



Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Board

APPROVED Minutes of the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership Board Meeting held in Darwin Room, Innovation Centre Medway, on 9th March 2020 commencing at 2.30pm

Present:

Board members and observers

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

Also present:

Stuart Bobby, Gravesham Borough Council (SB)
Neil Davies, Medway Council (ND)
David Hughes, Gravesham Borough Council (DH)
Chris Inwood, Maidstone Borough Council (CI)
Richard Longman, TGKP (RL)
Duncan McClintock, Environment Agency (DM)
Matthew Norwell, TGKP (MN)
David Smith, Kent County Council (DS)
Emma Wiggins, Swale Borough Council (EW)
Sarah Dance (Item 3) (SD)
Emma Wilcox (Item 3) (EWx)

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
Ian Piper, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation
Rehman Chishti, Member of Parliament

Alison Broom, Maidstone Borough Council
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
Sarah Nurden, Kent County Council

Action

Item 1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1. The Chairman welcomed those present, particularly Stuart Bobby as incoming Chief Executive of Gravesham BC, Duncan McClintock deputizing for Sally Harvey from the Environment Agency, and Sarah Dance and Emma Wilcox presenting item 3.
- 1.2. The Chairman also thanked David Hughes on behalf of the whole Board for his many years of support and input into TGKP, and wished him well for his forthcoming retirement.

Item 2. Minutes of the Board meeting and AGM held on 10 December 2019 – TGKP 200309(1a) and (1b)

- 2.1. The Minutes of the Board meeting were agreed subject to an amendment to reflect a point raised by Swale BC about the importance of the Thames Estuary Envoy avoiding a conflict of interest between her professional work and any Envoy-related activity on matters such as freight and logistics and waste-to-energy.
- 2.2. On actions and matters arising not on the agenda:
 - 2.2.1. RL had circulated and subsequently submitted the TGKP response to Transport for the South East's consultation on their draft Transport Strategy.

2.2.2. RB, MW, MN and DS had held preliminary discussions about the future of recycled TIGER funding, and dialogue was continuing between MN and DS.

2.2.3. MN had written as requested seeking to delay demolition of the Littlebrook Power Station chimney, but demolition had taken place on schedule.

2.3. The minutes of the AGM were agreed without amendment. On matters arising:

2.3.1. AJ had suggested reviewing the name of the Partnership. The Officers' Group had not yet arrived at recommendations to put back to the Board, but would consider further and make proposals to the Board.

TGKOG

Item 3. Thames Estuary Production Corridor – presentation by Sarah Dance and Emma Wilcox

- 3.1. SD and EWx shared a verbal presentation (visuals circulated with these minutes). Setting the scene for the Production Corridor (TEPC) based on the work undertaken for GLA by Regeneris (now Hatch Regeneris), SD emphasized the economic value (over £3.7bn GVA) and presence of at least 28 creative production hubs. Production space in London was getting squeezed out: major films had to be turned away for lack of studio space, over 14,000 artists were on waiting lists for workshops and studios. Of over 100,000 creative practitioners in the Thames Estuary area, 50% commute out (mainly to London).
- 3.2. The GLA report on TEPC provided the basis for the Creative Estuary (Cultural Development Fund) bid and £4.3m funding awarded by Arts Council England. TEPC was also of interest to the Thames Estuary Envoy: MHCLG had awarded £350k in its response to the Thames Estuary Commission, part of which would be used for sector infrastructure mapping, and the Envoy was seeking further funding to support skills initiatives. LIK were also building on the TEPC work to submit a "High Potential Opportunity" bid to the Department for International Trade. The creative economy was growing faster (5x) than the overall economy but was competing for some of the same talent as other sectors (e.g. electricians, carpenters and certainly digital).
- 3.3. EWx gave a swift outline of the Creative Estuary (CE) work programme. They were keen to avoid the 'left behind' label, but much of the Thames Estuary area shared characteristics with places identified by Government as having low cultural investment. CE was effectively a pilot for Kent & Medway and nationally, and was leading the peer learning network of CDF-funded schemes. Compared to others, CE's £4.3m was spread over a much wider geography, so the funds had to be used smartly. CE covered 7 strands (or "sparks"), of which Estuary 2020 Festival in September/October would be the most visible. Estuary Commissions, over the next two years, would help promote engagement as well as attract attention and support the narrative of places. The 'Places' strand, bringing underused assets into creative use, includes specific allocations to the Docking Station in Chatham Maritime and in Purfleet. The Skills element, called Re:generation2031 is about helping young people find and develop career paths in creative industries. What CE was seeking from TGKP partners and other stakeholders was using their networks to open doors, including to investors and asset-holders, and to be advocates and champions for CE.
- 3.4. In discussion the following points were raised:
 - MW confirmed that KCC were willing and keen to help in any way they could. He suggested a strong focus on coastal communities where deprivation was most extensive.
 - Re:generation2031 was focusing on young people, but it would be good to find a way of supporting older people in career change and re-training.

- The Kent Film Office arranged 280 days of filming in Kent in 2019 worth at least £2.8m direct injection into the economy.
- There was risk of duplication between CE and the Thames Estuary Envoy: each must complement and add value to the other. Good communication would be critical.
- MC asked whether a particular specification needed to be met for buildings to serve for creative re-purposing. EWx confirmed that they would be looking at ex-industrial buildings as functional workspace, and trying to ensure this was not all snapped up for housing.
- Proximity to London was a strong selling point, including centres such as Maidstone and Sittingbourne. London's involvement in TEPC lent power and credibility, and the university role was hugely valuable. MB commented on potential learning that could be transferred from the recent CE study visit to Luton, particularly on developing investment models.
- ND asked what other funding opportunities there might be. EWx referred to the £29m UAL bid for Strength In Places funding: as a competition the outcome was uncertain but it would be important to have mini-projects ready to progress. Work on the Docking Station has opened up conversations about other opportunities working with HE partners, and similarly the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- CB observed that the digital (and creative digital) industries and associated skills would remain vital whatever lies ahead in the evolution of the national and local industrial strategies.
- Working with partners (e.g. LIK) CE needed to work out how best to handle investment enquiries. Successful delivery of creative sector projects and outcomes helped build trust and acted as a demonstrator benefitting the reputation of the corridor as a destination for investment generally.
- MN and EWx emphasized that local authorities would need to gear up for Estuary 2020 at all levels. CE would be looking to put a framework in place to help ensure coherence: SD suggested that at some stage this might also involve a creative leaders' board empowered to champion TEPC and CE more generally.

3.5. The Chair thanked Sarah and Emma for their presentation and commended the TEPC work programme to colleagues for ongoing and proactive engagement.

Item 4. Lower Thames Crossing – TGKP 200309(2)

4.1. RL introduced his paper. The detailed response was being refined in consultation with colleagues in the North Kent LTC Working Group. Overall there was a balance to be struck between confirming in-principle support – and the message that sends to central Government – whilst not holding back on matters where we still have concern about the proposals. Para 7 of the paper suggested some headline messages that we might want to frame in letters to Ministers and Highways England accompanying our detailed response. These emphasized the importance of getting the scheme right, and not value-engineering down to something sub-optimal, and matching this with investment in the other improvements needed in the strategic and major highways network.

4.2. In discussion, the following comments were made:

- JB stated that he could not support the headline messages. On behalf of Gravesham BC, he was particularly concerned about the impact on residents of Riverview and

the gridlock that added traffic was likely to create in Cobham. GBC would send its own response and not sign up to TGKP's.

- AJ confirmed that Medway would continue to support the LTC but with caveats including those spelled out in TGKP's response. It was vital that Highways England owned the issue of a coherent package of improvements to the whole Channel Ports-M25 corridor network, and not push the problem down to local level.
- MB stated that Swale BC had difficulties with the headline messages, particularly in the absence of a comprehensive plan from Highways England about how it would mitigate the environmental and other social impacts.
- MW said that KCC would continue to make strong representations about the effects across the major roads network (A226/227/228/229), including during construction. More extensive mitigation measures would be needed but Highways England seemed to be narrowing their scope. KCC shared the concerns in the TGKP response about the robustness of the traffic modelling regarding future development and environmental appraisal, and would like to see those messages strengthened. MC concurred with KCC's position.
- DM confirmed that the Environment Agency would be pressing for stronger environmental mitigations in its response to the consultation.

4.3. Given the lack of consensus, the Chair posed the question of whether TGKP should respond at all. MC responded that part of the strength of the Partnership is that it can articulate a diversity of views. EW queried whether partners' reservations, compared with agreement around past TGKP responses on LTC, reflected the changes to the design or other factors. MW emphasized that he felt we should back the LTC but make clear that Highways England have not so far answered our concerns. MB wanted to emphasise the need for mitigation, including other network improvements, up front. JB maintained his position that, with the wider package of improvements that would be needed (and the prospect of years of disruption, this was not something he could commend to his constituents.

4.4. In conclusion, the Chair suggest that, instead of responding to each and every consultation question, TGKP instead write to the Secretary of State for Transport (copied to the Chief Executive of Highways England) and express the strength and diversity of feeling about the project, particularly an over-riding feeling from partners that issues have been continuously raised but not addressed by HE. **This draft letter to be circulated to partners to take a view, and submission of TGKP's response to take on board any further comments.**

RL

Item 5. Freeports Consultation – TGKP 200309(3)

5.1. RL introduced his paper. This was not a consultation that TGKP was obliged to respond to, but doing so was an opportunity to shape the government's policy proposals which were still clearly quite fluid. It seemed highly likely, given the championship for the free ports concept within the Cabinet, that they will happen in some form. That would have implications for North Kent whether or not a freeport was created in the sub-region. We therefore needed to think about what the regime should look like to ensure expected benefits are not offset by foreseeable adverse consequences.

5.2. In discussion the following points were made:

- Freeports bring massive implications for security that would need complete buy-in e.g. from Kent Police. There seemed much in the proposals that ordinary ports can

already do (e.g. bonded warehouses); great care was needed to think through the proposals more thoroughly.

- It was unclear whether there was a suitable geography within Kent, though we were aware of Peel Ports' interest. Ultimately the test was probably whether HM Treasury could see a net benefit, otherwise it was hard to see the justification. The business case would merit very robust scrutiny.
- Several Partners had concerns about what we don't know from these proposals, for instance the lack of attention to how freeports would connect to wider transport networks (including rail), the wider town and spatial planning implications, environmental impacts (particularly pollution and waste), and how avoiding displacement and delivering added value would actually be achieved.

5.3. In conclusion, the Board agreed that this was something that we should consider further, and be prepared that our consultation response might amount to a teasing out of concerns and a series of associated questions back to Government. Responding to the consultation is as much, if not more, about helping the Government to shape its thinking than it is about making the case for a freeport on our geography. **The TGKP Team would therefore prepare a draft response reflecting Partners' feedback and test via the Officers' Group prior to submission.**

RL/MN
TGKOG

Item 6. Update on the Thames Estuary Growth Board and Envoy – TGKP 200309(4)

- 6.1. MN introduced his paper, and reported on the meetings of the Growth Board that had taken place since the last meeting of this Board. Kate Willard's intention is that the Growth Board should have a draft action plan drawn up in April. The priorities are still under discussion but the emerging thinking was on: (i) the river itself; (ii) skills, and particularly seeking devolution of skills funding for creative production, linked to the TEPC; (iii) infrastructure, where the Growth Board could add value to what partners were doing; and (iv) a cross-cutting approach to "people, partnerships and innovation".
- 6.2. In response to the questions posed in the paper, the Board had no appetite to get impatient on the question of a Ministerial Champion, but queried why Government was dragging its feet on that commitment, made nearly a year ago. The Board was content with the emerging priorities subject to the all-important additionality test, and stressed its agreement about the importance of the cross-cutting issues, especially the people dimension.
- 6.3. The Chair thanked the Board for its feedback and looked forward to seeing the draft action plan in due course.

Item 7. TGKP Work Programme – TGKP 200309(5)

- 7.1. The Board noted the report which was primarily for information, and agreed it was helpful to have this overview across TGKP's wider activities.

Item 8. AOB

- 8.1. The Team would be canvassing for revised dates for future meetings if possible to avoid clashes with Medway Cabinet and briefing meetings.

Team

The meeting closed at 4.25pm.

TGKP, 20 March 2020