

Press Notice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Groundbreaking agreement signals new era for river freight on the River Thames

Thames Freeport, Thames Estuary Growth Board, and Port of London Authority unite to reduce pollution and congestion with a vision to see upwards of 20 million parcels taken off the road and transported by river every year.

In a landmark move set to transform the streets of London, the Thames Estuary Growth Board, Thames Freeport, and the Port of London Authority have signed a groundbreaking Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This ambitious agreement will reduce congestion and pollution by shifting a significant portion of freight transport from roads to the River Thames. Designed for scalability and commercial viability, this initiative marks a significant leap towards sustainable urban logistics, benefiting both London and the Thames Estuary.

Following growing concerns about pollution and congestion in London, this partnership addresses the urgent need to reduce the number of HGVs on the city's roads. Recent studies have highlighted the impact of traffic-related emissions on air quality and public health. By shifting a significant portion of freight transport to the River Thames and using sustainable vehicles for the last-mile delivery, this collaboration will alleviate road congestion, decrease pollution, and support the capital's commitment to achieving Net Zero emissions.

Kate Willard OBE, Thames Estuary Envoy, and Chair of the Thames Estuary Growth Board, commented, *"This agreement is a major milestone in our journey to create a greener, more efficient logistics network. It demonstrates our unwavering commitment to fair, sustainable growth and ambitious innovation."*

"As the UK's busiest inland waterway, the Thames already connects London and the South East with global trade routes but there is great potential to do more. This partnership will champion opportunities to decarbonise logistics, making the river an even more vital part of the supply chain and moving vans and lorries off our roads" said Robin Mortimer, Chief Executive Officer at the Port of London Authority.

Martin Whiteley, CEO at Thames Freeport, added, *"The collaboration between these major stakeholders underlines the enormous potential of the Thames as a vital freight artery, promising significant economic and environmental benefits and enhancing trade."*

This collaboration aims to revolutionise river light freight on the Thames, ensuring it is commercially viable, designed to be easily scaled up, and anchored at the Thames Freeport. It supports regional Net Zero objectives and leverages existing infrastructure to provide long-term benefits for communities across the Thames Estuary and far into London.

This MOU is part of a framework of activity led by the Growth Board under the RULE (Riverside Urban Logistics Environment) project. The RULE project is dedicated to developing a comprehensive river light freight solution, incorporating insights and expertise from a diverse array of partners, including boat operators, pier owners, policymakers, logistics service providers, last-mile delivery companies, and potential investors.

The RULE project will be a critical vehicle for establishing a new standard for sustainable river freight transport. The group's ambition is to see an initial 20million parcels moved annually on the river, generating £54 million in Gross Value Added (GVA), creating over 800 new jobs, and resulting in significant environmental benefits, including saving 2,284 tonnes of CO₂ and 3.6 tonnes of NO_x – with capacity to significantly scale this up further.

This groundbreaking partnership signals a significant commitment to revolutionising urban logistics, harnessing the power of the Thames to create a more sustainable, efficient, and commercially viable freight network. As we look to the future, this project will not only reduce congestion and emissions but also pave the way for a new era of river freight, setting a global benchmark for urban logistics.

Notes to Editors:**About the Thames Estuary Growth Board**

The Thames Estuary Growth Board is dedicated to unlocking the economic potential of the Thames Estuary. By fostering collaboration, driving investment, and spearheading innovative development projects, the Growth Board aims to transform the Estuary into a thriving, sustainable, and economically vibrant region. In this project, the Growth Board will lead the creation of a commercially viable end-to-end river freight solution. Leveraging its extensive network and expertise, the Board will form commercial arrangements, secure necessary investments, and coordinate efforts to remove barriers and implement the innovative solution.

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About Thames Freeport

The Thames Freeport is a once in a generation opportunity to stimulate trade, foster innovation, support energy transition, and improve people's lives in London and the surrounding boroughs to the east. Thames Freeport represents key sites including Forth Ports, Port of Tilbury, DP World London Gateway, and the Ford Motor Company plant at Dagenham.

The Freeport is focused on identifying commercially viable use cases and shore side facilities for the new river freight service. Their role in this project includes securing an anchor freight partner and aligning efforts with the Thames Freeport Innovation and Net Zero programme, thereby enhancing the overall objectives of the collaboration.

About the Port of London Authority (PLA)

The UK's largest port, central to the economy and with a commitment of Net Zero emissions by 2040, the PLA is the owner in trust of the riverbed and foreshore of the tidal Thames from Teddington Lock to the Estuary. We ensure the safe navigation of the river, enable trade and recreation, and protect the health of the river's ecosystems.