



Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Board

Approved Minutes of the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Board Meeting held on Monday 8th June 2020 via videoconference

Present:

Board members and observers

Rob Bennett, BBP Regeneration / SQW (Chair) (RB)
Cllr Monique Bonney, Swale Borough Council (MB)
Cllr John Burden, Gravesham Borough Council (JB)
Cllr Martin Cox, Maidstone Borough Council (MC)
Cllr Mike Whiting, Kent County Council (MW)
Cllr Alan Jarrett, Medway Council (AJ)
Mark Heeley, Tarmac (MH)
Carole Barron, University of Kent (CB)
Ian Piper, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (IP)
Shona Johnstone, Homes and Communities Agency (SJ)

Also present:

Stuart Bobby, Gravesham Borough Council (SB)
Alison Broom, Maidstone Borough Council (AB)
Neil Davies, Medway Council (ND)
David Godfrey, Kent CC (DG)
Richard Longman, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership (RL)
Duncan McClintock, Environment Agency (DM)
Matthew Norwell, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership (MN)
Emma Wiggins, Swale Borough Council (EW)

Apologies:

Cllr Jeremy Kite, Dartford Borough Council
Kamal Aggarwal, Thomson, Snell and Passmore
Daniel Ghinn, Creation Interactive Ltd
Robert Goodman, Land Securities/Bluewater
Paul Jackson, Dovetail Games
David Glead, North Kent College
Rehman Chishti, Member of Parliament

Adam Bryan, South East Local Enterprise Partnership
Graham Harris, Dartford Borough Council
Sally Harvey, Environment Agency
Iain McNab, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
David Smith, Kent County Council

Action

Item 1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chairman (RB) welcomed the Board and other participants via MS Teams and noted apologies for absence as shown above. On behalf of the Board, RB noted the sad news of Mark Radford's death and passed our condolences to colleagues at Swale BC. RB also noted this would be Mark Heeley's last Board meeting ahead of his retirement and expressed thanks for his contribution to TGKP over several years.

Item 2. Minutes of the Board meeting held on 9th March 2020 – Paper 200608(1)

- 2.1. The Minutes were agreed. On matters arising not on the agenda:

- 2.1.1. MN advised that the idea of re-naming and re-branding the partnership was still live. He mentioned two suggestions to date: "North Kent Together" and "The North Kent Growth Board". In a brief discussion it was agreed that any revised branding should be distinctive but capable of co-existing with the Thames Estuary branding work. **Action: MN would explore branding further against the backdrop of the Estuary work.**
- 2.1.2. TGKP's response to the Lower Thames Crossing consultation had been submitted, raising a number of issues for follow up with Highways England. MB reiterated there was not overwhelming support for LTC: there remained concerns

MN

about the environmental impacts and the need for a comprehensive infrastructure package across Kent.

Item 3. The Thames Estuary Growth Board and Envoy – Update – Paper 200608(2)

- 3.1. MN led the Board through his paper. The draft Action Plan was close to being shared with a wider audience. Kate Willard (KW) had already discussed it individually with Kent representatives on the Growth Board. The outline is still pitched at a high level. CB suggest that as the next level of detail is work through it would be good to have more attention to the higher education dimension. MH queried “*the* first place to invest” ambition and felt this would be very challenging within the envisaged two years. MN acknowledged this but pointed out it reflected the Envoy’s ambition to set a high bar. ND raised a query about governance in the references to an Employment and Skills *and Financing* Board: was financing a new aspect? MN advised that they were conscious of the need not to duplicate the work of sub-regional employment and skills boards and similar, such as the Kent & Medway Skills Commission. This was intended to be very specifically about skills in the creative and digital sectors and how funding and provider response could be tailored in the Thames Estuary area.
- 3.2. Odgers had been commissioned to recruit private sector members. The call for proposals closed at the end of May and there were around 20 high quality applications. Jeremy Kite would be on the appraisal panel. Shortlisting would take place at the end of week beginning 15 June and interviews held later in June. The aim was to have the final Action Plan, the composition of the new Board and the Communications Package all launched together in July. KW was keen that new Board members should be able to have individual conversations with Kent Leaders etc. as part of their induction. ND and others commented that they had been impressed by the calibre of candidates.
- 3.3. Communications – the media consultancy MSQ had been appointed to lead Thames Estuary work on campaigns, responsive press and PR, website, branding, copywriting and other marketing collateral. MN shared an extract from their presentation (attached) focusing on the core messages. He drew attention to the emphasis on “hydro-economy” – this was not a widely-developed concept and there could be an opportunity for the Growth Board to ‘own’ it. The overall strapline was “We’re in a good place”, with subsidiary messaging to highlight different aspects – live, work, visit, invest, etc. The emerging package had been endorsed by the Growth Board. They were keen to generate a new library of visuals and will be asking LA press teams for images but also generating original material. In discussion, AJ, MB and others emphasized a desire to see more green, fewer grey images. **Action: LA Comms teams to be mobilized to share suitable images.** IP welcomed the brand’s departure from a public sector look, and asked what will be protocols for using/referring to material. MN advised that Paul Morris at Local London will be coordinating to ensure that it works for/with all stakeholders so that they can use it as well as TEGB itself. TGKP will continued to be involved in preparations for the launch process and will keep the TGKP Board updated – **Action: MN.**
- 3.4. MN also reported that the Growth Board had briefly discussed the topic of housing and invited feedback from colleagues who participated. AJ commented that the Growth Board was fully aware of the million homes figure included in the Growth Commission’s report, but the rationale for this was weak. The Growth Board had recognized that housing was primarily a matter for local authorities but that it was important to capture the overall picture of local delivery ambitions as part of the Thames Estuary narrative.
- 3.5. On support and other arrangements, ND was impressed by the energy shown by KW but was disappointed at Government’s tardiness in designating a Ministerial Champion. KW had paid tribute to the support she was getting from TGKP, Opportunity South Essex and

MN

Local London and ND reiterated thanks to MN and RL for their support. He queried whether there would be a reimbursement arrangement worked out in the medium- to longer-term MN confirmed that they will be looking at reimbursement arrangements and what tripartite support looks like in the longer term. He also clarified that whilst LB Redbridge was managing the Communications contract with MSQ, Thurrock remained Accountable Body and conduit for funding from MHCLG.

Item 4. Kent & Medway Draft Economic Recovery Plan – paper 200608(3) and appendices

- 4.1. The Chairman welcomed David Godfrey to speak on this item and conveyed apologies from David Smith and Ross Gill (the paper’s author) for being unavailable to join this meeting. The two documents – economic analysis and draft recovery plan – had already been shared with Kent Leaders and at KMEP. The Kent Resilience Forum provides the framework for devising response to recovery from the Covid-19 crisis, but most activity would be initiated at local level. RG will be updating the analysis with more recently published data. The final iteration of the plan would be completed by the end of June (next iteration on 28th), and the Forum would be seeking endorsement from Leaders and KMEP. DG would welcome feedback on the recommendations in the recovery plan, particularly from a North Kent perspective and on how to support key sectors affected. **Action: All.** **RG**

- 4.2. CB welcomed the analysis but pointed out that the impacts on the HE sector – particularly in Medway as well as in Canterbury – went well beyond the loss of international students mentioned. Other impacts included loss of events, conferences, accommodation rental fees and private sector student lets, student spend in the wider economy etc. The University of Kent was putting together a paper for SELEP (there would be a short item at the SELEP Strategic Board on 12 June). Universities UK have done some modelling, which CB will share – **Action: CB.** The impact is also not just affecting young people: Kent has a diverse student population age-wise as well as in other respects, e.g. the adults re-training in the healthcare sector. **CB**

- 4.3. AB referred to the presentation by Heather Carey of the Work Foundation at the last Thames Estuary Growth Day (October 2019) looking at different models of working and, in particular, how technology will change where and how we work. She asked whether we could link together those futurology insights with capturing experience from Lockdown and what this might mean e.g. what sort of buildings will companies need, how will this affect place-shaping. **Action: DG/KCC.** RB commented that SQW’s subsidiary Oxford Innovations could also share insights from some analysis they have been doing about business parks – **Action: RB.** MN reported that conversations were already underway with Heather Carey (now part of an organisation called “Work Advance”). He added that we shouldn’t wait for Government to take the initiative or shape the agenda – they are desperate for some good ideas. So the emphasis should be on being more proactive and putting forward propositions and initiatives, especially at North Kent level. **Action: All to consider and share ideas keeping both TGKP and DG in the loop.** **DG**
RB
All

- 4.4. AJ drew attention to the implications for local authorities who faced a £225 million funding gap: authorities will need help from Government in order to be able to provide help to others. MB suggested there would be a fundamental shift in working patterns and this needed to be recognized through increased attention to digital connectivity especially in rural areas. In North Kent there were also major issues for the hospitality and accommodation sectors. There was scope for a virtuous circle with local people rather than overseas workers providing labour to the agricultural industry, strengthening ties between the rural economy and local residents. There are categories of people not getting help e.g. SME Directors, and those not getting Universal Credit: how can they best be supported? Remote working and learning could revolutionize training participation and

provision, enabling people – particularly those with limited access to training opportunities such as those with caring responsibilities – to re-train outside of normal hours etc. Education institutions would need to adjust their offering.

- 4.5. MW observed that new developments, particularly housing, will have different requirements in future and this could have big implications for what s.106 obligations will need to look at and what infrastructure is needed – e.g. future-proofing with appropriate connectivity, active travel provision etc. KCC would welcome any inputs into some thinking they are doing about this. SJ commented that Homes England is similarly doing some work looking at the future of planning policy in a post-Covid 19 situation.
- 4.6. MB commented that virtual healthcare is demonstrating scope to free up capacity and improve people’s standard of living. There could also be long term shift in travel patterns with fewer people commuting into London, or doing so less often. There must be opportunities to capture some of the capacity and economic potential released into the North Kent economy. MN suggested this could be a critical part of the communications work at Thames Estuary level, showing the potential of the Estuary area’s offer.
- 4.7. MW reported feedback from Locate In Kent about interest from London-based companies in relocating to Kent; and the Chairman commented on some businesses’ need to look for different or additional premises because they could not accommodate their staff with physical distancing measures in place.
- 4.8. The Chairman asked how can North Kent help? DG drew attention to the specific questions in the document but would welcome comments in any form. MW would welcome ideas, especially about what should be done immediately over the next couple of months and rallying forces behind some concrete actions. The recovery plan was a black-and-white framework: it needed local action to provide the colour. **Action: All to provide comments and ideas to DG.**

All

Item 5. Freeports Consultation – paper 200608(4)

- 5.1. MN introduced the discussion by referring to dialogue KW has been having with Government and other contacts about the scope for a Freeport across the Thames Estuary as a whole. Informal feedback indicates no appetite for that at this stage, but there are positive signals about ideas from major players on the Essex side of the Estuary. The issue then for North Kent would be what scope there would be for complementary measures across rest of Estuary that could benefit from Freeport status in Essex. RL’s paper gave some examples of possible opportunities that could enable North Kent to benefit, as well as there being other implications – e.g. housing and regeneration – that might benefit from being looked at in a joined-up way. Complementary measures need not necessarily be directly Freeports related, but this provided an entrée for further conversations and also to shape a TGKP response to the consultation.
- 5.2. CB advocated bringing the conversations together. There were many hundreds of Freeports globally and should therefore be scope to learn from good practice elsewhere. MB was aware of interest from Sheerness but recognized there were significant environmental and heritage constraints. Swale would be happy to be party to further discussions.
- 5.3. MW reminded the Board that at this stage what Government was looking for was responses to its consultation rather than bids. A Freeport somewhere in Kent could be a good thing for the county but we’d need to look carefully at implications. MN acknowledged that thinking about specific scenarios as well as the principles in the

consultation could inform the conversations KW is having the Government, and it was therefore worth doing both things.

- 5.4. IP asked what was known about the evidence around displacement? This seemed a particular risk in a coastal location? RB acknowledged this was a key point: the evidence on past models of Freeports in the UK, e.g. in the North West, had been a mixture of genuine value added and pure displacement. MH asked whether the Port of London were engaged in these discussions and MN confirmed this was the case.
- 5.5. TGKP had a draft response to the consultation prepared and this would be shared at officer level in the first instance, and then brought back to the Board for consideration and endorsement before the deadline of 13 July. This would need to be reviewed to ensure it captured the issues arising in a Thames Estuary context. **Action: RL**

RL

Item 6. TGKP Work Programme Update – paper 200608(5)

- 6.1. The paper was provided mostly for information, but MN was happy to take any questions. CB welcomed the update. AJ suggested it could be useful to have an update on Crossrail 1 to set the context for C2E. RL explained the prevailing view within DfT and TfL in light of budget and timetable over-runs on Crossrail and how this coloured attitudes towards C2E. Without diluting ambition, we had to be careful not to prejudge the outcome of the Connectivity Study by pinning everything on a possible Crossrail extension.

Item 7. AOB

- 7.1. MN reported conversations the team was having with HS1 about how to maximise use of the high speed infrastructure including freight use and investment in rolling stock and network patterns. The Board endorsed MN's proposal to continue those conversations and suggestion of inviting HS1 to a future meeting to discuss. East Kent Leaders were particularly concerned about capacity and were actively engaged. They would be writing to the Minister regarding the additional rolling stock needed to make greater use of line serving that part of the county.
- 7.2. JB Commented that it was important not to weaken political support for Crossrail extension. He also reminded the Board that changes to HS1's operations, particularly increased freight, could impact Dartford and Gravesham residents and were therefore sensitive. RB commented that it used to be the case that many of the freight pathways were owned by European railways and this constrained the scope to use them more fully. **Action: DG offered to explore specifics about the pathway ownership issues.**
- 7.3. London Resort. MN drew attention to the recent press notice promising public consultation in the summer and asked what districts' perceptions were. JB welcomed it as potentially a good thing for the area, particularly in employment terms; this was another reason to keep pressing for rail network improvements, especially C2E and HS1, to provide resilient infrastructure that was not car-dependent. MW echoed these comments: the consultation and subsequent NSIP application would have to be looked at on their merits, but there could be an opportunity for some big infrastructure wins with wider benefits for the area. JB also stressed the scope for better use of the river in connection with London Resort, which could also potentially link to improving cross-river travel access and the earlier Freeports discussion. The Board welcomed the suggestion of having representatives from London Resort present to the next Board meeting if they were going to be in a position to share positive information. **Action: MN to raise with LRCH.**
- 7.4. Next meeting 21st September – timing, venue or media platform to be confirmed.

DG

MN