THAMES GATEWAY
REGIONAL BRIEFING PAPER – Feb 2009

Part 1

1. *Clarify what is meant by the region in this project e.g. historical and cultural, long-term administrative and legal, or specially created for a particular development purpose. Comment on the advantages and difficulties of the nature and understanding of the region involved. [One general benefit from the PURE project should be to gain a better understanding of what kind of region is effective for what purposes.]*

The Thames Gateway was "created" in 1995. The principles of the Gateway spatial framework were established in Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9a), and are based around the consolidation of the existing regional pattern of town and country, maximising the potential offered by the area's supply of brownfield land and exploiting the opportunity offered by the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) and the river, first published in 1995. RPG9a was also the first document to define the Thames Gateway boundary (although it has changed slightly since).

The Thames Gateway spans around 17 local authority areas (lower tier district councils, upper tier county councils, unitary authorities and London boroughs). It also spans three Government Office Regions. No single authority is wholly contained within the Thames Gateway boundary.

The Gateway as a coherent policy area is a fairly new construct and technically dates from 1995. Prior to that, while the estuary had throughout the 20th century been subject to wide ranging attempts at what we now would call sustainable place making (Dagenham and Becontree Estate, Basildon New Town, East Tilbury model village, Thamesmead, and latterly Docklands), these were all unconnected and were not perceived or managed in a strategic way. Nor were they very successful.

The Gateway as a strategic policy area was a consequence of the pairing of Michael Heseltine as Secretary of State, and Sir Peter Hall as his planning advisor, at the same time as two major pieces of transport planning - the Channel Tunnel rail Link, and the East London Rail Study - were being drawn up. In the early 90's, fresh from the growing perception that Docklands was actually working they hit upon the idea of developing a strategic transport led approach to the development of the massive underused land and resources in the Estuary. They coined the Gateway name, commissioned the Llewellyn Davies study and decided the CTRL should provide the new backbone for a regional regeneration initiative. Even then it was not until the arrival of the RDAs that the Government turned its mind in 2000 to how to drive a strategic agenda, and set up the 'Thames Gateway Strategic Executive'.

The other point to acknowledge is the estuary's historical military role. The area never developed significantly outside a few locations largely because of its vulnerability. Historically it has been a line of defence rather than area of development, leading to a reliance on military based economy. It was the collapse of these economies in the sixties/ seventies in Chatham and Woolwich in particular - among the most drastic sudden loss of employment in the whole country- that helped trigger the Heseltine initiative (which included an Enterprise Zone being established in Chatham).

2. *Set out briefly key characteristics in terms of geography, economy, demography, social structure, trends and changes, as these affect PURE and the development agenda.*

The key characteristics of the Thames Gateway are set out in *"The State of the Gateway: A basis for future evaluation."*

http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/thamesgateway/state

The Thames Gateway – Key facts

Population:

1.45 million people live in the Thames Gateway

Households:

There are over 600,000 households

Size:

The Thames Gateway covers 100,000 hectares, and is 40 miles long and 20 miles wide

Brownfield land:

There are approximately 3,150 hectares of previously developed land (brownfield) within the Gateway

Employment:

There are over 637,000 employees in the Thames Gateway

Unemployment:

Approximately 6% of economically active residents are unemployed in the Gateway, compared with 5% nationally

Businesses:

There are nearly 32,000 VAT registered businesses in the Thames

Approximately 14% of land in the Thames Gateway is currently used for domestic buildings and gardens. Whilst the London sub-region is less urbanised than the London region, the Kent and Essex sub-regions are more urbanised than their regional comparators, particularly Essex.

The river provides a shared context for land use in the Thames Gateway. The industrial heritage afforded by the river has left a large amount of brownfield land with potential for development. The Thames Gateway has a rich environmental heritage. Over 60% of the area is greenspace and designated areas protect the coastal wildlife.

There has been a marginal increase in the amount of developed land in the Gateway since 1992 (approximately 0.1% of total land per year). There have been losses in agricultural land and increases in the amount of land used for housing, transport and utilities.

Between 2000/01 and 2004/05, an estimated average of 5,151 dwellings per year were delivered in the Thames Gateway (net additions). The Thames Gateway programme aims to increase the current rate of house building. Over 80% of the residential development that has taken place in recent years in the Thames Gateway is on brownfield land, which is above the national 60% target.

During the 1980s and early 1990s the Thames Gateway experienced high levels of population growth. Since the late 1990s the population has continued to grow but the rate of growth has slowed. The Thames Gateway has a younger and more ethnically mixed population than the surrounding regions. Demographic changes in the Kent and Essex sub-regions have been similar to those experienced nationally. Changes in the London sub-region reflect changes in London more widely, with more growth in the proportion of population from Black and Minority Ethnic groups and a slight reversal of the 'ageing' effect.

Housing affordability is poor compared to national levels, in line with the rest of the Greater South East. The London Thames Gateway sub-region has the poorest affordability and a high proportion of households in social housing. The Thames Gateway has higher levels of deprivation and unemployment than the surrounding regions and this difference has persisted over time. Deprivation is particularly acute in the London Thames Gateway sub-region, where there are higher proportions of unemployed people and lone parents. The contrast between Thames Gateway and the wider regions is greatest for the Kent sub-region and the South East.

The evidence of deprivation and poor housing affordability supports the rationale for policy intervention. They are also key challenges for Government to respond to through the programme. Other challenges include increasing the population growth rate without threatening community cohesion.

Whilst there has been an increase in the proportion of degree-qualified residents in the Thames Gateway, qualification levels have lagged persistently behind the wider regions. Whilst the gap in degree-level qualifications between the London Thames Gateway sub-region and London is narrowing slightly, Kent and Essex subregions have experienced a widening disparity to the wider regions. We do not know whether the increase in the number of residents with a degree in the London sub-region is due to up-skilling the existing population or migration of well-qualified people. Given the changes in Canary Wharf over this period it is likely that a good proportion of the increase is due to inward migration. That said, the population of students has shown a marked increase in the last decade.

The occupational profile of the Thames Gateway is similar to England, but the individual sub-regions lag behind their regional comparators with a higher proportion of low-skilled occupations and a low proportion of professional and managerial occupations.

Median unadjusted workplace earnings in the Thames Gateway are slightly higher than the national average. However, workplace earnings in the London and Kent sub-regions lag behind their wider regions. Employment rates lag behind the national average, and are lowest in the London sub-region. The Thames Gateway industrial profile shows a dependence on the manufacturing and construction sectors and a comparative lack of knowledge based or high-tech industries. There has been recent growth in the banking and insurance, and distribution, hotel and restaurant sectors. The growth in banking is associated with the development of Canary Wharf. There has also been consistent growth in the rates of VAT registrations.

In the six year period 1998-2004, an additional 90,000 employees were working in the Gateway. This rate would have to continue to meet the aspiration for 180,000 additional jobs by 2016.

A higher than national average proportion of employees and working residents in the Thames Gateway commute over 10km to their workplace. An exception to this pattern is that a lower proportion of employees in the London sub-region commute over 10km to work compared with London. The proportion of employees who travel to work by car is lower in the Thames Gateway compared with the national average, and in line with regional comparators.

Life expectancy levels in the Thames Gateway are only marginally lower than elsewhere in the surrounding regions. The Thames Gateway has higher than national average rates of robbery, but burglary rates are slightly lower. Crime levels are highest in the London sub-region (but are either below or in line with the London average). In terms of public attractions, the Thames Gateway has several Green Flag parks and historic sites, and a world heritage site at Greenwich.

3. *Identify and draw together a reference list of the main data sources available on the socio-economic, environmental, etc. condition of the region, and recent trends.*

The Department is monitoring the following from a variety of sources:

- **Land use and Brownfield land**
- **Earnings**
- **Education and skills outcomes**
- **Employment and unemployment**
- **Floorspace by use class**
- **Housing**
- **Population**
- **Residents' views and social cohesion**

The main source of data is contained within the State of the Gateway report (referenced above). The State of the Gateway draws together a range of sources, many of which are collected on a national basis.

We are also currently working on a Thames Gateway economic narrative which we will be able to share in due course.

We are looking at how we might develop a Thames Gateway window on places and are working with Natural England and the Environment Agency to develop some eco-region indicators.

At all times we seek to minimise the regulatory and monitoring burden on local authorities and therefore many of the data sets we draw upon are those developed for the national indicator set.

The new national indicator set for local authorities and local authority partnerships was announced as part of the Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review announcement in October 2007.

The new national indicators will be the only means of measuring national priorities that have been agreed by Government. The Local Government White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* committed to a smaller more focussed set of priorities as well as radically reduce the number of national indicators.

The number of national indicators has been radically reduced, from the around 1200 that local authorities and their partners reported on previously, to 198. The new indicators will strengthen the incentives for closer partnership working to deliver joined-up outcomes because they will apply (where relevant) to other local partners - such as Primary Care Trusts and police.
The headline definitions for the 198 are contained in the document *The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators*.

http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator

Specific higher education data is provided by The Higher Education Statistics Agency. HESA is the official agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education.

It was set up by agreement between the relevant government departments, the higher education funding councils and the universities and colleges in 1993, following the White Paper "Higher Education: a new framework", which called for more coherence in HE statistics, and the 1992 Higher and Further Education Acts, which established an integrated higher education system throughout the United Kingdom.

http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php

Individual institutions also collect data about their students and courses.

4. *Summarise any existing efforts to monitor and benchmark progress against purposes and targets. Please comment on any interest in and pressure for the measurement of quality and outcomes, including value for money auditing, that you are aware of in the region.*

The State of the Gateway report provides a basis for evaluation.

The national indicator set also includes some relevant data. However these are generally collected at local authority level which presents problems for the Thames Gateway as no single authority is wholly contained within the Thames Gateway boundary.

5. *List the main existing forms of collaboration between HEIs and the region. For this purpose you may need to consider the region as a single administrative entity, but also note and include more localized and specialized significant HEI partnerships with other stakeholders - public, private, and NGO or third sector.*

- **Thames Gateway Further and Higher Education Action Group (TGFHEAG) – as described in the Regional Profile**
- **Production of the Thames Gateway Skills Framework – November 2008, and subsequent action plan**
- **HEIs and Regional Development Agencies via EDIP – The Thames Gateway Economic Development Investment Plan**
- **Creative Way Lifelong Learning Network – extending to other sectors**
- **Thames Gateway London Partnership (London only) – Knowledge Exchange Partnership for collaborative bids**
- **[local partnerships – to be established as part of PURE project]**

http://www.lda.gov.uk/server.php?show=ConWebDoc.2779

Part 2

1. *What are:*

   1.1 *the main problems and challenges*

   1.2 *the main development aspirations,*

   that are shared by stakeholders in the region?

   Please consider the full spectrum of civil, economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors, including issues of sustainability, where these apply.

   These are set out in following publications that have been referred to previously:

   - **Interim Plan**
   - **Delivery Plan**
   - **State of the Gateway**
   - **Eco-region prospectus**
   - **Skills Framework**
   - **Economic and Development Investment Framework**

2. *What are the main changes that are looked for in taking part in PURE?*

   2.1 *For the region as a whole, and/or for particular communities and interests within it.*

   - **To ensure that HEIs play a stronger role in the development of the Thames Gateway, and thereby to deliver tangible benefits to the current population of the Thames Gateway and create places where people want to live, and where business wants to operate, increasing skill levels in the Thames Gateway and promote wider participation in higher education, taking advantage of new technologies.**

   2.2 *Within and on the part of higher education institutions i.e. sought by the HEIs themselves, and looked for by other stakeholders from HEIs.*

   - **[to be determined as part of project].**

   2.3 *In terms of how **regional and local government** are managed.*

   - **To create stronger partnerships with HEIs.**

   2.4 *In terms of the role and policies of **central government.***

   - **Central government wants to understand whether the Thames Gateway policy and strategic framework is working to deliver an improvement in the skills base in the area, which will contribute to the creation of new (higher skilled) jobs, and also whether national HE policy is also contributing to successful delivery of the Thames Gateway.**

3. *What key issues do you wish to discuss with the CDG when it visits your region?*

   - **New technologies – eco –region and environmental technologies.**
   - **SME development – knowledge transfer.**
   - **Local community engagement, and engagement with other governance structures.**
   - **Creative and cultural industries.**
   - **Olympics.**