

east kent
local strategic partnership



Lighting the way to success
The EKLSP Sustainable Community Strategy
2009



Foreword



I care about the future of East Kent. I want to see its citizens thriving; its businesses flourishing and its cultural and community life the envy of all. And naturally, I want to see that the beauty of its coast and countryside continues to be cherished as the precious asset that it is.

In short, I want to see its success: success for local people to celebrate and others to aspire to.

That is why I am proud to chair the East Kent Local Strategic Partnership (EKLSP), the first multi-agency partnership to focus specifically on the future of this part of the county. The EKLSP brings together the combined purpose and resources of Kent County Council; Canterbury, Dover, Shepway and Thanet Councils; East Kent NHS and the Police and Fire Authorities, together with other key partners representing public, private, voluntary and community groups across East Kent. It has the potential to be not just a partnership but a real powerhouse to champion the cause of local people.

And the immediate future is a challenging one. There are many exciting new prospects that have the potential to

improve everyone's quality of life locally but these are set against the background of a world-wide recession which leaves no-one unaffected. What is more, these economic conditions are likely to be felt most harshly by the more disadvantaged of East Kent's diverse communities.

The moment is therefore perfectly poised for the EKLSP to launch its 20 year vision; one that takes a long-term view of deep-rooted issues; one that works to support independence, tackle inequality and conserve all that is best in East Kent: a vision that looks forward to a brighter and fairer future, despite the current economic difficulties that confront it.

This vision, "Lighting the Way to Success", is the product of more than a year's work by the EKLSP Partnership Board and reflects the comments and criticisms from extensive consultation with local people and interest groups. The Board is fully committed to working yet more closely with local opinion as the vision is developed into a plan of action that yields real results.

"Lighting the Way to Success" is a long-term vision – it looks forward more than 20 years to 2030; it is unashamedly ambitious – the people of East Kent deserve nothing less and it has partnership working at its core – no single organisation will be able to overcome the challenges ahead. To succeed, partners will need to get behind a shared vision; that vision is:

By 2030, East Kent will have blended the best of its coastal location, landscape, culture and heritage to build a lasting beacon of success for the benefit of all its communities.

It will take pride in:

- Educational excellence that supports ambition, achievement and skills, for the workplace and beyond;
- Economic enterprise that is confident, resilient and with the support of local higher and further education institutions, innovative enough to seize opportunities presented by new markets and emerging technology;
- Fairer, stronger and healthier communities in resurgent coastal towns, enjoying high quality homes and an enviable quality of life;
- A high quality, integrated transport network, with reduced congestion and pollution, offering a wide choice of accessible transport for all sections of the community;
- A distinctive profile as a visitor destination, with a wealth of cultural treasures, sustaining a thriving tourist economy;
- The priceless asset of its unique natural environment and a commitment to protect it for future generations.

If you care about East Kent's future as much as I do, then I would invite you to read on, to share the vision and to contribute whatever you can to making it a reality.

Geoff Miles

Chairman

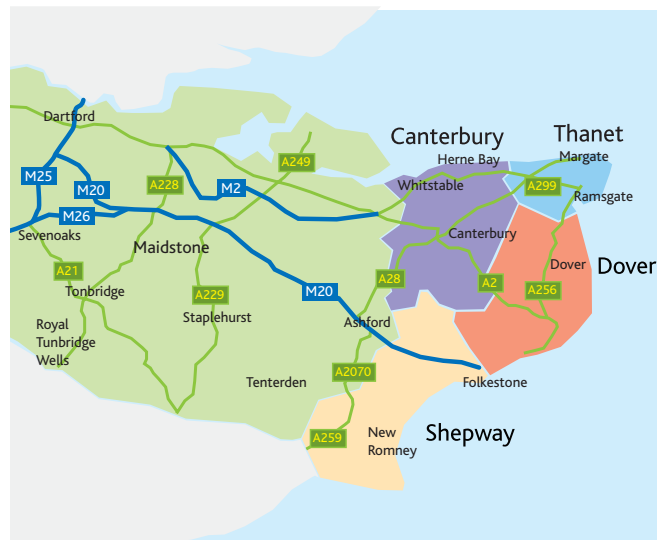
East Kent Local Strategic Partnership



Introduction

What is 'Lighting the Way to Success'?

All local authorities have a duty to work with other organisations to produce a sustainable community strategy. This is a document which shows how organisations will work together to improve their area and safeguard its future. This document sets out the clear, long-term vision for East Kent, covering the districts of Canterbury, Dover, Shepway and Thanet.



Reflecting the needs and aspirations of the community and with clear links to existing strategies, it points the direction for other local plans to follow. It co-ordinates the actions of partners and brings together their resources to improve the quality of life for local people.

By taking a long-term view, the vision will ensure that progress now does not come at the expense of long-term

damage to East Kent's unique natural environment, or disharmony in its increasingly diverse communities.

The vision will be of interest to all those who want to see East Kent thrive: its residents; those who generate its commercial prosperity; those who serve its local communities; visitors and potential investors. It is the essential guide to the area's future success.

A Distinctive Character – An Integrated Approach

There are strong, enduring ties of geography, history and economic reality that bind East Kent securely to the remainder of the county of which it forms part. This will always be the case.

But East Kent is undeniably different. The pattern of its settlements, the focus of its economy, its cultural heritage, its links to continental Europe and beyond, all speak powerfully of the coastal influences that have shaped its distinctive local character today.

The challenge for East Kent is how best to contribute to the success of wider objectives, for instance on climate change, community cohesion, educational underperformance and a more balanced housing market, without sacrificing its distinctiveness. Happily, by asserting aspects of that very individuality – its unique transport links for instance, or the untapped potential of its coastal towns, East Kent can rise to that challenge.

The Strategy therefore acknowledges the need to blend local distinctiveness with the aims of county-wide plans and those which span the South East as a whole. It seeks to work alongside partners delivering the following strategies; sharing their aims and complementing their efforts:

- The South East Plan published by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA)
- The Regional Economic Strategy for the South East published by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)
- The Vision for Kent published by the Kent Partnership.

Furthermore, the vision of 'Lighting the Way to Success' will form the basis of the local development frameworks that will guide planning decisions in each of the four districts for the foreseeable future.

The priorities identified as part of this vision are intended to represent those areas of activity where the efforts of the EKLSP can best add value. They make no attempt to cover all the ground needed to make the vision a reality over the next 20 years.





Partnership in Action

East Kent has a strong and increasingly diverse track record of successful partnership working. Effective collaboration and a shared commitment to the future among businesses, statutory agencies, voluntary and community sector groups have already delivered remarkable successes such as:

- **Award winning city academies providing opportunities for educational excellence in deprived communities;**
- **Linking urban regeneration to ambitious creative arts projects in Margate and Folkestone**
- **The East Kent Private Sector Housing Partnership, which has secured multi-million pound funding from the Regional Housing Board.**

As well as this, the four districts in East Kent are making rapid strides forward in sharing the management of core local authority functions, delivering higher quality, more resilient services to their communities, at less cost.

The East Kent Local Strategic Partnership (East Kent LSP) is further proof of partnership in action. Made up of businesses, voluntary and community groups, local authorities, health trusts, the police and a range of other key organisations, it provides a single focus and a single voice for East Kent.

East Kent – today

East Kent stands on the threshold of a bright future. It has a strategic location, an attractive environment and an increasingly diverse local economy. It is nevertheless an area of contrasts, challenged by its inequalities.

Many of its traditional economic strengths – seaside tourism, fishing, coal mining – have witnessed decades of decline. This has undermined the quality of life and prosperity of some neighbourhoods and continues to damage the prospects of those living in them.

To reverse this decline and fulfill its potential, East Kent will need to adopt a bold vision for the future, one which both reflects its distinctiveness and at the same time addresses its most acute challenges.

1.1 East Kent's Assets

East Kent's unspoilt acres of countryside, miles of coastline and sensitive wildlife habitats make for a pleasing place to live and visit. With unparalleled access to mainland Europe, low rates of crime, good health, sound education and underdeveloped tourism potential, the area has much to build upon.

1.1.1 Population growth

The resident population of East Kent in 2007 was over 485,000, having grown steadily from 445,000 in 1987, with especially strong growth between 2002 and 2005. This represents a more rapid growth than the UK as a whole, although it is slower than in the wider South East.

Each district has experienced a population increase, with Canterbury's being the fastest, particularly since 2000. Shepway has also recently had significant population

growth, while the increases in Dover and Thanet have been more modest.

Much of this growth reflects inward migration from other parts of the UK. In each of the four districts of East Kent, the number of people moving in has been greater than the number leaving.

1.1.2 Natural Environment

East Kent is home to the North Downs, the symbolic White Cliffs and 90 miles of the UK's cleanest beaches. It boasts an abundance of designated areas of outstanding natural beauty; sites of special scientific interest and important nature reserves.

These are irreplaceable assets which, if they are carefully looked after, will continue to enhance public enjoyment of the area's natural environment for generations to come. And they will form an essential element of the quality of life that attracts new people and new prosperity.

However, with many miles of exposed coastline, extensive areas of low lying land – in places below sea level – and with a range of sensitive natural habitats, East Kent is at particular risk from the effects of climate change.

1.1.3 Culture and Heritage

East Kent offers a rich mixture of culture, heritage and a wide range of important tourist attractions. The need to boost its visitor economy is well recognised and several major initiatives are now in place to regenerate the three coastal towns of Dover, Folkestone and Margate. These include:



- A 30-year master plan to revitalise Dover, including ferry port expansion, waterfront development and a new Sea Sports Centre;
- The development of Folkestone's Creative Quarter and Performing Arts and Business Centre. Alongside the masterplan for Folkestone Seafront, these will embed creativity within further education and economic development; and
- In Margate, plans for a new Turner Contemporary Gallery are proceeding with the Gallery opening in 2010.

The contribution that Canterbury makes to the cultural and historical fabric of the UK is beyond value as reflected in its status as a prime visitor destination. With the Canterbury Beane Project and the new Marlowe Theatre, both due to open in 2011, and plans in place to provide high quality performance, rehearsal and music therapy space at St Gregory's Music Centre, this celebrated status is sure to be further re-affirmed.

But there are emerging cultural and creative activities elsewhere in East Kent, particularly in Folkestone and Thanet, which provide a genuine regeneration opportunity; one which goes beyond conventional tourism and has the potential to create new jobs; enhance educational attainment and to open up more rewarding careers.

1.1.4 The Gateway to Europe

For some coastal areas, the sea represents a barrier to accessibility but the East Kent coast is not simply the end-of-the-road; it is the UK's gateway to mainland Europe.

The Port of Dover is by far the busiest and most well established sea port in the UK, handling 2.8 million tourist cars, 2.3 million freight units and almost 150 cruise ships during 2008/09.

East Kent is also the point of entry for the Channel Tunnel with vehicles boarding at the Cheriton terminal near Folkestone.

The High Speed Rail Link, due to start scheduled services in 2009, will link East Kent to London and the rest of the South East; significantly shortening some journey times to London.

Further travel choices are presented through East Kent's two underused airports – Kent International Airport at Manston and London Ashford Airport at Lydd. Both sites have the potential for significant expansion and are actively seeking to grow.

Internally, East Kent is well connected to London by road. This is largely because Dover and Folkestone are routes into Europe and so are served by the M20 motorway, the A20 and A2 dual carriageways. The northern part of East Kent also has good road connections, with the A299 running along the northern coastline to Margate.

1.1.5 Safe and Strong Communities

East Kent is a safe place to live. Its recorded crime rate is below the average for England and Wales and that of the South East region. There are variations across East Kent, with Canterbury and Dover having some of the lowest crime rates in England and Wales (47 and 48 crimes per 1000 population respectively, compared to the average of 62). However, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour is relatively high in some localities, particularly in Thanet.

The overall health of East Kent residents is better than the England average, although not as good as in some parts of the South East. There are striking variations in public health across East Kent which are linked to relative deprivation, inequality and social exclusion.

Overall, East Kent schools achieved mixed academic outcomes in 2007, reflecting local diversity. In Dover, nearly 70% of pupils achieved five or more GCSEs at A*-C grades, whilst Shepway (63%) and Canterbury (65%) exceeded the South East average of 62%. In Thanet, only 56% of pupils achieved this level.

Kent's schools play a vital role in providing not just education but a range of other important services for children and young people. Taken together, these help to raise the aspirations and develop the responsibility of East Kent's future generations of citizens. The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) project being rolled out across East Kent demonstrates its commitment to providing a first class school system for the 21st century.

1.1.6 Higher education

East Kent has three higher education institutions: the University of Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University and the University College for the Creative Arts.

The University of Kent is research-led and has an international reputation in many of its subject areas. As well as its Canterbury site, it has strong European links with campuses in Brussels and France. Canterbury Christ Church University has several campuses in Kent and offers a wide range of courses, and is a centre of higher education for public service employment. The University College for the Creative Arts offers more than 80 courses and is home to a number of research centres and public galleries.



The University of Greenwich has strong regional links in East Kent and Medway, promoting both lifelong learning and research excellence.

1.1.7 New Technologies

With its long association with nuclear power generation, recently commissioned wind farm and the prospect of the far more ambitious offshore London Array, East Kent is already at the forefront of sustainable energy production and has the opportunity to take on a pioneering role in exploring the potential of a low carbon economy.

The rapidly accelerating improvement of internet connection presents a golden opportunity for East Kent: faster connections will usher in a new era of internet communications, such as the use of video conferencing technology. This in turn is likely to encourage potential employers to put more emphasis on quality of life in their choice of location making East Kent's attractiveness an even more relevant factor.

1.2 East Kent's challenges

East Kent has much to be proud of, but the area faces significant challenges as well.

It has a number of deprived neighbourhoods, especially in coastal towns, where people suffer genuine hardship, poor health; lower educational achievement and a fear of crime. The local economy underperforms its neighbours in the South East, hampering prospects for greater prosperity.

Despite many familiar landmarks, East Kent tends not to be perceived as a high quality tourist destination and it has proved difficult to translate the popularity of specific attractions into an integrated, easily marketable, visitor product.

There are well-established, high-capacity, road transport arteries to the coast but in other respects, the road network is prone to congestion at times. This particularly affects traffic mobility within East Kent and circulation around a number of major towns, especially Canterbury.

1.2.1 Deprivation

It is an uncomfortable but inescapable feature of East Kent that it has 19 Super Output Areas (SOAs) which are among the top 20% most deprived localities in England and of these, six are in the top 5%. The majority of the deprived areas are located in seaside towns.

This concentration of disadvantage is apparently compounded by East Kent's remoteness relative to today's drivers of national prosperity. The figures suggest there has been little change in either the location of deprivation, or its severity, since 2004.

1.2.2 Health Inequalities

The contrasts in people's health and their average life expectancy show the impact of deprivation and its localised geography all too clearly.

On average in 2007, almost 30% of households in East Kent lived in the most deprived neighbourhoods, as measured by the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation. This compares to a figure of 20% across Kent. In Thanet, the most deprived group accounts for 49% of households. Equivalent figures for child poverty show for instance, that in Thanet, 25% of children are growing up in families experiencing income deprivation while 21% of those in Shepway are likewise affected. Overall in Kent the figure is 17%.

The impact of poverty on people's health and wellbeing is complex and difficult to measure. But the fact is that East Kent trails behind the national average against a range of measures reflecting health status: inequality in the wellbeing of its population is the key contributory factor here and has to be confronted.

Changes in the age profile of East Kent's population imply further challenges for health and social care services. Those aged over 40 now account for more than half of the population, with an especially marked growth in the number aged 40 – 59 and over 85. This trend will be highlighted still further by the projected relative decrease in the number of young people living in the area. The use of parts of East Kent (especially Thanet) to house vulnerable people from elsewhere in the South East further increases pressure on support agencies locally.

1.2.3 Qualifications and prospects

The relatively low levels of educational attainment achieved by local people and their corresponding lack of skills, compounds economic underperformance and associated poverty.

Employment projections forecast the strongest demand for people with intermediate and higher level skills. The concern in East Kent is that too many residents currently lack skills at the right level to respond to these labour market changes and will thus struggle to compete effectively. This is borne out by current evidence:

- **Less than a quarter of working age residents have qualifications equivalent to degree level, compared to 31% in the South East and the long term national target of 40%;**



- East Kent has about 72,800 working age residents with qualifications at or below GCSE level. Of these, almost half (47%) have no qualifications at all;
- Forecast labour demand to 2014 suggests that of the net annual demand of 11,300 jobs in East Kent, 61% would require a skill level equivalent to at least A level standard with only 13% being available to new entrants qualified below GCSE level;
- Although increasing, literacy and numeracy performance in schools remains below the Kent and English average; and
- Almost 1 in 7 working age residents in East Kent claim welfare benefits. This proportion has altered little between 2000 and 2007.

Improving the skills of East Kent residents to the point where they can compete more effectively for new local jobs, will require long-term effort. If this challenge is not addressed, then levels of benefit dependency will remain as high as they have proved to be over the last few years. Ultimately, this will discourage continued inward investment and undermine economic prosperity in the future.

1.2.4 Economic opportunity

Economic growth in East Kent lagged behind both the South East and the UK throughout much of the 1990s and despite some higher rates of growth in the early 2000s, this has slowed again recently.

There are few major single-site employers in East Kent, although Pfizer UK at Sandwich is a notable exception. The local business structure is not particularly distinctive, with some of the largest single employers being public service providers, or major supermarket retailers.

In the East Kent employment mix, jobs in 'low value' sectors (i.e. those with a low level of output per worker, such as retailing and hotels and catering) are slightly over-represented, while the reverse is true of jobs in high-value sectors, e.g. business services and finance. In addition, those jobs in low value sectors have seen relatively faster growth over the past decade.

1.2.5 Fear of crime

People's concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour tend to reflect how they see the quality of their surroundings and the 'image' of their locality. This is certainly true in East Kent. For instance, in Thanet, where measures of deprivation are markedly high (see paragraph 1.2.2), public fears about anti-social behaviour and feeling safe rank among the lowest in Kent, despite having fallen steadily over the past year.

East Kent also experiences a relatively high proportion of young people entering the youth justice system. Reducing the number of young people who are at risk of offending is a key challenge for East Kent in view of the impact on families, the community at large and its prospects for future success.

1.2.6 Access to quality housing

With its attractive living environment and good communications, East Kent is well placed to attract investment in residential development. There are 10,100 new homes currently planned in Dover alone.

Affordability is however a key issue, reflecting historically low earnings. Equally important is the quality of the older housing stock, especially privately rented homes in the larger coastal towns.

- The average house price to income ratio in East Kent is 5.3, compared to 4.7 in the South East as a whole;
- There are almost 12,500 households in East Kent, which are regarded as being in fuel poverty; and
- The proportion of all homes failing the fitness standard in Dover, Shepway and Thanet, are ranked respectively 1st, 3rd and 6th highest in the South East with an average of 11% unfit homes per district, against a regional mean of 4%.

Inevitably, the worst housing conditions are concentrated in those areas where the need for regeneration is greatest and where the shortage of high quality homes has a disproportionately severe impact on community prospects. Without further concentrated effort, poor quality, low value housing will continue to attract further deprivation to parts of the area.

The challenge for East Kent therefore will be to balance the housing market more effectively, ensuring a stronger supply of good quality homes at an affordable cost, without causing undue damage to the character of the area.

1.2.7 Tourist perceptions

East Kent has much to offer visitors, but it suffers from a low quality image. Tourism in East Kent is generally short-stay and low-spend. At an average of 2.8 nights, the length of a tourist trip to Kent is shorter than its equivalent elsewhere in the South East, and much shorter than one to the West Country, where Devon typically attracts visitors for 4 nights and Cornwall, 5.6 nights.

The average spend per night in Kent as a whole is £48.70, compared with £61.98 in the South East.



1.2.8 Transport

Road traffic in East Kent presents a paradox. On one hand it provides essential commercial links with the rest of the UK and the expanding markets of continental Europe. On the other, growing traffic congestion creates frequent problems, particularly around Canterbury.

The figures for freight movements along East Kent's two road traffic arteries speak for themselves:

- M20 (2005 actual) – 3.2 million truck movements, 11,000 a day at peak times.
- M20 (2034 projected) – 6 million truck movements, 20,000 a day at peak times.
- M2/A2 (estimated) – 470,000 truck movements annually.

Efficient transport links are vital if East Kent is to support much needed regeneration and to make the most of its unique gateway location.

1.4 Wider Perspectives

1.4.1 A Global Context

Over the next 20 years, East Kent is bound to feel the effects of increasingly rapid worldwide changes – economic, environmental and social. Some of these will have a significant impact on people's lives:

- **Climate change is a critical global threat and this has obvious implications for East Kent's exposed and partially low lying geography. But it can also offer opportunities as economic, technological and other systems adjust to environmental pressures.**

- Structural changes in the world's economy, characterised by vigorous growth rates in emerging markets such as China and India, are likely to continue despite the current recession. This may displace some employment in more traditional sectors like manufacturing but open up new economic opportunities.
- Despite the rate of increase in commodity prices having slackened in the short-term, future resource scarcity is inevitable as the trend of rapidly growing economies overseas continues. What is more, such scarcity tends to have a greater impact on the poorest members of society.
- People can be expected to become more mobile in response to worldwide environmental and economic pressures. East Kent is close to a number of points of entry to the UK and some demographic change is therefore likely over the next 20 years, increasing the area's cultural diversity. Such changes need to be planned for positively and accommodated sensitively if disparity and disharmony are to be avoided.

1.4.2 A UK Context

Similarly, national trends and characteristics will play a significant part in shaping East Kent's future:

- **The impact of an ageing UK population will be felt disproportionately in East Kent, with possible skills shortages in the workforce and additional pressures on health and social care.**
- Levels of income inequality in the UK remain relatively high against the 29 other countries in

the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), despite easing slightly since 2000. It will be important to reduce these inequalities still further in East Kent where there are already some entrenched and potentially damaging disparities.

- The current economic downturn and its impact on property values is bound to disrupt plans for regeneration, whether housing, commercial or leisure based, over the next few years. The challenge for East Kent will be how best to position itself so that such plans are primed to move forward once economic conditions are more favourable.

1.4.3 An East Kent Context

Neighbouring areas of Kent are set for growth on a significant scale. There are 31,000 new homes planned in Ashford as well as the even more ambitious expansion of the Kent Thameside and the Thames Gateway developments. Over the next 20 years, East Kent will need to be clear about how best to respond to take account of growth in its neighbouring communities.

Plans for major expansion in East Kent's national and international transport networks – by road, sea and air – are set to have a dramatic impact on its economy and outlook over the next 20 years. But this impact will have to be carefully managed to ensure that the benefits of prosperity are not simply cancelled out by the cost to East Kent's environment.

East Kent – the Vision

By 2030, East Kent will have blended the best of its coastal location, landscape, culture and heritage to build a lasting beacon of success for the benefit of all its communities.

It will take pride in:

- Educational excellence that supports ambition, achievement and skills, for the workplace and beyond (good schools, colleges and universities);
- Economic enterprise that is confident, resilient and with the support of local higher and further education institutions, innovative enough to seize opportunities presented by new markets and emerging technology;
- Fairer, stronger and healthier communities, in resurgent coastal towns, enjoying high quality homes and an enviable quality of life;
- A high quality, integrated transport network, with reduced congestion and pollution, offering a wide choice of accessible transport to all sections of the community;
- A distinctive profile as a visitor destination, with a wealth of cultural treasures, sustaining a thriving tourist economy;
- The priceless asset of its unique natural environment and a commitment to protect it for future generations.

These aims are our work themes.





Theme 1 – Education



What will it look like?

By 2030, East Kent will have an outstanding, closely integrated system of education which spans early years to adulthood. From the outset, children’s services and education will consistently nurture young people; fire their imaginations, foster their ambitions and equip them with the self-confidence, skills and qualifications they need in order to prosper.

Schools will be making a major contribution to this success and will have been transformed through initiatives such as Building Skills for the Future programme.

Outreach programmes will be promoting opportunities for education in the community. They will help to raise peoples’ aspirations, increase their potential stake in local economic success and bring together groups that might otherwise be marginalised, including the elderly, ethnic minorities and those seeking to return to work.

There will be strong links between businesses and the education system, including Further and Higher Education, ensuring the delivery of relevant courses, work experience and key employment skills; attracting greater numbers of students and retaining graduates in local careers.

What to prioritise?

Breaking Down Barriers to Learning

Programmes to modernise schools, to transform their performance, or to promote learning in the community require a contribution from many agencies if they are to succeed. Peoples’ capacity and eagerness to learn will depend on them having good health, secure housing, crime free surroundings and a choice of complementary activities.

The East Kent LSP will accordingly give priority to schemes that promote a positive

environment for educational excellence, change perceptions and break down barriers to learning.

Responding To Demand

Education providers and local employers will need to strike the right balance between curriculum content and business needs. If they do, it will ensure that students are more ‘work-ready’, giving employers a better pool of talent to choose from and encouraging more highly

skilled young people to remain locally and pursue the more fulfilling careers on offer. This will require close co-ordination between schools, further and higher education institutions and business leaders and will need to be sustained over sufficient time to yield opportunities for highly skilled and better paid local employment. Kent County Council will clearly have a pivotal role to play in this but support from other partners will be essential.

Promoting the value of work experience through internships, shadowing schemes and sandwich courses, as well as the development of basic skills, such as communications, teamwork and entrepreneurship, will boost employability and attract inward business investment.

A culture of lifelong learning

Educational excellence in East Kent must apply to learning at all levels in order to sustain economic success and share its benefits widely. As well as meeting the requirements of new economic and technological developments, it must reach out to more deprived groups and engage them in the learning process, if East Kent’s prosperity is to be inclusive.

Furthermore, with an ageing population, it will be essential to provide older groups in the workforce with new skills to keep them engaged in the labour market.

In essence, training and learning programmes will need to be broad, flexible and easily available to all.

The East Kent Skills and Employability Plan outlines a series of additional, broader priorities to addressing skills and employability issues in East Kent.

Theme 2 – Economic



What will it look like?

By 2030 East Kent will have a thriving and diverse local economy, well adapted to the needs and character of the area and drawing upon:

- A living environment of unparalleled quality;
- Strong academic and vocational foundations, with robust links to local business needs;
- A range of employment sources blending both the well-established and the newly emerging;

- Pioneering research and development work undertaken by higher education institutions and Pfizer UK;
- Flexible planning structures that allow a swift business response to changing economic conditions.

What to prioritise?

Building on Well Established Enterprise

East Kent's strategic location ensures that its transport links are an enduring source of employment and wealth, even though the technology of transportation may change. Similarly, its abundant local attractions will continue to appeal to visitors and sustain tourism. And imaginative, newly emerging creative industries are likely to add further interest for visitors.

Supporting the proven strength and reliability of these business sectors and as in the case of Kent International Airport, pressing for their further development, will be a key priority of the East Kent LSP.

Exploiting New Business Opportunities

In addition to an excellent quality of life and exceptional transport connections, East Kent already benefits from an expanding higher education sector with strong European links. And it has a prime coastal location to attract emerging technologies such as those behind green energy generation and marine engineering. Bringing these factors together to provide sources of employment for the future and matching the skills of the workforce to changing business demands, will be a consistent priority over the next 20 years.

A Co-ordinated Agenda for Growth

Economic underperformance has in the past frustrated progress in East Kent. From now on, the area will need to seize every opportunity to attract clusters of businesses that complement each other and best match local differences

It will not be enough in the future for individual local authorities simply to allocate sufficient employment and related land in their development frameworks. They will need instead to join with others in a single conversation to plan collectively for growth and its implications across East Kent as a whole.



Theme 3 – Communities



What will it look like?

By 2030 East Kent’s coastal towns will be transformed into thriving communities with strong local ties. The current inequalities in prosperity, prospects and living conditions will have receded significantly.

Imbalances in the health and life expectancy of East Kent’s citizens will have been substantially redressed

through a renewed focus on public health; benefit dependency will be on the wane; people will feel far less troubled by crime and anti-social behaviour; poor quality, badly managed housing will have been upgraded and will no longer represent a magnet for further disadvantage; communities will be at ease with their natural diversity.

What is more, local people will have greater self-confidence and sense of being in control, since they will be more positively engaged in determining the scope and nature of the public services that they receive.

East Kent will retain more of its young people as they enter employment and more people will move into the area, drawn by its exceptional living environment, good schools, high quality public services, well-targeted housing supply, and connections to London, the South East and Europe.

What to prioritise?

Coastal Regeneration

East Kent already boasts strong, prosperous communities, but there are some acutely deprived neighbourhoods, especially in Dover, Folkestone and Margate. Given the current economic conditions, there is every likelihood that the symptoms of that deprivation, such as the take up of work-related benefits, will become more severe.

Regenerating East Kent’s coastal towns and re-asserting the aspirations of their residents has be a priority for the East Kent LSP; if not, these communities will be further marginalised by the success of others and will struggle to move forward when the economic cycle

turns. Regeneration on this scale will be complex but should reflect a number of simple principles:

- **Community involvement from the outset**
- **Collaboration between key public agencies, voluntary bodies and community groups**
- **Supporting independence and stable employment**
- **Upgrading poor housing**

Public Services for the 21st Century

The next 20 years will see ever growing expectations about the quality and scope public services, not just from individual citizens but from government, businesses and investors. Good schools, effective healthcare, safe communities and smart surroundings will rightly be assumed to come as standard.

Responding to this level of expectation will be an essential priority in East Kent, not only to address the, in places acute, needs of the local population but also to compete with other areas in attracting inflows of highly skilled workers and high value businesses.

Collaboration between public agencies to achieve shared targets, which is at the heart of partnership like the Local Area Agreement (Kent Agreement 2) will be an essential component in delivering the quality of public services required to meet modern expectations. Likewise, the role which the voluntary and community sectors can play, in supplementing services offered by public providers will need to be better understood and better deployed.

Theme 4 – Transport



What will it look like?

By 2030 East Kent will be reaping the benefit of an expanded transport network which closely integrates its unique rail, air, sea and road connections. As envisaged in the South East Plan, there will be improved access to complement opportunities for major development; more effective management of the flow of international traffic and less transport pressure on the World Heritage city of Canterbury.

Benefits will include greater mobility for businesses, wider opportunities for employment, reduced congestion and less environmental damage.

The High Speed One Rail Services (HS1) will be effectively connected with the wider public transport network, offering all residents, even those in rural areas, the benefit of reduced journey times to London and the South East.

Furthermore, the expansion of Kent International Airport, (KIA), including a dedicated link with the HS1 and served by a Parkway rail station, will see its passenger numbers from the UK and Europe, rise from 16,000 to around 6 million annually, whilst freight traffic will increase some 1500% to 500,000 tonnes.

The Port of Dover will have been expanded to maintain its position as the UK's busiest seaport with a doubling of passenger numbers to around 30 million a year, a 90% increase in freight capacity and a cruise line industry to rival that of Southampton. In addition, the Dover waterfront will be developed to offer retail and catering outlets, as well as other commercial space providing local jobs.

The City of Canterbury will protect and enhance its position in the South East Plan as a regional transport hub and will successfully manage the transport challenges of the millions of visitors each year and the thousands of students who attend universities in the city.

What to prioritise?

Integrating the High Speed One Services

High speed rail services are coming to East Kent and will bring enormous potential benefits in their wake. The priority for the EKLSP will be to ensure that the network is closely integrated with wider public transport networks and is affordable.

Crucially, the HS1 will also need to provide direct connections with other key transportation hubs in the area, especially Kent International Airport as its business starts to expand. It will be a priority of the EKLSP to press for such a connection at an early date.

Investment in Strategic Transport Developments

Plans to expand Kent International Airport and the Port of Dover are rightly ambitious and have the potential for major economic dividends through investment and jobs. As part of an integrated travel network they could also help reduce congestion on the roads and consequent environmental damage.

Support for these projects, the associated infrastructure to complement them and the measures needed to manage their environmental impact, will therefore be an early priority of the EKLSP.

Improving Travel Choice

Plans to expand East Kent's transport capacity to cope with proposed housing and employment growth carry both environmental and social risks: traffic congestion, noise pollution and air quality may suffer and more isolated or otherwise disadvantaged communities may be unable to share the economic dividends.

An efficient public transport system will lie at the heart of the transport network and improvements must operate in tandem with the expansion of larger scale transport infrastructure if the true benefits of the latter are to be realised. Bringing people to East Kent is only the beginning; the benefits to economic growth will stem from their ability to move around easily and cheaply within the area.

The lives of residents in East Kent's attractive rural communities, together with the range of jobs and leisure opportunities available to them, will be greatly enhanced by regular, affordable and efficient bus services connecting them with other towns and villages.

Investing in attractive and direct walking and cycling routes will also be needed to help reduce dependence on the car.



Theme 5 – Visitor Destination



What will it look like?

By 2030, East Kent will be a thriving tourist destination; its unique mix of coastline and countryside, together with a rich historical heritage and vibrant culture will attract visitors from around the world. The revival of its coastal resorts and the integrated marketing of its attractions

will have boosted visitor numbers, average expenditure and length of stay, supporting an additional 10,200 jobs in the tourist economy.

East Kent’s contribution to the enjoyment of the creative arts will be recognized and celebrated far beyond its boundaries. The quality of the cultural experiences on offer in the performing, visual and literary arts will be as familiar a part of the East Kent landscape as the White Cliffs and Canterbury Cathedral are today.

The tourism sector will continue to offer seasonal employment opportunities to East Kent’s large student base. However, the strength of vocational learning within tourism will also provide a career pathway for those currently struggling to enter the labour market; moving employees from basic skills training through to intermediate-level qualifications with a strong focus on developing interpersonal skills.

Furthermore, the attraction of East Kent as a place to live will be widely acknowledged. Its renown will be a source of pride and celebration for its citizens, fostering stronger local ties and a self-confident sense of place.

What to prioritise?

Improving and Integrating Visitor Attractions

East Kent has many tourism assets with broad appeal for potential visitors. Some of those attractions, particularly in its coastal resorts, are however past their best. Nevertheless, the 90 miles of seafront that fringes East Kent remains a huge blessing to tourism and the challenge for the EKLSP will be to restore its quality and modernise its points of interest.

It will therefore be a priority to raise the profile of the East Kent coast, as part of a well integrated and strongly marketed visitor experience, attracting greater numbers of domestic and international tourists, and increasing their length of stay.

Harnessing Opportunities for Employment and Skills

Tourism jobs can mean low skills, low wages and seasonality. There is an opportunity however to exploit tourism as an entry point to the labour market. It could function as a ‘skills escalator’, engaging with those that are finding it hard to get into employment, boosting their experience and skills through in-work support and training and equipping them to progress to more rewarding and sustainable careers in the visitor and service economies.

Protecting and Promoting the Environment

There is potential conflict between greater numbers of visitors and the quality of East Kent’s natural environment, and safeguarding it against possible congestion, pollution and degradation associated with tourism will accordingly be a priority. On the other hand, tourism itself can help raise public awareness of the area’s unique landscape, sensitive habitats and fragile biodiversity, thus bolstering public support behind the EKLSP’s commitment to its protection.

Theme 6 – Environment



What will it look like?

By 2030, the benefits of East Kent's economic success will have been brought into balance with the value of its natural environment. The importance of this balance will be understood and supported by a broad range of local interests and what is more, local planning and policy making will be designed to ensure that it endures.

Any development that is needed to support economic and community progress will be designed to best reflect the character, function and scale of its surroundings. The location of significant new developments will be considered across existing local authority boundaries, to ensure that local distinctiveness is properly reflected and needless environmental cost avoided.

East Kent's many designated areas of particular landscape, scientific and wildlife interest will be managed more collaboratively, stressing their interdependence and strengthening their capacity to withstand development pressures. And by sharing environmental data and good practice, they will help identify and promote further conservation projects and innovation.

What to prioritise?

The outstanding natural environment found in East Kent's coast, countryside and towns is fundamental to sustaining a high quality of life for the future. It must be valued for its own sake and as a major contributor to the area's prosperity. The EKLSP will therefore need to develop an integrated plan for environmental protection and enhancement and to support investment in it.

The East Kent Local Strategic Partnership is uniquely placed to bring together and co-ordinate efforts to improve and enhance East Kent's landscape and wildlife. It will be a plan priority to work together to identify and increase awareness and understanding of the sub-region's green and blue infrastructure and to develop a plan, which will ensure that East Kent's natural environment is conserved and enhanced for its own sake and for the benefit of future generations.





How will we deliver the Sustainable Communities Strategy?

The document which you have just read is both ambitious and far-reaching and the delivery of the SCS will pose real challenges for those involved. Equally we know that if we get it right, East Kent will benefit from the many rewards that come from 'lighting the way to success'.

Initially we shall be developing action plans to ensure that we are successful in delivering the SCS. These action plans, grouped around the themes identified in the strategy, will identify how we can achieve the SCS, not just in the short-term (3 to 5 years) but also in the long-term (15 years +), by identifying the significant projects and activities which we will need to undertake to succeed or by highlighting the barriers which we need to overcome.

We shall be careful not to duplicate what others do, but seek to influence, co-ordinate or commission the activities we need to deliver our Vision. We shall also be careful to measure our success in meeting our objectives and be fair in identifying where we make progress or not.

The action plans must also be flexible enough to respond to the social, economic and environmental changes that will take place, locally, nationally and globally during the next twenty years or so. That is why they will be reviewed annually and updated to meet the changes which are sure to occur across this long time period.

You will be able to find all the documents relating to the delivery of the East Kent Sustainable Communities Strategy and its action plans on our website.

www.eastkentlsp.org.uk

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