

THAMES ESTUARY
PRESS RELEASE

**GOVERNMENT-BACKED
THAMES ESTUARY
LAUNCHES PLAN
TO UNLOCK GROWTH
AND PUMP BILLIONS
TO UK ECONOMY.**

- Thames Estuary has potential to create 1.5m jobs and £115bn GVA to UK economy
- Dedicated Growth Board, led by Government-appointed Envoy Kate Willard, plans to deliver greenest, most productive Estuary in the world
- Action Plan, 'The Green Blue', sets out vision for driving sustainable, economic growth; regenerating infrastructure; and improving transport and connectivity

“We’re here. We are the Thames Estuary Growth Board and I am the government appointed Thames Estuary Envoy.

We are going to make a transformative change within and across the Estuary to drive growth; creating jobs, improving productivity and ensuring that the right infrastructure is in place to make sure this unparalleled growth opportunity is delivered.

We will work with existing great partners across the patch and bring new voices and new investment to the Estuary. We’ll get stuff done and make sure you know about it. We will champion the Estuary and be tireless, tenacious and passionate. We’re going to make this happen. We’re in a good place. Join us.”

Kate Willard

Thames Estuary Envoy and Chair Thames Estuary Growth Board

The Thames Estuary is backed by the Government as the UK's biggest growth opportunity. With the potential to create 1.5million jobs and add value of up to £115bn to the nation's economy, it is integral to growth and recovery post-Brexit and post-Covid.

Today, the Thames Estuary Growth Board, led by Government-appointed Envoy Kate Willard, is launching 'The Green Blue'. Setting out plans for the next two years, looking ahead over the next ten, The Green Blue is a key step for the Growth Board in fulfilling the potential of the region, which is comprised of east London, north Kent, south Essex and the Thames itself.

Thames Estuary Envoy, Kate Willard said: "We now have have a fully formed and exceptional private/public Growth Board, who are working to leverage significant amounts of private sector investment and make the Estuary the most compelling investment proposition in the world. Each Board member is brilliant: possessing a high level of expertise in their area and fresh to this type of project, they have the drive and ambition to bring in new thinking. They are at the razor-sharp, cutting edge of business and are crystal clear about the Thames Estuary we want to create. Working as one unified voice, we will deliver the greenest and most productive estuary in the world."

The Thames Estuary Growth Board is currently working to increase freight and passengers moved on the river by 25% and 50% respectively over a 5-year period. The Board is also establishing a hydrogen production, storage and fuelling infrastructure to support a shift to green vessels and support green, land-based transport. This will enable the region to deliver on the Government agenda of jobs, clean air, productivity, and international trade.

There are currently around 30 projects in development across sectors including transport, infrastructure, leisure and culture. This includes the Lower Thames Crossing – a 2.6-mile tunnel (the longest in the UK) connecting communities in Kent, Thurrock and Essex, this will be the most ambitious UK road project since the M25.

The Thames Estuary is one of 10 freeports proposed for the UK and will have different customs rules to other UK ports. As well as tariff flexibility, customs facilitations and tax measures, the freeport will offer wider benefits for businesses such as planning reforms, funding for infrastructure improvements and innovation incentives. The freeport will generate jobs and opportunities for the whole area, benefitting communities along the Estuary that need it most.

The London Resort in Swancombe, Kent, will be one of Europe's largest construction projects and three times larger than any other resort park in the UK, transforming 535 acres into two theme parks, a water park, 3,500 hotel rooms. Creating 30,000 jobs, this will be one of the largest immersive experience centres in the world.

The historic London markets of Smithfield, Billingsgate and New Spitalfields are being consolidated into one market, located in Dagenham Docks, by 2023. This 42-acre site will be the country's largest wholesale food destination, bringing a huge economic boost to the area and creating employment opportunities for local people.

The Board is supporting creative and cultural projects to position London and the south-east as a world leader for the creative industries on a scale never seen before. As part of this, the Board is working with Arts Council England to implement its new strategy 'Let's Create'; it is developing the Thames Estuary Production Corridor; and overseeing the estuary Festival in spring 2021.

The Growth Board is also working to improve transport and connectivity, collaborating with Transport for East, Transport for South East and Transport for London for a co-ordinated approach across the Estuary.

The launch day also sees the new Thames Estuary website going live. It is the go-to place for information and updates on projects in the area; blog posts from Kate Willard; news and events in the area; backgrounds of the Board members; and details to contact the board directly.

Setting out the Growth Board's ambitions to transform the area; The Green Blue includes key plans to attract business and investors, boost connectivity to and in the area, bring clarity to the housing debate, regenerate infrastructure, and create jobs. The plan is called "The Green Blue" because it signifies good, green growth using the important, blue waterway of the Thames that connects the UK with the rest of the world.

Speaking about the launch, Kate Willard says: "The Thames Estuary is brimming with potential, just waiting to be tapped into. The government recognises this, which is why it is viewed as integral to the future of the UK economy. But real growth is about more than nuts and bolts – it's about people. That is why our Board is here. We build partnerships; we create opportunities; we work closely with local communities. We do all this and more to make the most of the possibilities the Thames Estuary offers. Ultimately, we are here to get things done.

"Today may be the official launch, however, the board and I have already been hard at work behind the scenes. We are ready to deliver good, green growth. Our plan will benefit businesses, residents, investors, communities and visitors alike. Our plan is ambitious, but so are we. Together, we will make great things happen."

For more information and to read The Green Blue in full, please visit the Thames Estuary's new website: www.thamesestuary.org.uk

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, Simon Clarke MP said:

"I am so pleased to see the Thames Estuary Growth Board's Green Blue Plan has been launched today. This plan will drive growth by prioritising jobs, better infrastructure for transport, investment and the expansion of housing.

"It's a plan committed to green growth and ensuring that this world-famous river acts as a gateway to economic growth, benefitting the local community through the creation of better roads and improved town centres.

"The UK is open for business and the Thames Estuary Growth Board's plan makes this clear."

For more information and to read The Green Blue in full, please visit the Thames Estuary's new website: www.thamesestuary.org.uk

Please contact ThamesEstuary-PR@smarts.agency / 07588 123 160 for further information

NOTES TO EDITORS

In 2018, The Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission published an ambitious vision for growth in the area of east London, north Essex and south Kent to unleash its potential. An exciting and ambitious vision, it is regarded as integral to the future of the UK economy.

Kate Willard has been appointed by the Government to drive this vision, leading a dedicated Thames Estuary Growth Board. The Growth Board has set out its action plan, entitled "The Green Blue", to realise the amazing potential of the Thames Estuary. With plans for developments over the next two years, looking ahead across the next ten, The Green Blue is about making great things happen.

We call our plan "The Green Blue" because we are creating good, green, sustainable growth using the important, blue waterway of the Thames that connects the UK with the rest of the world.

The Thames Estuary Growth Board will deliver and support existing projects which will lead to job creation; housing solutions; new transport and digital infrastructure, ultimately contributing billions to the economy by 2050.

For more information and to read The Green Blue in full, please visit the Thames Estuary's new website: www.thamesestuary.org.uk