

30 September 2013

By email to:

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[www.tgkp.org](http://www.tgkp.org)

Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP  
Minister for Business and Enterprise  
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
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Dear Minister

### **Review of Assisted Areas, 2014-20**

I welcome the opportunity to respond on behalf of the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership to the first stage of the Government's consultation on the review of Assisted Areas.

The Thames Gateway Kent Partnership (TGKP) is a private/public partnership that brings together senior business and local authority leaders to help to identify, promote and deliver sustainable economic growth in North Kent – Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Swale.

We welcome the Government's focus in this Review on economic opportunity and on support for manufacturing.

Specifically, TGKP wishes to express its strong support for the cases being put forward through the South East LEP, for the designation of further Assisted Areas in Medway and Swale – the Medway-Swale Arc – and in Gravesham and Thurrock.

Both areas are part of the Thames Gateway - a national priority area for growth. In its response to the Heseltine Review, the Government reaffirmed its recognition of the importance of the Gateway when it agreed with Lord Heseltine that the Thames Gateway project is crucial to future UK competitiveness.

In addition, companies in both areas benefit from Regional Growth Fund investment through the TIGER (Thames Gateway Innovation Growth and Enterprise) scheme, which would help to add value to Assisted Area designation.

Medway and Swale – the Medway-Swale Arc

I would highlight the following additional points, in support of this proposed designation:

- the area includes 17 wards in the manufacturing core of the Thames Gateway, some of the most important concentrations of manufacturing activity in the South East (over 20% of North Kent's GVA is derived from manufacturing), for example the Eurolink business park, currently home to over 250 companies, employing an estimated 6,500 people and Gillingham Business Park, which accommodates 3,200 jobs with companies including Delphi Diesel Systems, as well as two of the key innovation hubs in North Kent – the Medway Innovation Centre and the Kent Science Park.
- the Medway Superhub, at the heart of the proposed new area, is a key strategic investment opportunity for North Kent as a major centre for offshore renewable energy, and is already designated as a CORE area by Government (Centre for Offshore Renewable Energy). Assisted Area status would place the Kent CORE on a similar footing to the other CORE areas in England that already have Assisted Areas or Enterprise Zone designation, and would improve its potential to compete for investment.

Gravesham and Thurrock

Gravesham and Thurrock are important centres for manufacturing and logistics in the heart of the Thames Gateway, with significant opportunities coming forward with the development of London Gateway.

The proposed Assisted Area includes four growth hubs in Thurrock. Within Gravesham the area contains Northfleet Embankment, west of Gravesend, which has substantial employment potential, the Port of London's centre of operations for the Thames, and High Speed One direct services.

Partners in North Kent work proactively to promote growth in this part of the Thames Gateway. Assisted Area designation for the two areas proposed in North Kent would be an important catalyst in facilitating and promoting business growth, through new start-ups, partnerships between existing companies and others outside the area, inward investment as well as indigenous growth.

Finally, Assisted Area status would help ensure that local residents and businesses benefit fully from the economic opportunities and potential in these areas.

I hope you will be able to take these views into consideration in drawing up the revised Assisted Areas map for 2014 to 2020.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Smith', written in a cursive style.

**Rob Bennett**  
Chairman  
Thames Gateway Kent Partnership