



Observatory PASCAL

Place Management, Social Capital and Learning Regions

PURE Regional Briefing Paper (RBP)

KENT, UNITED KINGDOM

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.]

Introduction

Kent is defined for the purposes of this project as the area covered by Kent County Council, which is an 'upper tier' local authority within the English local government system. The current boundaries cover the majority of the historic county of Kent, which has existed as a geographical and political unit for centuries. These boundaries have been largely unchanged for many years, although a reform of the local government system in 1998 resulted in the establishment of a separate authority for the Medway Towns, the county's largest urban conurbation.

Kent has a population of 1,394,700 (1,646,900 if the Medway Towns are included). The county is polycentric, with no single dominant urban centre, and stretches from the southern fringes of London to the English Channel and North Sea coasts. GDP per capita is around 12% lower than the UK national level and the county has undergone significant economic restructuring over the past 25 years.

Politically, the County Council has responsibility for sub-national road infrastructure, schools, social services, some aspects of development and a range of community services. These are delivered within a strong national administrative context with no legislative devolution below national level. At more local level, Kent contains twelve districts, which retain powers in relation to (primarily) housing and land use planning.

These features are described further in Question 2.

Economic challenges and opportunities

Opportunities and strengths

- Strategic location between London and Continental Europe.
- Advanced rail and road infrastructure, including the London – Paris/ Brussels high speed rail link.
- Proximity to the large employment market, knowledge base and transport connections of London.
- Relative affordability (compared with elsewhere in South East England) for commercial development.
- Significant regeneration investment and areas of growth.
- Diversified economic base.

Challenges

- Areas of high deprivation, particularly in former industrial areas and coastal communities.
- GVA per capita persistently lagging behind regional and national levels.
- Workforce skills lower than national and regional levels.

- Polycentricity and lack of focal point for economic activity.
- Current challenges associated with the impact of international recession.

Political challenges and opportunities

Opportunities

- Generally stable political and administrative leadership at county and district level.
- Increasing willingness of national government to promote new mechanisms for sub-regional governance.

Challenges

- Increasing demands on public funds alongside falling tax and development receipts.
- Complex structure of regional and local governance arrangements.
- Limited autonomy below national level.

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

Geography

Kent has an area of 3,544 sq km, essentially covering the area from the south east of London to the Channel coast. Much of the county's rural area is covered by national and international environmental designations, including the Kent Downs and part of the county's estuarial and coastal marshes. Parts of West Kent also fall within the protected green belt around London. There are therefore significant environmental constraints on development, although the quality of the county's environment plays an important role in Kent's desirability as a place to live and in its attractiveness for tourism.

Although 85% of the county's land area is rural, some 69% of the population live in urban settlements. There is no single dominant urban settlement, with 'regional capital' functions dispersed (for example, the county's administrative centre is at Maidstone, while the main university location is at Canterbury).

Demographics

With a population of almost 1.4 million, Kent is the largest non-metropolitan county by population in England. The population is growing, with a forecast increase of 8.3% over the next twenty years. However, in common with the rest of the UK, the population is ageing:

9.5% of the population is from an ethnic minority. However, this overall figure masks significant variation at local level, with for example an ethnic minority population of 15.8% in Gravesham district in the north of the county.

Labour market

Around 81% of the working age population is economically active. This is slightly better than the national level, although slightly worse than that for the South East England region. Unemployment is currently 5.7%, compared with 5.2% nationally.

Workforce skills levels in Kent are relatively poor, with 26.1% qualified to NVQ4 and above, compared with 28.6% nationally (and 30.8% in the South East England region).

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Kent's proximity to job opportunities in London is an important feature, especially in the north and west of the county. Earnings measured by residence are some 6% higher than earnings measured by workplace in Kent, reflecting the attraction of higher value employment beyond the county boundary.

Economic sectors

Historically, Kent has had an important land-based sector, with a significant industrial base in paper, building materials and extractive industries. Over the past three decades, the economy has substantially diversified, with a dominance of small and medium sized enterprises.

The county retains strengths in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and the agricultural sector, as well as in transport and logistics and the ports sector, reflecting its gateway location. However, Kent has a diverse sectoral landscape, reflecting the polycentric and diverse nature of the county.

Local diversity

This local diversity can be seen in the divergences in economic outcomes across Kent. Using a national index which measures deprivation in each of 354 districts across England, Sevenoaks (in the west of the county) is the 59th least deprived district nationally. In contrast, Thanet (in east Kent) is the 65th most deprived. Generally, levels of deprivation are higher in the urban areas historically dependent on industry or mass tourism, and in a smaller number of peripheral rural and coastal locations. The west and centre of the county by contrast exhibits greater affluence.

Local economic diversity is reflected in the county's spatial development and regeneration priorities. These have tended to focus public sector investment in the north and east, where regeneration needs are greatest. In addition, Kent contains two nationally designated 'growth areas' associated with the Thames Gateway and Ashford, and a further growth point at Maidstone.

Universities within the region

Four universities are represented in Kent: University of Kent, University of Greenwich, Canterbury Christchurch University and the University for the Creative Arts. The major concentration of higher education activity is at Canterbury, with a secondary cluster in the Medway Towns and smaller branches elsewhere. The combined student population of the four universities (including those at campuses outside Kent) is around 70,000.

Links:

University of Kent: www.kent.ac.uk

University of Greenwich: www.gre.ac.uk

Canterbury Christchurch University: www.canterbury.ac.uk

University for the Creative Arts: www.ucreative.ac.uk

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.*

A central base of demographic and economic data is maintained by Kent County Council's Research and Intelligence Team, much of which is available at: www.kent.gov.uk/Community/kent-and-its-people/facts-and-figures, and derived from the Office



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for National Statistics, Department for Communities and Local Government and locally generated data.

4. *Summarise any existing efforts to monitor and benchmark progress against purposes and targets.*

An overall strategic framework for Kent is set out in the *Vision for Kent*. This is a long-term, aspirational strategy for the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the county, first published in 2002 and revised in 2006. *Vision for Kent* has been adopted by the Kent Partnership, which is a multi-agency body containing public, private and voluntary sector representatives.

Vision for Kent is accompanied by an economic development and regeneration framework for the county, *Kent Prospects*, which was published in 2006. Associated with the publication of *Kent Prospects* is a Baseline and Monitoring Framework, published in 2007, which set out the current state of the local economy, provided an analysis of recent trends, and compared data across the county's twelve districts. A progress review of *Kent Prospects* is currently underway, focused on updating the data in the Baseline and Monitoring Framework.

Proceeding from the overall strategy set out in *Vision for Kent*, the Kent Partnership is responsible for managing the delivery of the Kent Agreement, a compact between local partners and central Government, through which local partners agree to deliver against a series of social, economic and environmental targets in exchange for central Government reward grants and flexibilities. The current (second round) Kent Agreement was signed in 2008.

Vision for Kent, *Kent Prospects* and details of the Kent Agreement can be found at www.kentpartnership.org.uk

Recognising that economic development frequently requires working across local government boundaries, the Government has recently introduced a new mechanism through which groups of local authorities may commit to economic targets in exchange for regulatory or funding freedoms to help them meet these targets. Kent County Council is currently preparing such an arrangement to cover part of the county with Medway Council.

Beyond Kent itself, the Regional Economic Strategy, prepared by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and published in 2007, also contains a series of economic targets and is accompanied by a monitoring framework which it is the responsibility of SEEDA to keep under review. The Regional Economic Strategy can be found at www.seeda.co.uk

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. [It is hoped that the project will assist an understanding of what kinds of indicators and quantitative measures of regional development and the contribution of HEIs to this work and are useful.]

The Audit Commission, a national Government agency, has the responsibility for inspecting local authority services, both regarding the quality of the services that they provide and their current value for money, and their likely prospects for future improvement.

At present, the Audit Commission inspection regime focuses on the individual corporate performance of the authorities that are reviewed. However, this process is changing to a new Comprehensive Area Assessment, which will consider the overall performance of public sector agencies in delivering good services and leadership in a particular area. Among other implications, this means that the ability of partner agencies to work together in delivering sustainable development will become more critical.



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Further details regarding the Audit Commission inspection process, and reports on authorities in Kent, can be found at www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

5. *List the main existing forms of collaboration between HEIs and the region. 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.*

The Universities of Kent, Greenwich and Canterbury Christ Church have all participated in Interreg projects, which in recent years have included:

- Analysis of cross-border labour flows (University of Kent, CERTES).
- Coastal deprivation, social and health inequalities (University of Kent, COSIN).
- Widening participation in higher education (University of Greenwich).

The University of Kent contains the European Institute of Social Services (EISS), which has a history of working with public sector partners in Kent and has accessed significant European and other funding for research focused around drugs issues, offender integration, and other social policy matters.

Canterbury Christ Church also contains significant Education and Health and Social Care faculties, which again have long histories of working closely with local partners, given the public sector focus of their subject areas.

University of Kent has been involved in business support for some time. It currently acts as a major partner in Canterbury Enterprise Hub, funded by SEEDA to support knowledge intensive start up companies and based on the University of Kent campus.

More recently, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has supported Kent, Greenwich and CCU in establishing the South East Coastal Communities programme, which seeks specifically to link the three universities with the community and voluntary sector in areas of relative deprivation through a form of community knowledge transfer. This project is linked with other initiatives in the South East as a pilot for further development elsewhere.

Locally, Kent County Council has sought to encourage take-up of university education by students who would be otherwise less likely to access it through the Kent Higher Education Compact.

Finally, associated with the regeneration of the Thames Gateway, the Universities of Kent and Greenwich have participated in the development of the Institute for Sustainability, which seeks to promote sustainable construction and development, and is supported through regeneration funding.

6. *If there are any examples of good practice in HEI-regional engagement that you think of special interest, perhaps for inclusion later in a PURE Good Practice Manual, please make a note of them to call to the attention of the CDG.*

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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.

Problems and challenges

- Relatively low workforce skills levels.
- Persistent gap in GVA between Kent and the rest of the South East of England.
- Persistent areas of significant deprivation, especially in former industrial and peripheral areas.
- High costs of living and lack of affordability (especially in West Kent) impacting on service delivery.
- Managing an ageing population.
- Need to improve graduate retention and develop higher level skills.
- Consequences of climate change, particularly given the low lying coastal and estuarial nature of some of Kent's urban areas.
- Lack of 'critical concentration' of knowledge based infrastructure.
- Current economic pressures, including increasing limits to public sector funding.

Development aspirations

In broad terms, set out in the eight themes of *Vision for Kent*:

- **Economic success - Opportunities for all**, where a vibrant and successful economy and targeted regeneration are delivered and sustained by innovative and creative businesses, self-reliant and skilled people and supportive and responsive organisations in private, public and community sectors .
- **Learning for everyone**, where learning is stimulated and supported for everyone, for life, employment and enjoyment, in ways that are sensitive to individual, family and community needs and aspirations, placing our schools and other centres for learning at the heart of our communities.
- **Improved Health, Care and Well-Being**, where people lead healthier lives, and have choice and control over high quality services that meet their needs for health, care and wellbeing and where people with disabilities are supported to lead independent lives within the community.
- **Environmental Excellence**, where the countryside, coast, natural resources, wildlife and heritage are protected and enhanced for their own sake and for the enjoyment of current and future generations and valued as the key to a high quality of life in both urban and rural areas.
- **Stronger and Safer Communities**, where communities are stronger and safer and that are confident in the face of social change, supportive in their response to challenges and opportunities and respectful of the differences within and between them.
- **Enjoying Life**, where residents and visitors can enjoy the recreational, sporting, artistic and cultural opportunities the county has to offer, and where the range and quality of those opportunities is enhanced and made accessible to as broad a cross-section of the community as possible.

- **Keeping Kent moving** to provide good accessibility to jobs and services for all sections of the community in Kent and to improve the environment reducing congestion and pollution, widening the choice of transport available, developing public transport, walking and cycling.
- **High Quality Homes**, where housing needs are met and decent, high quality homes help create attractive, safe and friendly communities clustered around neighbourhood centres, with open spaces and community facilities.

In particular, what impact is the current global financial and economic crisis – and the global environmental crisis (global warming etc) - having on your thinking and long-term planning as a region and different stakeholders? What has really altered (or is changing) in your policy planning since one year ago?

Regarding economic policy planning at local and regional level, there are several observations worth making:

Firstly, the **pace of physical regeneration will slow in the medium term**, and some major schemes will take much longer to deliver than originally envisaged. More fundamentally, it is likely that alternatives will need to be found to the regeneration models based on private sector-led residential development which have frequently predominated. This is especially the case given the saturation of the high-density urban residential market, and the rapid contraction of the major developers.

Secondly, while the growth prospects of some sectors (such as financial services and construction) are likely to be reduced by the current recession, the **long term strategy of improving the county's skills base and investing in long-standing infrastructure projects** remains intact (and in fact may become relatively more important).

However, this long term strategy will need to be pursued against a backdrop of **increasing pressure on public funds** at the same time as private sector investment also falls. This will mean an increasing focus on priority areas (which – coincidentally – central Government is encouraging through some of the changes it is promoting in sub-regional economic development policy).

Regarding the impact of environmental factors, there are probably fewer related policy changes over the past year, although longer-term considerations will increasingly lead to management of climate change being reflected as the most important strategic consideration, for example in the preparation of district-level planning frameworks.

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

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

Greater understanding of the extent to which the HEIs can widen participation locally and play a greater role in the local economy (in terms of both economic policymaking and direct activity) while retaining their competitive positions in national and international HE markets.

Identifying strategic strengths and weaknesses of HEI's in the region and matching to economic opportunities.



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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?*

- a) **The extent to which local HEIs can contribute to increasing higher level skills within the Kent economy (for example by enabling increased participation from within the existing workforce) and leading to the development of policy options which may be taken forward in a local and national context**
- b) **Increased linkages between the research base of Kent-based HEIs and local economic policy development.**

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

As 2.2 b) above.

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

The extent to which central government funding mechanisms and assessment exercises may be made more flexible to support delivery of 2.2 a) and b) above.

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

- **How Kent fits within the wider impact of the Thames gateway developments?**
- **Where strategic development partnership opportunities may exist with other PURE regions?**
- **How to broaden co-operative working between HEI's, Regional Government and Private and Voluntary sectors for future sustainable economic base?**