

Roundtable on Economic Growth and Social Improvement with Kate Willard OBE, Chair of the Thames Estuary Growth Board

Tuesday 17 October 2023

Introduction

Stakeholders engaged in a dynamic discussion with Kate Willard OBE on the challenges and prospects of regeneration, with a focus on the Thames Estuary. Thames Estuary is the UK's most significant government-backed growth opportunity with potential to create 1.3 million jobs and add £190 billion to the economy. Key takeaways from the meeting include the need for coordinated efforts and political buy-in to address the complex nature of regeneration in the region. Participants emphasised the significance of attracting investment, especially in areas like hydrogen technology and transportation/logistics. In addition, the role of development corporations in overcoming challenges posed by the planning system was also discussed.



Key takeaways

- Coordinated efforts and securing political support are paramount for addressing the complex challenges of regeneration, particularly in the Thames Estuary region, which involves multiple local authorities and counties.
- The meeting emphasised the significance of attracting investment, particularly in innovative areas like hydrogen technology, maritime infrastructure, and transportation.
- The previous successes of development corporations were discussed and proposed as a potential solution to navigate challenges posed by the planning system and balance political support with effective problem-solving.
- The importance of data-driven decision-making emerged as a key theme, highlighting the need to match regeneration and development efforts with community needs and aspirations.
- Meeting participants stressed the importance of having a clear and sustainable investment vision that aligns with the needs of communities and families, emphasising the ethical and long-term considerations in development initiatives.

Issues raised

- The competing demands of environmental conservation and infrastructure development create a barrier to progress. Striking a balance between these needs was seen as a significant challenge.
- Smaller regions and constituencies may face difficulties in attracting large-scale private sector investments, making it a challenge to fund substantial regeneration projects.
- Resistance from some communities to regeneration efforts, possibly due to a lack of understanding or trust, emerged as a potential barrier to achieving progress.
- While data-driven decision-making was recognised as crucial, the complexity of gathering, analysing, and effectively using data to align regeneration efforts with community needs was acknowledged as a challenge.

We would like to thank the members of our Advisory Board for their contributions and continuing support.

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