

The North Kent Enterprise Zone opens for business

The North Kent Enterprise Zone has gone live, bringing with it financial incentives for those businesses that make it their home.

One of 12 new Enterprise Zones selected by Government, The North Kent Enterprise Zone (NKEZ) came into being on 1 April, and is designed to stimulate business growth and the creation of new jobs.

The Government will support business rates discounts of up to £55,000 per year for five years for companies that locate within an Enterprise Zone by 31 March 2022.

Comprising three schemes – in Ebbsfleet Garden City, Kent Medical Campus near Maidstone, and Rochester Airport Technology Park in Medway – the NKEZ is already taking shape and will welcome its first business occupiers next year.

Local Growth Minister Andrew Percy said: “Our modern Industrial Strategy is about creating the right environment for businesses to grow. The 12 new Enterprise Zones will help make sure this happens across the country.

“The North Kent Enterprise Zone will build on the area’s expertise in manufacturing, medical research and engineering to attract businesses to the area. The zone is a key part of our Plan for Britain to create a stronger economy.”

Welcoming the commencement of the new Enterprise Zone, Bernard Spring, Chairman of the NKEZ Strategic Board, said: “This is an important milestone in the development of the North Kent Enterprise Zone. A lot of hard work has gone into developing the proposals for the Zone and we have a strong group of partners committed to making these a reality.

“With excellent connections to London and Europe, our three schemes will help innovative businesses to thrive. We are particularly hoping to attract companies in medical technologies, advanced manufacturing, engineering and digital creative sectors. We look forward to seeing new premises coming out of the ground and available for occupation in the next twelve months or so.”

The NKEZ is one of three zones championed by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), joining Harlow and Discovery Park, which were created in 2012.

Christian Brodie, Chairman of SELEP, said: “We welcome the progress made at the North Kent Enterprise Zone and the excellent facilities this will provide to local business. There are very real incentives and benefits to business in locating here and we hope to spread the word far and wide and attract growing, ambitious companies to this superb location with outstanding connectivity and networks on offer.

“We will use the experience gained in the local area in developing and managing the Enterprise Zones at both Discovery Park and Harlow to help North Kent succeed. Each site is unique and we have much to offer growing businesses in our area.”

Over the next 8-10 years it is estimated the NKEZ will generate around 9,000 new jobs and boost opportunities for highly skilled employment in North Kent.

Paul Wookey, Chief Executive of Locate in Kent, said: “The development of the North Kent Enterprise Zone will give investors and businesses a great platform from which to grow and develop. Strategically located, the zone offers a wealth of opportunity and places the three key sites firmly on the Kent business map.”

Kent Medical Campus, just off Junction 7 of the M20 at Maidstone, has planning permission to develop 98,000m² of space to accommodate academic health and science related uses, and construction is under way on a 64-bed hospital for Cygnet

Health Care, one of the UK's largest independent providers of mental health support, following a £1.5m investment in a new link road.

The three sites at Ebbsfleet Garden City are expected to offer around 84,000m² of commercial and innovation space, with the first coming on stream at Northfleet East where detailed outline plans are with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation for approval.

Subject to planning, the two sites at Rochester Airport will offer over 47,000m² of space for high tech engineering and manufacturing enterprises to create a vibrant technology park, establishing Medway as a centre of excellence for engineering, innovation and technology.

For more information on the North Kent Enterprise Zone, visit www.northkententerprisezone.co.uk.

ENDS

Notes for editors

The North Kent Enterprise Zone was announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement in November 2015, one of 26 new or extended enterprise zones to add to the 24 created in 2012.

Enterprise Zones are a key part of the Government's strategy for enabling growth in local areas.

The benefits to business of locating to an Enterprise Zone are business rates discounts worth up to £55,000 per year for 5 years.

100 per cent of the business rates uplift generated on the North Kent Enterprise Zone sites will be retained by the local authorities for 25 years to invest in local economic growth.

The North Kent Enterprise Zone covers three locations:

- **Ebbsfleet Garden City:** Three sites – Northfleet Rise, Northfleet East and Northfleet West –will provide around 85,000m² of space for medical and healthcare technologies, advanced manufacturing, digital technologies and creative industries. With Ebbsfleet International Station next door and only 17 minutes from London St Pancras, the Ebbsfleet scheme is well placed to capture part of the growing medtech market as companies and institutions look for space to grow.
- **Kent Medical Campus:** Adjacent to the KIMS Hospital and near Junction 7 of the M20, this 30 acre landscaped site surrounded by woodlands, has permission to develop 98,000m² of flexible and innovative space including offices and laboratories, rehabilitation care centres, training and research and development, to be a centre of excellence for clinician-led medical sciences.
- **Rochester Airport Technology Park:** one mile from Junction 3 of the M2, the two sites (north and south) will offer around 47,800m² of flexible space for companies specialising in high technology manufacturing and engineering and digital creative industries. Partnership with the Universities at Medway will enable close collaboration in academic and business research and development and skills training.

Delivery of the enterprise zone is led by local delivery partners, which include both public and private sector interests. The enterprise zone as a whole is overseen by a Strategic Board comprising representatives from each scheme, the higher education sector, South East LEP, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership, Kent County Council and Locate in Kent. It is chaired by Bernard Spring, formerly Managing Director of Gillingham-based RHM Frozen Foods and currently also County Chair of Young Enterprise Kent & Medway, a member of the Kent & Medway Business Advisory Board and a Kent Ambassador.

Further information on the North Kent Enterprise Zone can be found at www.northkententerprisezone.co.uk.