

£37 million award to stimulate economic recovery

News that eight major capital projects in Kent and Medway are to receive funding of more than £37million from the government's new Getting Building Fund has been welcomed across the county.

Central government, working closely with local authorities and local enterprise partnerships, has produced an extensive package of measures that will drive economic recovery and get Britain building again.

The Getting Building Fund, which was announced today (4 August) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, will help stimulate the economy, drive forward new employment and learning opportunities, and support the delivery of new housing.

These projects were carefully selected by the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP), (which is the local federated board of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)), for their ability to be delivered quickly, but also for the size and scale of their wider economic impact. More than 3,600 jobs will be realised as a result of this significant investment.

The projects are:

- **Digitally Connecting Rural Kent and Medway** - This project will improve broadband connectivity for rural homes and businesses across Kent and Medway with poor or no broadband connectivity. This will be achieved through expanding the successful [Kent Top-Up Voucher Scheme](#)
- **Discovery Park Incubator** – This project will refurbish the ground floor of Building 500 to create world-class research and development space. 50,000 sq.ft. of individual biology and chemistry laboratories together with associated write-up space, and new plant-room equipment will be delivered to attract the companies to this world-class and world-leading science park.
- **Thanet Parkway Station** – This project will deliver a new 'Parkway' railway station in Thanet, located on the Ashford International to Ramsgate line, and just to the west of the village of Cliffsend. Thanet Parkway will increase rail connectivity between East Kent, London and the wider Kent area by providing access to mainline and high-speed services. The project will provide access to more employment opportunities for local residents, and help attract new companies and investors to East Kent.
- **The Meeting Point (Also known as 27-37 High Street, Swanley)** – This project will provide a new high-quality, sustainable, mixed use development at a key gateway to Swanley town centre, which will set high standards and help kick-start urban renewal essential. The project will fund the creation of a business hub co-working space of 250 square metres and the delivery of 17 new quality homes.

- **Britton Farm Redevelopment** – The project sees the creation of a Learning Skills and Employment Hub on the vacant top floor of the Britton Farm, a former shopping centre in Gillingham. The hub, which will be run by Medway Adult Education, will focus on supporting adults to retrain, upskill and access employment opportunities. Courses will be tailored towards helping residents gain skills for highly valued jobs which are being created across Medway. Also, the project enables the delivery of 44 affordable homes in the old loading bay at Britton Farm by Medway Council’s own housing company, called the Medway Development Company (MDC).
- **New Performing and Production Arts Facility** – The project relates to the building of a new two-storey 2,826 square metre, state of the art, performing and production digital arts facility within North Kent College’s Dartford campus, to replace old, dilapidated and historic accommodation that is unfit for modern education purposes and very expensive to maintain. North Kent College is a highly successful and popular facility which has a wide catchment of students throughout South East London and Kent. Nationally, North Kent College was ranked 2nd (out of 169 further education colleges) in the UK for Level 3 (A Level equivalent) for achievement rates in 2019, and this new facility would build on the college’s already enviable reputation via the Miskin Theatre as a regional hub for talent, becoming a key asset to help deliver The Thames Estuary Production Corridor, a joint initiative between the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (“SELEP”) and the Mayor of London.
- **Javelin Way** – The project sees the development of the Javelin Way site for employment use, with a particular focus on the development of Ashford’s creative economy. The scheme consists of two elements: - Firstly, the construction of a ‘**Creative Laboratory**’ production space, to be leased from Kent County Council by the Jasmin Vardimon Company (JVC), a major dance and creative organisation. This will be used as education space for accredited courses. Secondly, the project sees the development of **29 light industrial units** for sale and/or lease, suitable for additional creative businesses as well as the general market.
- **Romney Marsh Employment Hub** – The project will see the construction of a business centre and will create up to 700 jobs over ten years by bringing forward some six hectares of land for employment uses in the Romney Marsh area.

Quotes:

Geoff Miles, Chairman of the Kent and Medway Enterprise Partnership said: “I am delighted by this Government announcement. COVID-19 presents an exceptional challenge to the local economy, with both businesses and residents impacted. This is the time for decisive action and strong leadership, and the new investment of £37 million into Kent and Medway’s infrastructure is an important step forward in this regard.

“I wish to thank the 14 local council leaders, further education colleges principals, university Vice-Chancellors, and 17 business leaders that make up KMEDP’s membership for working so diligently to make today’s announcement a reality.

“However, the announcement today is just one of a series of actions that is being taken at a national and local level. I would urge all business leaders across the area to come join us next Monday at our virtual launch of our Kent and Medway Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan, where we be announcing further steps that we will be making to help stimulate the economy.”

Mayer Schreiber, CEO of Discovery Park, said, “The Getting Building Fund grant will accelerate the delivery of Discovery Park’s Incubator space, which will provide laboratories and offices for innovative life sciences companies in a collaborative environment. As a UK Life Sciences Opportunity Zone, we are pleased to play a role in driving local economic growth, bringing high value scientific jobs to the region. Discovery Park would like to thank SELEP for its support of our ambition to build a world class and world leading science park, a place where companies can start up and grow.”

Mike Whiting, Kent County Council’s Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: “I am delighted that the three projects put forward by KCC have been approved for the funding we requested.

“All three will have a significant impact on the economic future of the areas involved.

“Thanet Parkway, in particular, is important as it will make East Kent more accessible for companies and employees alike, bringing London only just over an hour away.

“Improving broadband connections to more of the rural areas of Kent and Medway has become even more vital with the current emphasis on home-working during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“And although the Javelin Way project has been in the pipeline for some time, the impact of COVID had put its immediate future in jeopardy, and the funding means that work can start immediately and the development will move forward at pace.”

Alan Jarrett, Leader of Medway Council, said: “We are extremely pleased that Medway is set to receive up to £1.99million for an innovative adult learning and skills hub in the heart of Gillingham town centre. These exciting plans will provide growth for all and will help our residents learn new skills and access a wider range of employment opportunities. The skills hub complements our ongoing regeneration plans for Britton Farm providing offices and affordable homes in the town centre which will further increase footfall in the high street. We have all been impacted by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, but it is of the utmost importance that we continue to invest in Medway’s future.”

Medway Council’s Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment, Strategic Regeneration and Partnerships, Rodney Chambers, said: “We are committed to helping our high streets thrive and this project will benefit the local economy, businesses and, most importantly, our residents. The Britton Farm redevelopment project will enable residents to learn new skills and provide opportunities to retain, for a changing work environment. Gillingham has a lot to offer including a diverse market, modern community hub and a regional centre of sporting excellence, Medway Park. Further investment will ensure that Medway becomes an even more desirable place to live, work, learn and visit.”

Leader of Sevenoaks District Council, Cllr Peter Fleming, said: “27-37 High Street will play a pivotal role in regenerating Swanley’s town centre, providing much needed houses and business services to generate footfall along the High Street. I am particularly thankful to Government and KMEP partners for supporting Sevenoaks District Council in its ambitions to invest in Swanley’s future.”

South East LEP Chair, Christian Brodie said: “We are delighted that government has recognised the excellent projects and potential that the South East has to drive forward our economy at this challenging time. These projects have been carefully selected to target those areas and industries particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and those that can progress, at pace, to support economic recovery. The South East LEP has a proven track record of delivering successful projects and has been working really closely with our local areas to understand what our businesses need and where investment will have significant impact.

“Over the last few months, we as a LEP have been providing support to local businesses. Our Growth Hubs have been providing advice to struggling businesses and directing businesses to funding support. We have also been reworking our own existing funding pots to create new COVID-19 funds for businesses, infrastructure investment and skills training.

“We truly believe that the South East will help lead the country out of the crisis and into recovery. The Getting Building Fund provides the next phase of financial stimulus to restart our economy.”

Notes to Editor:

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Virtual launch: On 10th August, KMEP will be launching its Kent and Medway Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan, where we be announcing further steps that we will be making to help stimulate the economy, and we are inviting business leaders from across the area to attend the virtual launch. For more details and to book a place, please go to www.kmep.gov.uk

Project details:

The eight projects awarded Getting Building Funding in Kent and Medway are:

Project	Getting Building Funding Award	Project Promoter
Digitally Connecting Rural Kent & Medway	£2,290,152	Kent County Council
First + Second Floors, Building 500, Discovery Park	£2,500,000	Discovery Park Ltd
Thanet Parkway Railway Station	£11,999,000	Kent County Council
The Meeting Point, Swanley	£1,490,000	Sevenoaks District Council
Britton Farm Redevelopment Learning Skills & Employment hub	£1,990,000	Medway Council
New Performing & Production Digital Arts Facility @ NKC	£12,625,000	North Kent College
Javelin Way Development	£578,724	Kent County Council
Romney Marsh Employment Hub	£3,536,466	Folkestone & Hythe District Council

About the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership

The Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) aims to drive forward economic growth and prosperity throughout the region. It was set up in 2013 and is the local federated board of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. KMEP is chaired by the private sector, with membership drawn from business, local government, further and higher education. <http://www.kmep.org.uk/kmep-membership>

The KMEP Chairman is Geoff Miles, Chairman of the Maidstone (TV) Studios. He also chairs the Kent and Medway Business Advisory Board.

The Government Press Release

Central Government's press release is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1-3-billion-investment-to-deliver-homes-infrastructure-and-jobs>

The South East LEP's Press Release

South East LEP's press release is available at: www.SouthEastLEP.com/news/