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Our vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. We work on practical, innovative solutions to the transport challenges facing us all. Sustrans is the charity behind the award winning National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools, Bike It, TravelSmart, Active Travel, Connect2 and Liveable Neighbourhoods, all projects that are changing our world one mile at a time.

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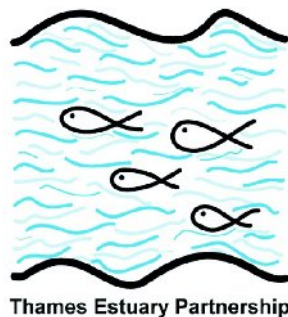
The Thames Estuary Path was surveyed and written in Summer 2008 by Matt Winfield, Tom Sharland, Nigel Brigham, David Young and Simon Pratt for Sustrans.

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## Thames Estuary Path

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### A survey of the Thames Gateway waterfront

**From the Thames Barrier to  
Southend-on-Sea on the North side  
and the Isle of Sheppey on the South**

## Foreword – Malcolm Shepherd and Chris Baines

For the last 30 years Sustrans has been demonstrating the benefits of active travel to people's health and to the environment. Over that time we have developed a range of practical projects that have made a real difference to the travel choices available for everyday journeys. These include the 12,000 mile National Cycle Network, which last year carried over 350 million walking and cycling trips, Connect2, which focuses on overcoming the barriers to active travel in 79 communities and which won the public vote in the Big Lottery Fund's: The People's £50 Million contest in 2007, TravelSmart, Active Travel and Bikelt.

In London, Greenways for the Olympics And London (GOAL) is Sustrans' vision for a sustainable city. GOAL aims to improve the lives of all who live in or visit London by creating a safe and attractive environment for walking and cycling.

Roughly half of our daily journeys are less than three miles long, yet the current built environment makes walking, cycling or catching public transport a challenging, sometimes impossible option. But with a number of small changes accompanied by a big vision for a new approach to transport and the planning system, it's quite possible to make these active and public travel choices the easier, more pleasant and more direct way to get to our everyday destinations. Recent problems in the world economy, concerns over climate change and resource depletion and the obesity epidemic in the UK all show that the need to find new opportunities to change the way we travel are even more pressing than they were 30 years ago.

It is against this background that I welcome the Thames Estuary Path. This report will allow the targeting of resources to ensure that those living in the Thames Gateway get the maximum benefits from improvements to walking and cycling opportunities. This report is an exciting opportunity to shape the way people travel in and around London for generations to come.



*Malcolm Shepherd*

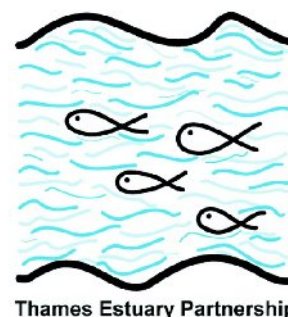
The Thames Estuary is in a time of very rapid and potentially significant change. With increasing development pressures throughout the Thames Gateway, the Thames Estuary Path provides a unique opportunity to secure and enhance long-term riverside access for millions of people who live, work and play throughout this area.

As President of TEP, I was pleased to launch the City to Sea vision for a coastal path extending eastwards in Summer 2005 and I am even more pleased to see this vision taken a step further in this Thames Estuary Path report. There is still a great deal of work to do - building a dream is never easy and dealing with the reality of mixed land ownership is even harder. The number of partners involved in this study are its strength and I am glad to see the Thames Estuary Partnership with its neutral status working with Sustrans to run the Stakeholder workshop and provide the policy context summary.



The Tidal Thames is waiting and we owe it to ourselves to take a closer look.

*Chris Baines*



**The Thames Estuary Partnership (TEP)** provides a neutral forum for local authorities, national agencies, industry, voluntary bodies and local communities to work together for the good of the Thames Estuary.

## Abbreviations

C2C	c2c Rail Limited - services for London, Tilbury and Southend
CLG	Communities and Local Government
CRISP	Cycle Route Implementation and Stakeholder Plan
CTRL	Channel Tunnel Rail Link
DBC	Dartford Borough Council
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DLR	Docklands Light Railway
EA	Environment Agency
EEDA	East of England Development Agency
LBN	London Borough of Newham
LCN	London Cycle Network
LCN+	London Cycle Network Plus
LDA	London Development Agency
LGA	Local Government Association
LTGDC	London Thames Gateway Development Corporation
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NCR	National Cycle Route
PLA	Port of London Authority
PRoW	Public Right of Way
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SEEDA	South East England Development Agency
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TSE	Thames Strategy East
TfL	Transport for London
UEL	University of East London

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## Thames Gateway Parklands

The aims for the Thames Gateway Parklands programme were set out by Communities and Local Government in the Thames Gateway Delivery Plan<sup>1</sup>:

- To retain - and where necessary restore - the high quality natural environment of the Gateway's landscapes
- To secure a high quality built environment, particularly in public spaces
- To protect, promote and celebrate the historic environment and heritage of the area

Beneath these sit five more detailed ambitions for Parklands:

- **Thames Waterfront:** to develop a continuous Estuary Path that will ultimately run along both banks of the river, and to improve waterfront environments
- **Thames Gateway World Class Heritage:** to support heritage improvement in the Thames Gateway, as well as support the bid for a new World Heritage Site at Chatham Historic Dockyard
- **Thames Gateway Landscapes:** to identify and support delivery of landscapes of regional importance
- **Thames Gateway Corridors:** to support environmental improvements to strategic transport corridors
- **Thames Gateway Squares:** to work with partners to identify and start work on two or three large squares

Communities and Local Government launched the Thames Gateway Parklands Vision<sup>2</sup> on 9 October 2008, which develops these ambitions further. The Vision is designed to provide a framework which suggests ways in which public, private, third sector and local organisations can help shape the future of the Gateway through the development of its green infrastructure. It is intended to help in strategic decision making and provide a context for the implementation of projects at local level.

The first of the Parklands ambitions is to develop a continuous Thames Estuary Path, a link on the north and south banks of the Estuary from the Isle of Dogs out to the coastal path network. It links 'city to sea', and certain sections already exist. It passes a number of major landmarks including the O2 Arena, the Thames Barrier, the Estuary forts, and the 'minsters' (churches) among others. It crosses over bridges and passes under viaducts and through tunnels. It runs along busy urban waterfronts, promenades and beaches as well as through quiet rural areas. However, because of industry, port activity and areas of sensitive wildlife, there are some unavoidable obstructions in some locations along the water's edge.

This survey was commissioned by Communities and Local Government to help deliver the Thames Estuary Path. It provides information about the current state of the waterfront path, how much it would cost to develop into a continuous route for walkers and cyclists, suggestions for link paths, what blockages there might be to development and options for how these may be solved. It is designed to facilitate development of sections of the path, providing easy access to key information which might help organisations to take decisions about whether they can undertake development.

The vision is of a path that will enable short local journeys to work, to school, for shopping and leisure trips, long distance walking, opportunities for quiet relaxation and tranquillity, exercise for people and their dogs and recreational pursuits such as walking, cycling or horse riding.

## Executive Summary

There is unprecedented interest in the Thames Estuary. Government wants to create 225,000 new jobs and provide 160,000 new homes in the Thames Gateway and the Thames Waterfront is one of five key ambitions for Thames Gateway Parklands<sup>1</sup>. The Thames Estuary Path is one of three key themes in the “connected Parklands landscape” vision of the Parklands Spatial Framework<sup>2</sup>. Thames Estuary 2100 is an Environment Agency project to develop a tidal flood risk management plan for the Thames Estuary through to the end of the century<sup>3</sup>. A coastal access audit of the entire English coast is being led by Natural England<sup>4</sup>. We must not forget that the river is still important for trade and the Port of London handled nearly 53 million tonnes of imports and exports in 2007<sup>5</sup>.

This report covers the Thames Estuary from the Thames Barrier to Shoeburyness on the north bank and to Shellness on the south bank. The Medway Estuary was outside the scope of this study and further work is needed to develop a continuous estuary path from Grain down to Rochester Bridge and across to the Isle of Sheppey. This has to be a high priority as Medway is the largest Thames riverside community outside London.

We have shown a single preferred route for the main path, as close as possible to the waterfront. There are a number of natural and man-made barriers and the line shown is an informed judgement of what could be achieved within a 10-year timeframe. This will not be easy and significant investment will be required by the public and private sectors to realise the ambition of a high quality path for walking, cycling and disabled access.

The path is divided into 70 separate sections. Each section has a detailed 1:10,000 scale map showing the proposed main path and links to nearby communities and public transport. Each map is accompanied by a detailed description of the current condition of the waterfront, barriers to development, links and access points and key recommendations. A “traffic light” system has been used to describe the route, where green = fully open with a good surface, orange = some infrastructure in place, but physical or legal work is required and

red = major work required. A summary of the total lengths on each side is given below (in miles).

	North	South
Green	12.7	18.4
Orange	20.3	17.1
Red	23.9	37.5
Total	56.9	73.0

All the major barriers are listed, with proposals to overcome them or divert around them. Costings are provided, but further work is required to confirm these. Indeed, many of the recommendations are for feasibility work on individual sections of the path. The legal and technical issues are discussed, with recommendations for taking this project forward. The amount of work needed to plan and deliver a project of this scope should not be underestimated and we recommend that a full-time Thames Estuary Path Manager is appointed at the earliest opportunity.

Our recommended priorities for development are listed according to how quickly we think the different sections can be delivered. Link paths have not been analysed in detail, but they should not be forgotten in any calculation of total project costs.

Having surveyed the whole route during the summer of 2008, we firmly believe that with the necessary investment, the Thames can rival some of the great European riverside paths, such as the Danube and the Rhine. At Cliffe Marshes, on a sunny August day, I personally cycled for 5 miles beside this great river and did not meet another person – only 10 miles from the London boundary as the crow flies! On the south bank, there is already an almost continuous path from the Thames Barrier to Weybridge in Surrey, a distance of 38 miles. This could truly become one of the world’s great journeys.



*Simon Pratt*