

Growing Sustainable Communities - 2008

It is two years since the 'Growing Sustainable communities – An Update on Progress in North Kent and Medway' report was published. Tremendous progress has been made in that time. What were just plans then are a reality now, and the people living and working in North Kent are seeing the benefits. Since 2006:

- passengers from the new Ebbsfleet International station can speed to Paris in little more than 2 hours
- businesses have taken up space at the Nucleus in Dartford and at the Medway Innovation Centre at Rochester
- the first residents have moved into their new homes at Springhead Park in Ebbsfleet Valley and at the Bridge in Dartford
- students have embarked on foundation degrees at the newly opened Kent Science Resource Centre at the Kent Science Park in Swale whilst others can now study in the fabulous new Drill Hall library on the Universities at Medway campus
- motorists are benefiting from the newly built stretch of the A2 in Kent Thameside, the major improvements to the M25/A2 junction at Darenth and the new Sheppey Crossing in Swale
- spectators can now enjoy watching Dartford Football Club play at their fine new stadium at Princes Park

- local people are leaving their cars at home and choosing to travel on Fastrack, the multi award winning Bus Rapid Transit system in Kent Thameside
- families can enjoy a day out at the new Dickens World entertainment complex and multiplex cinema on Chatham Maritime

But we are not standing still - other new initiatives are about to come to fruition:

- through the Thames Gateway Parklands initiative the partners in North Kent have developed a set of strategic projects which will bring major improvements to the quality of the environment in North Kent.
- we are strengthening our partnership working, which is key to successful delivery. The local authorities and other agencies in North Kent are developing a Multi Area Agreement (MAA) which will identify ways in which they can achieve more by working together, across local authority boundaries, than they can achieve working independently.

The Thames Gateway Kent Partnership is itself evolving. The Partnership has been recognised by SEEDA as one of 13 strategic sub-regional partnerships across the South East region. TGKP is gaining a sharper economic focus and strengthening private sector representation on its Board.



As 2008 draws to a close the Partnership finds itself in a very different economic climate from that which existed back in 2006. The current economic slowdown will have an impact in North Kent as it will in all areas of the country. However, the Thames Gateway is a long term project over 20 or more years. It will go through periods of slowdown and periods of faster growth. The priorities will no doubt need to be reviewed from time to time but the overall vision and objectives remain as valid as ever.

And there are good reasons for believing that the Thames Gateway, including Thames Gateway Kent, will be able to weather the storm and perform relatively better than some other areas of the country. For example:

- the massive public investment which has gone into the area, and which will continue in coming years, will help sustain the economy and encourage firms to invest here
- the emphasis on securing high quality in the Gateway, for example, in terms of design and public space, will continue to make new developments attractive to buyers and investors
- the arrival of South Eastern High Speed services into St. Pancras in 2009 will be a huge boost for the area, not just around Ebbsfleet but throughout North Kent
- the continued emphasis on putting the right infrastructure into place to support growth and regeneration and to build sustainable communities.

So we are confident that Thames Gateway Kent will continue to make progress during difficult times, and in more favourable conditions in the future. Our priority is to ensure that we work with partners across all sectors and make most effective use of the means and resources at our disposal to continue to shape Thames Gateway Kent into **“the place to be”**.



Drill Hall Library - Alan Reed



Fastrack



New Sheppey Crossing - Darius Wilson



Upnor Castle