

**KMEP Infrastructure Summit: 20 January 2017**

In January, the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) met Kent and Medway’s MPs.

The summit’s main purpose was to agree a **list of priority infrastructure** that we could **collectively lobby** the Government for.

This briefing note provides details about the event for those unable to attend.

**Who attended the conference?**

MPs:

- Charlie Elphicke
- Sir Roger Gale
- Rt. Hon. Damian Green
- Craig Mackinlay
- Kelly Tolhurst

From KMEP:

- 55 local businessmen and women
- 14 local Council Leaders or alternates
- Canterbury Christ Church University’s Vice-Chancellor
- MidKent College’s Principal

**What were the KMEP’s introductory messages at the summit?**

KMEP

- wants to **work closely with MPs**. Let’s support one another to benefit businesses and residents
- seeks to jointly agree a **list of priority infrastructure** with the MPs
- wishes to have a **shared lobbying strategy** with the MPs, encouraging investment in the south east
- **fully supports the government agenda** of accelerating housing delivery and job creation
- wants to **dispel the perception** that the **South East LEP area is one of the most prosperous places** in the country
- believes the **next 2-3 months are critical** to influence rail services
- wants recognition that a **resilient Kent road system is required for the UK to globally compete** in exports and imports.
- wants to know how we can help you...

**Overview of the event**

Presentations were given by local businessmen on the priority rail, road and skills infrastructure that KMEP wishes to see built.

There was then an opportunity to debate the presentations’ content, and for MPs to ask questions.

This briefing note now summarises the presentations:



**RAIL PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Which rail priorities did KMEP identify?**

**Crossrail** should be extended to **Ebbsfleet** as a minimum, and preferably to Gravesend. The strategic narrative for the extension will be submitted to HM Treasury this month.

The **South Eastern Franchise Tender** should include these requirements:

- **Elongate High Speed trains in the peak** to add capacity (trains should have 12-cars, not 6).
- Provide **new Ebbsfleet shuttle service to London** with 2 trains per hour (tph) all day (otherwise Garden City less achievable).
- Provide 2 tph all day to **Canterbury West and Dover**
- Provide 1 tph High Speed service to **Rye and Hastings**
- All services that pass through should stop at **Thanet Parkway**
- **Rebuild Westenhanger station**
- Have **Tonbridge to Gatwick through-services**
- Ensure sufficient **capacity at London termini**
- Agree sufficient station **car parking**
- Roll-out smart and mobile **ticketing**
- Establish a best **fare price promise** across all ticket media

These tender changes above should **not cost the Government money**; the franchisee should cover the cost of infrastructure delivery.

We have 2-3 months to influence the DfT and Rt. Hon. Chris Grayling MP to make changes before the tender is set.



**RAIL PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE continued...**

The [Network Rail's Kent Route Study](#) should include:

- A new **Thanet Parkway** station
- Rebuild of **Maidstone East** station
- Rebuild of **Strood** station
- Rebuild of **Swanley** station
- An **extra platform** at Canterbury West station
- **Track works at Ashford International** to link Rye and Hastings with High Speed 1
- Removal of **all road level crossings** over 20 years and improved safety at foot crossings
- Improved **accessibility at stations** for disabled
- Introduce new **journey time improvement** schemes
- A **review** of the route **bottlenecks**

The draft Kent Route study is due this month, to amend before Sept 17.

KMEP supports the changes to [Thameslink](#) which are already proposed. These changes are:

- 2 new tph from Ashford to Cambridge
- 2 new tph from Rainham to Luton

Retaining [international services at Ashford](#) is a growth priority for KMEP:

- KMEP is investing Local Growth Funding to ensure this happens.



**RAIL PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE Debate | Q&A**

During the debate, comments included:

- Rail investment in East Kent is vital to support market viability.
- Rail investment in West Kent is vital to ease overcrowding.
- Developers have experienced difficulties in securing a meeting with the rail franchisee during the transition period before a new franchise commences.

- Unifying elements of a franchisee (i.e. Southeastern) with Network Rail can produce good economies of scale on planning and accelerate engineering work. However, past experience indicates meshing together the profit and loss finance accounts of a franchisee with Network Rail is highly inadvisable.
- Thanet Parkway is essential to economic growth in East Kent.
- The 'Networkers' (a type of train that serves on the metro lines to Sevenoaks) are reaching 40 years old, and require replacement.
- Rail passengers numbers were:
  - In 1994 = 0.7bn users
  - In 2016 = 1.7bn users
 Yet almost the same rail infrastructure is used.
- The plans that KMEP outlines would take the rail network to capacity.

**Which road priorities did KMEP identify?**

The importance of Kent's highways acting as a resilient **international trading corridor** was emphasised.

The infrastructure needed is:

- A new **3-lane Lower Thames Crossing**
- Redesign of **M2 Junction 7** (Brenley Corner)
- **Dual the A2** from Lydden to Dover
- Improve the **M2-M20 connectivity** (by upgrading the A229 and A249)
- Establish a **Lorry Park Network** (national and local)
- Improve the **A2 Bean & Ebbsfleet Junction**
- Make **A20 Dover TAP** (Traffic Assessment Project) **permanent** and introduce temporary A2 Dover TAP - to hold port-bound freight outside Dover on the A20/A2 to prevent queuing in central Dover during busy periods.

By far, **the highest single priority for KMEP** is a new **Lower Thames Crossing east of Gravesend**, future-proofed to cope with increasing traffic flow and delivered in the shortest possible timeframe.



**ROAD PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**continued...**

Congestion and poor road design not only impacts the local economy but on **UK PLC's global competitiveness**.

As the Port of Dover's Chief Executive said 'we need to keep the traffic moving':

- If Port of Dover were a separate country, it would be the **world's 55<sup>th</sup> largest economy** (with £119bn of trade per annum).
- **5 million tourist vehicles** pass through the Port per annum.
- Up to **10,000 lorries** use the Port each day. If they lined up nose to tail, the queue would stretch from Dover to Stansted Airport (i.e. 160km).
- **All lorries use Kent's M2/A2 or M20** for part of their journey.
- **50% of all freight traffic** from the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel **use the Dartford Crossing** to travel to the Midlands and Northern England.
- Freight traffic's **grown by a third** in 3 years. This trend continues...
- Yet the **Dartford Crossing is at 117% of capacity**.
- **47,000 businesses and residents feel so strongly** that they responded to the consultation – the highest number ever.

**Investment in a new Lower Thames Crossing is needed now.** Further delay stifles economic growth.

We must **avoid barriers to trade in Brexit negotiations**: This would **impact Kent's highways**. Requiring lorries to make an export declaration at the Port/Eurotunnel would add 4 to 5 minutes per transaction. This would **triple the length of any tailback** in the event of cross-channel disruption.

The highway investments listed enable the UK to maximise its export and import opportunities, and would provide a resilient highway network to local businesses and residents.



**ROAD PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**Debate|Q&A**

During the debate, comments included:

- **Every KMEP Member voted in favour a tunnel at location C for the Lower Thames Crossing, with a western southern link, apart from Gravesham Borough Council that abstained.**

Hence, KMEP Members in favour include:

- all business leaders
- Kent, Medway, Ashford, Canterbury, Dartford, Dover, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Shepway, Swale, Thanet, Tonbridge & Malling, and Tunbridge Wells Councils.
- There is private sector appetite to fund the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC).
- A call for MPs to actively lobby for the Crossing at Gravesham.
- There is substantial concern about the delayed LTC announcement. Day-to-day activities of Dartford businesses and residents are being hindered currently; their health affected by the air quality, and the North Kent economic growth restrained.
- KMEP thanks the MPs for lobbying for more Local Growth Funding for SELEP, and for meeting the Chancellor before the Autumn Statement to lobby for the LTC, Brenley Corner's redesign, and the dualling the A2.
- The new Crossing, improvements to the M2/A2 and local transport funding are required to support the 190,000+ new homes earmarked for Kent and Medway by 2031.
- Brenley Corner's congestion not only impedes the European trade corridor, but hampers housing delivery in surrounding districts of Swale, Canterbury, Thanet and Dover.
- The major truck route to the busiest port in northern Europe becomes a single carriageway at Lydden. Why? KMEP has been told by Highways England that dualling is in road investment strategy for years, but this project has never made it to the top of the list.

- A developer at the summit offered to build junction 5A on the M2 and a southern relief road in Sittingbourne at no financial cost to the tax payer, but asked the Government for supportive decision-making.
- All government’s priority regional areas (such as Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine) are supported by Kent’s highways. **Invest here for maximum returns.**



**SKILLS PRIORITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE**

To tackle most effectively:

- The lower percentage of Kent & Medway residents with higher skills levels (compared to national picture)
- The reduction in the number of young people with no qualifications
- The need to upskill the population to meet current and future labour market demand...

KMEP seeks the implementation of the recommendations made by the **Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Sub-Committee** on Education, Skills and the Economy in their First Joint Report in 16/17.

Particularly, KMEP wishes to see:

- 1) **A more co-ordinated approach to careers education** – using the Careers and Enterprise Company & KMEP Guilds. This could:
  - enable efficiencies to be made through the closer alignment of funding streams.
  - benefit local businesses that find it difficult to know how best to access local schools.
- 2) **Longer-term planning**
  - Would like the government to place an onus on longer-term planning over short-term educational reform to allow policies to embed and bear fruit.
- 3) **Continued funding support**
  - Seek further investment to create aspirational, industry relevant learning environments, and support skill delivery.
  - There is a greater need from the FE colleges for revenue over capital funding to allow the delivery of new equipment and methodologies.

- Seek funding support is required to enable the Careers Enterprise Company to operate across Kent & Medway.
- 4) **Labour Market Intelligence support**
    - Desire revenue support to boost the capacity of LEPs so they produce the labour market intelligence – so skills provision has maximum responsiveness to employer demand.
  - 5) **Support for raising profile of apprenticeships**, particularly degree and Level 4+ apprenticeships.
  - 6) **Support for the key developments** which the univiersities are progressing, such as the Kent and Medway Medical School.



**SKILLS PRIORITY INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**Debate | Q&A**

- Kent and Medway has the largest population and geographical area without its own stand-alone medical school. Canterbury Christ Church University’s (CCCU) medical school proposal will help to retain medical graduates in the area.
- The £22m of Skills Capital Funding has been wisely invested by FE colleges in delivering new equipment and facilities for technical qualifications.
- Kent and Medway’s FE Colleges in a strong position as a sector – having a complimentary approach to sector specialisms, which is attuned to local economic needs.
- CCCU makes a significant economic impact of £1 billion to Canterbury, being the second largest employer.
- Funding has come from European Union to support sector guilds to date. KMEP Members seek to see alternative funding streams introduced post-Brexit.
- Creative sector comprises of 95% of small and micro businesses. This sector requires skills support to encourage business management and entrepreneurship.



## WAY FORWARD

Feedback is welcomed from the Kent and Medway MPs on what they want from KMEP.

Suggestions to date from the MPs include:

- Greater communication from KMEP with detailed, factual, economic businesses cases.
- To receive arguments on how Kent and Medway's priorities are beneficial for the whole country.
- To work collectively on lobbying the Government on mutual priorities.

KMEP proposes to hold the infrastructure summit as an annual or bi-annual event. We hope you would find that beneficial. Comments are welcomed.

This briefing note summarises KMEP's priorities. More exhaustive detail is within the attached presentations given at the summit.



## CONTACTS

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