions, investment propositions and delivery activity are progressed, equality impacts will continue to be reviewed to ensure equalities considerations remain embedded in future decision-making.

**Data Protection implications**
Adoption of the Local Growth Plan does not require significant processing of personal data beyond normal stakeholder engagement and partnership activity.

Any future projects arising from the Plan will consider data protection requirements as appropriate.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**
This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

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**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**
Option 1: Do not adopt the Local Growth Plan (**not** recommended**).** This would leave Kent and Medway without an agreed, evidence-led plan, weakening its ability to present shared economic priorities and engage with Government, investors and funding opportunities.
**Option 2: Delay adoption pending further development (not recommended).** This would allow further refinement of actions and investment proposals but delay use of the Plan, reduce momentum and limit near-term engagement with Government, investors and partners.

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Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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…….. ……

Signed Date

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# EQIA Submission – ID Number
# Section A

**EQIA Title**
Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan

**Responsible Officer**
Natasha White - GT GC

**Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)**
Steve Samson - GT GC

## Type of Activity

**Service Change**
No
**Service Redesign**
No
**Project/Programme**
No
**Commissioning/Procurement**
No
**Strategy/Policy**
Strategy/Policy
**Details of other Service Activity**
No

## Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**
Growth Environment and Transport
**Responsible Service**
Economy
**Responsible Head of Service**
Steve Samson - GT GC
**Responsible Director**
Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of this EqIA is to review the equality implications of adopting the Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan as a long-term, evidence-led plan to support sustainable economic growth across Kent and Medway. The Plan identifies priority sectors, growth opportunities and investment priorities and will support engagement with Government, businesses, investors and partners.

The Equality Impact Assessment considers whether adoption of the Local Growth Plan may have any differential impacts on people with protected characteristics and seeks to ensure that equality considerations are embedded in the ongoing development and implementation of the Plan.

The assessment indicates that the Plan is expected to have a positive impact on equality outcomes, primarily through supporting inclusive economic growth, skills development, employment opportunities and wider economic participation across Kent and Medway. Equality impacts will continue to be reviewed and the EqIA refreshed, where appropriate, as the Plan and associated actions continue to develop.

# Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

No

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

No

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

- Industry partners and sector representatives
- Local authority partners across Kent districts and Medway
- Internal Kent County Council officers involved in economic development

The development of the Plan has included engagement with businesses, education providers, local authorities and economic partners through workshops and stakeholder engagement activities. Further engagement is planned as the Plan continues to be refined.

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

No

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

No

**Staff**

No

**Residents/Communities/Citizens**

Residents/communities/citizens

**Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?**

Yes

**Details of Positive Impacts**

Age

The Local Growth Plan seeks to support economic growth, employment opportunities and skills development across Kent and Medway. This has the potential to benefit people at different life stages, including young people entering the labour market, those seeking career progression and older people wishing to remain economically active.

Disability

The Local Growth Plan supports inclusive economic growth and encourages consideration of accessibility, skills development and employment opportunities across Kent and Medway. Future actions and investment propositions arising from the Plan may help support improved access to employment, training and business opportunities for disabled people.

Sex (Gender)

The Plan supports economic growth, skills development and employment opportunities across a range of sectors where people of all genders are represented. It seeks to encourage wider participation in the economy and support access to growth opportunities.

Race

By supporting economic growth, business development and investment across Kent and Medway, the Plan has the potential to contribute to increased employment, skills and business opportunities for people from

diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Religion or Belief
The Plan supports sustainable and inclusive economic growth across Kent and Medway and is not expected to adversely affect any particular religion or belief group. Future engagement and implementation activity should continue to consider the needs of Kent and Medway's diverse communities.

Sexual Orientation
The Plan contributes to an inclusive economy by supporting business growth, employment and skills opportunities that are expected to benefit residents regardless of sexual orientation.

Gender Reassignment
No specific differential impacts have been identified. The Plan supports an inclusive approach to economic growth and opportunities that are intended to benefit all residents regardless of gender identity.

Pregnancy and Maternity
The Plan supports employment, skills and business opportunities across Kent and Medway and may benefit individuals balancing work, training and caring responsibilities through increased access to economic opportunities.

Marriage and Civil Partnership
No specific differential impacts have been identified. The Plan supports broader economic growth, skills development and employment opportunities that are intended to benefit all residents.

## Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

| 19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age |
|---|
| **Are there negative impacts for age?** |
| No |
| **Details of negative impacts for Age** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating Actions for Age** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age** |
| Not Applicable |
| 20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability |
| **Are there negative impacts for Disability?** |
| No |
| **Details of Negative Impacts for Disability** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Disability** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Disability** |
| Not Applicable |
| 21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex |
| **Are there negative impacts for Sex** |
| No |
| **Details of negative impacts for Sex** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Sex** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Sex** |

| |
|---|
| Not Applicable |
| 22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender |
| **Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender** |
| Not Applicable |
| 23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race |
| **Are there negative impacts for Race** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Race** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Race** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race** |
| Not Applicable |
| 24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief |
| **Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Religion and belief** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Religion and belief** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief** |
| Not Applicable |
| 25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation |
| **Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation** |
| Not Applicable |
| 26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity |
| **Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Not Applicable |
| 27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships |
| **Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |

| |
|---|
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| 28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities |
| **Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |

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**From:** David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee - 10 November 2026

**Subject:** KCC Energy Strategy

**Decision no: 26/00052**

**Key Decision:**
- It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** N/A

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** All

**Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes**

**Summary:** KCC's Energy Strategy assesses Kent's current, and future strategic energy needs and how KCC will work to ensure that these are met in the context of volatile energy prices, growing demands on the electricity network, and high energy bills for Kent's residents and businesses.

**Recommendation(s):**
The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE**, or make **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects on, the proposed decision to approve and adopt the KCC Energy Strategy, as set out in sections 1 – 6 and the Proposed Record of Decision at Appendix A.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The transition to low carbon energy systems is accelerating globally and is transforming the ways in which energy is generated, stored and used across the UK and in Kent. It involves moving energy production away from sources that release certain greenhouse gases – such as fossil fuels – to clean energy sources like wind, solar, nuclear and hydropower that release little to no greenhouse gases[1].

[1] What is the clean energy transition? | National Grid Group

1.2 The energy transition is essential for strengthening national energy security from volatile fossil fuel markets and driving economic growth as the cost of renewables increasingly undercuts those of fossil fuels[2]. Research by The Office for Budget Responsibility (2023)[3] and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) (2026)[4] have shown that the levelised cost of electricity (LCOE)[5] generated from renewables (including the additional costs of integrating renewables onto the UK grid), are now below that of fossil fuels and continue to decrease. This is part of a wider trend in which renewables have become the most cost competitive source of new generation globally, irrespective of national subsidy regimes and government interventions[6].

1.3 This energy strategy sets out the key energy challenges facing Kent and the ways in which Kent County Council will work to support the county's residents and businesses to help ensure that they benefit from the energy transition through access to reliable, affordable and clean energy now and in the future.

1.4 KCC's work will focus on the following priorities:

- Solar generation
- Nuclear generation
- Hydrogen production
- Dungeness Decommissioning Academy and Nuclear Skills Campus
- Port of Dover
- Data centres
- Community Energy
- Heat networks
- Grid constraints

## 2. The urgency for action

2.1 The energy transition is not a straightforward substitution of one energy source for another. Instead, it signifies comprehensive and profound transformations of how we generate and use energy[7]. The post-Covid pandemic surge in demand for oil and gas, followed by Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and restriction of Russian gas to the European market triggered European gas prices to soar by more than 200% in 2021. The war sent shockwaves through the global economy and disrupted energy markets on an unprecedented scale. Energy prices are still far above pre-pandemic levels, driving painful increases in the cost of living in the UK but the Europe wide energy-system transformation that it triggered has led to accelerating diversification and renewable deployment[8].

2.2 Coinciding with the post-covid energy shock, the cost of renewables like wind and solar is falling significantly, irrespective of subsidies, fuelling their rise as the world's cheapest source of energy. Between 2011 and 2021, the cost of

[2] Record Growth Drives Cost Advantage of Renewable Power
[3] A more comprehensive measure of the costs of energy - Office for Budget Responsibility
[4] Electricity Generation Costs 2025
[5] LCOE – the average total cost of building and operating an energy generating asset per unit of electricity over its lifetime. Subsidies are not included in LCOE calculations.
[6] International Renewable Energy Agency, 2026. Renewable power generation costs in 2025.
[7] Energy transition: Connotations, mechanisms and effects - ScienceDirect
[8] The economic and energy security implications of the Russian energy weapon - ScienceDirect

large solar projects dropped by 85% and renewables are now significantly undercutting fossil fuels as the world's cheapest source of energy[9]. Despite renewable generation being inherently weather-dependent, intermittency challenges are increasingly mitigated through advances in energy storage, system flexibility, interconnection and dispatchable sources of generation, including nuclear power.

2.3 In light of the above, electricity demand is projected to grow significantly in Kent over the coming years, particularly as electricity replaces fossil fuels to heat homes and businesses and electric vehicles increasingly take the place of petrol and diesel vehicles. Table 1 shows the number of battery electric vehicles (BEV) registered in the UK for the first time for selected years between 2010 and 2025[10]; while there were only 242 new BEV registrations across the UK in 2010, this had risen to 430,442 new registrations by 2025.

| Year | UK annual new BEV registrations |
|---|---|
| 2010 | 242 |
| 2013 | 2,411 |
| 2016 | 9,352 |
| 2019 | 34,224 |
| 2022 | 242,746 |
| 2025 | 430,422 |

**Table 1. UK-wide new registrations of BEV vehicles (annual totals) for selected years between 2010 and 2025 (DfT and DVLA)**

2.4 Table 2, taken from UK Power Network's (UKPN) most cautious projections regarding electrification and renewables penetration in Kent[11], shows how domestic heat pumps are projected to potentially increase slowly between 2025 and 2035 across the county. However, over the same period, the number of BEVs (cars) is projected to increase significantly even in UKPN's lowest growth projections. These represent the lower limit of domestic heating and BEV growth in the county but, in the case of BEVs, significant increases are expected across all credible scenarios.

| Technology | 2025 | 2030 | 2035 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Domestic heat pumps | **3,644** | **3,925** | **3,976** |
| BEVs (cars) | **35,725** | **209,724** | **471,930** |
| BEVs (vans) | **989** | **11,178** | **36,059** |

**Table 2. Projected increase in the number of domestic heat pumps, electric cars, and electric vans between 2025 and 2035 under UKPN's most conservative demand projections[12].**

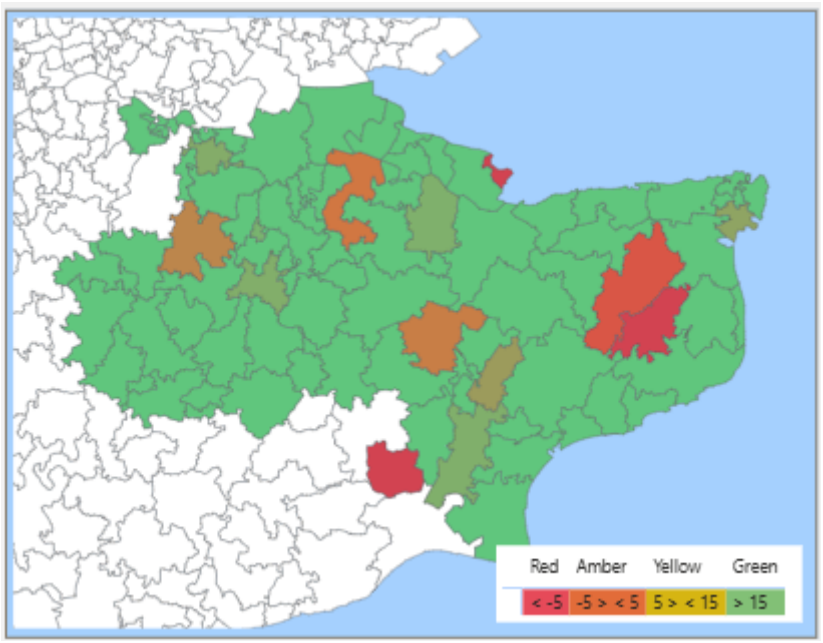
[9] Renewables Were The World's Cheapest Energy Source in 2020 | World Economic Forum

[10] Department for Transport and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency 2026: Vehicle licensing statistics data tables - GOV.UK

[11] Projections based on UKPN's UKPN consumer transformation scenario, which assumes that the UK will reach national 2050 net-zero target with high degree of societal change and deep electrification of transport and heat.

[12] UK Power Networks DFES 2024 based on its "Counterfactual Scenario" in which slow progress is made on decarbonisation. Natural gas remains the primary heating fuel but BEVs are still projected to become the most

2.5 Ensuring energy supply matches demand as electrification and decarbonisation progress is vital to the development and growth of Kent in the coming years. However, much of the county is subject to electricity grid network constraints, which can inhibit new generation from connecting and demand growth being met. The push to decarbonise energy over the next decade, with ambitious government targets to electrify domestic heating and increasing numbers of electric cars, will place growing demands on our electricity grid. Kent's electricity grid will have to manage rapidly growing electricity demand in the coming years. However, there are already areas of the county where the local grid is operating at or above capacity. Map 1 shows all of Kent's primary substation feeding areas and their current headroom status. The dark red areas show regions where the primary substation is currently over 5% overloaded, amber regions are between 5% headroom and 5% overloaded, yellow between 5% and 15% headroom and green over 15% headroom.

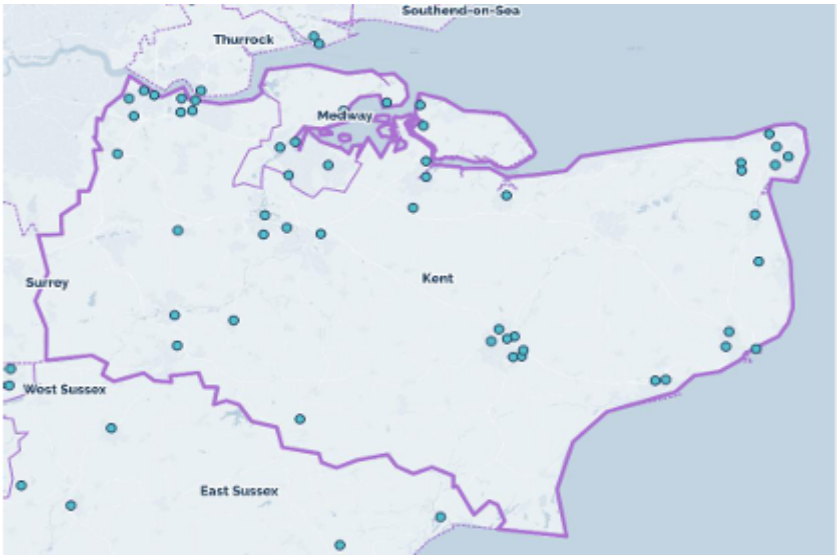



**Map 1. Demand headroom (%) at primary substation feeding areas in Kent (KCC Infrastructure Mapping Platform: Primary Data UKPN 2026[13]**

2.6 Business and industrial electricity demand in Kent is also set to increase considerably over the coming years, especially for the county's industrial clusters and ports (Dover in particular), with significant likely impacts on the local grid capacity. Kent's main industrial clusters are shown in map 2.

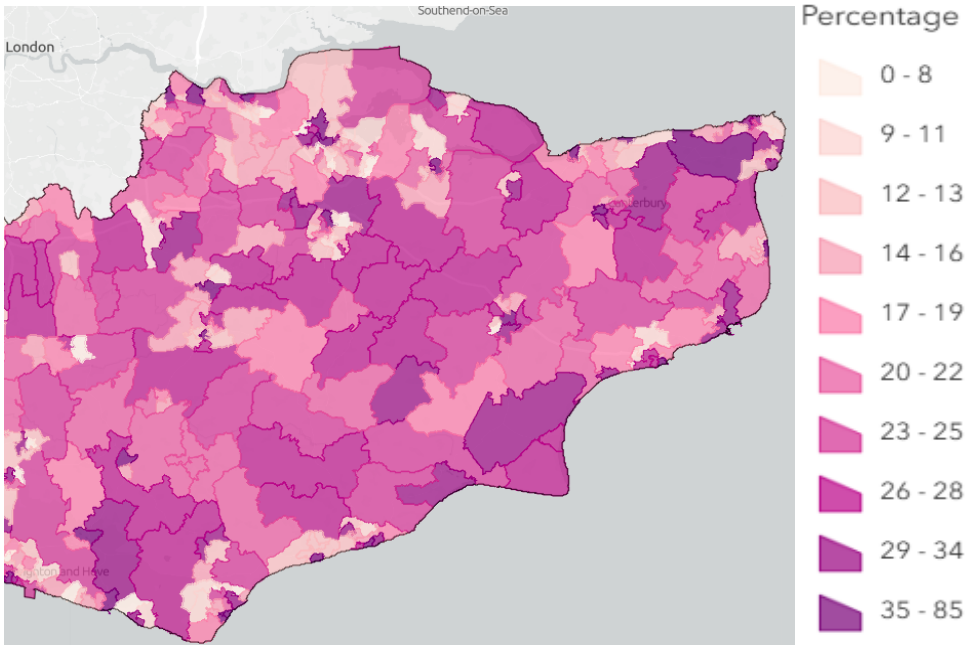
popular passenger vehicle by the mid-2030s. This scenario is the most restrictive in terms of electrification and renewables deployment (see **2025-DFES-Report.pdf**, p.15).

[13] Network Infrastructure and Usage Map (NIUM) — UK Power Networks




**Map 2. Kent's local industrial clusters (Opergy Net Zero, 2024[14])**

2.7 The non-domestic share of electricity demand shows significant spatial variation across Kent. The lighter shaded areas of map 3 represent the areas with the lowest share of non-domestic electricity demand while the darker areas represent the highest shares. As industrial processes and commercial sectors continue to electrify as a means of increasing energy efficiency and reducing operational costs, non-domestic electricity demand is expected to rise rapidly and areas with already high shares of non-domestic demand (the darkest areas of map 3 and closely correlated with the location of industrial clusters in map 2) are likely to see overall electricity demand increase faster than areas with relatively smaller shares of non-domestic demand. This has important implications for spatial planning of the energy system in Kent to ensure that supply and network capacity keep pace with local business demand growth.




**Map 3. Non-Domestic Share of Electricity Demand (NESO 2025[15])**

[14] Developing a Framework for Decarbonisation of Local Industrial Clusters report.

2.8 Despite the significant projected demand growth for electricity in Kent over the coming years, the ability for new generation projects to connect to the network in the county is currently being held up at the level of the distribution network, where UK Power Networks (UKPN) needs to upgrade and reinforce infrastructure to allow new sources of generation to be incorporated. Table 3 shows this transmission backlog, with five of the county's six grid supply points currently indicating maximum lead times for connection up to 2036/37 for already approved projects.

| Site | Transmission backlog | Max lead time | Number of solar and/or battery projects accepted but not connected |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kemsley | **363.6 MW** | **2036** | **8** |
| Northfleet East | **1072 MW** | **2037** | **29** |
| Kingsnorth | **0 MW** | **2026** | **8** |
| Canterbury North | **543.8 MW** | **2036** | **12** |
| Sellindge | **418 MW** | **2037** | **10** |
| Richborough | **489.9 MW** | **2037** | **14** |

**Table 3. Connection backlogs at Kent's grid supply points (UKPN 2026[16])**

2.9 Government's connection reform process should soon start to take effect, reducing the grid queue in Kent. However, as things stand, existing backlogs hinder the energy transition and disincentivise clean energy projects from being developed where connection dates are years into the future. KCC will work with Kent businesses to secure the grid connections they need through the emerging Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESP) (see section 3 below) and through lobbying central government to accelerate the connections reform process at Kent's capacity-constrained substations.

## 3. Vision for KCC Energy Strategy

3.1 Kent County Council's vision is to secure a resilient energy system that meets Kent's current and future economic and housing growth needs and reduces reliance on volatile international energy markets. In response to rapidly increasing demand arising from the electrification of heat, transport and industry, and existing grid constraints across the county, the Council will take a proactive leadership role in shaping Kent's future energy system.

[15] tRESP - Nations and Regions Context
[16] Network Operational Data Dashboard — UK Power Networks

3.2 KCC will work with Government, industry and partners to unlock investment, address infrastructure constraints and ensure Kent is fully prepared to shape and benefit from Regional Energy Strategic Plans, securing a sustainable and competitive energy future for the county.

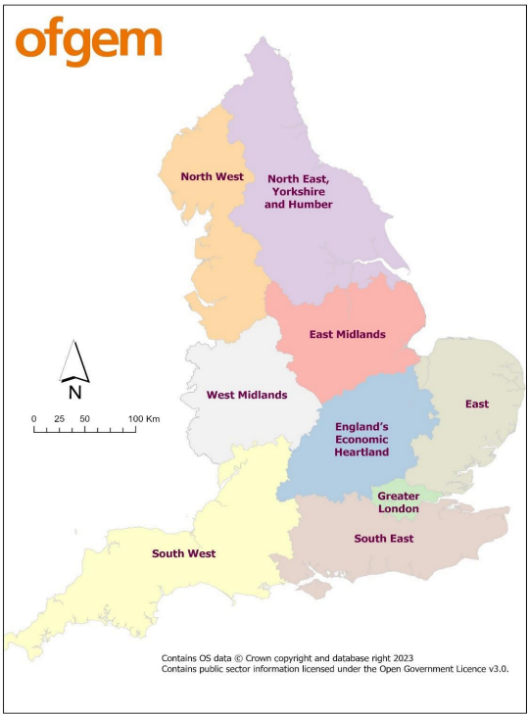
## 4. Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs)

4.1 Clean Power 2030 (CP2030), published in December 2024, is the UK's strategy to deliver a predominantly clean electricity system by 2030[17]. Led by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), it aims to ensure that:

- Clean sources produce at least as much power as Great Britain consumes annually; and
- At least 95% of electricity generation comes from clean sources such as nuclear, hydrogen, renewables, and carbon capture-enabled plants

4.2 Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs) were announced by Ofgem in November 2023 and are key to achieving CP2030. They will be produced across 11 regions of Great Britain (map 4) with the aim of ensuring regional priorities and spatial plans integrate into national energy system planning and support the Government's CP2030 target.

*"The purpose of the RESPs will be to support coordinated development of the energy distribution system and enable long-term investment to be made with confidence and ahead of need"*[18].




**Map 4. England's RESP regions[19]**

[17] CP 2030
[18] Regional Energy Strategic Plan policy framework consultation
[19] Regional Energy Strategic Plan policy framework consultation

4.3 The RESPs are expected to come into force in January 2028 and are intended to address the challenges set out in section one of this report through the introduction of regional energy system planning. Upper tier/strategic/foundation and/or unitary authorities are set to play a key role in the RESPs as members of regional strategic boards that will collaboratively design, implement and ultimately sign off the regional plans every five years. This energy strategy sets out KCC's strategic energy generation priorities in preparation for participation in the RESPs to ensure that the challenges set out in section 1 are fully addressed through regional energy system planning. Additionally, in partnership with Medway Council and Kent district and borough authorities, KCC are developing a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) to explore renewable technology deployment at a local level. The LAEP will identify opportunity areas, partnerships and cost-effective, feasible energy solutions for heat and transport. The LAEP is being developed as part of the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES).

4.4 Central government, network operators and the private sector are the main actors responsible for the deployment of energy generation infrastructure nationally, in line with CP 2030 targets. **Participation in the Southeast RESP is the key mechanism by which KCC can work with central government, network companies and private developers to influence decisions around the generation mix in Kent and the siting of new energy infrastructure to ensure that these meet the needs of Kent's residents and businesses**. KCC's Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Team will work across the Growth Environment and Transport directorate to identify Kent's current and future energy priorities in preparation for the 2028 RESP. This work will continue beyond 2028 to feed into subsequent iterations of the RESP.

## 5. Priorities

### Solar Generation

5.1 KCC's 2026 Position Statement on Solar Generation sets out the organisation's approach to ground-mounted photovoltaic development and its support for solar generation that is:

- Well designed and appropriately located, which is consistent with its commitment to protecting valued landscapes, habitats, heritage, and agricultural land.
- Not located on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land (grades 1 to 3a).
- Community-led integrating local ownership (in part or in full) and benefit, where evidence is provided that demonstrates roof or wall-mounted provision has been considered and why this is not feasible.

5.2 As set out in section 3 of KCC's 2026 Position Statement on Solar Generation, domestic and commercial rooftops, car parks and brownfield sites are all recognised as opportune sites for solar PV installations.

5.3 KCC, in collaboration with Medway Council and participating Kent Districts and Boroughs, will continue to promote collective purchasing schemes for low-carbon technology such as solar PV and storage batteries for households and SMEs. Since 2020, the iChoosr Solar Together project (now 'Switch Together Solar') has facilitated over 4,025 solar PV system, 289 battery systems[20], and 325 EV charging point installations in Kent and Medway. (This relates to household schemes in section 5.3 only).

**Nuclear**

5.4 Nuclear power generation began at Dungeness in 1965. The county has a long and proud nuclear heritage with potential for renewed nuclear generation in the future. KCC's Energy Strategy aims to look at ways to promote Kent as a site for new nuclear generation, putting it back on the national nuclear map.

5.5 Dungeness' two reactors, Dungeness A and B, are currently being decommissioned and defueled. Its environmental and size constraints previously excluded it as a new nuclear site but the Government's new national nuclear ambitions and the advent of advanced nuclear technologies - especially Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) - now offer the opportunity for Dungeness to be reconsidered. For these new smaller reactors in particular, Dungeness C provides the site, the existing grid connections, specialist skills and an increasing local and county-wide demand for energy. It also has a highly supportive local community.

5.6 Internationally important habitats surround and overlay the existing Dungeness powers station site, including a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site, all designated post-construction. These designations are subject to the highest levels of environmental protection under UK and international legislation and present significant environmental and consenting constraints to the development of an SMR on the existing site. The projected construction envelopes and associated activities of conventional, commercially advanced SMRs (such as those being developed by Rolls Royce, Holtec, EDF/NUWARD) would encroach on designated sites, complicating potential deployment.

5.7 A sub-category of SMRs, microreactors, may offer a more feasible possibility at Dungeness compared to conventional SMRs. These produce around 20 times less energy than conventional SMRs but occupy a significantly smaller area and may therefore not face the same environmental and consenting challenges as a traditional SMR. KCC is currently working with a microreactor developer to explore the possibilities for developing the technology on the existing power station site.

**Hydrogen production**

[20] Lithium-ion battery storage systems present a low-probability but potentially high-consequence fire risk. Recent UK standards, including PAS 63100:2024 and updated IET wiring regulations, have significantly strengthened requirements relating to the siting, installation and fire protection of domestic battery systems, helping to ensure that risks remain low when systems are correctly specified and installed.

5.8 The British Energy Security Strategy emphasises the importance of hydrogen in the UK's future energy mix.

"*Our drive on renewables makes green hydrogen especially valuable for flexibility and as a storage solution. Excess renewable electricity used to produce hydrogen can be stored over time and used to power the grid when needed. We will double our UK ambition for hydrogen production to up to 10GW by 2030, with at least half of this from electrolytic hydrogen*[21]".

5.9 The UK Hydrogen Strategy[22] envisages that hydrogen will be used in a number of sectors where electrification is not feasible or is too costly, and other decarbonisation options are limited. This may include generation of high temperature heat, as in industrial furnaces, and long-distance and heavy-duty transport. Similarly, it is useful in areas where the flexibility and stability of a gas is valued, for example large scale or long duration energy storage and flexible power generation.

5.10 Although there are currently no operational hydrogen plants in Kent, one is currently in the early stages of construction, another proposal in is the pipeline, and other developers have shown interest in the county as a potential site for production.

5.11 KCC supports the siting of hydrogen production facilities in the county as an integral element of the clean energy transition, especially for hard to electrify sectors. However, Kent is already seriously water stressed (household demand for water is already a high proportion of current effective rainfall available to meet that demand) and all hydrogen production technologies require water in production and cooling. As such, all proposals must be carefully considered with respect to the local and potentially county-wide impacts on water resources.

**Dungeness Decommissioning Academy and Nuclear Skills Campus**

5.12 Recognising the unique situation of Dungeness, having two reactors located side by side, both undergoing decommissioning, initial discussions have raised the opportunity for developing a decommissioning skills centre of excellence, or similar, working with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority/Nuclear Restoration Services, local colleges and universities, and local authorities via the Nuclear Legacy Advisory Forum (NuLeAF).

5.13 Decommissioning at Dungeness will be continuing for a number of years, with apprentices and other staff still being recruited and with a continuing level of employment of around 600 people. At the same time, as stated in the Advanced Nuclear Framework[23], the Government is committed to "supporting the nuclear industry, both civil and defence, to develop the next generation of nuclear skills to support current and future nuclear projects alongside an expanding decommissioning programme".

[21] British Energy Security Strategy
[22] UK Hydrogen Strategy
[23] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/698483397da3dc19896c7ddc/advanced-nuclear-framework.pdf

5.14 Through the national Nuclear Skills Plan[24] nearly 3,500 early-career starters entered the sector in 2024/25, with new opportunities promoted through the national nuclear recruitment plan. Regional Skills Hubs have also been established to align workforce planning with regional skills needs. However, while there is a National Decommissioning Centre at Aberdeen University, which includes nuclear (as part of the Aberdeen City Region Deal) as well as the Centre for Innovative Nuclear Decommissioning led by the National Nuclear Laboratory, and the HADES facility in Sheffield, amongst others, none of these appear to address the practical skills that are required. Equally, not all the Regional Hubs established under the Nuclear Skills Plan include decommissioning, and there is no regional hub in the South East, yet considerable interest in new nuclear.

5.15 The Kent and Medway Employment Task Force will be asked to inform the ambition to develop a Decommissioning Academy (or similar) as a physical and reputational anchor, providing training, apprenticeships, remote handling, waste characterisation and robotics - exportable skills in a world where decommissioning is a multi-decade global market.

**Port of Dover**

5.16 As battery power and storage capacity increase through technological advances, the prices of batteries continue to drop rapidly on the world market, and shipping is looking to take advantage of electrification. However, in the short term (between now and 2030), the Port of Dover faces significant technical barriers and uncertainty around electrification that are holding up investment decisions.

5.17 The Port of Dover currently has a 4.5MW connection to the grid but are working with National Grid to secure a 15 MW supply by 2028 for the cruise terminal. However, it is the ferry terminal that is most difficult to electrify. Since January 2023, 10 consortium partners integral to the advancement of decarbonisation of ferries that operate between the Port of Dover and its sister ports, Calais and Dunkirk have collaborated to determine the feasibility of electrification and how this could be phased. The study concluded that electrification of current ferry operations would require a mean power demand of 60MW for 13 fully electric ferries and a peak demand of 162MW[25]

5.18 Huge investment is required to increase the Port's electricity supply, and while there are a range of options to meet demand (from power purchase agreements, on-site renewables, connections to local generation such as solar farms or a small nuclear reactor), a firm connection to the grid is paramount, regardless of whether this connection will supply the majority or only part of the Port's energy needs. Supply resilience is critical to the Port of Dover, hence the need for a firm grid connection. However, this would require a direct line from Sellindge or Richborough substations and Port leaders have been told that the earliest connection to these sites is currently 2031 for those already in the connection queue. Such an investment would also come with significant risks if ferry companies reneged on electrification plans or, given

[24] https://nuclearskillsplan.com/
[25] Newest Phase Of Port Of Dover's Green Ferries Project

different electricity prices on either side of the channel, decide to double charge in France and not charge in Dover.

5.19 Working with port authorities and through the RESP, KCC will push central government to prioritise the electrification of the Port of Dover, ensuring that one of the UK's most important trade gateways has the energy infrastructure required to support economic growth, freight connectivity and the transition to low-carbon maritime transport.

**Data Centres**

5.20 Data centres process, store, and communicate the data behind most of the information services we rely upon every day, such as streaming video, email, social media, online collaboration, or scientific computing. They have the potential to create jobs, boost the economy, enhance connectivity and foster innovation. However, concern over the energy use of data centres and their demands on infrastructure has increased in recent years. In the Republic of Ireland, which is home to the European headquarters of several big tech firms such as Google and Facebook-parent Meta, data centres accounted for nearly a fifth of all electricity used in 2022. The amount of electricity being used by data centres in the country has risen by 400% since 2015 and ignited debate about capacity[26].

5.21 In addition to their high energy requirements, data centres also require significant quantities of water for cooling. A medium-sized data centre (15 MW) uses as much water as three average-sized hospitals, or more than two 18-hole golf courses. Some progress has been made with using recycled and non-potable water, but from the limited figures available some data centre operators in the U.S. are drawing more than half of their water from potable sources (in the UK, water use data for the sector is scarce). This has been the source of considerable controversy in areas of water stress and highlights the importance of understanding how data centres use water[27].

5.22 It is critical that any economic benefits of data centres are considered alongside environmental sustainability when planning for the potential growth of data centres in Kent where the grid is already constrained in some regions, and the whole county is designated by the Environment Agency as seriously water stressed. Data centres and AI infrastructure should not be planned in isolation from wider digital connectivity, energy, water, land use and climate systems[28].

5.23 KCC will work with central and local government partners to ensure that proposals for new data centres in Kent are subject to early and transparent public engagement, assessed for their cumulative impacts and incorporated into wider processes of strategic spatial planning.

**Community energy**

[26] Data centre power use 'to surge six-fold in 10 years' - BBC News
[27] Data centre water consumption | npj Clean Water (nature.com)
[28] Local government response to the sustainability of data centres in the UK | Local Government Association

5.24 Community energy refers to communities ‘understanding, generating, owning, using, or saving energy’, providing ‘clear accountability and participatory governance within the energy system’[29]. This can look like community ownership of generation assets such as solar panels or wind turbines, or energy advice or retrofit projects that help reduce local demand.

5.25 KCC has a convening and enabling role to play, supported by the national government’s Local Power Plan, which highlights the Government's vision that "*by 2030, every community in the UK will have the opportunity to own a local energy project*". The Plan empowers Councils to become involved; for example, with partnership grants for local government and community energy groups which will be delivered by Great British Energy.

5.26 KCC wants to facilitate community energy, recognising the benefits it brings to residents, business and local communities. In addition to creating renewable, clean energy, community energy projects can support local energy resilience, help reduce fuel poverty and ensure the economic benefits of energy generation are retained within Kent's communities. KCC can support the development of community energy groups, identify investment opportunities, and share knowledge and other resources with communities.

5.27 There are significant opportunities to ensure that Kent’s communities benefit from a changing energy system, including:

- Significant solar potential, with Kent benefitting from some of the highest levels of solar irradiance in the UK.
- Rural communities who could benefit from energy security and resilience, relying upon more localised generation rather than being subject to fluctuating gas and heating oil prices
- Large numbers of schools, village halls and community buildings suitable for siting rooftop solar and thereby benefitting from lower energy bills.
- Coastal areas with renewable energy opportunities

5.28 KCC will continue to support and grow our Sustainable Communities Network and work alongside local groups to develop interest and opportunities around community energy. We will work with local authorities, community energy organisations, Great British Energy, network operators and private sector partners to increase opportunities for community ownership, shared ownership and local participation in clean energy infrastructure.

**Heat Networks**

5.29 Heat networks (sometimes known as district or communal heating) provide heat, cooling or hot water from a central source to multiple properties or dwellings through a network of insulated pipes. Heat Networks are ‘fuel agnostic’ meaning they can use a variety of energy sources (include waste heat) to provide security from fluctuations in volatile energy markets.

[29] https://communityenergyengland.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/1591956106_CommunityEnergy2030Vision.pdf

5.30 Heat networks are expected to play an important role in the UK's transition, particularly in locations with high heat demand such as town centres, hospitals, universities, public sector estates and large housing developments. Currently heat networks supply 3% of the UK's heat, with a goal for this to increase to 18% by 2050 [30].

5.31 Kent has several characteristics that make heat network deployment particularly attractive:

- Growing urban centres with concentrated heat demand
- Large public sector estates, including hospitals, universities and local authority buildings
- Major regeneration and housing growth areas
- Opportunities to utilise renewable and cleaner-energy heat sources
- Industrial and commercial areas with significant waste heat and heat demand

5.32 KCC will play a strategic and facilitative role in the development of heat networks across Kent. This will include supporting local authorities and delivery partners with data, planning, coordination and the identification of potential sites, particularly in areas of high heat demand and planned growth.

5.33 KCC will work with local authorities, developers, heat network operators, energy companies and other partners to identify opportunities for heat network development and support the integration of low-carbon heat sources into new and existing networks.

5.34 Heat networks can contribute to Kent's wider decarbonisation, energy security, and sustainable growth ambitions, alongside delivering affordable, reliable low-carbon heat.

## 6. Conclusion

6.1 Electricity demand is projected to grow significantly in Kent over the coming years and ensuring that energy supply matches demand as electrification and decarbonisation accelerate will be vital to the health and wellbeing of residents and to the future of the county's businesses. However, the push to decarbonise the energy system, with ambitious government targets for electrified heating and transport, will place growing demands on Kent's already stretched electricity grid.

6.2 The introduction of Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs) from 2028 onwards is the formal mechanism through which local government will be able to contribute to the strategic planning of the energy system. It is an important opportunity for KCC (and our successor authorities as well as any future foundation strategic authority) to address the supply and demand issues elaborated in section one of this document and ensure that Kent's energy system is designed to meet the needs of its residents and businesses into the future, in particular the Port of Dover. The energy priorities set out in this

[30] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heat-network-zoning-promotional-resources/heat-networks-and-zoning-flyer-accessible-webpage

strategy will be developed between now and 2028, ready for incorporation into the Southeast RESP.

6.3 KCC can play a central role in facilitating community energy projects and ensuring the economic benefits of energy generation are retained within Kent's communities. Working with partner organisations to develop a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), exploring the potential for heat networks, and continuing to lead on and facilitate collective purchasing schemes for household level renewables projects will help ensure that Kent's residents and businesses benefit directly from the energy transition.

6.4 KCC aims to put Kent back on the nuclear map, with Dungeness as the centre of gravity—whether through SMRs, and/or a world-leading decommissioning academy. Power generation at Dungeness has been a huge asset for the county and the country over many years and our aim is secure its nuclear future, provide power to local businesses and support the local economy, securing new jobs and opportunities for local people.

6.5 Solar generation – on rooftops, brownfield land, and community-led schemes – should play a key role in Kent. However, ground-mounted solar on BMV agricultural land will not be supported or encouraged, as per the recently updated and established Solar Position Statement.

6.6 The importance of hydrogen in the UK's future energy mix remains uncertain, and recent trends suggest a smaller role than previously anticipated. However, there will be a place for hydrogen in hard to electrify sectors and KCC will work with developers to encourage hydrogen generation in the county provided that it does not have a net negative impact on Kent's already stressed water resource zones.

6.7 New data centres in Kent represent significant economic opportunities but also major challenges in terms of their intensive localised energy and water demands. It is critical that KCC works with local and national partner organisations to ensure that any data centre proposals are comprehensively assessed for their cumulative impacts within wider spatial planning processes.

## 7. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

7.1 To continue without an Energy Strategy. This was dismissed as it is felt helpful for all stakeholders to understand the hierarchy of KCC's ambitions around energy for the 2026 – 2028 period.

## *8.* Financial Implications

8.1 The adoption of the Strategy does not create any immediate additional financial commitment. Implementation will be undertaken within existing resources and budgets. Any future proposals requiring additional expenditure or external funding will be subject to separate approval.

## *9.* Legal implications

9.1 The adoption of the Strategy does not create any immediate legal commitments. Any future projects or agreements arising from its implementation will be subject to the relevant legal, regulatory and governance requirements.

## *10.* Equalities implications

Equalities implications - An EqIA has been undertaken and no key issues were identified

## 11. Data Protection Implications

*None*

## 12. Other corporate implications

12.1 The proposed KCC Energy Strategy will benefit all Kent residents and businesses by building the right foundations for what we hope the Kent and Medway successor authorities (should LGR review determine LGR continues) will then take forward. In this way- from individual household energy schemes through to shaping a robust Regional Energy Strategic Plan - all outcomes that KCC pursues will benefit from this Strategy. Ther are no immediate Corporate Implications that stretch outside of the Growth, Environment and Transport directorate.

## 13. Governance

13.1 The Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport will inherit the main delegations via the Officer Scheme of Delegation.

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**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE**, or make **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects on, the proposed decision to approve and adopt the KCC Energy Strategy, as set out in sections 1 – 6 and the Proposed Record of Decision at Appendix A.

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## 14. Appendices

- Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision
- *Equality Impact Assessment*

## 15. Contact details

| | |
|---|---|
| Report Author: *Tom Henderson*<br><br>Job title: Principal Strategic Energy | Director: *Stephanie Holt-Castle*<br><br>Job title: Director of Growth and Communities |

| | |
|---|---|
| and Infrastructure Officer<br><br>Telephone number: 03000 041 5248<br><br>Email address: tom.henderson@kent.gov.uk | Telephone number: 03000 412 064<br><br>Email address: stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk |

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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

| DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: | DECISION NUMBER: |
|---|---|
| David Wimble: Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects | 26/00052 |

**Executive Decision – key**

**26/00052 – Kent County Council (KCC) Energy Strategy**

**Decision:**
As Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects, I agree to:

**APPROVE** and **ADOPT** the Kent County Council (KCC) Energy Strategy;

**DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects, to finalise and publish the KCC Energy Strategy, including making any necessary minor or presentational amendments that do not materially alter its substantive objectives or priorities; and

**DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport to take the relevant actions, including, but not limited to, negotiating, finalising the terms of and entering into the necessary arrangements, contracts and associated legal documentation required to implement this decision.

**Reasons for decision:** Kent County Council's (KCC) Energy Strategy sets out the key energy challenges facing Kent and the ways in which KCC will work to support the county's residents and businesses to benefit from the energy transition through access to reliable, affordable and clean energy.

**Financial implications:**
The adoption of the Strategy does not create any immediate additional financial commitment. Implementation will be undertaken within existing resources and budgets. Any future proposals requiring additional expenditure or external funding will be subject to separate approval.

**Legal implications:**
The adoption of the Strategy does not create any immediate legal commitments. Any future projects or agreements arising from its implementation will be subject to the relevant legal, regulatory and governance requirements.

**Equalities implications:** None identified through EqIA

**Data Protection implications:** None

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation**:
This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**
To continue without an Energy Strategy. This was dismissed as it is felt helpful for all stakeholders to understand the hierarchy of KCC's ambitions around energy for the 2026 – 2028 period

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Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: N/A

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…….. ……

Signed Date

# EQIA Submission – ID Number
## Section A

**EQIA Title**
KCC Energy Plan

**Responsible Officer**
Tom Henderson - GT GC

**Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)**
Claire Pamberi - GT GC

## Type of Activity

**Service Change**
No

**Service Redesign**
No

**Project/Programme**
No

**Commissioning/Procurement**
No

**Strategy/Policy**
Strategy/Policy

**Details of other Service Activity**
No

## Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**
Growth Environment and Transport

**Responsible Service**
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure

**Responsible Head of Service**
Claire Pamberi - GT GC

**Responsible Director**
Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

## Aims and Objectives

To approve KCC's Energy Plan that sets out the organisation's approach to energy generation in Kent, in particular promoting new nuclear at Dungeness, opposing ground-mounted solar and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in rural locations, and supporting emerging opportunities for hydrogen generation in the county.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**
No

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**
No

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**
Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**
Not Applicable

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**
The Energy Plan is a strategic document that sets out KCC's policy preferences and direction. It will be debated by Members at the Growth Environment and Ttransport Cabinet Committee.

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

No

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

Service users/clients

**Staff**

Staff/Volunteers

**Residents/Communities/Citizens**

Residents/communities/citizens

**Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?**

No

**Details of Positive Impacts**

Not Applicable

## Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

**Are there negative impacts for age?**

No

**Details of negative impacts for Age**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating Actions for Age**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age**

Not Applicable

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

**Are there negative impacts for Disability?**

Yes

**Details of Negative Impacts for Disability**

People with a disability may find it hard to read and navigate the document

**Mitigating actions for Disability**

Training offered, support and advice, make the document clear and accessible

**Responsible Officer for Disability**

Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Team

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

**Are there negative impacts for Sex**

No

**Details of negative impacts for Sex**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Sex**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for Sex**

Not Applicable

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

**Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

No

**Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

| |
|---|
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender** |
| Not Applicable |
| 23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race |
| **Are there negative impacts for Race** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Race** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Race** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race** |
| Not Applicable |
| 24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief |
| **Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Religion and belief** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Religion and belief** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief** |
| Not Applicable |
| 25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation |
| **Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation** |
| Not Applicable |
| 26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity |
| **Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Not Applicable |
| 27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships |
| **Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| 28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities |
| **Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |

| |
|---|
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |

**From:** David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 10 November 2026

**Subject:** Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy – Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board

**Decision no:** 26/00066

**Key Decision :** *Yes – it is a strategic policy matter which will:*
- *Have a significant impact on a significant number people across multiple Kent County Council Electoral Divisions*

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** n/a

**Future Pathway of report:** n/a

**Electoral Division: All Divisions**

**Is the decision eligible for call-in?** Yes

**Summary:** The report sets out the reintroduction across England of statutory strategic planning and the new duty to prepare a spatial development strategy which will provide a strategic, long-term spatial investment framework for housing, economic growth, infrastructure and environmental priorities across Kent and Medway. The report also outlines the role and purpose of an anticipated Strategic Planning Board comprising Kent County Council and Medway Council, ahead of its establishment by the Government through secondary legislation. The report seeks endorsement of the proposed decision to support and participate in the anticipated Strategic Planning Board, for Kent County Council to act as Host Authority and to delegate authority for the actions needed to establish and support its operations.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE, or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects in relation to the proposed decision to recognise the establishment by the Government of a Strategic Planning Board for Kent and Medway and to approve the required Kent County Council activity to support its establishment and operations (further details are outlined in the Proposed

Record of Decision (Appendix A)).

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 Strategic planning is the co-ordination of activity across wide geographical areas and multiple sectors, including housing, transport, health and the environment[1]. The case for strategic planning is well-documented, particularly in grappling with the most significant issues facing the planning system and those which fall between the local and national level. These include the quantum and spatial distribution of new homes, transport infrastructure and water and energy distribution.

1.2 The value of strategic planning was recognised by consecutive governments over multiple decades as an integral part of the planning system, most recently through the Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006 and South East Regional Spatial Strategy 2009. In 2010, the coalition Government announced its intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies and since this time, there has not been a duty to prepare strategic plans.

1.3 The 'duty to cooperate' - a legal requirement introduced by the Localism Act 2011 - was intended to fill the strategic planning vacuum by addressing strategic planning matters which cross administrative boundaries through the preparation of local plans (currently undertaken by the districts and boroughs in Kent, and Medway Council). However, it was widely regarded as ineffective, particularly in terms of its technical implementation, and the Government abolished the duty as part of a wider set of planning reforms earlier this year.

## 2. Spatial Development Strategies

2.1 The Government published its English Devolution White Paper in December 2024. It set out the intention to reintroduce strategic planning by requiring all areas - regardless of the pace of Local Government Reorganisation or Devolution - to prepare new strategic plans, known as spatial development strategies. The duty is the centrepiece of the housing and strategic planning component of the Devolution Framework set out in the White Paper.

2.2 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 (amending the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) subsequently established the relevant legislative framework and provisions which (when brought into force) will place a duty on combined authorities, combined county authorities, upper-tier councils and unitary authorities to prepare a spatial development strategy for their areas. The legislation also gives the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government the power to establish Strategic Planning Boards, comprising specified groupings (see 3.1) of these authorities to exercise the statutory strategic planning functions for their combined areas.

2.3 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 also sets out extensive powers for the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to

[1] Royal Town Planning Institute (2023).

intervene in the preparation of spatial development strategies, in the backdrop of the Government's ambition to achieve universal strategic planning coverage by the end of the current parliament. These include the power to direct strategic planning authorities to prepare a strategy, prescribe its content and, where deemed necessary, the power to prepare and adopt a strategy on behalf of the relevant strategic planning authorities.

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (2026) sets out that spatial development strategies should establish a positive vision for future growth and change, and provide a clear spatial framework for investment and growth over a period of at least 25 years. This includes the apportionment across local planning authorities (currently Medway Council, and the districts and boroughs in Kent) of the objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses which are more appropriately considered at a strategic scale.

2.5 Spatial development strategies will also identify broad locations for growth and regeneration, including major housing and employment opportunities, and provide a spatial framework to support economic growth and investment, reflecting the economic priorities identified through Local Growth Plans (a separate paper at today's Cabinet Committee). They will also coordinate the delivery of strategic infrastructure (e.g. transport, water and energy) needed to support growth while addressing strategic environmental priorities, including those identified through Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the protection and enhancement of the historic environment.

2.6 Once adopted, spatial development strategies will form part of the statutory development plan. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2026), local plans will need to support the delivery of the spatial development strategy for their area. They will set out detailed proposals to accommodate development needs, including the housing requirement set out in the adopted spatial development strategy.

2.7 The preparation of the Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy is included as a priority within Reforming Kent 2025-2028 under Aim 4: Building Better Communities:

"Building on the Kent and Medway Infrastructure Framework, ensure the new Spatial Development Strategy fully captures Kent's strategic infrastructure needs and delivers a requirement into the planning system to deliver infrastructure first"

## 3. Key Considerations

<u>Confirmation of the geographies for spatial development strategies:</u>

3.1 In February 2026, the Government consulted on the proposed geographies over which spatial development strategies should be prepared. Kent and Medway was a proposed geography and both Kent County Council and Medway Council were identified as the strategic planning authorities. A requirement for the establishment of a Strategic Planning Board was also identified, comprising (pre devolution) Kent County Council and Medway Council, as the relevant strategic

planning authorities set out in the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 (amending the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

3.2 The Government's response to the consultation is anticipated in October 2026. However, given Kent and Medway is a well-established and recognised geography for both administrative and functional purposes, it is highly likely to be confirmed as a geography for the preparation of a spatial development strategy. The subsequent establishment of a Strategic Planning Board (see 3.6) will require separate secondary legislation.

Commencement of the statutory duty to prepare spatial development strategies:

3.3 The statutory duty to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy is anticipated to commence in November 2026 when the relevant provisions of the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 are brought into force by commencement regulations.

3.4 This is likely to trigger a requirement for Kent County Council and Medway Council to submit a draft timetable to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for the preparation of the spatial development strategy for Kent and Medway, and within a time period prescribed by regulations. This is currently anticipated to be 90 days.

3.5 The proposed decision, as outlined in this report and set out in the Proposed Record of Decision (Appendix A), includes relevant delegated authority to the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects, to submit the timetable to the Government.

Establishment of the Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board:

3.6 Separate secondary legislation will be required to establish the Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board as a joint committee of Kent County Council and Medway Council, and this is anticipated in early 2027. Kent County Council and Medway Council will be the two constituent authorities comprising the Strategic Planning Board, as the relevant strategic planning authorities set out in the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025.

3.7 Once the relevant regulations take effect, the Strategic Planning Board will become the Strategic Planning Authority for Kent and Medway, and Kent County Council and Medway Council will cease to be strategic planning authorities in their own right for the purposes of preparing the spatial development strategy. This will include responsibility for all decision making associated with the preparation and adoption of the spatial development strategy, and for its monitoring and review.

3.8 The regulations will set out the composition of the Strategic Planning Board in terms of the number of elected members from Kent County Council and Medway Council. It is expected that representation will broadly reflect the difference in population between Kent and in Medway i.e. there will be a greater number of elected members from Kent County Council than Medway Council. There are existing precedents for weighted representation based on population,

including, for example, the governance arrangements supporting Transport for the South East.

3.9 It is recognised that wider engagement with partners and stakeholders, particularly Kent districts and boroughs as the local planning authorities, will be an integral part of the preparation of the first spatial development strategy for Kent and Medway. Regular, informal engagement is already underway via existing structures in Kent and Medway, including Kent Chief Planners, Kent Chief Executives and Kent Leaders. Once established, it will be for the Strategic Planning Board to determine whether it wishes to invite other relevant authorities to participate in its proceedings and the secondary legislation is likely to prescribe the process for appointing co-opted members and observer members (both will be non-voting).

3.10 The proposed decision, as outlined in this report and set out in the Proposed Record of Decision (Appendix A), confirms Kent County Council's support for, agreement to participate in, and commitment to undertake actions to facilitate, where required, the anticipated Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board, in advance of its formal establishment through secondary legislation.

3.11 The proposed decision will allow Kent County Council to comply with the relevant legislation in a timely manner by evidencing the relevant political and strategic approval of the required arrangements and delegated authority to officers to take the necessary actions to support the Strategic Planning Board functions once established.

## 4. Other Options Considered but discarded

4.1 Other options considered but discarded were:

- **Take no action or defer –** rejected because KCC needs arrangements in place to participate effectively in the statutory Board.
- **Prepare separate Kent and Medway strategies –** rejected because the Board will be the strategic planning authority for the combined area.
- **Establish a voluntary joint committee –** rejected because it could not replace the statutory Board or exercise its functions.

## 5. Financial Implications

5.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has allocated Kent and Medway a ringfenced revenue grant of £765,000 to support the preparation of the Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy. The funding has already been received by Kent County Council, however, deployment of long term funding commitments remain subject to this decision that Committee is invited to comment upon today.

5.2 The total revenue grant funding allocation for Kent and Medway is anticipated to be confirmed in winter 2026. The Government has recognised there will be additional resourcing implications (see Section 8) for those areas where the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government establishes a Strategic Planning Board and this should be reflected in the funding allocation.

5.3 The total ringfenced revenue grant allocation is likely to exceed £1m and this also fulfils a requirement for a Key Decision (see Section 9). Acceptance of the total grant allocation would be subject to Kent County Council being satisfied with the associated final terms and conditions.

## 6. Legal implications

6.1 The decision is required to implement the statutory arrangements arising from the proposed Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board Regulations 2026 and the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025.

6.2 The intention is to establish a Strategic Planning Board for Kent and Medway, of which Kent County Council and Medway Council will be constituent authorities.

6.3 Once established, the Strategic Planning Board will need to consider appropriate representation from the districts in Kent as the local planning authorities with a duty to prepare Local Plans which will need to be in general conformity with the adopted Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy

## 7. Equalities implications

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the proposed decision and it does not identify any negative impacts for any protected characteristics.

## 8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 The Data Protection Impact Assessment screening tool has been completed. A Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required.

## 9. Other corporate implications

9.1 Clerking arrangements are yet to be finalised and consideration will be given to appropriate resourcing between Kent County Council and Medway Council relating to the support and administration for the Strategic Planning Board.

9.2 The Government has recognised there will be additional resourcing implications (see Section 4) for those areas where the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government establishes a Strategic Planning Board.

## 10. Governance

10.1 The proposed decision sets out Kent County Council's approval of the necessary arrangements to support the County Council participating in, and serving as Host Authority for, the anticipated Strategic Planning Board. This will include the general policy decision to confirm approval and the necessary engagement of Kent County Council with the Strategic Planning Board as a constituent member, along with delegations to the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport to take the necessary implementation decisions to facilitate the County Council undertaking the relevant Host Authority activity.

10.2 The proposed decision includes accepting and deploying funding from the Government which is intended to support the operations of the Strategic Planning Board. The total ringfenced revenue grant funding allocation for Kent and Medway is anticipated to be confirmed in winter 2026 (see Section 4), however, it is likely to exceed £1m and this therefore fulfils a requirement for a Key Decision.

10.3 The proposed decision nor any delegations included within represent any approval of future specific Strategic Planning Board decisions. In accordance with the arrangements required under the anticipated Strategic Planning Board operations, future Strategic Planning Authority matters for the purposes of preparing the spatial development strategy will be determined by the Board, with Kent County Council facilitating the Board's operations as the Host Authority.

## 11. Conclusions

11.1 The introduction of statutory spatial development strategies will restore strategic planning across Kent and Medway and provide the platform to establish a long-term vision for the area, including the scale and distribution of housing and economic growth and the timely provision of supporting strategic infrastructure. The Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy will provide greater clarity and certainty in the long-term policy environment, support public and private investment decisions and help deliver improved outcomes for residents, businesses and communities.

11.2 The anticipated establishment of the Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board will provide the governance required to prepare, adopt, monitor and review the forthcoming Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy. The proposed decision will enable Kent County Council to respond proactively to the anticipated new statutory requirements by confirming its support and participation, acting as Host Authority and putting in place the necessary operational arrangements.

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## 12. Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE, or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects in relation to the proposed decision to recognise the establishment by the Government of a Strategic Planning Board for Kent and Medway and to approve the required Kent County Council activity to support its establishment and operations (further details are outlined in the Proposed Record of Decision (Appendix A)).

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## 13. Background Documents

13.1 Equality Impact Assessment
13.2 National Planning Policy Framework (2026)

13.3 English Devolution White Paper (2024)

## 14. Appendices

14.1 Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

## 15. Contact details

| | |
|---|---|
| Report Author: Tom Marchant<br><br>Job title: Assistant Director – Strategic Development and Place<br><br>Telephone number: 03000 413412<br><br>Email address: Tom.Marchant@kent.gov.uk | Director: Stephanie Holt-Castle<br><br>Job title: Director for Growth and Communities<br><br>Telephone number: 03000 412064<br><br>Email address: Stephanie.Holt-Castle@kent.gov.uk |

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

| DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: | DECISION NUMBER: |
|---|---|
| David Wimble<br>Cabinet Member Economic Development and Special Projects | 26/00066 |

**Executive Decision – key**

**26/00066** Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy – Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board

**Decision:**
As Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects, I agree to:

**RECOGNISE** the statutory establishment of the Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board under the applicable Regulations and Kent County Council's status as a constituent authority;

**APPROVE,** subject to the final Regulations and agreement of the governance, financial and operational arrangements, and in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, Kent County Council undertaking the role of Host Authority for the Board;

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth and Communities, to take all relevant including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into any relevant contract or legal agreements as necessary to implement the decision contractual, governance and operational arrangements**.**

**Reasons for decision:**
The decision is required to recognise the statutory establishment of the Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board as a joint committee of Kent County Council and Medway Council, responsible for preparing the Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy.

The Board will be established through the proposed Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board Regulations 2026, under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025).

**Financial implications:**
- £765,000 ringfenced MHCLG revenue grant has been received by Kent County Council to support preparation of the Strategy; long-term funding commitments remain subject to this decision.

- The total Kent and Medway revenue grant allocation is expected to be confirmed in winter 2026 and should reflect the additional resourcing required for the Strategic Planning Board.
- The total ringfenced grant is likely to exceed £1 million, meeting the Key Decision threshold; acceptance remains subject to satisfactory final terms and conditions.

**Legal implications:**
- The decision is required to implement the statutory arrangements for the Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board under the proposed 2026 Regulations and relevant planning legislation.
- Kent County Council and Medway Council will be the constituent authorities of the Strategic Planning Board.
- The Board will need to consider appropriate district representation, reflecting districts' local planning responsibilities and the requirement for Local Plans to be in general conformity with the adopted Spatial Development Strategy.

**Equalities implications:**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken, and it does not identify any negative impacts for any protected characteristics.

**Data Protection implications:**
The Data Protection Impact Assessment screening tool has been completed. A Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required.

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**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation**:
This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**
- **Take no action or defer** – rejected because KCC needs arrangements in place to participate effectively in the statutory Board.
- **Prepare separate Kent and Medway strategies** – rejected because the Board will be the strategic planning authority for the combined area.
- **Establish a voluntary joint committee** – rejected because it could not replace the statutory Board or exercise its functions.

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Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

---

…….. ……

Signed Date

# EQIA Submission – ID Number
# Section A

**EQIA Title**
Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy - Strategic Planning Board

**Responsible Officer**
Tom Marchant - GT GC

**Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)**
Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

## Type of Activity

**Service Change**
No

**Service Redesign**
No

**Project/Programme**
No

**Commissioning/Procurement**
No

**Strategy/Policy**
No

**Details of other Service Activity**
Establishment of the Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board

## Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**
Growth Environment and Transport

**Responsible Service**
Strategic Development and Place / Growth and Communities

**Responsible Head of Service**
Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

**Responsible Director**
Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

## Aims and Objectives

The aim of the proposed decision is to recognise the anticipated establishment of the governance arrangements necessary to support the preparation, adoption, monitoring and review of a Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) in accordance with the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 and national planning policy.

The SDS will provide a strategic framework for addressing cross-boundary issues, including housing, infrastructure, economic growth and environmental enhancement, across Kent and Medway.

This Equality Impact Assessment has considered the potential impacts of the proposed decision on individuals and groups with protected characteristics. The assessment has concluded that the decision primarily relates to governance arrangements for the anticipated establishment of the Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board and does not in itself result in direct impacts on service users or communities. Equality and diversity considerations will also be taken into account as the detailed governance and membership arrangements for the Strategic Planning Board are developed.

Equality considerations will be embedded throughout the development of the SDS through evidence gathering, consultation and assessment, ensuring that potential impacts on different groups are identified,

understood and appropriately addressed.

The overall recommendation is therefore that the proposal may proceed.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

No

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

No

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Not Applicable

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

Consultation is not applicable at this stage as the proposed decision relates solely to the governance and administrative arrangements for the anticipated establishment (by the Government) of the Kent and Medway Strategic Planning Board. The decision does not directly affect residents, service users or communities.

The preparation of the Kent and Medway Spatial Development Strategy will be subject to consultation and engagement in accordance with the Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 (amending the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

No

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

No

**Staff**

No

**Residents/Communities/Citizens**

Residents/communities/citizens

**Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?**

No

**Details of Positive Impacts**

Not Applicable

## Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

**Are there negative impacts for age?**

No

**Details of negative impacts for Age**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating Actions for Age**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age**

Not Applicable

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

**Are there negative impacts for Disability?**

| |
|---|
| No |
| **Details of Negative Impacts for Disability** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Disability** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Disability** |
| Not Applicable |
| 21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex |
| **Are there negative impacts for Sex** |
| No |
| **Details of negative impacts for Sex** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Sex** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Sex** |
| Not Applicable |
| 22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender |
| **Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender** |
| Not Applicable |
| 23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race |
| **Are there negative impacts for Race** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Race** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Race** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race** |
| Not Applicable |
| 24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief |
| **Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Religion and belief** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Religion and belief** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief** |
| Not Applicable |
| 25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation |
| **Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation** |
| Not Applicable |

| |
|---|
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation** |
| Not Applicable |
| 26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity |
| **Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Not Applicable |
| 27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships |
| **Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| 28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities |
| **Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |

**From:** **Jamie Henderson-Cabinet Member for Coastal Regeneration and Environment**

**Simon Jones-Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport**

**To:** **Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 10 November 2026**

**Subject:** **Briefing on draft Kent Plan Sea**

**Decision no:** n/a

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Electoral Division:** County-wide

**Is the decision eligible for call-in?** n/a

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**Summary:** Plan Sea is a commitment by Kent County Council to work with others to improve our marine and coastal environment. It recognises that action is already in place along our coasts and sea and the intention is not to duplicate but to add value, through coordinating and joining up approaches and filling the gaps on action where they exist. Plan Sea has been developed through workshops and conversations with agencies, delivery partners and coastal stakeholders.

This paper presents the draft Plan Sea ahead of consultation.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the paper and draft Plan Sea document and endorse the Plan to proceed to public consultation.

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## 1. The need for Plan Sea

1.1 With over 350 miles, Kent has one of the longest county coastlines in England and our identity is strongly linked to our coastal and marine borders.

1.2 The coastal and marine environment faces many pressures:

- water quality degradation from land-based and sea-based activities and development
- climate change impacts, such as warming waters and coastal squeeze
- coastal erosion and flooding
- habitat damage and loss
- over exploitation
- impacts of resource extraction
- recreational disturbance
- invasive species
- damage to cultural and heritage sites

1.3 The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy aims to address the decline of nature but, for our coastal and marine ecosystem, it is limited to the intertidal area. However, the importance of recovering our natural environment doesn't stop at the low tide mark. There is the need to extend the benefits of managing our terrestrial habitats to offshore and dedicate the same level of effort for our marine environments as our terrestrial ones.

1.4 The success of the Local Naure Recovery Strategy is limited by some key challenges outside of its scope, in particular: coastal and marine pollution, marine management, human pressures and disturbance and invasive species.

1.5 Marine and coastal systems present unique restoration challenges linked to wave dynamics, shifting sediments, and climate change. Human pressures are similarly complex: land-based activities affect coastal waters through runoff, and multiple marine activities can overlap spatially or temporally.

1.6 Additionally, governance and regulatory responsibilities in marine areas are distributed across numerous organisations, making collaboration and partnership working essential, but this collaboration does not always occur.

1.7 There are a number of stakeholders with an interest in a clean, productive and biologically diverse coastal and marine environment and a number of bodies with statutory responsibility for various aspects of its management. Despite the number of stakeholders with an interest or responsibility, our coastal and marine habitats do not provide the healthy and productive environment we might aspire to and there is a lack of join-up across this strategic agenda.

1.8 We also need collective effort to secure a better baseline of data – improvements are needed in coastal and marine data collection and reporting and what is collected needs to be collated and stored in one place, building a bigger and better picture of Kent's coastal and marine habitats and species.

1.9 These challenges for coastal and marine recovery have been identified through workshops and conversations with agencies, delivery partners and coastal stakeholders. This work has also identified key areas they believe a coordinated, partnership approach is needed.

## 2. The purpose of Plan Sea

2.1 Plan Sea is a commitment by Kent County Council to work with others to improve our marine and coastal environment and to ensure this aim is integrated across the authority.

2.2 Plan Sea recognises that action is already in place along our coasts and sea and the intention is not to duplicate but to add value, through coordinating and joining up approaches and filling the gaps on action where they exist.

2.3 As Responsible Authority for the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Kent County Council is already working with partners to facilitate delivery of the strategy's coastal ambition. But restoration of our coastal and marine areas requires action outside the scope of the Local Nature Recovery

Strategy, and Plan Sea addresses this by also focussing on challenges which have a huge influence, such as water pollution, people engagement and management.

2.4 Plan Sea also addresses the spatial gap left by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy by extending the ambitions beyond the Strategy's remit of mean low water mark.

2.5 Plan Sea will:

- Enable and facilitate collaborative work to recover our marine and coastal environment, working towards clean, healthy, adaptable and resilient habitats.
- Establish partnerships and project working groups to tackle the pressures on our marine and coastal environment. It will enhance the work of individual organisations across Kent's coastline, including those with statutory duties to make sure they are working effectively.
- Ensure delivery of the coastal ambition of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and extend this ambition to our marine areas, ensuring action works for the benefit of the whole marine ecosystem.
- Apply an integrated management approach, so the socio-economic benefits of a healthy coastal and marine environment can be realised by Kent's coastal communities.
- Compliment and support the delivery of national coastal and marine targets, focusing on halting biodiversity loss and restoring ocean health.
- Advocate and champion for the better recognition, management and protection of our coastal and marine environment, locally and nationally.

## 3. Plan Sea aims and objectives

3.1 Plan Sea provides a framework for collaborative work and joined-up action to deliver the following aims:

- Our marine and coastal environments restored, functioning and resilient.
- Marine and coastal biodiversity loss halted and trends reversed.
- Clean, productive and biological diverse marine and coastal environments that continue to provide the ecosystem services that support and protect livelihoods, communities, health and wellbeing and the county's economy.
- The importance of our marine and coastal environment fully recognised, with good and effective management protecting these areas from damaging impacts.

3.2 Plan Sea will deliver these aims through the following objectives:

1. Work collaboratively across the county to facilitate delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities for coastal and marine habitats.
2. Coordinate and join-up efforts to support a source-to-sea approach that can effectively tackle marine and coastal pollution.
3. Make better use of management and protection mechanisms available to our Marine Protected Areas. Coordinate and join-up efforts to facilitate a holistic approach to the management of Marine Protected Areas, recognising how critical these are for marine nature recovery.

4. Lead efforts to improve ocean literacy so that all stakeholders, including the people of Kent, can make a decisive and direct contribution to the restoration of our coastal and marine environment.
5. Actively support communities and bodies in their efforts to reduce wildlife disturbance and tackle invasive non-native species.
6. Champion Kent and showcase the work of the county to highlight the challenges and achievements of the coastal county at a national level.

3.3 The draft Plan Sea document (appendix 1) expands on how Plan Sea will deliver against these six objectives.

3.4 While Plan Sea's focus is on driving environmental improvements, this work will be progressed in consideration of the socio-economic benefits a healthy coastal and marine environment will bring to the county. Integrated coastal management seeks to balance economic growth, human use and environmental protection – by employing this approach, Plan Sea will seek to support and maximise opportunities for a breadth of priorities for our coastal communities.

## 4. Delivery

4.1 While Plan Sea is a Kent County Council document, its delivery will be entirely dependant on partnership working. The intention is that Plan Sea provides the framework and a central point of coordination to enable this.

4.2 An annual action plan will be developed, outlining the work to be taken forward in support of the six Plan Sea objectives. This action plan will be developed with partners, recognising the important role they play in delivering Plan Sea.

4.3 Biennially, progress against these objectives will be reviewed and reported, and this will be used to inform priorities for the year ahead.

4.4 Plan Sea has a dedicated officer but funding to support its delivery will need to be secured. With diverse ambitions, this could open multiple areas of funding opportunities that need to be explored. Potential sources of funding to support Plan Sea action are discussed in the draft document (appendix 1).

## 5. Next steps

5.1 Over winter the draft Plan Sea will be consulted on – with key stakeholders, delivery partners and the public. Plan Sea has not be developed in isolation – its aims, objectives and potential actions have been developed in collaboration with the very partners we would be looking to for delivery. Consultation on the draft plan will be a critical step in securing their buy-in and active support.

5.2 The intent is to have Plan Sea ready for adoption in late spring 2027. The final Plan will come back to GET Cabinet Committee prior to adoption.

## 6. How the proposed decision supports the Council's Strategic Statement

6.1 Plan Sea will align with *putting Kent residents* first by:

- Directly engage with our coastal communities in the outreach and engagement work.
- Increase opportunities to volunteer and take part in citizen science.
- Increase opportunities to experience, explore and learn about our coastal and marine environments.

6.2 Plan Sea will align with *building better communities* by:

- Improving the coastal and marine environment and recovering coastal and marine wildlife.
- Supporting economic and societal improvements in coastal towns, through environmental improvements.
- Delivery of ecosystems services, and the economic and societal benefits they underpin, as a result of clean, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environments.

## 7. Financial Implications

7.1 Plan Sea will be delivered in partnership with marine and coastal stakeholders and delivery partners. This will be managed and coordinated by the Coastal and Marine Officer – this post is already covered by existing budget.

7.2 Projects and initiatives resulting form Plan Sea will be delivered using external funding, grants and investment. There will be no direct costs to KCC other than the Coastal and Marine Officer's time.

## 8. Legal implications

8.1 There are considered to be no legal implications for Kent County Council in developing and delivering Plan Sea.

## 9. Equalities implications

9.1 An EqIA screening has been completed and no implications were identified – a copy of the EqIA is provided in appendix 2.

## 10. Data Protection Implications

10.1 There are considered to be no data protection implications for Kent County Council in developing a Kent water strategy

## 11. Other corporate implications

11.1 There are no specific implications on other areas of KCC. However, delivering Plan Sea may require some support from other areas of KCC. There are no expectations for any additional spending.

## 12. Governance

12.1 Plan Sea will be delivered by the Natural Environment and Coast Team, Environment and the Circular Economy division.

## 13. Conclusions

13.1 Plan Sea is a commitment by Kent County Council to work with others to improve our marine and coastal environment.

13.2 Plan Sea recognises that action is already in place along our coasts and sea and the intention is not to duplicate but to add value, through coordinating and joining up approaches and filling the gaps on action where they exist.

13.3 Integral to Plan Sea will be continuing to build on the partnerships established during the Plan's development, working with deliver partners and stakeholders to collaboratively deliver the actions needed to bring about the Plan's aims to see:

- marine and coastal environments restored, functioning and resilient
- marine and coastal biodiversity loss halted and trends reversed
- clean, productive and biological diverse marine and coastal environments that continue to provide the ecosystem services that support and protect livelihoods, communities, health and wellbeing and the county's economy
- the importance of our marine and coastal environment fully recognised, with good and effective management protecting these areas from damaging impacts.

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## 14. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the paper and draft Plan Sea document and endorse the Plan to proceed to public consultation.

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## 15. Background Documents

Plan Sea - EqIA

## 16. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Plan Sea

## 17. Contact details


| | |
|---|---|
| Report Author: Elizabeth Milne<br><br>Job title: Head of Environment<br><br>Telephone number: 03000 413950<br><br>Email address: elizabeth.milne@kent.gov.uk | Director: *Matthew Smyth*<br><br>Job title: Director for Environment and Circular Economy<br><br>Telephone number: 03000 416 676<br><br>Email address: matthew.smyth@kent.gov.uk |

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# Plan Sea

## *Kent County Council's framework for collaborative action for our coast and seas*

**Draft – October 2026**

# Introduction

Kent has 563km of coastline stretching from the Dartford crossing to Dungeness. This features diverse seascapes including the famous chalk of the White Cliffs of Dover, Thanet's sandy bays, Dungeness' renowned 'desert' landscape of vegetated shingle and the expansive mudflats and saltmarsh of the North Kent marshes.

The seas around Kent are home to a wide array of marine life, much of which is unexplored. Kent's coastal habitats are diverse, and some play a vital role in buffering areas from erosion and sea level rise, while storing huge amounts of carbon.

The Kent coast is internationally important for wildlife but is also visited by 12 million people on leisure trips annually, many drawn by the natural beauty of the coast. The marine and coastal environment is vital for livelihoods, not just related to tourism, but ranging from fishing to renewable energy, as well as trade and transport from the European continent, through Dover Strait - the busiest shipping lane in the world.

Kent provides excellent opportunities for recreation and leisure – both along the coast and on the water. With this comes a risk to our marine wildlife, and disturbance is a well document outcome of increasing leisure pursuits at the coast.

A lot of Kent's population lives at the coast and there are some vibrant and thriving coastal towns along the shores. There is however some areas which have stark socio-economic disparities compared to inland areas, characterized by higher deprivation, lower educational attainment and health inequalities.

There is often a disconnect between communities in Kent and their marine and coastal environment, with people not fully understanding what this environment has to offer or the impact they can have on it. This has negative implications in terms of tackling the range of pressures described in Plan Sea. If people don't appreciate the environment, how are they going to act to look after it? Responding to this issue, improving ocean literacy will be an important aspect of the work that needs to go forward.

The Kent marine and coastal environment feature a Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network, which consists of sites designated for nature conservation from the mean high-water mark out to 12 nautical miles. Several agencies share responsibility for managing these MPAs, including the Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), Natural England (NE), and the Environment Agency (EA). Additionally, Harbour Authorities, Landowners, Non-Governmental Organisations and Local Government play a role.

Despite this protection, habitats are still under threat, with many species in decline. Pressures from climate change, increased storminess, higher temperatures, disturbance, pollution and unsustainable fishing practices are all contributing factors towards species declines and biodiversity loss.

In the light of these pressures, more collaboration and resources will be needed to implement management measures that genuinely protect the designated features of the MPA network and ensure the futures of all our marine and coastal habitats.

The Environment Act 2021 ensured that Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) were developed for every county in England. The Kent & Medway LNRS was published in 2025 and has a range of coastal measures (down to the low tide mark) which implemented in the right places will help to address some of the issues highlighted in Plan Sea, ranging from habitat loss and erosion to mitigating pollution. KCC is the Responsible Authority for the LNRS, and a strong connection will be made between the LNRS and Plan Sea.

The knock-on effects from a degraded coastline are serious. Many areas of Kent's coast are low lying and vulnerable to extreme weather conditions. There is a limit to how long coastal habitats can provide a buffer to increasing storms and floods. Risks to livelihoods and properties will increase, if we don't work with nature on solutions.

Microplastics are entering food chains, including those of humans, creating gastrointestinal issues. Some adults could be consuming an average of 45,000 microplastic particles per year. Microplastics come from the slow disintegration of plastic bags, wrap, food, drink and takeaway containers, polyester clothes, tyres, fishing nets, paint and artificial turf (UNEP, 2025) with 1.3 million metric tonnes of microplastic entering our sea annually.

Litter on beaches is a problem, both for people and wildlife, but is also strongly linked to the microplastics issue.

Pollution from increased nutrient levels is an ongoing problem. This includes nitrates and phosphates from rivers flowing source the sea and from both legal and illegal discharges from water company infrastructure.

In 2025, Southern Water reported 3,650 hours of storm overflow releases across the Kent region, pumping raw sewage into the sea from outfalls dotted across the coastline. In June 2026, the company was fined over £7 million pounds for illegal releases of sewage between Whitstable and Broadstairs between 2019-2021.

High concentrations of E. Coli in Kent's bathing water is the result of legal and illegal discharges and ongoing source to sea pollution. Not only is it a public health hazard, but it also affects fish stocks, ecosystem health and tourism in the area.

Plan Sea is a commitment by Kent County Council to work with others to improve our marine and coastal environment. Plan Sea recognises that action is already in place along our coasts and sea and the intention is not to duplicate but to add value, through coordinating and joining up approaches and filling the gaps on action where they exist.

# The ecological importance of our marine and coastal environment

Kent's coast has a range of habitats, including seagrass, vegetated shingle, mudflats, saltmarsh and chalk reefs, supporting a wide range of species. This contributes to the UK's diverse network of marine and coastal ecosystems.

## Seagrass

Seagrass, or eelgrass, is a plant, not a seaweed, that lives in the intertidal and subtidal areas of estuaries. Seagrass meadows provide shelter for fish species such as seahorses and pipefish and are important nursery habitats for cuttlefish, rays, small fish and shellfish. Seagrass stabilises sediments in intertidal areas, they also play a significant role in sequestering carbon along with kelp beds and saltmarshes. Seagrass is an important food source for the brent goose, which migrates from the arctic to our estuaries to feed in areas with seagrass beds every winter.

## Saltmarsh

Saltmarshes are inundated at high tide and exposed at low tide, so are dominated by salt-tolerant plants. The soil is generally composed of deep mud and peat.

Saltmarshes provide nurseries for fish and shellfish to breed in and are a feeding habitat for wildfowl and waders plus a hunting ground for birds of prey such as the marsh harrier.

Saltmarshes are a natural barrier against flooding and tidal surges, buffering waves and trapping sediments. They slow down surface water flooding and act as natural filters for surface water run-off, metabolising excess nutrients. They are natural carbon capture zones, storing carbon both in the plants and sediment. A hectare of salt marsh can capture two tonnes of carbon every year and store it for millennia if undisturbed.

## Mudflats

Mudflats attract thousands of migrating wading birds to the Kent coast each winter. These species probe the mud for the rich variety of invertebrates that live there. The north and north-east coasts of Kent are protected for such overwintering bird species, including turnstone, black tailed godwit, curlew and golden plover.

## Vegetated Shingle

Coastal vegetated shingle is a unique habitat, and Dungeness is the largest area in the UK with over 2000 hectares. Vegetated shingle is comprised of flint, once eroded out of chalk cliffs and washed along the shore with longshore drift. The shingle then settled, protected from the waves and started to colonise with lichens, moss and

specialist plants, adapted to grow in the low-fertile, free draining soil between the shingle.

The vegetated shingle of the south Kent and Sussex coastline is home to one third of the UK's plant species (JNCC, 2015). Vegetated shingle is sensitive to disturbance. Once damaged, it is difficult for the shingle to recover. Any amount of trampling can be damaging and the more regular it becomes, the more likely it will lead to a complete loss of vegetation.

## Chalk reefs

Chalk reefs are a globally scarce habitat, making Kent a place of unique ecological importance, as we have the longest continuous stretch of coastal chalk in the UK. This offers both intertidal and subtidal habitats, the soft rock creating a habitat for a unique group of creatures who can bore into the rocks, creating tunnels and holes and creating shelters for countless other creatures in the reef.

The Thanet Coast Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) has several designated features including; blue mussel beds, ross worm reefs, subtidal chalk and sand and St John's jellyfish.

## Coastal and marine species

Kent has abundant and varied marine wildlife, known to comprise at least 700 species. The coast also hosts a moderately rich seaweed flora with 256 brown, green and red algae of the 650 known in the British Isles.

Our open coast and network of estuaries is important for the movement of migrating fish species such as the European eel, smelt, bullheads, brown trout and shark species such as starry smooth hounds and tope.  The intertidal areas are significant for birdlife, particularly waders and wildfowl. And we have rare and significant species, such as the tentacled lagoon worm and the short-snouted spiny seahorse. Sea mammals are also seen off our shores, most commonly grey and common seals and harbour porpoise but also sometimes dolphins and smaller whale species.

Coastal and marine species act as a clear indicator to the health of an ecosystem. However, monitoring is limited and baseline data is lacking.

# The economic importance of our coast and sea

The marine and coastal environment support Kent's economy, offering a diverse range of benefits across multiple sectors. However, sustainable practices will be key for the environment to continue to benefit the economy.

## Fishing

Whitstable and Ramsgate are known for their oyster beds and fresh seafood, which not only support local livelihoods but also supply restaurants and markets across the region, bringing tourists in. For example, Whitstable Oysters draw visitors and tourists from all over the country. Folkestone is another hub for fisheries and catch is sold both in the UK and abroad.

The fishing industry sustains ancillary businesses such as boat maintenance, seafood processing, and local fishmongers, creating a ripple effect of employment and trade.

A lot of seafood served in restaurants or at fish and chip shops are not caught locally and often by intensive fishing fleets, contributing to the decline in 'popular' fish species.

Increasing ocean literacy in Kent will encourage the local, sustainable and seasonal eating of seafood across the region. Collaboration with local fishers would also build relationships and gain insight into the state of the fish populations around Kent.

There is also potential to link with researchers who could utilise fleets as an opportunity for data gathering and monitoring of some typically hard-to-access sites.

## Transport and Infrastructure

Kent is the gateway to Europe, featuring The Port of Dover, The Channel Tunnel and the Eurostar rail service. £144bn of trade in goods and 33% of UK-EU trade goes through the Port of Dover. In addition, 1.3m tourist vehicles use the Port every year. The Channel Tunnel transports approximately 18.3 million passengers each year through the Eurostar rail service and Le Shuttle road service.

Other industrial ports can be found on the Isle of Grain, Sheerness, Ramsgate and Whitstable. Additionally, coastal infrastructure projects, bring investment and innovation to the region, reinforcing Kent's strategic importance in national and international commerce.

The London Array offshore wind project is located about 20km off the Kent coast in the Outer Thames Estuary. It was the largest offshore wind farm in the world when it became fully operational in 2013.

All these economic benefits come with complications for the natural environment. Noise pollution from busy shipping lanes can have a detrimental impact on marine life, particularly cetacean species who rely on echo communication.
Cables and pipework under the sea connecting us to energy infrastructure as well as the continent can also have an impact on sensitive habitats. We need to be mindful of the strain these economical activities can have on our natural environment.

## Tourism

With over £4 billion generated annually and more than 77,000 jobs supported, the sector thrives on seaside attractions, cultural heritage, and nature-based experiences.

Kent's has award-winning beaches which attract both residents and visitors. In Visit Kent's 2023 report, over 12.3 million visitors to the county were day trippers to the coast. Sailing, paddleboarding, beachcombing, and wildlife watching are popular.

These activities contribute to physical and mental wellbeing while supporting local businesses such as equipment rentals, cafes, and guided tour operators, including those exclusively focused on showing people nature such as seals and birds.

It is therefore important to Kent's economy that we enhance the natural areas and maintain the healthy habitats and open spaces to continue to attract people to them.

However, Kent's increasing popularity brings risks too. Popular beaches such as Margate, Whitstable and Folkestone, put a strain on services such as waste collection, public amenities, public transport, roads and parking areas.

Associated problems include increased litter, more anti-social behaviour, and increased pollution such as road run-off and car exhaust fumes. A rise in water sports and leisure crafts can cause significant disturbance to coastal wildlife, a lot of visitors being unaware that they are visiting sensitive areas for birds, seals and other species.

Sustainable tourism strategies need to be considered when promoting Kent as a place to visit. We need to make sure our services can cope with increased visitors and that sensitive sites are protected and monitored appropriately.

# The social value of our coast and seas

## Health and wellbeing

In the UK, no one lives more than 80 miles from the sea – but in Kent that national statistic is significantly less, with the maximum distance about 30 miles and many not living more than 15 miles from the coast. The county also has significant populations living at the coast itself.

A 2020 government study suggested that exposure to coastal environments can play a significant role in boosting human health and well-being, due to the 'therapeutic effects' marine and coastal landscapes have. The research showed that people spending more time by the sea reported increased happiness, better general health and were more physically active during their visit, compared to visits to other types of environment. The study also showed the importance of the environmental quality in that benefit - visits to marine and coastal areas with designated or protected status and those with higher levels of biodiversity were associated with higher levels of calmness, relaxation and revitalisation, compared to locations without this status.

With such a long and varied coastline, we have an amazing resource available to the population of Kent and quite literally on the doorstep of many.

Despite this, evidence suggested that populations that live close to the coast do not necessarily visit it and may not have an appreciation of the marine and coastal environment.

The King Charles III Coastal Path provides the opportunity to explore the coast and save for a few sections, offers a continuous route spanning the length of Kent's water-edge.

## Art and culture in coastal towns

In Kent, we have coastal areas linked with art, literature and culture. Chatham Dockyard showcases ships, submarines and over 70,000 objects steeped in history bringing in 150,000 visitors per year. It welcomes tourists, schools and groups, hosting events and exhibitions on the maritime history of Kent.

Margate is a well-known hotspot for beachside entertainment and art. Home to the Turner Contemporary art gallery and Dreamland; it attracts visitors all year round. Whitstable attracts younger working people to coastal living, and with them, a thriving art scene. Filled with art galleries and colourful beach huts, Whitstable is attractive to the London crowd. It's one of the best places in Kent to eat oysters, and seafood is part of the Whitstable culture.

Folkestone is another creative town. Following funding injected into the town in 2015, the last decade has seen the town turn around to a thriving coastal area. With the Creative Quarter, Harbour Arm and the Folkestone Triennial art festival, it attracts a lot of tourists to the town.

The unique shingle peninsular of Dungeness attracts 1 million visitors a year to witness the ‘apocalyptic-type landscape’. It is also linked to creative industries and has been the backdrop for many films, music videos and inspired art pieces. The artist Derek Jarman lived there, and his cottage is now in public ownership. Dungeness attracts inspiring artists from across the world.

## Coastal town socio-economics

Although some parts of Kent’s coastline are thriving, many east coast communities experience worse outcomes than inland areas.

Kent’s coastal districts experience faster growth in the 65+ age demographic, when compared to inland averages.

Kent coastal areas also tend to see higher levels of deprivation – the coastal authorities of Thanet, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, and Swale rank among the most deprived local government districts in England.

These areas also face a distinct "coastal excess" regarding public health, with life expectancy 2.1 years lower on average. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and coronary heart disease rates are significantly higher (with COPD up to 60% higher than non-coastal Kent), alongside elevated levels of depression, smoking, and disability benefit eligibility.

Research from the University of Essex has found that people aged 16-25 in England’s most deprived coastal towns are three times more likely to struggle with undiagnosed mental health conditions compared to their inland peers.

Coastal economies tend to rely heavily on seasonal tourism and lower-secure work – east coast communities have 50% more unemployment claims than inland areas.

Educational attainment is also notably lower across coastal school districts compared to affluent inland areas (9% below inland areas) and these areas tend to see higher pupil absence.

In March 2026, Kent County Council announced the UK’s first Marmot Coast Region stretching from Swale to Folkestone and Hythe.  This initiative aims to tackle unemployment and lack of opportunity, two root causes of inequality.

# Kent's Marine Protected Area Network

Marine nature recovery is a central component of the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, published in 2018 (H M Government, 2018). Legally binding and measurable targets for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were later established through the Environmental Targets (Marine Protected Areas) (England) Regulations 2022, introduced under the Environment Act 2021.

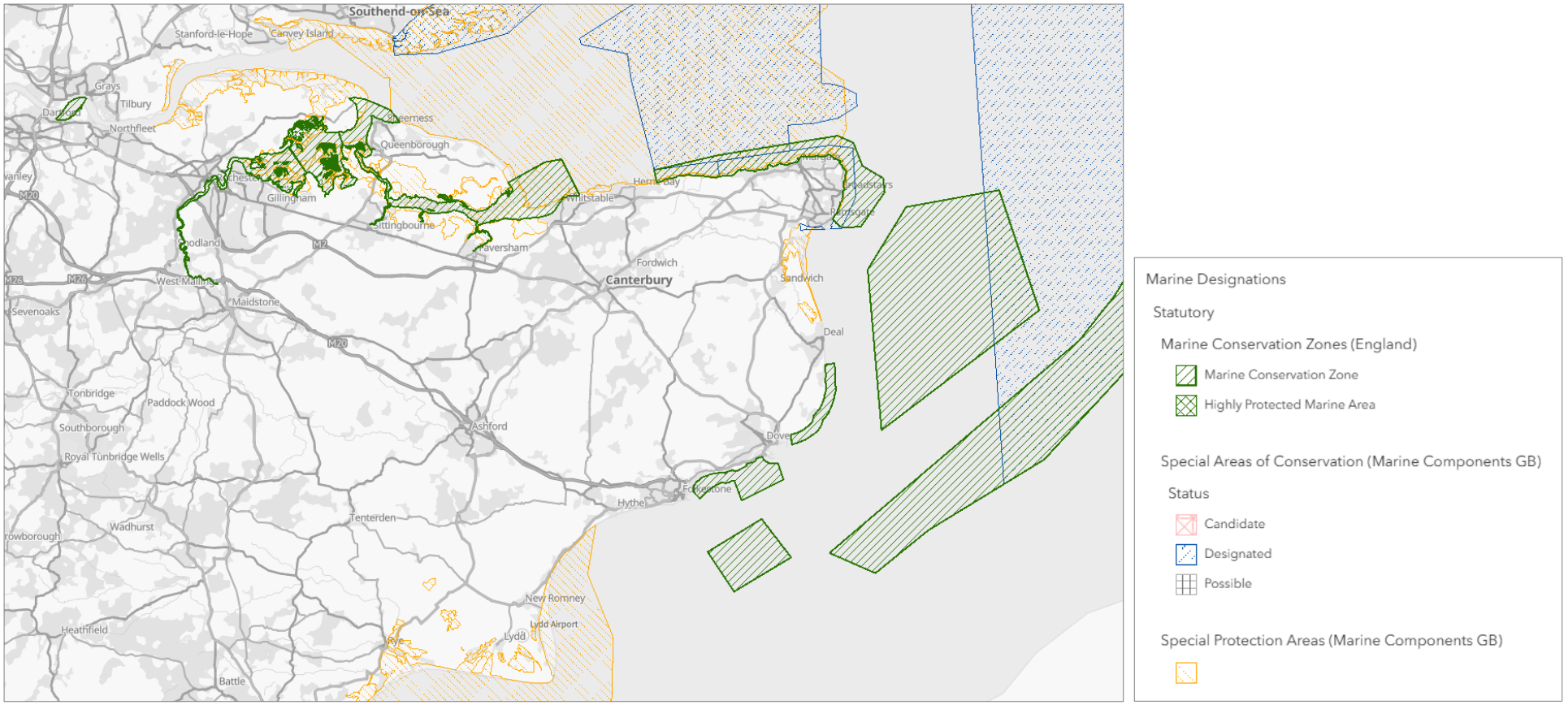
These targets require that 70% of designated MPA features reach favourable condition by 2042, with the remaining features achieving recovering condition. The Environment Improvement Plan (EIP) (DEFRA, 2023) further reinforces this ambition by committing the government to restoring 15% of priority habitats along the English coastline by 2043.

Kent's MPAs include:

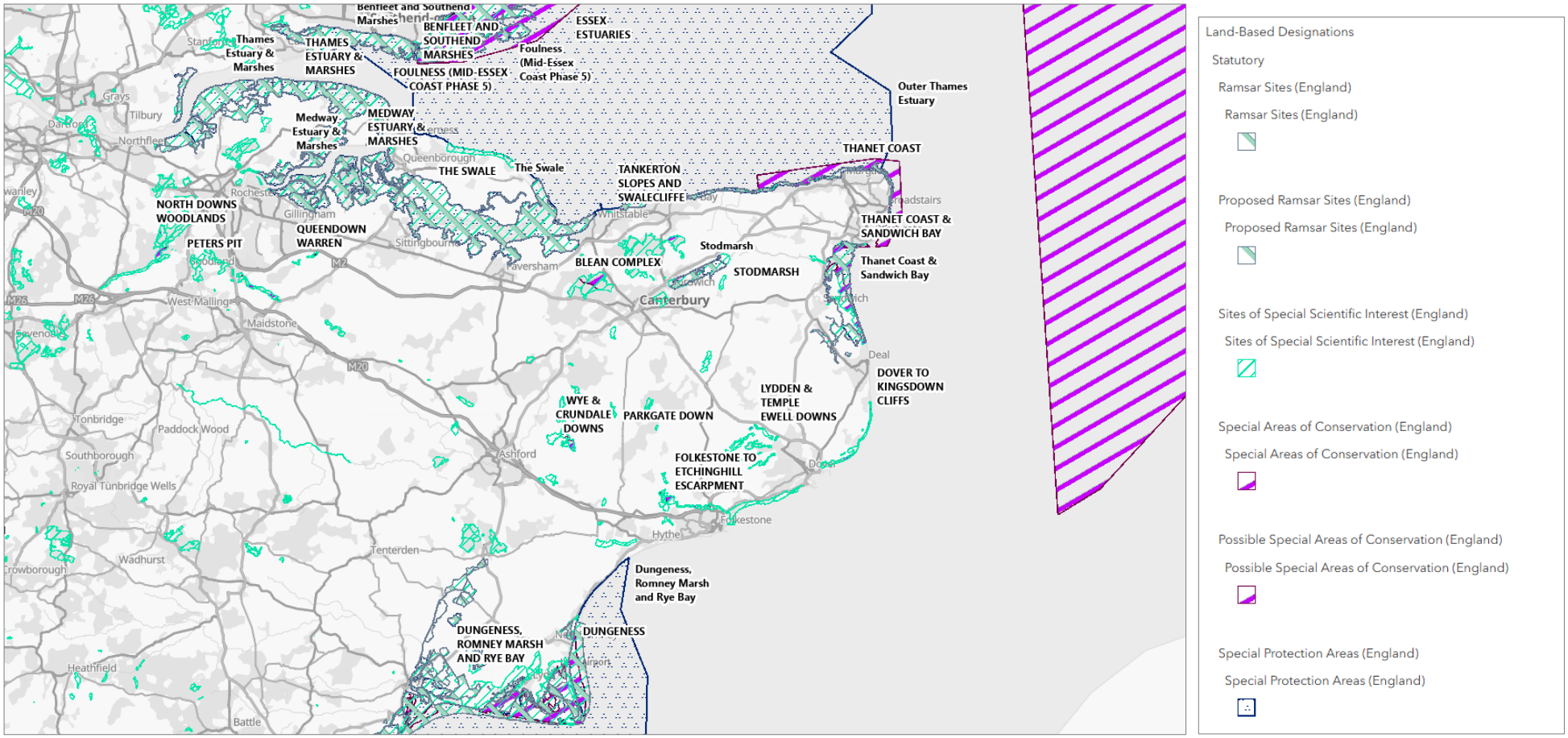
- 11 Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) specially designated for the protection of marine species such as the tentacled lagoon worm, harbour porpoise and stalked jellyfish as well as habitats such as blue mussel beds and seagrass.
- 9 coastal Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designating both biological and geological features of our coastline.
- 5 Ramsar Sites protecting coastal wetlands.
- 5 coastal Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) protecting important habitats such as chalk reefs, submerged caves, vegetated sea cliffs, sand dunes and vegetated shingle.
- 5 coastal Special Protected Areas (SPA) including areas for wintering and breeding wading birds, wildfowl, divers and seabirds.
- 3 National Nature Reserves (NNR) are situated on the Kent coastline, these include Dungeness NNR, Pegwell Bay NNR and Swale NNR.

In Natural England's EIP 2025 report, it recognises that whilst the MPAs exceed the 30 by 30 target already in terms of coverage, it still has a way to go before it is fully protected. The government has promised:

- Sustainable fisheries
- Protecting MPA species and habitats
- Implementing measures for Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs)
- Consulting on new bylaws and enforcing existing ones on bottom towed gear in MPAs
- Managing the expansion of offshore wind farms with environmental compensation requirements through a Marine Recovery Fund
- Reviewing the English MPA network to determine whether sites are in the right places with the right protection, exploring ways to update protection and management approaches, to better address the biodiversity crisis, improve climate resilience and support wider government priorities,
- Introducing a bill to enable ratification of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement, enabling greater conservation of the two-thirds of the ocean that lies outside national jurisdiction.




Marine based designations




Land based designations

Many of the habitats and species prioritised in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) fall within MPAs, so it is imperative that the management of the MPAs support these priorities, and these priorities contribute to improving MPA condition.

MPA management should adopt Lawton principles of ‘bigger, better, more and joined up’, starting with ‘better’ monitoring and management of current protected sites, including integrating the LNRS and then extending good practice between the MPAs spreading the benefit beyond these areas in terms of “more and joined up”.

## Other marine policies in English waters

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 marked a significant change in government policy and by 2021, for Kent the act resulted in 11 Marine Conservation Zones’ and 2 Marine Plans as well as the establishment of the Kent and Essex IFCA. It also resulted in the completion of the Kent stretch of the England Coastal path.

Marine Plans put into place objectives for the marine environment that are identified in the Marine Policy Statement, alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Localism Act 2011. The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) are responsible for Marine Plans. Marine Plans inform and guide marine users and regulators across England, managing the sustainable development of marine industries, such as wind farms and fishing, alongside the need to conserve and protect marine species and habitats. Both the South and South East Marine Plans cover Kent.

Whilst Marine Plans are quite infrastructure based, it is important for Plan Sea to be fully involved in Plan Reviews as they come up, opening doors for collaboration on marine nature recovery and mitigation opportunities in areas of marine development.

The Fisheries Act 2021 was a significant development, marking a step forward in the adoption of more sustainable fisheries practices, the key principle being the adoption of an ecosystem-based approach. Natural England is working across Defra on both Fisheries Management Plans and Offshore Byelaws providing timely advice.

Data collection is important here, finding out whether the byelaws are working to their desired effect, allowing vulnerable fish species and their habitats to recover appropriately.

# Marine pressures and threats

## Failing protections

Despite the plethora of protected areas along our shores and out to sea, many Marine Protected Areas are in declining and unfavourable condition. Some have not had condition assessments for several years, so the status of certain sites is unknown. Marine Protected Areas should play a key role in underpinning wider marine recovery but need to be in a better condition to do so.

The way Marine Protected Areas are managed needs to change as coordination is often lacking, particularly in coastal sites which experience numerous pressures and activities, many unlicensed. The Environment Act 2021 sets out targets for marine recovery – these must be assisted by citizen science monitoring and recording as well as actions from local authorities and non-governmental organisations.

Stronger enforcement of the byelaws for Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs), along with new byelaws is needed, plus more investment, research and recording, giving us a better understanding of the progress being made.

We need a joined-up approach to managing the marine space and to work with organisations with different priorities and targets, creating a holistic approach to marine nature recovery.

## Pollution

Physical pollution is not only damaging to the environment, but it also affects the quality of our blue spaces for coastal residents and visitors alike. Pollution sources include:

- Combined sewage outfalls.
- Run-off from land, including but not limited to; roads, agricultural fields, powerplants and industrial areas.
- Grey water discharge from pleasure craft and houseboats.
- Oil and pollution spills at sea.
- Beach and marine litter and microplastics.
- Noise pollution from shipping activity, mining and development.

All the above can have a detrimental effect on marine fauna and flora, be directly or indirectly harmful to humans and our health and many sources of pollution can spoil beauty and tourism hot spots.

## Destructive and unsustainable fishing practices

We need to make sure our priority fish species, and their habitat is protected in our offshore waters. Fish stocks are moving and rapidly changing with warming sea temperatures, and we are not finding or fishing the species we once used to.

Trawling and dredging, seine nets, gill nets, poisoning and blast fishing are destructive fishing methods used across the world. Ghost nets (fishing nets lost at sea) also account for 10% of marine plastics and cause entanglement and death to thousands of marine mammals, fish and reptiles.

Despite a lot of the Kent fleet being small and sustainable, unsustainable fishing practices are happening in Kent's seas. Cockle and scallop dredging are two concerns in the Thames Estuary and English Channel respectively. Dredging tears up the seabed and mud habitats, causing declines in non-target species as by-catch. Catch rates of fin fish and shellfish are monitored and regulated by the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA), however, the destructive methods on which they are caught are not part of the regulation.

## Biodiversity loss

We are witnessing declines in our marine species. We need to find out what is causing this decline and halt biodiversity loss in our ocean. Using the baseline data we currently have, and gathering more data and evidence, we need to provide a programme of regular monitoring to find out what is going on under the water.

## Invasive non-native species

We have growing numbers of non-native marine species living in the waters across the Kent coast. With our position so close to mainland Europe and our role as an international port, our coastal habitats are particularly vulnerable to invasive non-native species and often the front line and first point for new species. The changing climate, leisure pressures and habitat degradation is increasing the impact of certain invasive non-native species.

Removal and disposal of many of these invasive species can be done with the right training and resources.

## Development and disturbance

One of the biggest threats to nature recovery is development in its various forms. Offshore windfarms and cables under the ocean can cause serious habitat disturbance. Noise from the works and damage to the seafloor and its ecosystems is a still problem despite Environmental Impact assessments and various other processes. Aggregate extraction and subtidal dredging are other causes for concern.

Onshore development also affects offshore habitats. Housing development on our coast puts increased pressure on drains and sewerage systems and more contaminated run-off from hard standing, which then enters our sea.

Disturbance of coastal wildlife through more people wanting to access the environment for recreation presents an additional pressure. Disturbance to feeding birds, particularly on our coasts, is also an issue. Many of our sites are designated for overwintering wildfowl and wading bird species, and the disturbance of these birds through leisure activities, including dog walking, is putting a serious strain on

the birds' ability to feed, rest and survive the winter and spring migration back to their nesting sites.

## A changing climate

The changes in the climate has measurable impacts on our marine and coastal environment. The warming of our oceans moves species further north – this impacts all species in the food chain, who follow the food species. Temperature-sensitive species are also declining.

Sea level rise is causing coastal squeeze, forcing our coastlines to shrink in areas where we have hardscaped sea defences. Mud and sandflats are reducing and will eventually disappear under the water, reducing vital feeding habitats and freshwater grazing marshes could become inundated with seawater.

Marine heatwaves are becoming more consistent as the climate warms and The Kent & Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority notes a sharp increase in the frequency and intensity of marine heatwaves impacting local coastal and estuarine zones since 2014.

## Disconnect and lack of knowledge and understanding

A disconnect with the coast can have two main negative outcomes.  People can consequently lack the motivation to take personal responsibility for nature recovery and protection, which can result in both unintentional and intentional harm.  It also means that people are less likely to go to the coast, so do not experience the health and wellbeing benefits of nature. This is self-perpetuating, as a lack of connection can further the apathy.

Disconnect can stem from simply not understanding or having knowledge – disconnect can also prevent a person from striving to understand it better. When people lack understanding, they are also often unaware of how their actions and behaviour impact wildlife. This can result in unintentional damage to, or mismanagement and use of, coastal and marine areas.

## Desalination plants

As the climate warms, the pressure on freshwater resources increases. Kent also has a growing population adding to the pressure on our drinking water availability and infrastructure. There is a potential to look at desalination as an answer to drinking water shortages, and six desalination plants have been proposed for the South East of England by the government.

But what impact could these have on the marine environment? With the salt removed from the water, it is discharged back into the sea in high concentrations.

The detrimental effects of brine discharge into the sea are rooted in four primary factors, as identified by the University of Sydney; high salt concentration, high total alkalinity, elevated temperatures, and a high concentration of toxic metals.

Fish exposed to brine discharge often experience osmoregulatory stress, reduced growth and reproductive success. Seagrass biomass decreases by 25% near brine outlets and photosynthesis is reduced.

## Lack of funding and resources

The lack of funding and resources has a big influence on nature recovery and is, in fact, a driver for nature degradation. Even protected sites are not always afforded that protection, because of insufficient management, enforcement and policing – linked to insufficient funding and resources. Many of our most valued sites are in an unfavourable condition.

Often this is not because of lack of care or interest but because habitat management can be costly and time consuming and is also complex.

Funding for nature restoration, enhancement or creation is often associated with a time-limited project and, while the achievements of such projects can be significant, they can be short lived if there is no onward investment to manage and maintain the gains. Funding is also often targeted towards capital works and does not always provide for the personnel needed to support, coordinate and deliver the nature recovery action.

Central investment in the natural environment can be short term as well, designed to fit around current policy and priorities which can change from one government term to another.

## Lack of data, evidence and understanding

Lack of data for the coastal and marine environment is a key issue.  Surveying these areas is challenging and in the case of marine, often costly and requiring skills and equipment.

The impact of a lack of data means that issues are not always identified, the evidence for action and funding is, in some cases, insufficient, and a reliable baseline on which to measure progress is absent.

# The need for Plan Sea

The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy is limited to the intertidal area but the importance of recovering our natural environment doesn't stop at the low tide mark. There is the need to extend the benefits of managing our terrestrial habitats to offshore and dedicate the same level of effort for our marine environments as our terrestrial ones.

Marine and coastal systems present unique restoration challenges linked to wave dynamics, shifting sediments, and climate change. Human pressures are similarly complex: land-based activities affect coastal waters through runoff, and multiple marine activities can overlap spatially or temporally.

Additionally, governance and regulatory responsibilities in marine areas are distributed across numerous organisations, making collaboration and partnership working essential, but this collaboration does not always occur.

We also need collective effort to secure a better baseline of data – improvements are needed in coastal and marine data collection and reporting and what is collected needs to be collated and stored in one place, building the bigger and better picture of Kent's coastal and marine habitats and species.

The success of the Local Naure Recovery Strategy is limited by some key challenges outside of its scope, in particular: coastal and marine pollution, marine management, human pressures and disturbance and invasive species.

These challenges for coastal and marine recovery have been identified through workshops and conversations with agencies, delivery partners and coastal stakeholders. This work has also identified five key areas they believe a coordinated, partnership approach is needed for; these are:

- Better management of our marine protected areas.
- Marine pollution, both water contamination and marine litter.
- Lack of empathy, understanding and interest in the ocean and its habitats.
- Invasive non-native species and their influence on important habitats.
- Marine and coastal disturbance.

# The purpose of Plan Sea

Plan Sea is a commitment by Kent County Council to work with others to improve our marine and coastal environment and to ensure this aim is integrated across the authority.

Plan Sea recognises that action is already in place along our coasts and sea and the intention is not to duplicate but to add value, through coordinating and joining up approaches and filling the gaps on action where they exist.

As Responsible Authority for the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Kent County Council is already working with partners to facilitate delivery of the strategy's coastal ambition. But restoration of our coastal and marine areas requires action outside the scope of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and Plan Sea addresses this by also focussing on challenges which have a huge influence, such as water pollution, people engagement and management.

Plan Sea also addresses the spatial gap left by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy by extending the ambitions beyond the Strategy's remit of mean low water mark.

Plan Sea will:

- **Enable and facilitate** collaborative work to recover our marine and coastal environment, working towards clean, healthy, adaptable and resilient habitats.
- **Establish** partnerships and project working groups to tackle the pressures on our marine and coastal environment. It will enhance the work of individual organisations across Kent's coastline, including those with statutory duties to make sure they are working effectively.
- **Ensure delivery** of the coastal ambition of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy and extend this ambition to our marine areas, ensuring action works for the benefit of the whole marine ecosystem.
- **Apply an integrated management approach**, so the socio-economic benefits of a healthy coastal and marine environment can be realised by Kent's coastal communities.
- **Compliment and support** the delivery of national coastal and marine targets, focusing on halting biodiversity loss and restoring ocean health. **Advocate and champion** for the better recognition, management and protection of our coastal and marine environment, locally and nationally.

# Plan Sea aims and objectives

Plan Sea provides a framework for collaborative work and joined-up action to deliver the following aims:

- Our marine and coastal environments **restored, functioning and resilient**.
- Marine and coastal **biodiversity loss halted** and trends reversed.
- **Clean, productive and biologically diverse** marine and coastal environments that continue to provide the **ecosystem services** that support and protect livelihoods, communities, health and wellbeing and the county's economy.
- The importance of our marine and coastal environment fully recognised, with **good and effective management** protecting these areas from damaging impacts.

Plan Sea will deliver these aims through the following objectives:

1. Work collaboratively across the county to **facilitate delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities** for coastal and marine habitats.
2. Coordinate and join-up efforts to support a source-to-sea approach that can effectively **tackle marine and coastal pollution**.
3. Make better use of management and protection mechanisms available to our Marine Protected Areas. Coordinate and join-up efforts to facilitate a **holistic approach to the management of Marine Protected Areas**, recognising how critical these are for marine nature recovery.
4. Lead efforts to **improve ocean literacy** so that all stakeholders, including the people of Kent, can make a decisive and direct contribution to the restoration of our coastal and marine environment.
5. Actively support communities and bodies in their efforts to **reduce wildlife disturbance and tackle invasive non-native species**.
6. Champion Kent and **showcase the work of the county** to highlight the challenges and achievements of the coastal county at a national level.

Whilst Plan Sea's focus is on driving environmental improvements, this work will be progressed in consideration of the socio-economic benefits a healthy coastal and marine environment will bring to the county. **Integrated coastal management** seeks to balance economic growth, human use and environmental protection – by employing this approach, Plan Sea will seek to support and maximise opportunities for:

- Maritime and coastal economy.
- Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.
- Tourism and recreation.
- Public health and wellbeing.
- Job creation and community regeneration.
- Nature based solutions to storm surges, sea-level rise, and coastal erosion and opportunities for carbon storage.
- Compliment and support the delivery of national coastal and marine targets, focusing on halting biodiversity loss and restoring ocean health. Advocate and champion for the better recognition, management and protection of our coastal and marine environment, locally and nationally.

# Objective 1 - Facilitate delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities

*Work collaboratively across the county to facilitate delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities for coastal and marine habitats.*

## The challenge

In November 2025 the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy was published, setting out the county's priorities for nature recovery and the recommended actions to deliver them. This spatially framed Strategy also identifies where in the county this action should be targeted to deliver the greatest outcomes for habitats and species.

The Strategy sets an ambition for coastal habitat in Kent and Medway: *Coastal and estuarine areas are allowed to evolve, with natural processes and progression restored, to enable them to adapt and be resilient to climate change. Habitat succession is managed strategically and holistically, to minimise loss and support a range of high-functioning, connected coastal habitats.*

It also has 9 priorities for the coast:

1. Sustainable and strategic management of estuaries and open coast to create functionally linked coastal habitats that are allowed to evolve, creating areas for wildlife to thrive. Natural dynamic processes and progression is restored, to enable adaptation and resilience to climate change and minimise the loss of intertidal habitats
2. Reduce small-scale loss, improve condition and increase connectivity of saltmarsh and mudflats, providing functioning ecosystems that are safeguarded from recreational disturbance.
3. Reverse the decline in seagrass off Kent's coast to safeguard this important habitat for marine species and their breeding grounds and nurseries, and to preserve its vital function as a blue carbon store
4. Chalk cliffs and reef communities thrive in their natural state and are safeguarded from damage from recreational and leisure activities, development and bottom fishing methods.
5. Sustainable management of native reef building shellfish to allow them to reach their habitat-providing potential.
6. Saline lagoons are appropriately safeguarded and managed to increase their resilience and adaptation to climate change and to secure their ecological functions, including the role they will play as transitional habitats
7. Safeguard and restore vegetated shingle, ensuring there is no unavoidable loss and areas remain in, or are returned to, a favourable condition.
8. Restore sand dunes, enabling, where possible, the natural mobile function of the dune system to be reinstated or use management to maintain a full range of successional stages of sand stabilisation across the dune system
9. Reduction in coastal wildlife disturbance resulting from leisure pressures at the coast.

Kent County Council is the Responsible Authority for the Strategy. This requires it to convene delivery partnerships, facilitate projects, embed the strategy within the county and monitor and report on the strategy delivery.

## What Plan Sea will do

Plan Sea will provide the delivery framework necessary for delivering the hugely ambitious coastal priorities of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.  It will support partner collaboration and the join-up of efforts across the county to realise the ambition for our coastal environment.

Importantly, Plan Sea will also work with coastal and marine stakeholders to address some of the key challenges that limit how successfully the ambition can be achieved; in particular coastal and marine pollution, marine management, human pressures and disturbance and invasive species.

# Objective 2 - Tackle marine and coastal pollution

*Coordinate and join-up efforts to support a source-to-sea approach that can effectively tackle marine and coastal pollution.*

## The challenge

Marine and coastal pollution has become a key priority for many residents of Kent. Focus has understandably been on notable pollution incidents arising from sewage from outfalls and Combined Sewage Outfalls, with many coastal towns such as Whitstable, Margate and Dymchurch have repeated incidents.

There are many local authorities, charities, local communities and volunteer groups who are individually trying to tackle the problem but they cannot work on it alone.

Tackling water pollution requires a holistic approach. Our waterways are a connected system with rivers, and all they contain, eventually running into the sea – and this includes any pollutant collected on the way. Sources of pollution can be traced back to riverine sewage releases and pollution incidents, as well as run-off into rivers from intensive agriculture, highways, spills from vessels and urban dwellings and hardstanding.

Our coastlines and marine water are also impacted by litter and microplastics – and as with water pollution, the source is not always at the same point of discovery.

## What Plan Sea will do

Plan Sea will provide a forum to address coastal and marine water pollution and provide a framework for collaborative action.  It will enhance existing work by coordinating efforts, securing funding and engaging with both water companies and stakeholders.

Plan Sea will promote a source to sea approach, identifying where interventions within a catchment can help to reduce pollution at the coast. It will utilise various land management and water management approaches identified within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to reduce upstream water pollution and link in with ongoing work to support delivery. It will use the strategic influences and networks of the county council, and the delivery of our own functions, to bring about the change needed to reduce catchment pollution and thereby pollution of our marine waters.

Plan Sea will promote the use of nature-based solutions to reduce the impact of pollution at the coast and to reduce the contaminants reaching coastal waters.

Plan Sea will collaborate with local authorities, local business and communities to address litter at the coast – by both driving behaviour change to reduce litter in the first place and supporting clean-up efforts.

Plan Sea will also stand up for our marine environment, lobbying for the change needed within the water industry and regulation to ensure we get clean seas and are able to restore the health of our coastal and marine ecosystems.

Plan Sea will engage with the county's water companies, scrutinise their efforts to reduce the incidents of sewage releases and push for better.

# Objective 3 - Holistic approach to the management of Marine Protected Areas

*Make better use of management and protection mechanisms available to our Marine Protected Areas. Coordinate and join-up efforts to facilitate a holistic approach to the management of Marine Protected Areas, recognising how critical these are for marine nature recovery.*

## The challenge

Many Marine Protected Areas are in declining and unfavourable condition. Some have not had condition assessments for several years, so the status of certain sites is unknown.  The way Marine Protected Areas are managed needs to change as coordination is often lacking in coastal sites which experience numerous pressures and activities, many unlicensed.

Stronger enforcement of the byelaws for Marine Conservation Zones, along with new byelaws is needed, plus more investment, research and recording, giving us a better understanding of the progress being made.

Marine and coastal systems present unique restoration challenges linked to wave dynamics, shifting sediments, and climate change. Human pressures are similarly complex: land-based activities affect coastal waters through runoff, and multiple marine activities can overlap spatially or temporally.

Additionally, governance and regulatory responsibilities in marine areas are distributed across numerous organisations, making collaboration and partnership working essential, but this collaboration does not always occur.

Monitoring and data collection is critical to use better understanding the state of our marine areas and what the biggest threats are to their condition.  Citizen science has a vital role to play in data collection and reporting of biodiversity and habitat condition. Its collection collation and interpretation needs to be coordinated and supported.

Many of the coastal habitats and species prioritised in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy fall within Marine Protected Areas, so we need to make sure that the management of these support the Strategy's priorities and any action within the Protected Areas is aligned with those set out by the Strategy's mapped potential measures. In turn, delivery of these potential measures will contribute to improving the condition of the county's Marine Protected Areas.

## What Plan Sea will do

Plan Sea will work with Natural England and other key players to explore solutions for improved management and to determine how others can be better involved.

Plan Sea will advocate for, and facilitate, a holistic approach to marine nature recovery. Plan Sea will provide a framework for a more join-up approach to managing the marine space, allowing priorities and targets to be aligned and shared; and management tools and legal enforcement powers to be more effectively applied.

Plan Sea will promote and instigate local collaborative action that employ measures to better manage and better protect the Marine Protected Areas.

Plan Sea will work with stakeholders to review government advice on management to ensure it is appropriate and fit for purpose for Kent's Marine Protected Areas. It will ensure that management and action supports delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and that any potential measures resulting from the Strategy do not undermine the protected areas' conservation objectives.

Plan Sea will work with stakeholders to review existing and required monitoring, research and recording and explore options for data collection to improve understanding and inform management and interventions.  Plan Sea action to improve ocean literacy may provide opportunities to increase and expand the use of citizen science to support this work.

The condition of the Marine Protected Areas is also hugely impacted by influences that maybe be outside of the area – water pollution and recreational impacts being two key concerns. Plan Sea's work addressing these two challenges will in turn deliver improvement to these protected areas.

Plan Sea will lobby government and hold them to account on the Marine Protected Area targets listed in both the Environment Act and Environmental Improvement Plan.

# Objective 4 - Improve ocean literacy

*Lead efforts to improve ocean literacy so that all stakeholders, including the people of Kent, can make a decisive and direct contribution to the restoration of our coastal and marine environment.*

## The challenge

The more people engage with our marine and coastal environment, the more they will understand it and the more likely they will be to act to look after it and advocate to protect precious habitats and species.

Evidence suggests that despite being a coastal county, our residents may not fully appreciate the value of our marine and coastal environment nor understand the impacts, positive and negative, they can have on it.

The widely used definition of *ocean literacy* is 'the understanding of our individual and collective impact on the ocean and its impact on our lives and wellbeing'. Ocean literacy covers both formal and informal educational programmes, ensuring emotional connection leads to behaviour change.

## What Plan Sea will do

Plan Sea recognises the importance of our coastal, and inland, communities reigniting the 'island living' feel and reconnecting with the sea as part of our heritage and culture, and thus benefiting from the health and wellbeing benefits it presents.

Plan Sea will develop and deliver, in partnership, a programme of ocean literacy action to enhance the link and ownership Kent's people feel towards our coastal and marine environments. This will link in with, and build on, engagement work already underway in the county and look to coordinate across the county to ensure clear and consistent messaging.

The programme will focus on:

- Sustainable and responsible access to the coast.
- Reducing coastal litter.
- Reducing impact on marine environment through sustainable choices.
- Addressing the disconnect and the health and wellbeing benefits.
- Citizen science supporting coastal and marine monitoring.
- Volunteering supporting coastal and marine restoration and protection.

In the first instance, Plan Sea will lead an ocean literacy survey for residents across Kent. This will be used to understand the baseline of understanding and connectivity and determine areas for engagement work.

Going forward, co-ordinated partnership-led engagement work could include:

- Working with Kent's industries and businesses in the maritime sector to promote and support career options, particularly aimed at young people in coastal areas.
- Working with schools and libraries to support ocean literacy in the classroom and deliver engagement events.
- Supporting the establishment of more *Beach Schools* across the county.
- Working with artists to use arts and creativity to engage people.
- Working with local authorities and town/parish councils to adopt and support a county-wide ocean literacy ambition.
- Working with Explore Kent, Visit and Invest Kent and other partners to promote responsible enjoyment of the coast.
- Engaging with in-land residents on how their impacts can still affect the sea.
- A county-wide "Kent Marine Week".

These ideas will need scoping in order that the most effective can be matched with funding mechanisms and various community engagement routes already available in the county.

The ultimate aim of any Plan Sea engagement that is that it results in action to protect our marine environment. By providing resources, opportunities, public engagement and events, we want people to act for the environment.

Improving ocean literacy, and the resulting change in behaviours and increase in engagement and volunteering, will be key to the delivery of a number of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy priorities and Plan Sea can make the necessary linkages across the work to ensure join-up.

# Objective 5 - Reduce wildlife disturbance and tackle invasive non-native species

*Actively support communities and bodies in their efforts to reduce wildlife disturbance and tackle invasive non-native species.*

## The challenge

Invasive non-native species (INNS) are a contributing factor to the decline of certain native species and habitats. With our position so close to mainland Europe and our role as an international port, our coastal habitats are particularly vulnerable to invasive non-native species and often the front line and first point for new species. The changing climate, leisure pressures and habitat degradation is increasing the impact of certain invasive non-native species.

Invasive non-native species can smother a habitat and outcompete native species. This reduces general biodiversity and abundance of species in a habitat, making it even less resilient to changes in the environment, which could cause an ecosystem to completely collapse.

If we don't address invasive non-native species, efforts to restore our coastal and marine ecosystems will at best be undermined and worst not be effective at all.

Wildlife disturbance at the coast is well document and we have initiatives already in place in Kent to help minimise this. Bird Wise is a development funded project which monitors and prevents disturbance, through engagement activities, to coastal birds in Kent's Special Protected Areas. But with an increasing population and growing visitor numbers, this on its own may not be sufficient to curb wildlife disturbance.

Many maritime activities unintentionally cause harm to marine species. Boats, jet skis, canoes and paddle board use is often unregulated and unmanaged. Craft can be launched or landed in the wrong places, including protected sites. Often disturbance results from a lack of knowledge of just how sensitive sites are and how vulnerable wildlife can be.

Marine infrastructure can also impact our marine species. Whilst such developments are regulated and protections exist, we need to ensure marine wildlife is a consideration from the outset and design and construction not only minimise impacts but also presents opportunities to support nature recovery.

## What Plan Sea will do

Plan Sea will provide a framework for a collaborative and joined-up approach to managing the risk of invasive non-native species.  Initially this will focus on the known risks highlighted in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy:

- Invasive spartina in seagrass beds.
- Invasive Pacific Oyster in Native Oyster and Blue Mussel beds.

- Invasive species in sand dune systems.

Plan Sea will work with stakeholders to review and identify other invasive non-native species risks to our coastal and marine ecosystems and seek to develop systems by which these risks can be monitored and managed.

Plan Sea will engage with others across the country to share data and findings and ensure learning from elsewhere can benefit efforts in Kent to control invasive non-native species.

Plan Sea will utilise efforts in the ocean literacy work to educate and inform visitors and recreational users of coastal and marine wildlife disturbance.

Plan Sea will provide a framework for collaboration and a coordinated approach to manage wildlife disturbance, to ensure that interventions to manage impacts in one area don’t just push the problem to another section of coast. This partnership approach will also provide a forum where organisations can share best practice and develop ideas.

# Objective 6 – Showcase the county's coastal and marine areas

*Champion Kent and showcase the county's coastal and marine areas to highlight the challenges and achievements of the coastal county at a national level.*

## The challenge

The 2009 Marine and Coastal Access Act was designed to manage the marine environment and improve marine protection. Whilst new protections were introduced, the promises of improvements to our marine environment have not materialised.

There is a lot we can do at the local level and this is what Plan Sea sets out to do. But national action is also needed and the government's recent commitments through the Environment Improvement Plan will only be achieved if sufficient resources are made available.

## What Plan Sea will do

Plan Sea will champion Kent and showcase the work the county is doing. It will make use of its role on the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group (LGA Coastal SIG) to engage with government departments and agencies to not only share the work underway but also highlight the challenges and barriers to its delivery.

Plan Sea will use the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group and other networks to share learning with other coastal authorities.

# Delivery of Plan Sea

An annual action will be developed, outlining the work to be taken forward in support of the six Plan Sea objectives. This action plan will be developed with partners, recognising the important role they play is delivering Plan Sea.

Biennially, progress against these objectives will be reviewed and reported, and this will be used to inform priorities for the year ahead.

Plan Sea has a dedicated officer but funding to support its delivery will need to be secured. With diverse ambitions, this could open multiple areas of funding opportunities that need to be explored. Some examples of this are below.

**Blue carbon and blue finance**

Opportunities for funding marine recovery projects could include;

- The use of **Biodiversity Net Gain** (BNG) credits in coastal development sites. BNG is a statutory requirement of developers to increase biodiversity by at least 10% of biodiversity improvement before development. This applies to areas down to the mean low water mark.
- **Marine Net Gain** (MNG) has the same principles as BNG but is not currently statutory and will be applied in offshore developments below the mean low water mark. MNG will incorporate both species and habitats, wider environmental benefits and pressure reduction however, there is currently no existing framework for trading, costs, management or monitoring. There are also no established ways of quantifying marine habitats, so MNG has some way to go before it is ready to be used as a blue financing option. That's not to say trials aren't happening; marine irreplaceable habitats are being mapped by the Marine Restoration Project (MaRePo) investigating habitats and species with potential for restoration, recovery and enhancement.
- The carbon captured and stored within marine habitats, including mangroves, seagrasses and saltmarshes, represents a significant opportunity for nature-based climate action. Often referred to as "**blue carbon**" ecosystems, these habitats can sequester carbon at rates equivalent to, and sometimes exceeding, those of terrestrial forests. Alongside carbon storage, they deliver valuable co-benefits, such as improving habitat quality for marine species, supporting sustainable fisheries, and strengthening the resilience of coastal communities to flooding and coastal change. Blue carbon environmental credits are a scheme for businesses and financers to invest in the regeneration of these carbon-sequestering marine habitats, but they remain critically underfunded, attracting less than 1% of international climate finance. But there are promising progresses in this area as governments show interest in blue carbon solutions to achieve their climate targets. For example, there is currently a project in place establishing a Saltmarsh Code, for saltmarshes to be used as a habitat bank and direct carbon-offsetting funding for regenerating saltmarsh across the UK.
- Leading on from successful trials of Natural England's Nutrient Neutrality scheme, using **environmental credits** to capture and store excess nutrients

(such as phosphorous and nitrates) in water bodies, some ideas have been discussed about creating a similar model for marine.

- **Tourism tax** has been introduced across certain countries in the world, and some have used the money to invest in the conservation of marine and coastal habitats, where increased tourism is a detriment to the marine habitats of that country. Recent analysis suggests that tourism taxes could generate between USD 400 million and USD 2.3 billion annually for ocean protection, helping to address up to 15% of the ocean finance gap. While not a complete solution, they offer a practical and politically viable source of domestic funding for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), particularly in high-value tourist destinations.

**Arts funding**

Many ocean literacy projects could be supported by creative arts (e.g. Arts Council England) or lottery funding. Putting together a project that connects people to their environment through education and engagement could open multiple funding opportunities. The Plan Sea officer would investigate these areas of opportunities and co-ordinate them with local artists, facilitators and practitioners looking to engage Kent citizens with the ocean and enable actions to help restore it.

**Industry funding**

Many large businesses in Kent offer funding for local environment projects. Some examples include;

- The Port of Dover Community Fund provides grants ranging from £2,000 to £10,000 for grassroots projects that enrich the social, cultural, and environmental life of Dover and its surrounding areas.
- Vattenfall, who own the windfarm off the coast of Thanet have community funds they invest in annually.
- Recycling companies such as Viridor offer WeShare Community Fund, which distributes £320k annually to local projects and charities. There are 2 Viridor waste recycling sites in Kent.

**From:** **Jamie Henderson-Cabinet Member for Coastal Regeneration and Environment**

**Simon Jones-Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport**

**To:** **Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 10 November 2026**

**Subject:** **Development of a Kent Water Resources Strategy**

**Classification:** **Unrestricted**

**Electoral Division: County-wide**

**Summary:** Kent is one of the driest regions in England with population and economic growth along with a changing climate putting increasing pressure on the county's water resources. The results of water stress within the county are expected to cause long term impacts for house building, economic development, agriculture, tourism and water availability for residents. A Kent Water Resources Strategy is in development to address the challenges now and in the future and shape how the county can maintain growth whilst protecting water resources for the benefit of the environment and quality of life for the residents of Kent.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the paper and the update on the development of a Kent Water Resources Strategy

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Kent is one of the driest regions in England, and climate change is intensifying the pressure on its water resources. The county is experiencing warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers, which are impacting both the quality and availability of water.

1.2 Parts of Kent are already classified as experiencing moderate to serious water stress, where water demand exceeds the effective rainfall available, these include Shepway, Dover, Thanet, Swale, Gravesham, and Sevenoaks.

1.3 The recent heatwaves experienced within the county and the water supply outages have highlighted the immediate and long-term risks posed for everyday water access for residents and the impacts that will be faced for housing development, economic growth, tourism, and the environment.

1.4 Kent County Council has, over the previous 10 years, worked to develop and deliver water resource projects, build strategic partnerships with key stakeholders and understand the risks and challenges for securing water resources.

1.5 Using this platform, and working with our strategic partners, KCC is developing the Water Resources Strategy to enable partners to understand how we can manage the long-term risk to water resources collectively and build resilience.

## 2. Developing a Kent Water Resources Strategy

2.1 Kent is a diverse county with a high-quality environment, varied towns and rural landscapes. These resources and assets are valued by residents, business and visitors alike, providing significant benefits to the county's economy and the health and wellbeing of its residents.

2.2 Economic growth, including housing, will require significant investment in the water infrastructure and technology to balance future supply and demand in Kent. Depending on the climate prediction, level of population growth and the mitigation action taken, projections suggest an additional 1.5 – 2.6 billion litres per day will be needed for households by 2080 in the South East.

2.3 These figures do not represent a hard line but will be realised incrementally year-on-year, with the impacts being felt on the public water supply and high-water consumption sectors, including newly emerging industries such a data centres.

2.4 Water Resources South East, is an alliance of the six water companies that cover the south east region of England, they work to secure water supply for the future and take a regional approach to managing water resources. KCC is working closely with them in the development of a Spatial Development Strategy which will review the water demands across the South East Region. This work is critical to improving our understanding of housing forecasts, infrastructure needs and economic development against available water supply and how additional need will be met.

2.5 Whilst regional strategies, as well as new and emerging policy and development in the water sector, are vital in shaping how water resource and supply is managed, there remains a need for a Kent focused strategy.

2.6 The development of the Kent Water Resource Strategy is ongoing, and the Kent Water Resilience Partnership meeting held on the 8th October 2026 has highlighted that partners from all sectors support this approach and are committed to co-designing the water strategy. The ambition for the strategy is that it will be owned and delivered by all partners across the county, with KCC acting as its facilitator for implementation.

## 3. Draft Kent Water Strategy overview

3.1 The Kent Water Strategy is being developed during a period of substantial change for the water sector and increasing water demand. Bringing partners together to develop the strategy will enable collaboration and active participation in the creation of shared goals. Adaptation and innovation is needed to improve water resilience but will require forward planning and

continuous improvement from all sectors to achieve a sustainable and environmentally sensitive solutions.

3.2 The ambition of the strategy will be to ensure that Kent has a resilient water environment which can support communities, the natural environment, the economy and enable the delivery of sustainable growth.

3.3 The Kent Water Resilience Partnership meeting highlighted that a wealth of technical expertise, knowledge and data exists across all sectors involved in water resource management. In bringing partners together the strategy will develop goals which can

- Bring together existing expertise and data to share, collaborate and consider the whole water management system in delivering coordinated action
- Address water demand and deliver water resource management projects in a timely way
- Invest in water resilience through innovative nature-based solutions to deliver for the economy, public health and the environment
- Lead by example through best practice adaption of public buildings and assets
- Ensure that growth ambition is fully understood and water resource planning is embedded to reduce uncertainty around future water demand.

3.4 The Kent Water Resource Strategy had previously intended to cover a 25-year period, however in recognising the role that the Water Resources South East Regional Strategy has and the need to align these strategies the timeframe of the strategy will now cover the period 2027 -2075.

3.5 In addition, to support development of the strategy the 18-month EU funded Pathways to Resilience project will be embedded, strengthening the focus on adaptation and resilience into a single framework.

3.6 The new timeframe will allow for the development of short-, medium- and long-term objectives and actions and align with the Water Company Asset Management Periods (AMPs) which will be one of the mechanisms for investment and delivery.

3.7 A phased approach to delivery will enable short term and quick win projects to be delivered at pace, delivery of medium-term objectives which require investment and increased coordination with partners would be delivered post 2030 and long-term objectives from 2035 onwards would realise the delivery of significant investment, adaptation and resilience.

3.8 Work is now underway to bring the partnership together to develop the strategy as a shared approach. It is anticipated that the draft strategy will be taken to public consultation in early 2027.

**4. Leading water resilience for Kent**

4.1 It's important to note the ongoing work of KCC on improving the water resilience of Kent. The strategy will bring together and coordinate these projects to provide a clear vision and ongoing and new activities will form the action plan for the delivery of the strategy. This includes:

- Holistic Water for Horticulture – a partner in the project, which supports the horticulture sector to reduce water use and create resilience within the sector.
- Work with sports clubs to assess options for rainwater storage and boreholes for irrigation. KCC is working with Active Kent, Kent Cricket, South East Water, Affinity Water.
- Work with schools to deliver sustainable drainage, water harvesting, grounds enhancement, water audits and education sessions.
- Creation of the rain water harvesting tool for growers to help farmers to calculate the most effective rainwater harvesting system for their circumstances. Now working with water companies to deliver a water resilience in agriculture pilot.
- Working with NFU, farm clusters, Environment Agency, Trading Standards and Public Health Further to support growers and agriculture to implement rain water harvesting equipment to reduce reliance on mains supply and increase resilience.
- Design guidance for irrigation reservoirs for the agriculture sector to reduce reliance on mains supply.
- Working with water companies, farm clusters,and the horticulture sector to review, test and modify the Water Trading Platform, which was started in 2020 to enable abstractors to trade licences when needed, to reduce reliance on mains water.

**5. How the proposed decision supports the Council's Strategic Statement**

5.1 The Kent water strategy will align with the Kent strategic statement by **putting Kent residents first.** The strategy will:

- Identify and implement water resilience measure that can be implemented for farming and growers across the county.
- Support local businesses to become more water resilience through nation and regional opportunities and programmes.

5.2 **Building better communities,** the strategy will:

- The strategy will identify areas where KCC can ensure that the water infrastructure needs of the county to support economic growth and quality of life are fully in place through partnership working and engaging with water companies.
- Protect our Kent environment with practical, affordable and visible improvements including assisting with building water resilience into

businesses and KCC buildings where practicable to do so. This will lead to case studies that can be shared more widely and translated into other areas.

5.3 In the context of water availability and quality and maintaining quality blue spaces for residents and visitor to enjoy.

**6. Financial Implications**

6.1 This proposed decision/update has not costs involved.

**7. Legal implications**

7.1 There are considered to be no legal implications for Kent County Council in developing a Kent Water Resources Strategy.

**8. Equalities implications**

8.1 An EqIA screening has been completed as part of the draft Kent Water Resources Strategy in advance of undertaking a public consultation and reviewed following the consultation process

**9. Data Protection Implications**

9.1 There are considered to be no data protection implications for Kent County Council in developing a Kent water strategy

**10. Other corporate implications**

10.1 There are no specific implications on other areas of KCC. However, delivering the Strategy will require support from other areas of KCC. There are no expectations for any additional spending.

**11. Governance**

11.1 The Kent Water Strategy will be adopted by the Flood and Water Management Team, Environment and the Circular Economy division.

**12. Conclusions**

12.1 KCC is developing a shared Kent Water Resources Strategy, which can bring together existing strategies, plans and projects to support water security for Kent. A coordinated, forward-looking strategy is essential to strengthen partnerships to ensure Kent's water resilience, support sustainable growth and protect the unique environment and landscape for the future.

12.2 Whilst work on the strategy continues, other collaborative efforts still continue to address the challenges of water security in the county.

**13. Recommendation(s):**

13.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the paper and to continue to support the development of a Kent Water Resources Strategy

## 14. Background Documents

*EqIA 2006-01-13 Water resources Strategy*

## 15. Appendices

None

## 16. Contact details


| | |
|---|---|
| Report Author: Mary Tate<br><br>Job title: **Water Manager**<br><br>Telephone number: 03000 414833<br><br>Email address: mary.tate@kent.gov.uk | Director: Matthew Smyth<br><br>Job title: **Director for Environment and Circular Economy**<br><br>Telephone number: 03000 416 676<br><br>Email address: matthew.smyth@kent.gov.uk |

**From:** Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** **Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 9 November 2026**

**Subject:** JTB – future arrangements

**Decision no:** ***26/00061***

**Key Decision :** *It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions*

**Classification:** *Unrestricted*

**Past Pathway of report: N/A**

**Future Pathway of report:** *Cabinet Member Decision*

**Electoral Division: County Wide**

**Is the decision eligible for call-in?** *Yes*

**Summary:** Kent County Council (KCC) and district/boroughs established Joint Transportation Boards (JTBs) in 2005 to facilitate cooperation on local highway and transportation issues and to provide recommendations to the appropriate KCC or district/borough Cabinet Member on highways issues. A legal agreement underpins each JTB.

The operation and effectiveness of Joint Transportation Boards have previously been considered through reports to the KCC Scrutiny Committee. The Committee's findings and recommendations included a review of the current arrangements. This work has informed the development of the proposed decision to end current arrangements in favour of a new partnership working approach.

**Recommendation:**
The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or **MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A), to end the current Joint Transportation Board arrangements and to establish replacement local engagement arrangements for highways and transport matters.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Joint Transportation Boards (JTBs) provide a forum for Kent County Council and district and borough councils to consider local highways and transport matters. However, the current arrangements are governed by separate

agreements that have developed inconsistently over time and no longer provide a clear or uniform countywide framework.

1.2 This report sets out the case for bringing the existing JTB agreements to an end and replacing them with a more consistent, efficient and flexible approach to local highways and transport engagement.

1.3 It seeks the Cabinet Committee's views on the proposed decision before it is taken by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

## 2. Key Considerations

2.1 On how KCC should structure future local engagement on highways and transport matters that ensures consistency, democratic engagement, operational effectiveness and flexibility for future local government arrangements and devolution.

2.2 The proposal is to end the existing JTB agreements and develop replacement engagement arrangements with each district and borough council. This will provide a clearer and more consistent framework while retaining local flexibility, Member involvement and the ability to respond to devolution and local government reorganisation.

## 3. Background

3.1 Joint Transportation Boards (JTBs) were established in 2005 through separate agreements between Kent County Council (KCC) and each of Kent's district and borough councils. They were created as consultative, non-decision-making forums through which county, district and borough Members could consider local highways and transport matters and make recommendations to the authority responsible for taking the relevant decision.

3.2 The agreements set out the membership, governance and operation of each JTB. Although based on a broadly common model, the arrangements have developed differently across Kent over time. Amendments proposed in 2021 sought to update and improve the consistency of the arrangements; however, these were formally adopted by only six district and borough councils. Consequently, JTBs now operate under different versions of the agreements and with varying local practices.

3.3 In September 2023, KCC's Scrutiny Committee reviewed the operation and effectiveness of the JTBs. It identified inconsistencies in how the JTBs operated, a lack of clarity around governance and decision-making, and differing views about their purpose, effectiveness and efficiency. The Committee recommended that KCC consider replacing the existing arrangements with a revised model for local highways and transport engagement. The replacement arrangements will be developed to address concerns identified through previous reviews of the current model.

3.4 In 2026, KCC and Maidstone Borough Council mutually agreed to terminate their formal JTB agreement. The remaining agreements continue to operate, but the differing contractual and operational arrangements mean that there is no longer a consistent countywide approach to engagement on local highways and transport matters.

3.5 A decision is therefore required to bring the existing JTB arrangements to an end and enable officers to develop and implement a clearer, more efficient and flexible replacement model. The new arrangements will be developed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and counterpart district and borough Members across all Kent districts, providing an opportunity for their views to inform the future approach. The new model will maintain effective local engagement while allowing arrangements to respond to changing local needs and the evolving local government landscape.

## 4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- **Retain existing arrangements**.
  Continue with the existing arrangements, accepting that different agreements and operating practices would remain across Kent. This would provide continuity but would not address the inconsistencies or limitations identified through the Scrutiny review

- **Terminate the agreements without a replacement model**
  Rely solely on existing Member, officer and council engagement channels. This would be administratively simpler but could reduce transparency, consistency and opportunities for structured local discussion.

## 5. Financial Implications

5.1 Administrative support for the current JTBs is provided by district and borough councils. The administrative responsibilities for the replacement arrangements will be agreed with each council as the new model is developed. The arrangements will be designed to be proportionate and to minimise additional demands on KCC services; any additional KCC responsibilities arising from the agreed model will be managed within existing budgets and officer resources.

## 6. Legal implications

6.1 The existing agreements must be ended in accordance with their respective termination provisions. Any replacement arrangements must be consistent with KCC's Constitution, statutory responsibilities and decision-making framework. Governance and Law will review the final arrangements before implementation.

## 7. Equalities implications

7.1 The decision relates to governance and engagement arrangements rather than service delivery.

7.2 No direct adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics have been identified. However, there is potential for indirect impacts if changes to membership, attendance arrangements, meeting timing, public participation opportunities or engagement mechanisms reduce the ability of particular groups to participate in local highways and transport discussions.

7.3 These risks will be mitigated through engagement with stakeholders, accessible meeting arrangements, publication of information, and continued opportunities for local input.

7.4 The Equality Impact Assessment will remain a live document and will be reviewed and updated, where necessary, as the replacement arrangements and associated Terms of Reference are developed and implemented.

## 8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 No personal data will be processed to implement this decision.

## 9. Other corporate implications

9.1 Implementation will require coordinated input from Highways and Transport, and Democratic Services in drafting terms of reference as new engagement models are developed.

9.2 Administrative responsibilities and officer capacity will depend on the practical arrangements agreed between KCC and each district or borough council. Transition arrangements will maintain Member engagement and ensure clear governance.

## 10. Governance

10.1 The proposed decision is to approve the termination of the existing Joint Transportation Board agreements and to delegate authority to the Director of Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to develop, finalise and implement replacement local highways and transport engagement arrangements, including the approval of associated Terms of Reference required for their operation, and to take all necessary actions to give effect to this decision.

## 11. Delegations

11.1 The Director of Highways and Transport is authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to finalise and implement the replacement engagement arrangements, including agreeing terms of reference and making minor amendments where necessary, in accordance with the Officer Scheme of Delegation.

## 12 Conclusions

12.1 The current JTB agreements no longer provide a consistent or effective countywide basis for local highways and transport engagement. Ending the

remaining agreements will enable KCC to work with districts and boroughs to introduce clearer, more flexible arrangements that maintain Member and partner involvement while supporting future changes to local government.

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**Recommendation:**
The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or **MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A), to end the current Joint Transportation Board arrangements and to establish replacement local engagement arrangements for highways and transport matters.

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## 12. Background Documents and Appendices

- Equality Impact Assessment
- Scrutiny Report
- Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

## 13. Contact details

| | |
|---|---|
| Report Author: Theresa Warford, Staff Officer<br>Telephone number: 03000 417192<br>Email address:<br>Theresa.warford@kent.gov.uk | Director: Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment & Transport<br>Telephone number:03000 411683<br>Email address: simon.jones@kent.gov.uk |

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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

| DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: | DECISION NUMBER: |
|---|---|
| Peter Osborne<br>Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport | 26/00061 |

**Executive Decision – key**

**26/00061 - Joint Transportation Boards Future Arrangements**

**Decision:**
As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, I agree to

APPROVE the termination of the existing Joint Transportation Board agreements.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Highways and Transport, to take all necessary actions to terminate the existing agreements, including serving any required notices and any associated documentation.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to develop, finalise and implement replacement local highways and transport engagement arrangements, including the approval of associated Terms of Reference required for their operation.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Highways and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet member for Highways and Transport to make minor amendments to the replacement arrangements where necessary to ensure their effective operation and to respond to changes in legislation, local government structures or operational requirements.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Highways and Transport to take the relevant actions, including, but not limited to, negotiating, finalising the terms of and entering into the necessary arrangements, contracts and associated legal documentation required to implement this decision.

**Reasons for decision:**
The existing Joint Transportation Board arrangements date from 2005 (five districts) and 2021 (six districts). Based on mutual agreement there are no formal Joint Transportation Board arrangements with Maidstone Borough Council. As such, there is no consistent or framework for engagement on local highways and transport matters.

In September 2023, KCC's Scrutiny Committee reviewed the operation and effectiveness of the JTBs. It identified inconsistencies in how the JTBs operated, a lack of clarity around governance and decision-making, and differing views about

their purpose, effectiveness and efficiency. The Committee recommended that KCC consider replacing the existing arrangements with a revised model for local highways and transport engagement that is clearer and efficient and flexible to adapt to an evolving Local Government landscape.

**Financial implications:**
Administrative support for the current JTBs is provided by district and borough councils. The administrative responsibilities for the replacement arrangements will be agreed with each council as the new model is developed.

The arrangements will be designed to be proportionate and to minimise additional demands on KCC services; any additional KCC responsibilities arising from the agreed model will be managed within existing budgets and officer resources.

**Legal implications:**
The existing agreements must be ended in accordance with their respective termination provisions. Any replacement arrangements must be consistent with KCC's Constitution, statutory responsibilities and decision-making framework. Governance and Law will review the final arrangements before implementation.

**Equalities implications:**
No direct adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics have been identified. Any potential barriers to participation arising from the replacement arrangements will be mitigated through stakeholder engagement, accessible arrangements, published information and continued opportunities for local input. The Equality Impact Assessment will remain under review as the arrangements are developed and implemented.

**Data Protection implications:**
No personal data will be processed.

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**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation**:
This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

- **Retain existing arrangements.**

Retain the existing arrangements, providing continuity but leaving the inconsistencies identified by Scrutiny unresolved.

- **Terminate the agreements without a replacement model**

Rely on existing engagement channels, which would be simpler but reduce transparency, consistency and structured local discussion.

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Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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| | |
|---|---|
| ..... | ..... |
| Signed | Date |

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# EQIA Submission – ID Number
# Section A

**EQIA Title**
JTB Future Arrangements

**Responsible Officer**
Theresa Warford - GT CDO

**Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)**
Tim Read - GT TRA

## Type of Activity

**Service Change**
No

**Service Redesign**
No

**Project/Programme**
No

**Commissioning/Procurement**
No

**Strategy/Policy**
No

**Details of other Service Activity**
Changing partnership arrangements

## Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**
Growth Environment and Transport

**Responsible Service**
Highways and Transport

**Responsible Head of Service**
Tim Read - GT TRA

**Responsible Director**
Andrew Loosemore - GT TRA

## Aims and Objectives

To replace current partnership engagement arrangements with updated more proportionate and resource effective engagement arrangements capable of flexing for LGR

# Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**
Yes

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**
Yes

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**
Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**
Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**
Districts and Boroughs as part of previous reviews of curent arrangements
KCC Members

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**
No

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

No

**Staff**

Staff/Volunteers

**Residents/Communities/Citizens**

No

**Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?**

No

**Details of Positive Impacts**

Not Applicable

## Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

**Are there negative impacts for age?**

No

**Details of negative impacts for Age**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating Actions for Age**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age**

Not Applicable

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

**Are there negative impacts for Disability?**

No

**Details of Negative Impacts for Disability**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Disability**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for Disability**

Not Applicable

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

**Are there negative impacts for Sex**

No

**Details of negative impacts for Sex**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Sex**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for Sex**

Not Applicable

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

**Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

No

**Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

| |
|---|
| Not Applicable |
| 23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race |
| **Are there negative impacts for Race** |
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| 24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief |
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| 28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities |
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| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |

**From:** Peter Osborne – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Simon Jones – Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 10th November 26

**Subject:** Contract CN260764 – Provision of CSAS resource

**Decision no:** ***26/00062***

**Key Decision: Yes**
- It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions
- It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** NA

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:**
Dover Town – Cllr James Defriend
Dover Town – Cllr Albert Throp
Dover West – Cllr Paul King
Folkestone East – Cllr Mary Lawes
Cheriton, Sandgate & Hythe – Cllr Tim Prater

**Is the decision eligible for call-in?** Yes

**Summary:**

The Council, as part of its role as a Strategic Lead in the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum (KMRF), provides resource accredited under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) in Kent to support the KMRF Operation Fennel suite of plans which manage traffic during periods of disruption at the Kent ports. The existing arrangement that supports delivery of the service is due to expire and therefore a new contract is required to ensure continuity of service from May 2027.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider, endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to award Contract CN260764 – Provision of Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) Resource, for a contract term of three years, comprising an initial two-year term with an optional one-year extension, as shown at, Appendix A, Proposed Record of Decision.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The existing arrangement that supports delivery of the service is due to expire.

1.2 There is a continuing need to provide CSAS accredited resource in Kent to support the KMRF Operation Fennel suite of plans which manage traffic during periods of disruption at the Kent portals, and therefore a new contract is required to ensure continuity of service from May 2027.

1.3 To ensure that this Service can be managed in the most cost-efficient manner, a longer-term strategy and contract is required; hence, this procurement of a longer-term CSAS Resource contract.

## 2. Key Considerations

2.1 As part of the Council's continued commitment to the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum Partnership, and in order to keep the Kent strategic and local road networks flowing during times of border disruption, our provision of CSAS resource is essential. The award of Contract CN260764 is key to this continued provision.

## 3. Background

3.1 Kent's strategic position in the UK centres on its role as the nation’s primary economic and logistical "Gateway to Europe". Connecting mainland Europe to London and the rest of the country, Kent hosts critical trade arteries but faces significant logistical challenges and border pressures. These pressures and challenges are managed on road by the KMRF via the Operation Fennel suit of plans.

3.2 Working in close partnership with Kent Police and National Highways, KCC plays a pivotal role in the management of disruption and congestion caused by delays and friction at the juxtaposed borders in Kent.

3.3 National Highways are responsible for the deployment of Operation Brock on the M20 and the Dover Traffic Management plan. While National Highways provide resource for much of the Operation Brock footprint, they only have limited numbers of Traffic Officers available.

3.4 Similarly, Kent Police have very limited numbers of Traffic Police Officers available.

3.5 Acknowledging the limitations of our partner organisations, Kent County Council manages the provision of CSAS as part of our role as a key KMRF partner. The CSAS officers that we provide are suitably trained and accredited to fulfil those roles needed to deliver the approved Fennel traffic management plans.

## 4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

4.1 Do nothing and continue with provision of CSAS through the new Highway Term Maintenance Contract (HTMC) - This would have resulted in sub-contract arrangements with associated management costs. To avoid these additional

costs and to ensure direct management and control of the service, establishing a standalone CSAS contract represents the most advantageous operational and financial solution for the Council.

4.2 Discontinue provision of CSAS resource - Considered but dismissed as this service is critical to the success of the KMRF Operation Fennel suite of plans which seek to minimise the impact of border disruption in Kent.

## 5. Financial Implications

5.1 The nature and extent of border disruption is inherently variable and influenced by a wide range of factors, including seasonal travel demands, changes to border processes and unplanned incidents. While much of the activity is planned around peak travel periods, the KMRF must also respond to unforeseen and spontaneous events at short notice. Consequently, forecasting the level of CSAS resource required over the life of the contract is challenging, particularly given the potential for future changes to national border systems, the impact of which is currently unknown.

5.2 Based on historic expenditure, annual spend on CSAS provision is currently estimated at approximately £750,000 per annum. Given the factors outlined in paragraph 5.1, actual expenditure may vary throughout the contract term. To ensure sufficient contractual flexibility to respond to changes in service demand without the need for further procurement activity, the contract will allow for expenditure above current forecasts where required. The maximum annual contract value will therefore be £1,000,000, although actual expenditure is expected to be lower and will be determined by operational need and the funding available.

5.3 Accordingly, the procurement will be advertised with a maximum total contract value of £3,000,000 across the full potential contract term of three years (an initial two-year term with the option to extend for a further year). This figure represents the maximum value permitted under the contract and should not be regarded as a forecast of actual expenditure

5.4 As with other border resilience measures and mitigations in Kent, the provision of CSAS officers is funded directly by His Majesty’s Government with grant payments to KCC via Section 31 of The Local Government Act 2003.

5.5 Government funding for the full period of the proposed contract is expected but has not yet been guaranteed. Contract expenditure will therefore be subject to confirmation of sufficient Government funding, with use of the optional third year also dependent on funding availability. There is no financial risk to the Council.

## 6. Legal implications

6.1 The procurement will be undertaken in accordance with applicable procurement legislation and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

6.2 In preparation for possible Local Government Reorganisation, appropriate provisions have been included within the contract to facilitate any future transfer of rights if required.

## 7. Equalities implications

7.1 The current EQIA Assessment will be included with the Committee Report. The EQIA identifies that individuals who fall within the Age and Disability groups may face negative impacts were CSAS resource not to be available.

7.2 These groups are expected to experience significant long-term benefits from the provision of CSAS resource on the Kent road network and no negative long terms impacts have been identified.

7.3 It should however be noted that, should CSAS resource not be provided to support the Fennel Plan options, other KMRF stakeholders will endeavour to fulfil these obligations where their own resources permit.

## 8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 A DPIA is not required as the contract does not involve the processing or sharing of personal data. No significant data protection risks have currently been identified.

## 9. Other corporate implications

9.1 It is not considered that this decision will have further corporate implications to other Directorates within KCC.

## 10. Governance

10.1 Subject to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport taking the proposed decision, authority will be delegated to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to take all necessary actions required to implement the decision.

10.2 This will include undertaking and completing the procurement process, approving the outcome of the tender evaluation, awarding the contract CN260764 – Provision of Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) Resource, finalising the terms of and entering into all necessary contractual and associated legal agreements. The Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport will also be authorised to exercise any extension provisions contained within the contract where this is considered necessary and where HMG funding remains available.

## 11. Conclusions

11.1 There is a continuing need to provide CSAS resource to support the KMRF Operation Fennel suite of plans.

11.2 The existing arrangement that supports delivery of the service is due to expire.

11.3 Contract CN260764 – Provision of Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) Resource will ensure continuity of service and allow The Council to continue fulfilling its obligations as a key Kent and Medway Resilience Forum stakeholder whist offering improved value for money.

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**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider, endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

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## 10. Background Documents and Appendices

10.1 Appendix A – PROD
10.2 Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

## 11. Contact details

| | |
|---|---|
| Report Author: Toby Howe<br>Job title: Senior Highway Manager<br>Telephone number: 03000 410219<br>Email: toby.howe@kent.gov.uk | Director: Andrew Loosemore<br>Job title: Director of Highways and Transport<br>Telephone number: 03000 411652<br>Email: andrew.loosemore@kent.gov.uk |

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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

| DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: | DECISION NUMBER: |
|---|---|
| Peter Osborne Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport | 26/00062 |

**Executive Decision – key**

**26/00062 – Contract CN260764 Provision of Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) Resource**

**Decision:**
As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, I agree to:

**DELEGATE** to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to:

a) **COMPLETE** the procurement process and **AWARD** a Contract CN260764 – Provision of Community Safety Accreditation Scheme Resource; for an initial term of two years, with an option to extend for up to one further year, within a maximum total contract value of £3 million;

b) **AGREE** the contract extension provision, subject to satisfactory performance, continued operational need and confirmation of sufficient Government funding; and further;

c) **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport to take the relevant actions, including, but not limited to, negotiating, finalising the terms of and entering into the necessary arrangements, contracts and associated legal documentation required to implement this decision.

**Reasons for decision:**
The Council, as part of its role as a Strategic Lead in the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum (KMRF), provides resource accredited under the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) in Kent to support the KMRF Operation Fennel suite of plans which manage traffic during periods of disruption at the Kent ports. The existing arrangement that supports delivery of the service is due to expire and therefore a new contract is required to ensure continuity of service from May 2027.

**Financial implications**:
CSAS provision is funded by His Majesty's Government through Section 31 grant payments to KCC.

Based on historic expenditure, annual costs are estimated at approximately £750,000.

Demand can vary due to seasonal pressures, changes to border processes and unplanned incidents. The contract will therefore have a maximum value of £1,000,000 per year and £3,000,000 over its potential three-year term. These are contract ceilings, not forecasts of expenditure.

Actual expenditure will be determined by operational need and available Government funding.

Funding for the full contract period is expected but not guaranteed. Contract expenditure, including use of the optional third year, will proceed only where sufficient Government funding is confirmed; any alternative funding would require separate approval through the Council's established governance arrangements.

**Legal implications:**
The procurement and award of the contract will be undertaken in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023.

The successful provider and all personnel deployed under the contract will be required to maintain the necessary Community Safety Accreditation Scheme accreditation, training and authorisations under the Police Reform Act 2002. The contract will include appropriate provisions covering performance, liability, insurance, termination, cessation of Government funding and any future transfer to a successor authority arising from Local Government Reorganisation.

Any extension or variation will be subject to available funding, the terms of the contract and applicable procurement legislation**.**

**Equalities implications:**
The EqIA, identifies potential negative impacts on older and disabled people if CSAS resource is unavailable. If unavailable, other KMRF partners will provide support where resources permit.

**Data Protection implications:**
N/A for this decision

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation**:
This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**
**Do nothing** and continue with provision of CSAS through the new Highway Term Maintenance Contract (HTMC) - This would have resulted in additional sub-contract arrangements and associated management costs.

**Discontinue** provision of CSAS resource. Dismissed as this service is critical to the success of the KMRF Operation Fennel suite of plans which seek to minimise the impact of border disruption in Kent

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: N/A

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..... .....

Signed Date

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# EQIA Submission – ID Number
# Section A

**EQIA Title**
Contract CN260764 - Provision of CSAS resource

**Responsible Officer**
Stephanie Wadhams - GT TRA

**Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)**
Toby Howe - GT TRA

## Type of Activity

**Service Change**
No
**Service Redesign**
No
**Project/Programme**
No
**Commissioning/Procurement**
Commissioning/Procurement
**Strategy/Policy**
No
**Details of other Service Activity**
No

## Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**
Growth Environment and Transport
**Responsible Service**
Highways and Transportation - Strategic Resilience
**Responsible Head of Service**
Toby Howe - GT TRA
**Responsible Director**
Simon Jones - GT CDO

## Aims and Objectives

There is a continuing need to provide CSAS accredited resource in Kent to support the KMRF Operation Fennel suite of plans that manage traffic during periods of disruption at the Kent ports.

To date, this service has been procured both via the Council's previous Highways Term Maintenance Contract (HTMC), which ceased and expired on 30th April 2026, and currently via the CN260704 – Provision of CSAS Resource contract.

The existing CN260704 – Provision of CSAS Resource contract was procured via a Direct Award procurement process, approved by an internal waiver. This current contract was structured for 12 months, with no extensions included into the contract and therefore shall expire on 30th April 2027.

To ensure that this Service can be managed in the most cost-efficient manner, a longer-term strategy and contract is required; hence this new procurement of an extended Provision of CSAS Resource contract.

Using the risk matrix the level of risk and impact to KCC is low across all areas; legal, financial, people and reputation. The service is being procured by KCC on behalf of KMRF and is being funded by HMG via a section 31 grant.

As part of the procurement exercise, the Council's standard Procurement Specific Questionnaire (PSQ) will be used including the core Conditions of Participation around equality and diversity.

Due to the level of spend under the new contract, a key decision is required. However, the scope of the works remains unchanged; CSAS are required to resource the KMRF Operation Fennel suite of plans.

As such, no change is required. The evidence suggests that there is no potential for discrimination and all appropriate measures have been taken to advance equality and foster good relations between the protected groups.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

No

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

No

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

No

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

The award of the contract does not materially change the Fennel plans, any KCC policy or procedure, or the level of resource provided. Given that the process will not produce any discernible difference to the public or any other stakeholders or groups, there is no requirement for consultation.

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

No

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

Service users/clients

**Staff**

Staff/Volunteers

**Residents/Communities/Citizens**

Residents/communities/citizens

**Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?**

Yes

**Details of Positive Impacts**

The service that we are procuring seeks to ensure traffic on both the strategic and local road networks in Kent, particularly in the Dover and Folkestone & Hythe area, keep flowing during times of congestion and disruption at Kent Ports.
This ensures that both Kent residents and those passing through the county can travel on Kent's road network by any means with the minimum of disruption. This also ensures everyone in the Dover and Folkestone and Hythe areas are able to access local amenities, attend appointments, receive care at home, and that services such as public transport, home deliveries, refuse collection etc. can continue unaffected.

These positive impacts will be most keenly felt by:

Age:
Bus routes are used frequently by older people and young people (particularly to and from school). Better management of traffic in the districts most affected by cross channel disruption will increase confidence in public transport and therefore, increase its use for learning, education, leisure, and health. Older people often rely on deliveries and care at home

Disability:
Public transport routes are often frequently used by disabled people with severe disabilities as private cars are not suitable for use by some disabilities. Better management of traffic will increase confidence in those routes, allowing use for learning, education, leisure, and health.

## Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

**Are there negative impacts for age?**

No

**Details of negative impacts for Age**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating Actions for Age**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age**

Not Applicable

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

**Are there negative impacts for Disability?**

No

**Details of Negative Impacts for Disability**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Disability**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for Disability**

Not Applicable

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

**Are there negative impacts for Sex**

No

**Details of negative impacts for Sex**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Sex**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for Sex**

Not Applicable

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

**Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

No

**Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

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| **Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities** |

| |
|---|
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |

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**From:** Peter Osborne Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Andrew Loosemore Director of Highways and Transportation

**To:** Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee Meeting – 10 November 2026

**Subject:** Winter Service Policy 2026/27

**Key decision:** No

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** N/A

**Future Pathway of Paper:** N/A

**Electoral Division:** All Districts.

**Summary**: Each year officers review the Council's Winter Service Policy and the operational plan that supports it considering changes in national guidance and lessons learnt from the previous winter. This report sets out any changes or revisions to this year's policy.

**Recommendation**: The Cabinet Committee is asked to note and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport on the proposed revisions to the Winter Service Policy for 2023/24 as set out in para 9.1.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The winter of 2025/26 ran from 17th October 2025 through to 17th April 2026. The first gritting run was 17th November and the last of the season was 25th March.

1.2 Overall there were 44 primary salting routes completed compared with the budgeted 66 runs. January was the busiest month, with a particularly busy period from 2nd to 11th – including the calling of an Ice Emergency.

## 2.0 Winter Planning

2.1 This will be the first winter under the new Highways Term Maintenance Contract (HTMC), awarded to Ringway Infrastructure Services Ltd.

2.2 In previous HTMC contracts, the winter fleet has been rented from Econ Ltd, whereby after the winter season, the fleet was taken back to Yorkshire where they were serviced, and if necessarily replaced with new equipment, and returned to Kent ready for the next season

2.3 Ringway have been awarded a contract with a minimum term of 14 years and have therefore found it more cost effective to purchase the fleet. 62 brand new lorries have been manufactured by Econ, to the contractor's enhanced specifications – with increased safety features for the driver and other road users.

To further personalise the fleet for Kent, a competition has been held with children from Kent to name the new fleet. From November, the likes of *Sir David Attenburrrr*, *Ctrl-Salt-Delete*, and *Spready Mercury* will be seen on Kent roads.

2.4 Over the 2026 summer period work has been undertaken to further refine and improve the winter service;

- All routes have been driven and reviewed by local Highway Managers to ensure they meet local requirements.
- Route maps and the KCC web site have been updated with the full network of routes.
- Salt bin filling and renewing where required

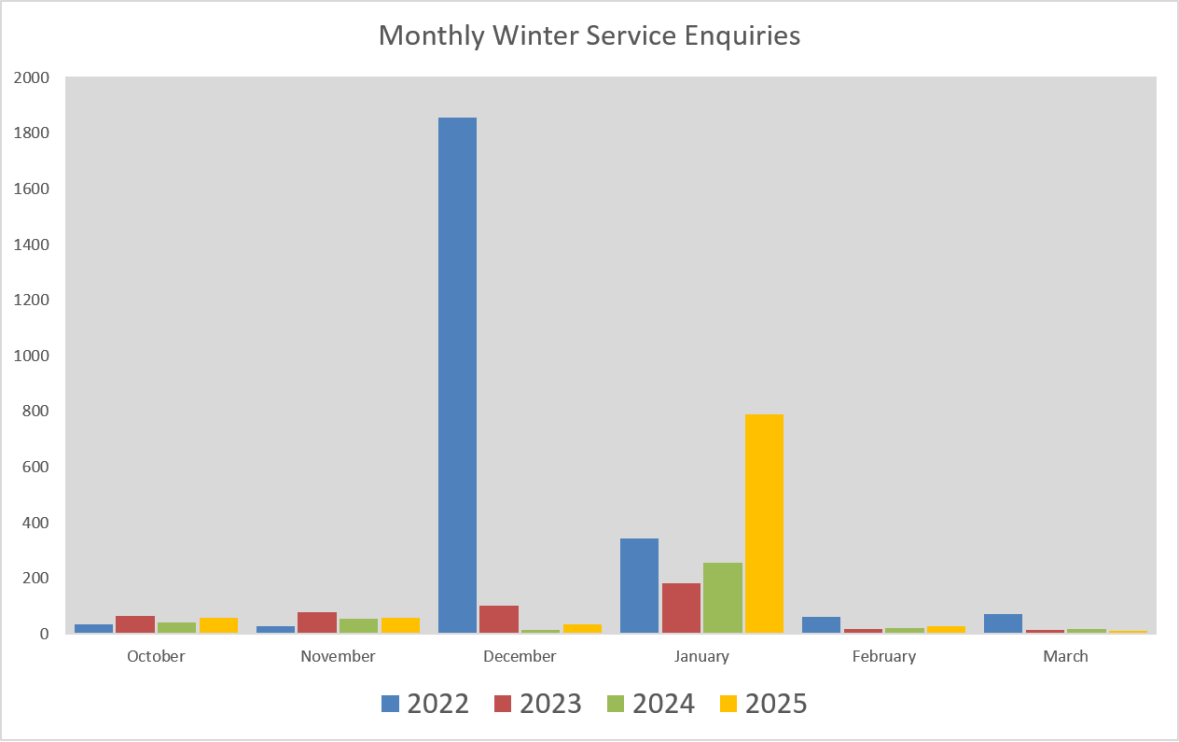
2.5 For the 2026/27 season, there will be little change to processes. However, through the summer of 2027, the Winter Service Manager will work with Ringway to look at proposed innovation to ensure continuous improvement and cost savings. Processes considered for the future include;

- Domain forecasting,
- thermal mapping,
- identification of variations in elevation, road surface temperature and salting needs

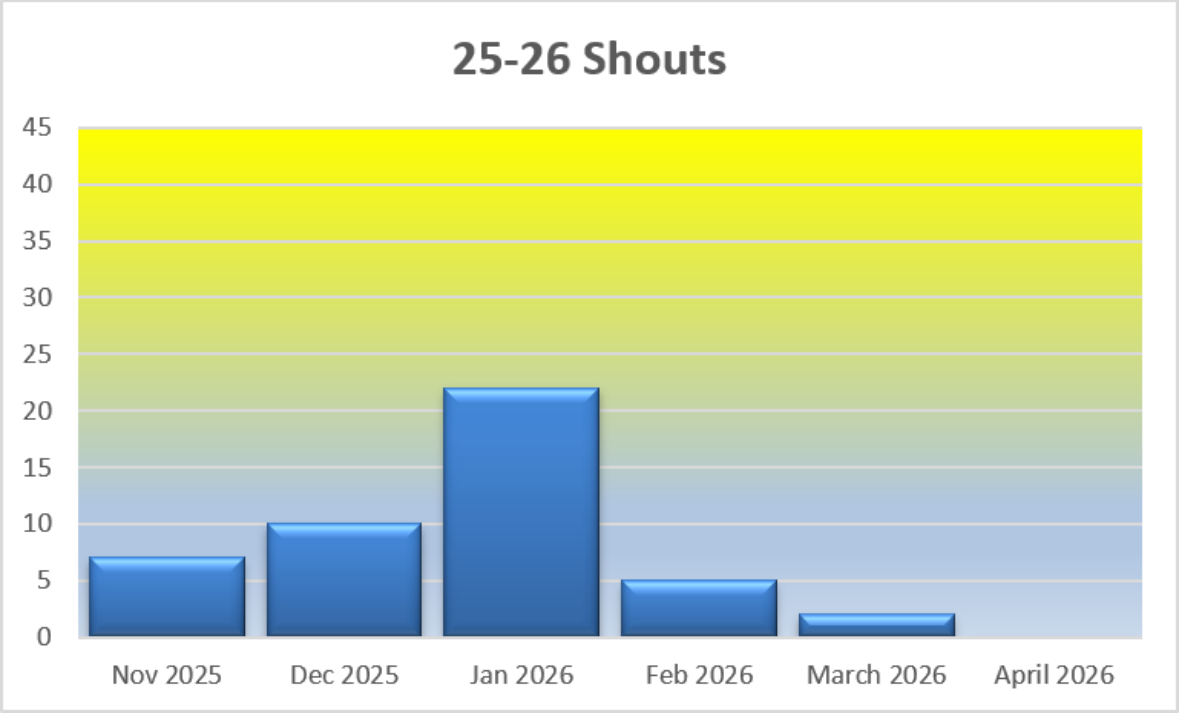
This will allow only areas that need treatment to be treated.

## 3.0 Winter Service

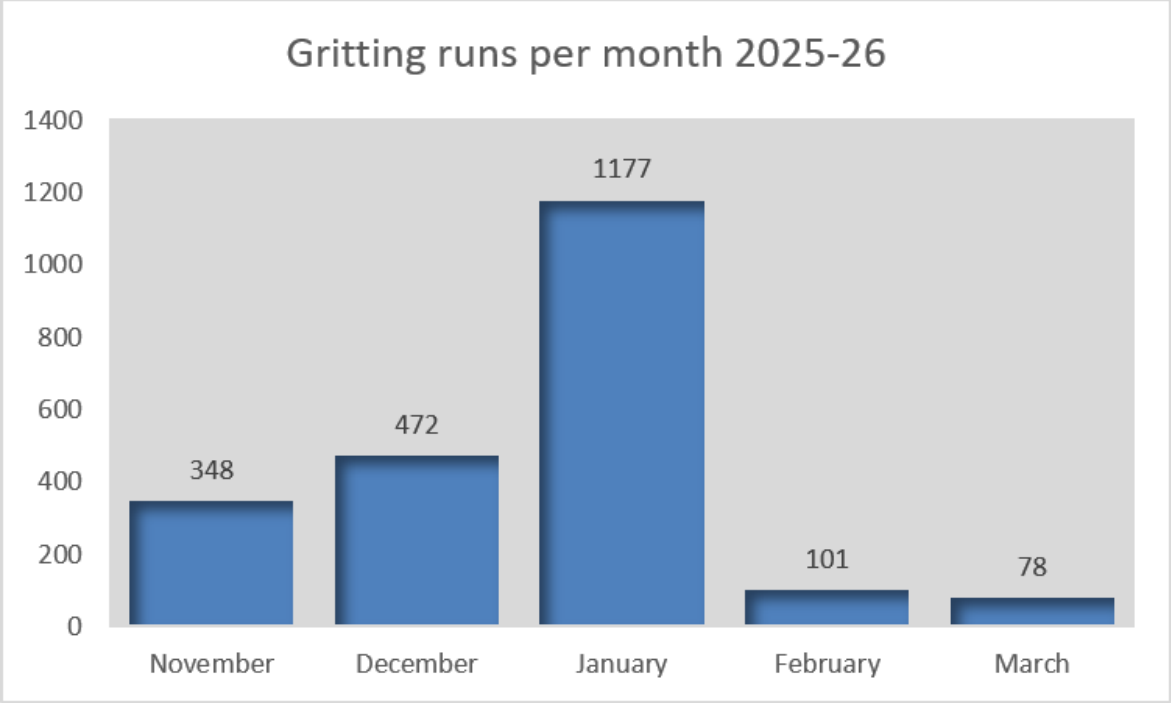
3.1 The graph below shows winter enquiries from 2022-2026.



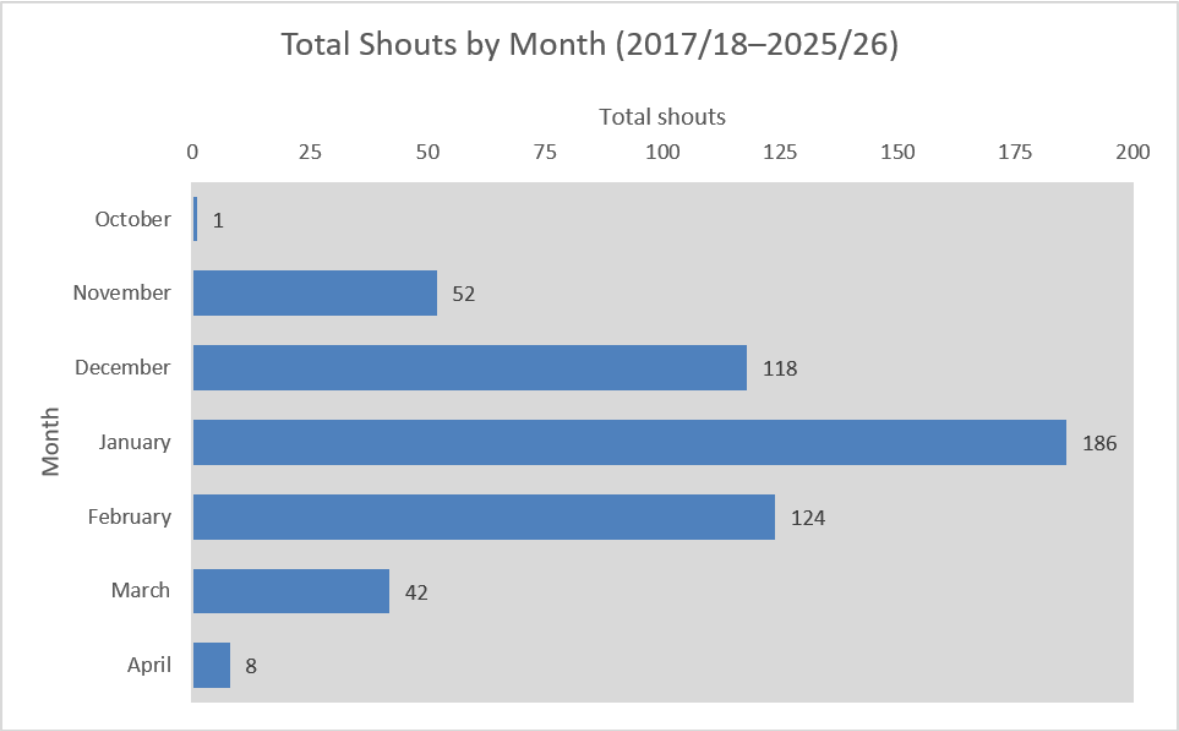
3.2 The graph below shows the overall number gritting instructions




3.3 The graph below highlights the number of individual runs per month. The previous graph shows the overall number of 'shouts' A Shout could include the whole county, or just a few routes in a part of the county affected. The Gritting runs in the graph below is the total number of runs carried out each month – (59 for the whole county)



3.4 The graph below shows total monthly instructions from 2017/18 – 2025/26. From this data, the decision was taken to alter the winter season, whereas previously it started mid-October, it will now start at the beginning of November




3.5 When icy conditions or snow is forecast, we treat about 30% (2586km) of the county's total carriageway (road) network which includes the A and B roads, major strategic, other strategic and locally important roads – these are termed Primary Routes.

3.6 Salting routes are published online at www.kent.gov.uk/highways, throughout the winter service

3.7 This service is time sensitive. The salt must be laid before ice forms or snow falls to be effective. Instructions for action are issued by the Winter Duty Officer (WDO) based on the forecasts received from Metdesk, our contracted weather forecast provider.

3.8 Social media is used to communicate the winter service action, including the Highways & Transport Facebook page, and on 'X'. This is updated when crews are going out, giving details of where we are operating, and the expected road hazards.

3.9 As well as the 62 salting vehicles which are on standby, we have more than 100 farmers around the county supplied with snow ploughs that can be fitted to their tractors. Under a signed agreement, they clear pre-determined rural routes, when there is more than 50mm of snow on the ground.

3.10 In addition to our normal highways out-of-hour service, we currently have four dedicated Winter Duty Officers, monitoring and actioning salting instructions throughout the winter period. Each WDO is on call 24/7 for a week on a rota basis.

The WDO works closely with the Senior Duty Officer (SDO) to coordinate out of hours actions when required.

## 4.0 Salting Routes

4.1 At the start of the winter service season we hold 23,000 tonnes of salt in stock in depots around the county. National guidance to local authorities suggests a resilience benchmark of 12 days/48 runs i.e. the authority would be able to continuously salt its winter network during its core winter period for 12 days. This equates to 16,800 tonnes therefore the level of salt in stock ensures that the required number of runs can be carried out. This is to ensure we meet our minimum resilient stock levels for the remainder of the season and are ready for any further winter events.

4.2 The salt supply is managed and purchased by the Highways Term Maintenance Contractor.

4.3 We continue to monitor requests for additional roads to be added to our primary salting routes and assess their suitability in line with the Winter Service Policy

4.4 In most cases, it is not possible to add additional sections of road to our existing primary salting routes, without removing something from a route. Our routes have been designed to capacity, either in length of network covered or available time to complete the salting operation. The Highways Act 1980 S.41(1A) states that we must do **what is reasonably practicable** to ensure that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice. Our policy approach and network length receiving treatment balanced against available resources meets this requirement.

4.5 At the end of the season we will review all our routes, to ensure that any changes to the network are considered and altered, as deemed necessary in-line with our Winter Service Policy.

4.6 Where we are unable to include extra sections of network on our primary routes or snow routes and we have identified that at certain times it may benefit the community as a whole if treated, then these may be considered for inclusion in the Highway District plans for local action, should the need arise during an event. These will be subject to the primary routes and snow routes being clear along with the available resources. Highway District Plans are agreements that we have with District and Borough Councils to provide resources for local snow clearance and gritting during extreme conditions and especially when they are unable to provide their services due to conditions.

4.7 A common request we receive is that the road is a bus route, so it should be treated. Unfortunately, it is not possible to treat every route a bus takes, we do however cover many routes, as they form part of the primary routes or snow routes.

## 5.0 Snow routes

5.1 The winter service is focused on keeping open the network of primary routes comprising 1597 miles, (2571 km) which are the main A and B roads and locally important roads in the county. During snow events these remain the focus or our activity. However, it is recognised that other parts of the highway in the county are adversely affected by snow, and this can have a detrimental impact on communities relying on these roads to get to the main roads. Whilst policy, service levels and resources enable us to meet our statutory duty we are mindful that other parts of the road network do experience difficulties. These include hilly areas, exposed roads subject to drifting and other factors. These have been designated snow routes and will be treated, as resources allow, when there is a snow event. These routes have been digitised and loaded into the in- cab Locatu system. Additionally, we will continue to have the support of our contracted farmers who clear snow from pre-approved areas of the rural network.

## 6.0 Salt Bins

6.1 There are over 3,000 salt bins in the county and this stock is considered sufficient to meet the needs of local communities. No new salt bins will be placed this winter. County Members can still use their Combined Member Grant to purchase salt bins, subject to meeting our salt bin criteria.

6.2 Following on from last season, all reports received regarding empty and damaged salt bins were actioned. For this coming winter season, we will continue utilising individual reports from the highways team and customer enquiries, to ensure salt bins are full. In addition, we will be producing an article for Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) newsletter to ask Parishes to report empty salt bins in their local area, via our online fault reporting tool.

6.3 Salt bins will be filled once during the season, however in the event of a snow event they may be refilled, subject to available resources. We will continue to monitor salt bin usage over the coming winter season, to ensure bins are located where needed on the network.

6.4 To enable good record keeping over the last few years we have given all our salt bins unique references. This should help both our residents in reporting issues and for us to respond / monitoring usage of individual assets.

## 7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 The allocated budget for winter service for 2026/27 is £4,364,500
The budget is broken down as follows:

| Winter Service | Budget |
|---|---|
| PRE-SALTING GRITTING OPERATION | £4,164,200.00 |
| MAINTENANCE OF FARMERS PLOUGHS | £50,000.00 |
| WEATHER FORECASTING | £21,800.00 |
| ICE PREDICTION | £38,200.00 |
| MAINTAIN SALT BINS AND JUMBO SALT BAGS FOR BOTH PARISH AND UNPARISHED AREAS | £75,900.00 |
| SUPPLY OF SALT TO DISTRICTS | £9,400.00 |
| PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN | £5,000.00 |
| **TOTAL** | **£4,364,500.00** |

## 8.0 Collaboration with neighbouring authorities

8.1 Mutual aid arrangements are in place with National Highway Area 4 and Medway Council. Forecasting and planned actions are shared, to ensure a mutual understanding across the road network of Kent.

## 9.0 Media and communication

9.1 As in previous years a media campaign will be used during the winter season. A series of infographics have been prepared which gives information about the winter service in an engaging manner. These will feature in a range of media, including social media. The H&T Facebook page has a high profile and will include information regarding winter treatment and times of actions.

9.2 The campaign will increase awareness of the service and encourage everyone to be prepared and undertake self-help when possible. This year radio, television and press will be provided with media briefs in advance of the winter season detailing the essentials of the winter service.

9.3 Key staff in Highways are working with the press office to prepare statements and press releases for rapid issue at the onset of winter conditions. These will be pre-approved for use during periods of severe conditions when the winter service delivery team will be busy.

## 10.0 Winter Service Policy and Plan 2026/27

10.1 The Winter Service Policy is presented at Appendix A.

10.2 The Winter Service Policy is supported by an Winter Service Plan which has been updated in line with the Policy and discussions have taken place with our Highway Maintenance Service Provider to ensure that plans are aligned.

10.3 The Plan is available for Members to view on request. In addition, Highway Managers have prepared local district plans, developed in conjunction with district

and borough councils across the county and these will be used together with this revised Policy to deliver the winter service.

## 11.0 Equalities implications

11.1 An equality impact assessment (EQIA) has been carried out on the Policy.

## 12.0 Background Documents

12.1 Link to KCC web site for Winter Service https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/winter-service

**13.0. Recommendation**:
The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the details of this report and actions being taken regarding Winter Service.

## 14.0. Contact details

| Report Author: | Relevant Director: |
|---|---|
| Toby Howe<br>Senior Resilience Manager / Winter Service Manager<br>03000 410219<br>Toby.howe@kent.gov.uk | Andrew Loosemore<br>Director Highways and Transportation<br>03000 411652<br>andrew.loosemore@kent.gov.uk |

**Appendix A: KCC Highways Winter Service Policy 2026/27**

**From:** David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Special Projects

Peter Osbourne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Simon Jones – Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee
10 November 2026

**Subject:** Reallocation of Getting Building Funding

**Decision no: 26/00063**

**Non Key Decision:** Yes – expenditure under £1 million

**Classification:** *Unrestricted*

**Past Pathway of report:** N/A

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:**

The Tech Hub Flexible Workspace project:
- Northfleet and Gravesend West
- Gravesend East division

The A249 Bearsted Road project: Maidstone Rural North

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**Is the decision eligible for call-in?** *Yes*

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**Summary:**
This paper sets out a need to reallocate £370,000 of Getting Building Fund money to the Bearsted Road Project from the Tech Hub Flexible Workspace project due to unforeseen delays with the latter

**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A), to approve the reallocation of £370,000 of Getting Building Fund grant from the Tech Hub Flexible Workspace project in Gravesend to the A249 Bearsted Road scheme in Maidstone.

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 Getting Building Funding (GBF) was announced by the Government in June 2020. The funding was part of the then Government's plan to deliver upgrades to local infrastructure, boost skills, and help fuel an economic recovery by investing in shovel-ready housing and infrastructure projects, creating jobs and supporting economic recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 The previous Government decided that the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) would allocate the funding with their approval. In total, the Government provided £85m of GBF to SELEP in 2020.

1.3 In summer 2023, SELEP announced that there was £2.05m of unallocated GBF available to bid for. Projects had to be shovel-ready capital projects which would deliver within 12 months. Business cases for Tech Hub Flexible Workspace, Gravesend and the A249 Bearsted Road Project were amongst those submitted for consideration.

1.4 SELEP Accountability Board met and considered the business cases submitted from across their area (Essex through to East Sussex).

1.5 On 12 January 2024, the SELEP Accountability Board agreed to "the award of £370,000 GBF to Kent County Council for the Tech Hub Flexible Workspace, Gravesend, project which has been assessed as offering High value for money with a Medium/High certainty of achieving this, subject to receipt of Government approval of project inclusion within the GBF programme, and agree that the GBF funding can be retained against the project for a maximum period of **12 months to 31 January 2025**."

1.6 The A249 Bearsted Road project was not originally awarded funding, but was placed on SELEP's reserve list of projects, were more GBF to become available.

## 2. Key Considerations

2.1 Regular monitoring of the GBF programme is now undertaken by KCC which has become the accountable body for the SELEP legacy capital programmes following the closure of SELEP.

2.2 In late 2024, the project promoter requested a project extension with the GBF allocation to be fully spent by 31 March 2025. This request was agreed by Central Government.

2.3 This revised deadline was subsequently not met and a further extension to April 2026 was also agreed. In January 2026 the project promoter, Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) confirmed that the project was no longer deliverable and had been cancelled. An alternative project was put forward by GBC but it was at a very early stage of project development and would therefore be unlikely to meet the delivery requirements and spend deadlines.

2.4 Consequently, the deliverability concerns and risks of not spending the GBF allocation by March 2027 were discussed by senior KCC officers (from GET and Finance Departments). Their recommendation to the Cabinet Member is to reallocate the funding to the A249 Bearsted Road Project, a project on

SELEP's original reserve list that was assessed as offering High value for money, is currently in delivery and does not require a funding agreement to be set up with a 3rd party to release the funds.

2.5 The A249 Bearsted Road project is due to complete construction in February 2027, which would ensure prompt spend of the reallocated GBF by the new requirement of March 2027.

2.6 The business case demonstrates that the project aligns with the original aims of the GBF that were set out by Central Government. It will unlock development at the Kent Medical Campus Enterprise Zone, which is restricted to 75% build out without improved highway capacity (from the Bearsted Road scheme and M20 Junction 7). This is a key employment site for the county and will create 3,700 highly skilled jobs, including specialised research and development – an area key to boosting productivity.

2.7 The reallocation of funding will also benefit existing businesses and local communities through further investment in one of the original GBF projects approved by Central Government.

## 3. Background

3.1 A previous decision has been taken by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration in October 2025 to reallocate GBF (£300,000) originally awarded to Maidstone Business suite Phase 2 to A249 Bearsted Road Project. **Decision - 25/00074 - Reallocation of Getting Building Funding**

## 4. Options considered and associated risk

4.1 Option 1 – do not reallocate the GBF to Bearsted Road (discounted) If Kent County Council were to choose to not reallocate the funding to a project on SELEP's original reserve project list, the GBF would need to be returned to Central Government, with associated risk of reputational damage of not retaining funding allocated within Kent which have already been earmarked for investment in the County. This option may also leave KCC with a potential cost pressure on the A249 Bearsted Road project, as other match funding has not been confirmed.

4.2 Option 2 – reallocate the GBF to The A249 Bearsted Road (preferred) – Bearsted Road is the only project remaining on SELEP's reserve list that is in delivery and requires additional funding. Reallocating the £370,000 to Bearsted Road will reduce the risk of potential cost pressures for the Council as other match funding has not been confirmed.

## 5. How the proposed decision supports the Council's Strategic Statement

5.1 A reallocation of funding would align with KCCs strategic statement as the investment would support the aim of Building Better Communities by improving the quality of roads in Maidstone and ensuring that an infrastructure improvement is completed which will enable economic growth in Kent.

5.2 The A249 Bearsted Road and its adjacent junctions is a key part of Maidstone's highway infrastructure contributing to a link around the north and east side of the town. The dualling scheme is underway and proposes a safer and resilient solution which once complete will provide an enhanced corridor alongside further improvements planned for M20 Junction 7. This is considered imperative at a time when growth in the business sector is paramount.

## 6. Financial Implications

6.1 The reallocation of GBF to the A249 Bearsted Road scheme will enable scheme delivery to continue as planned and provide an additional £370,000 towards the £10.8m construction contract, replacing other previously identified match funding which has been withdrawn and currently leaves KCC with a funding gap. This will help reduce the potential cost pressures for KCC and avoid the money being returned to Central Government.

## 7. Legal implications

7.1 The award report for the A249 Bearsted Road construction contract was signed in July 2025. The required funding agreements have also concluded and the scheme is due to complete in February 2027.

7.2 The funding agreement that was in place with Gravesham Borough Council to deliver the Tech Hub Flexible Workspace project has lapsed as the project was not delivered within the specified timescales. Therefore, there are no legal implications with this.

7.3 As KCC is now accountable for the Getting Building Fund programme, it can report this update to central government and use the reallocated funds to support the delivery of the A249 Bearsted Road project. No further funding agreements are required.

## 8. Equalities implications

7.1 Both the Tech Hub Flexible Workspace project and the A249 Bearsted Project had to complete an EqIA as part of the SELEP business case process.

7.2 The current EqIA Assessment for Bearsted Road is included as Appendix B. The completion of the A249 Bearsted Road project will improve travel in Maidstone for all groups of the population, reducing journey times and delays for residents, including those with protected characteristics.

## 9. Data Protection Implications

9.1 A DPIA is not required for this decision or scheme. There are no foreseen data protection implications.

## 10. Other corporate implications

10.1 It is not considered that this decision will have further corporate implications to other Directorates within KCC.

## 11. Governance

11.1 As accountable body for the legacy SELEP capital programme, KCC is responsible for overseeing the allocation and management of Getting Building Fund monies. The proposed decision seeks approval to reallocate £370,000 of GBF funding originally allocated to the Tech Hub Flexible Workspace project to the A249 Bearsted Road project

11.2 Should the recommended decision be progressed, authority will be delegated to the Director of Growth and Communities to implement the reallocation of £370,000 of Getting Building Fund funding from the Tech Hub Flexible Workspace project to the A249 Bearsted Road project, including but not limited to finalising and entering into any required funding, contractual and legal documentation to give effect to the decision.

## 12. Conclusions

12.1 The reallocation of this GBF allocation to the A249 Bearsted Road project is an important way of retaining monies within Kent which have already been earmarked for investment in the County. It will also reduce the burden on KCC to cover any cost overruns that may occur on the A249 Bearsted Road project.

12.2 The investment aligns with KCCs strategic statement and will support the aim of Building Better Communities by improving the quality of roads and providing an infrastructure improvement in Maidstone which is necessary to enable economic growth.

12.3 The A249 Bearsted Road and its adjacent junctions is a key part of Maidstone's highway infrastructure contributing to a link around the north and east side of the town. The dualling scheme is underway and proposes a safer and resilient solution which once complete will provide an enhanced corridor alongside further improvements planned for M20 Junction 7. This is considered imperative at a time when growth in the business sector is paramount.

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**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A), to approve the reallocation of £370,000 of Getting Building Fund grant from the Tech Hub Flexible Workspace project in Gravesend to the A249 Bearsted Road scheme in Maidstone,

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## 13. Background Documents and Appendices

13.1 Appendix A – PROD

13.2 Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment

## 14. Contact details

| | |
|---|---|
| Report Author: Kerry Clarke<br>Job title: Senior Programme Manager<br>Telephone number: 03000 411661<br>Email: Kerry.clarke@kent.gov.uk | Director: Andrew Loosemore<br>Job title: Director of Highways and Transport<br>Telephone number: 03000 411652<br>Email: andrew.loosemore@kent.gov.uk |

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

| DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: | DECISION NUMBER: |
|---|---|
| David Wimble<br>Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects | 26/00063 |

**Executive Decision – key**

26/00063 - Reallocation of Getting Building Funding

**Decision:**
As Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects I agree to:

**REALLOCATE** £370,000 external grant from the Getting Building Funding (GBF), originally awarded to Tech Hub Flexible Workspace, Gravesend, to the A249 Bearsted Road Project. and

**DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Growth & Communities, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of, and entering into required contract or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

**Reasons for decision:**
The decision is required to reallocate £370,000 of existing Getting Building Fund grant from the Tech Hub Flexible Workspace project in Gravesend to the A249 Bearsted Road project, ensuring the funding can continue to support the delivery of growth-enabling infrastructure and be utilised for an eligible purpose.

**Financial implications:**
The reallocation of GBF to the A249 Bearsted Road scheme will enable scheme delivery to continue as planned and provide an additional £370,000 towards the £10.8m construction contract, replacing other previously identified match funding which has been withdrawn and currently leaves KCC with a funding gap. This will help reduce the potential cost pressures for KCC and avoid the money being returned to Central Government.

**Legal implications:**
The Gravesham Borough Council funding agreement has lapsed. As accountable body for the Getting Building Fund, KCC may reallocate the funding to the A249 Bearsted Road project and report the change to central government. No further funding agreement is required.

**Equalities implications:**
There are no equality implications directly arising form the reallocation of the funding.

The long-term effects of the A249 Bearsted Road improvement are expected to be mainly positive, particularly for age, disability and pregnancy and maternity. Most negative effects are temporary construction-related impacts and are intended to be managed through accessible, well-lit and clearly signed diversions, advance communication, alternative-language information, maintained access to services and inclusive design standards.

**Data Protection implications:**

Nor required as there are no foreseen data processing implications.

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**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation**:
This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**
**Not to reallocate the GBF to Bearsted Road-** the GBF would need to be returned to Central Government, with associated risk of reputational damage of not retaining funding allocated within Kent which have already been earmarked for investment in the County. This option may also leave KCC with a potential cost pressure on the A249 Bearsted Road project, as other match funding has not been confirmed.

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Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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..... .....

Signed Date

# EQIA Submission – ID Number
# Section A

**EQIA Title**
Bearsted Road Improvement Maidstone

**Responsible Officer**
Emma Palmer - GT TRA

**Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)**
Tim Read - GT TRA

## Type of Activity

**Service Change**
No
**Service Redesign**
No
**Project/Programme**
Project/Programme
**Commissioning/Procurement**
Commissioning/Procurement
**Strategy/Policy**
No
**Details of other Service Activity**
No

## Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**
Growth Environment and Transport
**Responsible Service**
Colin Shorter - GT TRA
**Responsible Head of Service**
Tim Read - GT TRA
**Responsible Director**
Haroona Chughtai - GT TRA

## Aims and Objectives

Project Overview and Background:

The scheme involves the signalisation of the A249 Bearsted Road roundabout and the enlargement and signalisation of Bearsted Road/New Cut Road roundabout. Smart technology will be employed to ease congestion, improve traffic flow and accommodate traffic associated with the Kent Medical Campus Enterprise Zone and growth in the town centre and Borough of Maidstone (Kent County Council, 2017). Additionally, to improve pedestrian experiences and safety improved footways will be provided with enhanced tactile crossing points.

The Kent Medical Campus Maidstone, A249 Bearsted Road roundabout and Bearsted Road/New Cut Road roundabout junction improvement was submitted as one of two priority schemes in Kent for funding support through the Department for Transport (DfT) National Productivity Investment Fund (Kent County Council, 2017a). An allocation of £4.0M towards the scheme was announced on the 19th October 2017 (Kent County Council, 2017b), this was combined with £5.4M National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) allocated to KCC in financial year 2017 and Developer Contributions of £1.92M (inclusive of £420k in-kind land gift) (Kent County Council, 2017).

The main objectives and anticipated benefits of the scheme comprise:

- Upgrade two junctions on the A249 Bearsted Road and New Cut Road roundabouts;
- Accommodate increased traffic volume from Kent Medical Campus;
- Support the redevelopment of the nearby Newnham Court Shopping Village;
- Ease congestion;
- Improve traffic flow into Maidstone;
- Unlock economic growth and job creation opportunities;
- Enable the delivery of housing development;
- Improve walking and crossing facilities;
- Improve air quality and/or reduce CO2 emissions; and
- Incentivising skills and apprentices.

The scheme proposes to significantly upgrade two junctions on the Local Road Network close to M20 J7 in Maidstone and install Smart Technology on the A249 Bearsted Road, a local strategic link into Maidstone.

The Kent Medical Campus Maidstone, situated on the northern arm of the Bearsted Road/New Cut Road roundabout, is a centre for care, health, science and education. It offers 1,000,000 ft2 of flexible accommodation and has the potential to create over 4,000 jobs. By 2027, it is expected to contribute £147 million annual Gross Value Added to the Kent and Medway economy. This makes it a key employment site for the county and promotes specialised research and development, which is crucial for boosting productivity (Kent County Council, 2017). The space is already being occupied by various businesses, including KIMS Hospital, Cygnet Healthcare and Care UK, with four plots still available for development. The scheme will improve capacity and traffic flow so that the increased volume from the Kent Medical Campus can be accommodated.

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership's (SELEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) explicitly refers to the role of Kent Medical Campus in attracting businesses of all sizes in the medical technology industry to the region. Both the life sciences and healthcare sectors are central to SELEP achieving its objectives to increase productivity and innovation, create private sector jobs, increase the number of knowledge-based workers, and raise skills levels. Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) adopted Economic Development Strategy (EDS), sets out how future growth and prosperity of the borough will be supported. Working in partnership with MBC, KCC is determined to see local people benefit from new jobs, increasing prosperity and sustainable growth (Kent County Council, 2017).

Traffic modelling has identified the need to mitigate the traffic generated from housing growth in the town centre and to the south of the Borough. The scheme has been designed to support the planned housing growth in Maidstone and the redevelopment of the adjacent Newnham Court Shopping Village. The proposal is continued to be fully supported by the Local Transport Plan 5: Striking the Balance 2024. The plan emphasises improvements to Bearsted Road junctions as a priority for Maidstone Town Centre.

EQIA Overview:

In addition to the benefits that all users will gain from this scheme, individuals with certain protected characteristics should also experience additional advantages. The protected characteristics expected to see improvements include:

- Age (increased connectivity for individuals with reduced mobility and greater confidence in both walking and cycling options)
- Disability (inclusive facilities to increase accessibility to services and confidence in both walking and cycling routes)
- Pregnancy and maternity (improved pedestrian environment and safety)
- Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race and Religion (improvements to public realm could reduce fear

of hate crimes for vulnerable groups)

In the construction phase some protected characteristics may experience some negative impacts. These protected characteristics include:

- Age (construction works may cause confusion and anxiety due to temporary service changes and diversion routes)
- Disability (noise from construction could cause anxiety for some disabled individuals, and unfamiliar diversion routes may be challenging for visually impaired users)
- Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race and Religion (diversion routes with inadequate lighting might affect a users' sense of safety)
- Pregnancy and Maternity (temporary footpath closures could be challenging for pregnant individuals and people with young children, increasing the likelihood of tripping)

The appropriate mitigation actions are outlined in the below sections.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

No

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

Yes

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

Public Consultation took place for residents in October/November 2018. The sessions were well attended and the feedback received was recorded and minor alterations to the design were made to reflect those comments. Delays caused by COVID & various funding challenges allowed the design to undergo a full review, with the outcome being the current, more robust layout providing the dual carriageway & greatly improved pedestrian links.

Discussions with the KCC Diversity Team confirmed that an EQIA would be required and which protected groups should be considered in the EQI Screening. The KCC Diversity Team reviewed the EQI Screening document and agreed the content of this EQIA.

There has been on-going reports and discussions at the Maidstone Joint Transport Board meetings. In between the Joint Transport Board meetings responses to queries from members of public and local members have been responded accordingly. Newsletters, including the most recent August 2025 edition, are distributed to the public to provide updates on the scheme.

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

Yes

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

No

**Staff**
No

**Residents/Communities/Citizens**
Residents/communities/citizens

**Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?**

Yes

**Details of Positive Impacts**

In addition to the positive impacts identified for all residents and users of the scheme, specific positive impacts have been identified for the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Pregnancy & maternity
- Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race and Religion

Age:

The scheme will widen and enhance pavement and crossing points. Since these walking routes are frequently used by older and younger people, especially for school commutes, the improvements to access and facilities will boost confidence in walking and cycling. This, in turn, will encourage greater use of these routes for learning, education , leisure and health.

Enhancements in the infrastructure, such as improved pedestrian crossings, will greatly enhance user experience. This will lead to increased usage, improved traffic safety, reduced fear of crime and greater confidence in making independent journeys for school, social activities, recreation and travel to essential services. The clear and well-signed routes will help prevent confusion in new areas, which is often experienced by both young and older people.

The schemes will improve connections to The Crematorium, Shopping Village & KIMS, meaning that those with decreased mobility will be able to travel more directly and easily. This will increase access to the service and subsequently increase access to vital hub locations.

Disability:

The design will incorporate inclusive facilities accessible to disabled users. The scheme will enhance connections to The Crematorium, Shopping Village & KIMS allowing those with limited mobility to travel more directly and easily. Additionally, widening of the pavement will improve accessibility for individuals in wheelchairs. This will increase access to the service and subsequently increase access to vital hub locations. The clear and well-signed routes will help uncertainty in new areas often experienced by disabled people.

Pedestrian crossings will also be upgraded. Improvements in infrastructure such as improved pedestrian crossings will significantly improve the user experience, leading to increased use, improved traffic safety, reduced fear of crime and increased confidence to make independent journeys for school, social, recreation and travel to essential services.

Cycle routes are often infrequently used by disabled people with mild to moderate disabilities due to a lack of accessible facilities. Improvements to access and facilities will increase confidence in the routes and use for learning, education, leisure, and health.

Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Race and Religion:

The schemes would provide public realm improvements through enhanced footways and lighting which could improve feeling of safety for women, transgender and non-binary individuals, ethnic minorities and people of different faiths who could be subject to hate crimes

Pregnancy and maternity:

The Schemes will include improvements to pavements, pedestrian crossings, and highway surfaces. Therefore, there will be a decreased risk of falls or injury, that may disproportionately impact pregnant women. Widening footways will also benefit parents with prams and pushchairs.

## Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

**Are there negative impacts for age?**

Yes

**Details of negative impacts for Age**

Construction could result in temporary closure, & diversion of footpaths for users, this may result in uneven footway surfaces which could increase the chance of tripping in young and older pedestrians.

During construction, pedestrians and road users may have to find alternative and more lengthy routes to access services (such as hospital, schools, public transport etc.). If access to services and access to transport is disrupted it could disproportionately impact elderly people's health and wellbeing as they may stop attending social groups, being active or attending health appointments.

Noise disruption from the construction works could cause anxiety and confusion for some older and younger people.

**Mitigating Actions for Age**

- A safety audit was completed at the design and construction stage in August 2019. NMU audits will be undertaken to ensure due consideration is given to all road users.
- The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.
- Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.
- The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.
- Access to services kept clear with ramps where required.
- Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulation.

**Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age**

Colin Shorter

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

**Are there negative impacts for Disability?**

Yes

**Details of Negative Impacts for Disability**

The construction phase will result in temporary closures of footpaths, for road users including pedestrians & cyclists.
This may temporarily disrupt access to essential services for disability groups meaning alternative, lengthier

routes may be required.

Construction works can cause major obstructions on key walking routes and unexpected changes to the 'landscape' for blind and partially sighted people.

Noise disruption from the construction works could cause anxiety and confusion for some disabled people.

**Mitigating actions for Disability**

- A safety audit was completed at the design and construction stage in August 2019. NMU audits will be undertaken to ensure due consideration is given to all road users.
- Ensure designs are carried out in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), which gives guidance based on current legislation for non-motorised users (NMU) and those with disabilities.
- The design will meet recommended guidance from the Department for Transport on inclusive mobility, the Kent Design Guide and associated standard details.
- The need for the schemes has been identified through assessment by KCC in partnership with local District development and transport strategies.
- Risk assessment to be completed for affected groups prior to construction.
- The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.
- Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.
- The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.
- Access to services kept clear with ramps where required.
- Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulation.

**Responsible Officer for Disability**

Colin Shorter

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

**Are there negative impacts for Sex**

Yes

**Details of negative impacts for Sex**

During construction, women may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes or waiting in temporary structures or adjacent to construction sites due to fear of crime.

**Mitigating actions for Sex**

- Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings, where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure users can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.

- Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

**Responsible Officer for Sex**

Colin Shorter

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

**Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

Yes

**Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

During construction, individuals that identify as women may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes due to fear of crime.

**Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

- Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure residents can access and use the walkway safely during the construction works.

- Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

Colin Shorter

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

**Are there negative impacts for Race**

Yes

**Negative impacts for Race**

During construction, communication barriers could cause confusion and anxiety for different ethnic groups in relation to the construction works due to the potential for a language barrier. Ethnic minority individuals may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes due to fear of crime.

**Mitigating actions for Race**

- Public engagement materials during construction to be available in alternative languages on request.
- Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race**

Colin Shorter

24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

**Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief**

Yes

**Negative impacts for Religion and belief**

Individuals of different faiths may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes sites due to fear of crime.

**Mitigating actions for Religion and belief**

- Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure residents can access and use the walkway safely during the construction works.

- Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief**

Colin Shorter

25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

**Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation**

Yes

**Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation**

Individuals from a sexual orientation minority may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes sites due to fear of crime.

**Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation**

- Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure residents can access and use the walkway safely during the construction works.

- Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation**

| |
|---|
| Colin Shorter |
| 26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity |
| **Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Yes |
| **Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| During construction there is an increased risk of falls if pregnant women are walking unfamiliar routes and increased walking distances. Unfamiliar routes could prove difficult for individuals travelling with young children or pushchairs. |
| **Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulations. Diversion routes to be appropriately lit and well signed with ramped access to services as required. |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Colin Shorter |
| 27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships |
| **Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| 28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities |
| **Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Yes |
| **Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |
| During construction, diversion and major construction work could impact on travel plans if works are not known in advance. Additionally, construction works and changes to the site area could affect planning for independent travel with client groups. |
| **Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works. |
| **Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Colin Shorter |

**From:** Simon Jones – Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Peter Osborne – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

**Subject:** A226 Galley Hill – Funding acceptance, land acquisition, procurement and delivery

**Decision no: 26/00065**

**Key Decision:** Yes – Scheme affects more than two Electoral Divisions; scheme involves expenditure of greater than £1m

**Classification:** *Unrestricted*

**Past Pathway of report:** Growth Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee 10 November 2026

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** Cllr Thomas Mallon – Swanscombe and Greenhithe
Cllr Matthew Fraser Moat – Northfleet and Gravesend West
Cllr Sharon Roots – Northfleet and Gravesend West

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**Is the decision eligible for call-in?** *Yes*

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**Summary:**
There is a continuing need to address the highway and utility infrastructure damage caused by the collapse of A226 Galley Hill on 10 April 2023.

Following a report to Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee in May 2026, Record of Decision 26/00019 gave a wide range of authorities to allow the A226 Galley Hill scheme to proceed through to detailed design.

To deliver the scheme, the Council has applied for funding through the Department for Transport's Structures Fund. This funding, if awarded, along with identified match funding, will cover the forecast scheme cost. An announcement is expected imminently, it is appropriate therefore, to seek a further key decision to accept this funding (subject to a review of the terms and conditions of the grant), if awarded.

The Structures Fund requires the grant to be spent and the infrastructure to be delivered by March 2030. To meet this deadline, governance approval to progress land acquisition and procurement activities is required.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A), to approve the progression and delivery of the A226 Galley Hill scheme, through to completion,

including the necessary funding, land acquisition, statutory approvals and consents and procurement arrangements.

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The A226 Galley Hill is an important route linking Dartford, Gravesham and Ebbsfleet. On 10 April 2023, a section of the chalk spine between Swanscombe High Street and Snowden Hill, Northfleet collapsed causing highway and utility infrastructure damage.

1.2 Restoration of the route is vital for supporting local communities, businesses, and planned growth within Ebbsfleet Garden City, as well as the reinstatement of the Fastrack bus network. As part of the Kent Resilient Network, the route is important for the efficient management of highway network flows.

1.3 To deliver the scheme, the Council has applied for funding through the Department for Transport's Structures Fund. This funding, if awarded, along with identified match funding, will cover the forecast scheme cost. An announcement is expected imminently.

## 2. Key Considerations

2.1 No pre-existing capital funding is available to deliver this scale of reinstatement works arising from an unplanned event.

2.2 The scale of the collapse meant that the costs could not met from existing highways maintenance budgets. The cliff structure below the road is not a KCC owned asset, and KCC's responsibility is limited to the carriageway construction.

2.3 The Strategic Statement prioritises improving connectivity and network resilience. The A226 Galley Hill is identified in Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) as a key part of the local road network, with its restoration recognised as essential to reducing congestion, improving journey time reliability, and enabling the return of bus and Fastrack services along this corridor.

2.4 Restoring the route directly contributes to the Council's objectives to improve transport reliability, reduce pressure on the wider network, and enhance sustainable travel options.

2.5 Due to these policies and importance to the local area, the Council has progressed with the scheme design for restoration and pursued identification of external funding for the route. In the short term the Council covered some initial optioneering and survey costs at risk, reimbursement from the party at fault for the collapse will be sought in due course as the Structures Fund will only cover expenditure from the date of award.

## 3. Background

3.1 The A226 Galley Hill is a strategically important route linking Dartford, Gravesham and Ebbsfleet, forming part of the Kent Resilient Network and supporting local communities, businesses, and planned growth within Ebbsfleet Garden City. A

section of this chalk spine collapsed to the north of Galley Hill, triggering a significant landslide that resulted in the loss of part of the carriageway and footway and caused damage to buried utility infrastructure serving the local area. As a result, the A226 Galley Hill has remained closed since that time.

3.2 The ongoing closure of the A226 Galley Hill continues to have a significant impact on the surrounding highway network, with diverted traffic, including heavy goods vehicles, using less suitable local routes. In turn this has placed additional pressure on the local maintenance budget. The closure has disrupted public transport services, including the Fastrack bus network, and has wider implications for the delivery of planned housing and employment growth in Ebbsfleet and Northfleet. Restoration of the route is therefore considered critical to maintaining network resilience, supporting sustainable transport, and enabling future development in the area.

3.3 Following the previous decision (26/00019), design work has progressed, the optioneering and appraisal process are complete, and the preliminary design stage is progressing. In parallel, further engagement with stakeholders has continued through technical review meetings, including discussions with Natural England regarding Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) constraints and mitigation. This work has progressed ahead of a Structures Fund decision using identified funding.

3.4 The proposal being progressed is for approval to accept the Structures Fund if awarded, proceed and progress scheme development through to construction, including approval for land acquisition through Compulsory Purchase Order, if required. This option is recommended so that the KCC will be able to progress the scheme development and delivery to the timescales set out by the Structures Fund and is further discussed below.

## 4. Funding Acceptance - Options considered and associated risk

4.1 KCC has applied for funding through the Department for Transport's Structures Fund. This funding, if awarded, along with identified match funding, will cover the scheme forecast capital cost. An announcement is expected in imminently. As such a decision is due imminently; however, a further Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) will be required between the parties prior to the award of funding. To ensure that the scheme can progress to budget and programme, approvals are sought to delegate the decision to accept funding from the DfT in case of a positive announcement.

4.2 It should be noted however, that there remains a risk of programme slippage for the scheme if the award and grant agreement is not agreed within the expected timescale. This will be mitigated by allocating the additional legal resource to reduce the risk of delays. Slippage would present a financial risk also, as the grant has to be spent by 31 March 2030, after which point, KCC would be liable for any costs to complete, including spend above the budgeted amount.

4.3 **Option 2 (discarded)** – Completely pause all project development work until funding is secured or received. This option has the following significant drawbacks. KCC would place unnecessary delay on a tight delivery programme and reduce the ability to meet the deadlines set by the Structures Fund. Delay at

this stage would continue to cause ongoing congestion and have a significant impact on the surrounding highway network, with diverted traffic, including heavy goods vehicles, using less suitable local routes. It will also put the Structures Fund grant (if awarded) at risk if the DfT's deadlines cannot be met.

4.4 **Option 3 (discarded)** – Completely stop the scheme to reinstate the A226 Galley Hill. This is not considered a viable option. Separate legal advice concluded that stopping up of this route would have significant ramifications and did not recommend it as an option for KCC. Modelling work of this scenario also shows current and future significant congestion completely curtailing all growth across the Ebbsfleet area.

## 5. Land acquisition - Options considered and associated risk

5.1 The proposal recommended to progress is to provide approval for voluntary acquisition and CPO if necessary. The delivery of the A226 Galley Hill scheme requires KCC to secure the land and property rights necessary to construct, access and subsequently maintain the infrastructure. The proposed extent of land take is shown in Appendix B.

5.2 KCC will utilise specialist land advice to support this process, including land valuation, engagement with affected landowners and advice on the potential use and programme for compulsory purchase powers. The intention is to seek acquisition by voluntary agreement wherever practicable. However, to retain programme and delivery certainty to enable KCC to meet the 2030 deadline, a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) needs to be progressed in parallel to ensure all land can be secured. A CPO is also a mechanism to gain title to any unknown or unregistered land, and to remove any restrictive covenants affecting use of the land.

5.3 Most of the land required is held by commercial organisations, and no land is required from any residential property. Further detail on the proposed CPO is provided in Appendix B. If formal governance approval is provided, discussions will commence in earnest with all landowners to see all land can be secured by voluntary acquisition. It should be noted that the CPO (if needed) cannot be finalised until funding for the scheme is secured.

5.4 **Option 2** (discarded) – provide approval only for voluntary acquisition and not CPO. Voluntary acquisition is the preferred approach as it provides an opportunity to reach agreement with affected landowners without resorting to statutory powers. However, not allowing for use of a CPO increases the risk that agreement cannot be reached with all relevant interests within the timeframe required for delivery, or potentially at all, jeopardising scheme delivery.

## 6. Procurement - Options considered and associated risk

6.1 It is recommended that approval is provided to proceed to procurement. Procurement is similarly required to be progressed because of the programme constraints associated with a potential Structures Fund award. Due to the complexity of the structure, and the need for specialised temporary works designs, a two-stage contract (using NEC4 Option X22 Early Contractor

Involvement (ECI)) is one of the options under consideration. Note that this proposed contract approach is subject to approval via internal governance.

6.2 A procurement approach incorporating Early Contractor Involvement aims to improve the quality of the detailed design and buildability through contractor expertise and avoid extensive design changes as construction begins. There are considerable project and site constraints which will impact upon buildability and require ongoing design review by an experienced contractor.

6.3 **Option 2** (discarded) – no approval for procurement at this stage. Delaying procurement would delay delivery of the scheme, increasing the risk that KCC is unable to meet the required delivery timescales. KCC would not be able to benefit from contractor expertise during the design period. This has the potential to reduce the quality of the design output.

## 7. Financial Implications

7.1 KCC has submitted a Structures Fund bid for £45.3m, comprising of £40.8m funding from the DfT and £4.5m match funding. This scheme cost estimate includes substantial risk and contingency to protect against potential cost increases.

7.2 Ebbsfleet Development Corporation have committed a total of £1.5m match funding towards the scheme and will work in close partnership with KCC due to the importance of the scheme to Ebbsfleet. If successful, KCC will fund £3m towards the scheme. This funding is proposed to be funded from the Strategic Transport Infrastructure Fund (STIP) and KCC Highway Capital Funding. A breakdown of funding stream and project costs is shown in Table 1.

| **Funding/Income** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Structures Fund, DfT | £40.8m | |
| KCC Match Funding | £3.0m | Comprising £1.5m STIP; £1.5m Highway Capital Funding |
| EDC Match Funding | £1.5m | Conditional on funding award |
| **Scheme Expenditure Profile** *(dependent on funding award)* | | |
| 2026/27 | £2.4m | |
| 2027/28 | £1.5m | |
| 2028/29 | £21.2m | |
| 2029/30 *and future years* | £20.2m | Includes cost for minor works and potential LCA claims after completion |
| **Total** | **£45.3m** | |

7.3 The scheme cost outlined above have been prepared by specialist cost consultants and is based on a detailed measure of the proposed works. Non-construction costs including design fees, professional fees, supervision costs, land acquisition costs and all other anticipated project costs have been included within the cost estimate, but excluding costs incurred to date (see below). A proportionate approach to risk has been taken in preparing the cost estimate,

combining quantified and measurable allowances for understood risks, with an additional percentage-based contingency for residual and emerging risks.

7.4 In accordance with the requirements of the fund, c£2m historic development costs, operational costs to make the cliff safe and legal costs have not been included within the £45.3m scheme costs. These costs have been sourced from existing budgets and reserves.

7.5 Should the bid to the Structures Fund be unsuccessful, KCC will continue to pursue potential external funding opportunities. Early-stage development and design work associated with capital projects may result in abortive costs if funding cannot be secured to enable scheme delivery. Where a scheme is not subsequently approved or funded, these costs cannot be capitalised and must be met from revenue budgets. If funding cannot be identified in the longer term and the scheme is not able to proceed, there is a possibility that scheme development costs to that date will be abortive, representing a revenue risk of approximately £160k, plus any land fees associated with the purchase of land to the south of the spine. This £160k comprises the cost of the land purchase and minor capital abortive spend to date. This is in addition to the costs already incurred in 7.4.

**Ongoing maintenance costs**

7.6 The chalk spine on which Galley Hill is routed is not a highway asset. As such, the construction of this scheme will introduce a new bridge asset to KCC's asset register. KCC operates an established asset management approach for our highway structures. Following handover of a new structure into KCC's asset portfolio, structures are managed through KCC's Structures inspection and maintenance arrangements.

7.7 An initial commuted sum has been calculated at £7.1m. This represents the total future cost of owning, operating, and maintaining the bridge over its design life (120 years). This cost is not included within the scheme costs above, nor can it be funded through the Structures Fund (this is a requirement of the fund and most government funding). The funding for maintenance of the new bridge structure will be from the Highways Asset Maintenance Block Allocation, which itself is based on the asset lengths and volume of KCC highway assets across the county. Periodically KCC are required to provide DfT with updated asset data to enable the block calculation. Once constructed, Galley Hill Bridge and other new structures will be reported under this mechanism.

7.8 Without intervention, the whole-life costs associated with the continued closure of the A226 Galley Hill would be significant and ongoing and would exceed £7.1m over 120 years. These costs arise not only from the deteriorating asset itself, but also from increased maintenance pressures on the surrounding network.

7.9 It is also expected that, if awarded, the Structures Fund grant will include terms and contractual obligations to spend the grant by 2030. It is also anticipated that the grant amount will be fixed. Through acceptance of a grant KCC will take on additional risks associated with this. For instance, if costs exceed the budgeted amount, or if the 2030 date is reached and the project is not complete, then KCC will be liable to fund the remaining works and

potentially repay any grant uncommitted at the deadline. This risk has been minimised by progressing the scheme at pace and including a healthy price risk and contingency within the scheme cost.

## 8. Legal implications

8.1 The A226 Galley Hill is a highway maintainable at public expense, and KCC is the highway authority for the route. As such, KCC is subject to the section 41 duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highway and keep it reasonably safe for ordinary use.

8.2 The collapse of the carriageway and footway in April 2023 meant that the A226 was no longer reasonably passable without danger requiring the authority to act to prevent danger to highway users. Although KCC are responsible for the highway on the cliff spine, at the time of the collapse the Council did not own the chalk cliff supporting the road.

8.3 Given the complexities around ownership of the spine and the planned legal proceeding against those deemed responsible for the collapse, legal support and advice has been ongoing since April 2023.

8.4 A full legal review of any proposed grant agreement will be undertaken prior to acceptance of grant funding to highlight and reduce risk to KCC. Ongoing legal support will be employed throughout the land acquisition and procurement processes.

## 9. Equalities implications

9.1 The current EQIA Assessment is included as Appendix C. The EQIA was most recently updated in March 2026 and identifies that individuals who fall within the Age, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, and Carer Responsibility groups have faced negative impacts following the closure of the route and may face minor, short-term negative impacts during the construction.

9.2 However, these groups are expected to experience significant long-term benefits from the scheme and no negative long terms impacts have been identified.

## 10. Data Protection Implications

10.1 A DPIA is not required for this decision or scheme. There are no foreseen data protection implications.

## 11. Other corporate implications

11.1 It is not considered that this decision will have further corporate implications to other Directorates within KCC other than the aforementioned legal and infrastructure impacts discussed in Sections 5.1 and 8.

## 12. Governance

12.1 This decision builds upon the approvals previously granted under Record of Decision 26/00019, which enabled the scheme to progress through to detailed design.

12.2 The proposed decision seeks approval from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to progress the A226 Galley Hill scheme through to completion. This includes acceptance of the Department for Transport Structures Fund and associated match funding, acquisition of the land and rights required for the scheme, including the use of compulsory purchase powers where necessary, progression of the required statutory approvals and consents, and procurement and award of the contracts required to deliver the scheme.

12.3 Subject to approval, authority will be delegated to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport to take all further decisions and actions necessary to implement and complete the scheme within the approved £45.3m funding envelope. This will include, but not be limited to, finalising and accepting the Structures Fund, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance, entering into associated funding agreements, contracts and other legal documentation, and taking any other actions necessary to give effect to the decision. The procurement strategy and subsequent contract awards will remain subject to the Council's relevant internal procurement and governance requirements

12.4 Separate authority will be delegated to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Director of Growth, Environment and Transport to approve and enter into the contracts, agreements and other legal documentation required to secure the necessary land and property interests.

12.5 The existing approvals contained within Record of Decision 26/00019 will remain extant.

12.6 Any proposal to increase the approved £45.3m scheme funding envelope will be subject to the Council's relevant financial and decision-making requirements.

## 13. Conclusions

13.1 There is a continuing need to address the highway and utility infrastructure damage caused by the collapse of A226 Galley Hill on 10 April 2023.

13.2 Following a report to Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee in May 2026, Record of Decision 26/00019 gave a wide range of authorities to allow the A226 Galley Hill scheme to proceed through to detailed design.

13.3 To deliver the scheme, the Council has applied for funding through the Department for Transport's Structures Fund. This funding, if awarded, along with identified match funding, will fully cover the scheme cost. An announcement is expected imminently, it is appropriate therefore, to seek a further key decision to accept this funding if awarded.

13.4 The Structures Fund requires the grant to be spent and the infrastructure to be delivered by March 2030. To meet this deadline, governance approval to progress land acquisition and procurement activities is required.

## 14. Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A), to approve the progression and delivery of the A226 Galley Hill scheme, including the necessary funding, land acquisition and procurement arrangements.

## 15. Background Documents and Appendices

15.1 Appendix A – PROD
15.2 Appendix B – Compulsory Purchase Order
15.3 Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

## 16. Contact details *(please insert details below)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Report Author: Toby Howe<br>Job title: Strategic Resilience Manager<br>Telephone number: 03000 410219<br>Email: toby.howe@kent.gov.uk<br><br>Report Author: Abigail Roscoe<br>Job title: Senior Assistant Project Manager<br>Telephone number: 03000 414093<br>Email: Abigail.roscoe@kent.gov.uk | Director: Andrew Loosemore<br>Job title: Director of Highways and Transport<br>Telephone number: 03000 411652<br>Email: andrew.loosemore@kent.gov.uk |

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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

| DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: | DECISION NUMBER: |
|---|---|
| Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport | 26/00065 |

**Executive Decision – key**

**26/00065 – A226 Galley Hill Funding acceptance, land acquisition, procurement and delivery**

**Decision:**
As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, I agree to approve the progression and delivery of the A226 Galley Hill scheme through to completion and specifically:

i. Confirm that the decisions contained within Record of Decision 26/00019 remain extant.

ii. Subject to a successful Structures Fund bid and satisfactory review of the grant terms and conditions, approve the acceptance of £40.8m from the Department for Transport Structures Fund and the associated £4.5m match funding, comprising £3m from KCC and £1.5m from Ebbsfleet Development Corporation

iii. Subject to the award and acceptance of the Structures Fund and confirmation of the associated match funding approve the progression and delivery of the A226 Galley Hill scheme through to completion, including:
   a. acquisition of the necessary land and rights, by voluntary agreement or through the promotion and implementation of a Compulsory Purchase Order where required;
   b. progression of all necessary statutory approvals and consents; and
   c. procurement and award of the contracts required to deliver the scheme, subject to the Council's relevant internal procurement and governance requirements.

iv. Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, to approve and enter into all contracts, agreements and other legal documentation necessary to secure the land and property interests required for delivery of the scheme.

v. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport to take the actions necessary to implement and complete the A226 Galley Hill scheme within the approved funding envelope, including, but not limited to:

a. in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance, finalising and accepting the Structures Fund and entering into any associated funding agreements;
b. entering into contracts, agreements and other legal documentation necessary for the delivery and completion of the scheme;
c. in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, agree non-material changes to the scheme required during its delivery; and
d. taking any other actions necessary to give effect to this decision.

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**Reasons for decision:**

There is a continuing need to address the highway and utility infrastructure damage caused by the collapse of A226 Galley Hill on 10 April 2023. Following a report to Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee in May 2026, Record of Decision 26/00019 gave a wide range of authorities to allow the A226 Galley Hill scheme to proceed through to detailed design.

To deliver the scheme, the Council has applied for funding through the Department for Transport's Structures Fund. This funding, if awarded, along with identified match funding, will cover the forecast scheme cost. An announcement is expected imminently, it is appropriate therefore, to seek a further key decision to accept this funding (subject to a review of the terms and conditions of the grant), if awarded.

The Structures Fund requires the grant to be spent and the infrastructure to be delivered by 31 March 2030. To meet this deadline, governance approval to progress land acquisition and procurement activities is required.

**Financial implications:**
KCC has submitted a Structures Fund bid for £45.3m, comprising of £40.8m funding from the DfT and £4.5m match funding. This scheme cost estimate includes substantial risk and contingency to protect against potential cost increases.

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation have committed a total of £1.5m match funding towards the scheme. If successful, KCC will fund £3m towards the scheme.

Should the bid to the Structures Fund be unsuccessful, KCC will continue to pursue potential external funding opportunities. Early-stage development and design work associated with capital projects may result in abortive costs. Where a scheme is not subsequently approved or funded, these costs cannot be capitalised and must be met from revenue budgets. If funding cannot be identified in the longer term and the scheme is not able to proceed, there is a possibility that scheme development costs to that date will be abortive, representing a revenue risk of approximately £160k.

**Legal implications:**
The A226 Galley Hill is a highway maintainable at public expense, and KCC is the highway authority for the route. As such, KCC is subject to the section 41 duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain the highway and keep it reasonably safe for ordinary use.

The collapse of the carriageway and footway in April 2023 meant that the A226 was no longer reasonably passable without danger requiring the authority to act to prevent danger to highway users. Although KCC are responsible for the highway on the cliff spine, at the time of the collapse the Council did not own the chalk cliff supporting the road.

A full legal review of any proposed grant agreement will be undertaken prior to acceptance of grant funding to highlight and reduce risk to KCC. Ongoing legal support will be employed throughout the land acquisition and procurement processes.

**Equalities implications:**
The current EQIA Assessment is included as Appendix C. The EQIA was most recently updated in March 2026 and identifies that individuals who fall within the Age, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, and Carer Responsibility groups have faced negative impacts following the closure of the route and may face minor, short-term negative impacts during the construction. However, these groups are expected to experience significant long-term benefits from the scheme and no negative long terms impacts have been identified.

**Data Protection implications:**
None

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**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation**:
This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**
Option 2 – Completely pause all project development work until funding is secured or received. KCC would place unnecessary delay on a tight delivery programme and reduce the ability to meet the deadlines set by the Structures Fund. Delay at this stage would continue to cause ongoing congestion and have a significant impact on the surrounding highway network, with diverted traffic, including heavy goods vehicles, using less suitable local routes. It will also put the Structures Fund grant (if awarded) at risk if the DfT's deadlines cannot be met.

Option 3 – Completely stop the scheme to reinstate the A226 Galley Hill. This is not considered a viable option. Separate legal advice concluded that stopping up of this route is not an option for KCC It would also attract significant abortive cost.

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Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None

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Signed Date

## Appendix B Compulsory Purchase Order

### 1. Compulsory Purchase Powers

1.1 KCC, as highway authority, has powers under the Highways Act 1980 to acquire land required for the improvement of a highway, either by agreement or compulsorily.

1.2 KCC will continue to seek acquisition of the necessary land and rights by voluntary agreement wherever possible; however, should agreement not be achievable, it is proposed that the Council progresses a Compulsory Purchase Order under the Highways Act 1980 to secure the land required to deliver the scheme.

1.3 Currently, no CPO powers include temporary power. Where CPO projects require land temporarily, one of two strategies is adopted, assuming the temporary occupation cannot be secured by agreement. This is the case for Galley Hill.

1.4 One strategy is to seek a permanent acquisition power and then serve a Notice to Treat (NTT) to acquire the land. An NTT creates an obligation to sell the land but does not transfer title. The land is then returned to the landowner at the end of the works. This strategy depends on the owner being willing to take the land back. The landowner could require the authority to acquire the land and pay compensation accordingly. As such, the budget for this has been included within the cost estimate.

1.5 The second strategy is to seek rights, rather than seeking to acquire the temporary land. Although the rights will exist into perpetuity, the authority is not obliged to use them after the works are completed. After the works are completed, the right can be removed by agreement. If the right is not removed Compensation would have to reflect the presence of the right.

### 2. Land Requirement

2.1 The land and rights that will be included in the CPO are the minimum that will be necessary to deliver the scheme and have been determined by design and engineering standards, environmental measures, and the requirements of statutory bodies. The affected land parcels are shown in Figure 1, with the parcels closest to the spine required for construction with the remaining parcels required for access during construction.

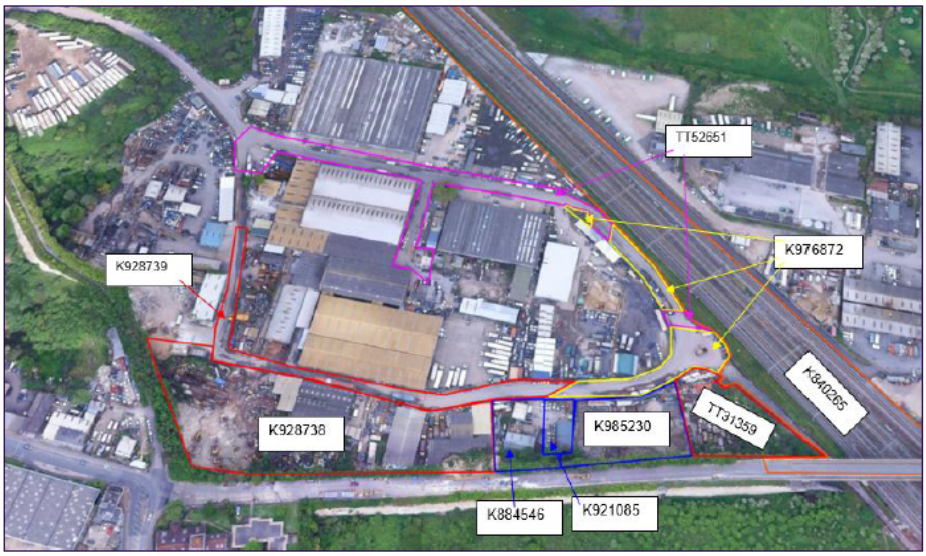



Figure 1: Land parcels affected by the proposed CPO

2.2 Land is also required to the south of the spine to deliver the scheme. This land was auctioned in May 2026 and KCC have purchased this land. As such, the land has already secured and will not be subject to the CPO or voluntary acquisition process.

## 3. Legal and Policy Tests for the use of Compulsory Purchase

3.1 The use of compulsory purchase is a strong power available to a local authority and justification for its use must satisfy numerous legal and policy tests. It is considered that, in the stringent development of the scheme, these tests are met. The details will be included in the Statement of Reasons that will be published with the Order.

3.2 The Secretary of State requires a “compelling case in the public interest” to be demonstrated in order to confirm the CPO. In the case of Galley Hill, the public benefits fall clearly within the purpose of the Highway Act. The improvements will allow the A226 to reopen, reducing congestion on alternative routes, and providing capacity for future increases in traffic.

3.3 Early implementation of the scheme is important so that the infrastructure is in place at the earliest opportunity as the number of new homes within the Swanscombe and Ebbsfleet area being built and occupied increases. The scheme funding is also time limited requiring construction to start as soon as practicable.

## 4. Programme of Compulsory Purchase

4.1 The time required to secure a CPO can vary considerably. The current A226 Galley Hill programme allows 15 months between making the CPO and confirmation. Factors affecting the length of the CPO programme are largely out of the authority's control. If no objections are received, the timescales can be reduced considerably.

# EQIA Submission – ID Number
# Section A

**EQIA Title**
A226 Galley Hill Reinstatement

**Responsible Officer**
Abigail Roscoe - GT TRA

**Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)**
Tim Read - GT TRA

## Type of Activity

**Service Change**
No
**Service Redesign**
No
**Project/Programme**
Project/Programme
**Commissioning/Procurement**
Commissioning/Procurement
**Strategy/Policy**
No
**Details of other Service Activity**
No

## Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**
Growth Environment and Transport
**Responsible Service**
Highways and Transportation
**Responsible Head of Service**
Tim Read - GT TRA
**Responsible Director**
Haroona Chughtai - GT TRA

## Aims and Objectives

Overview:
The A226 Galley Hill scheme is a proposed strategic reinstatement scheme that is a strategic priority for the local highway network within the Ebbsfleet area (Dartford and Gravesham border). The scheme is a complex structural engineering project which aims to address the significant highway and utility infrastructure damage caused by the collapse of the underlying chalk spine on 10th April 2023.

Restoration of the route is vital for the successful delivery of key strategic housing allocations and the reinstatement of the sustainable transport Fastrack bus network. As part of the Kent Resilient Network, the scheme is also crucial for the efficient management of highway network flows and will become increasingly important with the potential delivery of Lower Thames Crossing

Summary of equality impact:
Equality & Diversity Screening highlights four protected groups as being particularly affected by the proposed scheme: Age, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity and Carer Responsibility. Medium level, negative (but temporary) impacts have been identified. However, the scheme results in high level positive outcomes for the group. The negative impacts generated by the proposed scheme come from either the collapse itself or the construction period whereas the positive outcomes identified are longer term benefits for the

protected groups.

At this point no further investigation or analysis has been undertaken however, the proposed engagement exercises will connect with national and local groups from the identified protected groups and any feedback received will be noted and this document updated, as necessary.

Adverse Impact
The adverse effects of the proposed scheme which affect the mobility of vulnerable groups are temporary. The cliff collapse itself has resulted in the complete disruption of journeys for all user groups, specifically vulnerable individuals who rely more heavily on public transport. Although the construction period may further disrupt journeys for these groups, it should not stop journeys being made, as alternative locations and timings have already been put in place and advertised. These adverse impacts are far outweighed by the positive impact on mobility once the schemes are completed and in use.

Once the schemes are complete, the adverse effects for the majority of vulnerable people will be removed. The possible adverse effects on mental health, including increased anxiety/panic attacks, loneliness, depression, and stress, could take longer to reduce. However, the improved environment should provide an improved travelling experience, which could help recovery times. With advanced notice and information about the works publicised appropriately, the possible adverse effects can be minimised. The action plan sets out steps to mitigate against the possible temporary impact of the scheme.

Positive impact
The positive impacts from this scheme are wide ranging and will have long lasting effects on every user group in this assessment on some level. The scheme aims is to improve the highway infrastructure, enable the reinstatement of the Fastrack bus routes and enhance connectivity across Ebbsfleet for all user groups.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

Yes

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

Yes

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

Since the collapse, KCC has kept stakeholders informed and updated on the closure. KCC has set up a public webpage with regular updates to reflect the status of the project including changes to the Arriva and Fastrack bus timetables and routing. Further to this the KCC Strategic Resilience Manger and his team have attended multiple public meetings and are continuing to meet with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, Swanscombe Town Council and local district and county members to provide updates.

No formal public consultation has taken place to date. It is anticipated that this project will become a planned scheme and therefore public engagement will form part of the design process following the option selection process. The most appropriate level of consultation will be formalised as part of the business case

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

No

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

No

**Staff**

No

**Residents/Communities/Citizens**

Residents/communities/citizens

**Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?**

Yes

**Details of Positive Impacts**

In addition to the positive impacts identified for all residents and users of the scheme, specific positive impacts have been identified for the following protected characteristics:
- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race

Age:
Bus routes are used frequently by older people and young people (particularly to and from school) and improvements to access and facilities will increase confidence in public transport and therefore, increase its use for learning, education, leisure, and health.

The scheme will improve connections (both public transport and private transport) across the Garden City meaning that those with decreased mobility will be able to travel more directly and easily. This will increase access to the service and subsequently increase access to vital hub locations, such as Ebbsfleet International Station.

Improvements in infrastructure aim to improve the user experience, leading to increased use, improved traffic safety, reduced fear of crime and increased confidence to make independent journeys for school, social, recreation and travel to essential services.

Clear, signed routes help avoid confusion in new areas often experienced by young or older people.

Disability:
Works will include improvements to pavements and highway surfaces. This will improve connections across the Garden City meaning that those with decreased mobility will be able to travel more directly and easily.

Public transport routes are often frequently used by disabled people with severe disabilities as private cars are not suitable for use by some disabilities. Improvements to access and facilities will increase confidence in the routes and use for learning, education, leisure, and health.

Clear, signed routes help avoid uncertainty in new areas often experienced by disabled people.

Gender:
Improving the route and widening the footway may increase perceptions of safety leading to increased confidence when travelling for employment, learning, health, and social activities.

Pregnancy and maternity:
Schemes will include improvements to pavements, pedestrian crossings, and highway surfaces. Therefore, there will be a decreased risk of falls or injury, that may disproportionately impact pregnant women. Widening footways will also benefit parents with prams and pushchairs.

Race:
Walking for Everyone (Livings Streets, 2022) states that ethnic minorities were likely to make less trips by car. Improved public transport connections through the reopening of the A226 Galley Hill route will improve commuting infrastructure for pedestrians that could be covered under the protected trait "race".

## Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

**Are there negative impacts for age?**

Yes

**Details of negative impacts for Age**

It is noted that many of the negative impacts on those with protected characteristics have already occurred due to the unforseen collapse of the cliff. This has resulted in the complete closure of the route for all vehicles, but principally this has impacted the Fastrack bus routes, on which many people with protected characteristics rely. This is the case for all identified negative impacts.

The collapse and the construction to reinstate the spine has resulted in the temporary closure, & diversion of footpaths for users, this has resulted in excessively long pedestrian diversions utilising uneven footway surfaces which could affect young and older pedestrians. Similarly bus services have been rerouted, with some bus stops no longer being served.

Pedestrians, public transport and road users have had to find alternative and more lengthy routes to access services (such as hospital, schools, public transport etc.).

Noise disruption from the construction works could cause anxiety and confusion for some people.

If access to services and access to transport is disrupted it could disproportionately impact elderly people's health and wellbeing.

**Mitigating Actions for Age**

Safety audits will be completed at the design and construction stage. NMU audits will be undertaken to ensure due consideration is given to all road users.

The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.

Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.

Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulation.

**Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age**

Abigail Roscoe

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

**Are there negative impacts for Disability?**

Yes

**Details of Negative Impacts for Disability**

The collapse and construction has resulted in temporary closures of the entire route including footways for pedestrians & cyclists, and bus routes.

This has temporarily disrupted access to essential services for disability groups meaning alternative routes have been required. These routes are on average longer and more congested.

Construction works can be noisy – causing confusion and anxiety for some disabled people.

**Mitigating actions for Disability**

Safety audits will be completed at the construction stage. NMU audits will be undertaken to ensure due consideration is given to all road users.

The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind.

The design will meet recommended guidance from the Department for Transport on inclusive mobility, the Kent Design Guide and associated standard details. Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.

Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulations with access to services kept clear with ramps where required.

**Responsible Officer for Disability**

Abigail Roscoe

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

**Are there negative impacts for Sex**

Yes

**Details of negative impacts for Sex**

One walking diversion route has diverted pedestrians from a lit busy road to an unlit Public Right of Way. Women may feel less safe walking this route at night in comparison to men. Diversions that lead individuals to less familiar or underlit streets could disproportionately affect women's feeling of safety when using pedestrian infrastructure during construction.

**Mitigating actions for Sex**

Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings, where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure users can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.

Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works. Alternative lit routes have been identified but these are significantly longer for pedestrians while the cliff remains collapsed.

**Responsible Officer for Sex**

Abigail Roscoe

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

**Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

No

**Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

Not Applicable

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

**Are there negative impacts for Race**

Yes

**Negative impacts for Race**

Walking for Everyone (Livings Streets, 2022) states that ethnic minorities are less likely to make trips by car. As such footpath closures and diversions due to the collapse and during construction could have a disproportionate effect on ethnic minority groups during daily trips or commutes by increasing required distance to walk or reduce areas in which roads can be crossed.

Some minority groups may be first generation and thus may not be completely fluent in English which could have a disproportionate effect if no arrangements consider language barrier in public information.

**Mitigating actions for Race**

Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings, where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure users can access and use the highway safely during the construction works. Materials will be made available in other languages based on data of the local population.

Provisions to reduce pedestrian impact will be considered when any road/footpath closures are required.

Additional traffic management has already been put in place on the eastern side of the collapse to further highlight the road closure, as previously those not fluent in English (residents and foreign lorry drivers) had had to reverse and turn around due to not understanding road signage.

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race**

Abigail Roscoe

24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

**Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief**

No

**Negative impacts for Religion and belief**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Religion and belief**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief**

Not Applicable

25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

**Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation**

No

**Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation**

Not Applicable

**Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation**

Not Applicable

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation**

Not Applicable

26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

**Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity**

| |
|---|
| Yes |
| **Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| There is a possible increased risk of falls during work if pregnant women are walking longer and unfamiliar routes due to the diversion put in place. |
| **Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulations. Diversion routes to be lit, as necessary, and well signed with ramped access to services as required |
| **Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity** |
| Abigail Roscoe |
| 27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships |
| **Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships** |
| Not Applicable |
| 28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities |
| **Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |
| No |
| **Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |
| **Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities** |
| Not Applicable |

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|---|---|---|
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | KCC Position on Data Centres | Report |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | Final Draft Budget | Report |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | Infrastructure Funding Statement | Report |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | **KD-**Revision of Management Plan of Kent Downs National Landscape | Key Decision |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | **KD-**HAMP (Highway Asset Management Plan) | Key Decision |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | **KD-**Closure of the Kent Life Science Fund Equity Portfolio | Key Decision |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | **KD-**Small Works at Waste Sites Commissioning Framework | Key Decision |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | **KD-**New Transfer Station at Ebbsfleet | Key Decision |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | **KD-**Grove Ferry Bridge | Key Decision |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | **KD-**Monkton Marshes Bridge Deck Replacement Scheme | Key Decision |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | **KD**-Sturry Bus Lane Scheme | Key Decision |
| Thursday, January 14, 2027 | **KD**-Dane Court Road Junction Improvement | Key Decision |

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