

# A Framework for Action for the Coastal South East

Working Draft, July 2007

## 1: Background

As set out in both the Regional Economic Strategy and the Consultation Draft of the RES Implementation Plan, the Coastal South East<sup>1</sup> has often been seen as “underperforming” economically: within the South East it is the area in which activity rates are low, the skills base is weak, and the incidence of deprivation is high. Indeed, if its economic performance was to match the regional average, GVA would increase by £13bn.



This underperformance is typical of many coastal areas. It reflects a combination of characteristics including relative remoteness,

<sup>1</sup> Coastal South East is broadly represented by four sub-regions and one special policy area as defined in the draft South East Plan: Kent Thames Gateway, East Kent and Ashford, Sussex Coast, South Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight

isolation, deprivation, an ageing population, a transient population, poor quality housing, and limited agglomeration advantages resulting from a restricted (180°) hinterland.

Yet the Coastal South East is also different.

It is close to one of the most buoyant and successful world city economies (London) and within reasonable reach of a second (Paris). It also has a distinctive and important role within the Greater South East – the UK’s engine for growth and prosperity.

Added to that, ways of working and living are changing. Forced in part by congestion and high costs, but also by the possibilities offered by advanced telecoms, more people now work at least part of their time at home, or in more flexible working arrangements. The high quality living environment of the coastal area has become increasingly attractive as solutions to the problems of remoteness have started to become available.

## 2: Purpose

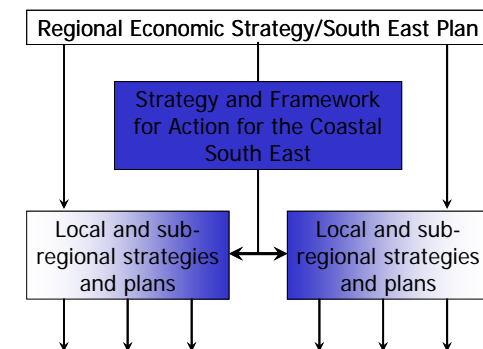
Against this backdrop, both the Regional Economic Strategy and the Consultation Draft of the RES Implementation Plan include a commitment to working with partners to develop a strategic framework for the Coastal South East.

The purpose of the Framework for Action for the Coastal South East is to “*raise the [area’s] economic performance, by realising its untapped potential in an inclusive and sustainable way*”.

The Framework for Action **does not replace strategies and plans that have been developed at sub-regional and local levels**. In the context of wider targets and objectives, those prepared by the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership, and partners in East and West Sussex, Isle of Wight, Brighton and Hove, East Kent and Hastings already identify and respond to specific opportunities and threats.

Equally, the Framework for Action **is intended to complement – not replace – the delivery of actions identified in the RES Implementation Plan**.

Figure 1: Fit of the mezzanine Framework



In both cases, the Framework will support implementation and delivery by providing a “mezzanine” perspective that takes the themes of the Regional Economic Strategy and develops their relevance and application at the scale of the Coastal South East (Figure 1).

Over time, it will add value by:

- providing a common and coherent reference point for local economic strategies and plans across the Coastal area as they are refreshed
- supporting local partners from across the area in advancing a few Transformational Action Areas which are specific to, and relevant at the scale of, the Coastal South East.

These purposes are illustrated and explained further below.

### 3: The Vision underpinning the Framework for Action

**The Framework for Action for the Coastal South East will contribute to a transformation in the way the area works and looks.**

*By 2016, a profound transformation of the economy of the Coastal South East – consistent with its assets and its prime location*

*in relation to London and the Greater South East – will be well underway. Significant progress will have been made in advancing a growth model that is consistent with carbon neutrality and in which the distinctive character of particular coastal places – both urban and rural – is enhanced and maintained.*

*In the process, decades of under-investment in the built environment and physical infrastructure will be reversed, and spirals of inter-generational economic exclusion and deprivation will be broken. At the same time, communities in coastal areas will be more balanced in terms of demography, providing opportunities for people of all ages to meet their aspirations and enjoy a high quality of life.*

The strategies for achieving this overall Vision need to be bold and adventurous, but they must also reflect the particular challenges, opportunities and circumstances which exist in different parts of the coastal area’s geography.

In line with this Vision – and alongside locally developed strategies and plans – the Framework will help in two main ways.

First, the Framework reflects and distils **new forms of thinking, leadership and commitment to growth and change:** a transformation of how the Coastal South East economy works and its economic positioning within the Greater South East. The Framework

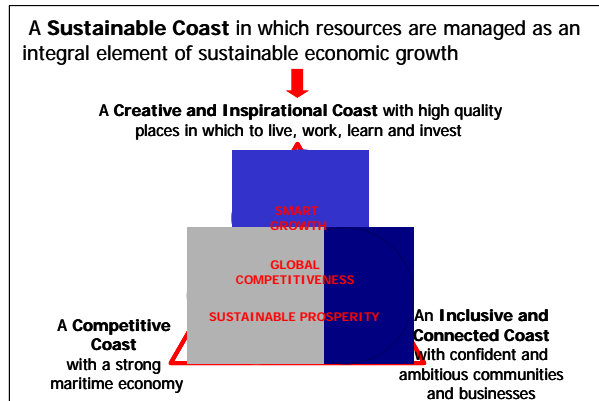
embraces growth but does so through a business model that differentiates itself by the creative use of coastal assets, renewing waterfront activities and supporting innovative – and sustainable – ways of living and working.

Second, the Framework **creates scale benefits** which enable the Coastal South East to be a major contributor to overall regional success. It provides new and sustainable solutions to pressures of growth across the wider South East. The Framework is premised on the Coastal South East becoming, over time, a real source of sustainable growth, changing internal and external perceptions and reversing a century of relative coastal decline.

### 4: Framework Priorities

**Underpinning the Vision is an Overarching Priority that the economy of the coastal area must be genuinely sustainable.** The area’s natural environment is of a high quality and much of it is of designated status. Development pressures and opportunities need to be managed carefully and environmental assets harnessed appropriately. At the same time, there is a need to anticipate the emerging opportunities and threats linked to climate change, recognising that parts of the coastal environment are especially vulnerable.

Figure 2: Advancing the Vision for the Coastal South East: Framework Priorities



Beyond this, the Framework is structured around **three main Priorities, defined at the mezzanine scale** (Figure 2). All three are informed by the headline Objectives from the RES – Sustainable Prosperity, Smart Growth and Global Competitiveness – but with particular interpretation at the scale of the Coastal South East.

***I: A Creative and Inspirational Coast with high quality places in which to live, work, learn and invest***

Although in need of new investment, the built environment across much of the Coastal South East is of a high quality and most of it is situated in environmentally outstanding locations. In the context of changing lifestyles and working practices, there are substantial

pan-coastal opportunities to garner new wealth and derive substantial local benefits – in terms of sustainable economic development – from it.

More particularly – and in a context that is both *urban* and *coastal* – significant growth across the cultural and creative industries, linked in part to higher education, is attracting people to live, work, learn and visit. The transformation of Brighton and Hove over the last decade is a case in point. Elsewhere (e.g. Hastings) significant strides are being made in establishing a revitalised coast which is creative and inspirational, providing high quality places in which to live, work, learn and invest; creating vibrant coastal town centres is absolutely key to this. Ensuring that this process continues is an on-going priority.

***II: An Inclusive and Connected Coast with confident and ambitious communities and businesses***

Across the Coastal South East – as in coastal areas elsewhere – the challenges relating to isolation have been a primary cause of economic under-performance. Although physical connectivity may be less of an absolute imperative than it once was, it is still very important. It matters because it impacts on the available opportunities for both individuals and businesses. Hence connectivity solutions need, in addition, to

recognise the fundamental importance of socio-economic inclusion and addressing inter-generational challenges as well as responding to the needs, threats and opportunities linked to transient population groups; transport is a major part of the solution, but not the whole story.

From across the Coastal South East, there are already clear examples of the opportunities unleashed through improved connectivity. The resurgence of coastal towns in East Kent in the context of the CTRL domestic (due to open fully from 2009) provides ample evidence of the impacts that can potentially follow.

***III: A Competitive Coast with a strong maritime economy***

The economy of the Coastal South East includes businesses from all sectors. Their growth needs must be recognised through the provision of appropriate workforce skills, premises, business support, and so on. Existing sub-regional economic strategies have already responded to the needs of locally defined priority sectors; in Urban South Hampshire, for example, the potential linked to advanced manufacturing has been researched and priority interventions have been defined in response. Progress with regard to the implementation of these actions needs to be supported.

At the same time, however, it is clear that where the economy of the Coastal South East is distinctive is with regard to businesses which are intrinsically maritime – in sectoral focus, location or infrastructure – and therefore are inextricably linked to a coastal location. These firms and sectors warrant particular attention within the Framework for Action – recognising the opportunities that may be afforded at the mezzanine and pan-Coastal scale. These must be pursued in a manner that complements the delivery of the wider sectoral development needs and opportunities identified in local and sub-regional strategies and plans.

## 5: Transformational Action Areas

Underpinning the Framework for Action is **an over-arching need for actions relating to re-branding and marketing**. These will need to capture the distinctiveness of coastal assets together with the outstanding quality of life choices that coastal/waterfront communities and locations can provide. These will also need to reflect the area's huge opportunities and potential in the context of the Greater South East.

In addition, working with key partners, four substantive action areas will be need to be advanced. These are summarised below.

### **Action Area 1: Identify major coastal sites where redevelopment could enable the creation of new mixed use communities including high quality, high density living and working environments with outstanding physical and virtual communication links**

Under Action Area 1, there will be a need to work with partners to identify key sites, develop a concept for their re-use, and an indication of their potential contribution to population and business growth in the Coastal South East. Lessons and exemplars from elsewhere should also be identified.

Within this context there will be a need to consider the scope for the relocation of economic activities which currently occupy waterfront locations but could operate equally effectively elsewhere. This may include port related land which is no longer required for operational port activities.

The new mixed use communities that are eventually created should become demonstration projects for new ways of carbon neutral living and working, including more flexible working arrangements, greater home-working and networks of freelance consultants and high value added micro businesses.

Across the Coastal South East, there is already a range of on-going activity that is

advancing Action Area 1. One important example is the re-development of Shoreham Harbour which is a major project linked intrinsically to the long term economic potential of the area from Brighton and Hove through to Worthing. Shoreham Harbour is a critical project for that part of the Coastal South East and there is a need to work with partners to identify and advance similarly ambitious opportunities elsewhere, in line with the overall Vision.

### **Action Area 2: Work with businesses which rely on the coast as a primary resource to identify complementary (and where appropriate, collaborative) development strategies, taking into account the provisions of the proposed Marine Bill**

Business sectors which are intrinsically maritime include port operators, port-related logistics, marine technologies, offshore renewable energy, yachting and sailing, and coastal eco-tourism. Many of these activities are knowledge-based and in developing Action Area 2, there will be a need to ensure that relevant higher education institutions (HEIs) and other research bodies are engaged fully and effectively.

One key challenge is to assist the key businesses and their related stakeholders to grow. A second is to improve their efficiency of

utilisation of waterfront resources and their interface with land side activities.

In this context there are immediate actions for:

- *port operators and related service providers* from across the Coastal South East. They will need to identify opportunities and threats to growth in each of the principal market segments (containers, ro-ro, passenger), maximise complementarities, and ensure the full economic impacts arising from port activity are captured and that best use is made of the land-based assets tied up in port complexes. A working group will be set up from across the Coastal South East to identify and agree priorities. This will include leaders from among the port community, relevant public sector officials and key stakeholders from related industries (inland transport, logistics services) and interested community members. A strategic perspective will be required as the competitive dynamics of the sector operate at the Greater South East level – including Thames Gateway (with Thamesport / Medway, London Gateway and Tilbury) as well as Felixstowe
- the *marina and related leisure cluster* to assess future growth requirements and

business opportunities (for example building on the Marine Spatial Study covering Southampton – Chichester and taking this across the Coastal South East)

- *the renewable energy sector* across the Coastal South East, recognising in particular the scope and potential of the London Array – based around offshore renewables (wind/wave) – and its links to the regeneration of Ramsgate.

**Action Area 3: Develop priorities for long term investment to improve coastal connectivity for the main urban areas (including major new developments), recognising the distinctive contributions that can and should be made by different transport modes, and responding to the different imperatives surrounding orbital and radial routes (including links to London)**

Given the need for lower carbon growth and the limited available resources, the emphasis must be on high density public transport solutions and next generation broadband (including equipping businesses and communities to use it to full effect). However the need for selective improvement of strategic road links must not simply be ignored as too difficult or too controversial.

Transport and connectivity issues exist at three levels:

- *Coastal South East Gateway Functions:* A fundamental role of the Coastal South East is its function as a maritime gateway to the UK. Defining, strengthening and safeguarding this role is critical to the economy. Future growth and investment requirements should be defined and the actions to deliver these agreed
- *Connect Coastal South East:* The challenge of connecting the Coastal South East “internally – east and west” as well as facilitating better links to London remains central to improving the attractiveness and performance of the sub-region. Many of the issues are long standing. However, to meet the transformational challenge they need to be addressed and resolved
- *Innovative Transport Lifestyle Choices:* One possible differentiator for the Coastal South East will be new ways of organising work-life-leisure balances to reduce dependence on private vehicles as part of the Coastal South East lifestyle brand. Leading edge thinking around urban design and Smart Growth increasingly looks toward walking, cycling and public transport as the cornerstones of sustainable futures. Steps should be

taken to explore how these “climate change friendly” modes of transport can be used to improve the quality of urban living and turn this into a unique selling feature of the coastal area.

Across the Coastal South East, there is already much activity consistent with Action Area 3. Key examples include the opportunities linked to the CTRL stations at Ebbsfleet and Ashford – not just in terms of connectivity *per se*, but also the stimulus they are providing to economic growth and modal shifts. Looking ahead, there is scope to establish pan-Coastal synergies in advancing opportunities of this nature: the links between Southampton and Ashford are a case in point.

**Action Area 4: Build civic leadership and alignment across the geography of the Coastal South East so that a transformational Vision for the area will be embraced and delivered, and to support the development of strong and inclusive communities whose members have the aptitude and skills needed by the new economy**

Building civic leadership is a key priority and one on which much of the rest of the Framework depends for its implementation. Appropriate mechanisms for effecting this outcome will need to be identified and agreed,

building on experience and insights both from within the area and elsewhere.

At the same time, it will be important that the aspirations of local people and existing communities are raised such that all may contribute to – and benefit from – the transformation that is planned. Key to this will be the delivery of better skills among both those already in work and those aspiring to be in work – both now and in the future.

Again there is much on-going activity on which to build. One example is the significant efforts that have been made to train local people in relation to the employment opportunities at Bluewater (Dartford).

#### ***Fit with other actions***

These four Transformational Action Areas are distinctive to the Coastal South East and it ought to be possible to add value and impact by advancing them at this scale.

However they are not the complete solution for the Coastal South East: the mezzanine scale needs to be a partial one, if it is to serve its purpose of adding coherence and providing a “check and challenge” for other interventions. In delivery, the four Transformational Action Areas must complement – and be supported by – a range of interventions undertaken both across the South East as a whole, and more

locally within specific sub-regions and localities.

## **6: Next Steps**

The Framework for Action for the Coastal South East outlined above is:

- adventurous in approach
- anchored around the distinctive assets and opportunities which define the Coastal South East
- consistent with the opportunities afforded by the mezzanine scale
- transformational in starting to define a new Framework for sustained and sustainable economic development across the Coastal South East.

The Framework needs to be refined and developed further in consultation with partners from across the Coastal South East.

At the same time, rapid headway needs to be made in developing the four Transformational Action Areas, recognising that in some sub-regions, significant progress has already been made. The intention is that the Framework should endorse and support delivery within those sub-regions whilst helping to marshal and galvanise it across other parts of the Coastal South East.