

# Medway Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space Strategy 2008 - 2016

- **Analysing and Informing**
- **Planning and Providing**
- **Protecting and Celebrating**

# Foreword

This is a time of great opportunity for Medway. Situated within the Thames Gateway, regeneration is bringing investment to the area and with it raised aspirations for Medway's communities, built and natural environments. This focus on Medway as a successful and attractive city in which to live, work and visit has increased awareness of the area's special qualities and its potential to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Our countryside and open spaces stand out as some of the most significant assets we have in Medway, important for people, wildlife and in supporting regeneration.

Medway's countryside and open spaces form part of all our daily lives. Views of the hills, river and marshes accompany us as we move around Medway. Medway's natural environment is also of world-class importance for wildlife. The dramatic chalk hills of the downs and the wild open vistas of the estuaries and marshes define Medway's sense of place. Parks, open spaces and allotments provide spaces where we can spend time to unwind, play, explore, exercise, socialise, and learn. The countryside, parks and open spaces are a free and shared resource, and offer a neutral space to bring new and existing communities together.

We have international and local responsibilities to safeguard our natural environment, protecting its wildlife and landscapes. We also realise the importance of safe, stimulating and quality open spaces that can perform a range of uses for different people, in contributing to a decent quality of life.



# Our Vision



**Councillor Howard Doe**  
Portfolio Holder, Community Services

**By 2016, Medway will be characterised by and celebrated for its attractive, distinctive estuarine, downland, woodland and farmed countryside, its rich diversity of wildlife and its high quality open space network. These will be protected to meet the needs of local communities, to improve levels of customer satisfaction and usage, and improved for present and future generations to enjoy and use.**

Medway has the opportunity to use its rich natural environment and open spaces as a means to strengthen its future as an attractive place to live, work and visit. Quality countryside, parks, play areas and allotments are intrinsic to healthy and vibrant communities. At a time of change, there are both pressures and opportunities for our countryside and open spaces. One of the greatest concerns that people have about development is the impact on the local environment, the loss of open spaces and countryside. This strategy seeks to address these concerns by promoting a strong vision and land use policy for our countryside and open spaces placing them at the very heart of the current and future plans. It also provides direction and mechanisms on how we can secure and enhance both the quality and accessibility of the countryside and open spaces.

For the first time in Medway, this document brings together information on our local countryside and open spaces to coordinate planning, development and investment. It is a chance to celebrate our best assets and bring attention to the potential for improvements. Our work builds on the knowledge and concerns of our partners and local communities. We have used a wide ranging information base, including statutory data, site surveys, expert advice and best practice, together with local knowledge to inform the strategy. This has allowed us to identify priorities for investment and to set out the actions we need to take to achieve our aspirations for quality and accessible countryside and open space throughout Medway, functioning successfully for wildlife and people.

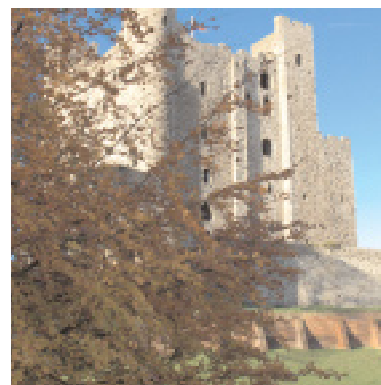
Our strategy's focus is to deliver on our aspirations. It is a basis for our partnership work, putting the countryside and open spaces agenda at the centre of plans for Medway.

This strategy informs and is central to the regeneration plans for Medway as a successful and thriving city. World-class cities are defined by the quality of their open spaces. We have the added benefit of a high quality countryside setting surrounding our urban area. We now need to focus our work on bringing forward the full potential of Medway to provide for our residents and wildlife. This strategy sets out this direction.



# Summary

**The countryside and open spaces of Medway have a positive and crucial role to play in helping to deliver sustainable development in Medway and in supporting a good quality of life for existing and new communities. We can celebrate the international importance of the North Kent Marshes and the Thames and Medway estuaries and the fact that visitors come from near and far to marvel at the spectacle on our doorstep. This spectacular asset covers 30% of Medway - a truly remarkable and unique fact. The North Downs are home to many rare and attractive plants such as Man and Lady Orchids plus many nationally rare plants only found in quantity at Ranscombe Farm, Cuxton.**



In a national climate of tight budgets, increased user expectations and demands, and a growing pressure on the countryside and landscape, this strategy confirms that Medway has much to celebrate and that we are starting from a strong countryside and open space asset base. In the last 3 years Greenspace Services have secured over £5m investment, held over 300 walks and 15 major events visited by over 70,000 people, have established and supported 19 "friends of" groups and have received over 2 million visits to Riverside and Capstone Farm Country Parks. We have seen an increase in pitch bookings and allotment lettings as well as in the development of four new promotional walking guides. The accessible countryside and open space in Medway is large, totalling some 1,900 ha, and consists of 48 countryside sites, 2 country parks, 1 farm reserve, 33 allotments, 125 play areas and 25 parks. Greenspace Services are also working across the authority on health initiatives, are involved in strategic planning and development control and are developing external bids to enhance key sports facilities and open spaces.

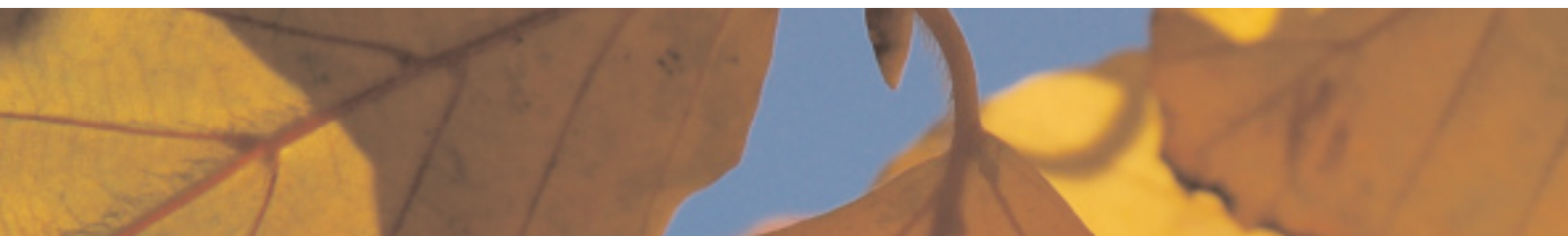
In 2004, 72% of Medway residents were satisfied with their open spaces (Mori 2004 BVPI 119a). Our audits and surveys tell us that users experience inconsistent quality across the range of open spaces. Our countryside areas and play areas are considered good quality, while some parks and allotments are falling short of expectations. Young people have informed us that we need to provide more and better teenage facilities at sites across Medway.

Our Play Audit tells us that we need to increase accessibility to some of our play areas and parks and also concentrate on better site management. Our workshops and conferences confirm that we need to work harder to ensure that wildlife, countryside and open space assets are better protected, enhanced, and above all are valued for their ability to support regeneration, economic growth, health and tourism. Greenspace Services are keen to develop 'destination' sites for play, countryside, allotments and outdoor sport. The idea is to target income generation and development resources to selected countryside and open space sites that will be capable of attracting users from across Medway rather than just the local neighbourhood.

To maintain momentum, while also tackling the above issues, this strategy aims to improve year on year the residents opinion poll ratings, to address the findings of the open space quality and quantity audits, to celebrate the strengths of the countryside and open space resource and to secure additional internal and external funding. This need has informed both the strategy's vision and the following six outcomes:

- 1) Providing more high quality facilities**
- 2) Improved monitoring and management**
- 3) Prioritised investments**
- 4) Improved protection and conservation**
- 5) More open spaces contributing directly to regeneration**
- 6) Greater celebration and engagement.**

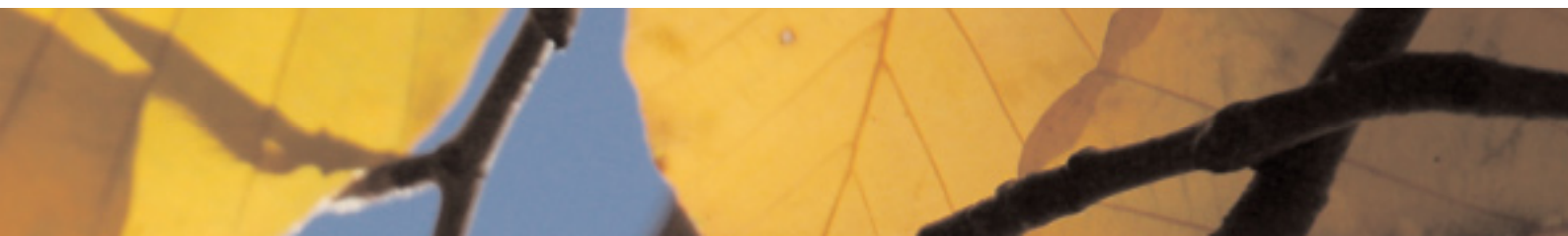
The delivery of the vision through delivering strategic headline actions, will ensure that Medway Council and its partners are in a better position to deliver and protect the resource that local people want and expect. This strategy looks forward 8 years to 2016 and is to be supported by a Delivery Framework that maps out resources and timetabling for driving the strategy forward.



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# Why a Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space Strategy?

## Introduction

Medway is well placed to grasp the opportunities offered to develop into a city of learning, culture, tourism and enterprise. Supported by more than £120 million of Sustainable Communities Funding, Medway will change dramatically over the next 20 years. Whilst 85% of our population live in Medway's urban areas, half of the land area is rural. There are abundant natural resources, including eight nature conservation sites designated as nationally and / or internationally important.

The population of Medway is 250,000. In 20 years, due in part to planned development and an increasing birth rate, it will be 300,000. Medway's population is younger than the average for England, but the profile is slowly changing. Our older population is increasing and the predicted growth in the over 60s between 2003 and 2028 is 75%. Planning and investment in the biodiversity, countryside and open space network must respond to this demographic profile by providing adequate facilities for children and young people, while at the same time considering the health and access demands of an older population. The challenge is also to protect and enhance the internationally and locally important natural environment to complement our regeneration agenda, improving health and promoting higher quality of life for people in Medway.

The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) is active in defining the Vision and 'Place Making' qualities of the Thames Gateway (Thames Gateway Parklands), and the planned open space interventions in Medway will be an important part of this.

Medway Council cannot achieve the vision for Medway's countryside and open space if working in isolation. Therefore this strategy promotes joined-up thinking and delivery as a key to sustained success. We need to ensure that our partners support the key outputs promoted in the strategy and are aware of the benefits that meeting the vision could have on environmental, economic and social sustainability.

Medway Council, its partners and stakeholders have thus produced this strategy for the reasons set out below.

## Planning

- To fulfil the commitment in the Medway Core Strategy\*\* (policy CS 22) to produce a Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space Strategy to provide equal opportunity for all people to enjoy accessible, high quality and affordable open space facilities.
- To address the Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17) requirement that local authorities undertake an audit of the open space resource (quality, quantity and accessibility) for current and future residents.
- To meet guidance contained in Policy Planning Statement (PPS) 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas and PPS9 Biodiversity Duty.
- To deliver to the Local Strategic Partnership's Local Area Agreement which sets out key objectives for the countryside and open space.
- At the heart of the Thames Gateway, Medway is set to experience an increase in population of some 50,000 people. The new and existing communities need and desire a network of high quality countryside and open space close to where they live, work and play. At times of such significant change there is a need for a robust and well-informed strategy that helps ensure that the value of the countryside and open spaces is protected and enhanced. It is the role of this strategy to set out how the delivery of high quality facilities can be achieved, with indicative timetables.
- To provide context for Local Development Framework policy in relation to countryside and open space provision and enhancement.



## Securing funding and providing high quality facilities

- There is a need to plan the allocation of internal resources and to secure additional external funding to drive delivery of Strategy Headline Actions
- When applying for internal and external grants it is important to have an informed and strategic overview of how best we can enhance our wildlife, countryside and open spaces.

## Communication and Celebration

- There is a need to communicate the value that Medway Council, its communities and its partners place on the wildlife, countryside and open spaces. This strategy coordinates and prioritises future activity and funding needed to meet the requirements of countryside and open space users.
- There is a desire for Medway to evolve into a city of learning, culture, tourism and enterprise. This strategy has been developed to demonstrate the important and necessary contribution that Medway's wildlife, countryside and open spaces can make in assisting Medway to become a great city in the Thames Gateway.
- Countryside and open spaces touch all of our lives. Our inherited environment has already developed into an important and unique local, national and international asset - an asset that this strategy will help to protect, enhance and celebrate. The conservation and enhancement of our natural environment and open spaces is central to developing a sustainable community and economy.

## Developing the Strategy - Key Drivers

The Wildlife, Countryside & Open Spaces Strategy has been informed by a number of key documents, summaries of which are detailed below, at national, regional & local level. The primary documents that have informed the development of this Strategy are that of meeting the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance 17, Policy Planning Statement PPS7, Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, PPS9 Biodiversity Duty, and CABI Space best practice guidance for producing Open Spaces Strategies.

### National

#### Planning Policy Guidance Note 17

States that to ensure effective planning for open space, sport and recreation it is essential that the needs of local communities are known. As such, the guidance encourages local authorities to develop open space strategies, and undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Assessments will normally be undertaken at district level, although assessments of strategic facilities should be undertaken at regional or sub-regional levels.

PPG 17 confirms that open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives. These include:

- Supporting an urban renaissance - local networks of high quality, well managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe. Green spaces are important as areas for nature conservation, biodiversity and as 'green lungs' which help improve air quality.
- Supporting a rural renewal - the countryside can provide opportunities for recreation and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas.
- Promoting social inclusion and community cohesion - well planned and maintained open spaces and recreational facilities can help improve people's sense of well being and serve as a focal point for community activities and social interaction.



- Health and well being - open spaces, sport and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others.
- Promoting more sustainable development - by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly in urban areas) are easily accessible by walking and cycling, and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for locations well served by public transport.

### **Planning Policy Statement 9 - PPS9**

Sets out planning policies on the protection of biodiversity and geodiversity through the planning system. This statement seeks to:

- Promote sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development, so that policies and decisions about the development and use of land integrate biodiversity and geological diversity with other considerations.
- Conserve, enhance and restore the diversity of England's wildlife and geology by sustaining and, where possible, improving the quality and extent of natural habitat and geological and geomorphological sites; the natural physical processes on which they depend; and the populations of naturally occurring species which they support.
- Contribute to rural renewal and urban renaissance by enhancing biodiversity in open spaces and among developments so that they are used by wildlife and valued by people, recognising that healthy functional ecosystems can contribute to a better quality of life and to people's sense of well-being; and ensure that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment.

### **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006, S40)**

- Promotes a duty on local authorities to conserve biodiversity in exercising its existing functions. This aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity, to clarify existing commitments with regard to biodiversity, and to make it a natural and integral part of policy and decision-making.

### **Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas**

Sets Government's objectives for promoting rural areas through:

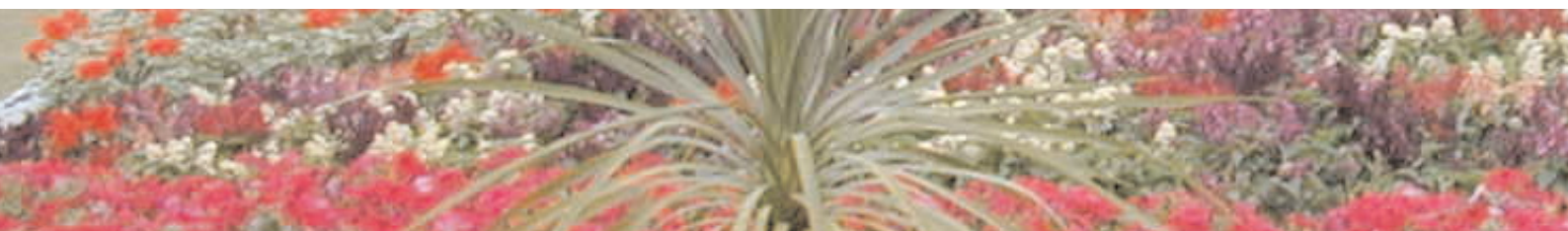
- Raising the quality of life and the environment in rural areas
- Promoting more sustainable patterns of development
- Promoting the development of the English countryside by improving their economic performance so that they are able to reach their full potential
- Promoting sustainable, diverse and adaptable agriculture sectors

## **Regional**

### **Greening the Gateway Strategy (2004)**

Stresses the important role of open space and wildlife in supporting the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities. Greening the Gateway sets out the Government's vision for the Thames Gateway as a model of sustainable development, with the landscape at its heart. It has 2 key objectives:

- that a network of varied and well-managed greenspace should be the setting for new and existing residential and commercial areas





- that the landscape should be regarded as functional green infrastructure, recognising a wide range of potential benefits from healthy recreation, to wildlife protection and enhancement, to flood risk management.

### **Thames Gateway Parklands Programme (2006)**

The Thames Gateway Parklands Programme has been established to celebrate and enhance the individual character of the Gateway and its communities. This has evolved from work in 2006 by CABI titled "New Things Happen, a Guide to the Future Thames Gateway". The Parklands programme three aims are to:

- Retain and where necessary restore the high quality natural environment of the Gateway's landscapes
- Secure a high quality built environment particularly in public spaces
- Protect, promote and celebrate the historic environment and heritage of the area.

Over time it will confirm this enhanced identity of the Gateway and further increase the quality of life on offer to existing and new residents alike.

To make the Parklands vision a reality and to achieve the three aims it is important that regional, sub-regional and local initiatives work in partnership. This includes prioritising long term investment, maximising the potential of existing strategic projects such as green grid frameworks, new landmark environmental schemes, and allowing the existing built environment to be integrated into new development. The Parklands vision will be realised by adopting transformational themes and transformational processes.

Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway (GTGKM) has a central role in delivering the aims of the Parklands programme through developing strategic partnerships to join up local projects and aspirations across the Gateway in Kent and Medway. This is reflected in the GTGKM vision:

"Achieve a radical transformation in the quality of the urban environment across North Kent, together with the conservation of adjacent high-quality countryside assets and improved access to them."

Core objectives of GTGKM are to:

- Transform the environmental quality and green connectivity of our built environments
- Conserve, restore and enhance the quality and accessibility of our natural environments
- Engage people from all backgrounds in understanding, enjoying and caring for our historic environment, culture and heritage.

### **Kent and Medway Structure Plan (2006)**

This document covers the period 2006-2021 and provides the strategic planning framework to guide decisions on development, transport and environmental matters in Kent and Medway. It seeks to develop sustainable communities, promoting an urban renaissance and revitalising rural communities. The key themes and core principles of the Structure Plan are:

- Nurturing Kent and Medway's environment and resources
- Fostering prosperity and well being
- Securing quality, investment and infrastructure for regeneration and development
- Enhancing choice, opportunity and accessibility

The Structure Plan also contains specific policy in relation to areas of landscape importance, wildlife designations and the protection of the natural environment.



## Forestry and Woodlands Framework for South East England (2004)

A partnership of key organisations and agencies has come together to develop the Forestry and Woodlands Framework for South East England. This partnership framework promotes a vision in which woodlands make an increasing contribution to the sustainable development of the South East Region, in both urban and rural areas. Achieving this vision would see woodlands and forests supporting better places for people to live, enhanced environment and biodiversity, a stronger contribution to the economy, and a secure future for our woodland resources.

### Local

At a local level the strategy has been informed by a number of Council adopted documents, community and stakeholder engagement programmes and audits:

#### Council Documents

Core Council documents that have informed development of the Wildlife, Countryside & Open Spaces Strategy are the Medway Community Plan (2004), the Rural Action Plan (2004), the Sports Development Strategy (2004), the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, the Medway Renaissance Regeneration Framework (2006) and the Medway Local Plan (2003).

This strategy has a key relationship with the Local Development Framework of the Council as audit data and actions in this document will help inform spatial planning for open space provision and landscape protection. Specific policy details are included in appendix 1.

#### Customer Responses

Youth consultation, four stakeholder meetings (held between September and December 2005), the Greenspace Conferences (2003 and 2004), consultation responses to the Greenspace Services Statement of Intent (2003), and Citizen Panel (2006).

#### Audits

Medway Council staff and consultants undertook quality, quantity and accessibility audits of parks, allotments, countryside areas and play facilities.

#### Stakeholders

The development of this strategy followed CABI Space (government advisors on open space) advice on strategy production. This included engagement of a wide range of stakeholders in order to ensure all major issues relating to countryside and open space in Medway have policy provision. Organisations involved in producing the strategy were Medway Countryside Forum, Medway Local Strategic Partnership, Medway Access Forum, Open Spaces Society, Medway Council, Medway Urban Parks and Greenspaces Forum, Medway Allotments Federation, Medway Sports Council, Kent Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Natural England, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, 'friends of' groups, parish councils and Kent County Council.



## About the Strategy

This strategy is structured as follows:

### Section one

Introduction provides the vision for countryside and open space in Medway. This vision is supported by high-level outcomes related to specific themes (delivery, quality, management and monitoring, prioritising investment, ensuring protection, celebration and engagement, and regeneration).

Section one then sets out the importance of combining the needs and interests of countryside and open space in one document. It makes clear the inter-relationship between the countryside and open space, as well as confirming their differences and strengths. Information is provided on key land use planning documents, which provide a context for countryside and open space management, and lastly the benefits of high quality countryside and open spaces are set out.

### Section Two

Developing a Strategy - Research and Consultation, describes the background research and consultation that underpins the study (the evidence base).

### Section Three

Medway's Wildlife and Countryside sets out the nature of Medway's countryside, its wildlife, landscapes and recreational facilities.

### Section Four

Medway's Open Space Network focuses on open spaces including play provision in Medway, formal sport provision, urban Parks, amenity spaces and allotments in Medway.

### Section Five

Connecting People, Spaces and Places (Green Grid Framework) focuses on the area between the towns and the countryside and specifically on the green grid framework.

### Section Six

Delivery Framework summarises the headline actions and places them in a phased delivery programme.



## **Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space Vision**

The vision below is the product of consultation on the Greenspaces Statement of Intent (2003) and the strategy workshops held during 2005. Both of the above consultations confirmed users and partners desire to recognise Medway's valuable countryside and wildlife resource alongside the need for protection and enhancement of all open space to meet current and future needs.

**"By 2016, Medway will be characterised by and celebrated for its attractive, distinctive estuarine, downland, woodland and farmed countryside, its rich diversity of wildlife and its high quality open space network. These will be protected and enhanced to meet the needs of local communities, to improve levels of customer satisfaction and usage, and improved for present and future generations to enjoy and use"**

### **Strategy Outcomes 2008 - 16**

#### **Outcome One - Providing more high quality facilities**

Medway Council, its partners and stakeholders will ensure that all residents and visitors will have access to a range of parks, open spaces, play areas, allotments, countryside and sports sites that are more welcoming, safer, cleaner and greener.

#### **Outcome Two - Improved monitoring and management**

Medway Council, its partners and stakeholders will ensure that all residents and visitors experience better monitoring and management of greenspace sites.

#### **Outcome Three - Prioritised investments**

Medway Council and its partners and stakeholders will work together to increase investment and income generation. Work will be prioritised to achieve sustainable improvement and value for money.

#### **Outcome Four: Improved protection and conservation**

Medway Council, its partners and stakeholders will work together to realise their duty to protect, manage and enhance the wildlife, countryside, biodiversity, and open space resource and to strengthen policy protection for rural Medway.

#### **Outcome Five - More open spaces contributing directly to regeneration**

Medway Council and its partners and stakeholders will ensure that Medway's countryside and open spaces contribute to on-going regeneration.

#### **Outcome Six - Greater celebration and engagement**

Medway Council, its partners and stakeholders will ensure that residents and visitors have opportunities to enjoy and appreciate Medway's countryside and open space resource and also to engage in discussion about future management.

## The Benefits of Wildlife, Countryside and Open Spaces

The benefits of well-managed countryside and open space are diverse and wide-ranging. National and local research indicates that people believe that a high quality countryside and open space network contribute towards a higher quality of life and economic development. For example, research by CABI has shown that house buyers are willing to pay more for a house close to high quality public space (CABI 2005). The government's Greening the Gateway Strategy (Defra/ODPM, 2004) and supporting Implementation Plan stress the important role of open space and wildlife in supporting the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities. A major theme of Greening the Gateway is the concept of functional green infrastructure offering a range of benefits.

Furthermore, the success of initiatives such as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers' Green Gyms, (a scheme which offers the opportunity to 'work out' in the open air through local, practical environmental or gardening work) has developed evidence that participation alongside nature is good for us. Our research has found that the most frequently expressed reason for visiting the countryside or an open space in Medway is for the physical exercise opportunities it offers.

This section considers Government policies relevant to the countryside and open spaces and summarises the benefits to be derived from a strategic approach to planning and management. In summary, we have defined seven key benefits from a high quality, attractive, ecologically diverse and accessible countryside and open space network in Medway.

### **Benefit One - Wildlife, countryside and open space improving image and perceptions**

The development and promotion of a well managed countryside and open space network will reinforce the message that Medway is an attractive and fun place to live, work, learn and play. This strategy will help support a positive image of Medway as a city with safe, clean and green open spaces that are accessible to all and also support tourism and economic development targets. Key strategy outcome 6 promotes the need to encourage greater celebration of our high quality wildlife resource, countryside, landscapes and open space network - a key factor in tackling negative perceptions of Medway's environment. There are links to the Putting Medway on the Map initiative, the Medway Community Plan and Local Area Agreements, the Medway Regeneration Framework and the emerging Thames Gateway Parklands initiative.

#### Medway example

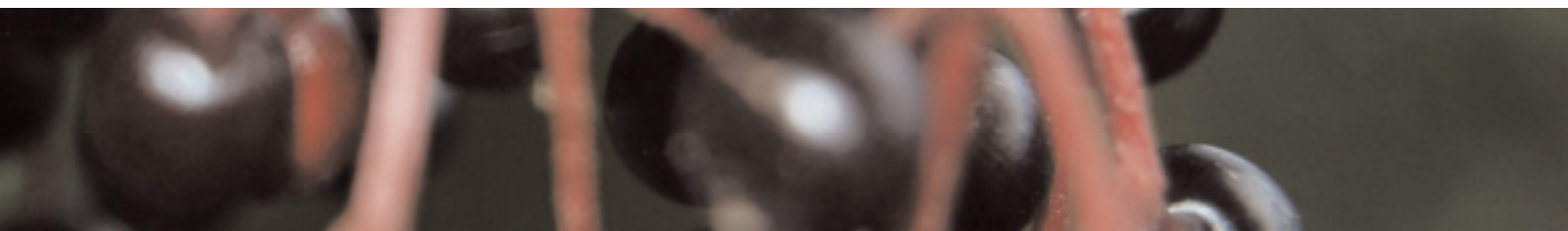
Medway Council purchased Ranscombe Farm, Cuxton, in 2004 with support from the ODPM and the Tubney Trust. This purchase secured the ownership of this important open space on the urban fringe of Medway and Gravesham for future generations to enjoy. More importantly, the purchase, the associated publicity and the on-going events have also helped to raise the public's awareness of Medway's attractive landscapes and rich wildlife resource.

### **Benefit Two - countryside and open space supporting and improving our environment and biodiversity**

The environmental benefits of green spaces are well documented and range from the obvious support for biodiversity (wildlife) conservation, to less obvious factors such as reductions in flood risk (Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes), countering air pollution, and a reduction of the urban micro-climatic effects of heat, wind, insulation and humidity. Well-managed countryside and open space can also provide opportunities for people to live closer to nature and to enjoy attractive landscapes and important species and habitats. Key strategy outcome 4 promotes the protection of Medway's unique biodiversity resource that must be maintained and enhanced.

#### Medway example

Since 2004, Greenspace Services have been investing in two large areas of previously poorly managed chalk grass - the Daisy and the Coney Banks. Both sites are surrounded by dense urban areas and suffer from a range of inappropriate uses. Works to improve the local environment have included the removal of scrub, the cutting back of grassland and the erection of fences and gates to secure the sites boundaries. These fences will also support plans for cattle grazing and have already led to a decrease in local motorcycling activity. The work will continue for another 7 years.



### **Benefit Three - Countryside and open space improving our health**

There is growing concern about the health of the nation and particularly the health of young people. Obesity is now a major public health concern with over 20% of men and 25% women potentially being obese (Green Spaces, Better Places - Final Report, 2002). Medway's countryside and open space network are considered powerful tools in the campaign against obesity, together with improving mental wellbeing, reducing stress, and alleviating depression. The realisation of initiatives such as Green Grid, and planned investments in sport facilities and improvements to allotments, will ensure that Medway's countryside and open spaces continue to play an increasingly prominent and important role in improving the health of residents and visitors. There are links to the Primary Care Trust's '4 Life' programme, the Medway Obesity Action Plan and the Sports Development Plan, 2005.

#### Medway example

Greenspace Services has worked with local communities to provide six new ball courts to encourage greater youth involvement in active recreation. The Service also undertook enhancements at the Hillyfields Open Space including the creation of a new path complete with 100 metre markings to encourage people to run between points. The Race for Life held at Capstone Farm Country Park encouraged 2250 to participate in 5km run - many for the first time. The Medway Allotment Federation is supporting the Great South Allotment holders in encouraging the local school association to participate in allotmenting - thus promoting physical activity as well as healthy eating.

### **Benefit Four - Countryside and open space supporting sustainable transport**

Some areas of open space and countryside can provide alternative opportunities for promoting movement around Medway on foot or by bike. Investing in walking and cycling routes that connect open space sites and provide positive and safe links to schools, shops and the surrounding countryside will help realise open space's contribution to the promotion of sustainable transport. The inclusion of Green Grid principles in future site enhancements, development briefs and master plans will enable the countryside and open spaces to contribute fully to the promotion of sustainable transport opportunities. There are links to the Green Grid Action Plan, the Local Transport Plan, 2005 and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2007.

#### Medway example

In 2005, Medway Council and the Friends of Berengrave secured funding to improve access to a previously closed site - including the provision of a 600m cycle-route. This path will link to the proposed Green Grid initiative and as such will provide a critical north / south connection.

### **Benefit Five - Countryside and open space contributing to economic development**

As towns and cities increasingly compete with one another to attract inward investment, the presence of attractive and unique countryside and landscapes, plus good parks, squares, gardens and other public spaces become a vital business and marketing tool. Projects such as the Great Lines City Park, Gillingham Park Heritage Project, the World Heritage Site and green tourism initiatives will all help to create destinations that support tourism growth. A good quality public landscape also offers clear benefits to the local economy in terms of stimulating increased property prices, encouraging employment and inward investment, and attracting visitors. The development of high quality open spaces and attractive landscapes across Medway promotes greater confidence in the area and supports the securing of inward investment.

#### Medway example

In 2006, Greenspace Services led on the Great Lines City Park development proposal which engages the business community in planning future investments in this key green space. Ideas include tourism initiatives and connections to housing developments.

### **Benefit Six - Countryside and open spaces supporting social regeneration and inclusion**

Engaging people in their countryside and open spaces can foster social inclusion, community development, citizenship and local pride. Medway's countryside and open spaces are open to all, regardless of ethnic origin, age or gender and can act as a positive meeting space for all. Inclusive community engagement in the decision-making and management of open spaces, plus involvement in training schemes such as Cozenton



Nursery and as proposed at the Great Lines City Park, all indirectly contribute to social well being, cultural identity and community regeneration. Medway Council values the positive and sustained community engagement opportunities associated with the process of enhancing and managing our countryside and open space resource.

#### Medway example

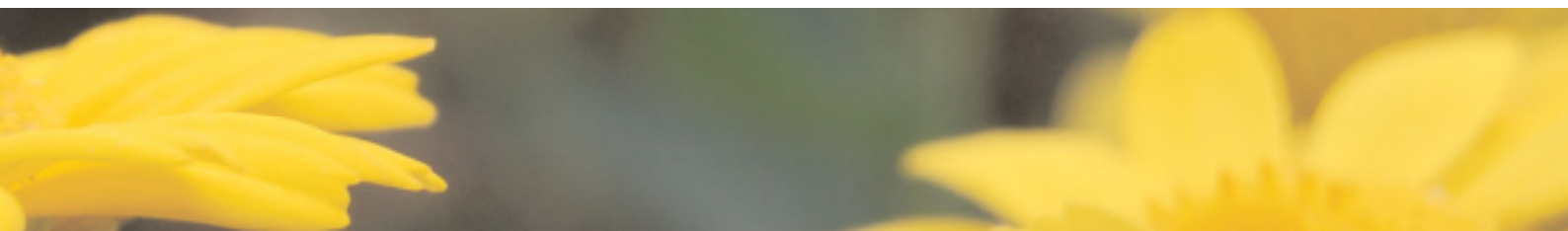
The Council's Cozenton Nursery hosted a horticultural training scheme in basic skills for excluded and hard to reach groups, co-financed by the European Union and Job Centre plus. External funding of £310,000 has been generated to support the project and a total of 150 people undertook training and 62 have obtained sustainable employment as a result of the project. A further 20 have progressed on to higher and further education. A partnership with Hadlow College is now being arranged to develop the nursery into a North Kent satellite centre for horticultural and land based training.

#### **Benefit Seven - Wildlife, countryside and open spaces supporting education activity**

When considered as an outdoor university or classroom, Medway's wildlife, countryside and open space network provide opportunities for outdoor learning and involvement in environment, ecology, landscape and social history. They can also provide space for outdoor teamwork, sports and cultural activities. Medway Council values the role that the countryside and open space resource can play in providing opportunities for life long education, awareness of natural and cultural history, volunteering and sport.

#### Medway Example

Medway's Country Parks support the delivery of over 3500 pupil visits per annum and new initiatives such as Forest Schools will see this figure increase. Also, Greenspace's sites are used to host events such as the 'Your Town Your Future' event which attracts an additional 1600 children per annum. Great South Allotments, Chatham, and Street End Allotments, Luton have plots used by schools to grow produce.



## Council Priorities

This strategy will help to deliver the Community Plan and the Council's 6 Strategic Priorities. These were developed by taking into account customer feedback and through an analysis of performance. It is important that this strategy makes clear the contribution Greenspace Services and good quality countryside and open space will make to achieving Medway Council and Community priorities. The following provides detail on how the Wildlife, Countryside & Open Spaces Strategy will support achievement of the Community Plan and 6 Council Strategic Priorities.

**Table one: Medway Council Priority Delivery**

<b>1. A clean and green environment</b>	To be achieved through a combination of protection, celebration and enhancement of countryside and open space, supporting environment partnerships, securing internal and external funding, the implementation of Green Grid, involvement in the s106 process and by input to the regeneration framework and development plans.
<b>2. Safer communities</b>	The involvement of the new Parks Ranger Service at key sites across Medway coupled with future better design of play areas and parks, plus increased community involvement through "friends of" groups, liaison with the police on anti-social behaviour and motor vehicle crime will help meet this priority.
<b>3. Children and young people having the best start in life</b>	Change for Children is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. The programme place better outcomes for children firmly at the centre of all policies and approaches involving children's services. The Every Child Matters agenda and the Play Facilities Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed by the Medway Play Partnership-a forum of public sector (including Children's Services), voluntary sector and private sector organisations responsible for delivering play opportunities in Medway. Engagement of young people will take place for specific schemes together with continuing involvement with the medway youth parliament in order to assess local need and prioritise investment. Development of education activities across Greenspaces building on the existing programme in the country parks including Your Town Your Future and Forest Schools will fully engage young people with the service.
<b>4. Older and vulnerable people maintaining their independence</b>	To be achieved through building on the Cozenton Nursery training scheme provided in partnership with Hadlow College to offer skills training and support to enable vulnerable people to move into work and learn independence by using horticulture as therapy. Green Grid improvements in access between destinations and on sites will facilitate movement of older and vulnerable people across Medway facilitating their independence as their confidence in Greenspace safety increases.
<b>5. People travelling easily and safely in Medway</b>	Greenspace Services will support the creation of new cycle and walking routes across countryside and open space network through the promotion of green grid and will also raise awareness of walking/cycling opportunities within the rural urban fringe.
<b>6. Everyone benefiting from the area's regeneration</b>	This strategy expresses a commitment to provide high quality open space facilities by working within the planning system to protect and enhance countryside and open space, following input to master plans, vision documents and planning documents detailing the provision of new open space for new and existing communities.





**Table two: Medway Council Community Plan Delivery**

Community Plan Priority (specific to Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space)	Outcome	Greenspace Response
<p>Reduce anti social behaviour to increase people's feelings of safety</p> <p>Empower local people to have greater participation and influence in local affairs</p> <p>Ensure that regeneration and development is matched to the natural resources and infrastructure available to improve the quality of life for existing and new communities. Cherish and enhance Medway's rural heritage and the important resources of open space, countryside, and wildlife habitats.</p>	Reduce overall crime	To promote community engagement, ownership and pride in the delivery of high quality and well-maintained facilities. This will include appropriate siting of facilities; effective sightlines and ensuring sites are 'over looked' and be supported by the work of the Ranger Service.
	Reassure the public by reducing the fear of crime.	To communicate a positive message through Greenspace updates supported by effective maintenance of vandal / graffiti free open spaces.
	Build respect in communities and reduce anti social behaviour.	To work alongside the Neighbourhood Renewal, social regeneration schemes and Youth Services to deliver community engagement in countryside and open space regeneration projects, events and education programme.
	Empower local people to have greater choice and influence over local decision making and a greater role in public service delivery.	To involve "friends of" groups, the Medway Urban Parks and Greenspaces Forum, Medway Allotments Federation, Sports Council, Medway Countryside Forum and Greenspace Conference in the work of Greenspace Services and to mainstream customer survey questionnaires results when reviewing service plans.
	Increase the number of volunteers recruited and working in Medway.	To promote volunteer activity in the management of country parks, open spaces and events.
	Cleaner, greener and safer public spaces.	To raise awareness of this strategy and to promote greater investment and implementation.
	Improving the local street scene.	To implement new grounds maintenance and the supporting Quality Management Framework plus involvement in quality assurance schemes such as Britain in Bloom.
	Improving the key services for our customers.	To receive, hear and respond to customer needs and desires when delivering and enhancing Medway's countryside and open space resource.
	Protecting the countryside and open spaces.	To promote schemes (Green Grid) and partnerships that raises awareness and promote further enjoyment, celebration and access to Medway's countryside and open space resource. To meet the standards and targets set out in this strategy.

# Developing a Strategy - Research and Consultation

Section 2 provides a summary of the research and consultation that underpins the strategy. This research is important in the formation of this strategy as it both increases knowledge of local need and provides an evidence base for the formation of key outcomes and headline actions. The research and consultation undertaken has been tailored to suit the user group (e.g. young people) or facility (e.g. quality audit of parks and amenity spaces).

Common key findings have indicated the important relationship between customer satisfaction and the desire for consistent and high quality management. Negative issues of vandalism and anti-social behaviour are consistently noted as factors spoiling user experience. We have been made aware that users are keen to be involved in decision making (Statement of Intent, 2003) and from Medway Urban Parks and Green Spaces Forum responses.

## Greenspace Services Statement of Intent (2003)

In 2003, copies of the Greenspace Services Statement of Intent were distributed to stakeholders, partners and local communities. The council received over 120 responses, which confirmed that people in Medway believe that clean, safe, and attractive green spaces are important. It confirmed that people 81% of respondents want to become involved in decision-making and be kept informed on how the countryside and open space resource is being managed. The feedback also showed that 85% of respondents believe that clean, safe and attractive parks, countryside and open spaces are important to a good quality of life.

## Greenspace Conferences (2003 and 2004)

Greenspace Services organised conferences in 2003 and 2004 to aid communication and engagement in countryside and open space management. Both of these conferences consisted of a morning session with presentations from local forums and Greenspace officers on open space issues. Afternoon sessions consisted of workshops in which all attendees had an opportunity to address a specific open space or countryside issue. These workshops were led by forums or key users groups such as the Medway Youth Parliament who also chaired the 2004 conference.

Consistent messages from the two conferences included:

- The need to improve the provision and management of facilities for young people
- The need to ensure that the countryside and open space resource is protected from loss to housing
- The need to encourage new users into allotments and parks
- The need for an over-arching strategy promoting the protection and management of Medway's countryside and open space resource
- The need to tackle the impact of vandalism and anti-social behaviour on open spaces across Medway
- The need to protect and enhance wildlife resource

## Playing Pitch Study, 2003

The Playing Pitch study, undertaken in 2003 assessed the quality and accessibility of outdoor pitches and formal sport provision across Medway. It concluded that:

- Outdoor sport provision makes up 330 ha of the open space network (about 20%) and, by 2016, there is likely to be a 112-hectare shortfall in provision

- The quality of outdoor sports provision was “poor” to “very poor” - no pitches were considered to be 'excellent' quality and numerous pavilions were rated as being very poor
- The majority of residents live within the recommended 1.2km from an outdoor sports facility

In the period since this study was undertaken leading up to adoption of this strategy, measures have been taken to improve the quality of outdoor sport provision. This includes an improved specification for sports pitch management in the grounds maintenance contract, and the funding for provision of a temporary pavilion at Borstal. Whilst improvements have been made, this strategy establishes actions to further enhance quality of provision.

## **Play Area User Survey and independent Children's Play and Youth Audit (2005)**

An extensive survey was undertaken to capture the experience of play area users. This concluded that the location, accessibility and safety of play areas were considered to be the most important qualities for open spaces.

Overall the Play Areas User Survey suggested that users feel the variety, quality, condition and cleanliness of play areas and equipment is poor. The only aspect the users felt was generally adequate was the layout of play spaces. The majority of parents would not let their children play out on their own and the majority of respondents felt that their local play area does not cater well for supervising adults.

The survey suggested that two thirds of the respondents have no problem getting to their local play area due to problems such as busy roads. All but two respondents felt that there is not enough provision for young people in their local play area.

## **MORI Poll (2004) / Citizens Panel (2006)**

The 2004 Mori poll on Medway Council services revealed that 72% of residents were satisfied with the quality and cleanliness of the open space provision in Medway. One of the key aims of this strategy is to ensure that this satisfaction rating improves.

To complement and update the BVPI satisfaction rating, Greenspace Services commissioned a more detailed survey through the Citizens Panel (March 2006), which focussed on country parks, countryside sites, parks and play areas. The membership of the Citizen Panel has been established to ensure that it is representative of Medway demographic profile. A postal survey was sent to all members of the panel. Of the 1,485 questionnaires, 801 were completed and returned - a response rate of 54%. The questionnaire was divided into four sections; country parks; parks and play areas; countryside sites; and priorities for investment.

One of the conclusions from the Citizens' Panel 06 was that visitors enjoyed the country parks, due to the high quality management and permanent ranger service, but thought that the countryside sites and urban parks, which have fewer dedicated visitor facilities, variable management and less evident staff, were less enjoyable. In particular:

- The country parks received the highest approval ratings both overall and in terms of the individual facilities and services covered by the questionnaire. The overall approval rating for country parks was very high, with 80% rating them as “good” / “very good”
- Users are less satisfied with the quality of parks and play areas due to poor maintenance, lack of facilities and a general perception of vandalism and anti-social behaviour
- 66% of countryside sites were rated as “good” / “very good”
- Just over half of Medway residents visited a countryside site (a site owned by Medway Council and managed for wildlife and passive recreation - e.g. Watts Meadow or Great Lines) in the last 12 months and 41% of visitors went to a site less than once a month

- Of those never going to a countryside site, 17% said they had too little time and 17% said that they had too little information. This illustrates the need:
  - 1) to 'sell' the value of these sites to encourage more visits and
  - 2) to improve communication and signing of these sites.

## **Country Park Audits (2005)**

The Country Parks User Survey 2005 (Riverside and Capstone Farm) found that users generally visit Country Parks once every two to three months, although each has a core set of users who visit once a week. Almost three-quarters of users travelled further than two miles to visit the sites and more than 8 out of 10 travelled to the sites by car. Visitors most commonly use the spaces for walking, exercise, dog walking and picnics. There is also a significant set of users whose primary purpose for visiting is to observe wildlife. The cafés were stated as being an important draw for users, with 16% coming specifically to use this facility. The age of country park users is encouragingly broad, although common age groups are between 16-24 and then over 65 years old. This information will be used to inform future on site interpretation, marketing initiatives and development opportunities.

## **Park Audits (2005)**

Quality Audit: This has been designed to evaluate the quality of designated parks and amenity spaces and is intended principally to provide qualitative data. The Parks Audit was based on a sample size of 44 sites. The audit methodology was derived from the Greater London Authority's recommendations, using PPG 17 typology. Keyfindings included the fact that many park facilities are not appropriate to the parks size and location, that park furniture is not considered well designed and that maintenance is generally poor. Cleanliness was considered satisfactory and the larger parks were thought to offer more exciting places.

The responses below illustrate the linkage between the findings of the above consultations and the formation of the proposed strategy outcomes.

## **Response**

### **Outcome One - Providing more high quality facilities**

Responds to the need to deliver high quality facilities and to maintain or improve customer satisfaction rates. This is particularly true for outdoor sports provision, allotments and play areas.

### **Outcome Two - Improved monitoring and management**

Responds to the need to improve management structures and procedures in order to maintain or improve satisfaction rates. Examples include the need to improve management of play areas to reduce the impact of vandalism, and the need to improve sports pitch quality.

### **Outcome Three - Prioritised investments**

Responds to the need to determine how Greenspace Services and its partners will invest in Medway's countryside and open spaces to improve management and user experience across all interests.

### **Outcome Four: Improved protection and conservation**

Responds to the need to maintain and enhance a critical mass of wildlife, countryside and open space across Medway in order to meet biodiversity, landscape and recreational needs.

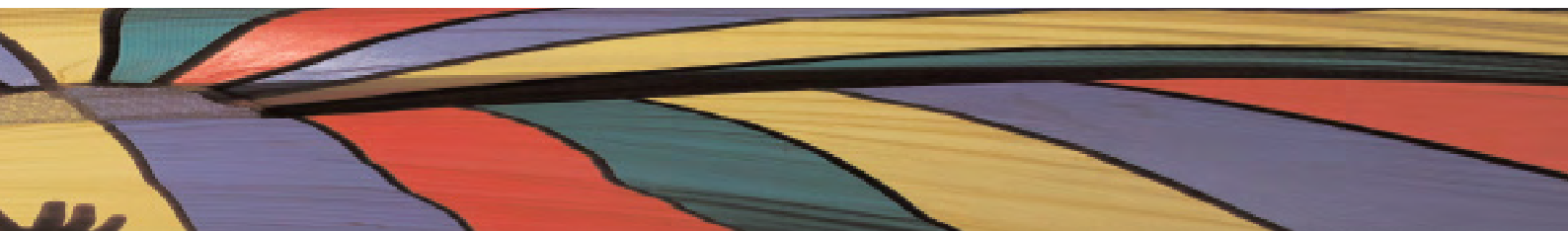


### **Outcome Five - More open spaces contributing directly to regeneration**

Responds to the need to establish strong and positive links to the regeneration agenda in order to deliver sustainable communities and to ensure that existing and new communities benefit from access to positive countryside and open space.

### **Outcome Six - Greater celebration and engagement**

Responds to the desire of local people to have an involvement in managing and promoting the use of countryside and open spaces across Medway.



# Medway's Wildlife & Countryside - A Global Treasure and a Local Resource

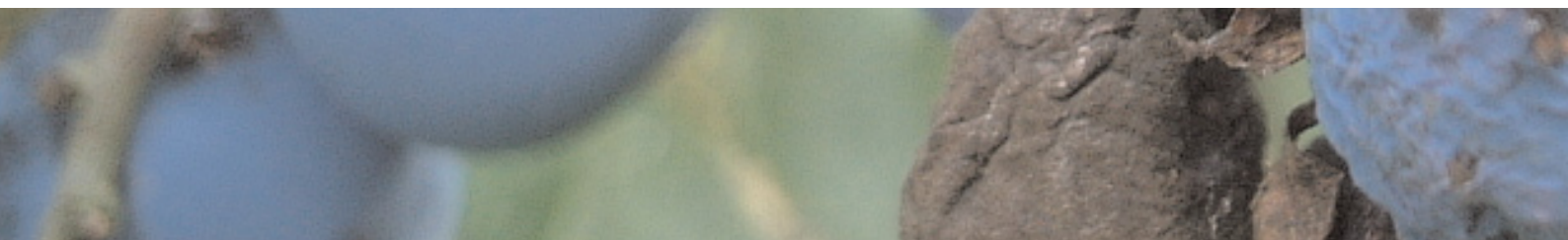
## Policy Statement

Medway Council, as statutory planning and highway authority, will ensure that local people, officers and members are aware and mindful of the intrinsic and wider values of wildlife and countryside in Medway's rural, urban and fringe areas. This strategy recognises and celebrates the positive contribution that wildlife, landscape and access interests offer to sustainable regeneration programmes and quality of life initiatives. Medway Council will ensure that appropriate processes and resources are secured and sustained in order not only to meet legal responsibilities but also to appropriately enhance designated landscapes and protected sites.

## Overview of Wildlife & Countryside in Medway

Medway's wildlife, countryside and landscapes are as impressive as they are diverse. This section promotes Medway's countryside as a positive asset to rural and urban communities and sets out what we need to do to ensure that this finite resource makes an even greater contribution to wildlife, image, farming, access and regeneration, quality of life, water resource and air quality management. However, it cannot add a tier of planning policy to assist the protection of the international and national sites. The Council will work closely with government agencies and non-governmental organisations, to ensure that the protection of important assets is consistent with national and international environmental policy framework. Over 50% of the Medway land area is rural in nature - this figure rises to 80% when including the Thames and Medway rivers and estuary. Furthermore:

- Some 60% of non-developed land area is covered by international, national or local environmental designations
- Our marshes and estuaries are of global importance on a par with the Coto Donano, the Danube Delta and the Camargue, and support internationally significant numbers of over wintering wetland birds, which feed on Medway's mudflats and saltings
- The North Kent Marshes support nationally significant populations of water voles, a species which has seen a 95% decrease in geographic area over the last 30 years.
- The landscapes of the Kent Downs are recognised as being of National Importance, AONB status means the area is on a par legally with a National Park.
- The countryside of Medway supports numerous rare and protected species - including orchids on the chalk grassland and the corncockle at Ranscombe Farm.
- Medway land area includes 42% of Kent's mudflats, 33% of Kent's saltmarsh, and 36% of Kent's grazing marsh. These figures illustrate the need to ensure conservation in Medway to help achieve county and national targets
- Our ancient woodlands support important populations of nightingale and plants such as orchids, bluebells and hellebores.





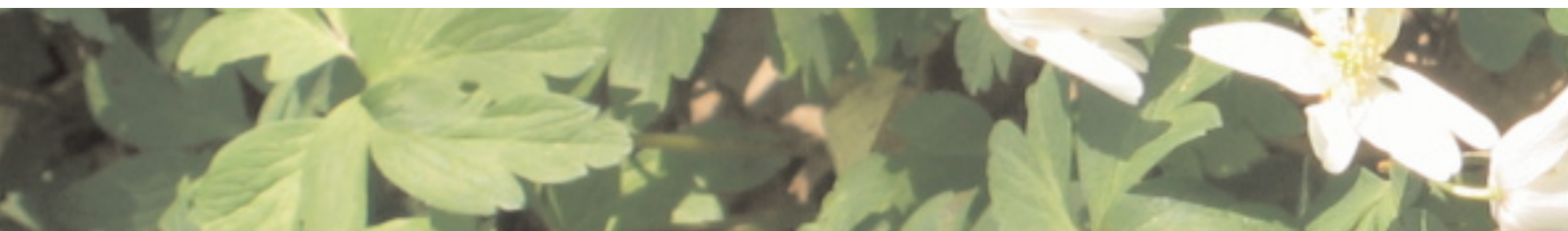
## SWOT Analysis

A SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) analysis on Medway's wildlife and countryside has been undertaken with partners. This analysis ensures that the strategy and supporting headline actions capture all policy areas necessary to further the goal of promoting positive land use planning and the protection and enhancement of the countryside.

**Table three: SWOT Analysis Medway Countryside**

### Strengths

- Medway benefits from a wide variety of habitats representing 16 of 22 listed in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan
- The countryside supports a good representation of designated biodiversity and landscape sites from international to European, national and local.
- The countryside and urban open spaces support numerous rare and scarce species
- The Medway and Thames Estuaries create a uniquely important feature in Kent supporting biodiversity, industry and heritage interests
- Landscape and recreation benefits relating to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is recognised as nationally important akin to a national park
- The creation and support for strategic landscape and access schemes such as the Four Parish Project in Grain, Capstone Valley and the Valley of Visions HLF Bid
- The potential of high quality countryside areas to support rural and urban regeneration, recreational facilities and biodiversity
- The diverse nature and distribution of two well managed country parks and 1 farm reserve
- Recognition of the intrinsic value of countryside in PPS9
- Recognition of importance of Green Grid and green infrastructure in Greening the Gateway Strategy and Thames Gateway Parklands
- An established and protected Rights of Way Network with new routes being added through Ranscombe Farm and ROWIP
- Presence of long distance routes (North Downs Way, Saxon Shore Way and Medway Valley Path) linking to other districts and towns
- Two country parks offering 'safe access' for many people
- PPS7 planning policies for rural areas
- Recognition in the Regional Economic Strategy of the quality of the natural environment in relation to achieving RES Work Strands
- Countryside and open space assets meet majority of Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards except sites within 300m of 100% of the population
- Positive strategic approach to planning and protecting countryside and landscape resource. Partnership working with neighbouring local authorities on access and countryside initiatives.



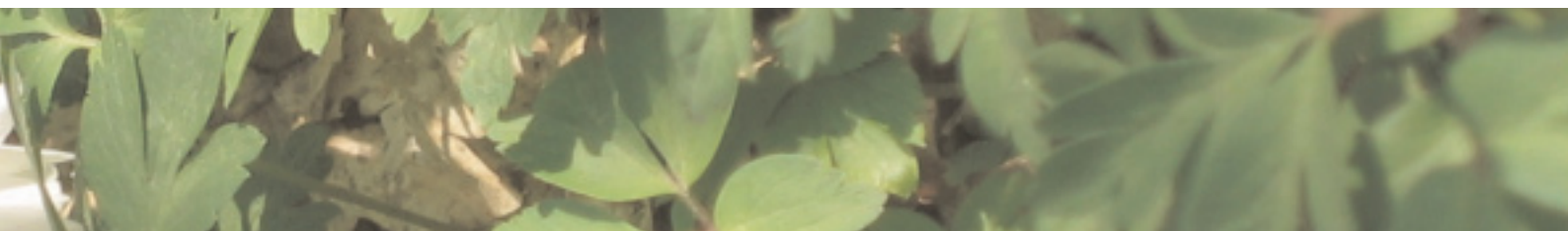


## Weaknesses

- Despite establishment of the Kent and Medway Biological Record Centre there is a lack of biological records available for non-designated sites
- Fragmentation of some habitats (woodlands) threatening viability of wildlife
- Lack of resources and suitable organisations in place to undertake countryside and landscape management and decline in traditional management techniques such as coppicing
- Fluctuating staff resources and budgets have negative impact on consistency of effort
- Lack of strategic recognition in policy documents of countryside's inherent value
- Lack of knowledge of the strategic approach to planning and protecting the countryside resource
- Significant urban and rural population with poor access (by walking) to semi-natural habitats - at present only 27% with 300 metres
- Some key council countryside sites without up to date management plans
- Some Council managed sites of little importance for nature conservation or recreation. Limited resources better targeted elsewhere
- Lack of awareness of planning enforcement opportunities to tackle poorly managed privately owned sites.
- Fluctuations in agricultural profitability.
- Lack of influence on farm diversification, fragmentation and agricultural habitat neglect
- ROWIP - poor links in places, shortage of bridleways, off road cycle routes
- Heavy local reliance on the car to reach countryside including Riverside and Capstone Farm Country Parks
- Limited public transport links to the countryside

## Opportunities

- Adoption of the Wildlife, Countryside Open Spaces Strategy and supporting Local Development Framework
- Survey and identification of all key wildlife sites and protection through appropriate site designation - Local Nature Reserve or Local Wildlife Site
- Partnership work with local communities, landowners, farmers and others to protect and enhance more areas of important habitat
- Habitat restoration and creation to contribute to the Kent BAP targets
- The identification and promotion of mechanisms to help deliver policies to protect the countryside - PPS7
- Opportunities to create informal urban open space integral to redevelopment on brown and greenfield sites
- Partnership initiatives such as the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan, Medway Swale Estuary Partnership and Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway
- Proposals for green infrastructure investment at key location such as the Cliffe Reserve, Horsted Valley and Great Lines.



- Support and guidance from community initiatives such as Medway Countryside Forum and “friends of” groups
- Promotion of agricultural policy reforms that support sympathetic land management and higher environmental standards
- Green tourism based on countryside assets supporting rural regeneration and economic development
- Increased promotion of circular routes and strategic links for walking and riding
- Improved promotion of public transport links
- Promotion of Green Grid initiative to achieve access and biodiversity gain.

### Threats

- Wildlife disturbance and habitat damage due to inappropriate recreation usage, visitor pressure and conflict of use
- Habitat loss due to physical development, poor management and coastal erosion
- Ineffective planning mechanism / awareness leading to damage to designated, non-designated sites and greenfield sites
- Climate change and sea level rise - MONARCH\*\*
- Negative perception of urban fringe area due to acquisition of land for its 'hope value' and subsequent poor management
- Fragmentation of access routes, sites and habitats by major infrastructure such as transport links
- Increasing population resulting in additional recreational demand and pressure
- Damage to access routes and sensitive sites by uncontrolled off road vehicle usage
- Limited effectiveness of rural PROW due to poor management or agricultural practice
- Limited public awareness of Medway's important countryside assets



## Landscape, Biodiversity and Countryside

This section considers Medway's landscape and ecological resources in terms of protected areas, habitats and species and by reference to the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan. It seeks to raise awareness of the wildlife and nature conservation resource in Medway but is not meant to be a comprehensive guide to the wildlife interest of the area. Medway's Wildlife & Countryside can be measured at international, national, regional & local levels of provision:

### International

#### Special Protection Areas



There are 79 internationally important ecological sites (Special Protection Areas - SPAs) designated under the EC Bird Directive 1979 Article 4 in England covering 5.5% of the country. In Medway no less than 28% of the total area is designated as SPA, mainly the mudflat, freshwater grazing marsh and the saltmarsh. These valuable habitats are given the strongest and most robust protection available under the Conservation (Natural Habitat and Wild Species) Regulation 1994 and the Ramsar Convention (1971). This strategy recognises the protection offered to these habitats by the Medway Local Plan and emerging Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

The goal of SPAs is to preserve and protect biodiversity of European importance. Sites are designated due to the presence of internationally important habitats and species. The objective of SPA designation is to ensure not only protection but that there is no net loss of habitat or decrease in biodiversity. This state is termed 'favourable condition'. Habitat Regulations 48 - 53 require Medway Council, as a competent authority, to make an assessment of plans or projects that may impact upon the SPAs. This could include development upstream of the estuary, encroachment on to mudflats, water extraction / discharges and marina development.

SPA Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Support measures and partnerships that promote positive management of areas of international importance.	2008 - 16	Outcome 4: Improved protection and conservation



Sites of Special Scientific Interest



The nationally important conservation sites are termed Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). There are eight SSSIs in Medway, which cover 7660ha, or 32.5% of the land area. By comparison, the average percentage land cover for SSSI in England is 7%. Natural England, formerly English Nature, has a national target to ensure that 95% of SSSIs are in a favourable or unfavourable and recovering condition. By 2010 a site is considered to be in favourable condition if it is able to support the wildlife interests for which it is designated.

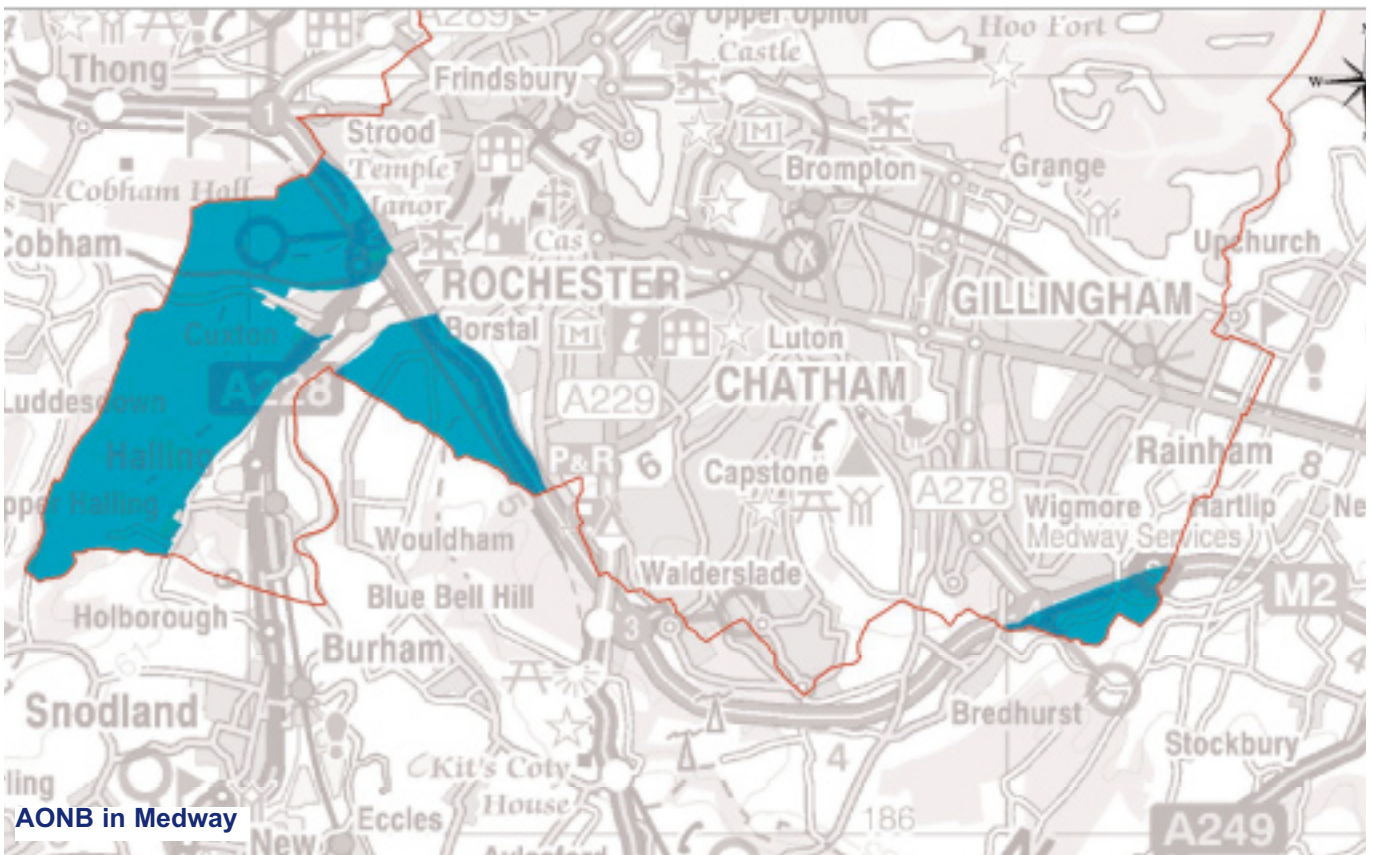
In 2002, English Nature completed a survey of SSSIs to determine their health. The most recent data available from Natural England indicates that of the eight SSSIs in Medway, 33% (2590 ha) were considered as in favourable condition, and 66% (5070 ha) in unfavourable condition. The majority of woodlands in Medway, which account for 33% of SSSIs, are in favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition. The 66% of SSSIs that are in unfavourable condition are estuarine habitats (littoral sediment) with this largely being due to saltmarsh erosion due to coastal squeeze against sea defences. The condition of SSSIs will continue to be monitored as a core Medway Local Development Framework sustainability indicator.

Medway Council owns SSSIs at Ranscombe Farm (extensive woodland) and land adjacent to Riverside Country Park (estuarine habitat). The Council is working with partners to ensure that these sites continue moving towards favourable condition. The Medway Local Plan and Draft Local Development Framework affords protection to SSSIs from development. However, the SWOT analysis has identified the need to consider how best to offer protection to SSSIs adjacent to new development sites such as Chattenden. Such sites may be damaged by increased visitor activity. Medway Council will work with conservation agencies and developers to seek a mutually beneficial solution to protection of SSSIs from the indirect pressures of adjacent development through the development of buffer zones.

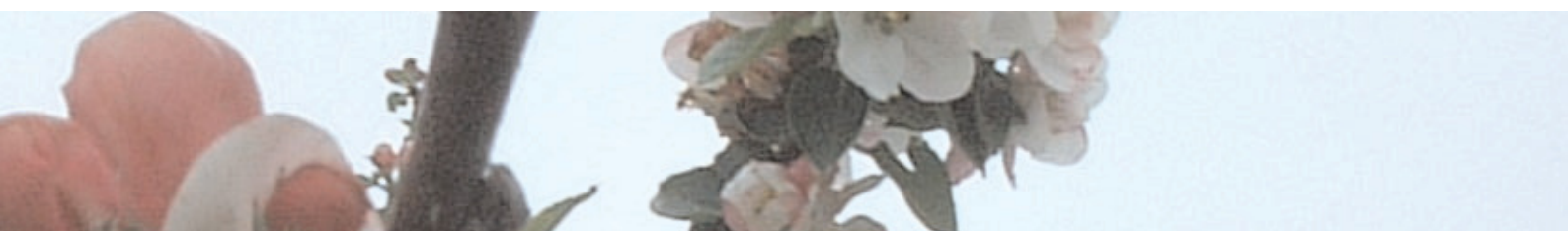


SSSI Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Resource positive management of Medway owned SSSIs to ensure that they continue moving towards favourable condition and support measures and partnerships that promote positive management of areas of national importance	2008 - 2016	Outcome 4: Improved protection and conservation
SSSI Headline Action (2)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Work with the planning framework and government agencies to promote a buffer zone concept to protect SSSIs from the pressures of adjacent development.	2008 - 2012	Outcome 4: Improved protection and conservation

### The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



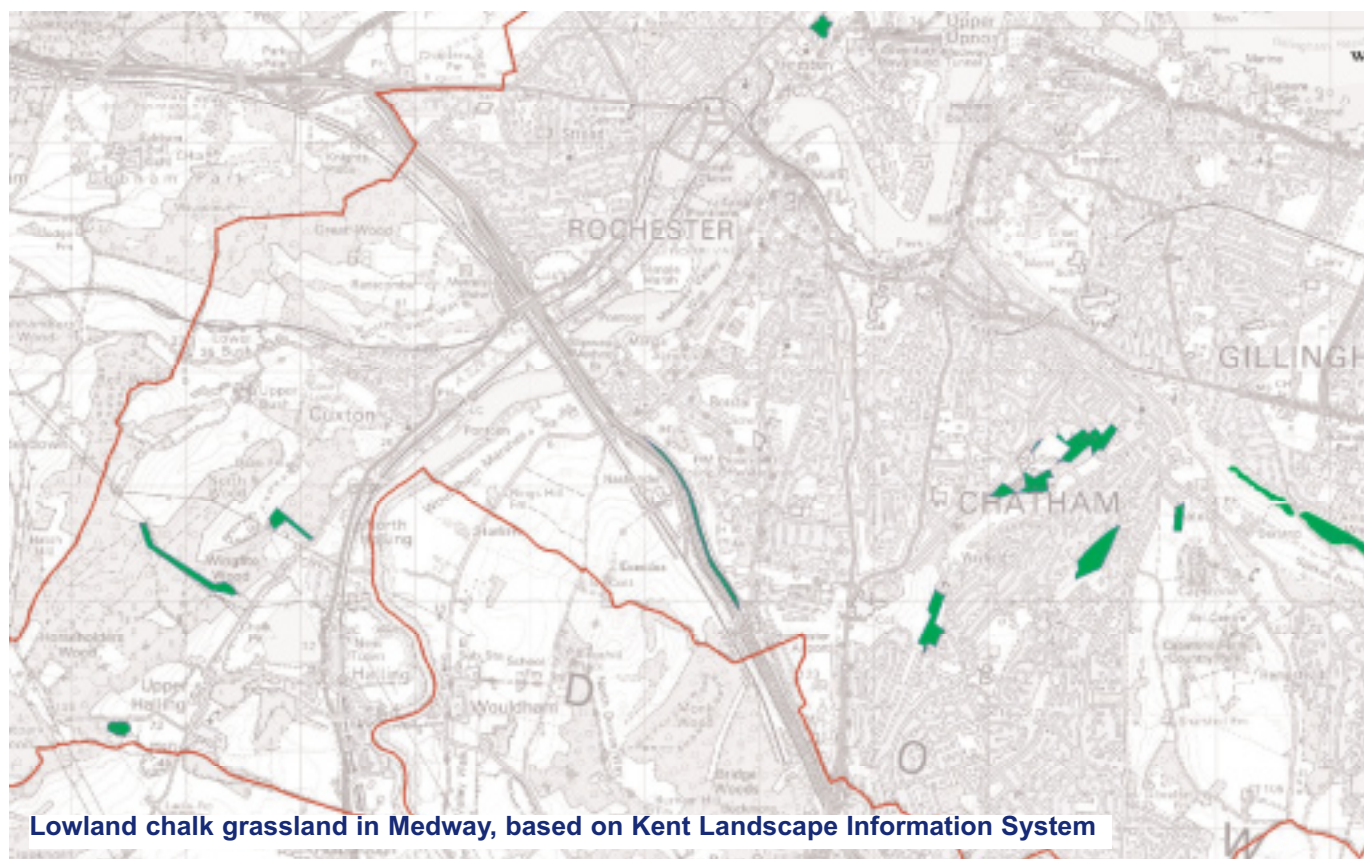
The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty covers 5% of Medway and is the fifth largest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in England and Wales. The purpose of the AONB (the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949) is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The steep slopes and dry river valleys of the Kent Downs are the main focus for the designation. These features are particularly valuable where they support chalk grassland and native deciduous woodlands. Other qualities of note are views from the escarpment, pastoral scenery, parklands, villages, churches and castles. The economic and social activity that contributes to the landscape and natural beauty is fundamental to shaping the future of the AONB. Policies, projects and programmes developed in Medway should respect landscape quality and promote social and economic activity that invests in and sustains the AONB landscape quality.



The Kent Downs AONB Management Plan (April 2004) promotes policies and actions to ensure that the natural beauty and special character of the landscape are recognised, maintained and strengthened. The management plan ensures the protection and management of the AONB is akin to that of a National Park. Medway Council has a legal 'duty of regard' with respect to its activities and functions in the AONB. The Council will continue to support the protection offered to the Kent Downs and will work closely with partners to secure additional investment in environmental, social and economic interests. It will support works to increase marketing of the downs through green tourism initiatives and will promote positive images of the downs in Medway.

AONB Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
To exercise the Council's 'Duty of Regard' for the interests and qualities of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.	2008 - 2016	Outcome 4: Improved protection and conservation

**Lowland Calcareous (Chalk) Grassland**



These are flower-rich grasslands that grow on the chalk of the North Downs. Fifty percent of the global resource of lowland calcareous grassland occurs in the UK, and Kent supports 5% of the national resource. Of this 5%, just over 10% occurs in Medway - a total of 60ha making this habitat internationally important. There are opportunities to create more. The Kent Lifescapes Information System has identified that an additional 304ha of species rich grassland can be created in Medway - this would increase our resource by 500%. The current Kent BAP target for chalk grassland is to create 249ha by 2010.

The chalk soils are low in nutrients, free draining and often occur on south facing slopes; hot dry places that are capable of supporting high species diversity. These grassland sites require management in the form of grazing or mowing. Medway's premier lowland calcareous site is at Darland Banks and sites such as the Great Lines, Daisy and Coney Banks and the Horsted Valley are now being managed to promote greater enjoyment of these sites for wildlife and people. The urban location of our existing calcareous grasslands results in high levels of incidents of damage to fencing and to livestock. An inability to overcome these problems places a major threat to the council's ability to support the Kent BAP and meet Countryside and Rights of Way Act duties. These chalk grasslands sites help define the structure of the proposed Green Grid in Medway and as such are set to be far more in the public eye.



Greenspace Services will continue to support the Kent Wildlife Trust in managing the lowland calcareous sites across Medway, seek investment opportunities to support the improved management of existing sites, work through the Local Plan and LDF to seek protection of these sites from development and seek opportunities to create new chalk grassland in areas such as Capstone Valley, Cuxton and Halling.

**Species of importance:**

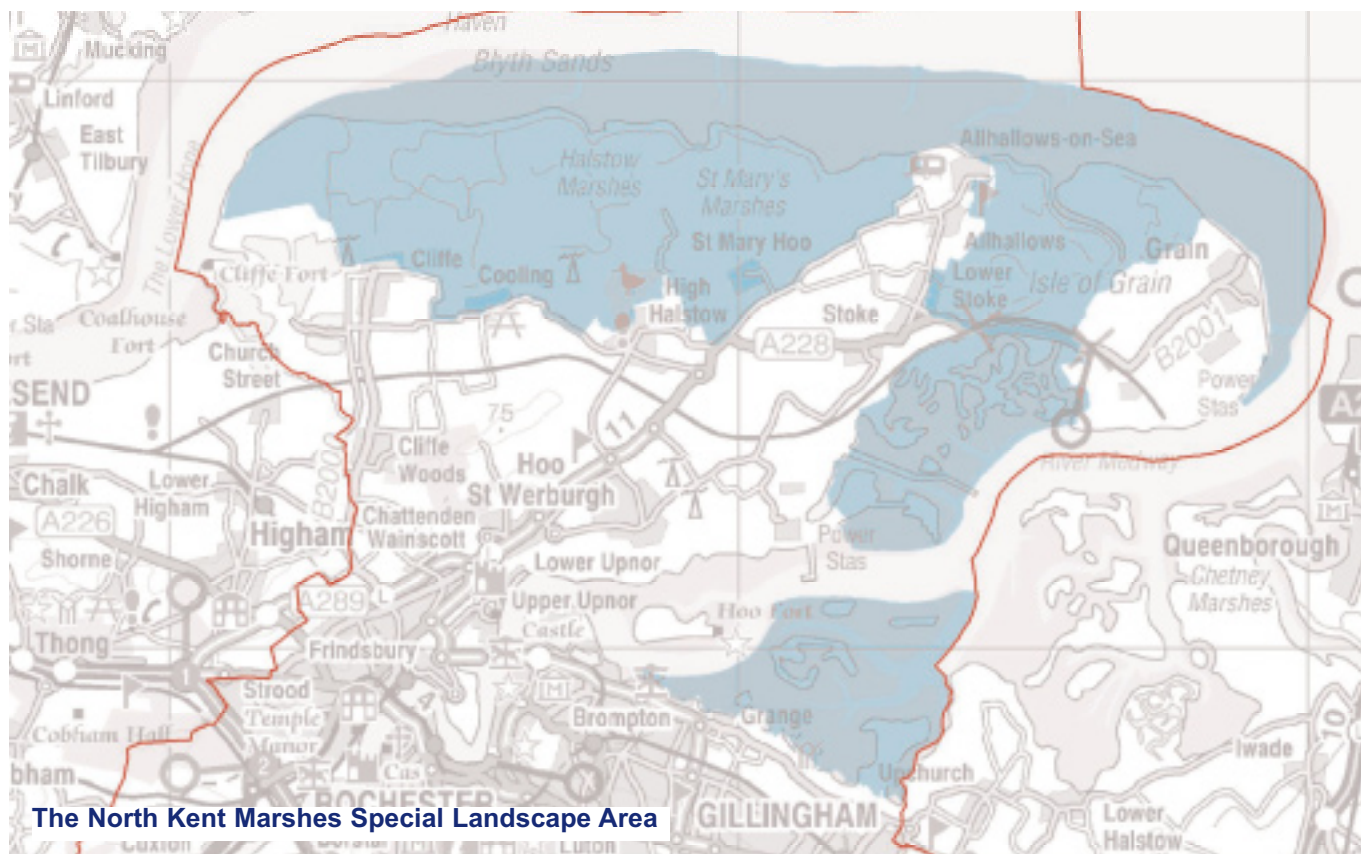
- Red Star Thistle - small population thrives amongst the longer uncut grasses on the plateau and slopes of the Great Lines and at Darland Banks
- Man Orchid - a Kent and Medway speciality found in chalk grassland such as Darland Banks and Princes Park (here it actually occurs along the road verges!)
- Corncockle - a very rare UK plant now only found in one field at Ranscombe Farm, Cuxton. This is the last remaining native site for corncockle in the UK
- Broad-leaved Cudweed - a nationally rare plant that is on the UK BAP species list and found growing at Ranscombe Farm, Cuxton
- Skylark - a county priority species that is found breeding amongst the rougher grassland sites across Medway such as Great Lines
- Adonis and Small Blue butterflies breed on important calcarous grassland sites such as Darland Banks

Calcareous Grassland Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
To establish a calcarous grassland management plan.	2008 - 2012	Outcome 3: Prioritised investments



## Regional

### The North Kent Marshes Special Landscape Area



Located in North Medway, the North Kent Marshes Special Landscape Area occupies 19% of rural Medway. The landscape of the North Kent Marshes is of county importance and is recognised as a Special Landscape Area in the Local Plan and Kent and Medway Structure Plan.

The marshland landscape, with its broad and low horizons is of particular importance for wetland birds, which visit in tens of thousands during the winter. Key features of the landscape are their sense of remoteness, the ditches that form wet fences controlling the movement of people and cattle, and the winter flooding which creates wetlands for feeding birds and breeding.

The remoteness of the North Kent Marshes is a product of its separation from urban Medway. The rural hinterland, which acts as a buffer between the marshes and urban Medway, provides this physical separation and therefore also requires careful management. The RSPB, Friends of North Kent Marshes and Medway Council are working together to increase awareness of and interest in this landscape by promoting greater awareness through the promotion of green tourism initiatives. All partners agree that care must be taken to ensure that the key qualities of this landscape are recognised and not compromised.

North Kent Marshes Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
To provide partnership support to the delivery of the "Great Expectations - Discovering the North Kent Marshes Area" programme.	2008 - 2016	Outcome 6: Greater celebration and engagement



## Biodiversity - The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

### Policy Statement

**Medway Council recognises the importance of protecting, managing and enhancing wildlife habitats and species across Medway and will work through the planning system and Green Grid to prioritise the management and protection of BAP habitats to raise awareness of the value and importance of this resource to achieve and sustain economic, social and environmental growth.**

The UK Government is committed to a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. This commitment is recognised in the England Biodiversity Strategy, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and in Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) on Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. Appendix 3 provides details on the national indicator NI197 for local authorities and Local Authority Partnerships concerning improved / active management of local sites for biodiversity gain.

The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) establishes priorities for enhancing and maintaining Kent and Medway's wildlife and identifies appropriate delivery mechanisms. The partnership is chaired by the Kent Wildlife Trust and Natural England. Its objectives and outcomes are influenced by national and county priorities which are relevant to Medway. Kent County Council completed an audit of habitats and species in Kent in 2003. This audit enabled the Kent Biodiversity Partnership to develop targets for each of the BAP priorities through adopted action plans. Each action plan denotes the importance of conserving, enhancing and restoring the natural condition of a habitat, underpinned through partnership working. Medway Council will use the Kent BAP as a planning and management tool to support improved habitats and species development across its estate. A key priority will be to establish a framework to undertake baseline monitoring on a planned basis through the involvement of key stakeholder groups to confirm BAP habitats and species present within Medway. The Kent BAP will be promoted through the development of Green Grid and adoption of site management plans.

Of the 22 listed Kent BAP habitats, Medway has 16 demonstrating the significance of the area for biodiversity enhancement based on detailed knowledge of the baseline status.

BAP Headline Action (1)	Timescales	Key Outcome
Support partnership framework for baseline monitoring for key habitats and species within the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan, and work in partnership to implement management to enhance habitats and species across Medway.	2008 - 2012	Outcome 2: Improved monitoring and management

### The Greater Thames and Medway Estuaries

The grazing marsh, mudflats, saltmarsh and tidal water of the Medway estuary are of worldwide significance due to the high number of feeding, roosting and breeding birds they support. 30% (74,000) of Medway residents live within 1km of the estuary and each winter over 70,000 wetland birds flock to the same estuary for food and shelter making it the tenth most important in the UK. Key species are shelduck, pintail, marsh harrier, little tern, and avocet. Water voles are still found amongst the ditches of the grazing marsh, but have nationally experienced a 95% decrease in distribution in the last 20 years. The internationally important wintering bird populations rely on both the mudflats for feeding and marshlands for feeding and roosting at high tide. The latest figures show that the Medway Estuary supports 26,770 wintering water birds (5-year mean 2000/01 - 2005/06). The Thames Estuary as a whole is the fourth most important estuary in the UK and supports 176,409 birds. All intertidal SSSI habitats in the Medway, and salt marsh fringing the Thames Estuary, are in unfavourable condition due to sea level rise and coastal squeeze. The estuarine habitats are affected by sea level rise (8mm per year), by proposals for managed realignment as part of a long-term strategic review of flood risk and by disturbance. The RSPB advocates that compensatory habitat is provided for lost intertidal areas by managed realignment, but not at the expense of internationally designated freshwater areas.

Historically, the River Medway acted as a transport route and has over time developed a suite of unique military and industrial cultural assets, including Upnor Castle and the Great Lines, meaning it should be celebrated as a positive feature of Medway not seen as industrial and dirty. Twenty-six kilometres of the river are accessible by public right of way and 11% of Medway residents live within 500m of the River Medway. The Environment Agency state that water quality is good and improving - seals are now seen off Riverside Country Park and as far upstream as St. Mary's Island. Today's challenge is to positively join up proposals for transportation, environment protection and regeneration in a way that supports the positive long term management of this complex and valuable resource. The positive management of the inter-related agendas of regeneration and green grid is a key opportunity. Medway Council will work closely with the Environment Agency and Medway Renaissance Partnership to promote positive access along the banks of the River Medway. Key sites for activity are Temple Marsh, Grain Foreshore, Riverside Country Park, Gillingham Waterfront, Rochester Riverside and Halling Waterfront.

Medway Council will promote Riverside Country Park, Gillingham and the Cliffe Conservation Park (RSPB Reserve) as gateways to the North Kent Marshes - providing physical and intellectual access for all to this fantastic and important resource.

## Notable Species

- Avocet - once extinct in the UK, the avocet, has since 1948 started to become a more frequent sighting around coast and estuary. Avocets breed close to saline lagoons within the grazing marshes of North Kent. In Medway Avocets breed at Cliffe RSPB Reserve, Northward Hill and within the Medway Estuary. At other times of the year Avocet feed over the extensive mudflats of the Medway Estuary.
- Water Vole - a priority county and national biodiversity action plan species, which has a stronghold on the North Kent Marshes. Nationally, Water Vole populations have experienced a 95% decline in distribution over the last 20 years making the Medway population of great importance.

Estuaries Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Support Estuary Partnerships to deliver positive management and greater awareness of Medway and Thames estuarine resources.	2008 - 2016	Outcome 6: Greater celebration and engagement

## Local

### Brownfield sites (previously developed land)

The Local Development Framework Core Strategy states that 80% of planned development will occur on previously developed land. Such "brownfield" sites can often support rare plants, invertebrates and reptiles. Key Brownfield sites include Temple Marsh, Grain, Upper and Lower Lines, Rochester Riverside and Gillingham Waterfront. As promoted in the Medway Community Plan, More to Medway, Medway Council is committed to completing ecological surveys of brownfield sites to ensure that the planning process operates in full knowledge of ecological interests.

Brownfield Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Establish a framework for ecological surveys of Brownfield sites to ensure that where feasible the nature conservation interest of Brownfield sites is maintained during and after development.	2008 - 2012	Outcome 4: Improved protection and conservation



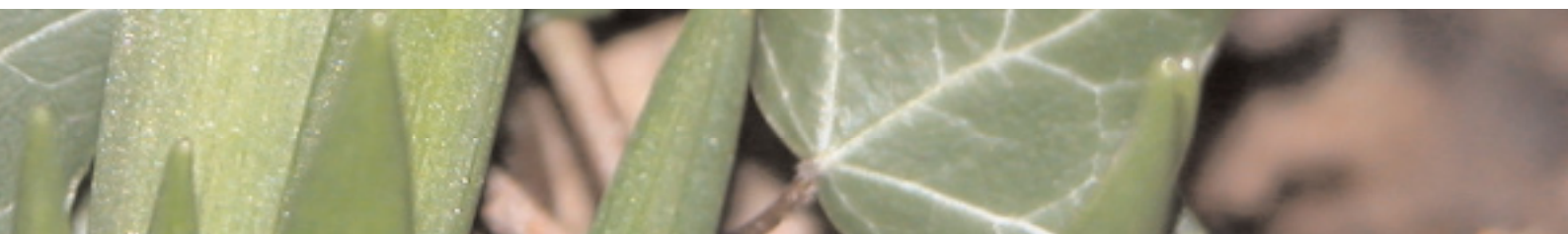
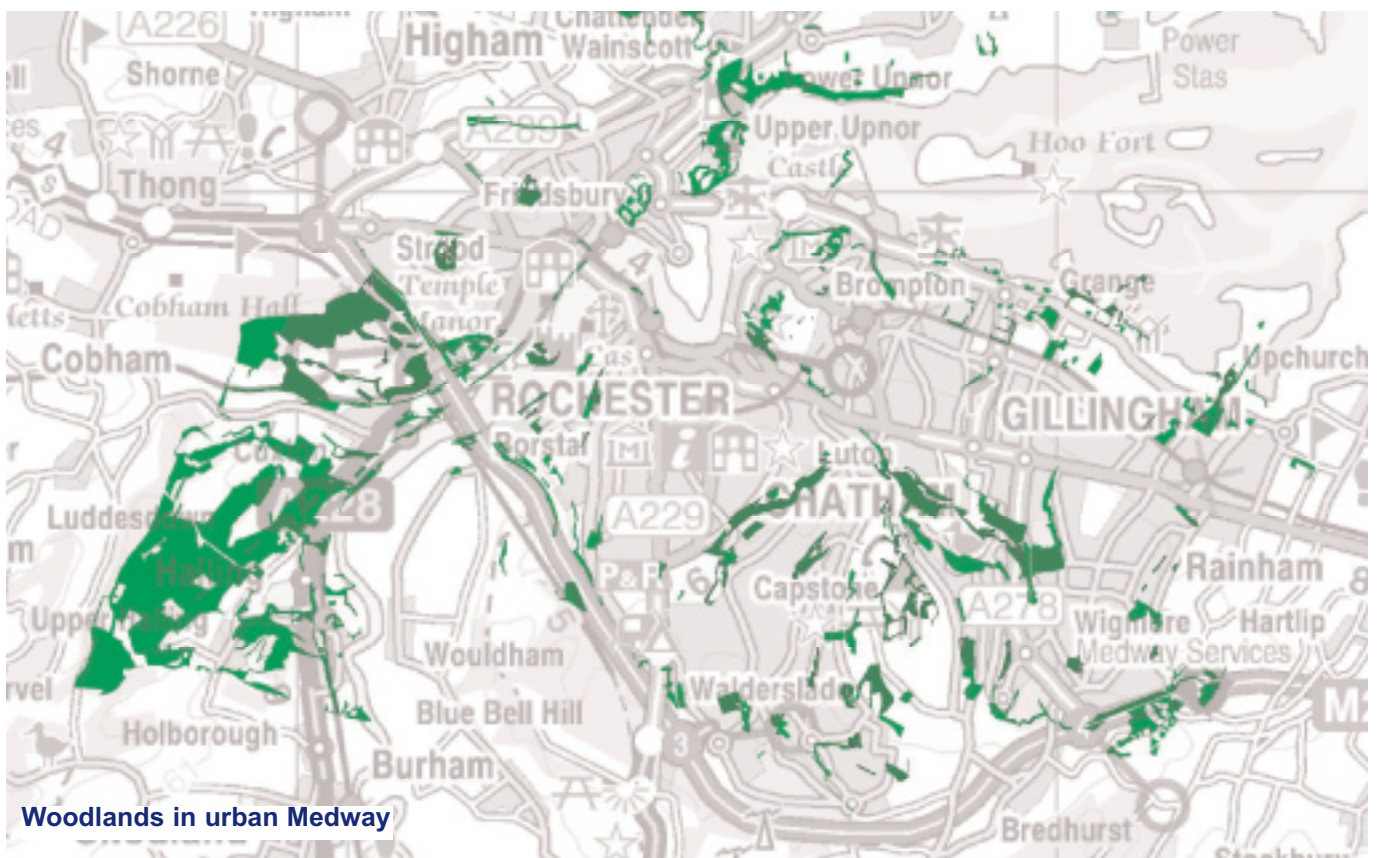
## Woodland

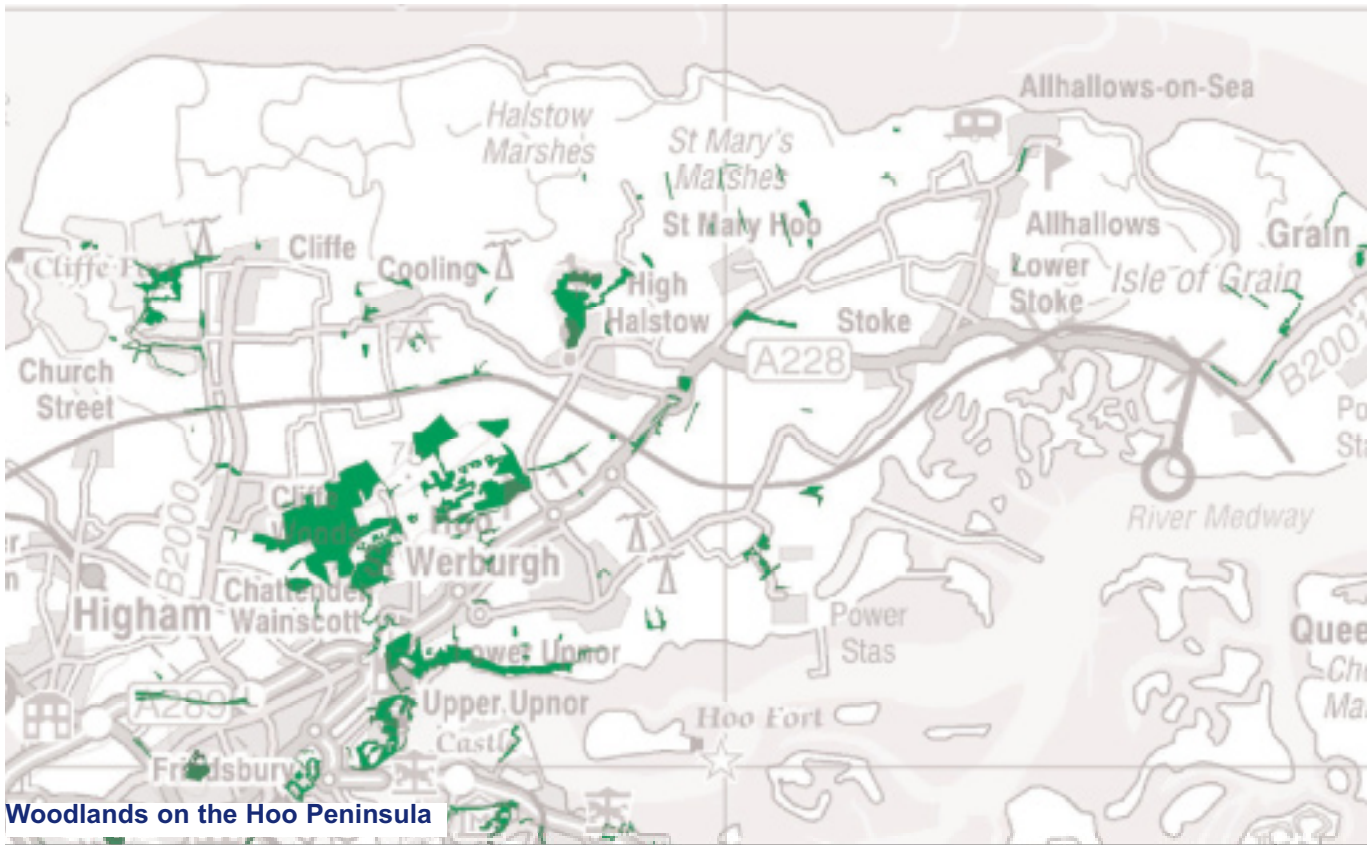
Pre 1960s, woodland cover in Medway stood at 30%. By 2006, this figure had fallen to 4%, significantly less than the UK average of 14%. However, in Medway, 98% of residents live within 1km of woodland, and 56% live within 5km of a 50ha woodland site. The important contribution of woodland to landscape value in Medway is illustrated in that 37% of woodlands occur in Areas of Local Landscape Importance and 38% within the Kent Downs AONB. The urban expansion into previously wooded landscape has created a situation where residents are living in close proximity to small, isolated but ecologically valuable woodlands. This increases the likelihood of management conflict caused by processes such as coppicing. Better management of woodlands is important if their ecological, landscape and cultural associations are to be retained. The positive management and protection of existing woodland is given a higher priority than the creation of new woodlands.

Future partnership actions will include promoting coppicing, accepting no loss of ancient woodland (over 400 years old), enhancing secondary woodland through the removal of sycamore and the planting of native species, decreasing the impact of fragmentation by targeting new planting to join existing valuable woodlands, ensuring nationally important woodlands are returned to favourable condition and identifying management objectives (conservation, landscape, economic and, or recreational) for all woodlands in Medway.

Positive management of woodland and scrub is beneficial for specific plants and birds. Of key importance in Medway is the nightingale population with summer migrants being heard during April and May amongst hawthorn and willow thickets along the River Medway. The Medway Valley (between M2 and M20), Hoo Peninsula (Cliffe, Northwood Hill, the Hogmarsh Valley and Chattenden), and Temple Marsh in Strood are all important areas for Nightingales. The current master plan for Temple Marsh has taken on board the need to preserve and enhance the Nightingale population. Current thoughts centre on retaining young scrub with dense cover alongside to ensure minimal disturbance.

Woodland Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Produce a Feasibility Study for the establishment of a Woodland Partnership.	2008 - 2012	Outcome 3: Prioritised investment





## Farmland

Agricultural census data (2004) shows that there are around 138 agricultural land holdings in Medway and that the biggest proportion of these are small non-commercial holdings and arable farms. The agricultural land classification shows that the greatest proportion of farmland is Grade 1 (excellent quality agricultural land) followed by Grade 3 (good to moderate quality agricultural land). There is relatively little Grade 2 land and pockets of Grade 4 (poor quality agricultural land) around Isle of Grain and the Cliffe coastal marshes. Agricultural trends show a change from arable farming (cereals) and top fruit (orchards) to grazing within the Medway area.

Since 2006, DEFRA have promoted two funding streams the Entry Level Scheme and Higher Level Stewardship. Both offer farmers and other land managers a programme of trigger payments in return for adopting land management practices that protect and develop environmentally beneficial forms of land management and support biodiversity. Medway currently receives funding for management of Horsted Farm, the Coney and Daisy Banks, and Darland Banks and will look to secure further funding through the new funding programmes over the lifecycle of the strategy. Focus will be on Capstone Valley, the Medway Valley (through Valley of Vision HLF Bid) and the Hoo Peninsula.

At a policy level the National Farmers Union (NFU) and Farm Wildlife & Advisory Group (FWAG) are actively promoting the "Year of Food and Farming" which is promoting healthy living by giving young people direct experience of the countryside, farming and food. A key component of this the production of "Why Farming Matters" education packs for primary and secondary schools. In addition FWAG are promoting a "Land manager" consultancy service that supports farms adopting Farm Biodiversity Action Plans and Habitat Management Plans.

As raised in the SWOT analysis there is a need to address the resource issues and the lack of a dedicated countryside management service in taking forward further positive work with farmers and landowners. Many areas of Kent are covered by countryside management services, which liaise with landowners, help secure funding agreements and also participate in practical works with volunteers. There is a need to develop a business model in conjunction with agencies such as FWAG and Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway to investigate development



of a Countryside Management Service for Medway and surrounding areas.

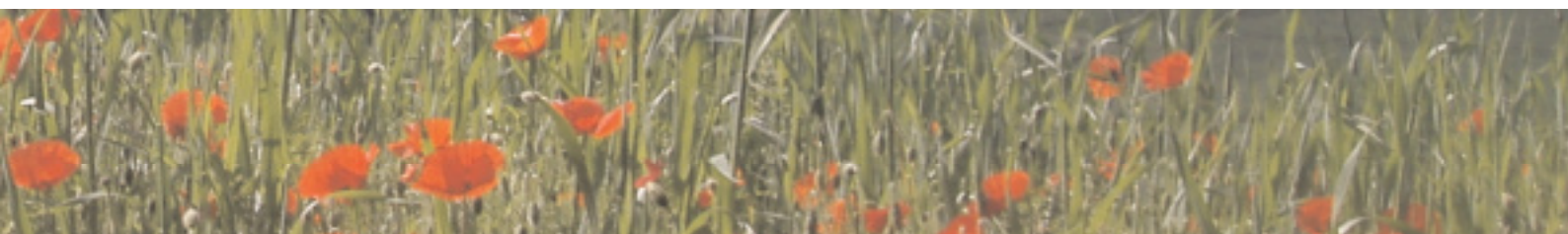
Farmland Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Work with Partners such as FWAG and Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway Initiative to investigate the costs and business case for a countryside management service.	2008 - 2012	Outcome 3: Prioritised investment

### Roadside Nature Reserves

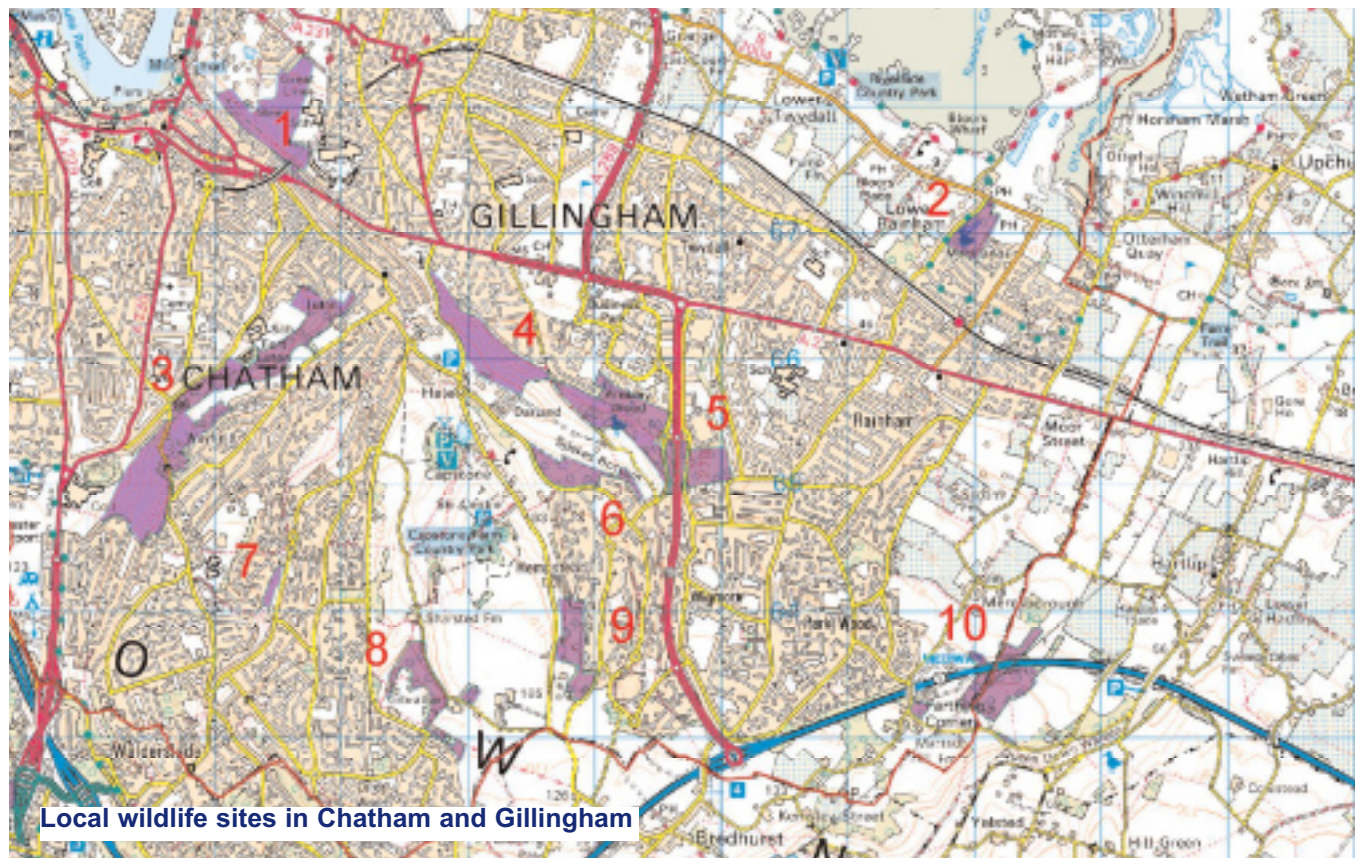
The Kent Road Verge Project was set up in 1994 to identify, protect and manage road verges which contain threatened habitats or wildlife. Of 130 Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs), totalling 55 miles in length in Kent, 19, totalling 7.7 miles, are in Medway.

The network of RNRs supports a range of scarce or threatened wildlife habitats, such as ancient woodland, chalk grassland, and heathland. Many RNRs are important for wild orchids, including the striking Greater Butterfly Orchid, the Man Orchid and even the resplendent Lady Orchid.

Roadside Nature Reserves Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Review management arrangements for RNRs	2008 - 2012	Outcome 2: Improved monitoring and management

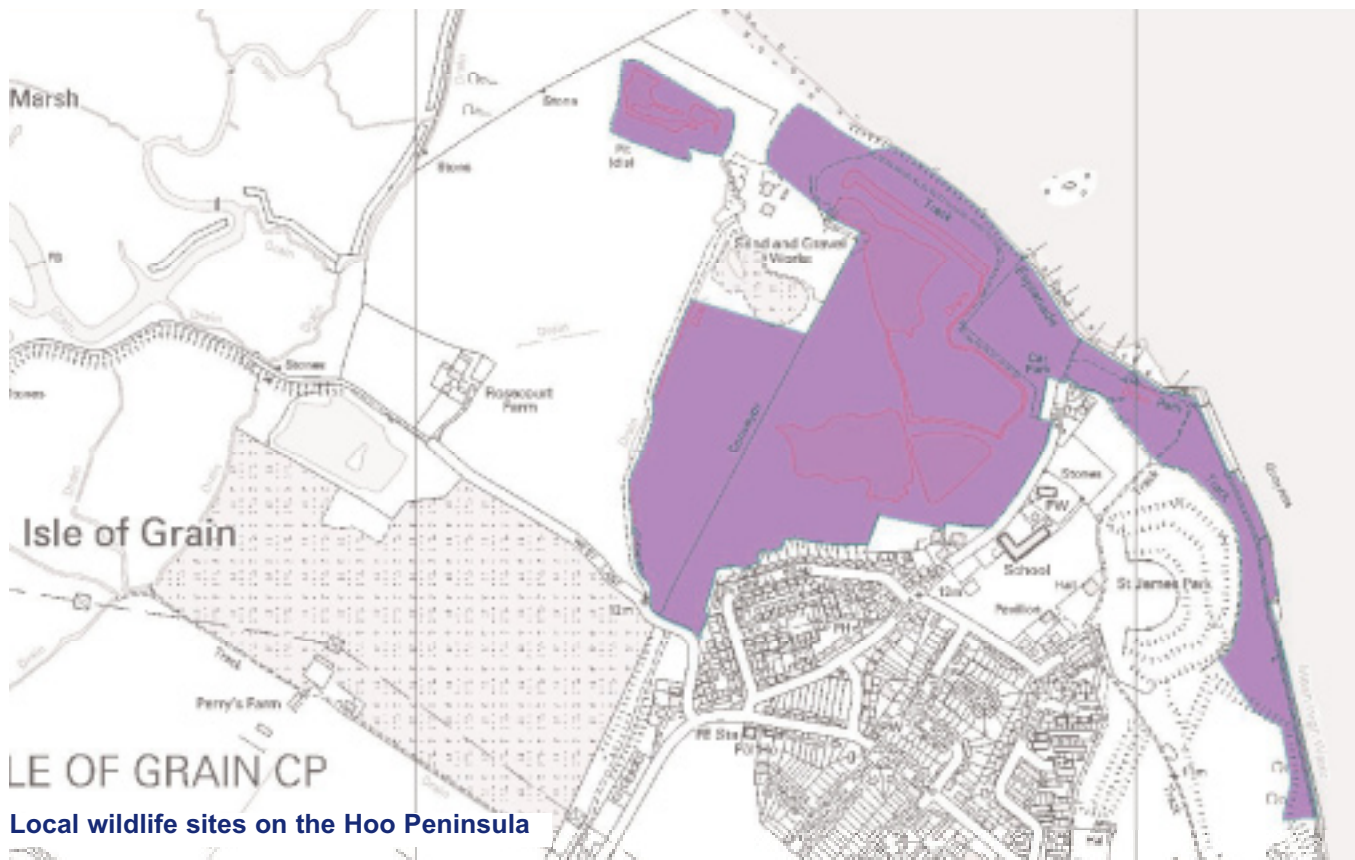


RNRs by their very nature are long and thin, so they can provide vital wildlife corridors for many species,

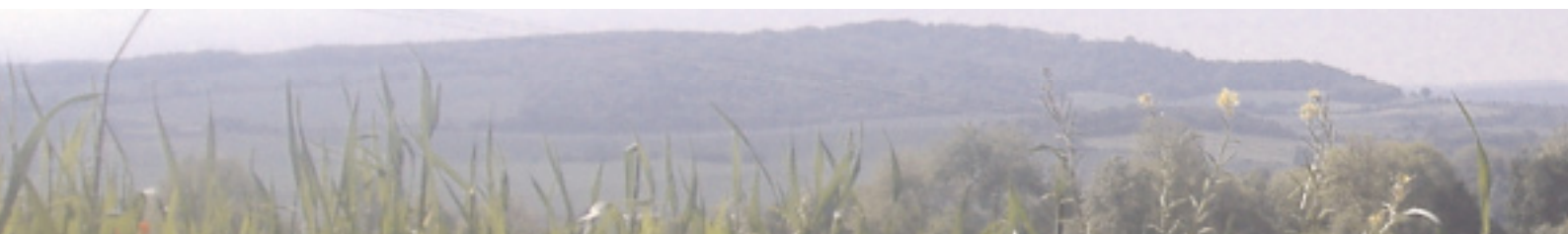


Local wildlife sites in Chatham and Gillingham

particularly mammals such as badgers and dormice.



Local wildlife sites on the Hoo Peninsula





Local wildlife sites in Rochester and Strood

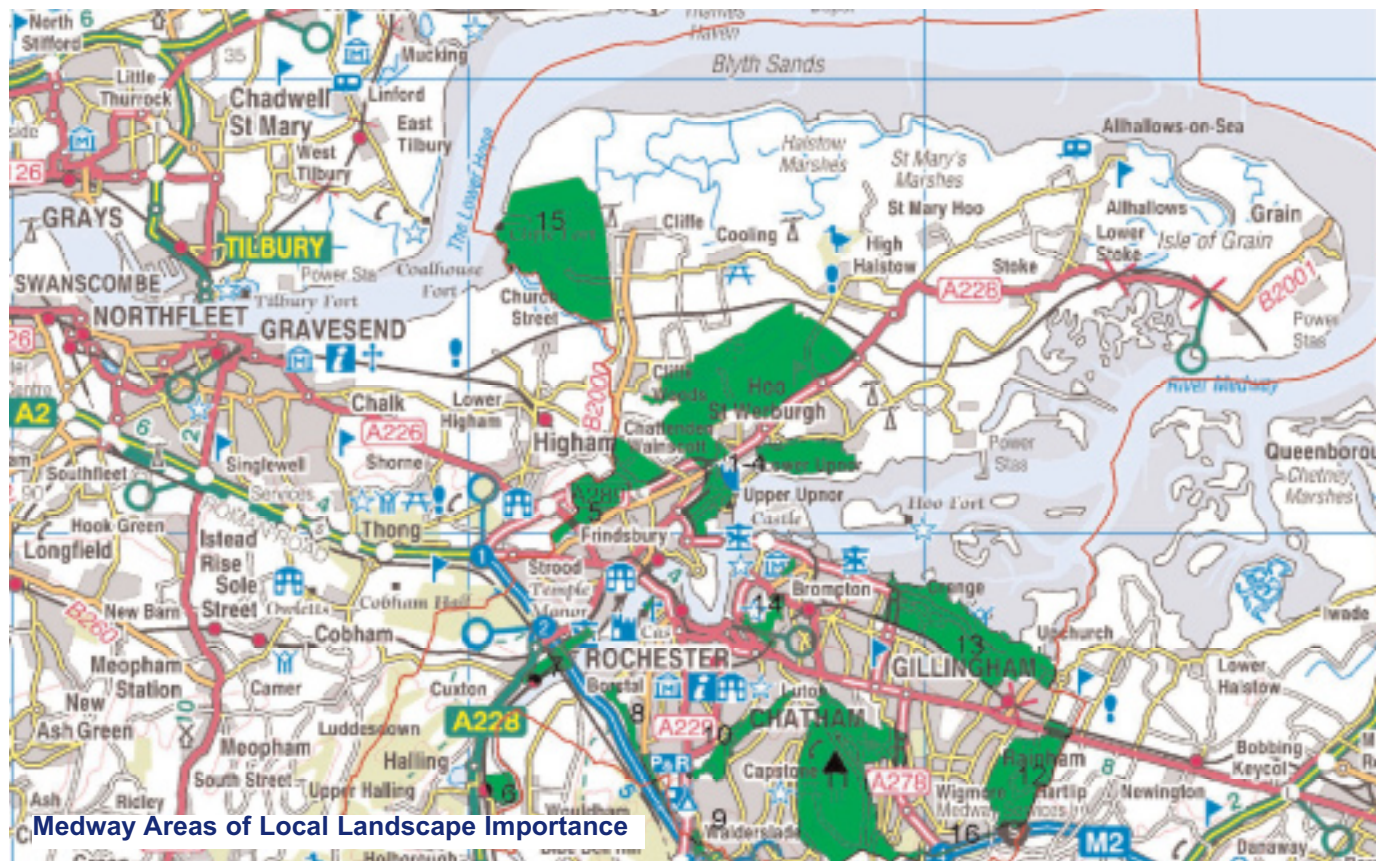
### Local Wildlife Sites

The locally important nature conservation sites are termed Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). There are 17 LWS in Medway covering a total of 399ha. Many of Medway's LWS are located close to residential areas and are therefore more accessible to people than sites such as the internationally important marshes. LWS are identified to protect nationally and locally threatened habitats and species as identified in the UK and Kent Biodiversity Action Plan. The nature conservation interest of these sites is not legally protected, although individual key species and possibly their habitats will be protected under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000). These sites receive local protection through Policy CS24 of the Medway Local Development Framework Core Strategy. The priority for managing and protecting these sites is reinforced through national performance indicator 197 (Appendix 3).

Medway Council values the landscape and biodiversity contribution of the LWS network and will work in partnership with the countywide Kent Biodiversity Steering Group to seek the long-term protection, management and designation of LWS. This work will include the surveying and identification of all locally important wildlife sites across Medway.

LWS Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Work with Kent Wildlife Trust to survey and identify all locally important wildlife sites and increase landowner awareness and positive management	2008 - 2016	Outcome 2: Improved monitoring and management
LWS Headline Action (2)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Ensure protection of LWS through LDF to ensure they continue to support nationally and locally threatened habitats and species	2008 - 2016	Outcome 4: Improved protection and conservation

## Areas of Local Landscape Importance





16 Areas of Local Landscape Importance (ALLIs) are identified in the Medway Local Plan (2003) that are predominantly located in Medway's rural-urban fringe. Due to their location within or adjacent to the rural / urban fringe, many of the ALLI's are subject to a wide range of pressures, including speculative development, and various types of anti-social behaviour (motorbike scrambling, fly-tipping, and arson).

Medway Council recognises the need to offer protection to ALLIs through policy in the Medway Local Plan 2003 and the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework. This Strategy complements this protection and through targeted Green Grid again will promote positive management to maintain and enhance the key features of the ALLIs.

Medway's ALLIs are particularly well placed to contribute to countryside and open space management due to their proximity to urban centres and hence accessibility. However, ALLIs are subject to a greater pressure than other designated landscapes and need a new pro-active management approach to ensure that these landscapes continue to play a significant role in improving quality of life and liveability across Medway.

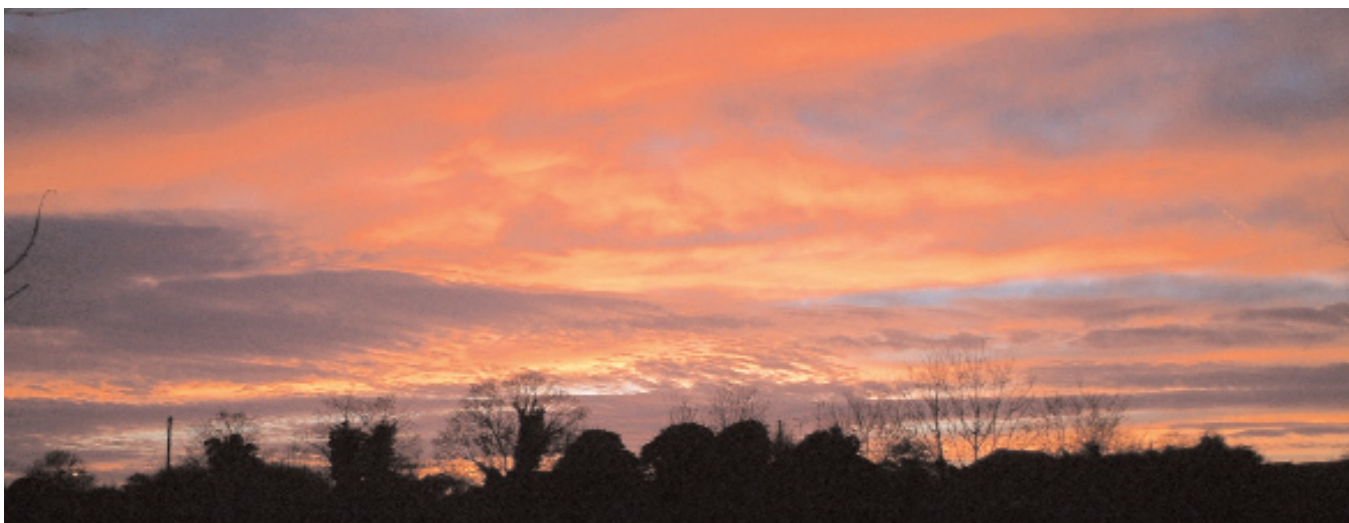
Area of Local Landscape Importance Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
To support the protection and positive management of ALLIs through Green Grid and LDF	2008 - 2012	Outcome 4: Improved protection and conservation

### Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) & Local Nature Reserves

Accessible Natural Greenspace is defined as land, water or geological features which have been naturally colonized by plants and animals and which are accessible on foot to large numbers of people. Access means certain rights of approach, entry or use that are legally defined or hallowed by custom. Accessibility is the extent to which these rights can be enjoyed. Accessibility is affected by: how far the place is from home, whether there are barriers in the way such as busy roads, and how far different groupings of adults or children are able to (or are allowed to) walk by themselves. Social and cultural matters, including how safe people feel traveling to and using the place concerned, also affect it.

There are currently 78 areas of accessible natural greenspace in Medway - this figure includes Medway owned countryside sites and parks, as well as trust owned, or privately owned sites. The privately owned sites include; Rochester Forest in Cuxton and Halling, the RSPB Cliffe Reserve in Cliffe and the RSPB Northward Hill in High Halstow.

Natural England defines Local Nature Reserves (LNR's) as places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. LNR is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by local authorities. In association with other ANGSt targets, Natural England promotes sustainability guidance that local authorities should strive for 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 population Medway currently has 100ha of designated Local Nature Reserves



## Natural England Standards & Medway Targets

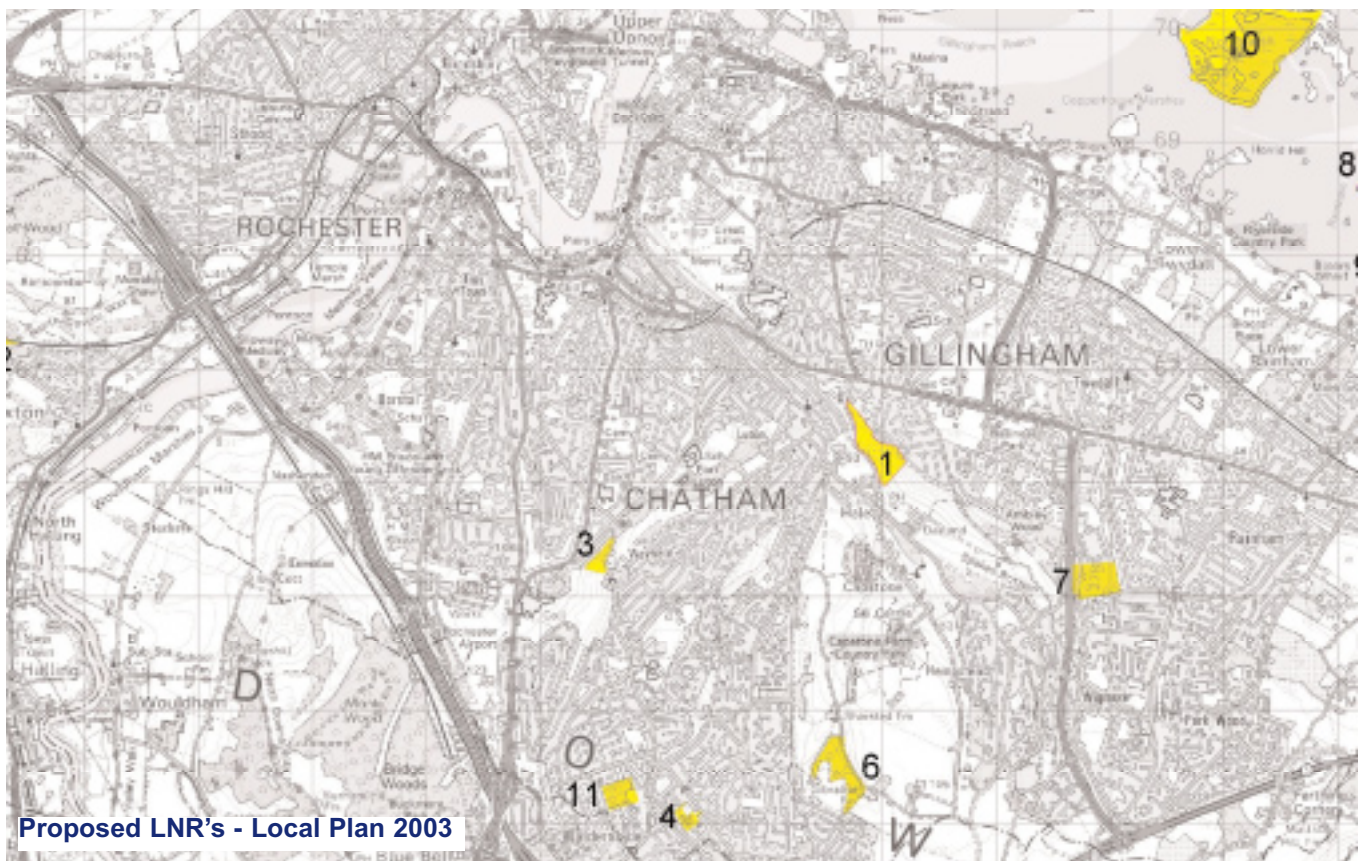
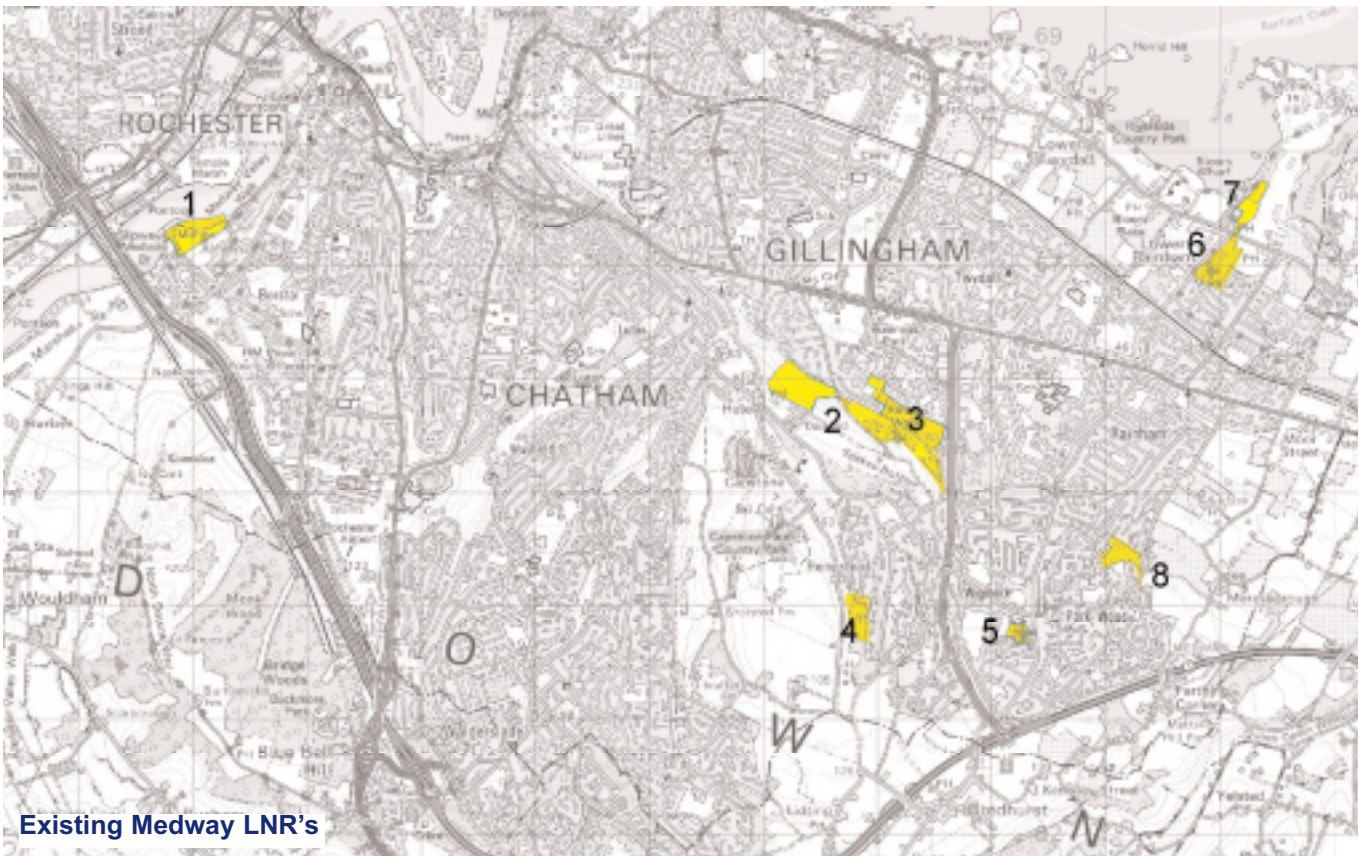
Natural England's Urban Greenspace Standards provide a set of benchmarks for ensuring access to places of wildlife interest. These standards recommend that people living in towns and cities should have:

**Table four: Medway Council performance against ANGSt standards**

English Nature's standards for access to Natural Greenspace	Current provision across Medway	Proposed Medway standard
Minimum level of 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population	0.4 ha of LNR per 1000 population	1ha of LNR per 1,000 population by 2016
Every home should be within 300m (5 minutes walk) of a natural green space	27% of population have an accessible natural greenspace less than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home	40% of population have an accessible natural greenspace less than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home by 2010  75% of population have an accessible natural greenspace less than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home by 2016
Every home should have at least one accessible 20ha greenspace site within 2km	87% within 2km of 20ha site	100% within 2 km of a 20ha site 2016
Every home should have at least one accessible 100ha greenspace site within 5km	51% within 5km of 100ha site	100% within 5 km of a 100ha site 2016
Every home should have at least one accessible 500ha greenspace site within 10km	No baseline figure available	Review of baseline data to be undertaken in 2010

Natural England recommends that these standards be used as a guide and suggests that targets are set to reflect local character, opportunities and need. Following discussions with Natural England and Medway Countryside Forum on setting a challenging but realistic ANGSt figure for Medway it has been agreed that the distance threshold of 300m will be promoted alongside a staggered increase percentage of the population figure for the lifecycle of this Strategy. In view of the current baseline recorded in 2005 of 27% of Medway's population living within the suggested 300m threshold, a 100% targets would be unrealistic, misleading and undeliverable. ANGSt targets will be achieved through the creation of new accessible greenspace sites within key developments such as at Strood Waterfront and Rochester Riverside. Greenspace Services will also explore opportunities to improve / establish new access to currently inaccessible sites. This will be encouraged through use of grants and permissive rights of way.

The Local Nature Reserve shortfall based on its current per head of population is 150ha and this figure will increase by another 50ha if Medway's population increases to 300,000. Greenspace Services will work with Natural England to identify a minimum of 200ha of new LNR for designation by 2016 based upon sites already identified within the Local Plan (2003).



Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
To improve biodiversity management of amenity sites in Medway and to work towards Medway ANGSt targets	40% of residents within 300m of an accessible Greenspace by 2010  75% of residents within 300m of an accessible Greenspace by 2016. Every home to have 1 500Ha greenspace site within 10km 2008-2016	Outcome 1: More high quality facilities
Local Nature Reserve Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Secure the designation of an additional 150ha of local nature reserve by 2010 and a further 50ha by 2016	Additional 150ha by 2010 Additional 50 ha by 2016	Outcome 4: Improved protection and conservation

## Country parks and Countryside Sites - a Medway success story

**Medway Council recognises the value placed on our countryside sites and recognises that people use them for a range of activities such as walking and exercising in a green and natural environment. Medway Council will enhance the resources available to improve the quality of management for access and biodiversity gain, and seek opportunities to increase provision and accessibility of the resource. We will seek to increase the number of countryside sites that are designated as Local Nature Reserves and will improve marketing and promotion of key countryside sites.**

Medway's countryside sites are council owned open spaces (totalling 48 sites, 2 country parks and 1 farm reserve) that are managed to enhance their biodiversity and landscape value. They are managed by the Greenspace's Countryside Rangers with support from volunteer groups and "friends of" groups. The majority of these Countryside sites are woodland or chalk grassland and occur in urban Medway. Not all countryside sites have a current management plan to inform their long-term management or benefit from the funding and staffing resources required to ensure best management.

Having access to wild places close to where we live is something that is highly valued and worthy of protection. People seek out opportunities to visit places where wildlife thrives, where birds can be heard and plants seen. Medway's countryside sites help us keep in touch with nature and the changing seasons - they provide random colour and interest in an otherwise ordered urban landscape.

### Summary

- A combined figure of over 750,000 people visit Riverside and Capstone Farm Country Parks each year
- Over 6,000 people visit the annual events at Riverside and Capstone Farm Country Park
- Overall the natural green spaces (countryside sites) are of "poor" to "average" quality, with almost 70% scoring under 3 out of 5 with respect to a series of quality indicators
- Only a third of the Countryside sites have either a nature or a wildlife designation, and only a quarter are subject to a management plan
- 87% of homes are within 2km of a 20ha Greenspace

Medway residents have access to two country parks: Riverside, Capstone Farm as well as Ranscombe Farm Reserve. Covering some 430ha, these sites comprise a significant element of the open space network. All are located within the rural urban fringe and will continue to make a valuable contribution towards the development and realisation of the Green Grid in Medway.



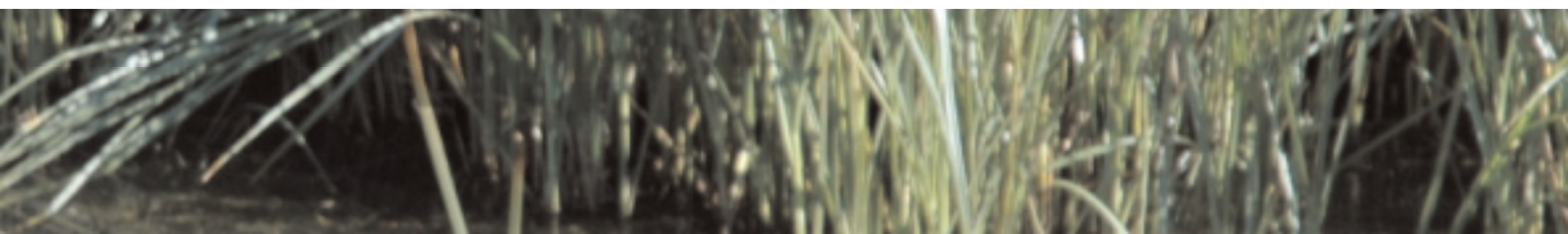
Riverside and Capstone Farm Country Parks have been available for many years and are now well established. They are managed solely by the council and conform to the public concept of a park, with visitor facilities such as toilets, on-site staff and a cafeteria. In contrast, Ranscombe Farm was purchased by the Council in 2003 / 2004 and is managed as a working farm reserve. A new car park and over 6km of new paths have been created. The focus of Ranscombe Farm is as a working landscape that people are encouraged to explore and enjoy. A new cycle route and additional parking is being explored. Country parks received the highest approval ratings both overall and in terms of the individual facilities and services covered by the questionnaire (Citizens Panel, 2006). The overall approval rating for country parks was very high, with 8 out of 10 rating them as good / very good.

Positive aspects that are frequently cited by users are the large and attractive open areas, tranquillity, and accessibility and wildlife value. The level of safety is generally considered to be good. This attribute however was rated lower than others, with 18% of Capstone Farm Country Park users considering the park to be unsafe or very unsafe. The main improvements requested by country parks users are; greater awareness of the country parks to encourage more people to use them, a reduction in dog fouling, keeping dogs on leads and improving play areas and children's activities.

**Provision of new Country Parks:**

The existing Medway Local Plan (2003), Policy L9 (Country Parks) promotes the establishment of three new country parks at Grain Foreshore, Ranscombe Farm and Horsted. Grain is in an area with a shortage of open space and facilities for young people. The proposed site is already in public ownership (parish council) and is of high nature conservation value. Greenspace Services supports the Grain Management Committee - a group that oversees site management and is interested in realising country park status for the site. Horsted Farm is also in public ownership (Medway Council) and forms an extensive area of open space close to large housing estates. A new "friends of" group will be set up to help develop a suite of community informed plans for the area - the culmination of which will be a country park designation.

<b>Medway Countryside Headline Action (1)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
To explore all options for realising new country park facilities at Grain and Horsted Farm.	2008 - 2012	Outcome 5: More open space contributing to regeneration
<b>Medway Countryside Headline Action (2)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Management Plan Framework for all sites and targeted investment to improve service standards.	2008 - 2012	Outcome 3: Prioritised investments
<b>Medway Countryside Headline Action (3)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Secure Green Flag Status for existing country parks	Annually	Outcome 1: More high quality facilities



## Section Four:

# Medway's Open Space Network

## Policy Statement

**Medway Council is committed through this strategy to ensure that those living in and visiting Medway have access to high quality open space of the right type, close to where they live. Medway Council will prioritise investment and development work to bring open spaces to an appropriate standard - both through better management and monitoring and through the provision of new facilities. Greenspace Services will work alongside development control and developers to ensure consistent provision of accessible high quality open space provision serving new and existing communities.**

## Overview of Open Spaces In Medway

Planing Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) states that open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation, as well as acting as a visual amenity. Open spaces are typically characterised either according to size or to function. Medway has a significant amount of open spaces, 1,909.63ha. There are also significant areas of privately owned open space such as Deangate Ridge, Gillingham Golf Course and Rochester Forest that are not included in this figure.

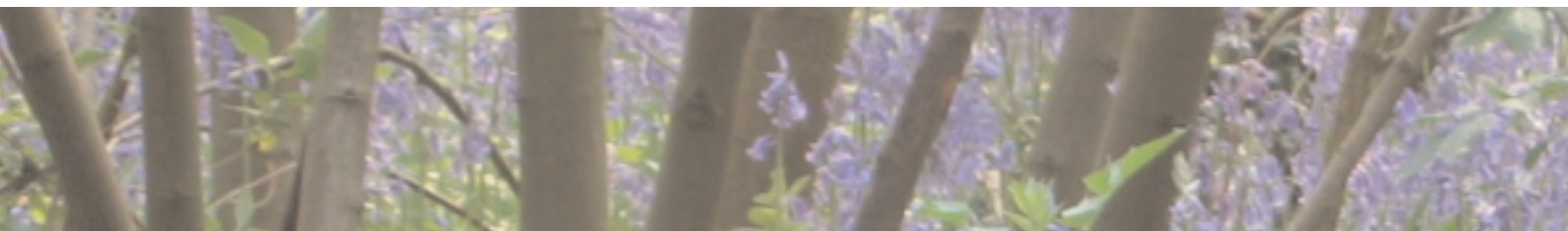
Total open space per thousand population in Medway is approximately 7.6 ha. This is a relatively high figure compared to other districts but it will, of course, fall given the projected increase in population unless new provision is made.

It is also important to consider the distribution of open space and its accessibility as a guide to new provision and improvement priorities. The open space provision by ward has been calculated by simply dividing the ward population by the area of open space in hectares. The wards with the lowest level of provision are: Gillingham South, Rochester East, Rainham Central, Strood North, Chatham Central, Rainham South, Walderslade and Princes Park. All of these Wards provide less than 2.4ha of open space per 1000 population when measured against the National Playing Fields Association NPFA Standard. Two of these wards, Chatham Central and Princes Park, are amongst the 20% most deprived wards in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation and therefore merit particular attention. Greenspace Services will target investment to these wards with less than 2.4 ha (6 acre) of NPFA open space and especially Chatham Central and Princes Park to increase the provision, accessibility and quality of open space.

The wards that are expected to see an increase in population growth linked to regeneration through the Thames Gateway programme are Chatham Central, Peninsula, River and Strood South and these will be targeted by Greenspace Services to increase levels of provision.

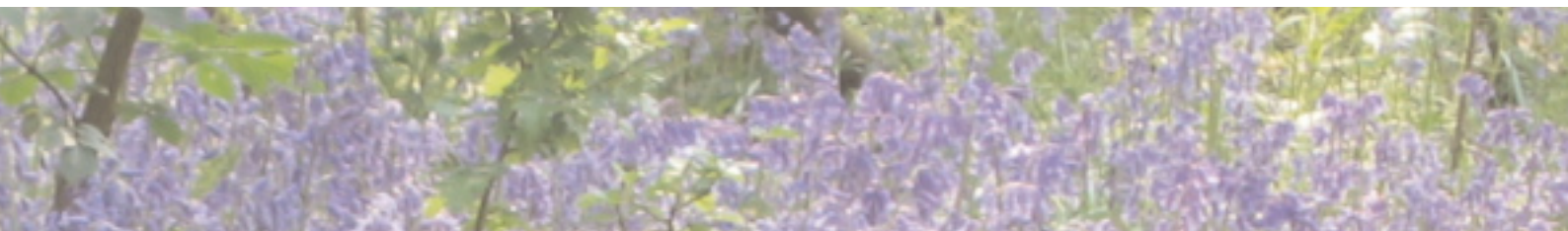
Open spaces are typically classified according to size or to function. Open space provision in Medway by functions summarised on page 46 based on the typology contained in PPG 17. It includes headline summaries of quantity and quality based on GIS mapping and sample audits undertaken to inform the development of the Strategy.

The Borstal Open Space in Rochester is an example of a 'destination' site development. This site is currently subject to plans to enhance the pitch provision, to create a sports pavilion which can double as a wider community facility and possible visitors centre and to undertake landscape and biodiversity improvement works. These plans have been informed by the Borstal Open Space Society and will be achieved through funding bids to the Football Foundation and developer contributions. This strategy also promotes Cozenton Park and Jackson's Recreation Ground as destination sites set to receive external funding to help create significant play and youth facilities. The idea of creating destination sites will help achieve the idea of 'mending before extending' and will focus on existing sites rather than creating new sites.



**Table five Overview of Open Space Provision**

Typology	Quantity	Quality
<p><b>(i) Parks and gardens:</b> including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens, countryside sites and Country Parks</p>	<p>25 urban parks and gardens with an average size of 2.2ha. The largest is at Broom Hill, Strood, which is a site that is currently a priority for improvement. Rochester has the greatest concentration of parks with 7</p>	<p>33% of the Local Parks (2-20ha) scored as below average</p>
<p><b>(ii) Natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces:</b> including woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons and meadows) wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and derelict open land</p>	<p>78 areas of accessible natural greenspaces - this figure includes non-Medway Council owned sites such as RSPB reserves and parish owned sites. Large areas of key habitats such as Tidal Waters (1858 ha), Marshes (142ha), Chalk grassland (50ha), Saltmarsh (484ha), Mudflat (4305ha)</p>	<p>Overall, the natural greenspaces are of poor to average quality, with almost 70% scoring less than 50% on quality ratings</p>
<p><b>(iii) Green corridors:</b> including river and canal banks, cycleways and rights of way</p>	<p>Green Grid identifies key green corridors across Medway. The River Medway and Thames Estuary are important accessible river banks. Medway has nearly 400km of public right of way managed through its Rights of Way Improvement Plan that is in the process of being adopted following consultation in 2007</p>	<p>The Thames Estuary and River Medway are important assets with varying degrees of accessibility. The Saxon Shore Way recreational walk promotes both these important assets. The proposed City to Sea route will provide additional access and promotion to the North Kent Marshes</p>
<p><b>(iv) Outdoor sports facilities:</b> including tennis courts, bowling greens, sport pitches, golf courses, athletics tracks, school and other institutional playing fields and other outdoor sports areas</p>	<p>There are 92 identified outdoor sports and leisure facilities totaling 330ha</p>	<p>Eleven of the identified outdoor sports and leisure facilities spaces have private or restricted access. 'Very poor' pavilions were recorded at Beechings Way and APCM Cliffe and a 'poor' pavilion at Cliffe Woods. Beechings Crossing pavilion was recorded as 'excellent'. Six sports pitches were only ranked as 'acceptable' and none was ranked 'excellent'</p>
<p><b>(v) Amenity greenspace</b> (most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas) - including informal recreation spaces, greenspaces in and around housing, domestic gardens and village greens</p>	<p>There are 62 amenity spaces most being under 2ha in size</p>	<p>40% of amenity space scored 4 out of 5 for quality</p>
<p><b>(vi) Provision for children and teenagers:</b> including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops and other more informal areas (eg 'hanging out' areas, teenage shelters)</p>	<p>There are 125 sites covering 11.35ha. This figure includes 9 Local Areas of Play, 66 Local Equipped Areas of Play, 36 Neighbourhood Areas of Play and 14 individual teenage play facilities covering 11.35ha. NPFA requirement (based on 0.2ha per 1000) equates to 49.27ha illustrating a 37.92ha shortfall.</p>	<p>The Play Area Assessment showed that 69% of play areas complied with national standards for quality and accessibility, 7% failed to meet the standard due to accessibility, 7% were not applicable and 17% failed due to insufficient equipment. Medway is well served by Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPS) but has fewer Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAPS) and 35% of NEAPs failed to meet expected equipment standards. The vast majority of play areas are considered to be of good quality (83%) although use has lessened due to acts of vandalism</p>



## **Play Facility Provision**

Medway Council recognises the importance of play in the social, physical, intellectual and emotional development of children and young people. The Council is committed to providing high quality and accessible play provision for children and young people across Medway. This will be achieved by numerous activities including better monitoring of the quality of sites, by responding to expressed needs through the implementation of an investment framework and by insisting on best design and location of play provision. This strategy promotes the establishment of strategic play facilities at key locations across Medway that complements existing provision.

Work has already begun on delivering new and improved play facilities for children and young people in Medway. Medway Council was successful in a Big Lottery Fund (BLF) bid for £624,000 to improve facilities at Riverside Country Park, Jackson's Recreation Ground and Pottery Road and to develop a new skate facility at Cozenton Park. As well as this Medway Council have funded new facilities at Hook Meadow and Jackson's Recreation Ground and Section 106 contributions from new housing development are funding play facility improvements across Medway including Hillyfields Community Park, Copperfields Park, Admirals Gardens, Grange Farm and Rochester Riverside.

## **Play Policy and Context**

Local Authorities, including Medway Council, have historically used the National Playing Field Association's (NPFA) "Six Acre Standard" for assessing whether their play provision is at an adequate level for the children of their area and for assessing deficiencies (or over-provision) in wards or estates. The six-acre standard was adopted in 1970 and is based on children's travel distance. In 1992 it was revised to include provision in the six acre standard for a specific recommendation for outdoor space for children's play of:

### **0.2-0.3 hectares of equipped play space per 1,000 people**

It is important to recognise that the NPFA standard is based on children's travelling distances from the 1970's and as such should only be used as a guide to inform standards of provision. This strategy identifies a new standard for play facility provision in Medway as recommended by the Planning Policy Guidance 17 document (PPG17). PPG 17 encourages local authorities to set their own standards for provision of children's play facilities, informing future provision and revisiting existing provision and not just adopt the existing NPFA standard.

A key development in play trends is the concept of natural play provision as a compliment or alternative to fixed play. Whilst a relatively new concept it is very much a renaissance to traditional play values and opportunities and is being championed by a number of play organisations. Medway through its diverse countryside and open space estate has significant potential to facilitate natural play opportunities and will be developing such opportunities as part of the funding secured through the BLF fund allocation for Riverside Country Park.

## **Play Space Audit**

A comprehensive assessment of Medway's play facilities was carried out in summer 2004 auditing quality, quantity and accessibility. This included Medway Council, parish councils, housing associations and equipped play areas managed by trusts set up by housing developers. A three-page report was produced for each of Medway's play areas detailing the key findings of the assessment relating to each site. This data was updated in August 2005. As part of the study for Medway Council, each play area was assessed for play value, parental and community oversight and social safety, vulnerability, usage and access.

A summary of the results of Medway's play facility audit including quantity, quality and accessibility can be found below.

## **Quantity findings**

Medway has 125 play facilities, including 9 Local Areas for Play, 66 Locally Equipped Areas for Play and 36 Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play and 14 individual Teenage Play Facilities. Of these facilities, 88 are owned and managed by Medway Council and 37 are owned by either parish councils or housing associations.

The following measurements are based on the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) guide of 0.2-0.3ha of equipped play space per 1000 people. As Medway is very deficient in play space, according to this standard, the lower benchmark level of 0.2 hectares has been applied to assess Medway's shortfall.





**Table six Medway Council NPFA Shortfall**

<b>NPFA requirement</b>		<b>Current Medway Provision</b>	<b>Shortfall</b>
Equipped play space per 1000 people	0.2 ha	0.046 ha per 1000 people	0.14 ha per 1000 people
Total play space provision	49.14 ha	11.36 ha	37.92 ha

It was found that of each of Medway's wards is deficient in open space according to the NPFA standard. Details of these can be found in Appendix 4

<b>Play Headline Action (1)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Provision of new play areas through funding secured as a result of regeneration investment (Developer Contribution Guide) or through external funding programmes	2008 - 2016	Outcome 3: Prioritised investments

**Quality findings**

There is significant variation in the level of use of play areas. Overall there are more spaces with low levels of use, which could be a result of a number of factors including poor quality, poor location or inaccessibility. Over a third of play areas have evidence of vandalism or other anti-social behaviour, which could explain (and be a result of) low usage in some of the play areas.

As a rule, the smallest play areas (LAPs) are of highest quality. It is important to note that whilst this quality rating suggests that some play areas are of good quality, the experience for users can be reduced due to poor maintenance. Additional studies and surveys have confirmed that there is significant variation in the level of use of play areas. In general there are more play areas in Medway with low levels of use. This could be a result of a number of factors including poor quality, poor location or inaccessibility. The majority of play areas in Medway are considered to be of good quality. However, over 30% of sites show signs of vandalism and over 50% are inaccessible to people with mobility impairments.

Thirteen of Medway's play facilities are of such a poor quality or are wrongly sited that their use should be considered for review. It was found that ten of these sites have had their play equipment removed due to significant vandalism or inappropriate siting.

<b>Play Headline Action (2)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Strategic Review of the 13 non-operational playground sites to determine future use	2008 - 2012	Outcome 1: More high quality facilities
<b>Play Headline Action (3)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Deliver the BLF Play Improvement Programme	2008 - 2012	Outcome 3: Prioritised investments

## Accessibility Findings

The Medway study revealed significant differences in catchments between the straight-line distances (drawing a circle) and the walking distances. Some play areas, which may have been thought to serve a large catchment, in fact served a very small one. This data should be used as a guide in the development of the action plan but the plan should outline the need for a review of this data and the need to compare this with Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping showing site catchment areas. The catchment areas will be based on the NPFA travel distances but adapted for Medway. Areas outside of the catchment areas of existing sites will then be identified as shortfall areas.

An important finding of the play assessment was the accessibility problems associated with a large number of play spaces. Over half of Medway's play areas are currently inaccessible to people with mobility impairments. Whilst in some cases relatively simple changes would greatly increase access, in half of the play areas design changes to access points could be required.

## Review of Community Engagements in Play

The Medway play facility assessment also included observations of, and significant engagement with, local users including children, young people and parents/carers. The approach to public participation and consultation for this strategy was one that Medway Council hoped would determine the views of as many users of play facilities from as wide range of age groups and socio economic groups as possible. Below is a summary of findings and conclusions. Appendix 4 contains more detail on play consultation.

1) Play Area Assessment - questionnaire survey: found that the location, accessibility and safety of play areas were considered to be the most important qualities for open spaces. Overall the Play Areas User Survey suggested that users feel the variety, quality, condition and cleanliness of play areas and equipment is poor. The only aspect the users felt was generally adequate was the layout of play spaces.

2) Observational and interview research found that the travel distances for children as indicated in the NPFA standard do not reflect the increasing restrictions caused by traffic and poor design of street layout on children's freedom to play outside. The catchments in the Medway play areas are therefore an over-estimate of the dwellings served by each play area. Where play places are open, visible and can be safely accessed then children use and value them and do so from a young age as children traditionally have.

3) "Your Thoughts on Your Open Spaces - a consultation for 11-19 year olds" found that more than half of respondents visit open spaces once a week or more and half of the respondents rated their play area as 'good' or 'very good'. A significant number of participants (particularly the skaters) highlighted the Millennium Park in Maidstone as the type of facility they would like built in Medway.

## Proposed Medway Play Standards - Quantity / Quality / Accessibility

Planning Policy Guidance 17 encourages Local Authorities to reassess standards for the provision of sport and recreational spaces based on assessment of the quality, quantity and accessibility of provision. The Medway Play Standards are intended to replace the NPFA guidance and are based on an audit of existing play facilities, consultation with local people and observational and interview research of children at play.

### Medway Standard for Quantity

Medway's Play Facility Assessment found that there is 0.046ha of play space per 1000 people in Medway. When compared to the lowest NPFA standard of 0.2 ha per 1000 people, Medway would need another 300 play facilities if this standard were to be adopted. This is clearly an unachievable target to meet within the life of this strategy and does not reflect actual demand or developing trends in play provision such as natural play. Therefore, Medway will adopt a local standard for play quantity of:

**0.15 hectares of equipped play space per 1000 population**



This will include a provision for teenage specific play facilities of 0.05 ha per 1000 population. A breakdown of the play space typologies required for 1000 population is outlined below:

0.15 hectares of equipped play space per 1000 population	0.10 ha of which should be provision for younger children (Doorstep and Local spaces)
	0.05 ha of which should be teenage play provision (MUGA's, skate provision etc)

This standard is most relevant in terms of considering the need for new play facilities within new housing development. In order to meet both the 'quantity' and 'accessibility' standard, new housing development where new facilities are required (as identified by Medway Council's Developer Contribution Guide) must be provided, where possible, within the new development. However, the 'quantity' standard should also be applied to the strategic provision of play facilities across Medway, with a rolling programme of projects to address the shortfalls as much as possible.

Medway's play standard will be subject to review through the lifecycle of the Strategy in accordance with Section 6 - Delivery Framework.

### Play Space Typologies

The NPFA play space types have also been revised with two new types of play provision ('Destination' and 'Teenage' sites). The new typology of 'Destination' site will provide new, large facilities that offer significant play value to local communities, people travelling from across Medway and visitors from outside of Medway. Examples of a 'Destination' play facility include the existing facility at The Strand in Gillingham and the proposed facility at Jackson's Recreation Ground of Rochester. The other new typology of 'Teenage' site refers to facilities that are designed specifically for teenagers.

**Table seven Play Space Typologies**

Typology	Description	Size	Travel distance	Equipment
<b>Doorstep</b>	A small amount of equipment focussing on seating and informal play space catering for mainly 4-6 year old children	100m <sup>2</sup> with at least a 5 metre buffer zone	100m	None required but seating, planting and small items of equipment should be considered
<b>Local</b>	Provision mainly for 4-8 year old children	400m <sup>2</sup> with at least a 20 metre buffer zone	400m	5 or more but greater flexibility than NPFA
<b>Neighbourhood</b>	Provision mainly for 4-19 year olds	1000m <sup>2</sup> with at least a 50 metre buffer zone	400m for 4-8 year olds and 1000m for 9-19 year olds	8 or more but greater flexibility than NPFA
<b>Destination</b>	Provision mainly for 4-19 year olds with a significant range of equipment and very high play value	Approx 2000-4000m <sup>2</sup> with at least a 50 metre buffer zone	Users may travel from across Medway or even from outside of Medway	10 or more including provision for young people
<b>Teenage</b>	Provision for 9-19 year olds either as part of a NEAP or in isolation from younger children's facilities	Approx 600m <sup>2</sup> (dependant on facility type) with at least a 50 metre buffer zone	1000m (or up to 2000m for a large destination facility. Young people are likely to travel longer distances to larger facilities)	No specific requirement - to be informed by local needs. Could include wheel parks, MUGAs, sports walls etc. May include provision of a seating area



## **Medway Standard for Play Quality**

The Medway Standard for quality of its designated playgrounds and other play places has three elements, which will be considered in the development of new facilities, refurbishment of existing facilities and the maintenance of new and existing facilities:

- The first will be the play value and age range suitability appropriate to its size and location
- The second will be the feelings of security for the child, achieved by good sightlines from housing, passers-by etc
- The third will be based on condition, cleansing and maintenance

The priority for investment will be to increase the quality of Medway's worst quality facilities and the rationalisation or refurbishment of the thirteen non-operational play sites should be considered.

## **Medway Standard for Play Accessibility**

The standard for play accessibility will be:

- The local assessment of play space suggested that the LAP (Doorstep) threshold distance should be 100m and the LEAP (Local) threshold distance should be 400m
- The distance threshold for the elements of a NEAP (Neighbourhood) for 4-8 year olds will be reduced to 400m. However, the distance threshold of facilities for children between 9 and 19 provided within the NEAP should remain at 1000m
- Accessibility for those with mobility or visual impairments, for parents with pushchairs etc. will be site specific and will be achieved by reference to the recommendations in the NPFA "Can Play Will Play"

The criterion is that children and teenagers can play out. This has been and will be informed by observation and interview consultation within communities. "Playing out" is a term used by children and parents and indicates a range of activities (talking, games, play equipment, informal sports) in a variety of locations (front garden/pavement, friend's, park/play area, public space).

## **Priorities for Play Development**

All of Medway's wards are deficient in equipped play space, even when applying the new Medway standard for quantity. However, due to the size of Medway's shortfalls of provision this strategy cannot aim to address this shortfall completely. Therefore the priority projects will meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Deliver the Big Lottery Fund Play Improvement Programme (and others such as Hillyfields Community Park) to achieve destination playgrounds that will serve large catchment areas
- Review and develop opportunities for natural play to compliment existing levels of fixed play provision
- Address some of the most significant ward shortfalls where possible, for example Gillingham South Ward is the ward with the highest shortfall but there are very few sites within this ward with the potential to develop new facilities). In cases where this is not possible, existing sites should be improved or expanded or neighbouring wards should have their facilities improved and / or expanded in order to compensate

## Formal Sport Pitch Provision

Medway Council is committed to ensuring the maintenance of an accessible and high quality sports facility provision that meets the diverse needs of existing and future users and is complementary to the implementation of the Medway Sports Development Strategy, Tackling Obesity Strategy and the 2012 Olympics Plan. This will be achieved by working in partnership with the diverse range of users and the national agencies to deliver the investment framework and through the consistent implementation of the Medway Council Developer Contribution Guide.

This section addresses the main sports pitch provision provided in Medway's parks and open spaces, which include football, cricket, rugby union, tennis and hockey. Other sports including indoor and water sports are addressed within other Medway Council strategies.

### Medway's Playing Pitch Study

The Medway Playing Pitch Study (2002/03) identified all the sports pitches accessible to Medway residents. This includes school playing fields, which have been excluded from the open space network for the purposes of this study. However, The Playing Pitch Study, which informs this part of the strategy, requires a review, which will be undertaken in the first delivery phase of the strategy.

Playing Pitch Study Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Baseline audit of the 2002/03 Playing Pitch Study	2008 - 2012	Outcome 2: Improved monitoring and management

### Quantity findings

In order to establish the relationship between the locations of pitches to the concentration of need, the Medway area was segmented into seven distinct geographical areas. The seven areas are Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham, Rainham, Rural 1 and Rural 2. The number of pitches for each of the relevant sports is shown below relative to these seven geographical areas in table 8.

**Table eight Current Geographical Pitch Provision**

Area	Football			Rugby	Hockey	ATP	Cricket	Tennis	Bowls
	Snr.	Jnr.	Mini						
Strood	7	4	0	0	0	1	2	16	2
Rochester	10	7	1	4	0	1	5	16	2
Chatham	27	18	2	2	1	1	4	12	0
Gillingham	24	10	3	4	0	1	2	11	2
Rainham	6	18	2	0	0	0	2	10	0
Rural 1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rural 2	14	5	2	0	0	0	6	5	2
<b>Total</b>	92	63	10	10	1	4	21	73	8

The tables below summarise the balance between supply and peak demand in 2002 and 2016. Surplus provision does not imply these facilities are not required (see PPG17) as they give opportunity for sports development activity, facilities improvement and pitch rotation.

**Table nine      Playing Pitch Supply and Demand Analysis 2002**

Facility	Supply	Peak Demand	Shortfall / Surplus
Senior football	92	96	-4
Junior football	63	80	-17
Mini - soccer	10	13	-3
Cricket	21	13	+8
Rugby	11	11	0
Tennis	73	90	-17
Bowls	8	9.3	-1.3
Hockey	5	5.5	-0.5

**Table ten      Playing Pitch Supply and Demand Forecast 2016**

Facility	Supply	Peak Demand	Shortfall / Surplus
Senior football	92	102	-10
Junior football	63	88	-25
Mini - soccer	10	14	-4
Cricket	21	13	+8
Rugby	11	11	0
Tennis	73	95	-22
Bowls	8	11.3	-3.5
Hockey	5	6	-1

### Football

Based on current participation rates the Saturday League experiences a surplus of 51 senior, 63 junior pitches but a shortfall of 13 mini pitches. The Sunday League experiences a shortfall of 5 senior and 17 junior pitches but a surplus of 10 mini-pitches. There is a projected shortfall of 10 senior, 25 junior and 4 mini-pitches across Medway by 2016.

### Cricket

There are 25 clubs (49 teams) active in Medway with 10 clubs playing regularly in a league. The current supply of pitches available for both mid week and weekend periods is adequate for current demand. Medway Council has 5 local grounds of which 5 hosted 29 games in the 2002 season (last data available). 18 of these were played at Hempstead. Another 4 grounds only hosted 11 matches between them. Projections for 2016 show a surplus of 8 pitches.



## Rugby Union

There are four rugby clubs that play regularly in Medway. Clubs state that they are growing in membership due to the popularity of junior and mini rugby but pitch supply currently meets demand and there is therefore no headline action currently identified for rugby within the strategy. This will be reviewed through the Delivery Framework detailed in Section 6.

## Tennis

There are 6 tennis clubs in Medway and a total of 74 courts of which 33 are in voluntary / private ownership, 33 in council ownership and 8 on school sites. Our research shows that there is a current shortfall of 17 tennis courts in Medway, which is expected to grow to 22 courts by 2016. Of the Medway Council owned courts there are 7 grass courts provided at Maidstone Sports Grounds and APCM, Cliffe. The Council in partnership with the private sector, stakeholders, and national agencies such as the Lawn Tennis Association are looking to develop a tennis centre of excellence. As part of this development tennis court management will be reviewed within the open space network to ensure joint investment opportunities are maximised.

## Hockey

Competitive hockey is now totally played on artificial turf pitches (ATP). Medway has 5 ATP's. The recognised standard of provision for ATP's in the southeast is one pitch per 45,000 of population (Sport England). This equates to 5.5 pitches for current population of 250,000, rising to 6.6 pitches if the population increases to 300,000.

## Quality findings

The quality of each facility was assessed in terms of its playing surface, changing accommodation and ancillary facilities.

Notable outcomes included:

- 'Very poor' pavilions at Beechings Way and APCM Cliffe
- 'Poor' pavilions at Cliffe Woods and Borstal Recreation Ground
- An 'excellent' pavilion at Beechings Crossing
- 1 pitch ranked as poor
- Six sites where pitches were only ranked as 'acceptable'
- No pitches ranked as 'excellent'

## Accessibility findings

Accessibility was informed by both the NPFA standard for 'distance to travel' and local consultation whereby all residents should ideally have access to a playing field within 1.2 kilometres of where they live. GIS modelling showed that in the majority of cases this standard is being complied with across Medway.

## Medway Standard for Quality, Quantity and Accessibility of sports pitches:

Medway Council will work with its partners and stakeholders to achieve:

- A balanced provision of outdoor sports facilities across Medway a maximum of 1.2km from where people live
- Outdoor facilities that are safe, clean and fit for purpose
- Outdoor facilities that are accessible to all members of the community
- New outdoor facilities that reduce travel time, are well designed and are multi-functional spaces



## Medway Standard for Quality

- To adopt the Kent County Football Association's new 'Kent Pitches and Facilities Standard' (due for completion in 2008) and achieve "good" ratings for all pitches and facilities
- To facilitate Delegated Management Agreements so that clubs take responsibility for management of sites
- Identify and secure investment opportunities to achieve 'excellent' ratings for key sites

Football Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Work with Kent County Football Association to develop and adopt the new 'Kent Pitches and Facilities Standard'	2008 - 2016	Outcome 1: More high quality facilities
Football Headline Action (2)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Facilitate Delegated Management Agreements (DMA's) for sports clubs	2008 - 2016	Outcome 6: Greater celebration and engagement
Football Headline Action (3)	Timescale	Key Outcome
To submit Football Foundation bids for Beechings Recreation Ground and Borstal/Shorts Way Recreation Ground	2008 - 2012	Outcome 3: Prioritised investments
Tennis Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Review tennis court management arrangements to identify investment mechanisms and partnership opportunities	2008 - 2012	Outcome 2: Improved monitoring and management
Cricket Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Establish partnership working with Sports Development and national sport agencies to develop cricket participation rates	2008 - 2012	Outcome 1: More high quality facilities

## Medway Standard for Quantity

The Council and other providers should work to eliminate the identified facility deficiencies, Medway wide and at sub-area level, in line with the Medway Standard for Quantity by:

- Introducing formal Community Use Agreements with Medway schools
- Investing in new facilities including the re-construction of sub-standard changing accommodation and the extension and upgrading of existing facilities e.g. tennis courts
- Improving the playing surface and drainage capacity of pitches to increase usage potential
- Actively seeking funding from the Football Foundation and developer contributions and new funding streams as they become available to develop new facilities
- Building partnerships to create centres of excellence for football and rugby in Medway
- Identifying a site for an additional ATP in Medway
- Introducing incentives and other mechanisms to improve the balance of play by football clubs and leagues across both Saturdays and Sundays



<b>Tennis Headline Action (2)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Investigate provision of all weather tennis courts in Gillingham, Chatham and Rainham Wards	2008 - 2012	Outcome 3: Prioritised investments
<b>Hockey Headline Action (1)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Investigate the utilisation of s106 contributions to provide an additional Artificial Turf Pitch in Medway, taking into account the developing University Project	2008 - 2012	Outcome 1: Providing high quality facilities
<b>Headline Action All Sports (1)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Provision of new facilities through funding secured as a result of regeneration investment (Developer Contribution Guide) or through external funding programmes	2008 - 2016	Outcome 3: Prioritised Investments

### **Medway standard for Accessibility**

The Medway standard for accessibility is based on the following principles.

- Work with partners to develop community use of facilities for youth work and sports coaching to address obesity and anti-social behaviour
- Maintain charging levels for tennis courts for the foreseeable future
- Introduce differential charging for socially excluded members of the community
- Introduce differential charging for facilities once improvements have been made
- Apply the Medway Standard for Accessibility for all new developments and future population increase

<b>Accessibility Headline Action (1)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Work with partners to develop community use of facilities for youth work and sports coaching to address obesity and anti-social behaviour at a floor target of at least 50% of sites with pavilions by 2016	2008 - 2016	Outcome 6: Greater celebration and engagement



## Urban Parks and Amenity Spaces Provision

Medway Council recognises the important contribution that urban parks make to the quality of life of people living in urban areas. Greenspace Services are committed to delivering accessible and high quality urban parks. This will be achieved by prioritising the sites that scored low in the Parks Quality Audit through targeted investment and improved management standards.

For the purposes of this strategy the PPG 17 typology definition has been used to define the term Parks and Gardens:

**"Parks and gardens include urban parks and formal gardens; amenity greenspace includes informal recreation, greenspaces in and around housing, domestic gardens and village greens. It includes publicly accessible and private spaces, but excludes space left over after planning (SLOAP) and other incidental areas of land, such as road verges, which are not intended for a specific use"**

### Summary of Medway's Parks and Amenity Spaces Audit

A full audit of 25 urban parks and a selected 19 amenity spaces was undertaken to inform this strategy (The Medway Parks Quality Audit, 2004). The audit was designed to evaluate the quantity, quality and accessibility of designated parks and amenities. It provides the basis for assessing a range of assets of a park covering its design and physical structure, management and maintenance and its value to people. The methodology was derived from the Greater London Authority's recommendations, using PPG 17 typology.

### Assessment of Quantity

The analysis of the quantity of parks and amenity space in Medway is based on the categories of parks recommended by the London Planning Advisory Committee-the 'LPAC' hierarchy. This hierarchy is based on size and indicative catchment areas and enables the quality to be evaluated of designated parks and amenities and is intended principally to provide qualitative data.

**Table eleven The LPAC Hierarchy**

Category	Size	Walking distance
Small Local Park	1 ha	2 minutes (200 m)
Local Park	2 ha	5 minutes (400 m)
District Park	20 ha	15 minutes (1.2 km)
Metropolitan Park	60 ha	40 minutes (3.2 km)

### Multi-Functionality & New Demands

Many parks and amenity areas have more than one purpose. They can be aesthetically pleasing, as well as offer opportunities for informal recreation, children's play, social gathering places, exercising dogs, and holding events. This can create problems when analysing an audit of provision and determining if local needs are being met. However, this multi-functionality can provide opportunities for plugging gaps in local provision and exploring the possibilities of new, original and exciting uses of parks.

A key issue to recognise during the lifecycle of this strategy is the projected growth in older people (over 60's) and the need to ensure provision and opportunities for engagement reflect this projected growth. Whilst referenced within Section 4 this is very much a crosscutting theme that will encompass both Section 3 (Wildlife & Countryside) and Section 5 (Connecting People, Spaces & Places).

Opportunities for provision and engagement with older people are currently identified within the "Opportunity in the Third Age/Improving Life for Older People" Plan 2006-09. At the end of this plan cycle (2009) it is proposed that this Strategy Delivery Plan (Phase 1) is reviewed and appropriate headline actions linked to the National Service Framework eight key standards for improving health and social care for older people be included.

## Primary purpose

A way of avoiding the problems of multi-functionality can be to assign a primary purpose to a park. The park is only counted once in an audit of provision with this identifying the parks prime function. This also implies that the park has a secondary role, which reflects the multi-functionality of many parks, but nevertheless brings clarity and consistency to planning, design and management policies, and promotes the concept of fit for purpose.

There are 25 parks averaging about 2ha in size in Medway. Most are either 'Local' or 'Small Local' Parks (6 are Pocket Parks, 9 are Small Local Parks and 10 are Local Parks). The small size of the urban parks means that they are best placed to serve local communities but are not capable of delivering a strategic park destination serving Medway. The majority of urban parks occur in the built up areas of Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham. Strood and Rainham are less well served. The majority of sites are of average quality. The five sites with the lowest quality score (as ranked for overall quality and maintenance) are Temple Marsh, Luton Millennium Park, Broom Hill Park and Hillyfields Community Park. However, two of these sites (Temple Marsh and Hillyfields Community Park) are subject to significant investment programmes.

There are 62 amenity spaces averaging less than 2ha in size (i.e. of Small Local or Pocket Park size). The amenity spaces are scattered fairly evenly across the urban parts of Medway. The larger amenity spaces - such as Queen Elizabeth tend to occur close to urban centres.

In general the amenity spaces are well located with respect to communities and are fit for purpose. Perhaps as a result they also performed well with respect to levels of vandalism and grounds maintenance. However the amenity spaces are also generally less well designed and are of poor quality with respect to stimulation and interest for users. In addition, there are minimal biodiversity features and grass habitats are poor. A key factor for amenity spaces is the lack of clarity as to who can use the spaces and therefore they can lack community ownership. The enhancement of biodiversity for amenity spaces will both improve the value and interest of the spaces as well as help achieve the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard. There are already some amenity spaces that stand out from the 'norm', for example spaces such as in Low Meadow in Halling, which score highly for biodiversity features and stimulation and interest.

## Summary of Parks and Amenity Spaces Quality Audit

The main findings were as follows:

<b>Landscape:</b>	Our larger parks provide a more stimulating and exciting landscape
<b>Facilities:</b>	Facilities offered in open spaces are generally not appropriate to their size or location
<b>Furniture:</b>	Park furniture and buildings are generally not thought to be well designed or located
<b>Maintenance:</b>	The quality of maintenance is generally poor
<b>Cleanliness:</b>	Average to good
<b>Management:</b>	Play areas showed an average quality of management and urban parks are less well managed
<b>Community involvement:</b>	Pattern of development of Friends Groups at key sites such as Gillingham Park Hillyfields, Rede Common, Borstal, Broomhill and the Vines. Since 2005 there has also been a Medway Urban Parks and Greenspaces Forum that actively works on strategic development of open space issues with the Council and supports "friends of " groups
<b>Vandalism:</b>	More in outdoor sports and leisure facilities and play areas than other spaces.
<b>Sense of safety:</b>	A high perception of fear of crime exists due to park design and physical qualities

**Usage:** Usage of open space is variable with Gillingham Park receiving about 500,000 visitors per annum while many amenity spaces are poorly used due to their ill-defined function. Few open spaces cater well for all ages

Open Space Headline Actions based on the sample audit undertaken and consultation responses are:

<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces Headline Action (1)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Submit a Heritage Lottery Fund Application (Parks for People) - to fund restoration works to Gillingham Park	2008 - 2012	Outcome 3: Prioritised investments
<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces Headline Action (2)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Green Flag accreditation for sites that meet assessment criteria and adoption of a local quality management indicator for other sites	2008 - 2016	Outcome 1: More high quality facilities
<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces Headline Action (3)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Management Plan framework for all sites and targeted investment to improve service standards	2008 - 2016	Outcome 2: Improved monitoring and management

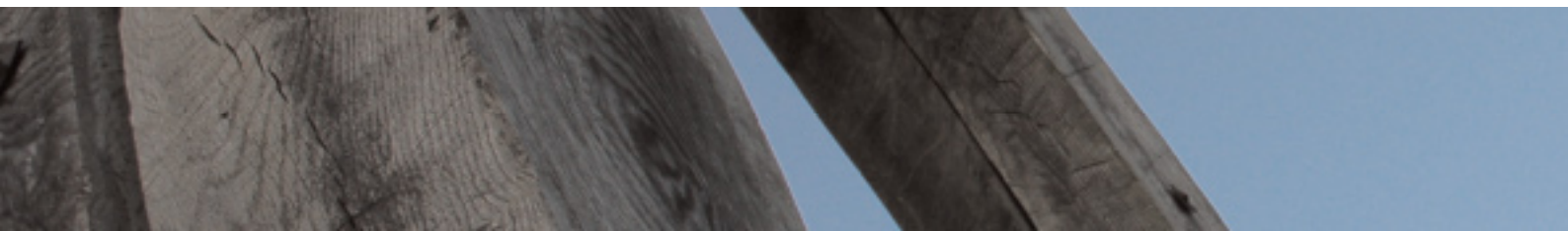
### Summary of Quantity & Accessibility

Medway has a significant amount of open spaces: 1,909.63ha and total open space per thousand population in Medway is approximately 7.6 ha. This is a relatively high figure compared to other districts but it will, of course, fall given the projected increase in population unless new provision is made.

It is also important to consider the distribution of open space and its accessibility as a guide to new provision and improvement priorities. The open space provision by ward has been calculated by simply dividing the ward population by the area of open space in hectares. The wards with the lowest level of provision are: Gillingham South, Rochester East, Rainham Central, Strood North, Chatham Central, Rainham South, Walderslade and Princes Park. All of these wards provide less than 2.4ha of open space per 1000 population (the National Playing Fields Association standard). Two of these wards, Chatham Central and Princes Park, are amongst the 20% most deprived wards in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation and therefore merit particular attention. Greenspace Services will target investment to those wards with less than 2.4 ha of NPFA open space and especially Chatham Central and Princes Park to increase the provision, accessibility and quality of open space.

The wards that are expected to see an increase in population growth linked to regeneration through the Thames Gateway programme are Chatham Central, Peninsula, River and Strood South and these will be targeted by Greenspace Services to increase levels of provision.

The distance thresholds used in this strategy are based on recognised standard walking and travel times. Ideally everyone should live within 5 mins walk (280m) of a small park. For larger parks the distance threshold is higher at 20 mins walk (1.2km). The application of such standards is only relevant and appropriate for urban Medway.



The table below shows that the most significant shortfall in accessibility relates to District Parks. However, over 80% of people have good accessibility to Small Local Parks and a good proportion (two-thirds) have a good accessibility to Pocket Parks.

**Table twelve Proposed Medway Council LPAC Standards**

Park size	London Standard	Current Medway performance	Suggested Medway standard
<b>Formal Metropolitan Park</b>	100% population within 3.2km	0%	Develop the Great Lines as a city park (Metropolitan facility) to increase percentage of residents living with 3.2km of a metropolitan park to 50% by 2016
<b>District Park</b>	100% population within 1.2km	49%	Increase to 60% by 2012 and prioritise quality and access to the larger parks. This will be achieved through the realisation of formal recreational open space at Temple Marsh, enhancement of Hillyfields and the Queen Elizabeth Open Spaces and creation of wider function for sport sites such as Borstal and Shorts Way
<b>Local Park</b>	100% population within 400m	64%	Increase to 70% by 2012 through realisation of new facilities such as Lower Lines Park and Fort Amherst
<b>Small Local Park</b>	100% population within 400m	81%	90% to be realised through creation of new open spaces such as associated with developments such as Rochester Riverside and Grange Farm
<b>Pocket Park</b>	100% population within 280m	67%	Due to the limited function of these small sites and the efficiency of maintenance, the Medway Standard is to enhance quality of existing pocket parks rather than creating new



Headline actions for Open Space development around quantity and accessibility are:

<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces Headline Action (4)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Prioritise the creation of new district parks (2ha - 4ha) within new developments	2008 - 2016	Outcome 5: More open spaces contributing directly to regeneration
<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces Headline Action (5)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Support the project partnership to establish a 'metropolitan' size park at the Great Lines, Chatham	2008 - 2012	Outcome 5: More open space contributing directly to regeneration
<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces Headline Action (6)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Support the development of Friends Groups for Open Space Sites and continue partnership development with Medway Urban Parks and Greenspaces Forum	2008 - 2016	Outcome 6: Greater celebration and engagement
<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces Headline Action (7)</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Key Outcome</b>
Provision of new open space through funding secured as a result of regeneration investment (Developer Contribution Guide) or through external funding programmes and the development of multi-functional open space framework	2008 - 2016	Outcome 3: Prioritised investments



## Allotments

Policy statement: Medway Council recognises the wide appeal of allotments and values the contribution that allotments make to health, sense of place, wildlife, sustainable food production and social cohesion. Greenspace Services will seek to improve site safety and enhance facilities of allotment sites to ensure that they continue to play a unique role in community life. This will require the protection of existing allotment sites and the delivery of an investment framework to make quantity, quality and accessibility improvements.

### Allotment Quantity

Medway Council manages 28 sites designated as allotments covering approximately 22 hectares, providing 923 plots of which current occupancy is at 98%. Parish councils are responsible for a further 5 allotment sites located in rural Medway. To assess the quantity of allotment provision in Medway, it is possible to compare the number of plots available to the standard set by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG). The NSALG advocates a standard of 15 plots per 1,000 households, Medway currently has 9 plots per 1,000 households.

When new sites are to be provided, they should, if possible, be provided next to existing open spaces to facilitate positive conversion, as well as to encourage passive security for the open space as a whole. Greenspace Services will seek to procure additional allotment land, particularly in Lordwood, Parkwood and Hempstead where there is demand but no available sites.

In the unlikely event that allotment land is found to be redundant, alternative uses should be considered through implementation of the Asset Management Review process as detailed in section 6 of this strategy. This will include consultation with the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) and Medway Allotment Federation. If allotment land is genuinely surplus due to falling demand, then consideration must be given to alternative community based, sustainable land-based activities, for example community gardens, community orchards, or local nature reserves. However, provision must be made for converting back to allotments if demand increases.

**Table thirteen**                      **Medway Council Allotment Quantity Measure**

Allotment Quantity Measure (1)	Current provision	Target 2010	Target 2016
15 plots per 1,000 households	9 plots per 1,000 households	12 plots per 1,000 households	15 plots per 1,000 households

The above target will be met jointly by exploring provision of new designated allotment sites and by continuing a programme of halving the size of redundant and released plots. This will create an increase in additional plots of a size appropriate to encourage new comers to allotmenting. In addition, new developments will be required to consider the allocation of allotment either in situ or within 1km of the proposed development. This requirement will be reflected in the Developers Contribution Guide for Medway.

Proposed Medway Allotment Quantity Standards for allotment sites:

- Investigate opportunities for allotment sites in areas of under provision
- Incorporate allotment requirements into the planning system
- Continue to work with Medway Allotment Federation and Parishes to review plot sizes and allocation

Allotment Quantity Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Target additional provision in Lordswood, Parkwood and Hempstead and promote provision of additional allotment space through the Developer Contribution Guide	2008 - 2016	Outcome 1: Providing more high quality facilities

### Allotment Quality

The Allotment Condition Survey, 2004, undertaken by Medway Council, provided the following findings:

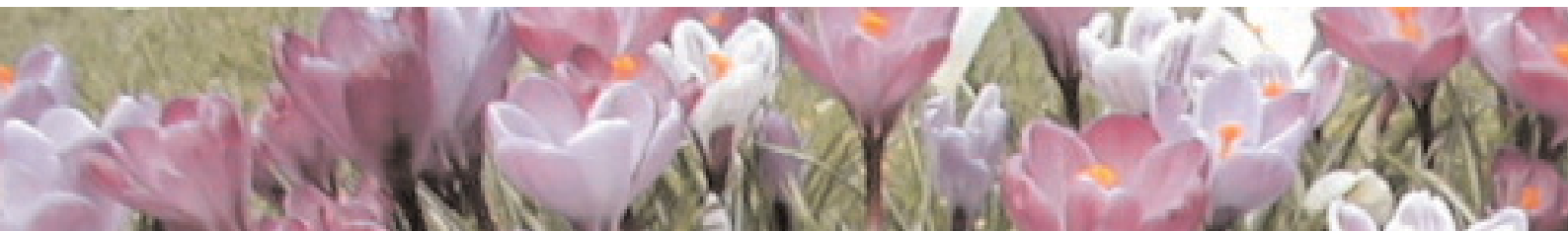
- Water provision is not consistent across sites
- Criminal damage is often evident in the form of vandalism and fly tipping
- Sites with active associations are better managed
- Boundaries are often poorly managed
- Only one site has an on-site toilet

The facilities which users feel are essential for a good quality allotment are: water; secure boundary fencing and good maintenance. Therefore the main improvement standards are suggested to existing sites are:

- Improving site security / boundary fencing with prompt repair of any damage
- Providing toilets where feasible and economic to do so
- Clearing vacant plots and maintain communal paths
- Assisting in rubbish disposal
- Improving water supply
- Refurbishment of allotment sheds

A full copy of the Allotment Condition Survey is included in Appendix 4. Since 2006/07 three phases of capital funding to the value of £125K has been invested in allotments. This funding through consultation with Medway Allotment Federation has been allocated to site infrastructure improvements including site security, improved water supply and refurbishment of allotment sheds.

Allotments Quality Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Investment framework to improve the quality of existing allotments	2008 - 2016	Outcome 1: Providing high quality facilities





## Accessibility of Allotments in Medway

Allotment sites are not evenly distributed across Medway - homes in the more recently developed parts of Medway, such as Lordswood, Parkwood and Walderslade, have limited access to allotments. These later areas will be a focus for attention. Based on a distance threshold of land area within 1km radius of existing sites the current levels of provisions against population figures are shown below.

**Table fourteen Medway Council Allotment Accessibility Target**

Allotment Area Measure	Current Performance	Target 2012	Target 2016
Land Area within 1km radius of allotments	70%	75%	90%

## Management of Allotments in Medway

All Medway Council owned sites are managed by Greenspace Services. There are currently no sites where devolved management is practiced. Most sites have allotment associations, some of which are more active than others. There seems to be a correlation between active site associations, plot take-up and overall site quality. Attractive, functioning and popular sites all tend to have very active site associations. The Medway Allotments Federation supports and promotes allotment gardening across the whole authority and represents the interests of allotmenting. We know that there is interest in exploring devolved management, as many plot holders (70%) in the survey mentioned that they would like further information on such an approach. Devolved management schemes can benefit both Local Authorities and their allotment gardeners. A reduced burden of administration and maintenance responsibilities means savings for the authority and a route to engaging with local communities in the regeneration and management of important environmental assets. This could "kick-start" the process of turning underused sites around, and provide "best-value" to service users.

For plot holders, devolution can bring more responsive management on a day-to-day basis, a sense of pride in any improvements to the site, and opportunities for volunteers to bring their skills and expertise to a new challenge, particularly beyond retirement.

Allotment Management Headline Action	Timescale	Key Outcome
To work with Allotment Federation to develop Delegated Management Agreements (DMA's) so that clubs take responsibility for management at some sites	2008 - 2016	Outcome 6: Greater celebration and engagement



# Connecting People, Spaces and Places (Green Grid Framework)

## Policy Statement

'Medway's Green Grid will forge connections between local communities and their local environment, encouraging a step change in the quality and quantity of accessible green space and demonstrating Medway's credentials as a dynamic, sustainable green city in the making'.

## Introduction

The five historic towns which make up the core of Medway's urban area are bordered by the M2 to the south and west, to the north by the River Medway, and to the east by open countryside. Urban vacant or derelict land is minimal, with the largest pockets being around parts of the rural-urban fringe. This fringe is subject to considerable pressures and as such what could be a positive transition is more often an area that suffers from an ill-defined purpose and poor quality landscape, fly-tipping, motorbike scrambling and anti-social behaviour. Agriculture in the rural-urban fringe faces particular pressures, with incidences of trespass, arson and fly-tipping. There has also been an increase in land used for horse pasture - all factors which can have implications for landscape character. There is a more general issue that people feel the rural area is being 'urbanised', and as such there is a need to carefully plan and manage the rural-urban fringe to maintain a rural character.

A greater sense of ownership by urban residents of the rural - urban fringe needs to be developed to overcome current pressures. A key factor in this is improving access and informing future positive management of areas through a planned strategic approach to land management. Medway's two country parks and farm reserve perform a valuable function as 'gateways' to the countryside and the development of additional appropriate strategically located gateways will help enhance access to rural Medway. Developing a Green Grid outwards from the strategic gateways will be key to improving access and informing land management projects.

## Overview of Green Grid

Medway Council is developing a Green Grid initiative to promote access to, and investment in, quality open spaces and countryside in Medway. The Green Grid will provide sustainable links between urban and rural neighbourhoods through a network of quality open spaces and corridors of landscape, recreational and ecological value through which people can move without the need for cars.

Green Grid in Medway will fit into the wider aspirations to secure access to quality open spaces and countryside in the Thames Gateway and will feed into broader Thames Gateway plans. This link is evidenced by funding from the Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway Initiative currently undertaking studies to identify the opportunities to promote Green Grid projects across areas of the Thames Gateway. Within Medway these cluster studies are considering areas from the Great Lines to the Capstone Valley, and the Hoo peninsula. The outcomes of these studies will inform future funding priorities from central government.



Core principles of Green Grid are to:

- complement the existing landscape, habitats and access network
- foster and promote local distinctiveness
- enhance, link and buffer designated sites
- promote access for all
- encourage community engagement
- be environmentally informed

### **Benefits and Relationships**

Green Grid will deliver a wide range of benefits:

#### Health

- Provide opportunities to improve peoples physical and psychological health in a green environment
- Provide opportunities for health organisations to utilise green resources to provide therapeutic benefits
- Promote healthy lifestyles through development of transport routes between destinations across Medway to encourage non-motorised transport options and less sedentary lifestyle
- Develop eco-therapy activities in conjunction with health providers from the country parks
- Improve walking, cycling and other formal and informal outdoor recreation opportunities for the 15.6% of the Medway population who stated they had a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limited daily activities or work
- Support local delivery of national initiatives including Green Gyms and the Walking the way to Health Initiative (WHI) building on existing healthy walk programmes run at Capstone Farm Country Park.

#### Transport

- Provide safer routes to work and schools through improving and developing access paths and cycleways on and between countryside and open spaces
- Delivery of Local Transport Plan (2006) priorities for reducing congestion, improving accessibility and improving air quality
- Support Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2007) aims of resolving existing barriers to movement, better promoting the network, and identifying and delivering new links to provide continuous routes where practicable for public use

#### Ecology

- Establish linear urban nature reserves by identifying management to create ecological and access linkage between sites therefore contributing to enhanced management of existing, and potentially designating new, Roadside Nature Reserves and buffering important sites
- A creative response to climate change through 'greening' of routes between sites, enabling non-motorised transport, and exploring innovative site management regimes including use of sites for sustainable urban drainage schemes



- Living Landscapes produced by South East Wildlife Trusts, highlights the need to develop ecological networks which Green Grid will establish. Within Medway the Capstone Valley link to the North Downs, and the Hoo Peninsula are identified for network development

#### Education/Events

- Provide access to nature through reviewing management of sites to maximise value for biodiversity on a local level
- Provide a focus for local heritage and culture through celebrating the history of sites as part of the community through a programme of events
- Establish Outdoor Classrooms and Green Gyms through providing opportunity for practical works and the study of biodiversity of sites

#### Financial

- Act as a catalyst for investment by establishing priorities for investment and informing the developer contribution guide for investment in greenspace
- Create a visitor attraction through improving the environment and providing enhanced visitor facilities and enabling visitors to move freely from the urban to rural areas of Medway.

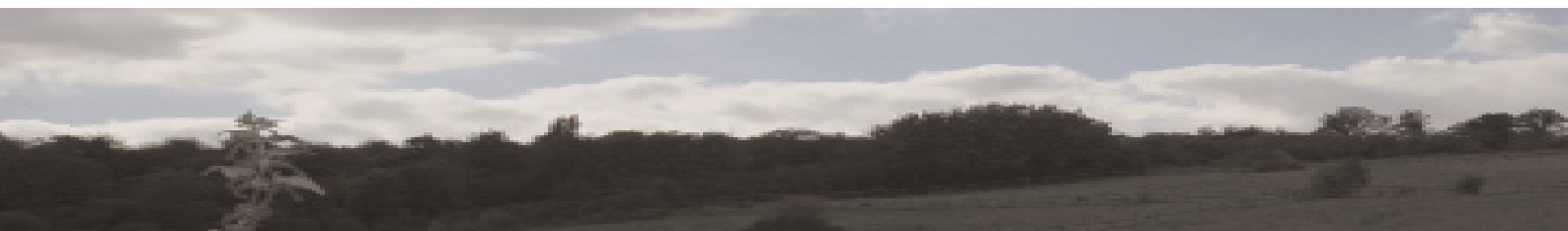
#### Planning / Policy

- Meet draft South East Regional Policy requiring provision to be made for Green Grid networks, recreation and public access, and enhancement of landscapes, habitats, heritage and the environment
- Inform Local Development Framework proposal mapping for landscape protection
- Contribute to the Medway Rural Strategy (2004) key areas of work relating to supporting rural community life, investing in Medway's countryside, and integrating strategic and local needs.

#### **Priorities for investment**

A Green Grid Action Plan is being adopted following a process of mapping work and liaison with key organisations locally. This has identified a number of priority strategic routes that link up key assets across Medway and provide the most direct route between rural and urban Medway in order to maximise healthy lifestyle choices by providing sustainable transport opportunities. This includes a diverse range of sites, including the Capstone Valley, Cliffe Pools, Medway Valley, riverside walks, woodland and parks and open spaces. Proposed routes follow seven broad corridors:

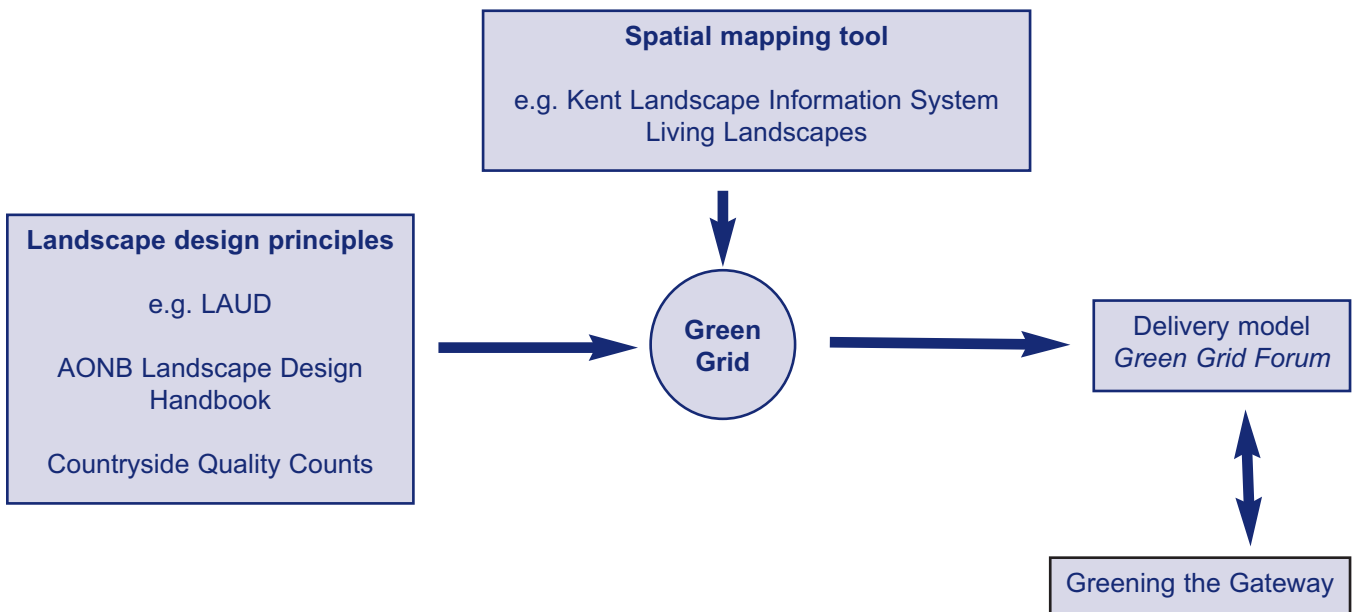
- Star Hill to Motney Hill
- St Mary's Island to Riverside Country Park
- Great Lines to Capstone Valley
- Great Lines to Horsted Valley
- Great Lines to Wouldham
- Whitehall Creek to Upper Halling
- Whitewall to Hoo Peninsula



In parallel with these initial strategic priorities for Green Grid, opportunities for the development of the urban Green Grid network will also be explored as part of the regeneration framework that is being delivered by Medway Renaissance Partnership.

### Delivery Model

The schematic below shows the drivers for Green Grid and highlights the need for a delivery mechanism.



A wide range of documents exist which could be used to inform the design principles for Green Grid Routes. Documents including the The Landscape Assessment of Kent, The Kent Thames Gateway Landscape Report, Landscape and Urban Design Framework (LAUD) and Countryside Quality Counts all provide varying levels of detail on local landscape character across Medway with Countryside Quality Counts highlighting change over time against characteristics. On a more specific level, the Kent Downs AONB Landscape Design Handbook should be utilized for determining appropriate design for areas of Green Grid routes within the Kent Downs AONB.

Spatial mapping tools include the Kent Landscape Information System which aims to enable better informed decision-making by providing detailed information on Kent's landscape and biodiversity. Countryside access, landscape character, identifies opportunities for habitat creation and landscape restoration, the physical environment including soils and geology, the Kent habitat survey are all mapped with areas designated for their conservation value. Similarly, the Sustainable Benefits Mapping Tool is a multi-criteria map model being developed by Natural England which could demonstrate key sites for investment based on their value for single or multiple criteria.

These models could help to inform priority sites along Green Grid routes for investment together with highlighting opportunities for changing land management practice as part of future developments to enhance ecological corridors. There is also a need to have a basic map layer showing all Greenspace along routes in order to find the most direct route with highway use limited to an identified network of greenways or quiet lanes to maximise realised lifestyle change and health benefits.

The delivery model for Green Grid in Medway is centred on a local partnership, in order to coordinate opportunities to improve open spaces and countryside. A Green Grid Forum will represent a broad range of interested organisations, including various council services, such as Greenspaces, Road Safety, Public Rights of Way, Medway Renaissance, Transport and Health Promotion; Natural England; Environment Agency; local amenity and interest groups, such as the Local Access Forum, Ramblers Association, Medway Countryside Forum and the Medway Urban Parks and Green Spaces Forum.

The Forum's role will be to:

- agree the broad strategy for Green Grid in Medway
- share information and coordinate the work of its members to achieve the aspirations for Green Grid
- determine the most appropriate landscape design principles and spatial mapping tool for each Green Grid route
- champion principles and funding of Green Grid as part of regeneration, transport development, and health improvement

Greengrid Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Support the Green Grid forum in ongoing project delivery to maximise ecological, health and transport benefits.	2008 - 2016	Outcome 5: More open space contributing to regeneration

### The Thames and Medway Canal

Together with linking destinations in rural and urban Medway through the Green Grid, this historic transport route also has the potential to form the basis of a modern sustainable transport network between destinations in Medway and Gravesend.

The canal was completed and opened in 1824 including the 2.25 mile long Strood Tunnel. The canal was never able to make sufficient profit to cover its construction cost and the growth of rail transport led to the canal under the tunnel being filled in 1846 splitting the canal into 2 sections. As late as the 1930's, Thames sailing barges were towed from the Gravesend basin to what was then British Uralite, and to Dung Wharf at Lower Higham but the canal was finally abandoned in 1934 since which time many features have been lost.



In 1975, the Inland Waterways Association (IWA) decided that the canal and basin should become part of the waterway network and benefit from the canal restoration effort that was enveloping the country in the 1970's from which the Thames and Medway Canal Association was established in 1976, becoming a registered charity in 2005.

The Thames and Medway Canal Association has undertaken work ranging from informing local planning policy so that this now states that all developments must preserve the line of the canal for potential future restoration, through to dredging and reed clearance, and maintenance work, together with supporting Sustrans in adopting the canal towpath as part of the national cycle network. The Association has a long history of working in partnership not only with Sustrans and the IWA, but also with Gravesham Borough Council and SEEDA.

In 2005 the Association published a High Level Restoration Strategy for the canal, and the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (IWA) included the canal in its report on restoration priorities in recognising it as being of medium heritage and high nature conservation interest.

The future of the canal currently forms part of one of the cluster studies within Gravesham being funded by Communities and Local Government and being prepared by the Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway Initiative. The aim of the study, which ranges from East Gravesend to the RSPB Cliffe Marshes, is to agree a common vision for the wider area in which the canal is located. The Cluster study will help co-ordinate future project development and implementation. Such work will be linked to the emerging Thames Gateway Parklands Transformational Themes. A key feature will be the enhancement of the canal's heritage, biodiversity and navigation - linking to town centre regeneration, Shorne Marshes, Sustrans National Cycle Route 1 and Cliffe Pools. Partners in this study include the RSPB, local landowners, Gravesham Borough Council, Environment Agency, Kent Thameside and the Thames and Medway Canal Association.

Thames and Medway Canal Headline Action (1)	Timescale	Key Outcome
Provide partner support as required to assist the Thames and Medway Canal cluster study and project development	2008 - 2012	Outcome 3: Prioritised investment



# Delivery Framework

## Overview

To be successful this Strategy needs to have a Delivery Framework that:

- Quantifies a model for delivery
- Measures performance
- Reflects the available resource
- Partnership based

It is important to recognize from the outset that this Strategy is not just owned by Medway Council and its success or failure will be down to all partners engaging and supporting delivery of the Headline Actions. In many aspects of Strategy delivery the function of Medway Council will be to facilitate and champion change to improve and protect Medway's Wildlife, Countryside and Open Spaces.

The following drivers have guided the Delivery Framework for the Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space Strategy:

## Capital & Revenue Investment

Capital and revenue investment will determine the success of this strategy and key to securing investment is demonstrating the wider benefits of a countryside and open space provision. Whilst intrinsically important in their own right, greater emphasis needs to be placed on their role in delivering health benefits, building community cohesion and addressing anti-social behaviour if funding is to be secured and sustained. Partnership working will be central to securing funding for sites and projects owing to the greater range of funds available to voluntary and charity groups than local government bodies.

Building on investment levels secured to date the priority for funding bids will be targeted to achieve (where practical) whole-site refurbishment rather than incremental improvements and to maximise investment through the Developer Contribution Process. To underpin capital investment, revenue provision will need to be aligned to ensure adequate investment in sites that have been refurbished. In parallel with alignment of revenue provision will be the development of endowment funding for new sites and increasing income through targeted sponsorship and efficiency savings for reinvestment through the grounds maintenance contract. The level of revenue funding that can be secured will determine the level of capital investment that is made through this strategy.

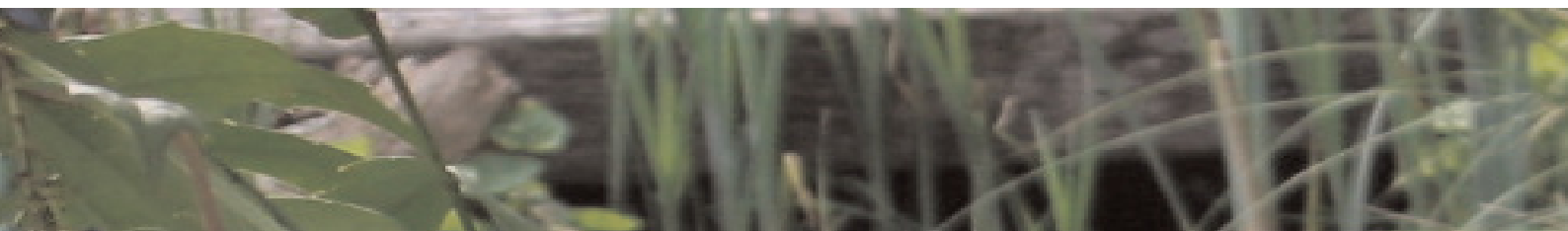
A detailed assessment of funding streams has been identified and included in Appendix 5 and this will be updated as and when new funding streams become available.

It is important to note and recognise that the Council either through direct funding or external grants cannot guarantee that all identified investment will be achieved over the lifecycle of the strategy. This does not undermine the Council's commitment to, or the value of, adopting the strategy.

## Strategy Implementation Group

To drive delivery of the Strategy and the six identified outcomes it is proposed to establish an inter-departmental Strategy Implementation Group. The priorities of this group will be:

- Produce Strategy Action Plan
- Implementation of Strategy Action Plan
- Cross-departmental working
- External funding applications





- Capacity building with community groups and stakeholders

The Strategy Implementation Group will be established during year 1 of the Strategy 2008 - 2009. It will be led by the Head of Greenspace Services and will be supported by a dedicated project officer.

### **Community Engagement**

Developing and facilitating community engagement is a key driver for this Strategy and is reflected in Outcome 6 - Greater celebration and engagement. A number of headline actions have been identified around community engagement within this strategy the most important of which is that around facilitating Delegated Management Agreements for user groups such as clubs that play sports and establishing self management "friends of" groups.

The role of the third sector is key in developing and underpinning active community engagement since the Council cannot always, due to resource constraints, provide practical support and is also not always best placed to provide the support. Whilst no specific headline action has been adopted within the strategy, opportunities for third sector involvement will be explored and developed through the delivery phases with an initial priority being around a practical conservation network through the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

Satisfaction with countryside and open spaces will continue to be measured through the ROP but greater emphasis will also be placed on using consultation models such as place checks to demonstrate improvements in quality at site level are endorsed through improved usage levels and satisfaction levels. In parallel with adoption of site-specific consultation models will be the need to undertake a wider barriers audit to identify and understand engagement trends and barriers both physical and cultural. It is proposed that a barriers audit be undertaken as part of the first action plan for the strategy.

### **Site Management**

Three overarching principles will guide and deliver improvements to site management to underpin delivery of this strategy:

- Improvements in the quality of maintenance standards for sites through the delivery of the Grounds Maintenance Quality Management Framework (adopted in 2007)
- Adoption of management plans for key sites and a management framework for smaller sites
- Green Flag accreditation for sites that meet assessment criteria and adoption of a local quality management indicator for other sites

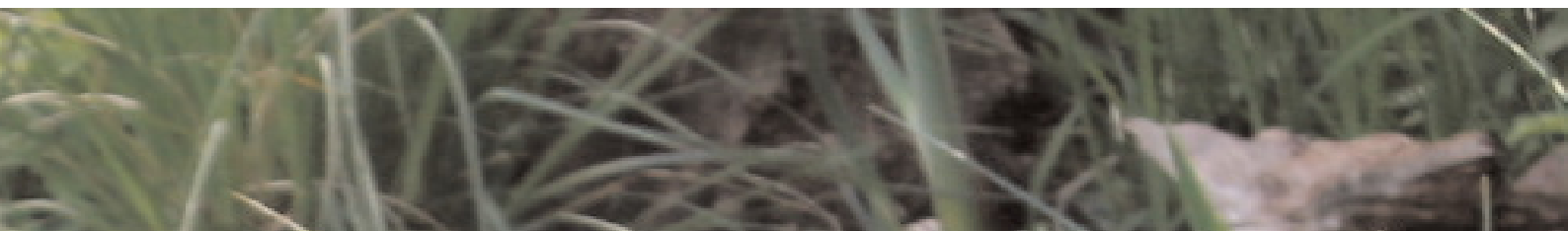
Management plans will follow best practice guidelines promoted by CABE Space for open space sites and Natural England / Forestry Commission for countryside sites. They will be broad in scope and have a strong development emphasis and will also form an important engagement platform with existing and new stakeholder groups.

### **Design**

Principal findings from the various audits that have been undertaken to support development of this strategy indicate design shortfalls across the Greenspace estate. This is very much reflected of the national picture and not unique to Medway. Good sustainable and inclusive design is key to the renaissance of greenspace within Medway. Through the various regeneration programmes that are being implemented and ambitious targets within this strategy there are numerous opportunities to promote and develop well-designed countryside and open space and these opportunities to drive improvements through design should not be missed. Well-designed countryside and open spaces will attract high usage levels and promote and encourage diversity of use.

### **Asset Management Review**

Medway Council places great importance to the retention of recreational, countryside and amenity open spaces in urban and rural areas and recognises that once built on, they will usually be lost to the community forever. There will be a presumption that existing open space will be preserved and enhanced and this is reflected in existing Local Plan Policy.



This guide has been written to support the making of informed decisions in situations when it is suggested that facilities or sites are either unfit or are incapable of fulfilling their original purpose. Examples of this could be where a play area has sustained vandalism over a long period of time and it has proved uneconomical to maintain in its present role. Whilst council policy is towards the protection of open space from development, a review should be considered where all reasonable long-term efforts to redress the situation have proved unsuccessful. At this time it is important to have a robust and clear methodology for assessing the immediate and long-term value of a site - both for its prescribed purpose as well as addressing shortfalls in open space provision. Therefore an informed decision then needs to be taken as to the long-term future of that land. This will consider as to whether:

- Further investment in the site should be prioritised
- The site should be given an alternative open space use to help address shortfall
- To seek disposal of the site on the open market with income being reinvested for open space enhancement of a similar type and as close as possible to the site

The following process will apply in identifying open space, sports and recreational facilities for disposal prior to a recommendation to the Corporate Property Team, Development Control or Cabinet.

1. Site assessment

- a. Determine local provision using NPFA benchmark or standards as stated in this strategy. Quality of facilities, site history, covenants, legal status S106 agreements and community interest should also be taken into consideration.

2. Site history

- a. What is the nature and scale of the problem?

3. Establish links to departmental and corporate strategies

- a. Determine potential impact of strategies on any proposal

4. Local Plan / LDF compliance

- a. Determine proposed disposal complies with Local Plan Policy L3 and LDF policy CS22

5. Options / opportunities

- a. Can the factors impacting upon the site be addressed through community engagement, wardening, investment, improved maintenance and management, change of use within greenspace portfolio?

6. Preliminary consultation with Property Services and Development Control

- a. Seek guidance on suitability, planning considerations and potential value of disposal

7. Consult with Portfolio Holder

- a. Views of the Lead Member and Ward Councillor(s) to be sought prior to formalising any proposal for disposal of a site

8. Public and stakeholder consultation

- a. Ascertain views of local residents, "friends of" groups, etc

9. Statutory consultation

- a. Undertake statutory consultation e.g. allotments with NSALG



## 10. Options

- a. Option 1: Undertake works as required
- b. Option 2: Referral to Property Services for disposal

### **Delivery Phasing & Performance Review**

It is important to recognise and accept that delivery of Strategy Headline Actions over the 8-year life span of the strategy will require phasing that is aligned to available resource and funding streams. Consequently headline actions will be broken down into 2 delivery phases for the lifecycle of the strategy:

- Phase 1 (2008 - 2012)
- Phase 2 (2012 - 2016)

For each delivery phase the Strategy Implementation Group will produce an Annual Action Plan. The action plan will list headline actions identified in the strategy and the milestones that will need to be delivered on an annual basis. For some headline actions delivery will bridge a number of financial years and for others they will be time-limited such as the Big Lottery Fund Children's Play Programme.

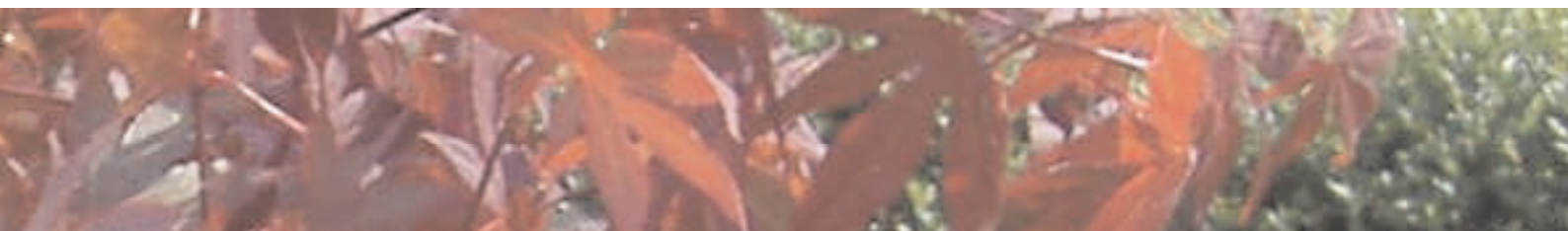
To ensure joined up delivery and to avoid duplication, all existing Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space Strategy targets will be embedded / cross referenced within the Annual Action Plan along with the headline actions identified. Where relevant, for example Green Grid, separate action plans will also be produced.

Performance review of the strategy will be undertaken at two levels:

- Action plan performance will be monitored quarterly through the service -planning framework that will include the collation of any performance management data
- Publication of a bi-annual report that will detail progress measured against the six adopted strategy outcomes

As part of the performance review process all headline actions will be reviewed annually to determine whether new funding opportunities or consultation demand require them to be brought forward within the strategy phases.

Phase 1 of the strategy is shown at key milestone(s) level in Table 15 and 16 on pages 75 to 84.

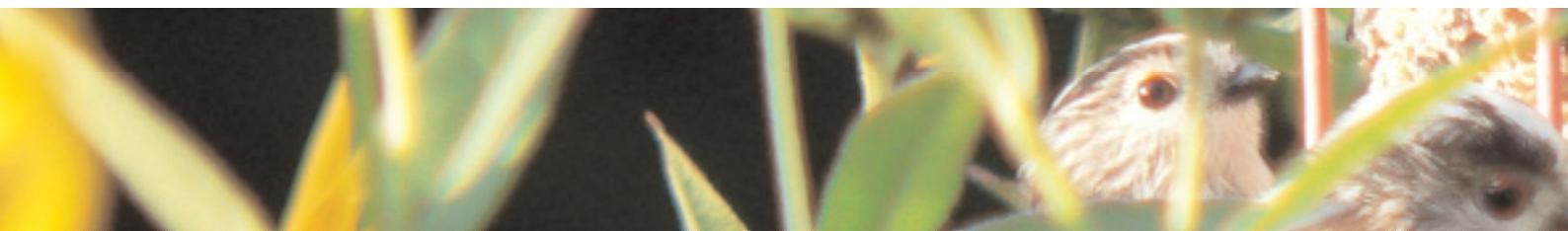


**Table fifteen Wildlife & Countryside Headline Actions**

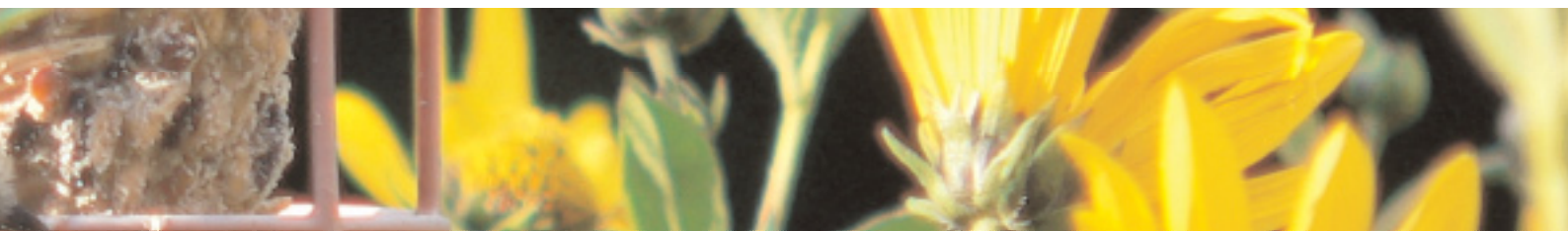
Phase 1 2008 - 2012

Notes: Year 1 (2008 - 2009), Year 2 (2009 - 2010), Year 3 (2010 - 2011) and Year 4 (2011 - 2012)

		Page	Headline Action Description	Key Milestone(s)
Outcome 1: More high quality facilities	1	43	<b>Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard</b> To improve biodiversity management of amenity sites in Medway and to work towards Medway ANGSt targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baseline Audit of existing provision to determine priorities for improvement</li> <li>Phased programme of site improvements</li> </ul>
	2	44	<b>Medway Countryside</b> Secure Green Flag status for existing country parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit Green Flag applications</li> </ul>
Outcome 2: Improved monitoring and management	3	32	<b>Biodiversity Action Plan</b> Support partnership framework for baseline monitoring for key habitats and species within the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and work in partnership to implement management to enhance habitats and species across Medway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GAP analysis of monitoring records</li> <li>Identify targets for improvement and implement monitoring framework</li> </ul>
	4	36	<b>Roadside Nature Reserves</b> Review management arrangements for Roadside Nature Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake management review and identify options for improvement.</li> </ul>
	5	38	<b>Local Wildlife Sites</b> Work with Kent Wildlife Trust to survey and identify all locally important wildlife sites and increase landowner awareness and positive management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a monitoring framework for LWS Sites</li> </ul>
Outcome 3: Prioritised investments	6	30	<b>Calcareous Grassland</b> To establish a calcareous grassland management plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce management plan and sign-off with key stakeholders and statutory agencies</li> <li>Implement management plan recommendations</li> </ul>
	7	34	<b>Woodland</b> Produce a feasibility study for the establishment of a Woodland Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benchmark exercise to determine best practice and preferred mode</li> <li>Draft and sign-off feasibility study</li> </ul>
	8	36	<b>Farmland</b> Work with partners such as FWAG and Greening the Gateway Kent & Medway Initiative to investigate the costs and business case for a countryside management service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer review of Countryside Management Service Models</li> <li>Draft business plan</li> </ul>
	9	44	<b>Medway Countryside</b> Management plan framework for all sites and targeted investment to improve service standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft Management Plan Framework</li> <li>Funding bids to deliver improvement programmes</li> </ul>



Year	Resource Implications	Lead Bodies	Measurement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 2</li> <li>Year 2 - 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer time</li> <li>Grant aid</li> <li>Funding via regeneration investment</li> </ul>	Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team)	Monitoring audits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annually</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer time</li> <li>Service budget</li> </ul>	Medway Council (Countryside Team)	Green Flag Award
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 2</li> <li>Year 3 &amp; 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer time</li> <li>Service budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kent Biodiversity Partnership</li> <li>Kent Wildlife Trust</li> <li>Key stakeholder groups</li> <li>Medway Council (Countryside Team)</li> </ul>	Monitoring audits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer time</li> <li>Service budget</li> </ul>	Medway Council (Countryside Team)	Management review completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer time</li> <li>Grant aid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medway Council (Countryside Team)</li> <li>Kent Wildlife Trust</li> </ul>	Monitoring framework established
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 2</li> <li>Year 3 &amp; 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer time</li> <li>Service budget</li> <li>Grant aid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medway Council (Countryside Team)</li> <li>Kent Wildlife Trust</li> </ul>	Management plan adopted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 1</li> <li>Year 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medway Council (Countryside Team)</li> <li>Forestry Commission</li> <li>Plantlife</li> </ul>	Woodland Partnership established
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 3</li> <li>Year 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team)</li> <li>Greening the Gateway</li> <li>FWAG</li> </ul>	Business plan adopted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 1</li> <li>Year 2, 3, &amp; 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer time</li> <li>Grant aid</li> </ul>	Medway Council (Countryside Team)	Management plan framework adopted



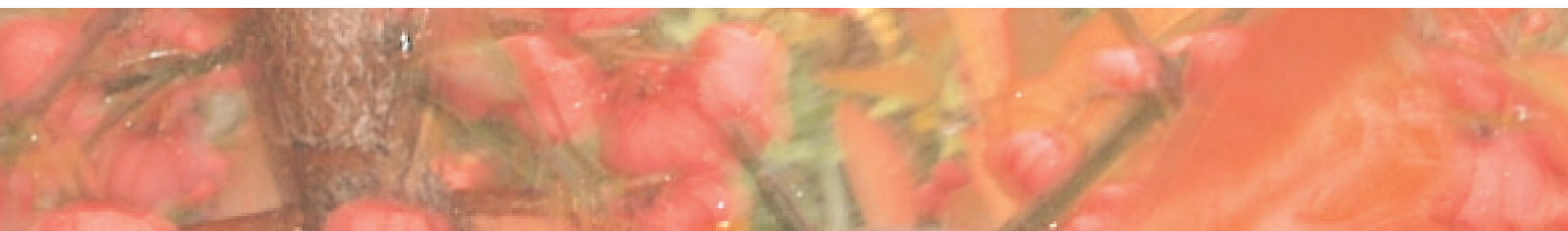
Outcome 4: Improved protection and conservation	10	26	<b>Special Protection Areas</b> Support measures and partnerships that promote positive management of areas of international importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue partnership working with statutory agencies and key stakeholder groups to ensure SPA are maintained to a favourable condition</li> </ul>
	11	28	<b>Sites Special Scientific Interest</b> Resource positive management of Medway owned SSSI's to ensure that they continue moving towards favourable condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Management Framework for SSSI sites</li> <li>Identify and implement improvement targets</li> </ul>
	12	28	<b>Sites Special Scientific Interest</b> Work with the planning framework to promote a buffer zone concept to protect SSSI's from pressures of adjacent development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Liaison with statutory agencies and identification of best practise.</li> </ul>
	13	29	<b>Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty</b> To exercise the Council's "duty of regard" for the interests and qualities of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steering Group representation on the Kent Downs AONB</li> </ul>
	14	33	<b>Brownfield</b> Establish a framework for ecological surveys of brownfield sites to ensure that where feasible the nature conservation interest of brownfield sites are maintained during and after development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft audit framework &amp; sign-off</li> <li>Undertake surveys on a phased basis</li> </ul>
	15	38	<b>Local Wildlife Site</b> Ensure protection of LWS through LDF to ensure they continue to support nationally and locally threatened habitats and species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LWS sites included within the LDF Core Strategy</li> </ul>
	16	40	<b>Area of Local Landscape Importance</b> Support the protection and positive management of ALLI's through Green Grid and LDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review management models within designated ALLI's &amp; identify opportunities for improvement</li> </ul>
	17	43	<b>Local Nature Reserve</b> Secure the designation of an additional 150ha of local nature reserve by 2010 and a further 50ha by 2016.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare and submit applications for Local Nature Reserve designations</li> </ul>
Outcome 5: More open space contributing to regeneration	18	44	<b>Medway Countryside</b> To explore all options for realising new country park facilities at Grain and Horsted Farm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft feasibility studies for new country parks</li> </ul>
Outcome 6: Greater celebration and engagement	19	31	<b>North Kent Marshes</b> To provide partnership support to the delivery of the "Great Expectations" - discovering the North Kent Marshes Area" Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officer representation on programme steering group</li> </ul>
	20	33	<b>Estuaries</b> Support estuary partnerships to deliver positive management and greater awareness of Medway and Thames estuarine resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish joint project working protocols</li> </ul>

• Ongoing	Officer time	Medway Council (Countryside Team) Natural England Kent Wildlife Trust Natural England	Ecological Survey's (Natural England Assessment)
• Year 3 • Year 4 onwards	Officer time Service budget Grant aid	Medway Council (Countryside Team) Plantlife Kent Wildlife Trust Countryside Forum	LDF - Sustainability Indicator
• Year 2 onwards	Officer time	Medway Council (Land Use Planning & Countryside Team)	Buffer Zone Policy adopted
• Ongoing	Officer time Service budget	AONB Steering Group Medway Council (Rural Strategy Manager)	AONB Management Plan Targets
• Year 2 • Year 2 onwards	Officer time	Medway Council (Countryside Team and Land Use Planning)	Audit framework established.
• Year 1 onwards	Officer time	Medway Council (Land Use Planning)	LDF Policy
• Year 3	Officer time Green Grid funding	Medway Council (Green Grid Steering Group)	To be determined
• Year 1 onwards	Officer time	Medway Council (Countryside Team) Natural England	Site designation
• Year 3 onwards	Officer time	Greening the Gateway Medway Council (Countryside Team)	To be determined
• Year 1 onwards	Officer time	RSPB Friends of North Kent Marshes Medway Council (Rural Strategy Manager)	Programme completed
• Year 1 onwards	Officer time Service budget	Medway Council (Countryside Team & Rural Strategy Manager) Estuary Partnerships	To be determined



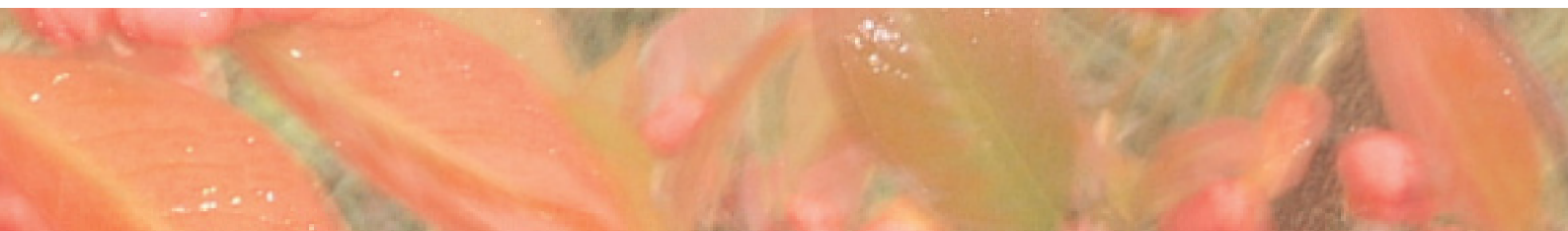
Notes: Year 1 (2008- 2009), Year 2 (2009 - 2010), Year 3 (2010 - 2011) and Year 4 (2011 - 2012)

		Page	Headline Action Description	Key Milestone(s)
Outcome 1: Provide more high quality facilities	1	48	<b>Play</b> Strategic review of the 13 non-operational playground sites to determine future use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site audit to determine future use</li> </ul>
	2	55	<b>Football</b> Work with the Kent County Football Association to develop and adopt the new "Kent Pitches and Facilities Standard".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish project working group and draft improvement plan</li> <li>Phased implementation</li> </ul>
	3	55	<b>Cricket</b> Establish partnership working with Sports Development and national sports agencies to develop cricket participation rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership establishment and action plan produced.</li> </ul>
	4	59	<b>Hockey</b> Investigate the utilisation of S106 contributions to provide an artificial turf pitch in Medway taking into account the developing university project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site and funding identified</li> </ul>
	5	63	<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces</b> Green Flag accreditation for sites that meet assessment criteria and adoption of a local quality management indicator for other sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit Green Flag applications</li> <li>Produce a local quality management indicator for other sites</li> </ul>
	6	63	<b>Allotments</b> Investment framework to improve the quality of existing allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update expenditure audit for allotment sites</li> </ul>
	7	52	<b>Allotments</b> Target additional provision in Lordwood, Parkwood and Hempstead and promote provision of additional allotment space through the Developer Contribution Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look to include allotments in the Developer Contribution Guide</li> </ul>





Year	Resource Implications	Lead Bodies	Measurement
• Year 1	Officer time	Medway Council (Greenspaces Operations Team)	Review completed
• Year 2 • Year 3 & 4	Officer time Contract budget Grant aid	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team) Kent County FA Local football leagues Grounds maintenance contractor (Quadron)	Standard adopted
• Year 3	Officer time	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team & Sports Development) Local Clubs National Sports Agencies	To be determined
• Year 4 onwards	Officer time	Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team) Local clubs Universities	Funding secured
• Annually • Year 2	Officer time Service budget Contract budget	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team) Grounds maintenance contractor (Quadron) Medway Urban Parks and Green Spaces Forum Park "friends of" groups	Green Flag Award
• Year 1	Officer time	Medway Council (Allotment Officer) Medway Allotment Federation	Audit completed
• Year 1	Officer time	Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team)	Allotments included in the Developer Contribution Guide.



<b>Outcome 2: Improved monitoring and management</b>	8	52	<b>Playing Pitch Study</b> Baseline audit of the 2002/03 Playing Pitch Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission consultants to undertake baseline audit of 2002/03 Playing Pitch Study</li> </ul>
	9	55	<b>Tennis</b> Review tennis court management arrangements to identify investment mechanisms and partnership opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish project working group and draft improvement plan</li> <li>Phased implementation</li> </ul>
	10	59	<b>Parks &amp; Amenity Spaces</b> Management plan framework for all sites and targeted investment to improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft management plan framework</li> <li>Funding bids to deliver improvement programmes</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 3: Prioritised investments</b>	11	48	<b>Play</b> Provision of new play areas through funding secured as a result of regeneration investment (Developer Contribution Guide) or through external funded programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission and build new play areas</li> </ul>
	12	48	<b>Play</b> Deliver the BLF Play Improvement Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete consultation programme for BLF Play Improvement Programme</li> <li>Tender &amp; deliver BLF Play Improvement Programme</li> </ul>
	13	55	<b>Football</b> To submit Football Foundation bids for Beechings Recreation Ground and Borstal / Shorts Way Recreation Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applications drafted and signed-off for submission</li> </ul>
	14	56	<b>Tennis</b> Investigate provision of all weather tennis courts in Gillingham, Chatham and Rainham Wards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit of potential Greenspace Sites and identification of preferred site(s)</li> </ul>
	15	61	<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces</b> Provision of new open space through funding secured as a result of regeneration investment (Developer Contribution Guide) or through external funding programmes and the development of multi-functional open space framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management and design input into delivery of Regeneration Framework</li> </ul>
	16	56	<b>All Sports</b> Provision of new facilities through funding secured as a result of regeneration investment (Developer Contribution Guide) or through external funding programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission and build new sports facilities</li> </ul>
	17	70	<b>Thames and Medway Canal</b> Provide partner support as required to assist the Thames and Medway Canal Cluster Study and project development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore partnership working opportunities</li> </ul>

• Year 1	Officer time Service budget	Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team) Medway Town Sport Council Local leagues	Audit completed
• Year 2 • Year 3 & 4	Officer time Contract budget Grant aid	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team and Leisure Services) Tennis clubs Grounds maintenance contractor (Quadron)	Review completed
• Year 2 • Year 3 & 4	Officer time Grant aid	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team & Greenspace Development Team)	Management plan framework adopted
• Ongoing	Officer time Grant aid Funding via regeneration investment	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team & Greenspace Development Team)	Percentage of investment secured - baseline to be set Year 1
• Year 1 & 2	Officer time	Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team) Groundwork Kent & Medway (Project Consultants)	Programme completed
• Year 1	Officer time	Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team)	Funding applications successful
• Year 2	Officer time	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team)	Sites identified
• Ongoing	Officer time Grant aid Funding via regeneration investment	Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team)	Percentage of investment secured - baseline to be set Year 1
• Ongoing	Officer time Grant aid Funding via regeneration investment	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team & Greenspace Development Team)	Percentage of investment secured - baseline to be set Year 1
• Year 1	Officer time	Greening the Gateway Thames and Medway Canal Association Gravesham Borough Council RSPB	To be determined

Outcome 5: More open space contributing to regeneration	18	59	<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces</b> Submit a Heritage Lottery Fund application (Parks for People) - to fund restoration work for Gillingham Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft and sign-off Stage 1 Application</li> <li>• Draft and sign-off Stage 2 Application</li> </ul>
	19	69	<b>Green Grid</b> Support the Green Grid Forum in ongoing project delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steering group representation on Green Grid</li> </ul>
	20	61	<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces</b> Prioritise the creation of new district parks (2ha-4ha) within new developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design input into regeneration programmes</li> </ul>
	21	61	<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces</b> Support the project partnership to establish a "metropolitan" size park at the Great Lines, Chatham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce funding applications</li> </ul>
Outcome 6: Greater celebration and engagement	22	55	<b>Football</b> Facilitate Delegated Management Agreements (DMA's) for sports clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission consultants to prepare Delegated Management Agreements</li> <li>• Consultation with leagues and clubs</li> <li>• Implement a rolling programme of Delegated Management Agreements</li> </ul>
	23	56	<b>Accessibility</b> Work with partners to develop community use of facilities for youth work and sports coaching to address obesity and anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish project working group and draft improvement plan</li> <li>• Phased implementation</li> </ul>
	24	64	<b>Allotments</b> To work with the Allotment Federation to develop Delegated Management Agreements (DMA's) so that clubs take responsibility for management at some sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission consultants to prepare Delegated Management Agreements.</li> <li>• Consultation with leagues and clubs</li> <li>• Implement a programme of Delegated Management Agreements</li> </ul>
	25	61	<b>Parks and Amenity Spaces</b> Support the development of "friends of" groups for open space sites and continue partnership development with Medway Urban Parks and Green Spaces Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce Model Park Friends Agreement Market sites to develop new "friends of" groups</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 1</li> <li>Year 2</li> </ul>	Officer time Grant aid Contract budget	Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team) Gillingham Park Friends Group	Application successful - funding secured
Ongoing	Officer time Green Grid funding	Medway Council (Green Grid Steering Group)	Percentage of investment secured - baseline to be set Year 1
Ongoing	Officer time Funding via regeneration investment	Medway Council (Greenspace Development Team) Medway Renaissance Partnership	To be determined
Ongoing	Officer time	Medway Council (Planning and Greenspace Development Team)	To be determined
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 2</li> <li>Year 2</li> <li>Year 3 &amp; 4</li> </ul>	Officer time Contract budget	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team) Grounds maintenance contractor (Quadron) Leagues and individual clubs	No of signed agreements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 2 onwards</li> <li>Year 3</li> </ul>	Officer time Service budget	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team / Youth Services / Sports Development) Leagues and individual clubs	No of sites running community use activities (Floor target of 50% of sites with pavilions by 2016)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Year 3</li> <li>Year 4 onwards</li> </ul>	Officer time Contract budget	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team) Medway Allotment Federation Allotment sites	No of signed agreements
Ongoing	Officer time Service budget	Medway Council (Greenspace Operations Team) Groundwork Kent and Medway	No of constituted park "friends of" groups