

By: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence  
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To: Cabinet  
Date: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007

Subject: Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012 – Final Draft

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: To invite comment on the final draft of Kent Prospects, the Kent Partnership's countywide economic development and regeneration framework.

## **For Decision**

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### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Kent Prospects was first produced in 1996 as a 10 year countywide framework to guide economic development and regeneration activity, with this updated in 2002 to take it through to 2006. Kent Prospects was reviewed during 2006 to roll it forward to 2012. This has taken place within the context set by the Kent Partnership's Community Strategy – the Vision for Kent. Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012 will be owned by the Partnership, and provide a further level of detail to support delivery of the Vision's, the Kent Agreement's, and KCC's Towards 2010 aspirations for developing Kent's economic prosperity. The Kent Commitment also provides a key mechanism driving the delivery of Kent Prospects.
- 1.2 Cabinet considered and approved a consultation draft of Kent Prospects at its meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> March 2006, in advance of it being circulated for wider stakeholder consultation from March to July 2006.

### **2. Review and Consultation Process**

- 2.1 The review of Kent Prospects has involved key stakeholders, been led by KCC and overseen by a multi-agency Kent Prospects Advisory Group (KPAG). In addition to the Vision for Kent and Kent Agreement, it has drawn on partner plans and strategies, KCC plans, activity and material, including KCC's Towards 2010 programme, Kent and Medway Structure Plan, Local Transport Plan, and the Supporting Independence Programme.
- 2.2 The March to July 2006 stakeholder consultation involved circulating a consultation draft to a wide range of organisations and individuals. These included - Kent Partnership organisations; Local Authorities; Economic Development Agencies (SEEDA, Locate in Kent, Business Link Kent, Learning and Skills Council); Kent and Medway Economic Board (now reformed as the Kent Economic Board); Area Partnerships; Thames Gateway and Ashford Local Regeneration Partnerships; Business Organisations; KCC Members, Directorates and colleagues; the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors; Vision for Kent workshop participants; and skills bodies. A range of meetings and workshops were also held in association with – the Federation of Small Business; Kent & Medway Learning Partnerships; Learning and Skills Council, skills and training providers; West Kent Partnership; East Kent Partnership; Channel Corridor Partnership; Thames Gateway Kent Partnership; Swale Economic Forum; and Kent Economic Development Officers Forum.

- 2.3 Over 40 written responses were received through the consultation process along with a range of comments and suggestions received at meetings and workshops, and these have now been taken on board in the final draft of Kent Prospects.
- 2.4 The final draft of Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012 has been circulated. Its foreword and executive summary is attached (annex 1). Comments from Cabinet will be taken into account in the production of the published version of the document. The final draft will also be considered at an appropriate meeting of the Kent Partnership.
- 2.5 Subject to the views of Cabinet and the Kent Partnership, the published version of Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012 will be made available during April 2007.

### **3. Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012 – Final Draft**

- 3.1 A key Kent Prospects aim is to outline a framework to influence, guide and co-ordinate Partners' delivery of economic development and regeneration activities. Its purpose is not to provide a detailed and prescriptive listing of initiatives and projects, with this fine grain of detail to be considered by accompanying action plans and partners' own operational frameworks.
- 3.2 The framework's 4 key objectives and their 26 associated priorities are listed as follows:

***Strengthen Kent's accessibility, Infrastructure and connections by investing in:***

Infrastructure and integrated transport  
Kent's gateway location  
ICT , broadband and wireless infrastructure  
Environmental infrastructure, utilities and services

***Develop growth and regeneration opportunities by focussing on:***

The Thames Gateway Kent and Ashford growth areas  
The coastal area and towns  
Major and principal urban centres across Kent including the Maidstone growth point  
Rural areas and communities  
Supporting Independence, community & neighbourhood renewal  
The social economy and social enterprise  
2012 Olympics and Paralympics, sporting and cultural events  
Changing perceptions of Kent

***Promote enterprise and competitiveness and market opportunities to develop:***

Jobs and skills opportunities  
Cluster, sector and market opportunities  
Tourism opportunities  
Inward investment opportunities  
Enterprise and SMEs  
An innovation culture  
Sites and premises  
A culture of enterprise through education  
Global and European links

***Develop pathways to sustainable prosperity to create:***

Quality design, construction and pragmatic approaches to sustainability  
Sustainable consumption and resource efficiencies  
Sustainable enterprise and market opportunities  
A carbon neutral economy  
Improved capacity and skills

#### **4. Strategic Overview, Delivery and Monitoring**

- 4.1 The Kent Partnership through the Kent Economic Board (KEB) will have strategic overview of Kent Prospects. In this regard, key issues and opportunities will be addressed through KEB's 4 task groups on skills, enterprise, infrastructure and spending priorities.
- 4.2 Kent Prospects delivery will be broken down into three 2-year action plan cycles (2006 to 2008; 2008 to 2010; 2010 to 2012). The first cycle feeds into the Kent Agreement's 2005 to 2008 timescale, with the second and third to contribute to Kent Agreement '2' (from 2008 onwards). KEB through its 4 task groups will have the lead role in co-ordinating the development of action plans.
- 4.3 Progress will be tracked through the Kent Prospects monitoring framework. This will review how Kent's economy is performing in regional and national comparisons, using key performance indicators, targets and benchmarks. Full bi-ennial progress reports will be produced, along with more frequent bulletins as and when data becomes available from national and local sources.

#### **5. Towards 2010**

- 5.1 KCC's Towards 2010 programme and action plans will make a major contribution to the delivery of Kent Prospects through its focus on achieving goals related for example to – promoting economic success and increasing prosperity for Kent through business growth and job creation; transforming education; reducing traffic congestion; Improving health and quality of life; promoting environmental excellence and high quality homes.
- 5.2 A draft leaflet on how KCC is making its Kent Prospects contribution is attached (annex 2) for information.

#### **6. The Kent Commitment**

- 6.1 Local Government Leaders have drawn up the 2007 Kent Commitment, which includes a statement of intent to provide more clout to enable economic growth and regeneration opportunities in each part of the county, by effectively combining the decisions and resources held by national and regional bodies with those of KCC and the District Councils. Government also has a key role to play by providing the county with a fair share of infrastructure funding to support developments in the Thames Gateway, Ashford growth area and key locations across Kent.
- 6.2 Kent Prospects provides a further level of detail to support actions driven by the Kent Commitment.

#### **7. SEEDA's Regional Economic Strategy (RES) 2006 to 2016**

- 7.1 During the Kent Prospects consultation and drafting process, SEEDA updated their Regional Economic Strategy (RES) to take it forward from 2006 to 2016. The Kent Prospects review process has therefore been used as a mechanism to ensure SEEDA are aware of county issues and opportunities. The final version of the RES was endorsed by SEERA during September 2006.

## **8. 2007 to 2013 European Union (EU) Structural Fund Programmes**

8.1 New arrangements for 2007 to 2013 EU Structural Funds commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007, with their focus informed by the EU's Lisbon Agenda on improving Europe's competitiveness through enterprise, jobs and innovation, and a general shift of funding to Eastern Europe. The Kent Prospects review has informed a county response to the UK Government's National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) (the NSRF outlines how the Government intends to allocate structural funds across the UK). Kent Prospects has also helped shape thinking on new structural fund opportunities related to competitiveness, skills, innovation and Intra-regional co-operation (Interreg). Kent Prospects can also be used to guide the development of future project and funding proposals.

## **8. Recommendations**

8.1 Cabinet members are asked to note the timetable for producing the published version of Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012

8.2 Cabinet members are invited to provide comments on the final draft of Kent Prospects.

### Background Papers

Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012 (Final Draft)

The Vision for Kent

Towards 2010

Contact: Steve Arnett (01622) 221938

## Annex 1

### **Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012 Produced by the Kent Partnership**

#### **Foreword**

I am pleased to present Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012, which sets a course of action to secure Kent's future economic success, including growth and regeneration opportunities. Partners in this endeavour include our businesses, public sector bodies and communities.

I believe Kent's economy has great scope to flourish and that our gateway location at the heart of the UK's links with mainland Europe offers unique competitive advantage. Strengthening accessibility, keenly priced land and business premises, our skills and capacity for innovation, all re-enforce Kent's position as the UK's premier business location.

Kent needs to attract investment and make better use of our resources if we are going to lift economic performance and encourage success. To this end Kent's Local Government Leaders have drawn up the 2007 Kent Commitment. This includes a statement of intent to provide more clout to enable economic growth and regeneration opportunities in each part of the county, by effectively combining the decisions and resources held by national and regional bodies with those of Kent County Council and the District Councils. Government also has a key role to play by providing the county with a fair share of infrastructure funding to support developments in the Thames Gateway, Ashford growth area and key locations across Kent.

A wide range of organisations and members of the business community helped to shape Kent Prospects priorities during the 2006 review and update process. Partners also provided invaluable contributions to the 2005/06 review of the Kent Partnership's community strategy, the Vision for Kent. Kent Prospects serves as the Vision's detailed economic development and regeneration framework. Our thanks therefore go out to all those involved for their support and continuing dedication to ensure Kent secures economic success and prosperity for all of its communities.

Paul Carter  
Kent Partnership Chairman and Leader of Kent County Council

#### **Executive Summary**

Kent is a place with prospects. It has a gateway location serving UK and European markets; a distinct economy and diverse range of businesses in established and knowledge based sectors; and outstanding natural environment and quality of life. New infrastructure investment and in particular the start of CTRL domestic services in 2009 will mean a step change in accessibility. Coupled with new opportunities in the Thames Gateway and Ashford, coastal towns, key locations and in rural areas, this offers major scope to lift the county's economic performance.

#### **A Great Location**

Kent is the busiest gateway serving Europe's population of over 450 million and the UK, with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) and International ports providing easy connections to the 'London – Paris – Brussels' triangle. The county is by no means just a place to pass through. The Thames Gateway and Ashford growth areas; outstanding natural environment, coastline and rural areas; diverse cultural heritage; high quality of life; and rich variety of cities, towns, ports and villages - make the county a place hard to beat for working, living and leisure.

#### **A Distinct Economy**

Kent has an economic fabric and history that sets it apart from the South East. Industry developed through shipyards, coalfields and the role of tourism in the growth of Canterbury and the coastal towns. But it is the county's rural nature, hop fields, horticulture and fruit growing, that created the view of Kent as the Garden of England.

In common with many areas, older industries have declined or evolved as market conditions changed. In response, established businesses and sectors have diversified and grown, new companies have come to Kent, and a new knowledge and service based economy has taken root. This has been supported by considerable infrastructure investment over the past 10 to 15 years, including the CTRL, M20, M2, the second Swale crossing, Kent International Airport, FASTRACK in the Thames Gateway, the Leybourne bypass, and strategic business locations like Kings Hill.

A growing network of global companies, along with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), is at the forefront of change in the local economy. When combined with proximity to London, this means a county open to the global influences that increasingly shape business, market and job opportunities, whether through supply chain networks, inward investment, or commuting. The land based sector also remains a vital part of the county's future prosperity.

### **A Place with Prospects**

Future prospects for Kent's economy have never been better. The 2007 opening of the CTRL International station at Ebbsfleet and adjacent Thames Gateway developments will accommodate 20,000 jobs over the next 20 years, whilst Ashford will double in size and provide space for 28,000 jobs by 2030.

The commencement of CTRL domestic services during 2009 will increase access to London, with journey times of 17 minutes from Ebbsfleet, 37 minutes from Ashford, less than an hour from Canterbury, and times reduced by a half from the coastal towns of Margate, Ramsgate, Dover and Folkestone – placing them in easy reach of London.

East Kent and the coastal towns are developing masterplans, attracting investment for regeneration projects, and are exploring opportunities linked to the development of tourism and the visitor economy, creative and cultural industries, and the knowledge base (e.g. universities, research centres, science and technology businesses). Business infrastructure is also improving across Kent, to support the development of local SMEs and attract inward investment.

Kent's land based economy also has an exciting opportunity to respond to emerging markets for local produce, bio-fuels and other non-food crops.

In addition, the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics offers further potential to enhance Kent's gateway location serving the UK, London and Europe.

All of these factors combine to make Kent the 'go to county' and a unique proposition in UK, European and global terms, for the development of enterprise, innovation, jobs and communities.

### **Economic Performance and Progress**

Kent is only part of the way to realising its full potential. This is highlighted by a 10-year trend review (1996 to 2006) of the economy, and national and regional comparisons. A relatively good countywide performance is recorded on job creation, enterprise development and employment rates. Employment grew by 56,700 from 1996 to 2004, and inward investment has on average created 1,800 jobs each year since 1997. Kent's home-grown and small businesses, accounting for 98% of the stock, also continue to thrive. Higher education and research opportunities have also grown.

On other economic indicators, for example skills, the knowledge economy and Gross Value Added (GVA) per head, Kent's performance falls below that of the trend set by the South East and national economies. A wider range of socio-economic indicators also shows that Kent's coastal area and towns contains some of the highest concentrations of multiple deprivation in the South East. Kent's economy therefore displays a mix of success, disparity, disadvantage and opportunity.

The county's good performance on jobs and enterprise growth has to be further cultivated. Trend data also indicates the KCC area is beginning to close the knowledge economy and skills gap in national comparisons, but a persistent gap remains when compared to the South East, particularly on GVA performance. Over time however, more knowledge based jobs and higher skills should have a positive influence on this indicator.

Kent has great scope to grow and flourish and positive economic indicators are demonstrating this, especially when compared to the problems of success encountered by the inner south east and M4 corridor. The county's strengthening accessibility and strategic location supports a growing business community. Its high quality of life and environment, knowledge base and people serve as key assets to underpin future

investment and prosperity. Government, public sector agencies and the private sector need however, to continue to commit to high levels of infrastructure investment, to enable Kent to achieve economic development and regeneration opportunities, particularly in the growth areas.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

To ensure Kent's economy, communities and people prosper in a fast changing world, strengths and opportunities have to be cultivated, weaknesses and threats addressed.

The local economy is a multifaceted and dynamic entity, open to global influences and changes in the wider economy. So public sector and partnership interventions have to be gauged against how they will improve the county's preparedness to adapt to change and respond to opportunities. In this regard, stakeholders have identified a range of priority challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed during the period to 2012:

**Developing Kent's Infrastructure:** this means lobbying Government and public sector agencies for timely infrastructure investment; tackling congestion; working in partnership with the private sector on new funding sources; and assessing options for major infrastructure projects.

**Development of growth and regeneration opportunities in the Thames Gateway and Ashford, coastal towns and major urban centres across Kent:** this means securing infrastructure investment, and creating high quality places for communities, businesses and visitors, and promoting skills, enterprise and job opportunities.

**Promotion of cluster and sector opportunities:** this means linking growth area, regeneration, market, supply chain, and 2012 opportunities to key sectors. These include - creative, media and cultural industries; construction; tourism and the visitor economy; environmental technologies and eco-enterprise; marine, aviation, transport and port industries; land based industries and biodiversity; life sciences, pharmaceuticals and bio-technology; financial and business services.

**Closing the skills gap between Kent, the UK and the South East:** this means promoting a learning culture and the development of pre-vocational, vocational, further and higher education opportunities, targeted on employer needs, key market and sector opportunities.

**Closing the productivity gap between Kent, the UK and the South East:** this means promoting vigorously innovation; the development and attraction of high quality jobs; the development of graduate job opportunities; and promotion of learning and skills opportunities across public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

**Responding to globalisation:** this means making more of Kent's gateway location, and further investment in Kent's business sites, premises, learning and research facilities, international ports and airports.

**Ensuring the local economy can respond to change and opportunities:** this means supporting the growth of local SMEs and the development of a culture of enterprise and innovation across the county's public sector organisations.

**Strengthening the rural economy:** this means supporting new opportunities linked to non food crops; promoting local food production; development of traditional and craft based industries and skills; the development of knowledge intensive activities; and development of tourism opportunities.

**Supporting Independence through partnership working with communities:** this means increasing Kent's disadvantaged and deprived communities' access to learning, skills and job opportunities, and community facilities.

**Responding to environmental and climate change issues:** this means promoting economic development and regeneration opportunities that support the growth of new markets and pragmatic approaches to sustainability; enhance environmental quality; create better designed and more energy efficient buildings; address water scarcity; and increase skills levels.

## **What will Kent Prospects Do?**

Kent Prospects 2006 to 2012 provides the Kent Partnership's framework for influencing, guiding and co-ordinating the delivery of stakeholders' economic development and regeneration activities. In doing so it

adds a further level of detail to the Partnership's Community Strategy – the Vision for Kent. It also helps shape actions related to the Kent Commitment and its focus on promoting economic growth and regeneration opportunities in each part of the county; Kent County Council's Towards 2010 commitments; the Kent Agreement 1 (2005 to 2008) and 2 (from 2008); the Kent Economic Board's priorities; and SEEDA's Regional Economic Strategy.

A key aim is to focus attention on actions that unlock constraints and enable the achievement of Kent's considerable array of economic development and regeneration opportunities.



## Annex 2

### **Kent County Council's Contribution to Kent Prospects (Draft Leaflet text: 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007)**

#### **Introduction (by Paul Carter)**

The Kent Partnership has produced a welcome and wide ranging economic development and regeneration framework to guide local, regional and national partners' activities from 2006 to 2012.

Kent County Council is determined to lead the way in addressing the challenges and opportunities facing the economy, our businesses and people. Working with our partners to achieve common goals is however vital if we are to succeed in growing Kent's potential as the UK's premier business location. To this end, Local Government leaders have drawn up to the 2007 Kent Commitment. This includes a statement of intent to provide more clout to enable economic growth and regeneration opportunities in each part of the county, by effectively combining the decisions and resources held by national and regional bodies with those of Kent County Council and the District Councils.

I believe Kent's economy has great scope to flourish and that our gateway position at the heart of the UK's links with mainland Europe offers unique competitive advantage. Strengthening accessibility, keenly priced land and business premises, and Investment in the county's skills base, all re-enforce our capacity to attract and develop jobs, business and innovation. Investment is vital if we are to achieve further success. I am therefore actively lobbying Government to provide a fair funding share to enable Kent to meet its growth and regeneration challenges.

In this leaflet I outline how KCC is making its contribution to Kent Prospects. This includes my Towards 2010 commitments and the priorities we are developing through the Kent Partnership's Kent Economic Board.

#### **The Local Economy**

Kent is the busiest gateway serving Europe's population of over 450 million and the UK, with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) and International ports providing easy connections to the 'London – Paris – Brussels' triangle. The county is by no means just a place to pass through. The Thames Gateway and Ashford growth areas; outstanding natural environment, coastline and rural areas; diverse cultural heritage; high quality of life; and rich variety of cities, towns, ports and villages - make the county a place hard to beat for working, living and leisure.

Kent has not yet reached its full potential and in terms of south east and national comparisons, the economy displays a mix of success and disparity (table 1). The county has performed well on job creation, enterprise growth and employment opportunities. But our performance on skills, share of the knowledge economy, and productivity all need to be improved so as to initially match national benchmarks, and close the gap with the South East.

**Table 1: Key Economic Performance Indicators**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Kent (KCC area)</b>	<b>South East</b>	<b>England &amp; Wales</b>
Employment change (job creation) (1998 to 2004)	10.1%	6.4%	6.8%
VAT registrations (enterprise creation) (1996 to 2004)	17.7%	16.5%	12.7%
Unemployment rate (2005 annual average)	1.9%	1.5%	2.3%
Employment rate (2005)	77.4%	79%	74.5%
GVA per head (2003) (1)	£13,377	£17,631	£16,485
Knowledge economy jobs (2004) (1)	14.3%	20.4%	17.4%
Skills - % of population with NVQ4+ (2004)	24.4%	29.1%	25.8%
Median full time earnings (£ per week) (2005)	£412	£450	£432.10

#### Notes

1) GVA per head is workplace based and excludes incomes brought into the county by commuters. Knowledge economy jobs are also workplace based, so also exclude commuter jobs.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Kent Prospects outlines a range of challenges, opportunities and priorities that have to be addressed to enable Kent's economy to grow and its communities to prosper. These include:

- Securing **Infrastructure investment** to enable growth and regeneration, tackle congestion in our towns, and address the problems caused by the increasing volume of trucks on Kent's strategic road network, including those caused by Operation Stack.
- **Attracting and retaining investment, businesses and jobs** in the Government's Thames Gateway and Ashford growth areas, and in other key locations across Kent.
- Development of **regeneration** and place making opportunities in towns on the coast and across Kent. Regeneration also needs to provide opportunities for Kent's deprived communities, particularly in the coastal towns which have some of the South East's highest concentrations of deprivation.
- Making the most of the **2012 Olympics and Paralympics** and Kent's exceptional location for visitors and venues.
- Changing market perceptions and promotion of the regeneration benefits of **Channel Tunnel Rail Link domestic services** from 2009, with the quicker links between Kent and London this will bring.
- Development of **key sector strengths and market opportunities** in construction; creative and cultural industries; tourism; life sciences and pharmaceuticals; environmental technologies; land based industries and biodiversity; marine, aviation, transport and logistics; financial and business services.
- **Closing the skills gap** through investment in vocational, further and higher education opportunities, targeted on employer needs, key market and sector opportunities.
- **Closing the productivity gap** by promoting innovation, the attraction of inward investment and high quality jobs.
- Development of **Kent's gateway location** through investment in Kent's business sites, premises, learning and research facilities, international ports and airports.
- Supporting the growth of local **small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)** and the development of a culture of enterprise and innovation across the county's public sector organisations.
- **Promoting independence** in Kent's deprived urban and rural communities by increasing access to learning, skills and job opportunities.
- **Responding to environmental and climate change issues** through opportunities that support the growth of new markets and pragmatic approaches to sustainability.

### How will KCC contribute to Kent Prospects?

KCC supports the delivery of Kent Prospects in a multitude of ways. Our leadership role, strategic plans and services set the scene to ensure the county maintains high quality business, learning, living and leisure environments. In this regard we manage public resources for education and learning, spatial and transportation planning, regeneration, social care and health, the environment, community facilities, waste management and recycling, trading standards and regulatory services.

The Council also spends over £770 million each year on bought in goods and services. Ensuring fair and open competition, value for money for taxpayers, and promoting opportunities for the local economy, all form part of KCC's approach to public sector procurement.

The Council's programme, **Towards 2010**, provides a more detailed view of how we intend to make our contribution to Kent Prospects and the county's economic success. A range of actions are identified. Those which influence the economy and relate directly to Kent Prospects are summarised as follows.

## **Economic Success – Opportunities for All 'Supporting Business, Creating Jobs'**

Successful local businesses matter to us all. KCC must do all it can to help our business community – the wealth they create helps pay for good public services and the jobs they provide are key to a happy and successful life. Towards 2010 therefore promotes Kent as a great place to do business by taking advantage of the county's position as the busiest gateway serving UK, London and European markets.

Supporting jobs growth, new investment and the expansion of local businesses is a key aim. KCC has already ensured a generous supply of employment land through the planning system. A good supply of business premises is also central to this and our work with developers at the award winning Kings Hill provides a model for our future involvement in property developments. This includes the purchase of Manston Business Park to boost the East Kent economy. Provision of smaller start up units linked to growth areas and regeneration programmes, larger business parks and school sites also forms part of our approach.

Kent has a dynamic local business community, the vast majority small and medium sized enterprises. To compete in today's knowledge economy we need to add to the stock by attracting and retaining companies, more graduates and highly qualified staff. We are therefore working in close partnership with the county's inward investment agency, Locate in Kent, to market the county's unique location and competitive advantage. Supporting opportunities for rural businesses and the 110,000 people employed by them, is also on our radar.

The Council allocates substantial resources to developing growth opportunities in the Thames Gateway and Ashford, the regeneration of our coastal towns and town centres across Kent. Place making, high quality design and the identification of new uses for derelict land and vacant properties form a key part of our involvement. Providing skills and jobs opportunities for our deprived communities also forms a key part of KCC's approach to regeneration and our Supporting Independence Programme is leading the way in this area.

Market opportunities are fast evolving for Kent's proven strengths in construction, science and technology, creative and cultural industries, land based industries, tourism, biodiversity, aviation and port based industries. We therefore aim to ensure Kent gains a growing share of these markets through a range of initiatives including – Construction Labour in Kent; Produced in Kent; the Kent Tourism Alliance; The Kent Film Office; the development of eco-enterprise and environmental technologies; and our work with port and airport operators, Locate in Kent, SEEDA, LSC, Universities and Business Link Kent.

Partnership working is essential if we are to achieve greater success for Kent's economy. The Kent Economic Board, which brings together key players from the business world and public sector, is a key mechanism for us to tackle problems and progress actions. KCC is also committed to close working with District and Borough councils on service delivery, growth and regeneration opportunities.

### **Learning for Everyone and Preparing for Employment**

A skilled workforce is an essential ingredient to enable our established businesses to grow and attract inward investment. The Towards 2010 programme therefore aims to support school leavers and the workforce to develop the right skills for their careers and for employers.

Equipping young people with first class career guidance is part of the package that KCC is putting in place to ensure they are fully aware of enterprise opportunities, learning and career pathways. To this end, Kent Works encourages school and business community engagement and the provision of work experience placements.

As well as encouraging young people to gain qualifications through further and higher education, KCC is actively developing new vocational routes. KCC's pioneering '14 to 16' vocational programme is being expanded to cater for 4,000 students. More Skills – Force programmes are on offer, focused on team building and communication skills. And the Kent Apprenticeship scheme aims to offer 1,000 quality vocational opportunities across public and private sectors for the 16 and over age group. These initiatives aim to address the skills needs of key sectors, including growth and regeneration area construction opportunities.

The above activities form part of KCC's commitment to ensuring the council has the best possible education and learning infrastructure across early years, schools, vocational training, adult and community education. This includes the Building Schools for the Future programme that aims to rebuild or renew Kent's secondary schools over a 10-15 year period.

### **Keeping Kent Moving**

Traffic congestion is the bane of everyone's life, whether you travel by car, bus or train. It causes frustration and pollution in equal measures, slows down economic development and hampers efforts to bring inward investment into Kent. KCC actions therefore include the introduction of smart measures to tackle urban congestion. We will also work with bus and train providers and lobby Government to improve public transport services in Kent and to London. The provision of high speed domestic trains on CTRL is a major and unique opportunity.

We need further investment for Kent roads and will continue to press the Government to give Kent its fair share of funding for new roads and improvements. We will also press for the building of a third lower Thames Crossing to relieve congestion on the M25. Finding solutions to reduce the impact on Kent of Operation Stack is also a key aim.

### **Enjoying Life**

#### **'Kent – a great place to live and work'**

Leisure opportunities, quality of life and environment are increasingly cited as factors influencing decisions to locate a business or remain in an area. Marketing and investment in attractions can also provide a boost to regeneration and a stimulus for further growth to tourism and the visitor economy.

In addition to KCC managing a range of natural assets including 18 country parks, Towards 2010 highlights a number of actions that will add considerably to Kent's cultural and leisure offer for residents, visitors and investors. These include the promotion of Kent as a centre for the arts, culture and sports, hosting of a 2007 Tour de France stage, the development of the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate, and promotion of Kent as a tourism and visitor destination in the run up to the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

Further actions relate to modernizing the library service so that it becomes a key 21<sup>st</sup> century asset to support Kent's knowledge economy. Towards 2010 also aims to help the further development of Kent's voluntary and sports groups. Related actions include encouraging 2012 volunteering and providing support for voluntary sector activities in Kent's deprived communities.

### **Environmental Excellence and High Quality Homes**

#### **'Future generations will judge us by the quality of the environment they inherit'**

Towards 2010 outlines a range of actions that respond to environmental issues, promote regeneration and new market opportunities for the economy.

Maximizing the use of previously developed land and securing investment for infrastructure and community facilities are key aims that respond to the housing growth agenda enforced by Government. In our coastal towns and deprived areas we are piloting an innovative empty homes initiative as a means to bring new life to communities.

KCC has a duty of care to ensure its buildings achieve the best possible standards of construction by applying a pragmatic approach to sustainability using energy-efficient, robust and built-to-last materials. We are also trialling the use of bio-fuels and other technologies in our buildings and vehicle fleet, as a means to reduce our carbon footprint.

Kent's Garden of England heritage is being taken into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through our efforts to establish a global centre that will lead the world in developing crops to provide energy, medicines and other products.

## Delivery

A wide range of organisations and our businesses have a role to play in shaping Kent's future economy. We will therefore work closely with the Kent Partnership, Kent Economic Board, the business community and District Councils on the delivery of our Towards 2010 commitments.

Our aims are clear – the promotion and attraction of opportunities that bring further economic success to Kent.

Paul Carter

Leader of Kent County Council and Chairman of the Kent Partnership

<b>Kent Key Facts</b>
Kent's economy generates a GVA of £18.3 billion (2003 figure) per annum, has over 50,000 businesses and 542,300 jobs (2004 figure).
Kent's economy includes a tourism sector which generates direct visitor spend of £1.8 billion per annum, and supports over 49,000 jobs; land based industries which generate over £600 million for the local economy each year; and over 500 locally based eco-enterprises serving a growing global marketplace for environmental goods and services.
From 2009 CTRL domestic services will reduce Kent to London train journey times to 17 minutes from Ebbsfleet, 37 minutes from Ashford and less than an hour from Canterbury. Times will also reduce by a half from the coastal towns of Margate, Ramsgate, Dover and Folkestone.
Locate in Kent estimate that property and labour costs are approximately 60% of comparable London costs. With a greater range of developable employment land than other parts of the South East, Kent offers businesses opportunities to grow.
Kent's 5 universities are home to 32,000 students and produce a flow of 8,000 graduates each year.

## Further Information

This leaflet provides a taster of how KCC is making its contribution to addressing the challenges, opportunities and priorities set out by Kent Prospects. Further information is available in our Towards 2010 Action Plans which can be viewed at:

[www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk)