

The River Medway Strategy

Draft Strategy & Delivery Framework

DRAFT FINAL



SQW

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** The River Medway provides a stunning backdrop to Medway; the river and its banks are central to Medway's identity, history, and future development. This document sets out a strategy to ensure the full potential of the river within the boundaries of the Medway Unitary Authority is realised and developed as a key asset for the people of Medway, Kent, and to the wider world.
- 1.2** The river is one of Medway's greatest assets and the genesis for settlement in the area. It lies at the heart of Medway and provides a unique core to a wide mix of activities and functions, which create the character and identity of the place. To the north of the Hoo Peninsula, the district also fronts the River Thames, which provides another unique natural environment as part of the North Kent Marshes.
- 1.3** The River Medway is fundamental to Medway's history and heritage and is synonymous with the evolution of the place and its communities, with its use changing significantly over generations.
- 1.4** The Medway is at the same time a working river, a major leisure and sporting facility, a significant natural environment, and an important ecosystem.
- 1.5** A diverse range of groups and stakeholders therefore currently use and engage with the River Medway and its waterfront: commercial and industrial users; recreational, sporting and leisure users (of all ages); tour operators; hobbyists; environmental groups; heritage enthusiasts; birdwatchers; walkers; and an increasing number of both residents and visitors. It is of importance to all parts of the community, including families, children, and young people through education, recreation, and volunteering.
- 1.6** The River Medway uniquely passes through a diverse range of environments, with a series of spectacular river meanders framed by steep escarpments, and the marshes and mudflats of the estuary, which create the opportunity for stunning views and visual connections.
- 1.7** This includes a significant built heritage with Rochester recognised by the Romans for its strategic importance as a location for crossing the River Medway in 43 AD, which established the walled settlement as a "stronghold by the bridge".
- 1.8** The founding of the Cathedral in 604 rebuilt in 1079 and the second oldest cathedral in the country, and the Norman-era castle in 1078, together with the arrival of the Royal Navy in 1547, and the establishment of the Royal Navy Dockyard active for over 400 years – all acted as key catalysts to development in the area, helping shape the riverside military and industrial landscape. Forts such as Hoo and Darnet, Upnor Castle, Fort Amherst Britain's largest Napoleonic Fortress and many other assets, dominated the landscape, much of which still exists today.

- 1.9** Further downstream the mudflats and salt marshes on both sides of the river provide dramatic landscapes and wildlife habitat as well as being used as grazing land. The intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh are particularly important as a food source for migrating birds supporting thousands of wintering and breeding species and as spawning grounds for fish. To the north of the district – along the River Thames frontage to the Hoo Peninsula, sits the North Kent Marshes, providing valuable habitat for a range of species.
- 1.10** Most of the lower river, forming the Medway Estuary is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds and as a Ramsar site under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, signed in the city of Ramsar in 1971. It is also recognised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Marine Conservation Zone, which includes the whole of the estuary and the river up to Allington Lock.
- 1.11** There is a proposal from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds for the east coast wetlands, which include parts of the Hoo Peninsula and land surrounding the Medway to be put forward to UNESCO to be recognised as a World Heritage Site for its unique value as a network of wetlands.
- 1.12** The estuary hosts many yacht clubs, marinas and boatyards, offering a wide range of moorings that enable the many leisure boats to explore the river, its historic maritime features and the tidal creeks and channels. There is also significant public access to parts of this landscape, such as the Riverside Country Park forming a 100ha coastal park and the newly established King Charles III England Coast Path.
- 1.13** The river is a source of pleasure, opportunity and identity. It is something that should be used and experienced and has a number of key development opportunities going forward; it is more than just a stunning backdrop.
- 1.14** There is, however, a critical set of interlinkages and overlaps between these various functions and uses on the river. This creates different and sometimes competing priorities and responsibilities, and these cannot be thought of in isolation. This strategy has identified several different topic areas to help assess the role of the river, encompassing such broad issues as the natural environment and climate change, economic development activities, tourism, visitors and heritage, leisure and sport, and future key development areas.
- 1.15** The complexity of the various interlinkages is significant and creates some Key Challenges, and Opportunities for the River Strategy, which revolve around the above key topic areas.
- 1.16** Extensive consultations have also highlighted some other critical issues which overlap the above themes, and ideally need to be addressed on a comprehensive and consistent basis, such as significantly better access to and from the river, positioning the river as a central theme within the “Medway offer”, encouraging residents to understand and use the river more, and looking at ways of managing the health and safety, security and condition of the river. Importantly, timing is a key feature, as some of the above need to be addressed now and others progressively over the next 10 to 20 years.

1.17 The broad challenges, opportunities and associated issues that have been identified, are set out in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1-1: Outline of Key Challenges Influencing the River Strategy



1.18 Recognising the scale and breadth of these challenges, together with the overlap between them, a set of Key Themes has been developed, around which the River Strategy has been configured. This represents the most efficient way of examining the different roles that the river performs, the critical considerations that need to be highlighted under each, and how these need to be addressed and taken forward into a programme of actions.

Figure 1-2: Key themes for the River Strategy



1.19 As a whole, across each of these themes, there are opportunities for the river, and activities around the river to contribute to wider well-being and public health outcomes – through physical activity, mental health improvement, and by combating social isolation.

1.20 This report begins with an important consideration of context and strategic fit, around which the Strategy and river-related assets, challenges, users and other bodies need to be considered, and which will impact the river and form the basis for the ultimate, strategic recommendations.

1.21 It then considers each of the river's Key Themes set out above and highlights the perspectives of each under the following headings: -

- Background and Context
- Key Challenges
- Key Opportunities

1.22 This is followed by a chapter, discussing the ways in which an Implementation Strategy and initial Action Plan, can be developed.

2. Context and Strategic Fit

- 2.1** This River Strategy is a document which is designed to align with the ambitions and objectives of the statutory bodies and other organisations, Medway Council, businesses, community and interest groups that rely on, are impacted by, and responsible for, various aspects of the River Medway.
- 2.2** It sits alongside and aligns with Medway Council's One Medway Plan, the emerging Local Plan, the Medway 2037 strategy, the Medway Climate Change Action Plan, the Medway Cultural Strategy, and the Medway Heritage Strategy, which is in development. It also recognises the priorities of the Environment Agency, Peel Ports objectives as the Port Authority, central government policies relating to rivers and coastlines, and the important natural designations which apply to parts of the estuary. The strategy aligns with Medway Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP), which sets out the vision for a sustainable, integrated transport network across the borough. The LTP supports active travel, improved public transport, and reduced reliance on private vehicles – all of which are reflected in the River Strategy's emphasis on walking and cycling infrastructure, river-based transport, and connectivity between key sites.
- 2.3** Medway's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) are key transport strategies that support the Council's ambitions for sustainable mobility. The River Strategy aligns with these plans by promoting active travel routes along the river, improving access to waterfront destinations, and exploring river-based transport options that complement bus services.
- 2.4** While the strategy relates to the River Medway within the boundaries of the current Medway unitary authority, it should be recognised that there are important links upstream to Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling, and Sevenoaks, and downstream to Swale, where other local authorities have responsibility for the river and the land surrounding it. The policies of Kent County Council, the Thames Estuary Growth Board, and Internal Drainage Boards are all relevant to effectively managing the river and making the most of opportunities. This strategy should not be seen in isolation, but as part of a broader picture in terms of organisations and policies that relate to the river, water management, flood defences, waterside placemaking, and other themes.
- 2.5** Medway Council is publishing this document and will support its implementation, acting as animateur and facilitator, but the strategy is for the River Medway as a whole and is intended to align the objectives and future activities of a wide range of stakeholders. It is also aligned with Medway Council's sustainable development principles, addressing economic, community and environmental issues.

Medway Local Plan

- 2.6** This strategy sits alongside the Medway Local Plan, which is about helping Medway to grow sustainably, including finding a balance between the need for development of homes and protecting the environment. The River Strategy relates to Local Plan provisions in several ways and across different themes. Where this strategy has alignment with Local Plan policies, these are cross-referenced.
- 2.7** The Local Plan's Key Themes are:
- Community
 - Environment
 - Infrastructure
 - Homes
 - Jobs
- 2.8** The River Strategy has the potential to make a positive contribution to all five themes set out in the Local Plan.

One Medway Plan

- 2.9** The One Medway Plan sets out a vision for Medway as a place where people are proud to live, work, learn, and visit. It emphasises community engagement, economic growth, and environmental sustainability. The River Medway Strategy aligns with this vision across a range of different themes, but in following key areas:

i) Enhancing Community Engagement

By improving access to the river and promoting its use for leisure, sport, and cultural activities, the strategy fosters a sense of community and pride among residents. Initiatives such as river-based events and improved pathways encourage residents to connect with their local environment.

ii) Driving Economic Growth

This strategy identifies opportunities for economic growth along the river, in terms of opportunities for investment and business, as well as growth in tourism, leisure, and cultural activities. By creating attractive waterfronts and supporting river-based businesses, it contributes to the economic vitality of Medway.

iii) Promoting Environmental Sustainability

This document also relates to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment of the river, aligning with the One Medway Plan's commitment to a clean and green future.

Efforts to improve water quality, manage flood risks, and enhance biodiversity are central to this goal.

Medway 2037

2.10 Medway 2037 is the Council's core economic and regeneration strategy which focuses on deliverability, partnerships, and embedding key themes such as climate change and innovation in future initiatives. This document aligns with Medway 2037 in the following key areas:

i) Supporting Economic Development

Developing opportunities for business growth along the river, including tourism, leisure, and commercial activities supporting the goal of driving economic regeneration and creating a vibrant waterfront city.

ii) Enhancing Innovation and Skills

By promoting river-based activities and events, this document helps foster innovation and skills development. It aligns with Medway 2037's emphasis on creating spaces for creative industries and educational opportunities.

iii) Improving Town Centres and Connectivity

By enhancing physical and visual connections between the river and town centres, supporting Medway 2037's aim to renew, diversify, and activate town centres. Improved river access and transport links contribute to a more connected and accessible Medway.

iv) Addressing Climate Change

By promoting environmental sustainability and climate resilience this document aligns with Medway 2037's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions and addressing climate impacts. Initiatives to manage flood risks and enhance biodiversity are integral to this goal.

Medway Climate Change Action Plan

2.11 The River Strategy will contribute to the objectives of Medway Council's Climate Action Plan which outlines the commitment for Medway's residents, communities, and businesses to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 and addresses the impact of climate change. It aligns in the following key areas:

i) Enhancing Climate Resilience

Promoting flood risk management and protection against coastal erosion, which are critical in the face of rising sea levels and increased storm surges. These efforts help safeguard communities and ecosystems along the river.

ii) Promoting Sustainable Practices

Developing initiatives to improve water quality, reduce pollution, and enhance biodiversity and align with the Climate Action Plan's goals which encourage sustainable development practices and the use of green infrastructure.

iii) Supporting Carbon Reduction

By promoting walking, cycling, and river-based transport, this document helps reduce reliance on car travel, contributing to the lowering of carbon emissions. It also supports the development of renewable and alternative energy projects along the river.

Medway Cultural Strategy

2.12 The Medway Cultural Strategy aims to make Medway internationally recognised for its creativity and culture by 2030. It focuses on connectivity, shared ambition, spaces and places, creative people, and community engagement. The River Strategy aligns with these themes by:

i) Creating Spaces and Places

It promotes the development of cultural and recreational activities and spaces along the river, including visitor centres, arts venues, and heritage sites. These spaces serve as hubs for cultural activities.

ii) Nurturing Creative People

It supports events and activities that celebrate both Medway's cultural heritage and its forward looking creative and artistic talent, helping to nurture local creativity.

iii) Fostering Connectivity

Improves access to the river and enhances water transport links between cultural sites along the riverfront. This helps connect people and places, supporting the Cultural Strategy's goal of creating a more inclusive and connected community.

Medway Heritage Strategy

2.13 Medway Council's Heritage Strategy was published in 2018 and sets out to make the most of the opportunities identified in the Medway Heritage Asset Review 2017:

- Objective 1: Conserve and enhance Medway's heritage assets
- Objective 2: Work with Medway's heritage assets to help deliver sustainable development
- Objective 3: Increase the understanding and community involvement with Medway's heritage assets

2.14 Through the delivery of these objectives, the Medway Heritage Strategy aims to provide the framework for how Medway Council conserves, enhances and promotes its heritage assets in the immediate and long-term future.

2.15 The Heritage Strategy recognises the historic importance of the river, as well as its key significance as part of the landscape of Medway, and this River Strategy aligns with it in those respects. A new emerging Heritage Strategy is being developed during 2025.

Estuary Edges

2.16 Estuary Edges is an ecological design initiative supported and promoted by the Environment Agency, aimed at transforming hard engineered riverbanks such as those made of brick, concrete, and metal into more natural, habitat-rich environments. The project focuses on urban estuaries, with the Thames Estuary used as an initial case-study, where only 2% of the river edges remain in a natural state. The key themes of this work are relevant to the Medway.

2.17 The key objectives of the Estuary Edges agenda include:

- **Habitat Creation:** by softening the edges of estuaries, the project encourages the return of wildlife, including salt marsh plants, invertebrates, fish, and birds.
- **Ecological Design Guidance:** the website serves as a practical "how-to" guide for developers, planners, and environmentalists to incorporate ecological features into estuary edge designs.
- **Sustainability and Adaptability** emphasizes using materials and techniques suited to local conditions while considering the entire estuarine system from tidal limits to the ocean. The establishment of Design Principles that promote:
 - The use of intertidal vegetated terraces, creek erosion management, and timber structures to create diverse habitats.
 - The integration of public access, education, and aesthetic improvements into redevelopment projects.
 - A focus on ecosystem services such as flood risk reduction, carbon sequestration, and pollution attenuation.

2.18 The River Strategy sits alongside and acknowledges this initiative, which should be seen as complementary.

Peel Ports

2.19 As the Harbour Authority, Peel Ports is responsible for navigation and safety management on the river, as well as for the environmental preservation of the river, with a jurisdiction covering the Medway from Allington Lock at Maidstone to the Medway Buoy at the junction with the Thames. Within this jurisdiction, Peel Ports sets speed limits, and controls navigation

through a process called Vessel Traffic Services (VTS). The port of Sheerness's VTS is controlled from Liverpool.

- 2.20** As part of this responsibility, Peel Ports has the power to dredge and to issue dredging licences, as well as construction, demolition and maintenance permissions involving works below the high-water line,
- 2.21** In addition to being the Competent Harbour Authority (CHA), Peel Ports is also a major owner of the seabed, so river infrastructure on Peel's area of ownership requires leasing or licence arrangements to be negotiated with Peel Ports.
- 2.22** Peel Ports work with both commercial and leisure users of the river, providing security, safety, and environmental oversight, in addition to the operations of the ports of Sheerness and Chatham Docks.
- 2.23** In addition to issuing permits and licenses, Peel charges harbour dues and pilotage fees to vessels navigating the river, and leisure users are charged a conservancy fee to cover the costs of maintaining the safety, navigability, and environment on the river.
- 2.24** Peel's area of responsibility extends beyond the boundaries of the Medway authority area, which is the subject of this strategy.
- 2.25** Peel Ports supports in principal improvements to the river for all users, including the introduction and maintenance of new access points. They also convene a river user group and engage with working groups with other regulators and stakeholders, to coordinate responses to key challenges.

3. Theme 1: The River as a Location for Leisure and Sport

Background and Context

- 3.1** The river's leisure and sporting community is vibrant and diverse and a focus for a wide range of activities, including general sailing and boating activities, personal watercraft, cruising and motor vessels, rowing and fishing, in addition to walking and cycling along the riverbanks.
- 3.2** The river is used in different ways for different activities from small to large endeavours, free and at a cost, privately organised or publicly available. Although these types of activity are currently wide ranging, they all have the potential to grow exponentially in terms of numbers and type of users: -
- with investment in river access and other infrastructure
 - by developing the "Medway offer", as a destination in the Southeast through providing more events, attractions, competitions, other opportunities and facilities, including the development of nationally and internationally recognised teaching and training facilities
 - coordinated promotions of the Medway offer opportunities, and
 - better management of the river to address maintenance, health and safety and security concerns, including river infrastructure and a strategy for a "clean" River Medway to eliminate any environmental and health concerns.
- 3.3** The river can also make a major contribution to the health and wellbeing agenda, and to broader public health priorities (linked to physical activity, mental health, and addressing social isolation) by developing its walking offer via quality riverside pathways and improved accessibility and other facilities.
- 3.4** These priorities can be promoted by identifying key projects for which business cases for private and public investment should be developed.
- 3.5** Discussions emerging from these challenges have suggested the need for a new coordinated, representative group, involving all the key leisure and sports related parties with an interest in the river (statutory, planning, management, operational, recreational and promotional).
- 3.6** The river is already a focus for a range of leisure and sporting activities; some are undertaken simply for pleasure, others are highly competitive, and can be performed at a local, regional, national or even international level.
- 3.7** The use of the river by children, young people, and families is of key importance; it is used through education, recreation, and volunteering.
- 3.8** The leisure and sporting community and usage is therefore vibrant and diverse and includes:

Table 3-1: Leisure and sporting usages of the river

General sailing and boating activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dingy sailing • Larger sailing craft 	Personal watercraft: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paddleboarding • Kayaking / canoeing • Jet skiing / Hovercrafts
Cruising and motor vessels	Fishing (line and net)
Rowing	Walking and cycling (short or long distance)
Water skiing	Associated & training facilities – for all the above

Sailing and Boating

- 3.9** There is an abundance of leisure craft facilities on the Medway with multiple marinas, clubs and boatyards offering a range of services. Thirty-four facilities are currently identified, varying in size, offering and charges. Of these, half are privately owned marinas, boatyards, and water sport facilities and some 17 are club-owned facilities clubs, associations and trusts, including registered charities with an estimated 4,000 members.
- 3.10** This includes around 2,400 moorings and some 10,000 individual boat users including dinghies, canoes and vessels not moored on the river.
- 3.11** Policy T21 of the Medway Local Plan states that “the existing network of piers, jetties, slipways, steps and stairs will be safeguarded to support the potential for visitor and river taxi services and to accommodate visiting vessels, while any new facilities will be encouraged.”

Fishing and Angling

- 3.12** Recreational fishing is possible within the tidal stretches of the Medway, including shore, personal boat fishing, and charter trips, although this has decreased in numbers and popularity over recent years.
- 3.13** To protect and grow fish stocks, the UK’s largest “no-take zone” (NTZ) has been established in the Medway Estuary - covering 12.1 square kilometres of saltmarsh and mudflat environments that are vitally important to a wide variety of fish. The area is monitored by Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFFCA), and the results of testing over the next few years will dictate how future policies develop.

Walking, Running – Coastal Pathways

- 3.14** Access alongside the river is important, and it is currently possible to walk around much of the Medway Estuary using existing, designated routes, particularly the King Charles III England Coast Path.

- 3.15** Various initiatives are ongoing, particularly between Natural England and the Council, to affect some additions and improvements to existing provision, by avoiding busy road stretches and filling gaps in the current, coastal pathway network.
- 3.16** Active travel and riverside connectivity is supported by the objectives of Medway Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Medway's Local Cycling and these initiatives are supported by Medway Council's Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which supports riverside walking and cycling routes, and sets out a strategic approach to improving cycling and walking infrastructure across the borough, including riverside routes.

Key Challenges

Sailing, Boating and Cruising

- 3.17** There is a wide concern, expressed across the sailing and boating fraternity, that there is a severe lack of provision to enable access to be gained both into the river and from the river onto shore. This is linked to a view that real improvements could significantly change the way in which the river is used and the levels of usage.
- 3.18** Where facilities were historically available for such access (pontoons, wharfs, slipways), these have deteriorated over recent years, and elements of infrastructure are now unserviceable and unlikely to be capable of reinstatement without significant investment.
- 3.19** The lack of good and available public open access points to the river (slipways in particular) is also a key issue.
- 3.20** It is understood that many of the sailing and boating facilities, particularly clubs and associations, are in marginal financial positions and not able to generate surplus funds to invest in improvements, replacements, expansions or new facilities. This financial fragility is an ongoing challenge, and consequently it is difficult to see how the offer is going to be improved, without securing funding for key sites and initiatives.
- 3.21** This fragility also has an impact on the ability to cover the significant cost of maintaining current infrastructure in a serviceable condition, into the future.
- 3.22** There is also considered to be a real lack of teaching & training facilities for sailing and other water sport activities, around the Medway. Training is a key component in any successful sailing location, and the lack of it is therefore a barrier to getting more people on the river. At present it is left with the Clubs to provide appropriate facilities, which in many instances, is financially, very difficult.

Management, Security, Health & Safety and River Maintenance

- 3.23** Consultations have highlighted challenges in relation to the way in which the river is "managed" and how raises concerns over health and safety, security and anti-social behaviour including:

- The general level of management and security of current infrastructure and other installations – piers, pontoons and slipways, which is deterring regular use by both residents and visitors.
- The problems of floating or abandoned wreckage and rubbish, which is a hazard to existing users and causes damage to current operations.
- The relationships between the general sailing and boating community and the modern users such as jet skis & hovercrafts requires improvement.

The River Medway Offer - Promotion of Activities & Facilities on the River

- 3.24** Although the river provides a range of activities and it is well placed in terms of communications and accessibility in the Southeast and the London market, it does not attract significant footfall in terms of sailing, boating and other river related activities, comparable to similar locations such as the Solent.
- 3.25** This is demonstrated by the type, range and numbers attracted by the “water based” offer and the relative prices and income that can be generated from such uses. This view is supported by MDL Marinas, who operate the Chatham Maritime marina, alongside a number of other similar facilities around the country. MDL have confirmed that Medway achieves the lowest mooring fees within their portfolio.
- 3.26** Understanding the reasons behind these trends are critical and how the offer can be varied, expanded and improved to attract more users to the area.

Key Opportunities

Sailing, Boating and Cruising

- 3.27** Key opportunities to improve the sailing, boating and cruising experience on the Medway and to provide existing clubs and organisations with better prospects for operating viable and sustainable facilities, in the long term are:
- Establishing the river Medway as a prominent and popular boating destination, for example, for private and chartered super yachts.
 - Developing a Medway Offer that promotes water-based activities such as rowing, water skiing, paddleboarding, kayaking, and identifies potential, suitable locations for jet skiing and hovercrafts.
 - Developing a programme of activities that appeal to the adventurous side of people looking to engage with the river, rather than just concentrating on the “function” of the river (e.g. supporting the work which is already ongoing to establish a “long distance” canoe trail that encompasses the non-tidal part of the Medway, but also extending into the tidal stretches of the main river).

- The development of several national and internationally recognised teaching & training facilities for sailing and other water sport activities.
- Increasing the membership of the existing clubs and associations, by trying to grow the level of knowledge and interest in the youth community such as schools and colleges. This could include introducing a programme of visits, river themed events and presentations with an integral link to training and education opportunities.
- Considering more broadly how best to engage with children, young people, and families with river-based recreation through partnerships with schools, Council youth services, and relevant teams.
- Establishing the case for a clean river that attracts visitors and eliminates any environmental and health concerns, for those participating in “immersive” activities on the river. Further work is required to identify specific pollution issues, including the challenges with grey and blackwater being discharged from boats (primarily houseboats) and stormwater overflows, and potential funding sources to tackle these issues.
- Establishing a business case of potential projects both “hard” (physical infrastructure projects) and soft projects¹ to support the leisure and sporting agenda and to secure funding sources either from the public sector, or from private investors and sponsors.
- Establishing a community of interested parties to include the private sector to develop a programme of events which link sailing and boating activities with local communities.

3.28 Improving the experience for those who use the river in these ways will bring positive benefits to Medway’s public health, furthering access to the river for all age groups, supporting active travel and social prescribing.

Fishing and Angling

3.29 Outside of the No Take Zone, responsible angling and fishing should be encouraged and promoted to attract residents and visitors.

3.30 There are fishing opportunities at Rochester Riverside and Medway City Estate which will need to fit with other riverside users.

Access to the River and New Access Provision

3.31 There is a wide recognition that real improvements to the quality and number of river access points, could significantly change:

- i) the type and level of demand for people using the river, and

¹ The term ‘soft projects’ refers to those projects which do not involve physical construction intervention.

- ii) the range of activities undertaken and the volume of vessels coming into the area, subject of course to suitable safeguards in respect of the environment and natural habitats.

3.32 The degradation of the river infrastructure and assets over time, is an issue which will require a broader and more strategic approach, across the river. As such, there is a need to look at the feasibility of a much wider investment strategy across a range of existing and new assets that balances increased demand with investment, returns and benefits over the long term.

3.33 Getting the “points of access” to the river “right” (more of them, better quality, better managed and coordinated) is therefore seen as a major priority and it is recommended that a research brief is established, to investigate the range of options available, and the most effective and viable ways of delivering such a strategy.

3.34 For example, the lack of mooring points to enable access to Rochester, for visiting boats to access the castle, cathedral and High Street, or to visit the historic dockyard, is seen as a significant problem, although the recent installation of the Limehouse Landing, adjacent to Rochester Riverside, is a significant improvement. Public access points to other locations such as Upnor and the “attractions” at Chatham Maritime, also need addressing.

River Based Infrastructure Improvement Opportunities

3.35 Improving the use of river-based infrastructure at the Strand and Commodores Hard, could prove beneficial, for example by:

- Introducing sea lanes to separate non powered vessels and swimmers from jet skis and power boats
- Exploring ways to improve and fund River walkways and links to adjoining sites.
- Improving the Commodores Hard slipway the primary free to use public slipway in Medway.
- Exploring the feasibility of an “outdoor” education and training centre at this location possibly in collaboration with the Sea Scouts, Medway Cruising club and Medway Watersports Trust)

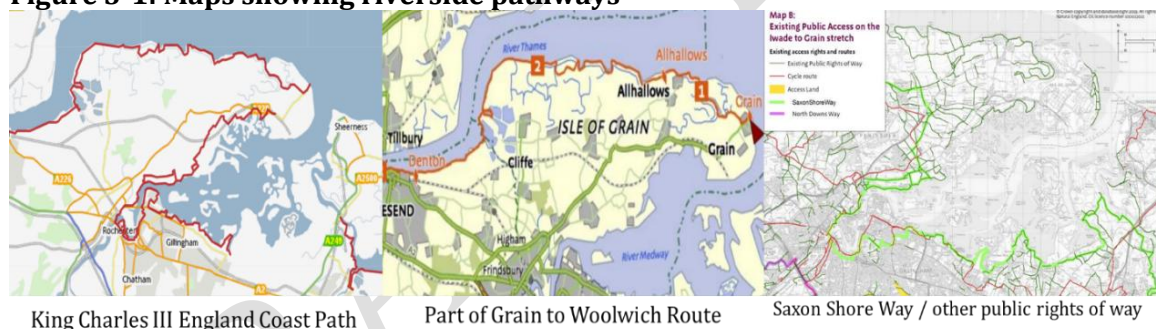
3.36 Another opportunity is a wider use of Riverside Country Park, for example:

- Exploring additional, river access options, e.g. a launch point for canoes, kayaks, and considering access to Bloors Wharf and Rainham Wharf
- Establishing Riverside Park as a key part of the wider “green spaces network” strategy, promoting riverside walkways linked with key strategic green spaces and environmental “hubs”.

Medway Coastal Path

- 3.37** The establishment of improved footpath access along the Medway in the next few years, not only improves access for more residents and visitors but also helps to raise awareness of Medway's exceptional recreational and natural environmental offers. In addition, it helps to encourage more people to walk for both short and long journeys, easing congestion and tackling air pollution.
- 3.38** A comprehensive network of footpaths and cycleways, well-maintained and promoted, as part of the potential "green spaces network", will also support both physical and mental wellbeing and help Medway to realise its ambition for the river to promote community benefits. Walking has been described as "the nearest activity to perfect exercise", being the easiest, lowest cost and enjoyable way for most people to increase their physical activity and to enjoy the natural environment / outdoors.
- 3.39** It would also link with the objectives in Medway's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) and the Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan, which is currently out for consultation.

Figure 3-1: Maps showing riverside pathways



- 3.40** The Council should also consider supporting and promoting an improvement in information sources and resources, making it easier to find details on the coastal footways, cycle paths and linked green spaces both online and elsewhere, for visitors and residents. Improving river related information on Medway Council's website will be an integral part of this Strategy.

Health & Wellbeing

- 3.41** It is important to ensure that the River Strategy contributes to the health & wellbeing agenda and the objectives set out in the Local Plan, to support people to lead healthy lives through promoting physical activity and providing access to local nature and opportunities for walking and cycling.
- 3.42** Walking and cycling have been discussed earlier, but there are many other river activities that can improve health and fitness, including those associated with sailing, rowing, as well as canoeing and kayaking and many others.
- 3.43** Supporting more people to access these activities, through the better use of information, and the development of easy routes into clubs and organisations able to help, together with the

benefits that can be gained, is an important part of the Strategy. Activities need to be easy to find and attractive to use, for both visitors and residents. Improving information on Medway Council's website is again, an integral part of this.

Management, Security, Health & Safety, and upkeep of the river

3.44 Consultations have highlighted the importance of improving the way in which the river is “managed” and how this raises significant concerns over health and safety and security. The opportunities for improvement include:

- A more coordinated approach to the management, maintenance and security of current infrastructure and other installations between stakeholders
- Working with Peel Ports, to develop a coordinated approach to “cleaning up” the river, in terms of floating and abandoned wreckage and rubbish generally.
- Developing a coordinated approach to the promotion of the Medway offer and the range of facilities available.
- Establishing better relationships, regulations & guidance, between the general sailing and boating community, Peel Ports and the specialist users such as jet skis, hovercrafts and those involved in shooting activities such as wildfowling.
- Working up proposals to engage and educate the residents of Medway as to the range of opportunities and facilities available on the river.

3.45 Discussions have suggested the need for a new coordinated, representative group, involving all the key leisure and sporting parties with an interest in the river, including statutory, planning, management, operational, recreational and promotional aspects.

3.46 Consultees have expressed the view that this should not be seen as a “talking shop”, and the participation of both the Council and Peel Ports are seen as essential to coordinating initiatives to improve the river in terms of access and health and safety.

3.47 Medway Swale Estuary Partnership (MSEP) already hold quarterly meetings with a wide group of stakeholders; to discuss issues impacting upon the estuary and the development of related projects and this could form the catalyst for a wider grouping. MSEP are also in the process of establishing a Scientific Advisory Group.

The Medway “Offer” Promotion of Activities & Facilities on the River

3.48 The opportunity to broaden and improve the Medway sporting and leisure offer and improve the footfall of visitors to the levels achieved by similar locations, such as the Solent, is a key objective.

- 3.49** Undertaking a market research exercise is proposed, which will help better understand the issues behind the above conundrum and develop a strategy to address the key areas of concern and demonstrate how to overcome the challenge.
- 3.50** Leisure and Tourism is a critically important aspect for Medway, particularly in terms of placemaking and creating a destination that appeals at a national and international level. The river could be a really important component here and significantly contribute to Medway's unique selling point.
- 3.51** The objective is to establish a strategy that provides, more of a reason to be on the river with more significant events of a national appeal, more attractions, more competitions, more opportunities and facilities to enable sailing, boating and other sporting activities.
- 3.52** In addition, more should be made of the connections to London via High-Speed Rail, to attract a wider catchment and visitor profile to the River and Medway more generally, by developing a sustained campaign around this messaging.
- 3.53** In the longer term, the potential Leisure and Sporting opportunity is exponential, assuming a strategic approach to "up" the offer in terms of what is available, the quality, breadth and scale of the offer, the range of assets on offer, and the way in which it is promoted.

Looking Forward

- 3.54** Over recent years, traditional marina infrastructure has moved from a storage operation into a destination, with waterfront developments for retail and food as well as maritime and ancillary services. There is also a major market in clubs and commercial training centres in the UK, which provide sailing and power boating activities to the people of UK and overseas. These are opportunities to be explored in Medway.
- 3.55** Existing clubs and facilities that are looking to redevelop and expand should be supported to develop a financial, business plan, to understand the investment return and identify where grant or other funding can be sourced.
- 3.56** Opportunities should also be identified, for development initiatives that have a visionary approach to capitalising on the advantages of a riverside location a mix of leisure, commercial, sporting, training uses. Potential sites should undertake preliminary viability and deliverability testing, linked to the creation of a prospectus to test in the market.

Theme 1 Summary

The river's Leisure and Sporting community is vibrant and diverse:

The river is a focus for a wide range of leisure and sporting activities, both on the water and along its banks. These include general sailing and boating activities, personal watercraft e.g. paddleboarding, kayaking, canoeing, and jet skiing, cruising and motor vessels, fishing, rowing, water skiing and many opportunities for walking and cycling.

Activities use the river in different ways, in the river, on the river, or alongside the river.

The facilities offering this mix of activities are also very wide ranging in their nature from small to large, free and at a cost, privately organised or publicly available.

Although these types of activity are currently wide ranging, they all have the potential to be grown exponentially in terms of the number and type of users with investment in river access and other infrastructure, more coordinated promotion of the offer and opportunities, and better management, maintenance and security.

Developing a “Medway Offer”

There is an opportunity to further develop the “Medway offer”, developing the river as a destination in the Southeast through providing much more of a reason to be on and along it with more events, more attractions, more competitions, and more opportunities and facilities to enable sailing, boating and other sporting activities. This includes:

- Developing nationally and internationally recognised teaching and training facilities for sailing and other water sports activities.
- Establishing the case for a “clean” River Medway, attracting visitors, eliminating any environmental and health concerns and ultimately encouraging participation in immersive activities on the river
- Establishing a business case of potential projects, including both hard projects such as physical infrastructure and soft projects to support the Leisure and Sporting agenda to secure further public and private funding sources into river activities.
- Contributing to the health and wellbeing agenda. Encouraging people to walk more as a form of low cost and enjoyable physical activity through developing the river's walking offer. This could involve creating good quality riverside pathways and developing walking schemes to direct residents and visitors to the best walking routes. Improving information about these pathways and routes will be critical within this.

Improving access to the river

Access to and from the river is a challenge at present. Improvements to the river's accessibility could significantly change the type and level of demand for people using the river, the range of activities undertaken and the volume of vessels coming into the area by water. This could include:

- Undertaking a feasibility study to assess the opportunities and viability of a medium-term strategy to maintain, refurbish, and reinstate a range of river access infrastructure (pontoons, moorings, slipways) and to construct new access points.
- Improving the use of river-based infrastructure at the Strand, including making better use of The Stand facilities, particularly the public slipway; improving River frontage access and links to adjoining sites; and improving river access provision.
- Widening the use of the Riverside Country Park, considering any additional river access options that could be developed around the park and linking the park with riverside walkways.
- Making more of the connections to London via High-Speed Rail – for example, to Strood, Rochester and Chatham to attract a wider visitor profile to the river, as well as developing a sustained campaign around this.

Management of the river

Establishing a new body empowered to strategically manage the river, including:

- Addressing management, maintenance, health and safety and security concerns, including in the river and infrastructure along the river
- Coordinating the 'Medway offer', including promoting the river, organising events, searching for funding opportunities, producing guidance and regulations for river users.

4. Theme 2 - The River as an Important Business and Economic Driver

Background and Context

- 4.1** The River Medway has long been a hub for industrial and commercial activities, facilitating the import and export of a wide range of goods. However, recent years have seen a shift in market dynamics, favouring facilities along the Thames Estuary and the East Coast. Currently, the Medway hosts two major port operators, Hutchinson Port Holdings and Peel Ports.
- 4.2** Most of the cargo shipping on the Medway is short sea, serving regional needs in the construction sector, waste products and liquids fuels and chemicals, mainly running from four cargo handling facilities in use on the river, namely Thamesport wharves, Grain oil and gas jetties, Chatham Docks, and the wharves on the Medway City Estate. These are considered in more detail below.
- 4.3** In terms of the existing maritime and port facilities within the Medway Council area, it is currently estimated that the river is essential to some 73 businesses requiring access to the river, which provides some 1,930 jobs 2% of all employment in Medway and supports economic activity in other businesses down the supply chain i.e. hardware providers, maritime insurers.
- 4.4** The operations at the ports have wider importance to the regional economy. In addition to the businesses directly serving the port operations, these activities serve significant supply chains in the construction, aviation, and many other sectors which rely on imports from the Medway's ports. These continue to have key importance in the energy sector, and are the locations for interconnectors from mainland Europe, providing a new energy link between the UK and Germany via the Neu Connect project, with construction works now underway on a new UK converter station at the Isle of Grain. The new link will allow electricity to flow in either direction, helping to boost energy security and resilience while also helping to integrate renewable energy sources in the UK and Germany.
- 4.5** In addition, National Grid Ventures is also in the process of developing plans to deliver Nautilus, a new subsea cable allowing electricity to flow between the UK and Belgium, with a preferred connection to the UK electricity system identified at the Isle of Grain.

Grain

- 4.6** There are primarily three operations within the Grain site that are contributing to the local economy for consideration.

National Grid

- 4.7** National Grid occupy a significant site, to the NE of the Isle immediately adjacent to the river. At the present time, their main business area within the Grain facility is the importing and storage of Liquid Natural Gas (LNG). This is primarily the subject of import contracts which will run until 2045 - 2050. Even though current national policy is to try and dilute the main gas supply with green hydrogen, to create a mixed fuel network, there are limits to this dilution. Even if it is possible to introduce more hydrogen into the network in future years, the prevailing view is that there will continue to be a need for an imported LNG supply for many years to come.
- 4.8** In terms of infrastructure, there are currently two main jetties at Grain, servicing the LNG operation, and a third jetty, which is currently unused but available for additional trade, as and when required. The balance of their site is largely occupied by storage tanks, although there are significant areas which are unused and available for other purposes. Consultations have indicated that irrespective of future and emerging uses, there is likely to be a need for significant investment in the Grain infrastructure, over the next few years.

Thamesport

- 4.9** Recent years have seen many competitors move into the specialist, automated container terminal arena, which Thamesport occupied almost exclusively some 20 years ago, and consequently the operation has had to diversify to provide a range of current facilities, which include:
- Deep water quays with road, rail & barge connections
 - LOLO (Lift On / Lift Off) container services
 - Bulk cargo handling solutions
 - Short sea services to continental Europe (Holland and Spain)
- 4.10** As such, the Thamesport landholding now accommodates several other operations, which largely revolve around the construction sector, which include an aggregates importing operation, a cement importer; a company manufacturing specialist, reinforced concrete sections for major infrastructure (e.g. HS2 and London Thames Tideway); and a steel importer. There are however, currently some 40 acres, which is still undeveloped.

Uniper, Grain Facility

- 4.11** Uniper continue to operate the Grain Power Station (three turbines) and are aiming to fully decarbonise by 2035, through Carbon Capture and the integration of hydrogen into the system (as a low carbon alternative to natural gas).

- 4.12** They also own several parcels of undeveloped land at present, including some 8.2 hectares in the middle of the Grain complex, and a further 40 hectares. They are currently considering a number of alternative uses for these areas.

Kingsnorth

- 4.13** Owned by Uniper, this site has outline planning for Medway One, a new mixed-use development on the former power station site comprising up to some 325,000 sq m of accommodation. The site includes a major electricity sub-station expected to remain in use for the foreseeable future and a right of way to access the river via the Kingsnorth Jetties owned by Peel Ports. The feasibility of introducing future river-based uses, must however address the viability of reconfiguring these existing structures and any associated operational challenges.
- 4.14** There are also other users and parcels of potential development land around the Kingsnorth area in a variety of ownerships, that could have the potential to use river access for incoming and outgoing goods and services, and these require further consideration, as a strategy for the area is developed.

Medway City Estate

- 4.15** There are three key operations on the Medway City Estate (Scotline, Heidelberg Materials Aggregates, and VeeTee Rice), two of which utilise access to the River as a fundamental part of their business model, and one which has a major river frontage, and the potential to utilise the river for the importation of raw materials, but has to date not taken advantage of that option.

Scotline

- 4.16** Scotline, are a major importer of construction related products, such as sawn timber, wood pulp, cement, refuse-derived fuel (RDF), together with some palletised products and steel products. Some 99% of the goods passing through their terminals are inward bound (imports rather than exports), and their vessels moor along the wharfage that forms the river wall at this point.
- 4.17** The river access channel alongside the Medway City Estate is currently described as adequate, however there is a need to undertake dredging on a regular 12 to 18 months basis, and Scotline have indicated that this is going to get significantly more challenging over the next 10 to 15 years.
- 4.18** There is also high demand for the current business model and their current facilities are operating at a maximum.

Heidelberg Materials Aggregates

- 4.19** Heidelberg are located on the Frindsbury Wharf site, which is a significant import facility. They produce and distribute aggregates such as crushed rock, sand and gravel from a network of quarries, depots, and wharves. These are supplied for a variety of construction uses including ready-mixed concrete production, pre-cast concrete, brick and block manufacture and asphalt production. The specific products include industrial sands, SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) aggregates, and sea defence aggregates, together with specialist sands for glass making, horticulture, agriculture and leisure.

VeeTee Rice

- 4.20** VeeTee is a family run business, occupying two sites within the Medway City Estate.
- 4.21** It is understood that the company's current proposals are for the business to grow further, in the UK and overseas, for which a more flexible location would be preferred, where transport and access provision is less congested, and they can consolidate their operation on one site. The potential to import raw materials, directly by sea might also be an advantage as currently most materials arrive by road from Holland.

Chatham Docks

- 4.22** Discussions with Peel L&P have indicated that they are currently proposing to permanently close the commercial lock gates to Basin 3, from 2025 onwards, which will prevent any remaining river-based businesses, continuing to operate from the Docks.
- 4.23** Proposals are being put forward for a redevelopment of this whole area for a mix of uses and the long-term plans for the enclosed basin and river frontages will need to be explored as Peel's redevelopment plans emerge. Future development options will be addressed by the emerging Local Plan and subject to planning approvals in due course.
- 4.24** The development of the operational Docks can be seen as an extension to Peel L&P's transformation of the neighbouring Chatham Waters site which includes the Waterfront UTC, Asda, the Mast and Rigging pub, and a total of 950 homes, over 600 of which have already been developed.

Other Uses

- 4.25** There are several small boat repair yards and contractors with varying facilities catering for both the larger commercial vessels and the leisure craft market with three commercial repair facilities currently available. These comprise Turks Shipyard at Chatham Historic Dockyard, GPS Marine at Upnor and European Active Projects at Chatham Docks.
- 4.26** A view has been expressed throughout our consultations however that there is generally a shortage of smaller boat repair engineering facilities on the Thames and Medway, and this is a major issue for boat owners and marinas.

Key Challenges

- 4.27** The consultations with organisations owning and operating within the locations described above, have identified several challenges, which are impacting the functioning and sustainability of both current operations and the potential for long term growth and viability.

Isle of Grain

- 4.28** The challenges for the Isle of Grain are mainly focussed on the provision of infrastructure. The availability of public transport is a major problem for businesses in both Kingsnorth and Grain, which creates difficulties in getting staff without a car to the facilities, particularly if abnormal hours are being worked. This is often the case for businesses that rely on the state of the tide in order to undertake their operation.
- 4.29** Although Rail is a major, potential asset in terms of diversifying the means of access to businesses across Grain generally, provision mainly consists of a single line constructed to Loading Gauge W9, which is not the largest loading gauge, and at present, Thamesport is the only Grain based operation with a functioning rail link. Proposals have been put forward over recent years, to improve pathways and rail access to the Isle of Grain, with a proposed link off HS1, however, to date this has not been implemented.
- 4.30** Furthermore, the fact that there is only one road access point onto the Isle of Grain is another concern expressed by several consultees, which it is considered will ultimately constrain development particularly commercial development on the island.
- 4.31** The original Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) programme for the Hoo peninsula, included proposals to upgrade road access and invest in the rail infrastructure, including a new station. However, with the withdrawal of HIF funding, these proposals are not currently progressing.
- 4.32** Finally, there is a view that despite the scale, nature and diversity of the businesses and uses, operating at both Kingsnorth and Grain, there is a need for increased strategic planning for the future development, growth and transition to new uses in these key locations. This is potentially even more important now, given the significant economic changes which have been experienced over the last 5 to 10 years, and the way in which the sectors represented at these locations will continue to fundamentally change over the next few years.

Medway City Estate

- 4.33** The current river access channel alongside the wharves at the Medway City Estate is currently adequate, however siltation is quick to form and Scotline's annual dredging liabilities are likely to become significantly more onerous in future years.
- 4.34** Concerns have also been expressed with regard to the provision of pilotage and other services from the competent port authority, Peel Ports, due to staff shortages, which are challenging and result in operators such as Scotline and Thamesport suffering delays whilst they are forced to wait for access.

- 4.35** Scotline believe that their operating model could grow significantly to take advantage of strong demand. They are therefore in real need of a larger site and facility as the size of their current operation and the complexity of operating across two sites is restricting their growth as a business. Taking on additional land within the Medway City estate is not seen as a long-term solution, and alternative locations on the Medway, need to be explored.
- 4.36** Given VeeTee Rice's current proposals to grow the business further, they have been forced to consider alternative locations, with better transport, access and provision, including river access and less congestion, where they can consolidate on one site.
- 4.37** VeeTee Rice have a strong, reliable local workforce of 350+, and therefore do not want to leave the Medway area. From discussions, it is understood that a site in Kingsnorth has been identified and there is an intent to move current facilities within the next 2 to 3 years.
- 4.38** It is also worth highlighting the impact which rising sea levels and ground water levels have had on Medway City Estate over recent years. It has always been susceptible to flooding, which has increased over the last 5 to 10 years, to the point where water levels are now high every year. This is becoming a factor when considering the types of use that can be sustained on the Medway City Estate in the future, and whether provision needs to be allowed for some areas to be set aside as open space to absorb flooding excesses as and when required.

Chatham Docks

- 4.39** As discussed above, Peel L&P are not looking to renew the leases of river-based uses that are currently located around the Basin 3 dock and are in the process of bringing forward redevelopment proposals for a range of residential and other commercial uses.
- 4.40** There is therefore a need to consider the relocation options for any river-based businesses currently in the Docks to facilities elsewhere along the Medway as that redevelopment strategy develops. The challenges relate to whether there are other facilities and locations along the Medway that can accommodate these operations, and whether the companies affected can afford relocation options and continue as viable businesses in the long term.

Other Uses

- 4.41** A diverse range of river-based operators and businesses, used to rely heavily on local repair and servicing facilities for their vessels and operations. However, many of these companies have ceased trading over recent years recent consultations suggest that local servicing has almost completely ceased and operators now must source facilities and expertise much further afield in the River Thames or the East Coast.
- 4.42** The challenge is whether sufficient demand can be developed for these services in the future to reinstate businesses of this type, in key locations along the river.

Key Opportunities

- 4.43** Going forward, there are some key issues to consider in terms of future maritime related activities on the River Medway. These need to be seen in the context of a range of national and international opportunities that are being considered by the maritime sector at the present time.
- 4.44** Although it is thought that the global reliance on shipping will decline in certain respects in future years, due to new technologies the move to more circular economies, and the forecast energy transition; it is still expected that the Maritime Sector will continue to be a primary mode of transport for international trade in the foreseeable future.
- 4.45** The sector therefore remains a vital part of the UK economy, and the UK remains an important player in the international arena, particularly in terms of skills and expertise in systems, design, and marine engineering.
- 4.46** Globally, future opportunities could include:
- more specialisation – fewer ports handling the majority of UK goods
 - ports will need to offer port-centric transport and distribution removing a leg of the logistics chain e.g. logistics parks with the port as a key distribution centre, manufacturing sites with ready access to ports and 3D printing supply chains
 - green maritime technologies, integrating green fuels and hybrid systems.
 - digitisation, and the adoption of “smart shipping” technologies
 - the evolution of marine science, to develop the role of oceans in our environment and economy
 - the importance of a skilled workforce – with close links to Universities and Colleges
- 4.47** There are however challenges in the River Medway capitalising on many of these opportunities, due to the location, scale, and configuration of competitor ports and facilities elsewhere across the South and East of the UK.
- 4.48** Irrespective, there are some significant opportunities for the Medway to pursue, and it is important to consider how businesses can survive and grow, and who needs to pursue actions to deliver on such opportunities.

Grain

Uniper

- 4.49** One of the key opportunities is the provision and development of potential Carbon Capture operations, which could be a focus for the available land parcels within their ownership –

some 8.2 hectares in the middle of the Grain complex, and a further 40 hectares of “available” land for other related uses.

- 4.50** Uniper have developed a Carbon Capture “business plan” to establish a carbon capture and storage (CC) project at the power station with post combustion carbon capture technology, and with CO₂ transported by shipping, or pipeline to permanent storage offshore.
- 4.51** They are currently considering up to three CC Units to accommodate their own requirements for the power station, plus any external business that they can generate servicing other emitters who are having difficulty dealing with CC.
- 4.52** They are also proposing a phased, low carbon hydrogen production facility delivering 700MW in late 2026 and growing to 7.4GW by 2040, together with capturing and storing up to 1.2m tonnes of CO₂ per year. Alternatively, Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage (CC) protocols, introduce the idea of producing “Food Safe” CO₂ from the process for use in the food & beverage industries, or synthetic fuel and low-carbon building materials.
- 4.53** Identifying a “route out” for the carbon capture, which could be via liquefaction, is a critical factor in developing this operation, and close cooperation with neighbouring National Grid to utilise their jetties, could be one of the solutions.

National Grid

- 4.54** National Grid have also identified Carbon Capture as a key element of their business plan going forward. The use of their three jetties could be an important component of any future operation to transport liquified carbon to what is expected to be a growing number of carbon stores offsite or around the country.
- 4.55** National Grid are also looking at other uses for their jetties, including the potential for ammonia storage and green ammonia which has particularly good energy storage properties to solve the problem of electricity storage for renewable energy plants, and the production of Food Grade CO₂
- 4.56** The future exploitation of these sectors will depend on significant investment over the next few years however the Grain location is seen as having major potential for a real “Energy Hub” potentially including:
 - Hydrogen manufacture & links to industry including Green Hydrogen
 - Carbon infrastructure – to lead on de-carbonisation
 - Ammonia / Green Ammonia storage
 - Links to high energy consuming, industrial process plants and blue hydrogen linked to CCS
 - Shipping and other infrastructure – to service the above

Thamesport

- 4.57** Thamesport could have a role within the CC agenda set out above. They are considering how they can develop their existing construction sector focus, with a wider range of importers and manufacturers, who can efficiently supply the London and Southeast markets from their location. This could establish a “one stop shop” for such products and services.
- 4.58** There could also be an opportunity to better coordinate timber, steel or other construction imports and exports through Thamesport, by relocating some of the existing businesses, from elsewhere in Medway, including operations looking to relocate from Chatham Docks, but this would need a coordinated approach, and discussions between all interested parties. Thamesport have highlighted the potential for discussions with the Amazon Distribution Warehouse in Kingsnorth, with regard to any opportunities to consider either rail related or sea related imports, via the Thamesport operation.

Kingsnorth

Uniper and Medway One and adjoining land opportunities

- 4.59** Uniper’s proposals for Medway One are not currently for river related uses, they are rather looking to deliver:
- a mix of commercial, manufacturing and industrial spaces, along with the potential for storage, distribution and data centre uses.
 - a potential option to create an Energy Hub – potentially generating sustainable power, steam and heat for neighbouring businesses.
- 4.60** The route to the river is however protected within the Outline Planning Application (OPA) for the site, and consultations have highlighted that the existing Kingsnorth jetties should be seen as an opportunity. There are however some challenges in terms of the viability of refurbishing and reconfiguring the existing structures, and operational issues which would need to be closely investigated.
- 4.61** We also understand the ownership of the jetties currently leased to Uniper, rests with Peel Ports, and therefore they would need to be a key part of any future planning and strategy for this area.
- 4.62** VeeTee Rice’s proposals to relocate their existing facilities to Kingsnorth, could also be linked to a proposition to re-open and upgrade the current Kingsnorth jetties, which would enable rice to be imported via the river.
- 4.63** VeeTee have also raised the possibility of a wider partnership coming together, to refurbish and upgrade the existing Kingsnorth jetties, which could lead to a coordinated approach to upgrading the access to the river, in this location.

4.64 Medway Council could potentially support this and there could be additional businesses, who might be prepared to consider a relocation to Kingsnorth, if such a facility were available. For example, as described earlier, Scotline need to expand and better coordinate the different components of their operation and have started considering alternative sites and locations within Medway; there is also the potential to consider relocating certain businesses from Chatham Docks.

4.65 At the time of consulting, there were no specific options being pursued; however the view was expressed that a new “Medway Dock” facility, in the right location (Kingsnorth or Grain) could prove a major attraction for both distribution and manufacturing businesses, looking to locate and relocate in the area.

Medway City Estate

4.66 The prospect of two or three major occupiers moving out of the Medway City Estate to a more efficient, nearby location, in the short to medium term introduces some urgency into the consideration of the mix and focus of future uses within this area, and whether considering future options should be grasped now. Opportunities include:

- the potential to considerably improve the river frontage throughout the Medway City estate, which currently creates a bleak and unattractive vista from the key riverside vantage points throughout Rochester and Chatham.
- establishing a policy which seeks to avoid any future industrial river-based operations locating on important river frontage sites and encourages such operations to consider suitable alternative locations at Kingsnorth or Grain.
- the introduction of a mix of residential and commercial uses, and new environmental floodplains to better accommodate rising water levels and seasonal flooding and make best use of the river frontage.
- establishing a clear strategy now, that identifies the future locational and operational requirements of companies like VeeTee Rice, Scotline and Heidelberg Aggregates, and establishes the future development potential and value of their current locations. This will be an essential ingredient of any planning framework for this area.

4.67 For identification and indicative purposes only, Figure 4 below, broadly identifies the land holdings that would be impacted by a decision from VeeTee Rice, Scotline and Heidelberg Aggregates, to move to an alternative location.

Figure 4-1: Land holdings within the Medway City Estate that would be impacted by a decision by VeeTee Rice, Scotline, and Heidelberg Aggregates to move to an alternative location



4.68 It is suggested that a Strategic Planning, Development, and Feasibility Study be considered to explore the following, linked challenges:

- The opportunity to establish a strategic employment location, with river access at its core, around the Kingsnorth area highlighting potential development areas, ownership issues.
- The feasibility and viability of establishing the necessary river access infrastructure at that location, including the potential to refurbish and replace the existing Kingsnorth jetties
- The potential for existing river-based operations on the Medway City Estate, to be the initial occupiers in the new Kingsnorth location
- The feasibility and viability of such relocations, including the broadbrush assessment of relocation costs, and land values at both locations
- The implications for other supporting infrastructure on the Isle of Grain road access and rail infrastructure.
- The short to medium term planning and development strategy for the Medway City Estate set within longer term objectives.
- The potential for some significant sites on the Medway City Estate to be vacated in the short term, and how the re-use and valuation of these sites can be established within a medium-term Planning Framework.
- The long-term strategy for the relocation and consolidation of other industrial and commercial uses on the estate and how this could be delivered over time

Chatham Docks

- 4.69** Peel L&P are proposing to permanently close the commercial lock gates to Basin 3 in 2025 and the existing river-based occupiers, will vacate the site when their current leases expire.
- 4.70** The relocation of businesses to be displaced by the closure of Basin 3, could provide opportunities for other potential waterfront locations along the Medway, and this has been highlighted in the development options covered above.
- 4.71** The whole area around Basin 3, is the subject of a proposal to develop the next phases of Chatham Waters, which will include offices and other commercial uses, residential buildings, a hotel, retail and leisure uses. Overall, the scheme has the potential to deliver 1.9 million sq. ft. of floorspace.

Figure 4-2: Images showing proposed next phases of development at Chatham Waters



- 4.72** Medway Council is currently working to publish a new Local Plan Reg 19 in early 2026 that will set a framework for the area's growth up to 2041. Strategically, it will be important to ensure that the remaining Chatham Waters development, encourages development which addresses the river and its enclosed basin frontages, creates a riverside walkway that connects with St Mary's Island to the west, and routes along Gillingham waterfront to the east, and allows use of Basin 3 for leisure and other water related purposes.

Other Issues

- 4.73** The significant decline in recent years, of the marine building, repair and servicing sector, has left problems for those continuing to operate on the Medway. There is however an opportunity, as the River Strategy develops and future usage increases, to work with river-based businesses, marina operators and others running vessels on the river, to identify whether sufficient demand can be developed to reintroduce a range of support services, including repair companies, engineers, electricians.
- 4.74** A marine building, repair and servicing sector could be an important driver in regenerating the river, and those taking forward the opportunities within this theme, may wish to commission some analysis to identify the point at which increased demand might warrant efforts to grow the support services sector again.

4.75 Although referred to in the Kingsnorth opportunities above, a wider feasibility study is required to assess and develop options to address the transportation and accessibility challenges of the Isle of Grain only having one road in and out and limited rail capacity. This could be a critical aspect of the opportunities for both Kingsnorth and Grain, particularly given the strategic importance of such developments being able to offer port-centric manufacturing, transport and distribution capacity in the future. There is also a need to work with Peel Ports to address the availability of Class 1 shipping Pilots which is a Peel Ports responsibility and overcome the current shortages which are causing delays and additional costs for operations needing to bring large vessels into the Medway.

Theme 2 Summary

The River Medway has traditionally been a focus for a range of industrial and commercial businesses, importing and exporting by sea a wide spectrum of goods and providing essential support services. However, the market context had changed over recent years, with better located facilities along the wider Thames Estuary and East Coast.

The river currently hosts two major port operators: Hutchinson Port Holdings and Peel Ports.

There are four key locations across the Medway area, where river based economic drivers are located:

- **Grain.** There are three operations within the Grain site: importing and storage of LNG by National Grid using two main jetties at Grain; London Thamesport, a small container seaport on the River Medway, serving the North Sea, which mainly supports operations in the construction sector; and the Grain Power Station three turbines operated by Uniper.
- **Kingsnorth.** The key site at Kingsnorth is owned by Uniper, formerly the site of the now cleared Kingsnorth Power Station. The site is now the subject of an Outline Planning Application for the development of Medway One, which will comprise a mixture of commercial, manufacturing and industrial spaces. The site also contains access to the river shoreline and the former Kingsnorth Jetties owned by Peel Ports and leased by Uniper.
- **Medway City Estate.** There are three key operations on the Medway City Estate, two of which utilise access to the river as a fundamental part of their business model Scotline and Heidelberg Materials Aggregates, and one which has a major river frontage with the potential to utilise the river for the importation of raw materials VeeTee Rice. There is the potential for all three to move to alternative sites to permit growth and more efficient operations.
- **Chatham Docks.** Although there are still several river related businesses on site, using the docks, the imminent closure and redevelopment of this facility means that there is a need to consider relocation options elsewhere along the Medway, if possible. Long term

use of the enclosed basins and river frontages will need to be explored, as Peel's redevelopment plans emerge.

Opportunities

Grain

There are several opportunities at Grain relating to existing operations. These include:

- The development of Carbon Capture operations which could be a focus for the available land parcels within Uniper's ownership; Uniper have developed a Carbon Capture "business plan" to establish a Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) project at the Grain power station
- National Grid have identified Carbon Capture as a key element of their business plan going forward. The use of their three jetties could be an important component of future operations to transport liquified carbon. National Grid are also looking at other uses for their jetties, including the potential for ammonia storage and green ammonia
- Thamesport are considering how they can develop their existing "construction sector" focus, with a wider range of importers who can efficiently supply the London and Southeast markets from this location. There could also be an opportunity to better coordinate timber, steel or other construction imports and exports through Thamesport by relocating existing businesses from elsewhere in Medway.

Kingsnorth

Although Uniper's proposals for Medway One are not currently for river related users, the route to the river is protected within their Outline Planning Application (OPA), and consultations have highlighted that the existing Kingsnorth jetties should be seen as an opportunity. There are some challenges in terms of the viability of reconfiguring the existing structures, and operational issues which would need to be closely investigated. Peel Ports, the current owners of the jetties, would need to play a key part future planning for this area.

Medway City Estate

The River Strategy considers the mix and focus of future uses within this area with a focus on improving the river frontage, potentially avoiding any future industrial river-based operations along river frontage sites and introducing a mix of leisure, residential and commercial uses to attract residents and visitors to the river.

It is suggested that a Strategic Planning, Development, and Feasibility Study be undertaken to appraise the opportunity of establishing a strategic employment location around the wider Kingsnorth area the viability of re-purposing the existing jetties and linking this to new users, relocating from elsewhere in Medway or further afield. The study should also consider

whether relocations from the Medway City Estate are feasible, and how that would impact on the medium-term planning and development strategy for that estate.

Chatham Docks

Peel L&P, the current owner of the Docks, does not consider the continuation of the existing operational docks to be viable due to the cost of maintaining the functioning of the lock gates, the level of income being generated and the demand for such facilities and the lock gates will be permanently closed. The whole area is the subject of a proposal to develop the next phases of Chatham Waters, including office and residential space and leisure facilities.

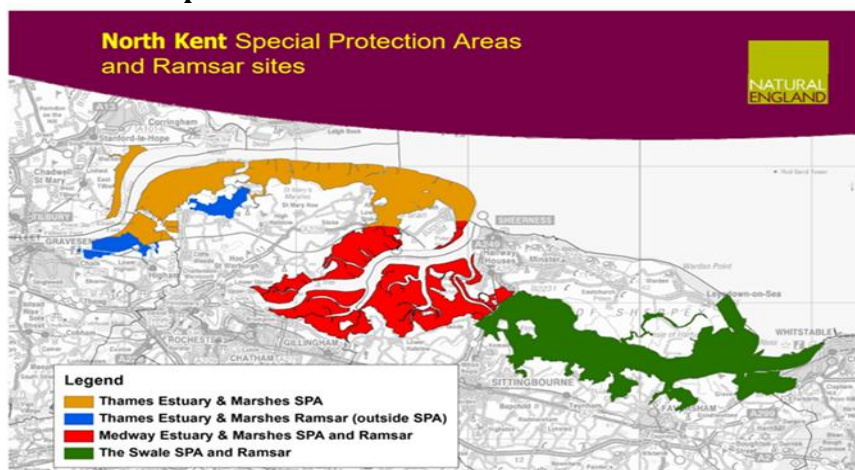
Medway Council is currently working to produce a new Local Plan that will set a framework for the area's growth up to 2041; a draft plan was published in June 2025 and will be submitted for examination later this year. The plan contains proposals for strategic redevelopment at Gillingham waterfront, which includes land around Chatham Docks.

5. Theme 3: The River as an Exceptional Natural Environment and Wildlife Habitat

Background and Context

- 5.1** The River Medway boasts an exceptional coastline with a natural environment and wildlife habitats that support outstanding biodiversity. This has been recognised through a series of local, national and international designations at key locations along the Medway estuary, and along the northern part of the Borough, which fronts the River Thames.
- 5.2** The Medway Estuary and Marshes, covers 4,748 hectares and is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), a Ramsar internationally important wetland site, and a Special Protection Area under the European Union Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds.
- 5.3** The Medway Estuary is a small but significant part of the East Atlantic Flyway a globally significant migratory bird route stretching from southern Africa to the Arctic.
- 5.4** Within the United Kingdom is an 800-mile area extending from the Humber Estuary to the mouth of the Thames and forms part of a larger network of ecologically connected coastal wetlands, including estuaries and open coast ecosystems. The East Coast Wetlands were added to the UK's tentative list of World Heritage sites in 2023 and will form a bid to UNESCO for recognition of natural and cultural heritage across the globe considered to be of outstanding universal value to humanity. There is the potential to demonstrate this value both through the role the wetlands play in supporting migratory birds along the East Atlantic Flyway migratory route, as well as the globally leading examples of coastal adaptation in the face of a changing climate. If accepted, this will be only the third Natural World Heritage site in the UK.
- 5.5** The north coast of the Isle of Grain, running from Cliffe to Grain, is also part of the wider, 4,800-hectare Thames Estuary SPA and Ramsar designated site.
- 5.6** The consequence of these designations is:
 - A statutory responsibility to safeguard the habitats of migratory birds and certain threatened birds (SPA)
 - An obligation to conserve, manage and protect the wetlands (Ramsar)
 - A legal duty to protect important fauna, flora, geological or physiographical features (SSSI)
 - A legal duty to protect and conserve the marine ecosystem (MCZ)

Figure 5-1: North Kent Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites



- 5.7** These responsibilities are currently covered in Policies S2 and S3 of the Medway Local Plan, which outlines the Council's commitment to promoting the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and species, avoiding damage to protected areas, as well as seeking opportunities to deliver biodiversity net gain.

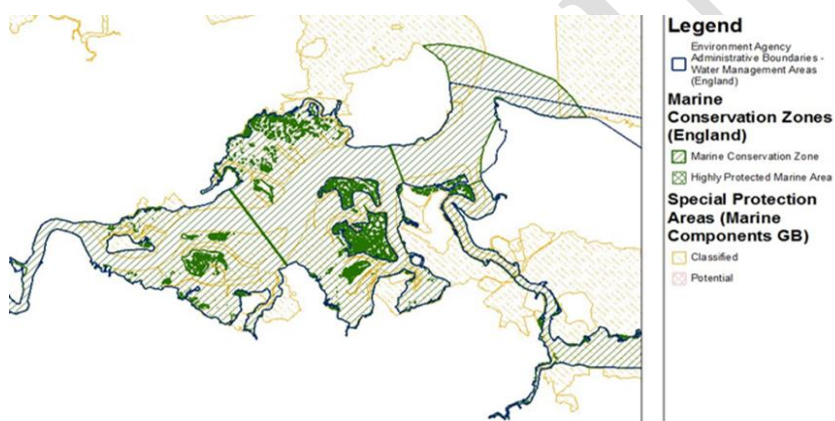
Intertidal Habitats - Salt Marshes and Mudflats

- 5.8** The intertidal habitats, which fall within the above designations, are particularly important, with large areas of sediment, mudflats and saltmarshes.
- 5.9** The Salt Marshes, are dynamic, vegetated coastal wetlands that form in the intertidal zones of sheltered shorelines, where saltwater and freshwater mix. These ecosystems serve as vital buffers between land and sea and play a crucial role in coastal protection, carbon sequestration, water purification, and biodiversity support.
- 5.10** The Medway Estuary salt marshes, are among the most ecologically significant in the UK, being important for their bird populations, supporting internationally significant numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders, including species like the avocet, redshank, and brent goose.
- 5.11** The area also acts as a fish nursery, support vast numbers of invertebrates, provides breeding grounds for nationally important bird species and is home to rare flora such as oak-leaved goosefoot and slender hare's-ear.
- 5.12** Studies over recent years have highlighted a marked decline of key bird species, particularly at the SPA level within the Medway Estuary. However, there is insufficient evidence to adequately assess the cause of these declines, although recreational disturbance is one potential factor. A further study to understand this decline is recommended.
- 5.13** This highlights the sensitivities, and the need to balance the competing uses on the river, and to manage what happens where. Ecologically, the estuary's brackish conditions, foster a unique and productive environment, with the river in essence forming an exceptional and highly important biodiversity corridor.

The Marine Conservation Zone

- 5.14** The Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), designated under the Marine and Coastal Access Act (2009), extends from Rochester to the river mouth, and the area of sea between the Isle of Grain and Sheerness. Its purpose is to protect nationally important marine wildlife, habitats, geology and geomorphology, which will help maintain clean, healthy, productive, and biologically diverse seas and estuaries.
- 5.15** This 60 sq km area is host to a complex and dynamic ecosystem, of both fresh and sea waters, which combined with tidal movements, creates changing levels of salinity and nutrients providing a fertile environment for wildlife, fish, and birds.

Figure 5-2: Marine Conservation Zone and Special Protection Areas



Source: XXX

Fishing

- 5.16** There are numerous species of commercially important fish to be found in the Medway, including bass, herring, cod, plaice, sole and smelt. Significant stretches of the river are used as a nursery area for many of these species, which is important given the declining levels of fish in recent years.
- 5.17** To assist with the important rebalancing of stock levels in certain parts of the Medway, a 'No Take Zone' (NTZ) order has been established, running from Kingsnorth to Hoo Marina. This is the largest marine protected area in the UK, covering 4.6 square miles of saltmarsh and mudflats, which are vital for the survival of many fish species.
- 5.18** The NTZ is supported by The Rochester Oyster and Floating Fishery (ROFF) and is being monitored by the Kent and Essex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (K&E IFCA).

Other Designations and Strategies

- 5.19** The Salt Fleet Flats Reserve on the north coast of the Hoo Peninsula is a new area of inter tidal habitat, constructed to compensate for losses elsewhere in the Thames estuary.

Approximately 700m of the sea wall was breached and an inland wall of 2.4km constructed to create some 65 hectares of new mudflat and saltmarsh habitat.

- 5.20** To the northwest of the Hoo Peninsula, Cliffe Pools is a series of pools and saline lagoons formed from former clay diggings and depositions of river dredgings and has since 2001 been owned by the RSPB as a significant reserve with public access.
- 5.21** The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which has recently been published in draft, is the responsibility of Kent County Council and aims to deliver the maintenance, restoration and creation of wildlife and plant habitats, over a 25-year period.
- 5.22** The strategy includes estuaries and coastal areas, and proposes that these are sustainably and strategically managed, to create functionally linked coastal habitats, where natural dynamic processes are restored, to create resilience to climate change and minimise the loss of intertidal habitats.
- 5.23** The Medway Blue and Green Infrastructure Framework identifies a set of priorities across Medway to protect and enhance biodiversity, create ecologically resilient networks to join habitats and help nature to adapt to climate change, link people and nature, and ensure development is sustainable. This, together with the Medway Local Plan provides a basis from which to develop strategic options for the River Medway.

The River and Climate Change

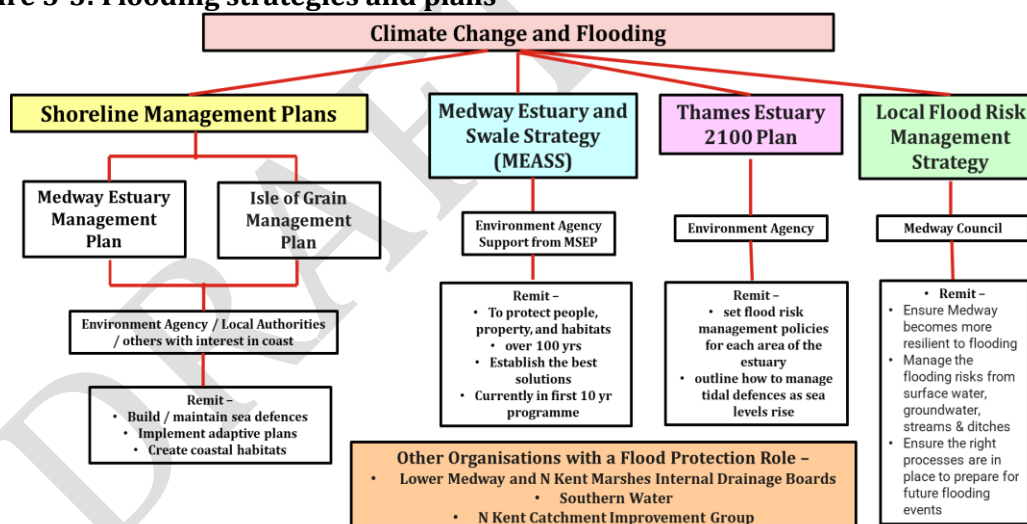
- 5.24** Another important influence on the river is the impact of Climate Change and how that is likely to evolve in the future.
- 5.25** Climate change is causing rainfall events to become more frequent and severe and sea levels to rise. The Medway area is at risk of flooding from several sources, including rising sea levels, inland rivers and watercourses, surface water and groundwater. There is increasing evidence of how flooding is impacting the area on an annual basis, particularly in the Rochester, Strood and Medway City Estate areas.
- 5.26** Medway Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to reducing Medway's carbon footprint, taking action to raise awareness of key issues, reducing emissions and ensuring that changes are implemented from the highest point down. To achieve this, the Council developed a climate change action plan for Medway which is regularly updated.
- 5.27** The Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, addressing ground and surface water flooding only, was reviewed in 2023. This, complements and supports the National Strategy published by the Environment Agency, which aims to balance the needs of communities, the economy and the environment.
- 5.28** Policy S1 of the Medway Local Plan, Planning for Climate Change, also seeks to ensure that development does not increase flood risk, including a sequential approach to avoid development in flood risk areas.

5.29 A national assessment of surface water flood risk indicates that Medway is one of 116 communities considered to be at significant risk of flooding. Currently, tidal flood risk infrastructure provides varying levels of protection to the areas of ecological importance, however it is certain that Climate Change impacts will cause:

- coastal erosion: due to increased storm surges, higher tides, compounded by isostatic rebound²
- sea level rises: resulting in significant losses of inter-tidal mud flats, salt marsh and other habitats through coastal squeeze, with increased pressure on wildlife and coastal defence structures

5.30 The management of Medway's coastline is currently covered in two Shoreline Management Plans – for the Medway Estuary and for the Isle of Grain alongside the Environment Agency's Medway Estuary and Swale Strategy (MEASS) and the Thames Estuary 2100 Plan (see Figure 8). These are intended to plan and co-ordinate a technically sound, environmentally acceptable and economically viable proposal for dealing with coastal flood and erosion risk management over the next 100 years.

Figure 5-3: Flooding strategies and plans



5.31 Flood protection strategies to deal with these issues will vary, depending on location and uses, but will impact riverside areas in different ways and are described as:

- Hold the line
- Enhancement
- Managed re-alignment

² The rising of the land over time due to the elastic deformation of the Earth's crust caused by the melting of glaciers.

Managing and overseeing the river

- 5.32** The important environmental and habitat designations and policies, are managed and monitored through a wide mix of organisations, including English Nature, the Environment Agency, Medway and Swale Estuary Partnership, Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities, the Marine Management Organisation, JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee) and CNCCW. There is a wide degree of overlap between the designations and those responsible for management, and although certain groupings have a wide membership, there is no overarching mechanism through which all aspects of the estuary are considered.
- 5.33** There are also other organisations with a role in the estuary, including Medway Council, the Lower Medway and North Kent Marshes Internal Drainage Boards, Southern Water, the RSPB, the Coastal Partnership Network, and the North Kent Catchment Improvement Group.

Key Challenges

Disturbances to birds and other wildlife

- 5.34** Studies over recent years have highlighted a marked decline of key bird species, particularly at the SPA level within the Medway Estuary. However, there is insufficient evidence to adequately assess the cause of these declines, although recreational disturbance is one potential factor.
- 5.35** Mitigating against disturbance to birds is a key challenge regarding the river's protected areas. The Medway's outstanding biodiversity creates the potential for significant economic and social benefits to residents; however, it also poses some challenges with the potential conflicts between its environmental objectives and recreational and leisure use of the area.
- 5.36** This is demonstrated by the marked decline in bird numbers in the area north of Gillingham, particularly including the area around the Riverside Country Park, one of the busiest areas in terms of recreational pressure.
- 5.37** While the tourism potential of the Medway's natural environment is significant, higher levels of publicity and greater usage of the river's open spaces, will lead to potentially higher disturbance levels to birds and other wildlife. For example, at certain times of year (breeding times in particular), there is concern over visitors and locals remaining on designated paths and keeping dogs under control.
- 5.38** There are also concerns that certain activities, and in some cases anti-social behaviour, can hinder conservation management, for example noise pollution from the use of hovercrafts and jet skis in particular locations is an issue.
- 5.39** Natural England's stance is to advocate closing off some of the more sensitive sites at particular times of the year to protect species breeding and over-wintering, although others favour better information and education to address the issues. There is therefore a need to study and manage these issues closely going forward.

River Pollution

5.40 The River Medway contains a wide range of pollutants, from many sources, which cause varying levels of harm to the local environment, wildlife, and population.

5.41 The two main categories, which are measured by the Environment Agency to assess the 'overall status' of the river, are chemical health and ecological health. Within this, the key components causing the levels of pollution being found, are:

- Nutrients from farming and water sector run-offs, which are exacerbated by climate change
- The discharge of untreated sewage, with increasing rainfall, which also adds further nutrients, compounding the seriousness of that problem
- Chemicals, including pesticides, hydrocarbons, pharmaceuticals and a range of plastics
- Urban run-off from roads etc and urban discarding, including plastics
- Soil erosion discharging sediment and exposing former tip sites, adjacent to the river, potentially containing contaminated waste

5.42 River testing and monitoring is essential, and these responsibilities are with the Environment Agency, although budgetary pressure over the last two decades has resulted in water monitoring declining significantly. This has resulted in other local testing arrangements needing to be considered to "fill the gap".

5.43 Another challenge is agreeing what actions are needed to address river pollution. It has been suggested that bringing together a range of parties with a role in monitoring and controlling river quality, to find the most effective and economic way of funding and delivering interventions, would provide a way forward.

Regulating Fishing

5.44 Given the establishment of the No Take Zone order, the challenge is now keeping the success of this initiative under review by monitoring and evaluating the quantity and type of fish stocks developing and the effectiveness of these protected areas. This should be compared with the performance of newly created habitats.

5.45 This will enable decisions to be made whether to expand or reduce the area covered by the order.

Biodiversity Net Gain

5.46 DEFRA's mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) policy and the passing of the Environment Act require a minimum 10% net gain for most developments.

5.47 The challenge is whether new river-based and river-front developments can achieve the minimum statutory 10% BNG or whether there is scope to improve on this either voluntarily

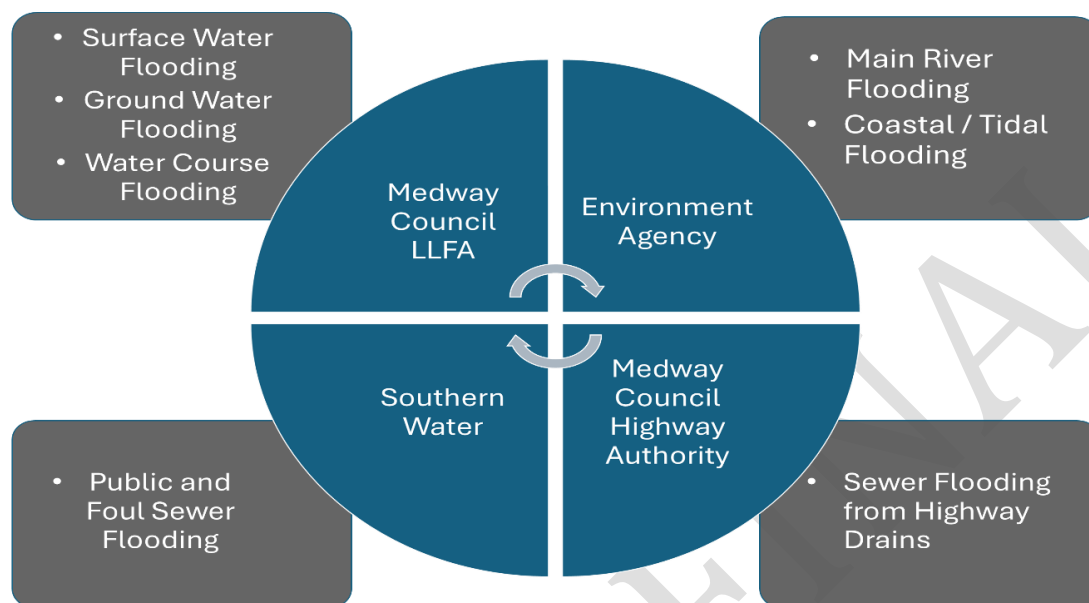
or through the adoption of local policies requiring a higher level of BNG as is being explored in some areas. This can also be linked to other initiatives undertaken as part of a new development, such as creating new, or extending existing, inter-tidal or new flood plain areas elsewhere along the river.

- 5.48** By linking to current and future habitat plans and strategies, including the future Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and BNG guidance this incentivises habitat creation and enhancement where most needed, for example intertidal developments establishing new areas of saltmarsh.
- 5.49** Natural England have also published Biodiversity Metric 3.0 which will be the principal measuring tool for future developments, however there is no funding to support a wider programme of activity and there is a need for improved policy guidance and monitoring around Developer Contributions.
- 5.50** The residential and commercial development obligations across the Medway that cannot meet BNG targets on site may also be able to contribute financially to habitat enhancement if appropriate BNG credit schemes are brought forward.

The River and Climate Change

- 5.51** Climate change impacts will lead to wetter winters and short-lived extreme weather events occurring more frequently, and rising sea levels. These will all have localised effects on the Thames and Medway estuaries, leading to flood and coastal erosion, drought, and habitat and species loss. Actions are required to enable the natural environment to adapt to these changes and for the river to continue as a key, abstraction water source for Medway, given that the Southeast is classed as water stressed and the river needs to be more resilient to drought and leakages.
- 5.52** There is a need for several responsible bodies (Figure 9 below) to be involved. Cooperation and coordination between them will be essential, both in the planning / strategy stages, to reduce the risks of flooding and maximise the levels of protection during an event.

Figure 5-4: Flood risk responsible bodies



5.53 Any new development on riverfront sites, should also take account of the flood risks inherent in such a location and any necessary mitigation measures, should be addressed during the planning application process.

Managing the River

5.54 Importantly the coastline and estuary, does need to be comprehensively monitored, managed, maintained, reinstated as and when climate change impacts its integrity and carefully used and enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

5.55 The challenge is how to address the complex overlays between the range of national and international designations and strategies, governing the Medway Estuary and the organisations responsible for monitoring and managing them.

5.56 Peel Ports is the only body which currently has ‘enforcement’ powers on the river but are not sufficiently resourced or positioned to be the principal coordinating body for managing the ecological and natural environments of the river. Natural England and the Environment Agency would be well-placed to have an overview of all aspects of the river, subject to sufficient resources.

Key Opportunities

Balancing Access with Conservation

5.57 While tourism and the natural environment may have some conflicting interests, there are also opportunities to develop “eco-tourism” and different approaches to sensitively bring

together the recreational activities of visitors and residents, while protecting and enhancing vitally important natural habitats.

- 5.58** Experience over recent years has shown that “education” is key to raising awareness of the problems associated with accessing protected areas. It provides the opportunity to explain why there is a problem and enables the showcasing of best practice and guidance to both residents and visitors, including the potential to deliver presentations to schools and community groups, where appropriate. The River Strategy will support initiatives to expand such programmes.
- 5.59** This also reflects the work undertaken through the Strategic Access Management and Mitigation strategy (SAMMS) which has considered the development of a code of conduct, targeted activities with dog owners, managing access and site works, and ongoing monitoring.
- 5.60** Specially designated areas could also be created to permit limited access near or within sensitive sites, at key times of year, to provide a more efficient way to manage and monitor recreational disturbance.
- 5.61** A further opportunity would be the establishment of additional Visitor and Interpretation Centres, which attract significant numbers of visitors who only penetrate short distances into the surrounding habitats. Riverside Country Park is an example where there is some disturbance immediately around the centre, but the majority of the wider habitats are better protected.
- 5.62** Centres could also be located some distance from the riverbanks and salt marshes but specifically designed to tell the riverside story. It has been found that such centres have a similar impact by attracting visitors to well-managed and resourced visitor centres, which helps to reduce unmanaged access by visitors to the river banks.

Developer Contributions

- 5.63** The Medway Developer Contributions Guide of 2023, updated developer contributions for all new development within 6km of the SPA and Ramsar sites, to £314.05 per new dwelling for initiatives undertaken by Birdwise.
- 5.64** A more extensive approach to new development, contributing to the river environment and wildlife habitat, is proposed, and consideration should be given to higher CIL or other Section 106 payments across a wider area, to fund for example, essential river infrastructure, inter tidal area restoration and expansion works, together with other aspects of the River Strategy.
- 5.65** The introduction of an appropriate Biodiversity Net Gain credit scheme could be brought forward to contribute financially to habitat enhancement.
- 5.66** This will require further, detailed feasibility examination, alongside more detailed planning guidance around the key principles and objectives, of riverside development.

- 5.67** Another opportunity is to establish a working partnership between organisations with a role in the natural wildlife environment for example, the EA, Natural England, Birdwise, MSEP, Medway Council and IFCA. This could be funded by the developer contributions, which are then reinvested into a management and monitoring structure, and specific mitigation projects.

Protecting the River from pollution

- 5.68** A river basin management plan needs to be established by a range of key stakeholders, to access more resources for the monitoring and identification of pollution and the development of policies and actions to address these challenges.
- 5.69** The plan would aim to protect the river's aquatic ecology, unique and valuable habitats, water abstraction resources and the river as a leisure resource.
- 5.70** Such a grouping would aim to fill the governance gap in coordinating across a range of river related strategies and priorities.
- 5.71** Opportunities should be taken to harness inputs from volunteer and community groups, not just on clean-up operations, (such as those run by the SE Rivers Trust volunteers and MSEP estuary clean-ups) but also developing "citizen science" groups, to increase regular sampling, surveying, and work with the North Kent Catchment Improvement Group, to ensure that these samples are fed into the wider EA monitoring.
- 5.72** Opportunities to develop nature-based solutions could also be developed, to restore critical wetlands, install SUDS where possible, and address key pollution hotspots.

Flood Risk Management and Climate Change

- 5.73** The Council's statutory responsibility is to assess development proposals to ensure that flood risk is not increased and where possible reduced. All key, river fronting development sites, brought forward over the next 10 to 20 years, will need to include design measures such as flood protection infrastructure and sustainable surface water drainage (SUDS), to protect against medium term flooding.
- 5.74** Appropriate protection techniques, design and construction criteria, should be embodied in a Planning and Development Guidance document, that the Council will prepare, to address the range of challenges which any developer should consider for a riverside development.
- 5.75** Where significant mitigation measures are not required onsite because of works being undertaken by others the potential for developments to contribute to offsite mitigation should be explored. This could include works to extend and reinforce areas of salt marsh in other locations or establish new flood plains.
- 5.76** Despite their ecological value, salt marshes face threats from coastal erosion and sea level rises and conservation efforts should aim to systematically preserve, restore and extend these

habitats. The benefits of such works should also be assessed in terms of added coastal protection, carbon sequestration, water purification and biodiversity support.

- 5.77** The Beneficial Use of Dredging Sediment (BUDS) Group, formed of river-based stakeholders and hosted by Medway Council, are proposing to use sediment from Peel Ports' arisings, to protect, enhance and establish additional Saltmarshes.
- 5.78** Detailed feasibility work should also be undertaken to assess the river being developed as a potential heat source, as part of a green energy hub initiative, to supply the urban areas of Medway, into the future.
- 5.79** The need for a water recycling scheme in the River Medway is also thought likely by Southern Water if the current levels of water abstraction are to be retained in future years.
- 5.80** Implementation of the Council's Flood Protection Plan to ensure that flood risk in Medway is maintained or reduced where possible, will require significant funding from a range of third parties. A Business Case should assess a range of projects and initiatives that require support, together with the outputs and benefits they will deliver. Funding sources could include Grant in Aid, Local Levies, Section 106 agreements, Defra Grants, and LLFA Funding.

Managing the River

- 5.81** There are opportunities to better coordinate the wide range of responsibilities, held by those organisations charged with monitoring and managing the Medway Estuary. This particularly applies to the areas covered by both national and international designations.
- 5.82** The proposal is for a group of key agencies and stakeholders with a role and commitment to the river, to come together and collaborate to:
- overview the river's current environmental and habitat status,
 - better understand the river's condition and challenges
 - coordinate responsibilities, actions and projects,
 - identify any immediate priorities and actions, and
 - consider longer term monitoring, designation extensions and improvements.
- 5.83** A fully resourced Medway Swale Estuary Partnership could be the focal point for bringing together the above group.

Theme 3 Summary

Medway has an outstanding coastline and is an exceptional natural environment and wildlife habitat with significant biodiversity. Much of the estuary and north Kent coast on the Thames and Medway Rivers is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds and as a Ramsar site under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. It is also recognised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Marine Conservation Zone.

The key challenges associated with the river as an exceptional natural environment and wildlife habitat are:

- Mitigating against disturbance to birds and other wildlife. While the tourism potential of the Medway natural environment is significant, higher levels of publicity and greater usage of the river's open spaces leads to potentially higher disturbance to birds and other wildlife. There is particular concern around visitors and residents keeping to designated paths, keeping dogs under control, anti-social behaviour and noise pollution - all of which have been linked to a decline in key species of birds along the river.
- Protecting, enhancing, and establishing additional salt marshes. The salt marshes are an important coastal habitat, providing a range of ecosystem services for fish, birds and plants and acting as a natural flood defence.
- Pollutants. There are challenges with a wide range of pollutants, from many sources with the most widespread currently from excess nutrients such as phosphate and compounds of nitrogen in air and water, as well as from plastics pollution. This requires further investigation with the key bodies involved.
- Regulations for fishing. There is a need to protect nursery areas and increase fish stock levels. There is currently a No Take Zone (NTZ) order, which stretches from Kingsnorth to Hoo Marina, covering 4.6 square miles of saltmarsh and mudflat environments which are vital for the survival of many fish species. The NTZ is being monitored and evaluated.
- Biodiversity net gain. DEFRA's mandatory biodiversity net gain policy and the passing of the Environment Act require a minimum 10% net gain for most developments. Natural England published Biodiversity Metric 3.0 which will be the principal measuring tool, but there is no funding to support a wider programme of activity and there is a need for better policy guidance and monitoring around Developer Contributions.
- Climate impacts on the river. These are likely to include flood and coastal erosion, habitat and species loss, crop changes, decline and migration. Work is ongoing to explore how the natural environment can adapt to these changes, for example how the saltmarshes can provide valuable flood control and storm buffering benefits.

Key actions

Key actions for the strategy are listed as follows:

- Managing the river.** To effectively address the issues and challenges facing the Medway's outstanding natural environment, the existing set of national and international designations will need to continue to be managed according to their existing principles and approaches. Concerns have been expressed about the range of designations that apply to the river, and the wide range of organisations who have a role in managing these areas. There is a view that much better coordination between these various facets of the river needs to happen and new opportunities must be examined to consider wider, overarching, coordination approaches.
- Balancing access with conservation.** There are opportunities for further developing "eco-tourism", considering approaches to sensitively bring together visitors and residents for recreation purposes while protecting natural habitats. A programme of educational activities could raise awareness of the problems in accessing protected areas and why this need protection. The provision of additional Visitor and Interpretation Centres could also provide a focal point for visitors, by concentrating the disturbances around the centre and reducing access into the wider habitats.
- Potential funding options.** Investigate potential funding options, such as finance in relation to new development and the implementation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Protecting the River from pollution.** Further prioritise engagement with the Thames River Basin District management plan to protect the aquatic ecology, unique and valuable habitats, protection of drinking water resources, and protection of bathing water in a combined approach with controls on stopping pollutants reaching rivers and a new "working partnership" between organisations with a role in the natural environment.
- Flood risk management.** It will be important to consider the medium-term requirements to accommodate additional flooding within key development sites adjacent to the river. The Council's statutory responsibility is to assess proposals to ensure that flood risk is not increased with development, and to ensure that opportunities are taken by landowners and developers to reduce flood risk. The Council does recognise that to fully implement its Flood Protection Plan, significant funding from a range of third parties will be required.
- Coordination.** Peel Ports currently has several 'enforcement' powers on the river; however, they are not sufficiently resourced to pursue all incidents and would be unable to perform a wider, coordinating role across the river on all ecological and environmental aspects. Natural England and the Environment Agency would be well-placed to take on a coordinating role but are also likely to be insufficiently resourced. Consultations have highlighted the need to bring together a more broadly based grouping of interested

parties; and it is recommended that an exercise should be undertaken to examine the ways in which this can be delivered.

- **Salt Marshes and Climate Change**– The benefits which salt marshes bring to the estuary are significant in terms of natural habitat, climate change and flood protection. It will be important over the next few years, to consider the feasibility of extending saltmarshes, where rising water levels are impacting existing areas and where wider catchments are required to improve levels of flood protection. Feasibility studies should also be undertaken to fully understand the benefits of using new saltmarshes as carbon sinks, and the potential for the river to be configured as a green heat source.

6. Theme 4: Tourism, Visitor Economy Events, Culture, Arts and Heritage

Background and Context

- 6.1** Significant heritage assets, as well as centres of arts and culture line the River Medway, giving the river and its surrounding area significant potential as a driver of the visitor economy and a valuable cultural resource to be used and enjoyed by residents and visitors.
- 6.2** As a strategic crossing point on routes between continental Europe and the rest of the British Isles, the Medway has been significant for thousands of years. The river 'is engrained in the cultural heritage of Medway' and has 'been the lifeblood for settlement in the area for millennia' as a source of food, raw materials, transport, employment, leisure, artistic inspiration, and defence.³
- 6.3** Significant maritime heritage uses along the river include salt workings from the Bronze Age to the eighteenth century, a flourishing fishing industry until the last century, brick and cement manufacture, shipbuilding for the Royal Navy at Chatham, and barge building.
- 6.4** Major tourism destinations include the Royal Naval Historic Dockyard in Chatham, historic Rochester with its Norman castle and cathedral, Fort Amherst, Upnor Castle, and Temple Manor.
- 6.5** Cultural and arts attractions feature numerous theatres, arts organisations, and cultural hubs such as Intra Arts, Sun Pier House, and the University of Kent Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries.
- 6.6** It is generally recognised that the river is a significant connecting feature, that links many of the above heritage and other assets, and this can be capitalised upon to enhance the visitor experience and to establish the river as an attraction in its own right.
- 6.7** Enhancing the narrative around the river and its connection to Medway's heritage and cultural assets will increase its attractiveness and broaden the tourism offer, as well as providing a catalyst for new joint events and historic interpretation initiatives.
- 6.8** There are several strategies, which have been adopted by Medway Council, and it is important that there is compatibility and synergy between these themes and objectives.
- 6.9** The Medway Draft Local Plan identifies Medway's historic environment as a vital, irreplaceable asset that shapes its unique identity and sense of place. It highlights the potential to use key heritage assets along the river's frontage as a focus for cultural activities and to drive the tourism and visitor agenda.

³ Medway Heritage Asset Review 2017

- 6.10** Medway Council adopted the Medway Cultural Strategy 2020-2030 in January 2021. The strategy puts culture at the heart of Medway's identity and sets out to make Medway "internationally recognised for its creativity and culture" through five key themes, namely Connectivity, Shared Ambition, Spaces & Places, Creative People, and Community Engagement.
- 6.11** While the Cultural Strategy does not concentrate on the river specifically, the maritime character of the area forms a strong background context, and the emerging River Strategy should ensure that the cultural vision plays a major part in developing activities and projects on the river, in future years.
- 6.12** Medway Council's Heritage Strategy was published in 2018 and sets out to conserve and enhance the heritage assets and to work with the community to increase their understanding of the area's history and to promote community involvement.⁴ The Heritage Strategy recognises the historic importance of the river, as well as its key significance as part of the landscape of Medway. A new emerging Heritage Strategy is being developed in 2025.
- 6.13** There is a wide range of events held across Medway, some on an annual basis such as the Rochester Sweeps Festival, the Dickensian Christmas festivals and the Rochester Castle concerts. Others are more infrequent, hosted by venues such as the Historic Dockyard and the 40's wartime event. More recent innovations include the Medway River Literary Festival, celebrating the history and future of literature, poetry, and the spoken word.
- 6.14** Although many of these events are close to the river, they do not interface with it. Specific river-based events include the annual Admiral of the River "beating the bounds" ceremony, and others which have not been held on a regular basis, such as the Festival of Chatham Reach which celebrates the heritage of the River Medway and its vessels, the 350th anniversary of the Battle of Medway and events which have historically involved the Tall Ships.

Major Tourist Attractions

- 6.15** Alongside the Historic Dockyard, both Fort Amherst and Upnor Castle are open to the public as successful tourist attractions, as is the Royal Engineers Museum, located in Gillingham.
- 6.16** The western reach of the estuary passes through historic Rochester with its bridges, Norman castle and the second oldest cathedral in England, both of which are open to the public and house several events and exhibitions each year.
- 6.17** Rochester High Street runs down to the river and has a range of significant buildings, with its links to Charles Dickens. The wider estuary has links to artist JMW Turner and includes a 100-hectare Riverside Country Park in Rainham and the King Charles III Coastal Path running along the Thames estuary and around most of Medway's river frontage.

⁴ DRAFT Medway Heritage Strategy 2018, p. 1.

- 6.18** There are a several historic vessels moored either temporarily or permanently at various locations along the Medway; these include the Medway Queen, and the Soviet U475 'Black Widow' submarine anchored off Strood. There have been several attempts over the years to create a grouping of heritage vessels, to form a major visitor attraction, however this has not been possible to date and there are no specific moorings where such vessels can be viewed together.

Chatham Intra

- 6.19** With funding from Historic England and its designation as a High Street Heritage Action Zone, the Chatham Intra area, provides a focus for heritage-led regeneration to help bring buildings back into use, re-establish links to the river and revitalise this attractive and characterful historic area.
- 6.20** Chatham Intra falls within a conservation zone which, runs from Sun Pier and provides public access to the river and a venue for local events, to Star Hill in Rochester. The area is an important creative and heritage hub, with the potential to develop a unique destination for visitors, capitalising on its significant river frontage and capacity to provide permanent moorings for heritage and other vessels.

Other heritage assets

- 6.21** There are 24 Conservation Areas in Medway, many with river access. There are also numerous non-designated heritage assets, listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments that are accessible from or visible from the River Medway and all contribute to the heritage of the river.

Culture and Arts Attractions

- 6.22** The banks of the Medway are host to a range of theatres, arts organisations and cultural hubs. Theatres include the Brook and Central Theatres in Chatham, the Glassbox Theatre at Mid-Kent College and the Medway Little Theatre. Art galleries are located at Sun Pier House and the Nucleus Arts Centre.
- 6.23** Nucleus Arts is a charitable arts organisation founded by the Halpern Charitable Foundation and aims to be Medway's cultural and creative heart. Its activities include running galleries, hosting an artists-in-residence programme, and organising events to connect artists and creative people and promote their work.
- 6.24** Intra Arts is a community run arts venue and maker space operating from the former Spemco building in Rochester High Street and runs projects, events, workshops and exhibitions to promote the arts.

- 6.25** Sun Pier House enjoys a riverside location and supports Medway's creative culture by offering a base for established and start-up artists to develop their practice and promote their work. The centre provides studio space and organises events and exhibitions throughout the year.
- 6.26** The University of Kent Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries (ICCI) is located at Chatham Dockyard, and delivers an arts programme, alongside research and creative knowledge expertise within the University. This supports the development of new creative industry businesses.
- 6.27** The ICCI in partnership with Medway Council and the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, has developed the former dockyard police house into the Docking Station, a unique creative facility that delivers a world-leading centre of creative digital production, education and community engagement.
- 6.28** The River Medway and its surrounding area is part of the 'Creative Estuary' initiative, which aims to transform the Thames and Medway estuaries into a hub for the creative and cultural industries, encouraging businesses to locate and grow in this area.
- 6.29** Another important driver of the visitor economy is the natural environment and the wildlife habitats of the river. These are covered specifically in Section 5 of this report.

Key Challenges

- 6.30** One key challenge is the lack of a Medway offer that fully recognises and makes the connections between the heritage sites of significance and the fundamental role which the river had in their formation and history and can still have in promoting their identity in the future.
- 6.31** The lack of river access points, particularly to the heritage and other retail and leisure assets, is another challenge. At present, the river is seen more as a barrier, and accessing places on both sides of the river, throughout its length, can be costly and time consuming. Using the river with additional pick up and drop off points, could be a key solution.
- 6.32** Linked to the above, the development of a transportation strategy, to use the river to move tourists and commuters around Medway more efficiently and sustainably, has always been seen as unviable. However, with a review of access points and within a broader, strategic approach to the river this should be reconsidered.
- 6.33** Despite the number of events which occur across Medway, the larger ventures are primarily land based, and the river events are relatively small, and are difficult for the public to view, due to the limited riverside access provision along key stretches of the river.
- 6.34** The challenge is therefore to make the river, a part of the larger land-based events, to develop events that link land and water-based activities, and to explore how the river can provide a backdrop for events, that are not necessarily linked to traditional river activities.

- 6.35** A further challenge for larger, river-based events is the gradual decline in obvious locations that could provide the necessary space and infrastructure, required for larger vessels to use moorings, pontoons, account for low tide water depth. Significant cooperation and coordination between owners and operators would be required, to deliver such an event, today.

Key Opportunities

- 6.36** The river provides an opportunity to connect, both physically and strategically, to Medway's heritage assets, bringing together individual heritage centres, cultural centres, and other visitor attractions into a connected narrative and sense of place.
- 6.37** This will require a significant degree of cooperation and coordination between the organisations responsible for managing these assets and programmes. There are however opportunities for initiatives to be developed, and for communication to be enhanced.

Accessing Built Heritage Assets

- 6.38** The linking together of the key heritage assets through an improved river access strategy (potentially linked to a river transport offer) is one of the key opportunities to be researched and tested.
- 6.39** This will require a feasibility study to understand the best physical locations and infrastructure to enable the most convenient access arrangements to be gained, together with ownership details, likely costs and longer-term management issues.
- 6.40** This should not prevent investment in other infrastructure proposals being pursued to link these different heritage destinations, but it will be important to bring together all the options being considered to ensure a comprehensive review can be undertaken.
- 6.41** The development of direct and safe walking and cycling routes that connect key waterfront destinations and provide a network of public open spaces, footpaths and cycleways should be encouraged. This would protect and enhance biodiversity through the creation of wildlife corridors and other open spaces. It would also establish a high-quality public realm which improves access to the river, links the key waterfront sites and encourages healthy activities such as walking, jogging and cycling.
- 6.42** Such initiatives would also transform the role of the river from a barrier to a means of connecting key assets with new development and infrastructure. This would foster a sense of pride, respect and understanding of the river.

River Based Transportation Opportunities

- 6.43** Assessing the viability and deliverability of a “regular”, river based, transportation service along the river is a potential opportunity particularly during the main visitor season (April to September), if sufficient pick-up and drop-off points can be established at key heritage sites and other popular locations such as Chatham Maritime, Strood riverside and Gillingham Pier and Gillingham Marina.
- 6.44** Creating a seamless water link between key heritage assets, retail and leisure facilities could:
- widen transport choice
 - improve public transport options
 - create a visitor attraction in its own right.
 - establish the first step in a wider service around Medway and beyond.
- 6.45** A typical route could visit Gillingham Marina and the Strand, St Mary’s Island, Chatham Maritime (retail and leisure), Chatham Historic Dockyard, Sun Pier, Limehouse Landing (for the castle, cathedral and High St in Rochester), Medway Valley Park (Diggerland), Strood waterfront and Upnor Castle.
- 6.46** This will require a feasibility study to both understand the potential access points being considered in the River Access Study above, together with other locations which could benefit from a river link. The study would need to assess the likely demand for river transport from both visitors and residents, together with the costs of operating a service. This aligns with Medway Council’s Local Transport Plan (LTP) and its ambitions for integrated transport and visitor movement. This also complements the Medway Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), by exploring alternative modes of transport, including river-based services, that enhance connectivity to key destinations and reduce reliance on private vehicles.

Tourism and the Visitor Economy

- 6.47** There are sensitivities around developing an eco-tourism offer, for the estuaries, however the unique environment and the presence of a significant and varied bird population at certain times of year does create opportunities to attract visitors to the area. This would need to be carefully planned and managed between all interested parties and could be linked to educational visits and organised river trips.
- 6.48** The potential for the Medway wetlands to become part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, could also create a significantly stronger visitor offer.
- 6.49** The Strategy has already highlighted the use of the river for leisure activities such as sailing, rowing, paddle boarding, and other water-based activities, and a coordinated approach to promoting these opportunities, could attract significant visitors to the area. This could also be

linked to other heritage and cultural opportunities, to appeal to a variety of different interests within a family or visiting group.

- 6.50** Consideration should be given to bringing together some of the key built heritage assets through joint events, which make the most of river linkages. This could attract a wider range of visitors and promote the river as a key attraction.
- 6.51** Reflecting the above proposals, there will be an opportunity to tell a much stronger story, about the river and the way it has created and shaped both the environmental and heritage characteristics of Medway today.
- 6.52** Linked to the above and the potential for other visitor-based activities, there should be an economic study undertaken, to assess the range of actual benefits and outputs that can be generated through increased visitor numbers.

Events

- 6.53** There is an opportunity for all those involved in landside events close to the river and river-based events, to come together, to explore the potential for a new programme which:
 - Extends landside events to encompass some river activities and locations.
 - Establishes some new events that combine both river based and riverside activities.
 - Develops a mix of large and small events with the potential for some national and international events that use the river at scale, potentially biannually or longer.
 - Considers using the river as a backdrop and location for events that don't involve traditional river-based activities.
- 6.54** The river has the potential to provide scalability for larger events, whilst combined events will help develop the more 'joined up' narrative for the Medway, bringing together land and water stories. Such a programme would further raise the profile of the river and promote the attractiveness of Medway as a whole.

Whose Hoo

- 6.55** Whose Hoo is a heritage funded, landscape scale project focussing on the Hoo Peninsula, which has a rich heritage, significant river frontages to both the Medway and the Thames and a range of diverse habitats.
- 6.56** Through engaging activities, educational programs, and community involvement, the project aims to highlight the hidden treasures of the Hoo Peninsula, creating a stronger bond between residents and their local environment.

Looking Forward

- 6.57** A group of key arts, cultural, heritage and tourism organisations and key individuals should be assembled to explore longer term plans and further enhance cooperation and coordination along the lines of the Key Opportunities discussed above.
- 6.58** An initial investment strategy should be prepared to test the feasibility and viability, as well as the outputs and benefits to be gained from investing in such a programme of tourism, visitor economy, arts and culture, and heritage initiatives and a linked events programme.
- 6.59** A key action will be to establish a new 'story' for Medway that incorporates the river, its role and importance as the lifeblood of the Medway area. This new story should then be embodied into the profiles of the heritage assets along the river, and the stories of the towns, settlements and attractions along the river.
- 6.60** A further key action will be to develop a five-year rolling event programme with some national or international profile activities. These could create some funding challenges; however, the benefits would need to outweigh the costs and the viability of this should be tested by the feasibility study.

Theme 4 Summary

Significant heritage assets, as well as centres of arts and culture, line the River Medway, including the Medway towns. There are 24 Conservation Areas in Medway, several of which have river access, as well as numerous non-designated heritage assets. There are several recent strategies that have been adopted by the Council, and which the River Strategy needs to consider and reflect on including the Medway Cultural Strategy 2020-2030 and Medway Council's draft Heritage Strategy.

Tourist and visitor attractions along the river include:

- **Several significant maritime heritage assets.** The river itself has a long heritage of “salt working” from the Bronze Age (c2,000 BC) to the eighteenth century; evidence of these practices remains, and the stewardship of the salt marshes is a key example of the cultural heritage of the area.⁵ Fishing has a significant heritage on the River Medway. The shipbuilding heritage of the Medway is significant, with a long history of ship construction for the Royal Navy centred around the historic dockyard at Chatham. The river also has a heritage of barge building.
- **Numerous major tourism destinations,** including: the Historic Dockyard in Chatham; Fort Amherst and the Lines, a series of fortifications built originally to defend the dockyard; historic Rochester with its bridges, Norman castle and the second oldest cathedral in England; Chatham Intra, a creative and heritage hub, which is a focus of heritage-led regeneration schemes; several historic vessels, moored at various locations along the Medway; and Temple Manor, a historic medieval manor house.
- **Culture and arts attractions.** Near to the river area range of arts organisations and cultural hubs, including: Intra Arts, a community run arts venue and maker space on Rochester Highstreet; Sun Pier House, a not-for-profit organisation which is a base for artists to develop their practice and promote their work; and the University of Kent Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries (ICCI), which is located at Chatham Dockyard. The River Medway and its surrounding areas is part of the ‘Creative Estuary’ (referring to the Thames Estuary) initiative, which aims to transform the Thames Estuary area, including Medway, into a hub for the creative and cultural industries.

There is an opportunity to link together key heritage assets through an improved river access strategy to provide a more joined up and compelling visitor offer. The provision of more frequent, river-based modes of transport would link river access points to key attractions. This could be supported by direct and safe walking and cycling routes that connect key waterfronts.

⁵ Medway Heritage Asset Review 2017, p. 10.

The river is also an attraction in its own right. The experience of being on the river through water taxis, pleasure boat trips, and tours by river can attract visitors, as well as leisure and sporting opportunities the river offers.

The enhancement of the narrative that links the Medway's heritage and cultural assets and emphasises the importance of the river will increase the Medway's attractiveness and tourism offering. Joint events and new interpretation centres could help to support this.

Key actions include:

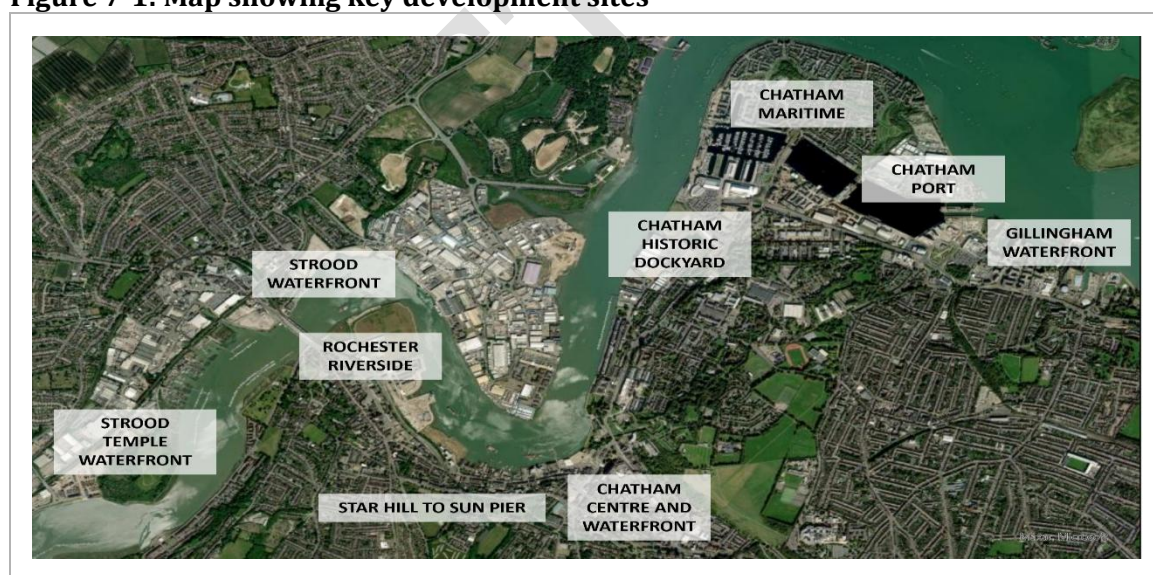
- A group of key arts, cultural, heritage and tourism organisations and key individuals should be assembled to explore longer term plans and further enhance cooperation and coordination.
- An initial investment strategy should be prepared to test the feasibility and viability, as well as consider the outputs and the benefits to be gained from and integrated approach to tourism, visitor economy, arts and culture, and heritage initiatives as suggested above.
- Establishing a new 'story' for Medway that incorporates the river, its role and importance as the lifeblood of the Medway area. This new story should then be embodied into the stories of the heritage assets along the river, and of the stories of the towns, settlements and attractions along the river.
- Developing a five-year rolling event programme with some big events with a national or international profile.
- Consider the potential for the private sponsorship of new events and initiatives that combine the heritage, arts and culture aspects of Medway; and opportunities for investment in both expanding current assets and creating new assets, in order to promote the tourism and visitor economy.

7. Theme 5 - The River and New Development Opportunities

Background and Context

- 7.1** Over the past 20 years, the Medway riverfront has evolved from a predominately industrial hub, characterised by shipbuilding and maritime trade and industry connected with the Royal Naval Dockyard at Chatham, to a more vibrant area with mixed residential, leisure, commercial and other uses having been developed across several key sites. Access to riverside areas has also begun to open significantly.
- 7.2** The Council's Renaissance Strategy, initiated in 2004, has driven this transformation, focusing on redeveloping 900 hectares of brownfield land into a dynamic waterfront city, composed of a series of urban quarters.
- 7.3** Key projects include Chatham Maritime, Rochester Riverside and Chatham Waters, amongst others. The main, key strategic sites are shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 7-1: Map showing key development sites



Source: SQW, 2024

- 7.4** Chatham Maritime was one of the first major redevelopment projects to come forward. Now almost complete, the project has developed approximately 2,000 homes, alongside retail and entertainment spaces, a new marina, and new facilities, including a primary school and doctor's surgery⁶.
- 7.5** Construction has progressed on Chatham Waters (Peel L&P's development to the east of Basin 3 – hitherto operated as a commercial port). This is a mixed-use development, spanning 26-

⁶ Medway Council, 2004. Waterfront Renaissance Strategy.

acres along the waterfront and planned to deliver 1,350 homes, alongside commercial and retail and leisure space.

- 7.6** Peel have also recently submitted outline plans to develop the remainder of the commercial port around Basin 3 into a new, mixed use residential, business and enterprise district.
- 7.7** Alongside Gillingham waterfront to the East, Berkeley Homes and Medway Council have now completed the redevelopment of the Victory Pier site, comprising 841 units, alongside 3,800 sqm of retail and commercial space, a hotel, and a 1,106-bedroom student village to serve the University of Kent⁷.
- 7.8** In Rochester, Countryside Homes (Vistry) and Hyde Housing are well advanced in developing the Rochester Riverside site (1,400 homes and over 100,000 sq f of non-residential space, including a new primary school when complete)⁸.
- 7.9** To the west of the River in Strood, Medway Council have begun work on the Strood Waterfront Regeneration project⁹ (over 1,100 homes) and to the South of Strood, the Temple Waterfront project has now completed, but the Temple Marsh strategic open space adjacent to the river, is still to be completed.
- 7.10** Other riverfront sites, currently under consideration and design by their present landowners include:
 - the Chatham Intra area (located between Sun Pier and Star Hill)
 - land to the east of Gillingham Marina and north of Pier Road
 - the Interface land (between Chatham Maritime and the Historic Dockyard)
 - Acorn Wharf, immediately to the north of Rochester Riverside
- 7.11** Fuller details of these and other sites, are included in Annex B of this Strategy.

Employment and Economic Development Sites

- 7.12** Finally, it is also important to reference the potential new river front development sites, which will be primarily used for employment and economic development schemes.
- 7.13** There are several such sites along the river which are anticipated to deliver strong economic development prospects to the Borough. These have been referenced in detail within the Theme 2 of the strategy, but are briefly highlighted here, for completeness.
- 7.14** The former Kingsnorth Power Station site (owned by Uniper and now known as Medway One) is currently planned for the development of a modern manufacturing and logistics employment area. The site will include commercial, manufacturing, and industrial uses,

⁷ Berkeley Group. 2024. Victory Pier webpage. Available [here](#)

⁸ Hyde Housing. 2024. Rochester Riverside. Available [here](#)

⁹ Medway Council, Strood Waterfront project page. 2024. Available [here](#)

totalling 33,000 sqm. of floorspace and has protected a dedicated access route to the river and the remaining Kingsnorth jetties, for any occupiers requiring river access. The development received outline planning permission in November 2022.

- 7.15** There are also several energy-related projects progressing on the Isle of Grain.
- 7.16** The Acorn Partners (Storegga, Shell, Harbour Energy and North Sea Midstream Partners) and Uniper have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to jointly develop a carbon capture and storage project, to process and move CO₂ away from the Isle of Grain for long term storage¹⁰.
- 7.17** National Grid Grain LNG (Liquid Natural Gas) have also announced plans to expand their gas storage operations, to meet up to 33% of the UK's gas demand.
- 7.18** There is also development land available within the Thamesport complex, which is available for potential occupiers, looking to use the deep-water wharves available on the Medway at this point.
- 7.19** Fuller details of these and other economic development sites, are included in Annex B of this Strategy.

Houseboats

- 7.20** The Medway is the setting for a significant number of houseboats which are static floating residences of either a temporary or permanent nature. Floating residences are a feature of many vibrant waterbodies elsewhere in the UK and across the world and are an important asset to the diverse community of river users.
- 7.21** In many communities of houseboat residences there is a strong sense of community and cohesion, and such communities can add considerably to the waterside environment.
- 7.22** It is noted that houseboats can provide placemaking benefits, reducing crime in quieter waterways, making waterside spaces engaging and active, and providing a link to the water and the riparian heritage of an area.

Key Challenges

- 7.23** Irrespective of the characteristics of the specific development sites under consideration, there are some common challenges that need to be addressed in respect of all sites that front or have a relationship with the river. This is to ensure that emerging development schemes make the most of the unique environment, introduce uses that will capitalise on the proximity to the water, create direct interfaces with the river to increase accessibility, and recognise the essential requirements needed to address climate change and rising water levels, into the future.

¹⁰ Insider.co.uk. 2024. Acorn project signs MoU with Uniper to ship and store captured CO₂. Available [here](#)

- 7.24** So often, riverfront developments fail to address these challenges and deliver schemes that could exist on any other site, in any location.

Placemaking and urban design

- 7.25** The need to make effective use and enjoyment of the river and its environment, which holds the potential to deliver many important placemaking objectives in Medway, is a key challenge. Effective design needs to play a key role in encouraging new, local communities to engage directly or indirectly, with the river for leisure and recreational activities.
- 7.26** Indeed, the Medway Draft Local Plan (2024) outlines that riverside developments are to facilitate walking and cycling to high design standards and consider the opportunity to provide linkages with other path networks. New waterside property development needs to address how it can unlock currently inaccessible areas of the river, to improve both the visual and physical connections between development sites, the river, and publicly accessible spaces. New development should align with Medway Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) infrastructure requirements and riverside development should support sustainable transport.
- 7.27** Visually, this could be implemented through the creation of waterside public ,green and seating spaces along the frontage of new developments; and physically, consideration should be given to the potential to create new footpaths, cycle ways, moorings, wharfage, pontoons, or slipways.

Habitat protection and developer obligations

- 7.28** The difficulty in securing habitat protection along the river, as part of any new development, is another key challenge. Further guidance and conditions are required, to ensure that developments optimise the benefits of the river while preventing ecological damage, enhancing biodiversity, and reducing flood risk. The difficulties in achieving consistency in these respects and ensuring that obligations are expanded to include more comprehensive protection and restoration requirements, is another major challenge.
- 7.29** Where sites are brought forward for development, there is a need for robust ecological surveys to be undertaken and careful consideration to be given where River access might be limited for ecological and environmental purposes. Developments must consider how to optimise the river whilst simultaneously reducing flood risk. This makes effective flood risk management crucial.
- 7.30** New development should also tackle the difficulties of preserving and enhancing existing local diversity, through delivering appropriate landscaping, and ensuring that less disturbed riverside areas are protected, and that habitats (either new or enhanced) are delivered for a range of species. The potential impacts of non-native plant species being used in landscaping should also be considered.

7.31 At present, Medway does have some obligations for developers to make S106 Developer Contributions in respect of sites within a 6km buffer of the Thames, Medway and Swale Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites, to address bird disturbance mitigation. Flood areas are also required to make contributions towards flood risk management and sustainable drainage. Environmental mitigation is required for developments which have a direct or indirect impact on the natural environment.

7.32 However, these obligations are limited, and there is a growing requirement for the extension of such contributions to cover a wider array of river related infrastructure and challenges, and for this to apply to a wider range of new developments undertaken within a redefined, “river zone”.

Houseboats

7.33 Given the scale and diversity, of houseboats currently located around the river, there are specific challenges that need to be met in relation to provision of appropriate infrastructure to deal with disposal of black water and grey water, which is causing localised pollution and concerns from an operational and river user perspective.

Key Opportunities

7.34 The analysis of both past river front development and the range of new sites being brought forward for future development, has highlighted several opportunities, which should be progressed and explored further, to make the most of the river, and introduce new benefits to residents and visitors alike. These include:

- Implement and develop design guidelines for more effective use of river frontages to maximise access provision and views.
- Encourage high-quality, mixed-use developments in appropriate locations, that integrate with the river and enhance its appeal and accessibility.
- Create overarching development briefs to include design guidance for key sites to attract developers and investors and ensure sustainable growth.
- Undertake detailed appraisals of Council-owned sites to assess the potential to optimise mixed-use development and promote the outcomes with developers.
- Investigate introducing new types of development, such as “floating homes” along the lines of developments in Holland such as at Schoonschip in Amsterdam. There are currently many house boats at sites along the river, but these have lacked sufficient investment in essential infrastructure, such as suitable waste collection and pumping out arrangements, and new developments would provide the opportunity to address some of these issues.

- The Medway River Strategy will empower river users to affect positive change to improve the river offer and improve the ecological health of the Medway Estuary and its 11,000 acres of salt marsh habitat.

Introducing Design Guidance

- 7.35** Consultations have highlighted the benefit of preparing a form of Planning and Design Guidance, which would articulate the key challenges, parameters and objectives that a developer should be trying to achieve in any new developments with a river frontage or link. Such guidance would highlight the importance of the river and how development can benefit from this in the longer term and the obligations that would be associated with this.
- 7.36** This would particularly encourage sites in private ownership to make more effective use of river frontages, by encouraging new river access provision, capitalising on the potential placemaking benefits of riverside sites, and ensuring development complements the range of river assets, attractions, and settlements on the river.
- 7.37** This should also include guidance that plans for climate change, so that new development is designed to minimise flood impact and mitigate effects that contribute to climate change, for example by including river related, energy efficiency measures.
- 7.38** As an example, the national Canal and River Trust has published guidance on waterside development which articulates the range of principles which could apply to river fronting and adjacent sites along the Medway.¹¹ This recommends that all waterside locations should be considered individually, but in each case, development should be structured by a series of clear and mutually agreed guiding principles.
- 7.39** Medway's Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area Significance-led Development Framework SPD¹² also sets out some useful design guidance for riverside development, which to a certain extent could provide the basis for a district wide policy.

Improving Riverside Access

- 7.40** Integrating such design measures into new developments offers a unique opportunity to overcome private ownership restrictions on waterside access, for example, by ensuring this is dealt with as a planning condition. This would potentially enhance the public rights of way network across the Medway area, reducing the interruption of routes by land in private ownership, and increasing overall accessibility and connectivity.
- 7.41** The importance of enhancing the Public Rights of Way Network is covered within Medway's Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020, and in other waterside development policies

¹¹ Read the Canal and River Trust's guidance on waterside placemaking [here](#).

¹² Sun Hill to Sun Pier SPD Draft, 2023.

elsewhere such as within the London Borough of Lewisham's River Corridor Improvement Plan 2015.¹³

- 7.42** Using the opportunity of influencing the design of new development, to introduce new waterside pathways, creates the potential to integrate new transport routes into the wider area and establish a more coherent movement network, that links with existing pedestrian and cycle links across the Borough. These waterside routes could also serve as potential areas for recreation and leisure, contributing to the delivery of healthier communities and boosting wellbeing.

Widening Developer Contributions

- 7.43** Consideration should be given to undertaking a feasibility study in relation to section 106 strategic policy issues, and the opportunity to expand the types of obligations for developing riverside sites beyond bird disturbance and flood protection to encompass some of the wider Development Guidelines and principles set out in the river strategy.
- 7.44** For example, this could include the introduction of requirements which directly relate to the protection, restoration and enhancement of the river. The management and maintenance of waterside spaces must also be considered at planning application stage, and these requirements can be regulated through planning conditions or S106 agreements.

Promoting a Wider Mix of Uses

- 7.45** Experience from other places, demonstrates that river frontages have the potential to host a stronger mix of uses, than has been seen in many developments to date. These might include food and beverage, retail and commercial spaces, such as studios and workspace and can optimise the unique benefits and appeal of being situated along the waterfront.
- 7.46** Culturally, the waterfront could also be a strong destination for the installation of public art along prominent Riverside areas, which would attract visitors to key corridors and waterside attractions.
- 7.47** Placemaking and good design can also encourage stronger community engagement with the river through leisure activities, retail spaces, and improved physical connections.

Encouraging New Development Opportunities

- 7.48** Local Authorities can take actions (in respect of sites in their ownership) to help ensure that the best development scheme is brought forward at each site, and adheres to the design principles, discussed earlier.

¹³ Read Lewisham' River Corridor Improvement Plan (2015) [here](#) Read Lewisham' River Corridor Improvement Plan (2015) [here](#)

- 7.49** Consideration should be given to bringing forward some overarching Development Briefs for some of the key sites to test the developer and investor market in the most analytical and robust way. Furthermore, detailed viability appraisal work should be undertaken, especially in relation to the Council-owned sites, to understand the potential to deliver a better mix of uses that play to the strengths of the river, and examine some of the ways site owners can better work with developers in order to achieve these objectives.

Houseboats

- 7.50** There is the potential to investigate the possibility of introducing new types of development, such as “floating homes” along the lines of developments in Holland such as at Schoonschip in Amsterdam.¹⁴ There are currently many house boats at sites along the River but these have lacked sufficient investment in essential infrastructure, such as suitable waste collection and pumping out arrangements, and new developments would provide the opportunity to address some of these challenges.
- 7.51** In many communities of houseboat residence there is a strong sense of community and cohesion, and such communities can add considerably to the waterside environment by providing placemaking benefits, improving security and making spaces more active.
- 7.52** Consideration therefore needs to be given to how best to introduce ways of overcoming the black water challenge, for existing houseboats, and how the development of future moorings can be better controlled to avoid such problems in the future.
- 7.53** A few examples of houseboat development in other areas are included in Annex A.

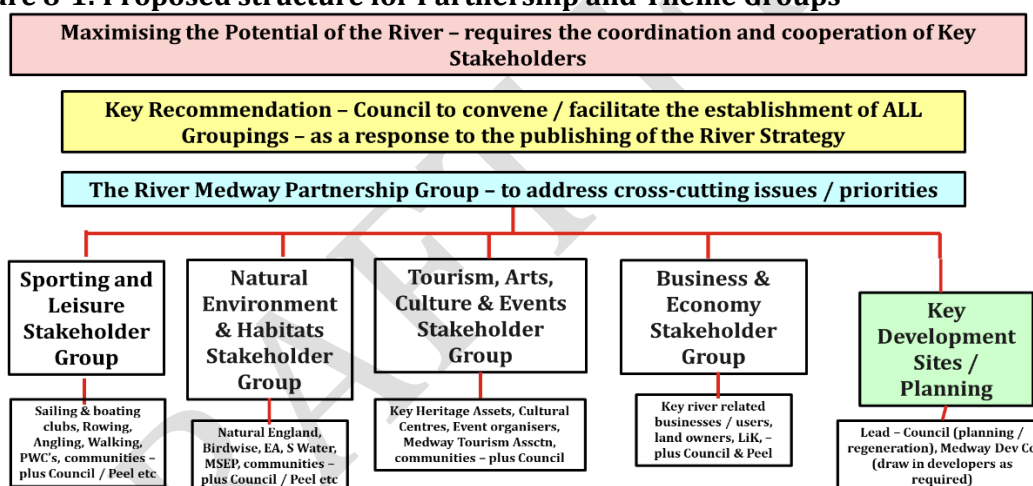
¹⁴ See <https://schoonschipamsterdam.org/>

8. Implementation and Delivery Framework

- 8.1** This strategy provides a framework for the future use and management of the River Medway, by addressing key challenges and maximising key opportunities.
- 8.2** There are a series of key opportunities, priorities and actions required within each of the themes identified. These require the involvement of a range of stakeholders working collaboratively together. Many of the key themes and actions overlap and will need communication across the separate groups.
- 8.3** Delivering the strategy will require:
- an overarching River Strategy Partnership group and themed groups to deliver feasible and sustainable solutions.
 - stakeholders with multi-disciplinary skills which can deliver the different themes.
 - combined funding and other resources, from a range of stakeholders
- 8.4** Each themed partnership group should lead on initiatives within their sector, namely
- leisure and sport
 - economy and business
 - tourism, heritage, culture and events
 - environment and habitats.
- 8.5** It is not considered that a similar approach should apply to the development sites and planning theme, which will involve the Council in a much more direct way both as Planning Authority and as a key landowner. This theme would cover a disparate range of sites, at various stages in the development process, with a wide variety of landowners and potential developers.
- 8.6** For the development sites and planning theme it is suggested that appropriate officers within the Council lead on planning and regeneration issues, including the establishment of policy and development guidance. With regard to Council owned sites, these would be progressed via the Medway Development Company. At some stage, there may be a need to bring together certain landowners and developers where there are some common areas of interest to be explored.
- 8.7** Medway's Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) as strategic documents will guide delivery and inform work in relevant areas across the themes. The LCWIP and BSIP plans aim to improve sustainable transport options, reduce car dependency, and enhance connectivity across Medway.

- 8.8** The wider River Medway Partnership needs to be an overarching group of stakeholders, including representatives from across each of the themed groups, to ensure that these cross cutting issues are addressed at the right level, receive the widest support, create the best chance of identifying viability and long-term sustainability, and therefore funding.
- 8.9** There is no essential sequencing to the establishment of these groups, but it is suggested that they are the first response to the publishing of this Strategy, and that the Council, and key officers within each of the proposed groups, should provide a facilitating role in order to assemble the key parties and help create an agenda and structure, the appointment of independent chairs for these groups will be important in order to drive forward the agreed agendas.
- 8.10** This combined approach is demonstrated by the diagram below, which shows the relationships between the various parties and the groups.

Figure 8-1: Proposed structure for Partnership and Theme Groups



The River Medway Partnership Group

- 8.11** In the case of the over-arching, cross cutting issues, it is recommended that these are addressed by a group of key stakeholders. This group's remit should specifically be focussed on these wider challenges, which overlay two or more of the theme groups.
- 8.12** It is considered that the catalyst for establishing this River Medway Partnership Group should flow from the publishing of the River Strategy and it is proposed that the Council, acts as the promoter and facilitator of this process.
- 8.13** Given the breadth of the Strategy, it is recommended that the Council nominate a lead Member and Officer, to coordinate responsibility for all river related challenges for Medway Council and lead the inception of the River Medway Partnership:
- The River Medway Partnership should include stakeholders with a remit and responsibility which covers key aspects of the river and its environs, for example Peel Ports, Environment Agency, Natural England, Southern Water, Rochester Bridge Trust.

- a representative(s) from each of the four theme groups
- the Council's nominated lead Member and Officer, drawing on key officers with specific responsibility for disciplines which fall within the cross-cutting issues, as appropriate.

8.14 It is recommended that the initial agenda and actions set out below are discussed by the River Medway Partnership at the inception meeting:

- An initial discussion document is produced, that outlines the key challenges and perspectives which have emerged from the preparation of the River Strategy and the rationale for the River Medway Partnership Group.
- Discussions should focus on some of the key, cross-cutting issues which have been identified as critical to the future sustainability of the river, such as:
 - overviewing the current arrangements for managing and maintaining the condition of the river and its surrounding environs, particularly protected areas and its infrastructure
 - the maintenance and renewal of such infrastructure assets, and the overall health and safety, and security agenda
 - exploring how these aspects can be combined within a single responsibility point.
 - strategies to both improve existing and create more access points to and from the river.
 - Feasibility and opportunity of establishing some form of river transportation to better link key assets and locations, and to examine how that could benefit from the expanded access strategy above.
 - opportunities and options to identify potential sources of funding to fulfil the capital and revenue expenditure needed to deliver the proposed programme of actions and activities going forward.
 - examining how to coordinate actions and to improve key areas of concern such as pollution
 - investigating the potential for the Medway to be developed as a Green Energy Hub, drawing on strategies already emerging elsewhere to use rivers and their tidal movements as a significant water source heat generator.
- The governance and terms of reference of the River Medway Partnership also needs to be determined, including:
 - membership, role and key objectives
 - short- and medium-term activities to form the initial work programme
 - lead responsibilities for delivering the work
 - finalising an Action Plan for the strategy including detailed projects

- the emerging thinking on the wider River Strategy and how it could be delivered including investigating the creation of a River Trust

Theme Groups

8.15 These groups will include stakeholders with an interest in driving forward a particular theme within the River Strategy.

8.16 It is recommended that the Strategy is the catalyst for the Council to act as facilitator, to begin to bring together the theme groups. The initial theme group meetings should be led by an appropriate Member or officer.

8.17 The theme groups should:

- gather initial stakeholder responses to the River Strategy and its proposals
- consider the initial proposed, agenda, actions and initiatives for each theme set out within the Strategy
- develop an agreed terms of reference including membership, roles and objectives
- agree a representative(s) to represent the theme group within the over-arching River Medway Partnership Group
- agree several short- and medium-term activities, to form the initial work programme for the theme group, and identify any key priorities and actions that will transcend the other theme groups and therefore be considered by the wider River Medway Partnership Group
- identify responsibility points for driving forward the agreed work programme and agenda for the group, together with potential funding and other resource needs
- develop an Action Plan for the theme group detailing key projects proposed, who is responsible for leading, the key actions and next steps and all critical requirements including funding, human resources and cooperation between parties
- coordinate a Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) at the appropriate point to consider the inclusivity of emerging proposals

8.18 It is envisaged that these groups will work towards the eventual formulation of implementation plans for each theme, with appropriate consideration given to broader issues including but not limited to public health, community participation, wellbeing, and inclusion. Theme groups should also consider relevant performance metrics.

8.19 The recommended initial key actions for progressing the River Medway Strategy are in set out in Table 8-1 below.

Table 8-1: Key Actions / Activities

Key Actions / Activities	Responsible Parties to Progress / Lead	Timing – short (1 yr), mid (2-3yrs), long (3+yrs)	Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources
THEME 1 - THE RIVER AS A MAJOR LOCATION FOR LEISURE AND SPORTING				
A - Better Coordination and Cooperation between the Key Leisure and Sporting Stakeholders				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble a theme group of stakeholders within the leisure and sporting sector to collaborate on projects to drive forward the River Strategy. Prepare an initial discussion document to form an agenda for this session based on the River Strategy 	Medway Council as facilitator and coordinator Stakeholder representatives	Short Term	Time resources only	Medway Council to provide time resources for facilitation role
Develop project suggestions to establish a draft Work Programme including potential project leads for the theme group members to take forward, drawing on initial suggestions in River Strategy	Theme group members Nominated project leads as appropriate	Short Term	Time resources only	Medway Council to provide time and resources. Possible Theme group members subscriptions
B - Improving and Widening the Leisure and Sporting Offer				
Initial Programme of Events and Competitions Objective - to attract a wider participation of Medway residents, visitors and competitors regionally and nationally. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review all existing / proposed events across the membership explore the potential to coordinate / expand this programme and the potential for sponsorship / other funding 	Key project for emerging theme group members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a “sub-group” of key parties action the key activities monitor progress 	Short to medium term	Time resources only	Theme group members Potential subscriptions and resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a programme and identify lead partners / actions explore ways these can support social prescribing, active travel, and access to nature for all groups engage children, young people and families with river-based activities through education, engagement with Council youth services, and early help teams 				
<i>Develop better and more access points to and from the river –</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidate contributions from members re existing pontoons and slipways incl condition, ownership, future use potential Known costs of repair if available Feed through data to Partnership Group 	Within the emerging theme group, key work stream requires direct inputs from membership	Short to medium term	Time resources only	Theme group members subscriptions and resources
C - Coastal walkways (and any associated cycleways) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a comprehensive coastal walkway, identifying “gaps”, assessing land ownership, and barriers to closing gaps and any funding sources. 	Theme group to develop a work programme with Medway Council	Short to Medium Term	Initially time resources only	Initial “gap” assessment by Medway Council / theme group members Public sector bidding rounds, potential \$106
D - Teaching & Training Centres – Compile data on current and planned provision i.e. nature, scale, operational responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to improve/ expand existing facilities Potential to create new facilities Examine the feasibility / viability of proposals emerging 	Theme group members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RYA / ASTO Medway Council 	Short to Medium Term	Initially group member time Feasibility studies estimate £25,000 per study	Initial review and potential projects work, funded by clubs / theme group members resources. Feasibility study by group members
E - New Leisure / Sporting Based Development Opportunities – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify any suitable locations, the Strand in particular 	Theme group to lead, in cooperation with Medway Council / other owners.	Medium Term	Initially member time Funding for	Medway Council owned assets

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider land ownership issues and obtain agreement to progress Work up an initial feasibility study Agree a way forward with landowners to promote etc 	Where sites are in Medway Council / member ownership, theme group to contribute to initial feasibility work		feasibility c.£30,000	Privately owned assets and funding
F - Making the Most of What We Already Have -				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an early work programme, to better maintain, coordinate and promote the use of existing river infrastructure (Sun Pier, Thunderbolt Pier, Chatham Maritime, Gillingham marina & Pier, the Strand & Commodores Hard etc) 	Theme group to lead with support from Medway Council. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHDT / Chatham Trust / MDL Gillingham marina 	Short to Medium Term	Study Costings £25,000 Any works required to infrastructure tbc	Initial review and scoping to be funded by asset owners. Any required works to be mix of owner and other public sources
G - Develop an agenda for promoting health and wellbeing, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the full range of leisure and sporting assets / opportunities, throughout the river for Medway residents and those visiting the area. Identify specific proposals & assess how theme group members can assist the Health and Wellbeing Board & Medway's "A Better Medway" as well as Medway's public health priorities – physical activity, mental health, social isolation Establish where appropriate, safeguarding frameworks for river-based events and activities. Collaborate with Medway Council community safety teams to address anti-social behaviour and perceptions of safety along the river 	Theme group to work with the Medway Council / the Health and Wellbeing Board to identify current & future initiatives	Short to Medium Term	Initially member & Medway Council time resources. Future projects tbc	Evidence gathering work to be funded by theme group / Medway Council / Wellbeing Board resources
H - Improving / Better Articulating the Medway Offer				

<p>Promote the better inclusion of the history, current importance and future leisure and sporting opportunities, offered by the river, in the whole Medway Offer / Story</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake market research as to why Medway does not attract the level of leisure users compared to Solent / Essex • Identify the key issues / challenges emerging, how these could be addressed re. costs / funding and benefits / impacts 	<p>Medway Council and theme group, with inputs from the tourism theme group to commission initial market research, share results, work up next steps</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term</p>	<p>Market research study estimates £30,000 to £35,000</p>	<p>Market research to be funded from a mix of Medway Council, tourism bodies and theme group members</p>
I - Funding Sources / Opportunities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the potential sources of funding, capital and revenue, to deliver the agreed programme of actions • Identify what supporting information and evidence is required • Develop a critical path in terms of priority projects and their potential funding sources / requirements 	<p>Theme group will lead on the agenda and liaise with the River Medway Partnership Group who will lead on the sourcing of river wide funding. The Medway Council will lead on public sector funds</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>	<p>Theme Group member resources</p> <p>Consultancy input, estimated at £25,000</p>	<p>Funding for identification of sources, from Medway Council / theme group / Partnership Group own resources</p>
J - An Over-Arching Business Plan / Case for Developing Leisure and Sport on the river				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent of the Leisure and Sporting action plan and range of proposed activities is potentially extensive, complex and highly interconnected. For these reasons it is suggested that an Over-Arching Business Plan for the Sector should be compiled 	<p>Theme group to lead on the Business Plan with Medway Council and River Medway Partnership Group support Key infrastructure inputs from asset owners</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>	<p>In addition to member resources Consultancy input is estimated at £40,000</p>	<p>Business Plan funding by a mix of theme group members and Medway Partnership Group</p>
THEME 2 - THE RIVER AS AN IMPORTANT BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DRIVER				

A - Better Coordination / Cooperation, between the key Business / Economic Development Stakeholders				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble a theme group” of stakeholders within the business and economic sector to collaborate on several projects to drive forward the River Strategy. Prepare an initial discussion document to form an agenda for this session, based on the River Strategy 	Medway Council as facilitator / coordinator Support from stakeholder representatives.	Short Term	Time resources only	Medway Council to provide time resources for facilitation role
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop project suggestions for a draft Work Programme including potential project leads for the theme group members to take forward drawing on initial suggestions in River Strategy 	Theme group members to nominate project leads as appropriate	Short Term	Time resources only	Theme group members
B - Grain				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with key landowners National Grid, Thamesport, Uniper etc to develop a strategic economic development and planning strategy for the next 20 / 30 years. 	Strategy led initially by Medway Council in a working “partnership” with National Grid / Uniper / Thamesport	Short Term	Cost estimate of ED&P Strategy at £50,000	ED&P Strategy to be funded by mix of Medway Council & key site owners
C - Kingsnorth				
Work with key landowners, occupiers, potential occupiers (Uniper, Amazon, Church Commissioners, VeeTee Rice, Peel) to develop a strategic economic development / planning strategy for an area encompassing all developed and potential development with a 20 / 30-year time horizon	Development & Planning Strategy to be led by Medway Council in a working “partnership” with key landowners, Uniper / Peel Ports	Short Term	Cost estimate of ED&P Strategy at £50,000	ED&P Strategy to be funded by mix of Medway Council & key site owners
D - Medway City Estate				
<p>Recognising the potential for some large industrial occupiers to move from key riverfront sites on the Medway City Estate to alternative locations (e.g. Kingsnorth), undertake a work programme to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review with these companies the potential for relocation 	Initial exploratory work to identify potential relocation sites led by Medway Council with key landowners, VeeTee Rice,	Short to Medium Term	Cost estimate of initial Relocation Study at £35,000	Potential Relocation Study to be funded by mix of potential relocating businesses,

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If relocation seems a feasible and viable option, examine the implications for land release in short to medium term, and how re-use and redesignations options 	Scotline, Heidelberg, Church Commissioners			site owners and the Medway Council
E - Chatham Docks				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In view of decision to close commercial docks, theme group and the Medway Council, should work with the river-based businesses to identify any relocation options within Medway, particularly any proposals which emerge from the potential strategies above for Kingsnorth and Grain 	Theme group, Medway Council & Locate in Kent	Short Term	Initially internal resourcing only. Relocation study tbc.	Internal resources of theme group members, Medway Council and Locate in Kent
F - Key Infrastructure – Hoo Peninsula				
<p>As part of the emerging, medium term economic development and planning strategies for Kingsnorth and Grain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the status of road and rail access assess the constraints / challenges which these impose on both existing and future economic activities, and identify options for new investment / other options to resolve 	Theme group / Medway Council in a working “partnership” with key landowners / operators:	Medium Term	Cost estimate of initial Infrastructure Assessment Study at £75,000	Infrastructure study – to be funded by mix of Medway Council / key site owners / any public funding
G - Servicing / Supply Chain Companies, Supporting River Based Users				
<p>In the light of emerging strategies for additional river-based uses and the servicing requirements of sailing and boating operations,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep the demand and supply characteristics of the repair and servicing sector and the boat building sector, under review identify the likely increase in demand, required from increased vessels operating in the area, to attract marine servicing / design / construction etc businesses to locate 	Theme group with inputs from Medway Council, Locate in Kent, operators likely to create demand and marine servicing Co’s	Medium Term	Initial monitoring by internal resources Demand Study estimate £35,000	Funding from a mix of theme group members, Co’s requiring facilities and Medway Council

C - Planning and Design Guidance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This opportunity has been highlighted in other Themes. It recommends the production of Planning and Design guidance, to apply to all river frontages to ensure new developments, better address the river and its opportunities. Further details - see Action Plan for New Development Opportunities 	See actions in the New Development Opportunities actions below	Short to Medium term	Developer Contribution feasibility and viability testing Initial report £50,000	Feasibility and viability testing by Medway Council and other government and public agencies to fund
D - Developer Contributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the potential to develop a wider Developer Contribution strategy, which seeks higher Section 106 payments, to be applied across a wider area, to fund some essential resources and infrastructure to secure improvements to the river generally and its infrastructure 	It is assumed that Medway Council would lead with input from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme group and Partnership Group Key developers / landowners 	Short Term in context of Local Plan	Developer Contribution feasibility and viability testing Initial report £50,000	Feasibility and viability testing, Medway Council and other government and public agencies to fund
E – Fishing, angling and the No Take Zone – continuation and expansion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with parties responsible for overseeing Examine the results from the regular monitoring Assess the levels of fish stock in river and breeding grounds Liaise with Rochester Oyster & Floating Fisheries (ROFF), Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority (IFCA) as to whether the Zone should be extended	Theme group could lead on coordinating this work stream – with inputs from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IFCA ROFF Medway Council 	Medium Term	Time resources only	Theme group member contributions
F – Biodiversity Net Gain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the developing Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and ensure that it is focussed on and addressing the river-based Medway challenges. 	KCC and Medway Council are progressing the LNRS Theme group to review issues emerging that impact the River Strategy	Medium Term	Time resources only	Theme group member contributions

G - Visitor and Interpretation Centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess whether there is the potential to develop any further environmental and habitat-based visitor and interpretation centres along the river which could contribute to the promotion and education and knowledge of both environmental and climate change challenges, and what the Medway community is doing about those challenges 	Theme group and Partnership Group to lead, liaising with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSEP Birdwise Medway Council 	Medium Term	Research and feasibility study between £25,000 and £40,000	Research and feasibility studies to be funded by a mix of public and private funds.
H - River pollution – The River Strategy is suggesting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of the measures being taken elsewhere and by others Is this work delivering the desired results Is further independent testing required If so, liaise with partners re commissioning brief and funding 	Medway & Swale Estuary Partnership, theme group, Partnership Group to lead on the review liaising with: Medway Council, Southern Water, Peel Ports and the EA on the outcomes.	Medium Term	Further testing, remedial, and clearance work to be determined	Initial work to be undertaken by theme group, Partnership Group and Medway Council.
THEME 4 - THE RIVER AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TOURISM / VISITOR ECONOMY, EVENTS, CULTURE, ARTS AND HERITAGE				
A - Better Coordination / Cooperation, between the key Tourism, Arts and Culture, Heritage and Events Stakeholders				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assemble a theme group of stakeholders within the tourism, arts, culture, heritage and events sector to collaborate on several projects to drive forward the River Strategy. Prepare an initial discussion document to form an agenda for this session, based on the River Strategy 	Medway Council as facilitator and coordinator Support from stakeholder representatives	Short Term	Time resources only	Medway Council to provide time resources for facilitation role

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop projects to establish a draft Work Programme including potential project leads for the theme group members to take forward drawing on initial suggestions in the River Strategy 	Theme group members nominating project leads as appropriate	Short Term	Time resources only	Theme group members
B – Transportation Strategy: Linking Key Heritage and Other Assets by River <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the deliverability of creating viable and sustainable river transport links between key heritage & other assets. Feasibility study to assess likely demand for regular, river transport service, from both visitors and residents, particularly between April & October, together with the costs of operating a service 	Partnership Group, with specific inputs from the theme group Inputs from asset owners and operators	Short Term	Feasibility and viability study, estimated cost £45,000	Investigation investment from a mix of asset owners, Partnership Group and Medway Council
C - Promoting the Area through River Trips <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drawing on the output from the River Transportation study above – examine the development of a viable and sustainable proposition to provide “pleasure trips” along the river “trips around the bay” that call at key landmarks heritage, retail, leisure facilities but also the wider river and natural environment 	This strategy would be led by the Partnership Group, with specific inputs from the theme groups Inputs from asset owners and operators	Medium Term	Feasibility and viability study estimated cost at £35,000	Funding of the feasibility and viability study, a mix of asset owners, Partnership Board, vessel operators and Medway Council
D - Joint Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the theme group, to identify the opportunities for a programme of joint Events, which have the river as a key component / attraction – and a means of connecting activities at several locations. Identify how this programme can be funded, including private / sponsorship options and organised 	The theme groups will lead liaising with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medway Council / Visit Medway / MSBA / Chatham Trust / Historic Dockyard 	Short Term	Time resources only	Theme group member contributions

<p>E - Creating a Stronger River Story, which provides a more cohesive picture of Medway, how it has developed over the centuries, and what it is today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work within the theme group and heritage asset owners, to develop a stronger “story” highlighting the river as the thread linking all assets • Incorporate that in the wider marketing and promotion material for Heritage and other assets, and for Medway as a whole 	<p>The theme group will lead with inputs from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medway Council heritage officers • Heritage asset owners 	Short Term	Time resources only	Theme group member contributions
<p>F - Tourist Attractions, Arts Venues and Associated Uses, Development Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key river-based sites, which could be brought forward for mixed use development, ideally with private sector investment, which include key elements that link to the theme group agenda • Create feasibility studies to identify what is deliverable and create a development brief to test with investors 	<p>The theme group will lead with inputs from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medway Council planning officers & as landowner • Other landowners • Potential operators and investors 	Medium Term	Potential feasibility and viability studies on a site-by-site basis £25,000 £35,000 per site	Potential feasibility studies to be funded by site owners, investors, developers and Medway Council
<p>G - Improved access to and from the river</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the number and quality of access points to and from the river. • Consolidate contributions from theme group members re existing piers, pontoons and slipways including condition, ownership, future use potential • Known costs of repair if available • Feed through data to Partnership Group <p>This initiative is Identified as a priority in other Sections of this strategy; however it is expected that this theme group would be significantly involved in the work stream</p>	Within the emerging theme group, this is a key work stream requiring direct inputs from membership	Short to medium term	Time resources only	Theme group members subscriptions and resources

The River and New Development Sites / Opportunities

- 8.20** It is proposed that the Development and Planning theme would not benefit from the establishment of a theme group but instead that Medway Council takes the lead in driving forward river related issues for this theme working with key stakeholders as appropriate.
- 8.21** The initial set of river related key actions and activities to be considered are outlined below.
- 8.22** It is proposed that agendas are set for specific development sites, for example, the remaining sites along the Gillingham River frontage, need to jointly address several critical infrastructure and site issues as well as agree the mix of development opportunities on this important river frontage.
- 8.23** The suggested key actions are:

THEME 5 - THE RIVER AND NEW DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES				
Development of sites along river frontages creates a major opportunity for varying types of uses, different configurations and layouts, and the provision of green and other public spaces and public rights of way to encourage a high quality of “placemaking” and a community which engages with the river in a number of ways				
<p>A - It is suggested Medway Council consider the production of Planning and Design Guidance, which should apply to all river frontages and cover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development objectives to better address the river and its opportunities • A set of specific design principles, using case studies etc 	Medway Council supported by the Partnership Group, Environment Agency, inputs from key developers and landowners	Short to Medium term	Planning and design guidance study Estimated cost £45,000	Medway Council to fund
<p>B - Developer Contributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a feasibility study to consider the potential to develop a wider Developer Contribution strategy, which explores the potential for higher Section 106 payments, to be applied across a wider area, to fund essential river resources and infrastructure and to secure improvements to the river generally <p>NB this action has been set out in detail in the Natural Environment and Wildlife Habitat Section</p>	It is assumed that Medway Council would lead on this work stream, with support from others See Natural Environment and Wildlife Habitat Section	Short to Medium term	Planning and design guidance study Estimated cost £45,000	Medway Council to fund
<p>C - Medway Council Owned Development Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where the Medway Council owns key river frontage sites and wants to take maximum advantage of the location, it could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ prepare Development Briefs which create an exemplar scheme, taking account of Development Guidance. 	<p>Medway Council to lead on the development brief and feasibility and viability testing study, with support from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership Group 	Short to Medium Term	Development briefs and feasibility and viability studies £30,000 per site	Investment for feasibility studies to be investigated

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ test the feasibility and viability of such schemes, via a study, to demonstrate new developments can be delivered in line with River Guidance <p>Such viability appraisals should also be used to challenge developers that river focussed projects can be delivered viably.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local agents and developers • Potential investors 			
<p>D - Economic Development Sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare strategic and planning strategies for the continued future development of key economic sites that have a river frontage and those likely to see a fundamental change in the use of their waterfront sites over the next 10+ years 	<p>NB responsibility points and programming, is set out in the Economic Development Theme actions</p>			

River Strategy - Looking Forward

8.24 The River Medway Strategy provides a framework to transform the river into a vibrant and sustainable key asset that will help Medway to achieve its potential as a destination for leisure, business, tourism, investment and future development. The strategy sets out a vision for the future use, enjoyment, and responsible management of the river, riverside locations, natural habitats, and key waterside assets. It is suggested that a monitoring and evaluation framework – with a series of KPIs – is developed in relation to this.

8.25 In summary, to realise this vision the following strategic objectives should be taken forward:

Enhancing Leisure and Sport Facilities

- **Investment in Infrastructure:** Develop and upgrade river access points, marinas, and sporting facilities to accommodate a growing number of users.
- **Promotion and Events:** Organize and promote events, competitions, and attractions to establish the Medway as a premier destination for water-based activities.
- **Training and Education:** Establish nationally and internationally recognized training centres for sailing and other water sports.

Driving Economic Growth

- **Business Development:** Support existing businesses and attract new enterprises by improving river frontage and access.
- **Strategic Employment Locations:** Support existing landowners with new proposals, and where appropriate, assist in the conduct of feasibility studies to identify and develop new strategic employment sites and infrastructure opportunities along the river.
- **Funding and Investment:** Secure public and private funding to support infrastructure projects and business initiatives.

Protecting Natural Environment and Wildlife

- **Habitat Conservation:** Implement measures to protect and enhance biodiversity, including the creation of new habitats and the management of existing ones.
- **Pollution Control:** Establish a river basin management plan to address pollution and protect aquatic ecosystems.
- **Climate Resilience:** Develop strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including flood risk management and coastal erosion prevention, including the identification of funding sources.

Boosting Tourism and Cultural Heritage

- **Heritage and Cultural Assets:** Enhance and promote key heritage sites and cultural centres along the river.
- **Visitor Experience:** Improve river-based transport and access to create a seamless visitor experience.
- **Events and Festivals:** Develop a rolling program of events to attract visitors and celebrate the river's cultural significance.

Facilitating New Development Opportunities

- **Placemaking and Urban Design:** Encourage high-quality, mixed-use developments that integrate with the river and enhance its appeal.
- **Developer Obligations:** Expand obligations to ensure developments contribute to habitat protection, flood risk management, and biodiversity enhancement.
- **Guidelines and Briefs:** Create detailed development briefs and planning guidelines to attract investment and ensure sustainable growth.

Next Steps

- 8.26** The River Medway Strategy provides a framework for transforming the river into a vibrant, sustainable, and economically prosperous area. By focusing on strategic actions, fostering collaboration, and securing necessary resources, Medway can achieve its vision of becoming a premier destination for leisure, business, tourism, and development.
- 8.27** The river is a vital natural and ecological asset, as well as a powerful catalyst for economic growth, community wellbeing, and cultural enrichment. The opportunities identified, from enhancing leisure and sporting activities, improving access and infrastructure, and promoting eco-tourism, to unlocking the river's potential as a business hub, are ambitious and achievable.
- 8.28** The River Medway is a backdrop to Medway's future, and central to its identity, prosperity, and sense of place. Realising this vision will require a coordinated approach that brings together public bodies, private sector, community stakeholders, and environmental organisations to drive forward the strategy and where necessary secure investment.

Annex A: Houseboat Areas – Examples of Good Practice

The Port of London Authority

- A.1** The Port of London Authority introduced a byelaw in 2015 prohibiting the discharge of sewage into the Thames from houseboats. Individual communities are responsible for selecting a waste disposal method that best suits their needs, rather than following a blanket approach. Options may include using shore facilities, connecting boats to a sewer system, treating sewage on board, using compost or cassette toilets, or installing a tank for routine pump-out to a suitable receiver. This has led to the following solutions within the PLA's jurisdiction:
- **Poplar Marina** (permanent, privately run) – Has on-site refuse and waste facilities.
 - **Limehouse Basin** (permanent, privately run) – Has on-site refuse and waste facilities.
 - **South Dock Marina** (run by Southwark Council) – Has a sewage pump.
 - **St Katharine Docks** (high-end, privately run) – Offers long-term and short-term moorings, including rubbish collection, water connection, and wastewater pump-out facilities.
 - **Temporary stays (less than 14 days)** – Managed by the Canal & River Trust (CRT) along London's canals. Not all moorings offer services, but some provide service moorings with access to water, sewage, and disposal points. These should only be used while actively using the facilities. Alternatively, boaters can visit designated service points for these amenities.
- A.2** For grey water, the Port of London Authority recommends using only phosphate-free detergents and advises opting for environmentally sensitive washing products whenever possible. If feasible, wastewater systems should be re-plumbed so that both grey and black water are diverted to a holding tank and then disposed of through connection to a sewer, on-board treatment, or pumping out to a suitable receiver.
- A.3** The Port of London Authority assigns responsibility for waste reception facilities to the operators of individual houseboats, piers, marinas, etc. Each operator must have a waste management plan detailing how and where waste is to be disposed of.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

- A.4** Since 2017, all houseboats in Amsterdam have been connected to the city's sewer system. As part of Project Schoonschip, technicians visited each boat to determine the optimal placement for the pump and collaborate with the owner to establish a timeline for the connection process. This process involved upgrades to the individual boat, as well as to the sewer system

and quayside infrastructure. Upon completion of the ship-to-sewer connection, boat owners received a €1,250 subsidy.

- A.5** In Amsterdam, all houseboats are connected to the city's power grid and have an address and house number.

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

- A.6** Vancouver offers a mobile pump-out service for houseboats at False Creek and Coal Harbour, as well as at several marinas. However, the city continues to struggle with water contamination issues. In 2020, the service assisted 398 boats and conducted 931 pump-outs, up from 112 boats in 2017. This rise is attributed to more people choosing to live on houseboats due to escalating housing costs. The city is now exploring alternative ways to fund the pump-out service but is concerned that introducing a fee could lead to illegal sewage discharges into the river. Other options under consideration include increasing business license fees for False Creek marinas or continuing to fund the service through sewage fees, which is raised from most property owners in the city.

Annex B: Future Sites

Key Future Sites – Status, Issues and Actions Arising

- B.1** Consultations have identified several key riverfront sites which will be brought forward over the next 10 to 20 years, across Medway. The following table (Category A) highlights these sites and provides some baseline information in terms of ownerships, envisaged development potential, status and timings. It is anticipated that these sites should pay attention to the development principles and guidance for waterfront locations articulated earlier in this section.
- B.2** Sites under construction and ready to commence (Category B) are also included although it is not anticipated these will be able to consider the development principles and guidance referred to above, unless construction delays create a further opportunity.

Table B-1: Major waterfront development projects in Medway

Development Name	Location	Stakeholders/ Ownership details	Size/ development potential	Status and timings
CATEGORY A - RIVER FRONTING DEVELOPMENT SITES (OR PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT) – IN DESIGN / PLANNING				
Land Around Basin 3 ¹⁵	Chatham Docks, Gillingham, ME4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peel L&P as developer: has determined that it will be closing the lock gates to Basin 3 in 2025 • All existing “water based” occupiers will need to look for alternative facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31,000 sq m employment floorspace, targeting businesses industries in the creative, manufacturing and technology, life sciences, and IT & Digital sectors • Dedicated spaces for smaller, independent businesses • Retaining water in basin with potential access for smaller leisure craft, activities, boat shows, floating restaurants/attractions etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline application plans were submitted in November 2023. This proposes a masterplan for the area. • Discussions are ongoing with Medway Council
Strood Waterfront Regeneration (Including Strood Canal Road Riverside and Strood Former Civic Centre) ¹⁶	Strood Waterfront, Strood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer is Medway Development Company, the Medway Council’s housebuilding company • Medway Council own the land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masterplan comprises 5 sites, totalling 213 houses and 1,398 apartments¹⁷ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Former Civic Centre ➢ Kingswear Gardens ➢ Watermill Wharf ➢ Watermill Gardens ➢ Strood Riverside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 Strood Waterfront Development Brief was adopted as an SPD • 2024 Currently consulting on the Civic Centre site in Strood for EIA and enabling works. Ends 31 January 2024. Application for 185 homes, a

¹⁵ Basin3. 2024. Welcome to Basin3. Available [here](#)

¹⁶ Medway Council, Strood Waterfront project page. 2024. Available [here](#)

¹⁷ Medway Council, Strood Appendix 2 – illustrative masterplan. 2024. Available [here](#)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also commercial, commercial leisure and retail uses 	café, travel infrastructure, public open space has yet to be submitted.
Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan and Significance Led Development Framework SPD (Chatham Intra) ¹⁸	Rochester ME1 1DA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historic England awarded Medway Council £1.6million from their High Streets Heritage Action Zones scheme Medway Council developing a series of heritage led regeneration projects. Also, several larger redevelopment schemes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated a 'Heritage Action Zone' along the high street. Involves a range of projects, focused on regenerating historic buildings (see below), alongside new-build residential schemes. Creation of a framework to guide future development on the high street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPD to guide projects has been adopted, Cabinet 13 February 2024. Projects are ongoing. Several key sites already have planning permission. These include Bardell Wharf (MC/22/1810), Rochester Riverside (expanded on below), 209-217 High St (MC/21/2271), Theatre Royal (MC/19/2762), Anchorage House (MC/20/1625), Mountbatten House (MC/20/3237), and Chatham Waterfront (expanded on below) Schemes coming forward within the area should comply with the Sun Hill to Sun Pier draft SPD (2023). This requires development to creatively respond to the river and waterside and provides guidance on how this can be achieved.

¹⁸ Sun Hill to Sun Pier SPD Draft, 2023.

Land to the East of Gillingham Marina	North of Pier Rd, Gillingham ME7 1UB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blueberry Homes the current landowner¹⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unknown, but potentially housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works have begun clearing the existing gasholder's frameworks. The site was said to have previously been put forward by Medway Council within their call for housing development sites.
The Interface Land, Chatham Maritime	Land to the North of the Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Medway, ME4 4AF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chatham Historic Dockyard Homes England Medway District Council Potentially to be taken on by Vistry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site forms the last area of undeveloped land in the former Naval base. There have been discussions that Countryside might be taking on the responsibility of developing a 'river friendly' scheme involving a mix of commercial uses, protection of the slipway, and the introduction of open space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chatham Interface Land Development Brief published in June 2018 Article published in 2020 notes that Vistry were awarded a contract to deliver 274 homes across two sites on the Historic Dockyard²⁰. These include the waterfront site, and the site which occupies Police Section House. An application was submitted for the Police Section House site in August 2023 (MC/23/1834), but no plans appear to have been submitted for the waterside site yet.
Port Medway	Station Rd, Rochester, Cuxton ME2 1AB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Port Medway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential development of a boutique hotel, with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No information available online with any updates. The

¹⁹ NewsITN. 2023. Former SGN gasworks near the Strand in Gillingham in process of being dismantled. Available [here](#)

²⁰ Future Chatham. 2020. Nearly 300 homes to be built next to Chatham Historic Dockyard by 2026. Available [here](#)

			associated offices. This would involve barges moored along the frontage of the site.	project is in its very early stages.
Borough Wharf (Formerly Grays Garage) ²¹	25-33 High St, Chatham ME4 4EN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option Two Development Ltd submitted the proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demolition of existing Grays of Chatham garage and redevelopment into 4 blocks. Up to 10 storeys 158 homes Commercial ground floor space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning application submitted in 2021 (reference MC/21/0429). No updates available online since then.
Morgans Timber (Borders phase 1B of the Temple Waterfront site) ²²	Roman Way, Rochester, Kent ME2 2NF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans submitted by Morgan and Co. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 168 homes on another part of the former Morgan Timber Yard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline application plans submitted November 2023, reference MC/23/2680
Rochester Riverside ²³	Rochester, Kent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led by Vistry and Hyde Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,400 homes (25% affordable) across 7 phases 10 acres of open space 108,000 sqf. of non-residential space including shops/ cafes, hotel Primary school Leisure spaces Office space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 500 homes occupied. Public plaza, river walkway, Travelodge, Costa, Co-op store and Primary School are all complete Work is underway on Phase 7, comprising 154 homes, and detailed plans have been submitted for two further phases totalling 353 units

²¹ Borough Wharf, 2024. Consultation website. Available [here](#). And Council planning website, with references noted above.

²² Medway Planning Applications Page. 2024. Available [here](#) with references above.

²³ Medway Council, 2024. Rochester Riverside. Available [here](#)

Upnor, former Arethusa Venture Centre site	14 Upnor Rd, Lower Upnor, Rochester ME2 4XB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnamed buyer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unknown, speculation of residential development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is limited information online beyond that the building was sold to an unnamed buyer, after the former Arethusa Venture centre closed in 2019²⁴. • Any future development will need to account for the listed HMS Arethusa figurehead on site.
Acorn Wharf	Former Acorn Shipyards, Rochester, Kent		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site abuts the Rochester Riverside site, lying just north of the redline boundary. • Only access is through Rochester Riverside site • Brief anticipates residential office space, workshops, studios and ancillary space for retail and cafes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A planning application was submitted in August 2024, for the development of four new buildings, one reaching 9 storeys, comprising 132 apartments, a café and commercial space. • Proposals also include a new pier into the river, to service yachts and motor vessels • Currently a key development barrier is the need for the construction and funding of a £6m flood protection wall.
CATEGORY B - RIVER FACING DEVELOPMENT SITES – ALREADY UNDER CONSTRUCTION				
Chatham House (formerly occupied by Featherstone's Ltd)	349 High St, Rochester ME1 1DA	Featherstone's Ltd own the building, which was previously a department store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chatham House (formerly occupied by Featherstone's Ltd) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 349 High St, Rochester ME1 1DA

²⁴ Upnor Village website. 2020. What happened to Arethusa Venture Centre? Link [here](#)

Temple Marsh	Tip Road, Strood, Rochester ME2 2BA	Medway Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landfill site in need of renovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medway Council have sought bids for design services, to create a scheme for the proposed Temple Marsh, public park area
Chatham Waters/ Docks ²⁵	Chatham Docks, Gillingham, ME4	Peel L&P freehold owner of the land and developer	<p>Mixed-use development spanning 26-acres along the waterfront/ dock area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 950 homes and later living accommodation Commercial space Retail/ leisure space 6-17 storeys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 phase development Final phases of development are imminent
Temple Waterfront (Including Temple Wharf and Temple Marsh) ²⁶	Roman Way, Rochester, Kent ME2 2NF	Redrow developer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1A originally 210 units Phase 2, 132 dwellings, 1,900 sqm. retail space, 200sqm community facilities, landscaping Temple Marsh: strategic open space, fronting the river. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development has been completed. Temple Marsh open space is still to be completed.

²⁵ Chatham Waters, 2024. Development website. Available [here](#)

²⁶ Redrow, 2024. Temple Wharf. Available [here](#). And Council planning website, with references noted above.

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