

THAMES ESTUARY GROWTH BOARD SETS OUT CRITERIA FOR FREEPORT PROPOSALS

- *Thames Estuary Growth Board agrees guiding principles for freeport proposals*
- *Proposals must show benefits for local communities, workforce and residents*
- *Principles demonstrate Board's dedication to deliver action plan, The Green Blue*

22 September, 2020: The Thames Estuary Growth Board, led by Estuary Envoy Kate Willard, has set out guiding principles for freeport proposals within the region. Putting the needs and interests of Estuary residents first, the principles lay out what the Board expects from a freeport and how this will benefit the Estuary region.

Freeports have different customs rules to the rest of the country. The government aims for freeports to become innovative hubs, boost global trade, attract inward investment and increase productivity. As well as tariff flexibility, customs facilitations and tax measures, freeport status will offer wider benefits for businesses such as planning reforms, funding for infrastructure improvements and innovation incentives.

Setting out criteria for freeports is a key step in the Board's activity since the launch of their action plan, 'The Green Blue'. Having set out a vision to boost the local economy and unlock the potential of the Estuary, the Board's requirements for freeport proposals demonstrate their collective influence, as well as their drive to push forward infrastructure changes that will benefit the local communities and residents.

Estuary Envoy, Kate Willard, said: "The Thames Estuary is well placed to become one of ten freeports proposed for the UK. The freeport will generate jobs and opportunities for the whole area, benefitting communities along the Estuary that need it most. The emerging freeport proposals must align with The Green Blue to truly maximise the benefits, potential and opportunities within the Estuary, that we as a Board have our sights set on fulfilling."

The six principles set out by the Thames Estuary Growth Board for freeport proposals that come forward within the region are:

Economic: Proposals need to demonstrate how freeport status would improve productivity, employment opportunities, boost trade, improve skill levels and overall prosperity across the Thames Estuary, and how it would support the Growth Board ambitions of £115bn additional GVA by 2050.

Investment: Proposals must show the public and private investment that freeport status would draw to the Estuary. This includes the physical and digital infrastructure needed and how investment will support wider issues such as housing.

Innovation: Proposals must show how freeport status will drive innovation, including how it will be used to address wider issues such as climate change. Innovative approaches to training and development must be detailed and ensure that benefits are felt locally.

Environment: Proposals must show how negative environmental impact will be minimised and recognise the opportunity to develop innovative approaches, as well as how the natural environment will be protected and enhanced.

Regeneration: Proposals need to demonstrate the opening up of new opportunities, including new employment and training, and ‘levelling up’ of the region. Proposals must show how they bring benefits to the Thames Estuary, articulating the economic, social and environmental benefit to the Estuary community as a whole.

Community: Proposals must show how they will work with local communities to support access to training, how they will raise awareness of opportunities and aspiration, and how this will have a positive impact on a range of outcomes for local communities.

In Autumn 2020, locations wishing to secure Freeport status will be invited to submit their proposals.

To keep updated with The Growth Board’s ongoing developments please visit the [News and Events](#) page of our website or sign up to our newsletter.

To get in touch with the Thames Estuary Growth Board, please visit the [Contact](#) form on our website.

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Please contact ThamesEstuary-PR@msqpartners.com / 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 on the Thames Estuary and to read The Green Blue in full, please visit the Thames Estuary’s new website: www.thamesestuary.org.uk

SIX KEY PRINCIPLES DETAILED BELOW

Economic: Clear articulation of the new employment opportunities, by sector and over time, that having Freeport status would generate. Proposals will need to demonstrate how Freeport status would improve productivity, boost trade, improve skill levels and overall prosperity across the Thames Estuary, and how it would support the realisation of the Growth Board headline ambitions of £115bn additional GVA by 2050.

Investment: Credible demonstration of the investment, both public and private, that having Freeport status would bring to the wider Thames Estuary. This will need to also include the infrastructure (both physical and digital) needed to deliver the economic benefits, and how this investment will also support wider issues such as housing delivery. Proposals must also demonstrate an ambition to scale up over time through the identification of further phases of the Freeport, ensuring wider distribution of benefits.

Innovation: Proposals must show how Freeport status will be used to drive innovation. This should include the use of data and tracking technologies to support the operation of the Freeport as well as addressing wider issues such as decarbonisation and climate change. Proposals must also highlight innovative approaches to training and development opportunities for communities within the Thames Estuary to ensure that the benefits are felt locally. A Freeport would present a unique set of opportunities to do things differently and provide a unique test bed, working across different sectors, to generate a broad spectrum of potentially game changing ideas. Proposals must capture these possibilities, and ensure businesses and residents have the right connectivity to engage with them.

Environment: Freeports have an opportunity to create the conditions for rapid uptake of practices and technologies to address issues such as climate change, carbon emissions, congestion and the impact of economic activity on the natural environment within the Thames Estuary. Proposals must show how they will minimise their impacts, recognising the opportunities to develop genuinely innovative approaches. Investment in new infrastructure must make provision for these new approaches, while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.

Regeneration: Freeport status, and its economic benefits, must directly benefit the residents and businesses within the Thames Estuary. Freeport status, and the additional trade it generates, can drive 'levelling up' across the Estuary. Proposals must demonstrate how new opportunities will be opened up, both through the creation of new employment and training as well as new ways of connecting people to opportunity. Proposals must show how they will bring benefits (directly and indirectly) to the Thames Estuary, articulating the economic, social and environmental benefit to the Estuary community as a whole. Investment in the right infrastructure to enable communities to access opportunities created must form part of any proposals.

Community: A Freeport presents the opportunity for a collective of businesses to consider how they work with communities across the Thames Estuary to support access to the opportunities for work and training. Proposals must therefore show how they will work with local communities to support access to training which will enable access to opportunities within the Freeport. Proposals must also show how they will raise awareness of



opportunities and raise aspiration, how communities will be connected to opportunity, and how this will have a positive impact on a range of outcomes for local communities.