

# RAMSGATE MARITIME PLAN

July 2013

Notes to this draft:

1. Footnotes are included for ease of explanation but will be omitted from the published version.
2. This draft omits relevant imagery/photography and has not yet been formatted for final publication.

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## Executive Summary<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To be completed following finalisation of the plan's content. To include a short glossary explaining the different terms used to describe the commercial port and Royal Harbour.

## About this Plan

Ramsgate's port and Royal Harbour, owned and operated by Thanet Council, are located 76 miles from the heart of London, and close to continental ports and harbours across the North Sea and Straits of Dover.

The commercial port has for the past decades, until recently, operated ferry services to both Dunkerque and Ostende and, has become both a construction and now operation & maintenance base for three nearby offshore wind farms. The port adjoins the Royal Harbour.

The Royal Harbour forms the visual link between Ramsgate's attractive waterfront and the open sea. The dominant activity in the Royal Harbour is created by large commercial and leisure marinas which provide berths for both local and visiting vessels.

The port and harbour lie in an environmentally sensitive marine area. The latter comprises of a number of nature conservation designations including Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas for birds together with Ramsar sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

We have published this Maritime Plan, which has an evolving scope and purpose, as a high level guide for the future operation, development and management of the port and Royal Harbour.

### Prime goals

This plan supports the council's prime regeneration goal of accelerating economic growth to achieve greater productivity and profit for businesses in and around the port, more jobs, and increased prosperity for our residents and in particular:

- builds on the unique conflux of a major seaport, international airport and high speed rail;
- rebuilds our reputation as the UK's favourite visitor destination; and
- achieves those goals in ways that are safe, sustainable and environmentally sensitive and which recognise the challenges posed by climate change.

We realise that our goals are ambitious and that their realisation will depend upon a range of factors - not least funding - some of which will depend upon a business case or third party commitments. However, our ambition is not constrained and we hope you will support this plan and the vital roles of the commercial port and Royal Harbour in our community and economy.

### Why is a plan needed?

The main purposes of this plan are to:

- clarify our strategic maritime planning for the short, medium to long term;
- assist us, other planning bodies, transport network providers and other stakeholders in preparing and revising their own strategies;
- inform current and potential users, stakeholders and local communities as to how they can expect to see development take place over the coming years;
- promote the efficient management and operation of our maritime assets;

- support individual developments within the context of a wider strategic plan;
- maximise and exploit available land for economic uses;
- improve the public realm, particularly Ramsgate's historic waterfront; and
- identify and promote other complementary economic and leisure uses.

It does this by outlining:

- how the commercial port and Royal Harbour expect to grow and develop over time;
- why this may be feasible in the context of wider patterns of supply and demand;
- where changes of land use may be required to support growth; and
- how we will manage any development to mitigate its impact on the environment and local amenity.

### Consultation

In preparing this plan we have consulted with key stakeholders in order to understand their different perspectives and any opportunities or constraints which they feel may apply to the future development of Ramsgate's port and harbour.

We have held numerous separate workshops, each with a wide scope and external facilitation, with participants drawn from a range of different interests.

### Core plan context

This plan is not just for the benefit of regional and local planning bodies and local stakeholders; we believe that the process of producing and maintaining it will assist with:

- being clear and transparent about the future strategic direction;
- engaging local and regional planning bodies at an early stage to allow any development to be incorporated at various levels of spatial planning and to secure the buy-in of stakeholders; and
- keeping local stakeholders informed of relevant maritime activities and building good working relationships locally.

We intend that this plan will be a key document in determining the future direction for Ramsgate's port and harbour, which are of considerable importance to the local and regional economy, both now and in the future.

This plan also fits within a wider policy context, as summarised below.

The *Thanet Corporate Plan* emphasises the importance of protecting and diversifying the commercial function of the port as a key Kent cross-channel trade route; working with European partners and encouraging further location of sustainable energy businesses into the area, particularly at the port; and encouraging and influencing the growth of Thanet's economy, including the tourism/leisure, creative and sustainable energy sectors.

The draft *Local Plan* sets out a vision for 2031 and foresees:

- Ramsgate making the most of its close proximity to Europe and easy access to London;

- Ramsgate Port and Manston Airport as successful economic assets, essential to Thanet's business and gateway role;
- Thanet having a sustainable, balanced economy with a strong focus on tourism, culture and leisure;
- the importance of Ramsgate's maritime heritage; the commercial function of the Port; supporting renewable technology; its Royal Harbour, marina, beach and attractive waterfront, providing a vibrant mix of town centre uses, with a strong visitor economy and café culture; and
- a continuing policy for the growth of Ramsgate Port.

The *Economic Growth and Regeneration Strategy* identifies the port as a strategic asset for the District, which is part of a comprehensive transport system that adds to the area's competitive position. The strategy aims to:

- build on the transport and communications infrastructure hence improving the flows of goods and people between Thanet's key markets;
- work with industry to capitalise on Ramsgate's role as the support base for England's largest offshore renewables projects;
- prepare for the future development and deployment of offshore technologies that build on the infrastructure that is already here; and
- capitalise on the area's natural advantages, its assets, heritage and culture that are unique selling points, to encourage private sector investment and support the visitor economy.

The *Local Transport Plan* highlights that:

- the future of the Port of Ramsgate depends very much on the development of new short sea shipping routes between Ramsgate and other European channel ports;
- in line with this view, the Council wishes to support the Government and EU initiative for the development of short sea shipping and aims to attract new business to Ramsgate's port;
- the development of the port is not expected to necessitate further land reclamation in the foreseeable future; and
- as a priority action, the port needs to seek several ferry operators.

## Ramsgate's maritime origins and development

### History

Ramsgate's maritime tradition goes back to the Romans, but it was not until the 18th century that work started on building Kent's first true safe haven. Enclosed by two vast piers for sailing ships seeking protection from the severe channel weather, Ramsgate's Royal Harbour was completed in 1760.

Ramsgate is justifiably proud of its status as the only Royal Harbour in the UK and can trace its history back 257 years when, following the Great Storm, Parliament passed an act giving approval for construction of a new harbour. George IV granted its Royal designation in 1821 in appreciation of the town's hospitality when he embarked, with the Royal Squadron, from Ramsgate for Hanover.

The Royal Harbour was one of the main embarkation harbours during the Napoleonic wars. In 1940, passenger ships, freighters and warships, unable to sail close enough to Dunkirk's beaches to evacuate the stranded British army, urgently requested small boats from England to help with the rescue of troops waiting on the beaches. Operation Dynamo was launched and boats and other small craft assembled in Ramsgate before crossing to Dunkirk to ferry men from the beaches in these "Little Ships". Around 40,000 rescued Allied troops were landed at Ramsgate.

### Commercial port

In the late 1970s Thanet District Council, the present owner and operator, reclaimed land to the west of the Royal Harbour to create a modern commercial port facility. The development provided valuable vehicle and storage land and included the necessary ro-ro berthing, capable of handling multi-decked vessels and passenger facilities required for a cross-channel ferry service.

In 1985, a third ro-ro linkspan was installed and the turning vessel circle was dredged to allow for vessels up to 6.5m draught to berth onto the three linkspans. In 1986 the completion of extended breakwaters gave the ro-ro berths all-weather protection and ensured that year-round operations were practicable.

Further hard standing land was reclaimed, which now provides 32 acres of dedicated port land. The port's approach channel was further widened to accommodate larger vessels. A new passenger terminal was constructed and, in 1999 a new direct relief road tunnel link into the port was completed. Completion of the recent extension to the Thanet Way provides excellent road links to both the M2 and the M25.

### Royal Harbour

The Royal Harbour continues to perform valuable activities for both commercial and leisure users. It adjoins the historic waterfront and forms part of Ramsgate's centrepiece. The regeneration of Ramsgate depends, to a large extent, on the attractiveness of the Royal Harbour. It is a tourist and leisure attraction with significant potential and, through its marina, already offers much to smaller pleasure craft for which the European coast is within easy reach. Commercial fishing and ship repair activities are also carried out in the Royal Harbour.

## Location and access

### By sea

Ramsgate's marine facilities provide direct access to the North Sea and English Channel, which benefits a wide range of different users:

- for commercial shipping, short sea journey times match, or beat, Ramsgate's competitors;
- for cruise ships, Kent's tourist hinterland - including London and Canterbury - is within easy reach by road or rail;
- for leisure sailors, the Royal Harbour is an ideal port of arrival/departure for continental visits; and
- for offshore renewables, Ramsgate's strategic location offers close proximity to major North Sea and English Channel developments.

The table below illustrates the relative journey time for cargoes in transit from their UK origin to four continental ports travelling via Ramsgate, Dover, Harwich or Purfleet/ Dagenham/Tilbury and demonstrates the significant locational advantage which Ramsgate offers.

To	Via	Ramsgate	Dover	Harwich	Purfleet / Dagenham / Tilbury
Rotterdam cluster		1 =	1 =	1 =	+2 hours
Zeebrugge / Ostend		1 =	1 =	+2 hours	+2 hours
Dunkirk		1 =	1 =	+3 hours	+3 hours
Calais		+30 mins	1 =	+3.3 hours	+3.3 hours

1. The figure 1= indicates that there is no material difference between journey times.
2. Journey origins in the UK are Dartford, Lutterworth and Cardiff.
3. The composite results are indicative only, but are of sufficient accuracy to reflect the relative times.

### By land and air

The port infrastructure is such that both freight and passengers can be clear of the port and en route within 20 minutes of disembarkation. The port has excellent inland transport links, with dedicated tunnel access giving immediate access to national road and motorway networks. Road distances from Ramsgate are set out in the table below.



<b>Key UK road distances from Port of Ramsgate</b>		
	miles	km
M2 (Junction 7)	24	39
M25 (East - Junction 2)	60	97
M25 (West - Junction 5)	62	100
London	79	127

A high speed rail link connects Ramsgate to London St Pancras in little more than an hour, with direct links from there to the national and European rail systems.

By air Manston Airport, with direct flights to Schipol, is within three miles; London Heathrow is less than two hours away by road and London Gatwick is an hour and a half away.

## Existing facilities

### Royal Harbour and historic waterfront

The Royal Harbour's visual appeal and the leisure activities available in it have a key role to play in rebuilding Ramsgate's reputation as the UK's essential maritime destination for visitors.

It is part of Ramsgate's historic waterfront which, with the town beyond, offers a wide range of leisure and retail activities (bars, restaurants, cinema and shops). For the visitor, the area includes award-winning beaches, seal watch trips (in season) and excellent public transport.

### Marina facilities

The Royal Harbour accommodates a marina for local and visiting leisure craft which has recently won a 4 Gold Anchor award in recognition of its extensive facilities, which include:

- dedicated permanent berths and, in the East and West Marinas, visitor berths;
- 24 hour access to the Outer Harbour;
- petrol and diesel available from fuel barge 365 days a year;
- full repair facilities ashore and afloat;
- water and electricity readily available;
- a modern amenity block with free showers, toilets and coin operated launderette facilities;
- 24 hour security, with CCTV surveillance;
- wireless internet;
- a 40 tonne boat hoist servicing both a secure boat yard or lifts to/from transport;
- recycling points;
- access for people with disabilities includes selected moorings, wheelchair accessible amenity block with dedicated showers and toilets;
- chandlery, sail loft, slipways, boat park and brokerage;
- dedicated parking; and
- a hospitable yacht club overlooking the Royal Harbour Marina.

### Commercial fishing

The Ramsgate fishing fleet is mainly composed of small, under 10m boats which tend to fish on day trips and travel up to a maximum of 25 nm from port working within the 6 or 12 mile limits. The principal species caught are sole, skate, plaice and cod.

The fleet operates within the Kent and Essex Fisheries Committee district. It is this committee which regulates the activities of Ramsgate's fleet, through a licensing scheme which limits the quantity of fish caught. These quotas have reduced over time, causing a decline in activity at Ramsgate and elsewhere. Despite this, the Ramsgate Fishermen's Association have been very active in gaining support for the future of Ramsgate's fleet and fishery.

## Commercial port

The commercial port is the second largest municipally-owned port in the UK. It can handle 5m passengers and 0.5m freight units annually and accept vessels up to 170m LOA, 6.5m draft, with no tidal restrictions.

Its facilities includes:

- 32 acres of commercial port land;
- three modern ro-ro bridges and pontoons with double lane access;
- a fast freight ferry service capability;
- tri-berth simultaneous operation;
- full passenger services and freight vessel facilities;
- modern and effective VTS;
- multi-deck vessel, stern and quarter ramp capabilities; and
- water and bunker facilities on all berths.

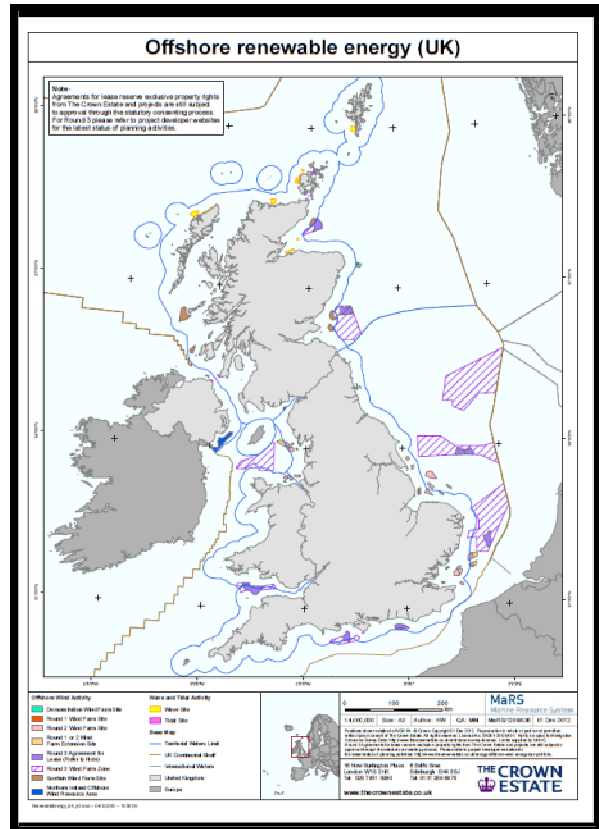
The commercial port's shipping activities covering ro-ro and bulk cargoes are key economic drivers. It takes 10 minutes for a vessel from berth to clearing the buoyed channel.

## Marine energy<sup>2</sup>

The port has firmly established itself as a support centre for the offshore wind industry by attracting major customers including Dong, Eon, Masdar (London Array), Vattenfall (Thanet Offshore Wind and Kentish Flats), VSMC and Siemens Windpower.

Its strategic location close to current and planned offshore renewables sites in the Thames Estuary and the North Sea (see map opposite) has been recognised by major wind industry players, who have made long-term commitments to the port by establishing operating and maintenance support bases.

This has enabled the port to invest and also sparked the growth of onshore supply chain business opportunities - and therefore training and employment - regionally.



<sup>2</sup> A copyright licence may be required to authorise reproduction of The Crown Estate's map.

## Future vision: Royal Harbour and historic waterfront

### Royal Harbour

Ramsgate is already a popular tourist attraction with significant growth potential.

We will undertake a range of improvements in order to help attract more visitors and to enhance the tourist and leisure experience:

- shore-based attractions and pedestrian access within the Royal Harbour need to be enhanced in order to achieve better integration with the historic waterfront; and
- some current marine uses (including leisure and commercial fishing) will be rationalised in order to make best use of the facilities.

There is little to encourage pedestrian visitors to visit the Royal Harbour - they just enjoy the view from Ramsgate's waterfront - so we aim to improve visitor footfall and circulation along the Inner Harbour cross wall, Harbour Street and Harbour Parade. In particular, circulation along the Inner Harbour cross-wall would create the potential for a circular visitor route.

Any new development should enhance the Royal Harbour and be congruent with its key (marine-related) brand attributes. Retail, educational and leisure/pleasure uses (A1, A3 and D2) should be supported, especially in the area between the historic slipways and the East Amenity Facility and the former Sally Line Shed.

Those uses should exploit links with Ramsgate's commercial fishing fleet and the Royal Harbour's unique history and location (adjacent to a recommended MCZ<sup>3</sup>, possible World Heritage Site and NOSTRA<sup>4</sup>).

The Inner Harbour and East Marina will focus on the development of their core heritage and leisure strengths in order to enhance their appeal to visitors and put yachtsmen where they would naturally wish to be - close to the waterfront. Over time, we intend that existing pleasure craft berths in the West Marina will therefore be relocated to the East Marina.

As part of the drive to improve the historic waterfront, priority will also be given to functional and quality improvements of the marina and the marina operation itself. These improvements cover the service standard provided by the marina (the anchor rating) and competitive pricing.

We recognise that leisure uses of the marinas depend upon the reduction of wave conditions which can occur in adverse weather. To provide increased protection we are undertaking a feasibility study to extend the East Pier breakwater, thereby interrupting wave generation and providing safe all-weather berths for leisure craft and preventing sand migration into the harbour. We will use our bathymetric hydrographical surveys to deploy dredging in an appropriate and timely manner.

As and when appropriate, having regard to existing use arrangements, commercial vessels which currently use the East Marina will be moved to the West Marina, which will then be used predominantly for commercial purposes. Once achieved, such a move will place those commercial vessels closer to their shore facilities and improve the efficiency of their operations. Their new locations would still add to the overall nautical ambiance of the Royal Harbour.

### Commercial fishing

<sup>3</sup> A marine conservation zone, established under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, intended to protect the sea's biodiversity.

<sup>4</sup> The NOSTRA (Network of Straits) project aims to allow economic development while preserving biodiversity and natural heritage.

We will safeguard an area in the West Marina / Commercial Quay for commercial fishing and support the development of a specialist fish quay/market, a fish processing capability, a quayside chill store (with ice facility), an amenity and training / education facility.

We will explore appropriate sources of domestic and EU funding for those developments and potential ways in which to attract new fisheries business by, for example, seeking approval for use of the new facilities by non-EU fishing vessels to land their catches.

A new fish market will also enhance the appeal of the Royal Harbour to tourists and contribute towards our goal of increasing visitor footfall, particularly in the area of the undeveloped commercial quay.

We will also pursue other opportunities to attract additional fisheries business, *eg* landing of catches by non-EU vessels.

### **Ship repair**

There are four historic slipways in the Royal Harbour which are in commercial use and operated by Ramsgate Harbour Slipways. Those slipways adjoin Ramsgate's waterfront and, while of some interest to visitors, their activities are not well suited to a tourist location.

Subject to a business case (and therefore funding), new, modern slipways should be established in the commercial port and commercial uses transferred to that new location. The existing slipways (which are listed) could then be allocated for limited leisure/pleasure use and in connection with the maintenance and repair of historic vessels.

We will therefore consider any proposals for the creation of new slipways and covered ship repair facilities in the port area to service the needs of commercial vessels and larger pleasure craft.

## Future vision: commercial port

We believe that the port's competitive potential may be much improved by the planned implementation of new EU regulations in 2015. They will require the use of much more expensive low sulphur marine fuel and will significantly increase journey and therefore shipping costs and create real advantage for freight and passengers because of the very short UK-continent Channel crossing.

We will therefore safeguard the commercial port and its berthing facilities for use by commercial shipping and support the future development of new marine infrastructure.

In particular, the growth of the commercial port business is inhibited by the lack of an alongside berth and we will develop plans for the provision of that capability.

As well as serving its existing customers, the commercial port will target a wide range of new business opportunities, including ro-ro, aggregates, biomass, fresh produce, offshore renewable energy, cruise and offshore construction, and any other opportunities that we become aware of which fit within the port area.

Any development of the commercial port area will have regard to existing leisure activities, as well as environmental and heritage assets including, in particular, Ramsgate's historic waterfront.

### Ro-Ro trade

The commercial port has excellent ro-ro facilities. Despite the recent loss of its major customer, ro-ro has by far the greatest potential. However, the short sea passenger and freight markets suffer from excess capacity and, although ro-ro growth to 2020 is forecast at 15%, any market share will have to be won from competitor ports.

The port's market position is also considerably enhanced by the availability of development land owned by us, with potential for port-centric logistic uses - including, for the rapidly expanding order fulfilment services sector - and a strategic rail freight interchange facility linking directly to the high speed and national rail network also enhances the commercial port's attractiveness to supply chain users who typically have a requirement for land and excellent inland distribution connections.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> A copyright licence may be required to authorise reproduction of the following annotated image.

For those reasons, the port's strategy will include the development of ro-ro businesses with an expanded focus on the commodity supply chains (*ie* the links between shippers and receivers in the UK and Continent), as well as the ferry lines which form an important part of those links.

The port will pursue a ro-ro strategy to exploit the changed market opportunity and it will:

- validate the ro-ro trade's requirements and test the market demand and potential for a longer term inland port/port-centric logistics/strategic rail freight interchange facility;
- employ or contract a highly experienced commercial/trade manager to formulate and execute the ro-ro and port-centric strategy;
- identify continental partner ports, principal commodity types to be targeted, and the related UK element of the allied logistics chains, in conjunction with UK-based commodity managers; and
- plan to achieve maximum water depth/widths in the port and its approaches.

Growth in the commercial port's ro-ro business will utilise spare capacity and also conflict least with leisure uses at the Royal Harbour and historic waterfront.

### Marine energy

The further planned increase in the UK's offshore wind capacity - including the Kentish Flats expansion - offers considerable potential to grow the port's support facilities and increase its geographic reach to provide cost effective through-life engineering and logistics support to offshore renewables in the North Sea and English Channel.

The table below shows, by development status, actual and proposed generating capacity, which demonstrates the future scale of opportunity for the port.

Status	Installed Capacity (MW)
Operational	2678.4
Under Construction	1538
Awaiting Construction	2388
In Planning	5611
Scoping	33919

*Source: UK offshore wind farm development (DECC, February 2013)*

Support requirements are likely to change and grow following construction of planned sites in the Thames Estuary, North Sea and English Channel.

The port is anticipating further growth as blue energy, tidal and wave capture becomes a reality. This is expected to occur within the next 3 - 5 years and could be seen as an 'add-on' to the existing offshore renewables infrastructure.

The development of other sources of renewable marine energy offers further opportunities for the port to further expand as a centre for both green and blue energy.

We recognise the need to integrate offshore renewables operating and maintenance capabilities with the other requirements - particularly training and construction-related - of the industries involved. This may mean collaboration between ports in order to deliver turnkey solutions. The



commercial port will actively seek to identify and exploit partnership opportunities with other ports in the UK and Europe.

The port's nascent concentration of expertise creates opportunity to provide cost effective through-life engineering and logistics support in Thanet. It also offers potential for the port to become a recognised centre of excellence and to exploit its position through the creation of higher skilled job opportunities to serve an emerging but growing industry.

To support all of these activities, we will:

- safeguard the current and potential offshore renewables support areas within the commercial port;
- support the Kent Core, but seek to shift its centre of gravity towards Thanet and expand its ambitions beyond the commercial port's current operational activity;
- establish a centre of excellence in offshore renewables support in Thanet and/or Ramsgate (and consider the possible linkage to an inland port-centric facility);
- develop South East regional 2nd/3rd/4th-line support cluster for southern North Sea, Thames Estuary and Channel offshore renewables projects; and
- forge a link to job creation in manufacturing, engineering, logistics, training & education in Thanet & East Kent.

The successful implementation of this part of our plan will:

- create direct and indirect employment opportunities which will, over time, result in a market leading and highly skilled workforce with the capability to offer its services internationally; and
- stimulate demand for marine-related services (such as towage, bunkering and ship repair) as well as a wide range of inland, non-marine services which will contribute to economic growth.

### **Bulk commodity trades**

The commercial port has the capacity to handle a range of dry bulk and other trades subject, in some cases, to the requirement for an alongside berth which the port cannot currently offer. As sustainable opportunities arise, we will support investment in additional facilities and operating plant and equipment in order to handle new business.

Currently the commercial port operates an aggregates facility in partnership with Brett Aggregates. There is scope to handle greater volumes which the commercial port will exploit within the region.

The commercial port lacks a significant market hinterland which might underpin demand for other bulk products. The majority of the latter are, in any event, relatively high volume/low value cargoes. These nonetheless require additional port facilities *eg* grab crane, and storage areas, all of which would attract capital expenditure (in competition with demands for capital expenditure to service other potential trades).

Through investment in the commercial port's sales and marketing capabilities (see below), we will scope opportunities to grow this business.

### **Cruise**

The long term trend in the European cruise passenger market shows strong growth. This is supported by a noticeable trend in 'cool water' cruising in northern Europe which showed a 10% growth in 2012. Ramsgate is well placed to take advantage of this shift in the market.

Ramsgate is an attractive historic town and one of the ancient Cinque Ports. Its easy access to London, Canterbury, and the Medway coast makes it an ideal location for cruise ship calls. The port will promote its capabilities with a view to increasing the volume of turnaround and cruise calls.

We will undertake a scoping project to understand the potential opportunities to attract cruise business.

## Increase market awareness

The commercial port and Royal Harbour serve different and distinct markets and we believe it is important to brand them separately and pursue different, but complementary, plans for their development, as set out in this plan.

To that end, we will create and implement specific communication and marketing strategies for each of the commercial port and the Royal Harbour Marina, because external commercial visibility and knowledge of their existence and capabilities is currently too low.

We will re-brand and re-launch the commercial port as “[Ramsgate Continental Port]” and create a separate identity and website, so that it is no longer marketed alongside the Royal Harbour Marina.

Similarly, we will improve the current arrangements for marketing the marina under the Royal Harbour Marina brand, with a new website which will no longer present the marina as part of the commercial port.

We will also expand the existing sales and marketing capabilities in order to exploit the full potential of both the commercial port (by recruitment of a Sales & Marketing Manager) and the Royal Harbour Marina (by recruitment of a Marina Manager).

## Ownership and governance

As well as owning and operating the port and harbour, we are also the statutory harbour authority and pilotage authority (known as the competent harbour authority).

Extensive stakeholder consultation has shown that there is substantial support for keeping the port in public ownership and, in particular, that there is no demand for privatisation or other transfer to private, or different, ownership (such as a trust port).

We therefore intend to keep the port and harbour in public ownership but will make early changes to its governance, in order to create greater transparency and accountability and to introduce more commercial expertise.

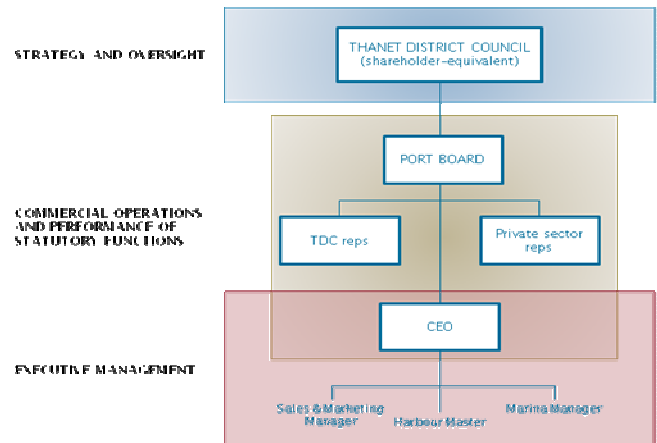
We will adopt a different governance (as opposed to ownership) model, which will preserve our (shareholder-equivalent) role and create a new Board with day-to-day operational responsibility for the commercial port and the Royal Harbour Marina. That Board will report to the Council and we will retain oversight and overall responsibility.

We will consider how best to constitute that Board, having regard to the principles articulated in the “Opportunities for ports in local authority ownership” (“OPLAO”), as published by the Department for Transport. In particular, we will decide whether the Board should be a separate committee of Thanet District Council or a Local Authority Company.

In selecting an appropriate structure we will have regard to the need:

- to achieve transparency and accountability;
- to introduce greater commercial expertise;
- to establish a Board whose membership will combine a mix of skills and experience relevant to the current and future needs of the port (and include elected councillors and representatives from the private sector in equal numbers);
- to establish assured accounts for the operation of the commercial port and Royal Harbour Marina;
- to publish an annual report and accounts describing in reasonable detail the activities and financial performance of the port and harbour for the year under review; and
- which otherwise enshrines the principles set out in OPLAO.

The proposed new model is illustrated opposite, which will achieve a clear separation between ownership, supervision and operations. The model also identifies operational management changes, comprising the recruitment of a chief executive officer and the selection/appointment of additional staff (Sales & Marketing Manager and Marina Manager) from the commercial marketplace to concentrate on the growth of the distinct commercial port and marina business activities respectively.



## Approval and key priorities

### Approval process

This plan was prepared by our project team and scrutinised by the Cabinet Advisory Group on 31 July 2013 and Overview and Scrutiny on 20 August 2013. Subsequently it was approved by Cabinet on 12 September 2013.

### Progress so far

Work has already started on a range of projects each of which, when completed, will contribute to the realisation of our goals:

- the Yacht Valley project which comprises the restoration of the historic arches in Military Road, a study into Smeatons Dry Dock and a study into yacht services for the Royal Harbour;
- we are commissioning a scoping report for the extension of East Pier breakwater (in order to reduce wave conditions) and the construction of an alongside berth at the commercial port and we have EU LO-PINOD funding for those developments, alongside which we are seeking interest for an economic study for the development;
- we are also commissioning plans for the design of a commercial boat park;
- we are applying for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the restoration of the Sailor's Church at the Royal Harbour;
- similarly, we will consider applying for financial support from the European Fisheries Fund for the relocation and enhancement of the commercial fishing quay; and
- we are developing proposals to invest in a new marina management system and to investigate the acquisition of a dredger to ensure that minimum channel depths are maintained in future.

### Key priorities

As we acknowledged at the beginning of this plan, our goals are ambitious. While we intend over time to deliver each of them, we have to apply our available resources according to the benefits each has the potential to deliver.

With that in mind, in the short term we will give priority to the following areas:

- protecting and growing the existing relationships with users of the port and harbour in order to assure service standards and secure future income streams;
- implementing the ro-ro strategy described in this plan to restore the commercial port's market position and recover recently lost revenue;
- making improvements at the Royal Harbour Marina (new marina management system, improved pedestrian access, dredging and extension of the East Pier breakwater) to significantly enhance the user experience and attract more visitors;
- re-launching the commercial port and Royal Harbour Marina under different brands in order to raise substantially their market profiles;

- adopting a new governance model for the future ownership and operation of the commercial port and Royal Harbour; and
- the scoping of an alongside berth at the commercial port, which will allow a much wider range of business opportunities to be targeted and developed.

We believe that, taken together, the implementation of those priorities will deliver early benefits and contribute substantially to the realisation of our prime goal - the economic regeneration of Ramsgate and the Thanet region.