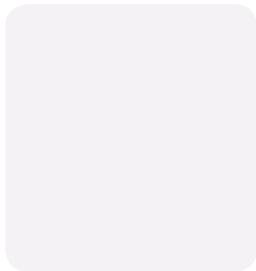


SUSTAINABLE CULTURE, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The Cultural Framework and Toolkit
for Thames Gateway North Kent

Executive Summary



Preface

Welcome to the Executive Summary of the Cultural Framework and Toolkit for Thames Gateway North Kent (TGNK). It provides an overview of this groundbreaking initiative and lists the key recommendations for strategic planners. The full Framework and Toolkit is available online at www.seco.org.uk, the South East Cultural Observatory.

The Framework and Toolkit is designed to help integrate culture into the regeneration and growth of TGNK. Culture touches and uplifts the lives of everyone in the UK. Developing access to a range of cultural activities and opportunities is an important part of the Government's vision for sustainable communities in the Thames Gateway.

The Framework and Toolkit was created by a unique collaboration between the South East Cultural Agencies; the Department for Communities and Local Government; the Department for Culture, Media and Sport; Local Authorities; Local Regeneration Partnerships; SEEDA; the Regional Assembly; GOSE; National Lottery distributing bodies; and others.

We hope that you find the Framework and Toolkit useful and that it becomes an important element in the decision-making process for cultural development in TGNK. We look forward to continuing to work together to deliver sustainable communities in TGNK.



Yvette Cooper MP
Minister for Housing and Planning



Richard Caborn MP
Minister for Sport



July 2006

Cover (clockwise from top left): Girls netball (Sport England South East) / Medway library user (Photo: Medway Libraries) / Father and child at Gosport Library (Photo: Hampshire County Council) / Rochester Castle Curtain Wall (Photo: Medway Council) / Woman showjumper (Photo: Sport England South East) / Gravesend Big Day Out (Photo: North West Kent Racial Equality Council) / Rollerblade contest (Photo: Sport England South East) / Older man walking (Photo: Sport England South East)

1. Introduction

The Framework provides a rationale for investing in culture within the regeneration and growth programme; an assessment of the existing local cultural sector; a vision and guiding principles which were agreed by all stakeholders to guide future cultural development; and a set of recommendations for strategic planning. These are primarily aimed at:

- Government departments and other agencies overseeing the creation of sustainable communities in TGNK.
- Regeneration, community, and cultural funding bodies.
- Local Regeneration Partnerships and Local Authorities, particularly heads of culture, planning and policy.

What is culture?

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport defines culture as:

- The performing and visual arts, craft and fashion
- Libraries, literature, writing and publishing
- Museums, artefacts, archives and design
- Built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology
- Sports events, facilities and development
- Media, film, television, video and language
- Parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, water environment and countryside recreation
- Children's play, playgrounds and play activities
- Tourism, festivals and attractions
- Informal leisure pursuits

The Framework covers all of these activities except planning for parks and open spaces as this is already underway via Greening the Gateway, Green Grid and so on; and supporting private enterprises operated on a fully commercial basis, for example design practices, as these require a different approach from public cultural activities.

2. The Value of Culture

Culture resides within the very concept of a sustainable community as a place where people will want to live and work, that meets their diverse needs and offers a high quality of life and good services for all. Good cultural provision will attract residents and businesses which might not otherwise consider moving to TGNK; bring together new and existing communities; and help deprived communities to raise their aspirations and reach their potential. Key recommendations for strategic planning include:

- Factor into planning from the start adequate access to cultural activities and opportunities, both within individual new neighbourhoods and across TGNK. This is critical to achieving sustainable communities.
- During the growth process, support the protection and enhancement of dedicated cultural facilities, and also the less formal cultural activities which take place in homes, pubs, public spaces, schools, places of worship, and so on.
- Strike a balance between supporting existing communities to realise their cultural aspirations, anticipating some of the cultural needs of incoming communities, and leaving space for incoming communities to express their own aspirations.
- Recognise the current public policy emphasis on facilitating voluntary organisations to professionalise and become more accountable to the community, and to provide local services in collaboration with Local Authorities.
- Use culture during the growth process to help gain buy-in by existing communities, to identify the elements of local sense of place, and to ensure distinctiveness and quality of new development.
- Monitor the resources which are currently under development to improve measurement of the instrumental benefits of culture. As these resources become available, they can be used to demonstrate and strengthen the role of culture as a key component of sustainable communities.



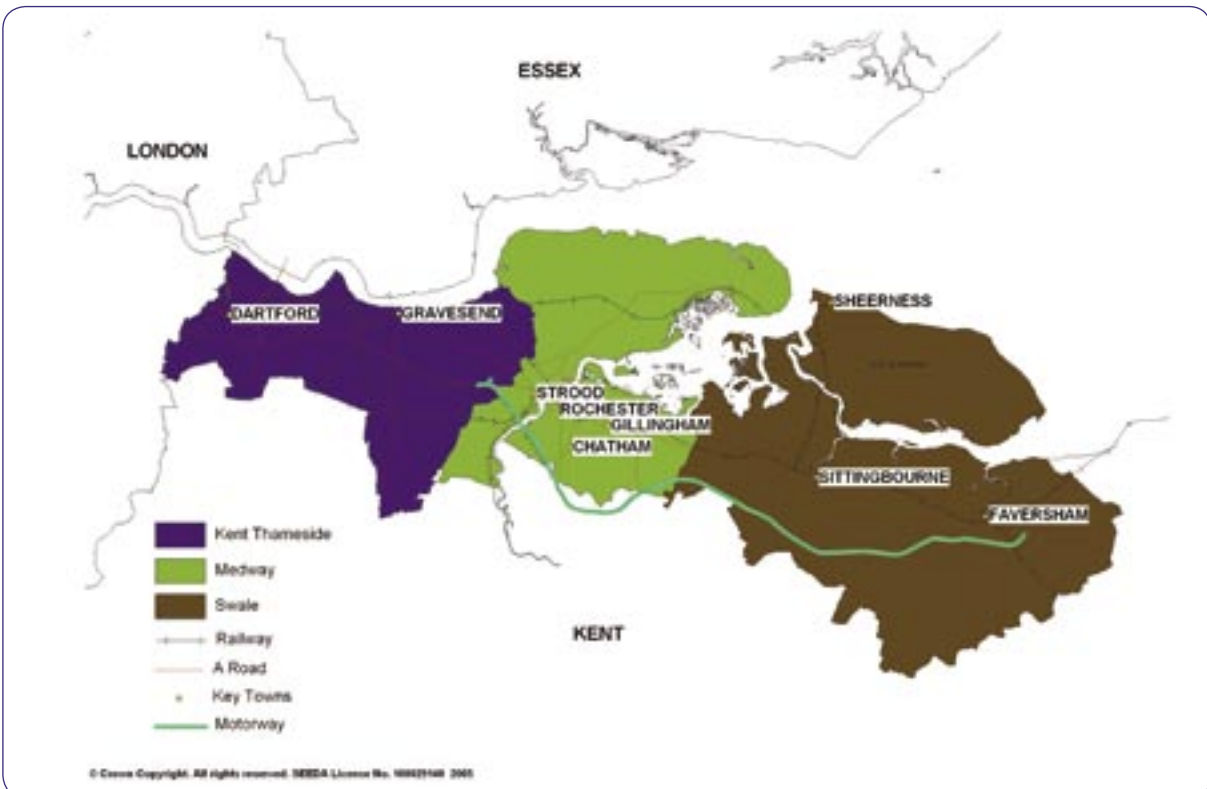
3. The Growth and Regeneration Context

TGNK is an essential part of the Thames Gateway growth programme. It comprises the Local Authority areas of Dartford, Gravesend, Medway and Swale. By 2026, TGNK is expected to benefit from fast domestic and international rail services via the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, and up to 50,000 additional homes and 80,000 additional jobs.

There is a strong collective desire to protect and enhance TGNK’s cultural activities and opportunities during the growth programme, as demonstrated by the local ambitions for culture set out within each of the LRPs’ regeneration frameworks. Key recommendations for strategic planning include:

- Ensure that the detailed investment programmes, and any future drafts of the regeneration frameworks, for Kent Thameside, Medway and Swale continue to recognise the importance of culture to the regeneration and growth of TGNK.
- Align cultural projects to the broad ambitions for culture set out in the relevant regeneration framework, the more detailed principles set out in this Cultural Framework and Toolkit, and relevant local policies such as community plans.
- Plan cultural projects not in terms of administrative boundaries, but always with reference to the precise activities and facilities in question and the distances people travel to engage in them (which can range from a few minutes’ walk to a local play area up to hundreds of miles to experience a major sporting event).

The Thames Gateway





Men Kayaking (Sports England)

- Focus at least as much on the cultural needs of existing communities as on the needs of new communities (and doing so will help to integrate the two). The exception to this is when planning local facilities within areas of intense housing growth and net in-migration; such areas are concentrated in Dartford in the period 2006 to 2016.
- Link cultural planning closely to forecast demographic changes as these will influence the facilities and activities needed and their access requirements. Proportional increases in older age groups and black and minority ethnic groups are anticipated.
- Ensure that the developing regional and local approaches to the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games support the longer term project of creating sustainable communities in TGNK.
- Recognise the trend for community facilities to increasingly function as 'multi-purpose community hubs'. It will also be critical to provide guidance to existing community facility managers which would help them to optimise use of their facilities for cultural activities.
- Take note of the 'London effect' when planning major cultural facilities which are typically visited on special occasions – but do not allow this to hinder the development of more local facilities and activities, or those aimed at groups less able to access London.

4. The Existing Local Cultural Sector

A distinctive cultural sector already exists in TGNK, comprising at least 2,000 facilities, clubs, societies and so on. There are indications that, apart from a few notable exceptions, the capacity of the sector is weak and its facilities suffer from a lack of recent investment. Key recommendations for strategic planning include:

- Use the regeneration and growth process as an opportunity to engage with the existing local cultural sector and improve its capacity, leadership and skill levels. In the short term there is a role for designated 'lead' organisations to mediate between cultural organisations and the planners and developers.
- Consider improving the quality of existing facilities as well as developing new facilities. This includes the community facilities – community centres, places of worship, village halls, and so on – which underpin less formal cultural activities.



CIBAS beneficiary (David Fisher Photography)



5. A Shared Vision for Culture

The aspirations for culture shared by all stakeholders can be summarised as: **putting Culture at the heart of Sustainability, putting Sustainability at the heart of Culture.**



This vision champions the fundamental importance of culture to developing sustainable communities in TGNK. It recognises that culture helps to develop successful communities where bonds between people are forged and strengthened. Finally, it demonstrates the importance of the Sustainable Communities agenda to the development of TGNK's existing cultural sector in a way that is sustainable in terms of finance and participation. It is supported by 24 guiding principles for cultural development, which have been distilled from more than 100 policies of stakeholder organisations. Key recommendations for strategic planning include:

- During the regeneration and growth process, recognise that all stakeholders share aspirations for culture.
- Use the guiding principles for sustainable cultural development in TGNK as a framework to understand and assess cultural projects with a view to maximising cultural value, and maximising the benefits of public investment.

6. Delivering the Vision

Delivering the vision for culture in TGNK requires a thorough, sustained effort involving many stakeholders and disciplines. Key recommendations for strategic planning include:

- Strive for effective partnerships between the cultural and other sectors; between Local Authority and voluntary sector service providers; and between designated 'lead' organisations, the cultural sector, and planners and developers.
- Use the suggested pyramid of street/ neighbourhood/local district/borough/ sub-regional levels as a guide for planning the cultural facilities that might be made available at each level.
- Plan all cultural facilities on the basis of robust analysis of population within the catchment area, level of demand, and frequency of use. Also, with recognition of the DCMS-led drive to increase participation in culture across the UK.
- Ensure that new streets and neighbourhoods are equipped with basic infrastructure such as libraries and multi-purpose community hubs. These are as important to creating sustainable communities as roads and schools. It is critical that development planning processes and developer contribution policies facilitate this.
- Support Local Authorities to provide high quality cultural services and local cultural leadership, and to help the existing cultural sector to increase its capacity and skills.
- Develop tourism as a potential growth sector of TGNK's economy, and a means of increasing the financial viability of the local cultural sector. Careful planning is needed in the areas of marketing, accessibility, accommodation, and standards.
- Monitor the impact of cultural investment via performance on Local Authority Comprehensive Performance Assessment, measurement of cultural participation, and contribution to DCLG Thames Gateway performance indicators.



Cycle race (Sport England)

On the basis of all the foregoing analysis and discussion, the following were identified as the priorities for cultural development in TGNK from 2006 to 2016:

- 1 Build capacity within the existing cultural sector in the areas of leadership, skills, audience development, and income generation and funding. This will enable it to provide a firm foundation for cultural development. Projects whose only purpose is to build capacity should be considered, as well as projects for which this will be a secondary effect.
- 2 Improve, refurbish and expand existing cultural facilities and activities to meet the demands of a growing and diversifying population, contemporary quality standards, and contemporary models for service delivery.
- 3 Ensure full access to relevant facilities and activities at new street / new neighbourhood level. This is as much part of the infrastructure of sustainable communities as roads and schools. New facilities (libraries, multi-purpose community hubs etc.) will be needed and must be accessible to the entire community.
- 4 Ensure facilities and activities at local district/ borough / sub-regional level meet modern expectations for attractive and vibrant cities and towns. Medway's central location within TGNK and its large local population make it an obvious candidate for sub-regional facilities, but equally important considerations include:
 - Site availability and infrastructure capacity
 - Location of existing facilities and activities
 - Leadership, management and funding capacity of development partners
 - Patterns of demand within catchment areas
 - Accessibility of major facilities and activities in London and other parts of Kent.

- 5 Maximise the potential of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games to catalyse sporting and other infrastructure projects, to bring together existing and incoming communities, to raise the profile and activities of the local cultural sector, to increase participation and volunteering, and to increase tourism and inward investment.

In order to ensure sustainability, all cultural projects conceived to meet these priorities must be considered in terms of their entire life-cycle and life-cycle costs.



Info Box proposal for Central / Milton Keynes by Thomas Heatherwick



Toolkit & Appendices

Toolkit

The Toolkit provides practical tools to help develop cultural projects, decide whether they deserve support, and maximise their prospects of gaining funding. These are primarily aimed at:

- People whose responsibilities cover policy and planning for growth sites, including people in regional and sub-regional agencies and – especially – in Local Authorities and Local Regeneration Partnerships.
- People in leadership or managerial roles in cultural organisations in TGNK.
- People involved in planning, promoting or delivering cultural projects – both those operating within the ‘cultural sector’ and those operating within sectors which culture can add value to such as education, health, etc.

The **Life-Cycle of a Cultural Project** section shows the stages through which a well-planned project passes, cross-referenced to the requirements of the planning system and the Government’s Gateway Review system. It can be used to identify the current stage of a project, what should have been done by now and what needs to be done next.

The **Checklist** section provides a series of questions that embody the agreed priorities and guiding principles from the Framework. A project that has strong answers to the checklist’s questions will find it easier to gain stakeholder support.

The **Planning Policy** section summarises the key national, regional and local planning policy documents (PPSs, PPGs, etc.) which are relevant to cultural projects, and with which cultural projects aiming to gain a broad base of support will have to demonstrate alignment.

The **Support Available** section gives information on the South East cultural agencies and National Lottery distributing bodies, and the practical and financial support that they offer to cultural projects.

The Planning Policy and Support Available sections of the online version of the Toolkit will be updated at regular intervals.

Appendices

The Appendices provide a more detailed examination of the 2,000 facilities, clubs and societies which were mapped during the development of the Framework and Toolkit. They:

- Discuss the spatial distribution of facilities, clubs and societies and relate this to current and future patterns of settlement.
- Provide a directory listing for each facility, club and society mapped.
- Provide an analysis of the lottery funding attracted by these facilities, clubs and societies over a ten-year period.



Rushenden Trail (Photo: Andy Brown)

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