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# River Medway Report Précis

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**Prepared for:**

**Medway Council and Marine South East**

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### 1. Summary

The River Medway processes just over 2.6% of the tonnage handled by United Kingdom ports<sup>1</sup>. Cargo types range widely from coal to cars and gas to fruit, all of which represent niche markets built on the Medway's geographic importance and its ability to handle ships of all sizes and types efficiently.

The localised movement of goods is untapped as is the transfer of waste material where the avoidance of road congestion would benefit the Medway conurbation considerably. The opportunity to process waste and its conversion in part to an energy resource should not be ignored.

The other aspect of river activity relates to marine leisure consisting principally of yachting and motor boating. The facilities populate the middle and upper reaches of the river<sup>2</sup>, broadly avoiding conflict with the major part of commercial traffic. Few marina operators cooperate with one another; in fact there is a surprising amount of non-cooperation in evidence on the river, something that the River Medway Business Users Association (RMBUA) is determined to address.

### 2. Recommendation

There are a number of recommendations arising from the Study which largely surround two main aspects of River Medway geography, namely (1) the outer reaches and (2) the middle and upper reaches.

Commercial shipping & ports in the outer reaches: commercial shipping and port related industries in the outer reaches of the River Medway are well marketed and run and have evolved in such a way that represents no threat to other economic activity. Break bulk cargo, cars, fruit and forest products handling at Sheerness is less skilled or specialised than some other ports, a factor that could well be to the ports detriment in the mid to long term. The river forms a fundamental part of the local conurbation and Medway Council should therefore meet with the ultimate owners of Medway Ports, Peel Holdings plc in order to gain an understanding of their future aspirations and plans.

- **London Gateway<sup>3</sup>:** The development London Gateway at the old Shellhaven site in the River Thames would certainly place a strain on other localised port facilities to the extent that increased competition could result in lower margins or lost business for the River Medway.

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<sup>1</sup> Included within the tonnage totals is Thamesport's performance accounting for 7.6% of all container ship arrivals in the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> See River Medway: Description

<sup>3</sup> In a communication to DP World (owners of P&O), the Government has restated the national need for the additional port capacity that would be provided by London Gateway and makes clear its desire to arrive at a final decision '*as swiftly as possible*'. London Gateway Port and Park will be developed at Shell Haven, a 1,500 acre site in Thurrock, Essex. As previously estimated, DP World believes the cost of development on the site is likely to be approximately £1.5bn, to be invested over a 10 to 15 year development timeframe. Source: DP World.

- **Commercial shipping & ports in the middle & upper reaches:** Cargo handling in the middle and upper reaches needs clear definition and boundaries if it is to coexist with residential and leisure related development which will otherwise cause it to be engulfed and suppressed. The RMBUA would be supportive of this initiative and that they would like to be involved in such an investigation.
- **Conservancy:** The River Medway continues to silt up due to a combination of lack of use and maintenance dredging. Conservancy charges are rendered by Medway Ports Limited<sup>4</sup> in exchange for the upkeep and preservation of the River Medway's safe navigation and more may need to be done in this regard particularly in terms of silt prevention, something which is increasing as usage of the river declines in the middle and upper reaches. Research should be carried out in order to evaluate the extent of siltation and exactly where the ultimate responsibility rests in this area.<sup>5</sup>
- **Leisure:** There are a number of facets to the leisure marine market on the River Medway that are restricting growth and development in what should otherwise be a thriving sector. Access to shore facilities would encourage passing trade and tourism as distinct from the rather static use of boats currently witnessed. It is recommended that a strategy be developed in conjunction with marina owners that aim to improve facilities for the benefit of all river users.
- **Leisure Growth:** There are aspects of the river that are untapped insofar as leisure boating use is concerned. Islands in the outer reaches that are doubtless steeped in history are unused. The areas concerned are Burntwick Island, Deadmans Island, Darnet Ness and Hoo Island. Exploratory discussions should be held with the Medway & Swale Estuary Partnership in order to see how this could be achieved with minimal environmental impact whilst at the same time fostering the aims of habitat preservation.
- **Riverfront Development – Public Realm:** During the course of our research we have been acquainted with the proposed development known as Public Realm. The proposal would seem to lack certain practicalities when it comes to the operation and upkeep of the river such as access to the river itself whether via piers or pontoons for boats and visiting yachtsmen. Commercial activity, and along with it a number of resultant jobs is also conspicuous by its absence.
- **General Demeanour:** The River has considerable potential but in order for it to develop we consider it important to foster better relations

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<sup>4</sup> The Report and Financial Statements for the period 1 January 2005 to 31 March 2006 refers to Medway Ports Limited as a '.....holding company for a number of subsidiary companies involved in the provision of port and associated facilities, river pilotage and conservancy of the River Medway.' Source: Medway Ports Limited Accounts; Companies House.

<sup>5</sup> Medway Ports Authority Act 1973 and Medway Ports Authority Harbour Revision Order 1989 S.I. 1989/775

with and amongst river related business. This could best be achieved by bringing them together via the good offices of the RMBUA to meet with Medway Council representatives. If businesses were more prepared to work together the river and its users would benefit considerably along with the opportunity to foster innovation.

- **Transportation on the River Medway:** There is a specific opportunity for the handling and possible recycling of waste materials that would focus transportation and processing on the River Medway. Commuter transport using the river should also be considered for the future with pre-planned adequate river access provision that would in the meantime benefit the yachting fraternity.
- **Other uses of the River Medway:** There is ample evidence of newfound innovation within Europe that is aimed at helping to relieve congestion through the use of coastal, estuarial and river sites for floating accommodation ranging from housing to car parking. We recommend that these solutions are evaluated in case they would be suitable for use on the River Medway.
- **Manufacturing, consolidation & processing:** The search for eco-friendly, economically beneficial transport and sustainable energy sources coupled with the considerable development unfolding on, in and around Thames Gateway provides a significant opportunity for a showcase *water: land* interface along the banks of the River Medway.

### 3. Key Facts

#### Medway Ports Limited

- Navigable since 17th century
- Sheerness Naval Dockyard closed 1960 & Chatham 1984
- Medway Ports Limited – 1989 mebo & sale to MDHC 1993
- MPL responsible for the 27.2 miles from Garrison Point to Halling and for the River’s conservation

#### Commercial

- More than 3,900 conventional & container ship calls:
  - 158 tankers
  - 742 RoRo
  - 2,360 dry cargo
- 15.5 million tonnes of cargo per annum
- 2.7% of UK trade & ship calls
- Sheerness tonnage:
  - 631,000 fresh produce
  - 353,000 forest products
  - 230,000 general cargo
  - 350,000 car
- Thamesport fourth largest container handler – 707,000 teu
- Kingsnorth 3.2m tonnes of coal
- Isle of Grain gas 251,000 tonnes
- Chatham handles 1.2m tonnes and 500 vessel calls
- Liquid bulk, forest products, agricultural, scrap & aggregates
- Medway 85:15 import-export; United Kingdom 48:52 import-export

**Table 3.1 River Medway throughput by major ports and wharves**

River Medway throughput by major ports and wharves	000' tonnes
Sheerness	1,895
Chatham	965
Thamesport	3,924
Grain (LNG)	251
Kingsnorth (Coal)	3,225
Other River Medway	
Other Dry Bulk (Aggregates, Agricultural products etc)	2,281
Liquid Bulk	2,457
Roll-on/Roll off Containers (self-propelled)	390
Other general cargo	82
<b>Total Medway</b>	<b>15,470</b>

Source: Drewry Shipping Consultants

### Leisure

- Most marinas provide only basic facilities
- Lack of river access to shore facilities
- Marina berths close to 100% occupancy
- Most houseboats are untidy
- Siltation of the river banks
- Lacking in boat & general repair facilities
- Very few organised events
- 1,866 boat licenses in 2006
- Down 16.5% since 2000
- Current usage & facilities:
  - Training
  - Clubs
  - Marinas
  - Support providers