

Sheppey's Healthcheck Plan



 The
Countryside
Agency


Swale
BOROUGH COUNCIL
NORTH KENT COAST

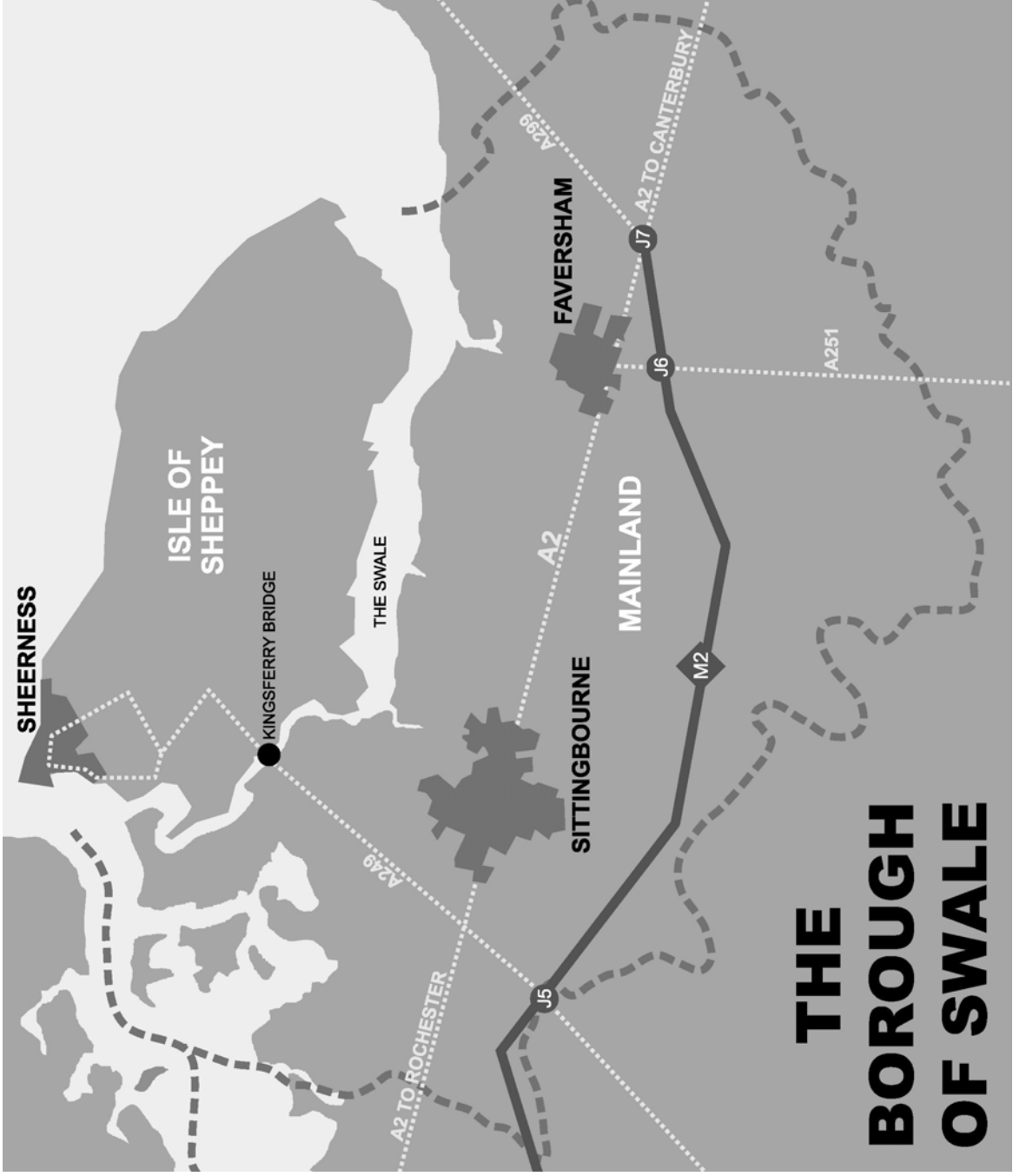
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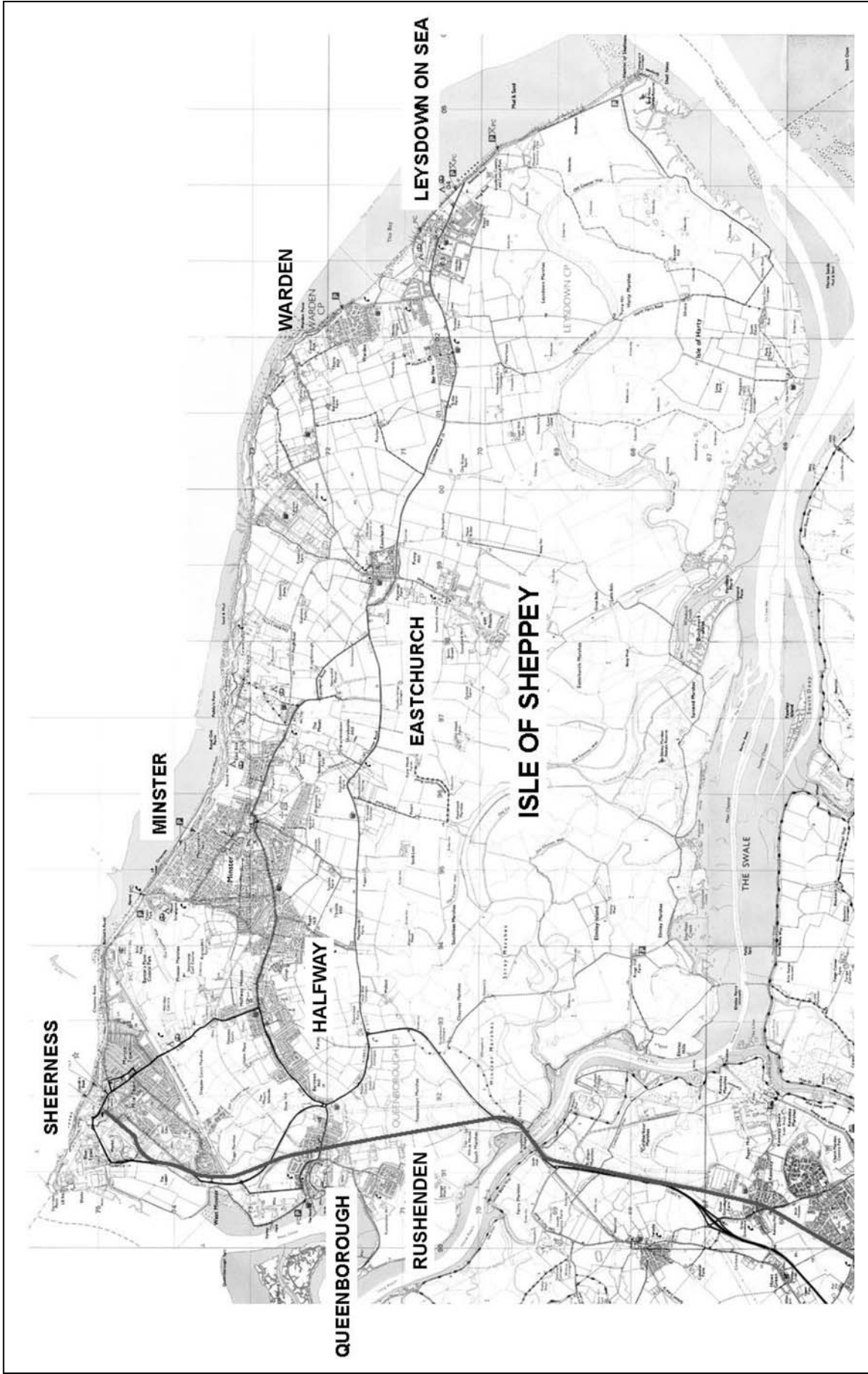
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THE BOROUGH OF SWALE



1.1.1 **Methodology of the Healthcheck**

1.1.2 In February 2002 the Economic Development Unit of Swale Borough Council submitted a funding bid to undertake a Healthcheck Pilot in Sheerness on the Isle of Sheppey. That bid was successful and funding for an officer for up to three years and nine months to undertake the Healthcheck became available.

1.1.3 Sheppey's Healthcheck process has two major phases. The first phase (which is now completed) was to conduct an economic assessment of Sheerness Town and its hinterland in order to identify deficiencies and needs that existed. The assessment has culminated in the production of this draft Action Plan to address the identified needs. In the second phase the Rural Projects Manager (responsible for co-ordinating the Healthcheck process) along with the local partners will seek to implement projects/actions over a period of three years.

1.1.4 In July 2002, a consultative meeting was held in Sheerness and over 80 people attended, representing local employers, town retailers, community groups, civic leaders, transport providers and ordinary members of the public. A number of issues affecting the Island were raised and a significant number of attendees, many with specialist knowledge deemed useful to the Healthcheck process, volunteered to assist. Some were recruited as members of the Healthcheck Steering Groups whilst others were eventually interviewed in-depth by the Rural Projects Manager.

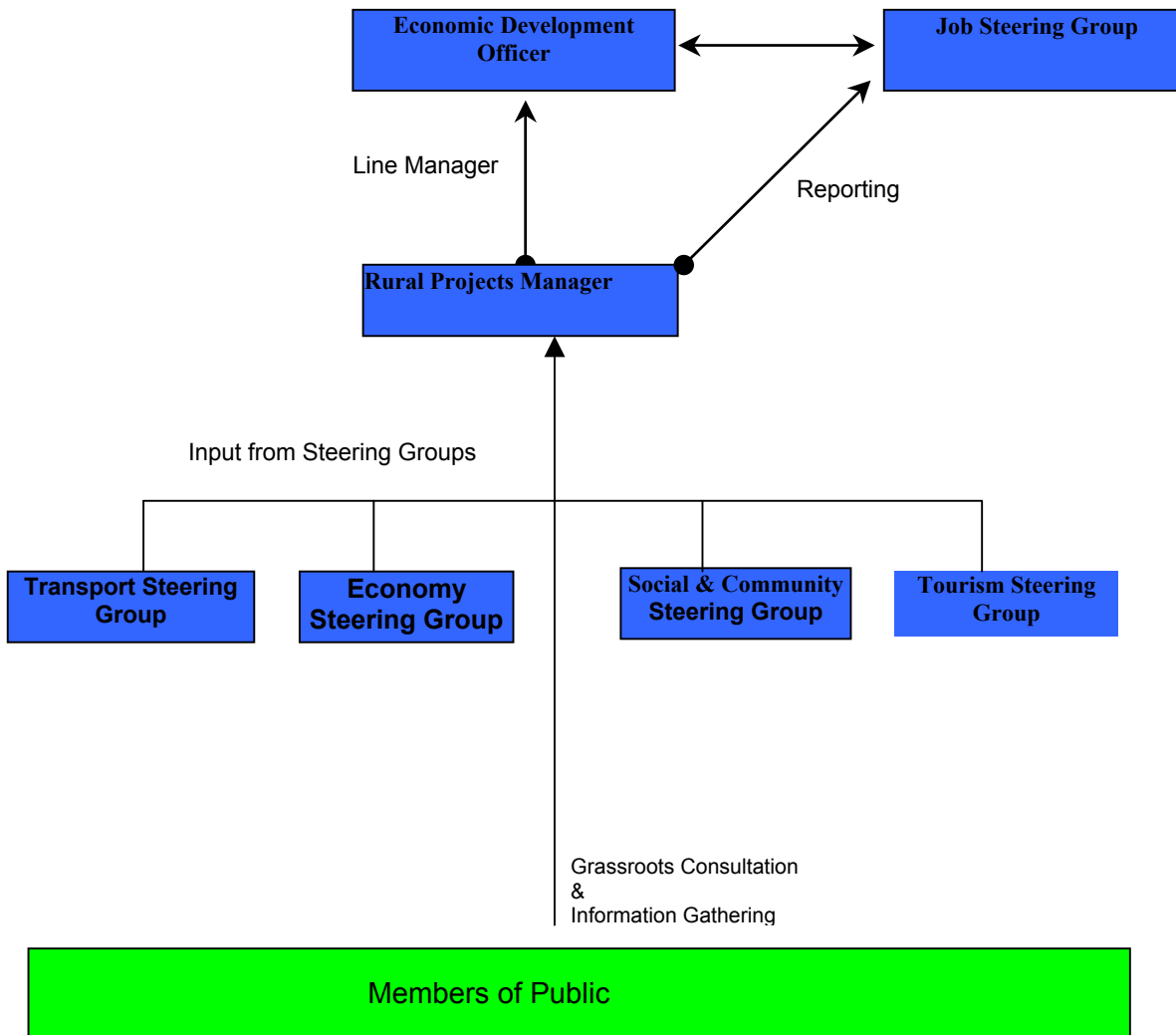
1.1.5 In order for the Healthcheck to be representative and to give the process an element of local ownership, four Steering Groups comprised of representatives with an interest in Sheerness Town and/or its hinterland were established. These included:

- **The Economy Steering Group** – this included representatives from agriculture, secondary and tertiary commercial activities (including retailers);
- **Social & Community Steering Group** – comprised of representatives from community & voluntary sector, members of the public and town users;
- **Tourism Steering Group** – comprised of representatives from heritage and visitor attraction operators.
- **Transport Steering Group** – This was comprised of transport planners, providers and those with an interest in public transport.

1.1.6 This framework was established to encourage local partnership and to offer a degree of transparency with everyone who was involved in the process (see diagram below). It was agreed that the Rural Projects Manager would be accountable to the principal funders via the Job Steering Group to which progress and broader strategic issues would be reported periodically..

- 1.2.1 The Job Steering Group was comprised of representatives from the Economic Development Unit of Swale Borough Council, Kent County Council, the Countryside Agency and Sheerness Town Centre Management.
- 1.2.2 Members of each Steering Group met to provide local information and many of the project ideas in the plan were conceived from the discussion and information they provided. The membership composition of each Steering Group can be found in Annex 1.
- 1.2.3 In addition to the information provided by the Steering Group Members, the Rural Projects Manager consulted widely at grassroots level. Local employers (large and small), retailers, tourist attraction owners, community groups, civic leaders and members of the public were all approached for information using a questionnaire, based on a format developed by the Countryside Agency.

Healthcheck Study & Reporting Structure.



2.1.1 **Executive Summary**

- 2.1.2 The Healthcheck process revealed that the Isle of Sheppey continues to suffer from the consequence of isolation from mainland Kent. A poor road link with the mainland has constrained Sheppey's economy from developing to its full potential. The inadequacies and inconvenience of the current lifting bridge (Kingsferry Bridge), which links the Island with the mainland have discouraged the much needed private sector investment, despite land values and industrial rentals being significantly lower than found on the mainland.
- 2.1.3 The Island's economy, which currently employs about 10,600 people appears to have stagnated for much of the last decade and has attracted little private investment or new jobs. Of the few jobs that have been created in the last six years, most have been through indigenous company growth whilst in the same period the Island experienced a number of large and high profile redundancies. It is therefore likely that Sheppey's economy has experienced net negative job growth rate.
- 2.1.4 The local economy continues to be dominated by manufacturing and port related activities, which between them employ the majority of semi-skilled labour. Although employment in the public sector has increased, manufacturing has declined and the majority of recent, known redundancies on the Island were within this sector.
- 2.1.5 It is widely thought that local manufacturing companies pay above the local average wage. However, as in the rest of the UK, employment in this sector is falling and anecdotal evidence suggests that the already low average wage may have fallen as a result.
- 2.1.6 The fortunes of Sheerness, the Island's major town, have mirrored that of the Island economy. Compared with nearby towns on the mainland, Sheerness has not attracted new retailers or new town centre developments in sufficient quantity. Since 1994, there has been virtually no new retail development, but more recently a trickle of multiple retailers have opened new shops on the High Street.
- 2.1.7 Sheerness is a price sensitive town and this is reflected in the type of shops on its High Street. It is thought that a significant proportion of the Island's spending power leaks out to mainland shopping destinations. Being a relatively small town, Sheerness is increasingly facing stiff competition from the surrounding towns on the mainland, of which all are larger and have a richer retail mix. With the promise of improved road access to the mainland, in a form of the Second Swale Crossing, there is the potential for this competition to attract an even greater proportion of spending away from the Island.
- 2.1.8 The Town also lacks a positive image and offers no specialist shops to attract shoppers from the mainland. Situated around the Town are a number of ugly, redundant buildings that have been empty for several years and have accumulated maintenance arrears. There is no graded guesthouse or hotel in the Town and the number of car parking spaces has reduced in the recent years. Some aspects of town based activities such as the evening economy, remain underdeveloped.

- 2.1.9 The Isle of Sheppey is the only location in Swale that was affected directly by the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. Despite hundreds of farm animals being destroyed, the Island was omitted from the Government's financial aid package to rural businesses. Although most of the rural businesses have now recovered, local farmers continue to experience falling farm incomes.
- 2.1.10 The Healthcheck revealed that Sheppey has heterogeneous communities; each with its own aspirations and social needs. Every settlement on the Island had motivated individuals or groups of people exhibiting degrees of civic pride and the desire to improve their communities. What appeared to be lacking was groups of people or individuals wishing to think and operate beyond their immediate communities and champion Island-wide social issues.
- 2.1.11 By all measures, most Island communities exhibited high levels of social deprivation. Whilst much effort was already being made to address the contributing factors, further resources and long-term strategies to improve the Island's social welfare are much needed.
- 2.1.12 Most Islanders were optimistic about the future. This optimism is mostly underpinned by the promise of the Second Swale Crossing. Many anticipate economic and social improvement when the Second Bridge is completed in 2006. However, some people are mindful that the new bridge will generate new housing and commercial development, which may eventually alter the Island's character. Those who participated on the Healthcheck process expressed the need to improve; health, access to school and hospital services, social housing, access to employment etc. There was also a call to provide more social activities, especially for young people.
- 2.1.13 The Island's tourism Industry is currently at a crossroads and a steer as to how this sector should be developed in the future was needed. The Healthcheck revealed:
- Sheppey's heritage and natural environment sites are under exploited. The Island could potentially increase the economic benefits accrued if they were developed and effectively marketed. A comprehensive heritage strategy was suggested as a means of setting local priority for development and for attracting external funds to develop sites;
 - concern about the current state of the Island's tourism industry and its future prospects. It was widely believed that existing visitor attractions, and facilities could not be relied on to attract the same numbers of visitor in the future;
 - the quality and the general state of the Island's tourism product has continuously been degenerating in recent years. For example the number of graded serviced beds among the Island's guesthouses and hotels is falling.
 - a significant proportion of hoteliers, visitor attraction operators and holiday parks appeared unprepared and incapable of taking advantage of new and emerging markets in the tourism industry.

2.1.14 The Healthcheck recommends a comprehensive evaluation of the Island's tourism industry, in the form of in-depth study, as a starting point to determine how the sector should be developed in the future.

2.1.15 A number of project proposals to improve the Island's well-being were suggested. These projects include:-

- A farm survey to gain a better understanding of the local farming sector.
- Support the process of industrial diversification as a means of generating new jobs.
- Increased use of local labour in new construction projects.
- Establish initiatives to help increase the use of ICT and E-commerce among local businesses.
- Study to look at ways the areas around Sheerness train station could be improved.
- Set up a pilot study to explore the effects of partial closure of High Street during certain periods of the year.
- Improve car parking in Sheerness and Leysdown.
- Seek to develop Sheerness evening economy.
- Improve town festivals as a means of promoting Sheerness.
- Improve shop frontage & alleyways in Sheerness.
- Use the media's attention upon the Second Crossing to increase the profile of Sheppey in Kent and beyond.
- Explore opportunities to increase house affordability among local people.
- Establish measures to prevent young boys from become 'teenage fathers.'
- Seek to establish a community cinema & extend youth activities.
- Address financial exclusion among the local people.
- Establish Island forum.
- Seek support for the construction of Rushenden Link Road at the earliest possible date.
- Improve road gateways to the Island and public arts.
- Establish a Wheels-to-Work scheme to overcome transport barriers to employment.

- Explore the feasibility of footpath around the Island.
- Undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the Island's tourism industry.
- Establish an Island heritage strategy.
- Set up an action plan to celebrate the first flight centenary.
- Explore the possibility of setting up a centre for curiosity and imagination.

3.1.1 **Background to Sheppey's Economy.**

3.1.2 The Isle of Sheppey is situated off the North Coast of Kent and is separated from the mainland by a narrow stretch of Water, known as the Swale. From east to west it is about 13.8km and 7.8km from north to south. It has eight main settlements, scattered across the west and northern coastlines and collectively they support a population of about 33,000 people. The Island's landscape is relatively flat, with gentle slopes, protected wetlands and attractive arable land. The highest point (Minster Water Tower) is only 70m above the sea.

3.1.3 **Sheerness Town.**

3.1.4 The Town of Sheerness is situated on the northwest tip of the island and is the principal commercial and retail centre. On the outskirts of the town lies the busy deep-water port of Sheerness. Once a major royal dockyard and naval base, the port has significantly helped to shape the historical development of Sheerness and its present character.



Coronation Clock Tower – Sheerness's icon symbol

3.1.5 Sheerness Town Centre has around 230 retail premises including seven bank branches, most clustered around the High Street. Essentially it is a functional town, with an unusually high number of independent retailers compared with surrounding towns in Kent. The few multiple stores present in the town tend to operate at the budget end of the retail market.

3.1.6 In recent years, a number of measures have led to improvements in the town's core shopping area. These include improved road access in and around the town and reformatting the High Street to give it a 'new-look' character.

3.1.7 The Council Wards of Sheerness East and Sheerness West cover the built up area of the town, including the residential areas surrounding the Town Centre. The Ward of Sheerness West has a mixture of privately owned and rented houses, mostly built between the 1930s and 1960s. There are 2891 dwellings and collectively these provide shelter to 6,312 people. Sheerness East is almost entirely comprised of old Victorian terraced housing crisscrossed with back-to-back alleyways. The households in this Ward occupy 2,404 dwellings, which provide shelter to 4,873 people.

3.1.8 The two Council Wards score well above the national average within the multiple index of deprivation. Sheerness West, falls within the worst 10% wards nationally and Sheerness East within the worst 20%. Both are considered as priority areas by the Local Strategic Partnership, which is the focus for regeneration activity within the Borough. These wards also house about 400 companies, which between them employ about 5051 people and include some of the largest employers in the Borough of Swale.

3.1.9 **Queenborough.**



Queenborough Harbour

3.1.10 Queenborough is situated on the western part of the Island. The Town's High Street has very few shops that include a hairdresser, a general store, fast food restaurant and two fine public houses. Situated off the High Street is a fishing bait shop and a fishmonger. The Main Road that leads into Queenborough has relatively more shops than the High Street. These include three grocers, a florist, a pharmacy, two fast food outlets, two public houses, a video rental shop and a library. In the past there was a bank in the town but that has long closed and, apart from a Post Office on the Main Road, there are no banking facilities in Queenborough.

3.1.11 The town is serviced by the Swale railway line. Its train station is centrally located, convenient for most of the town's residents. On weekdays there is a twice-hourly train service to Sheerness and Sittingbourne.

3.1.12 As one of the oldest places on the Island, Queenborough has about 20 listed buildings and a rich and eventful history, with a strong maritime heritage. During the first and Second World it was home to a flotilla of minesweepers and this naval heritage is much reflected in its only museum at the Guildhall. One of Queenborough's famous maritime residents is Radio Caroline anchored in the harbour. In the 1960's it made a major contribution to shaping UK's popular culture when, as a so-called pirate radio station it broadcast pop music from the Thames Estuary. The pirate station helped to

inspire some of the UK's well-known DJs. The town has a small creek that is still used by light watercraft and a small harbour, which is drained by the tide. Unfortunately although there are lock gates English Nature resist these being repaired claiming additional water traffic will interfere with nesting birds.



Caroline – The “Pirate” Radio Ship now anchored off Queenborough

- 3.1.13 The town's residential areas can effectively be grouped into three constituent parts. 'Old Queenborough' is the western portion of the town and is principally comprised of terraced type buildings, some dating back more than 200 years. 'New Queenborough' is situated to the east and is also comprised of terraced houses, built post 1900. The significant proportion of dwellings in these two areas are owner-occupied or privately rented. The third area is the Rushenden Estate, which is set apart from and to the south of the town, separated by an extensive industrial area. Most of the houses in Rushenden were built during or since the 1950's and a significant number (about 360 dwellings) are owned by social landlords.
- 3.1.14 Rushenden has two grocer stores, one newsagent, a fast-food outlet and no public house, although there is now a licensed community centre. It is an area of extreme deprivation with many socio-economic problems.
- 3.1.15 The community in Queenborough is very active and there appears to be a high degree of civic pride in the town. This pride is reflected in the activities pursued by the community that include a 'Queenborough in Bloom' competition, a 'Christmas Lights Competition' Street Fair, and involvement in the Pirates Festival etc.
- 3.1.16 Queenborough Town falls within the electoral ward of Queenborough and Halfway. This ward is home to 220 companies that employ over 3,000 people, reflecting the importance of the industrial estates surrounding Queenborough and the location of a major Abbott Laboratories facility in the town. The bulk of local industrial activity centres on manufacturing, engineering and activities associated with the Port at Sheerness.
- 3.1.17 Unfortunately Queenborough has hosted many dirty industries in the past. Most have now gone but have left their mark by way of contaminated, brown-field land. Cleaning this land up and putting it back into use has to be a priority of any study.
- 3.1.18 **Halfway.**
- 3.1.19 Halfway is located between Queenborough and Minster. It is a small community and largely residential. It has a number of restaurants, fast food outlets and shops that include a co-operative convenience store, a bike shop, a solicitor's office, an insurance broker, a pharmacy, hair dressers, newsagent and car accessories shops.
- 3.1.20 Halfway's residential area includes pre and post war buildings, and although it falls within the Queenborough and Halfway ward, its characteristics and

appearance have more in the common with Minster than the town of Queenborough.

3.1.21 **Minster.**

3.1.22 Sitting within the Minster Cliffs and Sheppey Central wards, Minster is identifiable as generally the most affluent area on Sheppey. It is essentially a dormitory settlement for people that live in the area but work elsewhere. It has approximately 5,000 dwellings that house a population of about 10,591 people. A significant proportion of its houses are semi-detached, modern and of post 1945 construction, built on a gentle rising slope that peaks at Minster Abbey.

3.1.23 Minster Abbey, which was founded by Queen Sexburga in around 670 AD, dominates the local landscape and can be seen from many miles away. The Gatehouse museum located nearby attracts many visitors and is open to members of the public for most of the summer period.



Minster Abbey

3.1.24 Over the past few years the area has attracted a number of new housing developments. Since 1998 over 257 new dwellings have been built, as has a new hospital, serving the whole Island, at a cost of £13m. Of the new houses built so far, 231 have been located at the Thistle Hill development site. A total of 1,000 new dwellings will be built at this site although 660 of these can only be developed after the Second Swale Crossing is in place.

3.1.25 In relation to its population, Minster lacks adequate shopping and other facilities. The few shops that serve the community are found in three principal areas. Trafalgar Parade has two fast food outlets, a newsagent, 2 groceries, a chemist, hairdressing salon, a florist and a post office. At Queens Road there is one convenience store and in Minster Village's High Street there are a few stores and public houses that appear to be remnants of a once much busier village High Street.

3.1.26 **Eastchurch.**

3.1.27 Eastchurch is located between Minster and Leysdown and is a quiet village surrounded by attractive countryside. To the north of the village there are many holiday parks that accommodate several hundred chalets and mobile homes and thousands of visitors every year. Its High Street appears to have lost retail facilities in the past and all of its present shops are independent retailers and include; a betting shop; two public houses; a hairdresser's salon; a newsagent and a post office. The dominant building on the High Street is the Shurland Hotel, which also incorporates a gymnasium and is licensed for weddings. The hotel is popular for short break tourism. It also does well as a consequence of visitors to the three prisons, less than a mile away.

3.1.28 The dwellings in the village are a mix of pre-1945 terraced houses and modern, principally semi-detached houses. About a Kilometre northwest of the village centre is an exclusive housing development site at Kingsborough Manor. At present there are plans to build 60 houses here prior to the construction of the new Swale Crossing, with a further 90 after its completion.

3.1.29 East of the village lies the ruin of Shurland Hall, which is a grade II listed building. Sadly it is on the English Heritage buildings at risk register and is currently out of view, being cocooned in plastic sheeting and scaffold to prevent further deterioration. Representatives of English Heritage at a recent site visit described this as 'a basket case' but pledged to look into what, if anything could be done. The problem is not funding but identifying an ongoing sustainable use for the restored structure.



Shurland Hall – now out of public view

3.1.30 Eastchurch has an excellent village hall, which has recently been refurbished and is now used by a variety of community groups. The hall also accommodates a number of UK-online computer terminals, which are used by the community to access the Internet and to acquire Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills.

3.1.31 Eastchurch has a rich Aviation History. It is the birthplace of the UK's aircraft industry but there is very little to show for it today, although the Sheppey Heritage Trust is hoping to change this. A number of the original aircraft hangers have survived. One in Eastchurch itself is used as a car repair workshop. Five others are used as farm buildings and are attached to Standford Hill Prison.



Home of UK's aerospace industry

Her Majesty's prisons (Swaleside, Standford Hill, and Elmley), are the largest employers in the area, and between them employ over 2,000 people directly and indirectly. The Home Office is in the process of closing down all the prison farm related activities and has indicated that these historic buildings will be sold off. One of the core objectives of the Sheppey Heritage Trust is to establish an aircraft museum on Sheppey and it is planned to locate this on the Standford Hill site.

3.1.32 **Warden Bay.**

3.1.33 Warden Bay is a small residential settlement built on a gentle slope overlooking the Thames Estuary. It is west of Leysdown and it is possibly the most isolated village on the Island. It has nothing by way of industry apart from holiday parks that are located around it. In terms of shopping, it

has a general store, a fast food outlet and a small DIY shop, all independently owned.

3.1.34 Like Eastchurch and Leysdown, Warden Bay has a Village Hall, that houses UK-online computer terminals, from which local people, and the visitors can access the Internet and learn ICT skills. However, Warden Bay Village Hall is in need of some renovation.

3.1.35 **Leysdown.**

3.1.36 Located at the eastern end of the Island, Leysdown is a small settlement that has managed to retain the characteristic of a traditional British seaside town. The village is dwarfed by the plethora of caravans and chalets dotted in and around the settlement. These once attracted many more visitors than currently, especially from London. Competition from budget foreign holiday destinations has severely affected the number of visitors to the area. Despite the drop in numbers, these holiday parks still attract thousands of visitors each year and many come to stay in Leysdown.

3.1.37 Many of the individual caravans and chalets are privately owned. Most owners tend to live outside the area and use them as a second home, on an adhoc basis. However many are also released for letting by their owners when not required for personal use.



Some of Leysdown's holiday homes

3.1.38 It should be noted that many holiday homes on Sheppey are on very long leasehold plots which means that any attempt by a site owner to move upmarket/develop a site is inevitably thwarted by the formidable task of having to deal with several hundred leaseholders and getting them all to agree.

3.1.39 The holiday season on Sheppey is principally confined to April to September, with peak times at weekends, bank holidays and throughout the school holidays. Most visitors tend to come in the summer months by car, although a small number still arrive by train. The additional car traffic adds to the congestion caused by the poor road infrastructure. However car transport is the most reliable and cost effective way to reach the holiday parks as the local railway station is located in Sheerness at least 13km away. There is a bus service from Sheerness, which takes about 45 minutes and runs on an hourly basis off peak daytime.

3.1.40 Leysdown's shopping facilities are largely set out to meet the needs of visitors that come to the village. There are a few general stores, some fast food outlets, three public houses, and a number of amusement arcades. All outlets are independently owned. For a village that has an elastic population, it is not surprising that there is no sizeable supermarket or other ancillary services in the area to service the large number of visitors that come into the village. Leysdown is a seasonal town and most of the retail premises are boarded up in the winter.

- 3.1.41 Most visitors hit Tescos in Sheerness the day after they arrive to supplement their own supplies and provisions, and find little need to use local facilities, which due to the seasonal nature of the trade can only offer a limited service. An oddity for such a place, where leisure activities depend on cash transactions, it is surprising that there is no retail bank branch in the area. There is a post office and only recently an ATM (cash machine) has been installed in one of the arcades.
- 3.1.42 Leysdown has limited historic heritage itself, being a modern Klondike that surfaced in the thirties to meet holiday needs. A skeleton of an elephant was apparently unearthed in 1750 from the fossil-rich soil of Shellness east of Leysdown. It is also here that the first experimental powered flight in the UK took place. The flight pioneers of the time once gathered at Muswell Manor, which they made their Club House and the bar has a small display telling the story of their exploits. As we now approach the 100th anniversary in 2009 of the first powered flight in the UK, a major opportunity exists to celebrate this event.
- 3.1.43 Leysdown has a village hall that has recently been refurbished to very high standards. Like the village halls in Eastchurch and Warden Bay, this one also houses UK-online computer terminals, which are used by the community to access the Internet and to learn computer skills.
- 3.1.44 To encourage shoppers to Sheerness, the Sheerness market operator provides a bus service from Leysdown to Sheerness every Tuesday and Saturday.
- 3.1.45 Leysdown has an active Trader's Association that is comprised of local businesses and local people. The objective of the Association is to serve as a platform and a voice of local people as well as seeking to improve the area.
- 3.1.46 The residential dwellings in the area are a mixture of old and post 1945 construction. There is relatively high proportion of bungalows, and some indication that more people are coming to the area to retire.
- 3.1.47 Prior to 2001, the settlements of Leysdown, Warden Bay, Eastchurch and some territory west of Eastchurch came under Eastern Council Ward. In 2001 Council Ward boundaries were redrawn to reflect local demographic changes. As a result, Eastchurch and some territory east of the village was ceded to Sheppey Central Ward. A new ward covering Warden and Leysdown was created and subsequently named as Warden and Leysdown. As of present little published data exists for the Warden and Leysdown Ward. For practical reasons, we have decided to use pre 2002 Council Ward structure.
- 3.1.48 The Eastern ward scores high in the national deprivation index. It is considered by the Local Strategic Partnership (the old Swale Regeneration) as one of the local Priority Wards for economic development and social regeneration.

3.1.49 **Sheppey's Rural Scenery.**

3.1.50 The Isle Sheppey has some of the most contrasting landscapes in Kent. Thousands of visitors come very year come to enjoy the diversity of plant life, local and migrating bird species and wildlife generally.

3.1.51 The land around the southern coast (the Swale) stretching from east to west of the Island is grazing marsh. Much of this land is included within DEFRA's North Kent Marshes Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) – an agri-environmental incentive scheme where farmers receive additional support to improve landscape and biodiversity. Additionally, some land received Countryside Stewardship monies aimed at similar objectives. On higher ground lies most of Sheppey's arable land that is used mostly for growing cash crops.

3.1.52 Many areas of the Island are home to some of the UK's rarest plants and animals. The low lying land around the Swale and Medway are designated internationally as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for the conservation of birds and their habitats and are listed as part of the Ramsar Convention on the conservation of wetlands. The same areas are also part of the UK's most important wildlife habitats for birds, plants and invertebrates and are so designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are two National Nature Reserves - one at Elmley, the other at Shellness. Additionally, the crumbling northern coastline of Sheppey is similarly designated for its flora and geological interest. The Kent Wildlife Trust designates some land, notably the marshland area between Sheerness, Queenborough, Minster and Halfway, as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI).



Sheppey's unspoiled rural scenery

3.1.53 Although there is little published information on agricultural land quality on the Island, it is likely that the vast majority does not form grades 1, 2 and 3a – these being the nations highest and therefore most valuable grades of land. Where such higher quality land does exist, this is most likely to be at the highest undeveloped points of the Island and probably amounts to a very small proportion overall arable land.

3.2.1 The Local Economy.

3.2.2 Swale's industrial activities are spread over three geographical areas. The area around Sittingbourne forms the main bulk of industrial activity in the Borough. Sittingbourne is also the largest retail centre and is the Borough's administrative hub. The second largest industrial concentration is on the Isle of Sheppey. Faversham, which is a small market town situated in east of the borough, is the least industrialised urban centre in Swale.

3.2.3 Unusual to Kent and the South East region, Swale's economy is characterised by a strong manufacturing sector, with port related activities also being important. Whilst the manufacturing sector has declined in recent years, it still accounts for 19.9% of the local employment. Proportionally, this rate is almost twice that of the South East region average.

3.2.4 Swale also has a distinctly underdeveloped sector within it's local economy. Financial and business services, which are often versatile and more recession proof sectors than manufacturing, are in particular under-represented.

Employment Distribution in Swale, Kent and South East. 2001

<u>Industrial Grouping</u>	<u>Swale</u>		<u>Kent</u>		<u>South East</u>	
Agriculture & fishing	497	(1.2%)	3337	(0.6%)	41,939	(1.1%)
Energy & water	102	(0.2%)	4,342	(0.8%)	22,373	(0.6%)
Manufacturing	8,095	(19.9%)	64,276	(12.2%)	407,442	(11.1%)
Construction	1,982	(4.9%)	28,408	(5.4%)	153,753	(4.2%)
Distribution, hotels & restaurants	10,925	(26.8%)	151,536	(28.8%)	941,727	(25.8%)
Transport & communications	3,183	(7.8%)	36,237	(6.9%)	223,764	(6.1%)
Banking, finance and insurance, etc	5,173	(12.7%)	85,193	(16.2%)	847,503	(23.2%)
Public administration, education & health	8,729	(21.4%)	125,421	(23.8%)	825,404	(22.6%)
Other services	2,070	(5.1%)	28,093	(5.3%)	191,599	(5.2%)
Total	40,757	(100%)	52,6843	(100.0%)	365,5503	(100.0%)
Source – Nomis						

3.2.5 Being an economy that is dominated by vulnerable sectors, Swale was particularly affected by the early 1990's recession compared to Kent and the South East. Local unemployment peaked at 11.9% (6,739) in January 1994 and thereafter it slowly began to fall. However for all years, until 2000, the local unemployment rate persistently remained above the County and national average.

3.2.6 The Isle of Sheppey was particularly affected by recession during the 1980's. The unemployment rate on the island increased and remained above Swale's and Kent's average for the remainder of the decade. Pockets of exceptionally high unemployment have developed around Sheerness and have persisted.

Swale's Ward Unemployment Rates (Sheppey Wards are marked with ✘)											
		% Unemployment rates									
Wards & Economically Active		Jul-93	Jul-94	Jul-95	Jul-96	Jul-97	Jul-98	Jul-99	Jul-00	Jul-01	Jul-02
Abbey	1,775	11.1	11	9.5	8.5	4.4	3.3	2.6	2.4	1.5	1.6
Borden	1,293	4.9	4.2	4	3.6	2.9	2.3	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.0
Boughton	941	7.9	8.2	7.9	5.6	5.1	3.7	2.2	2.4	1.4	1.8
Courternay	1,075	8	6	5.8	5.8	3.5	2.4	2.1	1.5	1.1	0.5
Davington Priory	1,809	12.9	12.4	10.2	6.5	4.1	2.8	3.5	2.5	1.8	2.4
East Downs	1,503	6.6	6.6	5.9	5.4	2.7	1.9	1.5	2.3	1.2	0.6
✘ Eastern	2,124	19.5	18.8	14.8	13.0	9.6	8.2	6.5	6.0	5.1	5.3
Grove	3,555	10.3	9.6	7.3	6.7	5.3	4.4	3.9	3.3	2.5	2.5
Hartlip & Upchurch	1,322	8.5	7.5	6.2	6.2	3.9	3.5	2.3	2.3	1.7	1.1
Iwarde & Lower Halstow	1,177	7.6	8.2	6.4	6.2	5.0	3.4	2.9	2.7	2.0	2
Kemsley	1,847	7.1	6.4	5.8	9.4	5.7	5.5	5.1	4.9	3.6	4.6
Milton Regis	2,924	14.3	14.2	12.1	9.8	7.1	6.4	5.7	4.9	4.3	4.8
✘ Minster Cliffs	3,170	10.4	9.1	6.5	6.6	4.5	3.3	3.0	2.2	2.0	2
Murston	3,415	14.2	11.9	10.1	10.7	8.5	7.3	6.9	6.4	5.7	5.2
Newington	1,267	9.6	8.2	6.9	6.4	3.8	3.2	2.9	3.1	2.1	2.4
✘ Queenborough & Halfway	3,475	13.5	12.8	10.1	8.0	5.2	4.2	3.8	3.1	3.0	2.6
Roman	3,565	10.9	9.7	8.4	8.3	5.0	5.1	5.1	4.2	3.2	3.3
St Ann's	2,793	7.8	7.7	6.7	7.8	5.3	3.9	3.0	2.1	1.9	1.9
✘ Sheerness East	2,465	19.3	17.8	16.9	15.1	11.1	7.9	7.1	5.8	5.0	5.3
✘ Sheerness West	2,679	22.4	21.7	16.7	16.2	10.2	7.2	7.8	7.5	7.2	6.6
✘ Sheppey Central	2,168	12.4	10.7	8.2	7.2	4.4	3.1	3.1	2.3	2.6	1.9
Teynham & Lynsted	2,785	11.1	9	7.4	7.2	4.7	3.9	3.7	2.4	2.2	2.4
Watling	2,007	7.9	6.8	6.3	5.9	40.0	1.9	2.4	2.3	1.3	1.2
West Downs	1,392	7.3	6.3	6	5.1	3.5	2.5	2.2	1.7	1.3	1.3
Woodstock	3,879	7.9	7.4	5.9	5.3	4.0	3.0	2.7	2.1	1.8	1.7
Total	56,405										

- 3.2.7 In response to the high unemployment rate, the government declared in 1993 the whole of Swale and other districts in the East of Kent, as Assisted Areas. Until then, the use of Assisted Area Status had been restricted to depressed parts in the North of England as part of the Government's attempt to address regional economic imbalance. In practice Assisted Area Status enabled local business (mostly in manufacturing operations) to receive government grants when undertaking investment that resulted in creating new jobs.
- 3.2.8 By the turn of the new millennium, the headline figures showed that the mass cyclical and structural unemployment of the early 1990's had nearly disappeared. The remaining local unemployment, now equalling the national average rate, could largely be attributed to lack of skills or transitional types of unemployment. After seven years in operation, in 2000 the Government decided to delete Swale from the Assisted Area map. However Swale did retain a new, lower level of designation, providing access to Enterprise Grants. This Grant regime was (and is still) aimed at manufacturing sectors and high value services. The availability of grants has provided impetus for enticing new companies into the area and encouraging local companies to invest.
- 3.2.9 Swales Economy has experienced significant diversification in the last ten years. A diverse range of economic activity now complements the traditional industrial sectors that include paper, print, and construction products.

Plastic goods, engineering and machinery and pharmaceutical and health care products are now all significant contributors to the manufacturing base. However, the impact of diversification is most evident around Sittingbourne's industrial estates and at Sittingbourne Research Centre; a science business park located south of the town. The process for the Isle of Sheppey has been considerably slower.

3.2.10 **The Sheppey Economy in detail.**

3.2.11 It is estimated there are about 1,050 businesses on the Isle of Sheppey, which between them employ about 11,550 people. It is difficult to group these employers into the various standard industrial sectors. This is because the government published district level data as the smallest unit of count and sub-sets within the district are unavailable. However, with the help of Kent County Council, we have been able to compile a picture of Sheppey's economy, but unfortunately for statistical reasons, agricultural employment could not be included. This section of the report looks at a number of important sectors within the local economy and the issues that face Sheerness and the Isle of Sheppey

3.2.12 The table below suggests that between 1998 and 2000, total employment on the Island declined. Whilst this data only covers a period of three years, an anecdotal assessment of Sheppey's economy suggests that this trend may have continued during 2001 and 2002 as the Island was hit by large scale, high profile closures and redundancies without being reciprocated by major new job creation.

3.2.13 **Sheppey's Agricultural Sector.**

3.2.14 It is not possible to get the exact number of farmers that farm land on the Sheppey. This is because;

- there are farmers registered elsewhere but who farm land on Sheppey and visa-versa;
- Council Ward level data provided by DEFRA is often suppressed so as not to disclose facts on farmers who could easily be identified from Ward data;
- DEFRA's data depends very much on the count of Farm Holding Numbers. However, it is possible that an individual farmer could have more than one Holding Number

3.2.15 Incomplete data from DEFRA's 2001 census shows that there are 25 full-time farmers and 31 part-time farmers. A part-time farmer could also be anyone who has a holding Number but not actively farming. Since everyone with a holding number is required to complete DEFRA's annual farmers census, non-active farmers also appear on DEFRA's database.

Farmers On the Isle Of Sheppey			
	Full-time	Part-time	Hectares
Sheppey Central	3	4	1,256
Queenborough & Halfway	9	12	1,053
Minster Cliffs	Data suppressed	Data suppressed	Data suppressed
Eastern	13	11	3,444

- 3.2.16 Information supplied by the Swale branch of National Farmers' Union (NFU) shows that there are 18 members on its database farming on the Isle of Sheppey. The NFU has also indicated its members are likely to fall within the commercial full-time farmers. Information provided by Country Land & Business Association shows there are 7 members on their database, collectively owning a total of 2,071 acres.
- 3.2.17 The export ban upon British livestock and meat products following BSE (mad cow disease) and the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease compounded with unfavourable economic conditions overall in the agricultural sector have contributed to the decline in agricultural employment generally and very likely on the Isle of Sheppey.
- 3.2.18 Sheppey was the only location in Swale where cases of foot and mouth were recorded during the 2001 outbreak. 2,935 local sheep had to be destroyed and five farm premises were affected. Other than the immediate impact upon the farming community, it is difficult to estimate the indirect economic consequences, for instance through a fall in the numbers of people visiting local attractions. However, anecdotally even after the disease had been contained visitors did choose to keep away as in other parts of the country more widely affected, and yet Government assistance to rural businesses affected by the outbreak did not extend to Swale or the Isle of Sheppey.
- 3.2.19 **Farm Workers' Incomes.**
- 3.2.20 Data from DEFRA regarding farm workers' wages only gives the national average figure. Whilst we accept there are obvious shortcomings for using the national average earning, it appears the average hourly wage for farm workers is significantly lower than Swale's average.

Hourly Pay (including Overtime)		
	All Sectors In Swale	Farm Workers (UK)
Year	Average Hourly Pay	Average Hourly Wage
2002	£9.64	6.78
2001	£9.24	6.42
2000	£8.70	6.09
1999	£8.51	5.92

- 3.2.21 However, whilst the average wage in Swale (including overtime work) amounts to £356.62 per week, the average weekly wage for farm workers amounts to £366.82. Farm work is characterised by long working hours compared with other sectors, with, on average a farm worker clocking in 54.1 hours per week.
- 3.2.22 **Farmers Earning Index.**
- 3.2.23 The Government publishes indices of Farm Net Incomes (i.e. income less expenditure) by means of a survey involving about 3% of all farming business units in the UK. The income index is set out in the table below and shows how incomes for various farm activities have fluctuated in the recent years. The indices shows that husbandry in lowland have experienced the highest fall in incomes in recent years.

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02*
Diary	115	98	111	91	59	37	24	29	66
Cattle & Sheep (Less Favoured Area)	100	82	108	109	68	36	29	35	31
Cattle & Sheep (lowland)	131	101	105	93	11	4	-2	3	-4
Cereals	57	76	119	105	40	21	32	17	12
General Cropping	64	104	128	68	33	52	13	23	18
Pig & poultry	28	59	126	114	38	-30	-10	45	26
Mixed	64	82	124	95	21	4	22	20	15

1994/95 - 1996-97 = 100.
*(2001-02 (are provisional estimations)

3.2.24 Most of Sheppey's farmers would fall in the cereals and general cropping categories. Like all other farming segments, farmers in these two categories have experienced almost continuous falling net incomes from their holdings. It is not exactly known how the falling net incomes have affected farmers on the Isle of Sheppey. Perhaps a specific study covering this area is needed. However there is evidence that suggests that some local farmers are exploring alternative means of generating extra cash to supplement their falling farm incomes.

3.2.25 **Farm Diversification.**

3.2.26 One way of supplementing farmers' incomes is by drawing income from the buildings that are no longer in use for farming purposes. The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) is in favour of this and is (at the time of writing) able to provide grants to farmers who wish to diversify into other activities. Swale Borough Council's Economic Development Unit has also indicated that it will seek to work with the Planning Department to provide farmers with informal advice regarding issues relating to changes of use of redundant buildings.

3.2.27 At the present it is not known how many redundant farm buildings with the potential for alternative uses there are on the Island or how many farmers wish to diversify their activities.

3.2.28 **Manufacturing.**

3.2.29 Manufacturing employment in the UK has been in a well-documented and long running decline. The manufacturing sector is generally considered vulnerable and business cycles disproportionately affect its employment levels compared with other business sectors. Although small firms employing less than 50 people dominate the manufacturing sector on the Isle of Sheppey. However, there are a number of large companies, which between them employ a significant amount of local labour.



ISTIL – one of Queenborough's major employers

3.2.30 Whilst Sheppey's economy is characterised by a strong manufacturing sector, it appears that local manufacturing companies have not taken full advantage of government grants operating in the area. Between 1993 and 1999, 76 companies received RSA grant awards. A significant number of awards went to Sittingbourne companies. Sheppey companies received approximately 20%. Since the introduction of Enterprise Grants in 2000, 24 grant offers have been made to Swale companies, of which four are to Sheppey companies. Perhaps Sheppey companies are not investing as much as those on the mainland Swale.

3.2.31 In line with the national trend, Sheppey's manufacturing sector has experienced job losses. Within the local context these losses compare unfavourably with Sittingbourne or Faversham, as shown in the table below.

Known large scale Redundancies in Swale.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Sector</u>	<u>Sheppey</u>	<u>Sittingbourne</u>	<u>Faversham</u>
1998	Safeway	Retail	-	-	64
1998	Acco	Printing/distribution	113	-	-
1998	Queenborough Rolling Mill	Steel	130	-	-
1999	DW Bennet & Sons	Transport	25	-	-
1999	BOC	Asda Food Depot	-	-	55
1999	ASW	Steel Production	160	-	-
1999	UK Paper	Paper	-	230	-
1999	Hunter Sapphire	Food Depot	-	-	130
2000	Laker Process Engineering	Engineering	-	70	-
2000	UK Paper	Paper Making	-	88	-
2000	Pilkington Automotive	Automotive Glass	88	-	-
2001	East Kent Packers	Fruit Processing	-	-	78
2001	Seaking	Automotive	192	-	-
2002	Abbot Laboratories	Pharmaceutical	80	-	-
2003	Twyfords	Ceramics	160	-	-
2002	ASW	Steel	350	-	-
2002	Macleod McCombe	Fruit Processing	-	200	-
2003	Bond Group	Fridge Refurbishment	20	-	-
Total Job loss			1,343	658	327

3.2.32 In an economy that is characterised with low wages, manufacturing is still among the sectors that pay some of the highest wage rates in Swale, and some of the most cherished employers on the Island operate in this sector. Despite the declining trend in manufacturing employment, a number of local companies have flourished and increased the number of people they employ.

3.2.33 **Distribution Hotel & Restaurants.**

3.2.34 This sector covers a range of activities along the distribution chain, and includes retailing and the Town of Sheerness, which plays a pivotal role within this sector locally. Employment in the sector is mainly found within the Council Ward of Sheerness West. This ward envelops most of the Town's prime retail space. A further 400 jobs, mostly related to the tourism industry, are provided in the Eastern Ward.

3.2.35 At present, retail employment remains strong on the Island. The number of empty shops has reduced in recent years and the demand for retail space appears to remain buoyant. Despite the signs of strong demand in the retail sector, total employment slightly fell between 1998 and 2000. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the declining trend has continued in 2001. It is thought that the brunt of the fall has been borne by the low cost tourism industry, mainly located within the Eastern Ward.

3.2.36 **Transport & Communications**

3.2.37 The Port of Sheerness, owned by the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company plc has seven all-tide deep-water berths, which enables it to work around the clock. Its operations include servicing specialist niche markets that include handling vast amounts of imported fruit and fresh produce. It is estimated that 30% of UK's fruit imports pass through Sheerness.



3.2.38 The Port also handles forest products and the import and export of motor vehicles. As a consequence there are a number of ancillary companies providing port related logistics and value added activities operating in Swale. Collectively these companies provide about 3,200 jobs of which nearly 1,000 are on the Island.

Port of Sheerness – one of the UK's largest ports

3.2.39 Total employment in the transport and communications sector has marginally reduced in Swale generally and on the Island. The attributing factors to this decline are many but operating costs and in particular the relatively high cost of fuel in the UK are among the major contributing factors affecting the whole industry in the UK.

3.2.40 At present the Port is experiencing commercial pressure through lack of land to accommodate its growing business, particularly relating to car importation. This is effectively constraining the Port's ability to increase its throughput and over the past four years, it has lost two car-handling contracts (Hyundai, Suzuki) to Bristol and Tilbury. The loss of these contracts in part contributed to the closure of Seaking in 2001.

3.2.41 **Banking, Finance and Insurance Sector.**

3.2.42 One of the major weaknesses in Swale's economy is its relatively small sized banking, finance and insurance sector and it is this weakness, compounded with an over dependence upon the manufacturing sector that sets Swale's economy apart from the rest of Kent and the South East region. The sector pays relatively higher wages and tends to be more stable over time, having historically not been as severely affected by the business cycle as, say, and manufacturing.

- 3.2.43 However, Swale's banking, finance and insurance sector has followed a growth path since mid. 1990's. At present it employs about 5,100 people (12.7% of Swale's workforce). This rate equates to just over half the South East region's average. On the Isle of Sheppey the sector employment rate compares more unfavourably. It is estimated that about 790 (7.4%) of the Island's jobs fall within this sector.
- 3.2.44 This is a disadvantage to the local economy, which is characterised by lower wage activities. Furthermore, of the 790 jobs, it is not known how many are occupied by residents of the Island. Anecdotal evidence seems to suggest a majority of bank managers and a significant number of senior bank staff live off the island. In practice these are likely to be the best-paid staff in the sector.
- 3.2.45 **Public Administration, Education & Health.**
- 3.2.46 In Swale public administration, education and health accounts for 21.4% of the local jobs. This rate almost mirrors that of Kent and the South East region averages. The sector provides 8,729 jobs within Swale, of which about 2,836 (32%) are located on the Isle of Sheppey.
- 3.2.47 On the Isle of Sheppey, about 24% of all jobs fall within this sector grouping, 6% more compared with Swale's average. The difference in employment rates is accounted for by the location of three prisons on the Island.
- 3.2.48 Employment in this sector has followed a stable trend over the past four years and there have been no known, large-scale job losses in the area. It is believed that the over represented public sector, education and health sectors could help to cushion the Island from the effects of economic downturn in the future.
- 3.2.49 **Enterprising Culture.**
- 3.2.50 It had traditionally been thought that Swale generally lacked an enterprise culture. This may have been true in the past, however data relating to company net VAT registration shows that between 1994 and 2001 Swale scored above Kent's average. Swale's net gain of 190 companies compares very favourable with East Kent economies, which, like Swale, experienced mass structural unemployment in the early 1990s. The data indicates that enterprise culture is increasingly taking root in Swale and the local economy is starting to resemble those of North Kent, where the culture of enterprise is more noticeable.

Numbers of VAT Registration & Deregistration From 1994 to 2001.

	VAT Registration	VAT Deregistration	Net VAT Registration Gain	% Change
Dartford	1960	1640	320	16%
Sevenoaks	3645	3345	300	8%
Tunbridge Wells	3665	3365	300	8%
Maidstone	3865	3645	220	6%
Gravesham	1915	1705	210	11%
Swale	2555	2365	190	7%
Ashford	2845	2695	150	5%
Tonbridge and Malling	2920	2785	135	5%

Medway Towns	5010	4940	70	1%
Dover	1860	1880	-20	-1%
Thanet	1950	2105	-155	-8%
Shepway	1910	2070	-160	-8%
Canterbury	2745	2970	-225	-8%
Kent's Average	2834	2731	102	3.6%

3.2.51 The presence of an enterprise culture in Swale is confirmed by the latest Government statistics, which shows that Swale has a higher proportion of its work force in self-employed occupations compared with Kent's average rate.

3.2.52 Evaluation of Sheppey's Economy.

3.2.53 On the surface, it appears Swale's economy has transformed itself in the last twelve years, with significant growth experienced within the local economy. Data from Annual Business Survey indicates that between 1995 and 2001 Swale's economy gained 521 business units (individual sites from which businesses are actively trading). Of these, 109 were located on Sheppey, 95 in Faversham and the remaining 317 in Sittingbourne.

3.2.54 In terms of the numbers and the quality of business units gained in Swale, Sittingbourne has benefited the most, the evidence of which can be observed by comparing the development rates of industrial estates. Sites within Sittingbourne, in particular at Eurolink and Sittingbourne Research Centre, have seen rapid growth and increasing activity, provided by both inward investors and indigenous companies alike. The increase in the number of business units in Sittingbourne is summarised in the table below.

Change in Number of Business Units in Sittingbourne 1995-2001			
Council Ward	No of Business Units 1995	No of Business Units 201	Change between 1995-2001
Borden	52	65	13
Grove	247	294	47
Hartlip and Upchurch	105	129	24
Iwade and Lower Halstow	53	71	18
Kemsley	73	74	1
Milton Regis	110	152	42
Murston	260	318	58
Newington	69	83	14
Roman	378	415	37
West Downs	78	100	22
Woodstock	215	256	41
Total	1,640	1,957	317

3.2.55 Unfortunately, the levels of growth experienced in Sittingbourne's industrial estates have not been reciprocated on the Isle of Sheppey. Although Minster Cliffs and Eastern Wards have collectively gained 66 new business units, these are most likely to be micro businesses with limited scope for growth, employing very few people and possibly falling within the 'low added value' activities.

Change in Number of Business Units on Sheppey 1995-2001.			
	No of Business Units 1995	No of Business Units 201	Change between 1995-2001
Eastern	149	180	31
Minster Cliffs	123	158	35
Queenborough and Halfway	187	220	33
Sheerness East	126	124	-2
Sheerness West	294	289	-5
Sheppey Central	63	80	17
Total	942	1,051	109

- 3.2.56 Sheppey's main industrial estates and employment centres, situated in the council wards of Sheerness West and Queenborough and Halfway appear to have failed to attract new business units in numbers akin to those experienced in Sittingbourne. Queenborough and Halfway has managed to attract a meagre 33 new business units whereas Sheerness West and Sheerness East have registered negative growth rates.
- 3.2.57 Other than a few instances such as the construction of Tesco's new store in Sheerness in 1994, the reclamation of 200 acres of land from the sea at Lappel Bank and a number of port related developments, there appears to have been little by way of major, high profile commercial developments on Sheppey. Expanding companies, either indigenous or with an existing local presence have been responsible for nearly all known industrial developments that have taken place since 1995. In light of known redundancies and the limited growth, it is plausible to assume that Sheppey's economy has stagnated since 1995, and possibly has experienced a net negative job growth rate.
- 3.2.58 It is widely believed that poor road infrastructure to the Island is the main reason why Sheppey has failed to attract inward investment from the private sector. Swale Borough Council has also been required to pursue policies aimed at minimising traffic impact on the existing Kingsferry Bridge by limiting the development that can take place before the Second Swale Crossing is built. This has meant that whilst employment-generating development is generally encouraged, major new employment development at, for example, Neatscourt cannot proceed as it is subject to the Second Swale Crossing being in place.
- 3.2.59 Clearly, the process of industrial diversification, which is very evident all around Sittingbourne, has yet to be reciprocated on the Island. As a result Sheppey's economy continues to house vulnerable industrial sectors without signs of attracting new and robust business sectors to replace those that have withered away. It is widely believed that the contraction of Swale's Second Crossing is a prerequisite requirement for attracting investors on the Island. As a result businesses and local people are looking forward to 2007 with anticipation.

3.3.1 Sheerness Town Centre.

3.3.2 The roots of Sheerness Town can be traced back to the 17th Century. The Royal Dockyard and the garrisons that were stationed there have shaped the town's historical development and much of its physical heritage. Initially, Bluetown High Street, which is adjacent to the Royal Dockyard and the old barracks, was a hive of activity, serving a community that lived and worked in and around the dockyard. In the 1840s, with a revolutionary tide sweeping across Europe, security at the dockyard was strengthened. This eventually led to retail and other activity shifting southwards to Mile Town, and Marine Town from which modern-day Sheerness has emerged.

3.3.3 Sheerness is a relatively compact town, with most of its retail activity being clustered in the High Street and Broadway, with a few retailers in streets off shooting from these. The High Street has a traditional look since many of the shop fronts have retained their original features. This helps to give the town an appearance and character that is rooted in the 1930s.



3.3.4 The Town Centre is dominated by an attractive Clock Tower, which has served Sheerness for over a hundred years. East of the Clock Tower is 'Broadway' a road that has about 170 metres of retail shops. After these shops, the road follows the coastal line for about two miles before reaching the village of Minster.

3.3.5 About two hundred metres north of the High Street is the Tesco store, the Island's only major supermarket and by far the largest store on Sheppey. Although Tesco is generally not perceived an integral part of Sheerness High Street due to its location and size, it is believed that the store complements the town's overall shopping provision and the recently completed McDonald's Restaurant, opposite the train station has helped to close the physical separation between the store and the core retail activities in the High Street.



The Island's only McDonald's Restaurant – completed in 2000

3.3.6 Sheerness has around 230 business units located along its prime shopping area. These business units range from solicitors and estate agents to general retail and fast food outlets. A table showing groups of business units in the town is provided below.

Type Of Shops	No. Shops	Type of Shops.	No of Shops
Accountants & Solicitors	4	Health food	2
Club & Amusements	7	Heritage	1
Arts & crafts	1	Household	10
Bakery	2	Jewellers & Lock Smiths	5
Banks & Insurance	9	Library & Leisure	3
Bicycle	1	Garage & Automotive	8
Bookmakers	2	Music	1
Butcher	3	Cards Gifts & Newsagent	13
Café	7	Night Club	1
Charity	7	Green Grocer & Off licence	3
Pharmacist & Dental Care	5	Optician	2
Children shop	3	Pets & Vet. Surgeon	7
Confectionary	1	Photographic	1
Dry Cleaning	3	Physiotherapist	1
Clothes	12	Post office	2
Coachworks	1	Printers	1
Community	1	Public House & Restaurant	11
Discount Store	3	Second hand	4
DIY & Builders Merchant	3	Shoes	5
Electrical & Electronic	10	Sports & Camping	3
Fire Brigade	1	Supermarket	3
Empty	12	Tattoos	1
Estate Agents & Accommodation	11	Taxis	1
Fast food	14	Training	1

Flowers	3	Travel Agent	4
Funeral	2	Videos Hire	2
Haberdashery	1	Wholesaler	1
Hairdresser	10		

3.3.7 Relative to the population size of the Island, Sheerness Town Centre appears to offer a reasonable retail mix. Contrary to widely held views about the town's poor retail mix; data provided by Kent County Council indicates that Sheerness Town Centre compares favourably with other Towns in Kent.

Rank of Town By The Number of Multiple Stores.

Town Centre	No. Multiple stores	Rank	Town Centre	No. Multiple stores	Rank
Maidstone	127	1	Whitstable	12	17
Tunbridge Wells	110	2	Faversham	11	18
Canterbury	102	3	Swanley	11	18
Ashford	78	4	Cliftonville	10	19
Gravesend	69	5	Hythe	10	19
Dartford	59	6	Broadstairs	9	20
Dover	58	7	Sandwich	6	21
Folkestone	57	8	Birchington	5	22
Sittingbourne	52	9	Cheriton	5	22
Ramsgate	51	10	Westgate	5	22
Margate	46	11	Paddock Wood	4	23
Tonbridge	46	11	Cranbrook	3	24
Sevenoaks	30	12	New Romney	3	24
Deal	29	13	Hawkhurst	2	25
Sheerness	21	14	Lydd	2	25
Herne Bay	20	15	Southborough	0	26
Tenterden	17	16			

Source – Kent County Council

3.3.8 Recent Major Developments in Sheerness Town.

3.3.9 The Council wards of Sheerness East and Sheerness West encompass the Town Centre and the built up residential areas. These Wards, in particular Sheerness West, score high on the Government's deprivation measures. Because of this, these Wards have been able to attract funding from a variety of sources to regenerate and improve the area. Swale Borough Council and the Local Strategic Partnership considered these Wards (including also Queenborough and Halfway & Eastern Wards) as a priority for regeneration.

- 3.3.10 **Tesco Superstore Development** - Tesco currently employs about 400 employees, of which approximately 300 are part-time. Prior to 1994 Tesco had a relatively small store on the High Street, which was overtrading and had outgrown its premises. Up to that moment that store was considered to be among one of the anchor shops on the High Street and hence there were concerns about how the High Street would be commercially affected if Tesco moved out and built a bigger store at the Town's periphery.



Tesco store

- 3.3.11 Initially, Tesco was interested in locating its new 4,820 square metre store at Neats Court (which is situated about two miles from Sheerness). However, this location was considered unacceptable to the local planning authorities on the grounds that such a move was likely to be detrimental to the High Street. As a compromise, Swale Borough Council, which owned the land at Bridge Road (about 250 metres on the edge of High Street), agreed to sell it to Tesco to develop as a superstore on the basis that the Neatscourt option would be detrimental to Sheerness town centre. At the time most retailers did not welcome this decision as they felt that the new store, being close to the edge of the High street, would decimate the Town Centre. As part of the land sale, Tesco agreed to keep its home and wear store in the High Street whilst the food retail activities migrated to the new store in 1994.
- 3.3.12 However, following a 1,516 square metre expansion of the Bridge Road store, the High Street retail outlet migrated to the expanded store, and the High Street store eventually closed in 2000. Five months after the High Street store closure, Bewise took on the premises as a discount clothes store.
- 3.3.13 Empirical evidence shows that despite its location (at the edge of town), Tesco is still the major anchor store, with High Street shops depending to some degree upon the strength of Tesco to attract shoppers into Sheerness. Tesco complements the High Street activities and there have been some benefits derived from the proceeds of the land sale. Swale Borough Council invested the proceeds in improving the High Street. In retrospect the land sale deal has resulted in a 'win-win' situation for all those involved, although the High Street retailers at the time would have thought otherwise.
- 3.3.14 The Tesco Store at Sheerness is the only supermarket in the whole of Swale that opens 24 hours a day. The store has a pharmacy within it and for those who work unsocial hours or night shifts, it is the ideal shopping destination in Swale. The store is considered to be one of the few shops in Sheerness that attracts shoppers onto the Island, Stones Nursery and Whelan's Garden Furniture being other examples. The Tesco store has continued to expand and at the time of writing this report, the store was seeking planning permission from Swale Borough Council to add a further 376 sq metres of storage to the existing site.

- 3.3.15 It is not known how many Islanders or those who live on the mainland depend on this store for the bulk of their shopping. However, data provided to us by Tesco indicates that there are 3,487 loyalty cardholders who live off the island but use the store at Sheerness. Comparatively, there are only 1,145 Sainsbury's loyalty cardholders on the Island who use Sainsbury's in Sittingbourne.
- 3.3.16 Asda, which is located in Sittingbourne and on en route to the Isle of Sheppey is perhaps, used more by those Islanders who work in Sittingbourne. Unfortunately, Asda does not operate a loyalty club card scheme and hence it has not been possible to estimate how many islanders shop there.

Store Loyalty Club Card Holders from The Following Post Codes				
	ME9 (Mainland west of Sittingbourne)	ME10 (Sittingbourne)	ME11&ME12 (Isle of Sheppey)	ME13 (Faversham)
Sheerness Tesco Store	850	2,599	17,322	38
Sittingbourne's Sainsbury's	N/A	N/A	1145	N/A
Sittingbourne's Asda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/a

- 3.3.17 **Sheppey College** - Until 1996 there was no further education provision on the Isle of Sheppey. Those who wished to undertake further education had two alternatives;
- travel over 28 miles to Canterbury in order to access courses at Canterbury College;
 - travel to Chatham in order to access courses at Mid. Kent College.

3.3.18 For those who depended on public transport either journey would have been a tough one given the poor transport links that exist on and to and from the Island. Even after getting on the train either in Sheerness or Queenborough, there would have been a need to change trains at Sittingbourne for all college journeys. These long and difficult journeys will have in part contributed to the poor participation in further education that is evident among the local population.



Sheppey's only Further Education College – opened in 1996

- 3.3.19 Following a successful partnership SRB1 bid, Sheppey College was build adjacent to the Tesco store in Sheerness. Sheppey College originally cost £1.2m to build and in 1998 underwent a further £0.9m expansion.

- 3.3.20 In the planning stage prior to its construction, it was expected that the college would attract about 250 pupils every year but today it has over 700 students undertaking a variety of courses. Most of the courses provided tend to be low level based, requiring little or no prior knowledge or qualification to access them. It is said that these courses in general reflect the low self-esteem that is thought to prevail among the local people.
- 3.3.21 The College also runs popular courses that are aimed at opening access to university level education. For example at present there are 28 students undertaking such courses and it is anticipated most of these will go on to pursue vocational training in areas such as teaching or nursing professions.
- 3.3.22 Although the college is relatively new, it is currently operating above its original capacity and would welcome the opportunity to expand. In particular it would like to provide courses aimed at media and creative industries.
- 3.3.23 **Healthy Living Centre.** - It has long been suspected that the Island, in particular the area around Sheerness, has a disproportionate number of people who have an unhealthy life-style. In response, a brand new extension at the Sheppey Leisure Complex was completed, in March 2003, to house a Healthy Living Centre. The cost of the building has amounted to £927,000 and the cost of running the Centre is expected to total about £3m over the next five years.
- 3.3.24 The Healthy Living Centre will seek to promote healthier lifestyles among local people and will also house a doctor's surgery capable of providing room for two GP's, a community information communication technology suite for members of the public to use, a clinic area and will also link with a 'Green Gym' initiative.
- 3.3.25 **Millennium Way** - Until the completion of the Millennium Way bypass in year 2000, Sheerness Town Centre was slowly suffocating under vehicular traffic that had to pass through the High Street. The high numbers of vehicle movements was conflicting with pedestrians and creating a poor environment for shoppers and other town centre users.
- 3.3.26 Part of the solution was to provide a route around the Town Centre. It was agreed that the bypass, which was to be called the Millennium Way, would start by the Railway Station, run downwards west of the High Street, bend eastwards and intersect the southern side of the High Street and link up with Trinity Road in the east of the Town Centre. There was some compulsory purchase of land and the total cost including construction amounted to £2.97m.
- 3.3.27 The completion of the Millennium Way was a major landmark achievement in the development of Sheerness Town Centre. It meant that non-High Street traffic could completely by-pass the Town Centre, a decision some traders did not welcome on the grounds they would lose custom derived from passing trade. Unfortunately, this type of reasoning has been proved fallacious by empirical evidence from other towns where traffic-calming measures have been taken. The usual trend is for footfall counts to increase following the calming measures and land rentals to appreciate in value.

3.3.28 A second phase, post completion of the road, came in the form of the Sheerness Pedestrian Priority Scheme. The aim of the scheme was to refurbish the High Street by giving it a 'pedestrianised' new-look but at the same time allowing vehicular traffic to access the High Street. A substantial grant from English Heritage was directed towards the Broadway to empathise with its unique Georgian look. Pedestrians were to be given priority over car traffic and a 15 mph speed limit was applied to cars.



Pedestrian prioritised High Street

3.3.29 The Town Centre Manager was keen to exploit the opportunities created by the bypass for regular road closures to facilitate events and perhaps farmers markets following the licensing of the Broadway for such events. The total cost of the Pedestrian Priority Scheme was £1.5m and it has been generally well received.

3.3.30 **New Retail Arrivals.**

3.3.31 Sheerness Town Centre went through a period of relative stagnation prior to 1999. There was very little by way of new retail development or multiple retailers moving into the Town. The perceived isolation of the Island, along with lower levels of effective demand and disposable incomes all conspired to keep multiple stores from investing in Sheerness.

3.3.32 Since 1995, Sheerness has undergone a number of social and physical regeneration changes implemented by Swale Borough Council and its partners. These improvements, along with the expectation of the Second Swale Crossing, to be completed in 2006/7, appear to have set retailers' confidence on an upward trend. As a result since 1999, a number of new major retailers have moved into the town.

Multiple Stores that have moved in Sheerness in Recent Years		
Store Name	Date Est. in Sheerness	Type of Store
Iceland	1999	Food
Peacock	1999	Clothing
Be-wise	2000	General Store
McDonalds	2000	Restaurant/fast food

3.3.33 In addition to the above recent arrivals, Aldi Store is in the advanced stage towards obtaining planning permission from Swale Borough Council to build a 1,157 square metre store with 80 car parking spaces west of the Millennium Way. Subject to all approvals, the



Aldi's proposed new store in Sheerness

construction of the store should commence in the summer of 2003 with an estimated six months to completion. When construction commences, it will be the only brand new purpose built retail development in the town since 1994.

3.3.34 Sheerness is a price sensitive town and this is reflected in the type of retail provision provided. The town has four long-established second hand shops, most of them situated at the southern end of the High Street. Complementing these are seven charity shops scattered around the High Street that sell donated goods at very low price. It is therefore no surprise that the multiple stores Sheerness has attracted in the recent years all appear to be targeting lower income households. Generally shops that have tried to cater for the quality end of the retail segment have all failed to take root in the town.

3.3.35 **Sheerness Market**

3.3.36 Sheerness has the strongest market culture among the three key towns in Swale. In line with the national trend, Sheppey's market has contracted in size from the 1950's but still has a significant number of core users and on most market days uses all the allocated space. The current market, which is held every Tuesday and Saturday in Rose Street



The 'Market culture' is still strong amongst local people

Car Park, remains a big and thriving market. Its history can be traced back to pre-1940, when it was located on land where Sheppey College is now built.

3.3.37 The size of the market tends to reflect the seasonal nature of the Island's tourism base. During the summer months, the number of market stalls peaks to about forty and falls to less than twenty in winter months. Swale Borough Council owns the market site and as of June 2002 it has been operated by Irvine Trading Services on a year long licence. The Council has indicated that it will be prepared to consider extending the licence for a further four years to the existing Market Operator subject to a number of caveats.

3.3.38 The market operator has indicated that the wide variation in the number of stalls during the summer and the winter months is a key concern as to the future viability, whilst the Town Centre Manager has been keen to broaden the mass appeal of the market by adding to it other activities such as street festivals, farmers' markets and continental markets at certain times of the year.

3.3.39 **Sheerness and the Evening Economy.**

3.3.40 The evening economy is one of the town's undeveloped areas of activity that has potential for growth. There are seven clubs and amusements, seven cafés, fourteen fast-food outlets, one nightclub and eleven public houses & restaurants in Sheerness Town Centre. Seven of the public houses have public entertainment licences that allow them to hold entertainment events up to midnight. This compares favourably with Sittingbourne, which has only four venues with similar licences.

3.3.41 There appears to be very weak links between the thousands of visitors that come to the eastern side of the island every year and the Town's evening economy. It is not exactly known why such weak links exist but anecdotal evidence suggests that the following are contributing factors.

- Poor transport links between the eastern side of the Island and Sheerness Town Centre.
- Evening economy facilities and the safety of individuals and property need to improve and relevant licensing laws need to allow for longer opening hours.
- A recent trend has been for holiday parks to make concerted efforts to keep holidaymakers on site by providing good evening entertainment and well-equipped clubhouses. This coupled with lack of alternate transport other than taxis is proving effective.

3.3.42 At the time of writing this report, there were two separate business development proposals, which if pursued, could boost the Town's evening economy. The first proposal is led by Thomas Holland and would include opening a Casino above his existing amusement arcade situated by the Beachfields Park. The second led by a consortium of five Island businessmen would seek to convert the former Victoria Club building into a Casino and a Restaurant. The Victoria Club has stood redundant for many years and if this proposal is successful, it could bring the slowly decaying and neglected building at the edge of the prime retail premises into good use



Holland Amusement Park – site for the proposed casino

3.3.43 In several respects the two proposals are very similar and at this stage it is not known if Sheerness could support two Casinos or how local people will react to any proposals advancing. Casino gambling is a mobile activity and those that do gamble generally are not averse to travelling. In a perverse way these proposals could bring visitors onto the island and create jobs.

3.3.44 **Living Above Shops.**

3.3.45 The Government's policy recommendation with regards to living above shops in town centres was set out in Planning and Policy Guidance 3 (PPG3). Part of this policy recommendation addressed the need to utilise the unused space above retail outlets as a means of increasing the number of people living in town centres. PPG3 also took into consideration that this recommendation could encourage town centres' vibrancy by encouraging outlets to remain open beyond core retail hours.

3.3.46 Swale Borough Council has pursued a policy to encourage shop owners to make space above their shops available for residential use. However, this policy has had limited success across the key towns in the Borough. Currently there are only 20 flats in such circumstances within Sheerness' core retail area. There are three main reasons for the relatively low numbers of dwellings above shops in Sheerness.

- Most of the properties on the High Street are relatively old and the access to the flats above the shops is through the shop. In order for such buildings to conform to building regulations, these properties would have to have a separate access by way of building a stairwell behind the shop. The cost of making such modifications proved to be high relative to the expected rents.
- Some retailers use the space above their shops for storage whilst others such as retail banks, on principle, will not allow any form of dwelling above their premises for security reasons. Irrespective of incentives available, some retailers would still be reluctant to convert the space above their shops into habitable dwellings.
- A bad experience by one retailer has muddied the waters in Sheerness. Having evicted a small group for non-payment of rent, the people involved absconded in the night. As a parting gift all the taps were left running which wrecked the shop and stock on the ground floor. This bad experience plus a lack of 'quality tenants' has made retailers very wary of this option.

3.3.47 Although the policy to encourage dwellings above the shops has had limited success in the past, this could change in the future. The Isle of Sheppey has experienced unprecedented appreciation in property values. Property prices and rents they can command have significantly increased over recent years. It is therefore possible that some projects considered costly to pursue in the past could now be more profitable to undertake.

3.3.48 **Car Parking.**

3.3.49 Besides Tesco's car park, practically all authorised public car parks in Sheerness are owned and managed by Swale Borough Council.

3.3.50 The Town Centre has eight major car parks, which between them provide over 600 car parking spaces. However, like many other towns, the demand for car parking spaces, especially around the core shopping areas, is exceeding the available car spaces. To make matters worse, the number of car parking spaces available around the Town Centre has diminished in recent years. For example, since Sheerness Market was moved from Bridge Road to Rose Street Car Park, about 90 car spaces become inaccessible to cars every Tuesday and Saturday. The loss of these 90 spaces often results in overflows to other popular car parks and traffic queuing around Trinity Place or Cross Street is a regular occurrence.

3.3.51 A number of shoppers have resorted to parking around the Water Tower area either to avoid paying car parking charges or because they are unable to find a parking space. The Water Tower building is a rather unsightly redundant building that possibly harbours some vermin. The tens of disorganised and randomly parked cars in its concourse add much towards diminishing the area's character.

Car Parks Spaces In Sheerness				
	Car Spaces	Disables Spaces	Motor Cycle Bay	Bicycle Bay
Bridge Road	46	-	-	-
Beach Street	80	2	1	4
Beachfields	80	2	-	12
Cross Street	80	5	2	5
Rose Street	161	7	-	5
Delemark Road	21	-	-	-
Trinity Place	58	4	-	1
Trinity Road	65	1	2	-
Parking Bays on High Street	30	-	-	-

Source – Swale Borough Council

3.3.52 The Town Centre Manager is keen to improve car parking in Sheerness and he has been exploring ways to convert the area surrounding the Water Tower into a managed car park. Some negotiations between Swale Borough Council and Parker Estates (the owners) have already taken place. A fully costed plan that is acceptable all parties involved has yet to be produced.

3.3.53 If the above deal was to be successful, it could potentially open the way for the High Street to be closed to all traffic on Saturdays (as in Sittingbourne) since the 30 car spaces that would be lost on the High Street would be compensated by 50 at the Water Tower.

3.3.54 There is a growing trend for supermarkets to charge non-customers who use their car parks. Sainsbury's in Sittingbourne recently started charging such drivers. Whilst Tesco's car park in Sheerness is still available for non-customers, the store's continued goodwill cannot be guaranteed.

3.3.55 **Redundant Buildings.**

3.3.56 The Town of Sheerness and the area around it has some the Borough's highest profile redundant buildings. Some of these buildings have been empty for many years and are unable to attract the interest of developers. These buildings include:

3.3.57 **The Water Tower.** This is a three-stored dilapidated building situated between Trinity Road and the High Street. Having been vacant and neglected for many years, it is now is a home to pigeons and rats and occasionally hosts drug users and the odd cat, which come to feast on the scores of residing pigeons. The Water Tower and the adjacent former Allday premises (also empty), belong to Parker Estates, a London based property developer.



The Water Tower

Over the years there have been a number of people and organisations that have shown interest in rehabilitating the Water Tower and bringing it back into use but no concrete action has materialised.



The Dockyard Church – in need of restoration

3.3.58 **The Dockyard Church.** This was purchased in 1999 by a London investor for the storage of ethnic art but unfortunately during repairs to the roof a fire broke out which has gutted the building although the external walls remain standing. It later transpired that the building was not adequately insured and consequently the owner never received any indemnity payout. The building has remained derelict since then and is in need of massive repairs.

To date, no developer has come forward with workable proposals that could eventually bring it back into use.

3.3.59 **The former Victoria Club.** This building is situated at the edge of the town's core retail area. The building has practically no car parking space or the capacity that can be converted into a car park, and huge arrears of maintenance. These costs plus identifying a sustainable end use in Sheerness to justify the capital investment required, keep this building on the derelict list. However, at the time of writing this report in February 2003 there were press articles in the local news claiming that that a consortium of



Former Victoria Club Building

local businessmen who were intending to convert the Victorian Club into a Casino and a restaurant had bought this building.

3.4.1 Evaluation of Sheerness Town Centre.

3.4.2 Due to its relatively small size and limited offer, a significant proportion of the Island’s purchasing power seeps to shopping destinations on the mainland. It is commonly believed that the towns of Sittingbourne, Maidstone and Chatham are the main destinations. However, beyond these three towns, there are other important shopping destinations used by Island residents. These include Blue Water shopping centre in Dartford, Lakeside Retail Park in Essex, Canterbury, Ashford (in particular Macarthur Glen factory outlet centre), London and destinations across the English Channel in France. All these destinations offer a wide shopping choice than Sheerness.

3.4.3 By all aggregate measures, Sheerness’ retail provision falls below its immediate competitors, both in terms of the size of the town and its retail composition (see table below for comparative evaluation). However this must be seen in context with the Island population of 36,000 (1991). Marks & Spencer for example requires a catchment area of 250,000 for a new store and Sheppey, with its back to the sea and poor road links could never effectively compete for investment at this level.

Comparative evaluation of Sheerness and its immediate competitor						
	Retail Floor space (SQ Metres).					
	Convenience Store	Non Bulky Goods	Bulky Goods	Empty Shops	Total	Floorspace per 10,00 population
Sheerness	2,803	13,912	2,537	2,163	21,415	612
Sittingbourne	9,756	19,090	14,283	2,884	46,013	822
Maidstone	15,737	73,690	17,168	18,326	124,921	899

3.4.4 Contrary to all expectations, and despite a smaller population Sheerness has approximately the same number of shops as Sittingbourne Town. However, there are remarkable differences in the average size of the business units in each town. On aggregate, retail units in Sittingbourne tend to be larger than those in Sheerness. Bigger retail units are often national chains and are able to offer customers more choice than small units.

3.4.5 Due to the relatively small size of retail units in Sheerness the number of square metres available to every 1,000 people of the Island’s population is 612sqm. Comparatively Sittingbourne offers 822 square metres of retail Floorspace for every 1000 people of its population (34% more than Sheerness). In short, shoppers get more choice in Sittingbourne than in Sheerness.

Comparative Average Retail Unit Size	
Town	Average Retail Unit Size (SQ Metres)
Sheerness	231
Faversham	291
Sittingbourne	381
Maidstone	473
Whole of Kent	305

- 3.4.6 Closely related to the average size of the retail unit is the economy of scale. The larger retail units are likely to be viable and also offer shoppers more choice than smaller shops. Comparatively, Sheerness is at a disadvantage as it has on average smaller retail units compared with its competitors.
- 3.4.7 The Isle of Sheppey has an important demographic factor, unique locally to it. During the summer months, the population of the Island almost doubles (to about 70,000 people) due to the large number of holidaymakers that come onto the Island. However, information gathered from local retailers in the process of the Healthcheck suggests their sales only increase in the range of twenty and thirty percent. This percentage figure seems to suggest the summer visitors have a low propensity to spend cash in Sheerness and since most of them come to the Island by car, it is thought most bring with them the necessary provisions for a self catering holiday.
- 3.4.8 Data provided by Kent County Council appears to suggest that a significant number of Islanders depend on non-Island retail destinations for their shopping. For example, 77% of the bulk goods, which includes such items as white goods and domestic electrical goods, consumed on the Island are provided by non-Island shopping destinations.

Distribution of Shopping Provision			
	Provided By:-		
Types of Goods	<u>Sheerness Town</u>	<u>Off-Island Retail Centres</u>	<u>Total</u>
Bulky Goods	23%	77%	100%
Convenience Goods	77.5	22.50%	100%
Town Centre Goods	26	74%	100%

- 3.4.9 **Retail Mix Gaps.**
- 3.4.10 Although Sheerness has a number of small independently owned DIY stores, it is thought by many that the whole Island could benefit from the presence of a large multiple DIY shop in, or on the edge of, the town. The Town Centre Manager has proactively been trying to entice such a store into the area but without success.
- 3.4.11 The town also lacks a decent bookshop although the library does excellent business. The last real bookshop closed around 20 years ago and although a number of discount bookshops have briefly appeared they have not survived. A limited range of discount books remains available through the local newsagents but the range is very limited.
- 3.4.12 **Lack of Expansion Space.**
- 3.4.13 At present, Sheerness has a stagnant Town Centre with very little room for expansion, unlike Sittingbourne which has seen sizable retail expansion at Sittingbourne Retail Park and new proposals coming forward for major redevelopment to provide additional floorspace. Since the completion of the Tesco Superstore Store premises in 1994, there have not been any brand new premises added to the town's core retail area. The proposed Aldi store will be the first major development in nearly 10 years.

- 3.4.14 Besides the Water Tower and other 'hard to develop' redundant buildings, it is difficult to foresee where such land will be found if demand for retail development were to improve in the future.
- 3.4.15 **The Town's Image.**
- 3.4.16 Sheerness appears to emit a less positive image than nearby towns. A bulk of the people who were interviewed in the process of this Healthcheck often expressed a low opinion about the town's characteristic and its retail composition.
- 3.4.17 There are a number of factors that contribute to the town's negative image. For instance, Sheerness is the only local town that has a municipal waste site in its High Street although this was positioned deliberately in view of the relatively low car ownership in Sheerness. Yet the town's bus station, the railway station and taxi pick-up point are all adjacent to that site. The railway station is run down and has no public toilets. Often the station's platform and the rail tracks are covered in accumulated and rather unsightly litter. There are a number of shops, especially in the southern part of the High Street with poorly presented shop fronts. The main gateways into the town are often littered with unpleasant objects and the gateways themselves could be visually improved. Clearly there are a number of issues that need addressing.
- 3.4.18 Sheerness is an integral part of the local economy and the factors that have contributed to its stagnation also have conspired to keep the whole Island underdeveloped. The isolation, poor road infrastructure, lack of effective demand and the propensity for income to seep out of the Island are all contributing factors. Pacifying these in the process will help to encourage the Town's long-term viability. However, it is noteworthy that that real force for changing the Town Centre will only gain momentum after improvements in the local economy have taken place.
- 3.4.19 The development and the growth of Sheerness depend very much on how the Island's economy develops in the future. Like the growth trend currently being experienced by Sittingbourne, improvements in Sheerness will happen when the local industrial base and disposable incomes have increased sufficiently to warrant them. At present it is anticipated that the Island's economic fortunes will improve when the Second Swale Crossing is completed. Should this happen, the town will need to reposition itself and broaden its appeal. Most important, Sheerness will need to increase its share of local spending and seek to retain more of the local spending power that currently leaks to other retail destinations.
- 3.5.1 **Summary of replies received from individuals relating to Sheppey's Economy.**
- 3.5.2 In addition to the replies received from the Economy Steering Group, a number of people were interviewed to ascertain their view on all aspects of Sheppey's economy. The following table summarises some of the questions and the answers received from the Economy Steering Group and members of public.

Questions relating to industrial property needs.

Questions	Evaluation of answers received
Can you identify where key industrial developments have taken place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people could not readily identify recently developed industrial or commercial sites on the Isle of Sheppey. • The Economy Steering Group members were able to point out that some developments have taken place at Tesco Store, Port of Sheerness, McDonald's at Beachfields, and Aldi Store was due to open in Sheerness in 2003.
Are there sufficient industrial premises to meet the needs of new small businesses on the Island?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people were unable to answer this question. However, the Economy Steering Group took the assumption that there are still empty units and while there are empty units there must be enough space. • The quality of empty units on the Island is not known.
Do you know of any redundant farm buildings that have been converted to alternative industrial uses on the Island?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people interviewed could not answer this question. However some members of the Economy Steering Group were aware of local farmers that have or were in the process of converting redundant farm buildings to alternative uses.
Do you anticipate commercial rental to increase after the completion of the Second Crossing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people felt that rental values on the Island were generally lower. Data provided by The Economic Development Unit shows that average cost for industrial premises on the Island is about, £4.50 per sq ft compared with £6.50 per sq ft in Sittingbourne. It was felt that poor road links to the mainland was the main reason why industrial rentals were lower on the Island. • Nearly everyone interviewed believed that landlords would expect rentals to increase after the new bridge in 2007.

Questions relating to anticipated industrial expansion

Questions	Evaluation of answers received
Are there any planned expansions of existing commercial and industrial firms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people could not answer this question. The few who were able to indicated that Abbott Laboratories had secured land for further development. Potentially Regis Furniture, Bond Shop Fitters along with Sheerness Docks were candidates likely to expand.
What assistance is available to assist incoming firms and the expansion of local firms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apart from some members of the Economy Steering Group, nearly all people interviewed were unaware of the Government's Enterprise Grants operating in Swale. However when asked where would they go to find out information on business grants, a high proportion of people cited the Council.

Questions relating to Earnings

Question	Evaluation of answers received																																	
Can you guess/estimate the local average household earning per month?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No one was able to give a fixed figure for average earning. However everyone believed that the Island's income per capita was significantly lower compared with the rest of Swale and the whole of Kent. Although some people also felt that people in Minster were relatively well off and had more disposable income compared with the rest of Islanders. 																																	
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Ward Level Household Income On Sheppey</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Ward</th> <th>Income P/A</th> <th>Rank out of 365 Council Wards in Kent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Sheerness East</td> <td>16,918</td> <td>342</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sheerness West</td> <td>16,942</td> <td>341</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Queenborough And Halfway</td> <td>20,312</td> <td>282</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eastern</td> <td>21,281</td> <td>263</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sheppey Central</td> <td>22,892</td> <td>231</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Minster Cliffs</td> <td>24,141</td> <td>203</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sheppey's average annual income is</td> <td>£20,414</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kent's average annual income is</td> <td>£22,035</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>UK's average annual income is</td> <td>£23,103</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Ward Level Household Income On Sheppey			Ward	Income P/A	Rank out of 365 Council Wards in Kent	Sheerness East	16,918	342	Sheerness West	16,942	341	Queenborough And Halfway	20,312	282	Eastern	21,281	263	Sheppey Central	22,892	231	Minster Cliffs	24,141	203	Sheppey's average annual income is	£20,414		Kent's average annual income is	£22,035		UK's average annual income is	£23,103	
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Questions relating to Are local unemployment rates

Questions	Evaluation of Answers Received												
How do the Island's unemployment rates compared with Swale's, the South East and the national's averages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost everyone interviewed thought that the unemployment rate on the Island was significantly higher compared with Sittingbourne or Kent. It appears the experience of early 1990s (when the Island unemployment rate reached 17%) is still fresh in people's minds and the recent fall in unemployment has yet register in their mind. Unemployment rate has now reduced. But despite the reduction the local rate persistently continues to run above Swale, Kent's and the national average rates. 												
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What proportions of the unemployed have been unemployed for over two years?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although no specific figures were given, a significant number of people thought that long-term unemployment was higher on the island. In practice however, the number of people in a long-term employment has fallen. This is because there has been a more coordinated approach to addressing it on the Island. Comparatively Sittingbourne is now exhibiting 'stubborn' long-term unemployment, which is proving difficult to shift. 												

Questions relating to travel to work.

Question	Evaluation of answers received								
<p>What proportion of local people commute off the island to work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong-held view among local people that to access good employment, one has to be prepared to travel off the island. This view has some validity especially when one compares the Island's industrial composition with that of Kent or London. • Data provided by Kent County Council indicates that over half of the island's economically active population travel elsewhere for employment. <table border="1" data-bbox="794 645 1437 846"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="794 645 1437 705">Sheppey's Economically Active Population & Work Areas 1991 Census</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="794 705 1166 739">Total Economically Active</td> <td data-bbox="1166 705 1437 739">16,091</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="794 739 1166 772">Total who live and work on Sheppey</td> <td data-bbox="1166 739 1437 772">7,980 (49.59%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="794 772 1166 806">Total who work elsewhere</td> <td data-bbox="1166 772 1437 806">8,111 (50.41%)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sheppey's Economically Active Population & Work Areas 1991 Census		Total Economically Active	16,091	Total who live and work on Sheppey	7,980 (49.59%)	Total who work elsewhere	8,111 (50.41%)
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Questions relating to Composition of the economy.

Questions	Evaluation of answers received
<p>Is the local economy particularly dependent on specific industry sectors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside the Economy Steering Group, most people thought that the docks along with Abbott Laboratories were the dominant employers on the island. • In practice, the three prisons are the largest employers on the island yet very few people were aware of this.
<p>Are the expanding sectors paying above the average local wage rates?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Economy Steering Group thought that young people's aspirations were increasing and some were no longer prepared to take low-paid jobs. Despite the unemployment rate of above 4% some employers claim they are having difficulty to recruit suitable labour. • A high proportion of those interviewed thought that the new jobs created on the island didn't pay above the local average wage rate.
<p>What are the weaknesses in the local economy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost everyone thought the absence of the Second Swale Crossing was major weakness that was constraining the local economy from growing. • Some people cited a new weakness emerging within Sheppey's economy. It is widely thought that the number of people in full-time work who are unable to afford a basic start-up home is increasing.

Questions relating to anticipated industrial expansion

Questions	Evaluation of answers received
Has the town centre has become a less attractive location for retail development in the past four years?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most people thought the town had improved in the past four years. They cited new 'the one way system' on the High Street, the Pedestrian Prioritising Scheme, the Millennium Way, and the new McDonald's Restaurant etc, as some of the contributing factors. The annual town centre survey also supports this view.• Despite the improvements, most people thought Sheerness didn't offer enough choice or high quality goods and it was necessary travel on the mainland to get to these.• Members of the Economy Steering Group felt that entrances to the town needed improving to reciprocate the improvements taking place in the town.
How many charity shops are in Sheerness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apart from some members of the Economy Steering Group, almost everyone interviewed thought Sheerness wasn't different to other towns as far as charity shops were concerned. To them charity shops were good for the High Street.
Are there any major retailers that have moved out of the Sheerness? If yes what reasons have they cited for moving out?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only two retailers are known to have moved out of the town. They are Granada TV rentals and Threshers Wine Merchants. It is not known why they moved out.
Are rents increasing or stable compared with rents over time and with town of same size in the area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• According to the Town Centre Manager, rents appear to have been static in the previous years, and comparative lower compared with Sittingbourne or Faversham.• It is anticipated that retail rentals will increase especially after the construction of the Second Swale Crossing.• "Hopefully higher rents will bring quality retailers".

4.1.1 **Sheppey's Community.**

4.1.2 At the 1991 census the Isle of Sheppey had a population of nearly 36,000 spread over eight key settlements. The 2001 census figures are not yet available but this figure is likely to have increased with the additional house building that has taken place. These key settlements are mainly spread along the north and west coastline. The southern side of the Island is mainly agricultural land, of which significant parts are designated as wildlife and nature reserves. These reserves are home to some of the rarest bird species in the UK.

4.1.3 The Island is divided into seven council wards and 5 Parish Councils. The council ward of Warden and Leysdown is relatively new and was created only two years ago (2001). Being a relatively new ward, there is limited data pertaining to it and as a result it has been omitted in this study. Instead, pre 2001 council ward structure will be used.

	1991	2000*	% Change
Eastern	5,100	5,100	0.85%
Minster Cliffs	6,500	7,100	9.19%
Queenborough and Halfway	7,600	7,600	0.06%
Sheerness East	5,300	5,200	-2.77%
Sheerness West	6,700	6,200	7.93%
Sheppey Central	4,600	4,800	4.04%
Sheppey's Total Population	35,800	36,000	0.5%

* Figures for year 2000 are estimates. At that time of writing ward-based statistics for 2001 population census had yet to be released.

4.1.4 **Myths, Perceptions & Realities.**

4.1.5 It appears there are some people, many non-Islanders who hold unhealthy and very often-misguided perceptions of Sheppey. Sheppey is perceived (correctly) as a deprived area and as such is looked down upon by those living on the mainland. Paradoxically it is not unknown for Islanders to spend their whole lives on the Island only venturing off for essential services such as hospital care.

4.1.6 The media has in part helped to feed and perpetuate the negative image of the Island. For example it has been mooted that recently a television reporter covering an event on the Island remarked, "...if Kent is the garden of England then the Isle of Sheppey must be its compost heap". Apparently, there are no shortages of similar negative remarks in the news archive library.

4.1.7 Regrettably when negative reporting prevails for most of the time, eventually people begin to believe it and possibly some may start doubting or even resenting the special and unique attributes that gives the Island its character. Unfortunately, this type of resentment has taken the extreme form on Sheppey. To illustrate this negativity Sheppey has a malevolent web site called Sheppey.scum which is devoted to an anti Sheppey stance.

4.1.8 The Island’s negative perception has also, in part, been reinforced by the methods through which funding from central government and other agencies is allocated. Cash is often targeted to the most deprived communities and it appears local organisations spend much effort selling the ‘deprived and isolated’ image of Sheppey to funding agencies rather than promoting the positive aspects of the Island to inward investors. Whilst there is much documented evidence of deprivation, the Isle of Sheppey also possesses several positive attributes, yet these are masked, and very often lost in the promotion generated by organisations keen to attract external funding.



Harty Ferry – one of the Islands best kept secrets

4.1.9 **Measures of Deprivation on the Isle of Sheppey.**

4.1.10 The Government publishes indices of deprivation for all council wards in England. The current indices cover the following domains of deprivation;

- Income employment.
- Health deprivation and disability.
- Education,
- Skills and training.
- Housing.
- Geographical access to services.

4.1.11 Each of the domains above is comprised of several relevant data sets gathered from each ward. For example the domain for Income Employment is made up of several income related data, which collectively show the degree of income deprivation for each ward. Deprivation domains can be used to show how each council ward on the Island compares with other wards in England. (Please see Annex 1 for further details)

Rank of Multiple Deprivation			
<u>Sheppey Council Wards</u>	<u>Rank out of 25 Wards in Swale</u>	<u>Rank out of 331 Wards In Kent</u>	<u>Rank out of 8,414 Wards In England</u>
Sheerness West	1	6	585
Eastern	2	16	846
Sheerness East	3	24	1139
Queenborough and Halfway	7	73	2376
Sheppey Central	9	86	2845
Minster Cliffs	11	110	3296

4.1.12 In all measures of deprivation Sheppey generally registers as having below average conditions. Even the relatively prosperous areas of the Island such

as Minster Cliffs or Sheppey Central scored below Kent's median of 166 in many instances.

4.1.13 The most important measure of deprivation is the 'Rank of Multiple Deprivation.' This is an aggregate score comprised from the individual scores from all domains (go Annex two for details). The 20% most deprived wards in England under this measure are usually regarded as priority for funding by agencies. Four of Sheppey's council wards fall within this threshold and as a result they have been able to attract streams of funding from several external agencies.

4.1.14 Swale Regeneration Partnership, (the Local Strategic Partnership), considers Queenborough and Halfway, Sheerness East, Sheerness West and Eastern wards as priority wards for social and economic regeneration. However, in Queenborough and Halfway ward, high levels of deprivation are concentrated in Rushenden.

Some of the Known External Funding Sheppey has Received Since 1995				
Distributing Body	Recipient	Award Date	Award Amount	Project Title/Description
Sure Start	Sure Start Sheerness	2002+	6,000,000	Programme focusing on 0-4yrs children.
SRB Round 2	Various Community Projects	1995+	3,000,000	Dozens of projects funded
Various	Sheerness Children & Families Centre	2003+	2,000,000	A centre of excellence in childcare provision
SRB Round 5	Various education projects	2000+	1,900,000	School based capital works.
NOF	Healthy Living Centre	2002	1,000,000	Capital works have just been completed January 2003.
NOF	Sheppey Matters	2001	976,454	Establishment of a Healthy Living Centre.
NOF	Village Halls in Eastern Ward	2001	260,000	UK-online Centres
N.L.C.B	Leysdown Village Hall	2000	144,308	Capital costs of rebuilding the main hall.
N.L.C.B	Sheppey Community Against Drugs Ltd.	2000	116,969	Extend activities.
Countryside Agency	SBC	2002	69,000	Healthcheck Initiative
N.L.C.B	Minster College	2000	109,088	Out of school hours learning.
N.L.C.B	Homestart (Sittingbourne and Sheppey	2000	51,893	Revenue costs.
N.L.C.B	Sheerness Youth Club & Activity Centre	2000	48,940	Provides facilities for young people.
N.L.C.B	Swale Foyers Limited	1995	42,694	Minibus.
Arts Council	Isle of Sheppey Community Play	2002	27,600	Isle of Sheppey Community Play.
N.L.C.B	Swale Furniture Project	1995	26,129	To run the project efficiently
Arts Council	Kent County Council	2000	26,000	Art gallery and performance space
Arts Council	Low-fi	2002	24,500	Regional Arts Lottery Programme (RALP)
N.L.C.B	Canterbury Kidney Patients Association	1996	23,500	Holiday for patients receiving kidney dialysis.
Miscellaneous Awards	17awards each worth £20,000 or less.		77,218	
Total External Funding			15,924,293	

4.1.15 Income Deprivation.

4.1.16 The level of income deprivation is much determined by peoples' disposable incomes. The level of disposable incomes is important as it directly affects peoples' lifestyles, the goods and services they can afford and their standards of living.

- 4.1.17 Evidence gathered in the process of the Healthcheck suggests that the level of disposable income among local people is relatively low in relation to the rest of Swale, Kent and the southeast region.
- 4.1.18 The process to increasing local disposable incomes can be extremely lengthy. It involves implementing relevant economic and social policies, and the process can take many years to show effect. For example, it takes many years to break a cycle in households with an inter-generation culture of benefit dependency. This process may involve many agencies working with parents and aspiring the young to develop higher life expectations than their parents etc.
- 4.1.19 **House Prices.**
- 4.1.20 Closely related to the level disposable income is the issue of house affordability. Historically, property prices on the Island have always been 25-30% lower compared with those on the mainline. This market condition may have served the Island population well since those working locally and earning modest incomes could afford to buy a house. The main historical reason for the lower house prices has undoubtedly been accessibility and since the improvements to the A249 and announcement of the second crossing works, Sheppey is now catching up.
- 4.1.21 In addition the number of people priced out of the housing market in the southeast is increasing. Anecdotal evidence received from local estate agents suggests that between 30% and 50% of the houses purchased in the recent years could be accounted to non-Islanders (i.e. people moving onto the Island).
- 4.1.22 It is thought some of the house buyers are those 'cashing in' on price disparities between Sheppey and high price areas such as London. It is said a number of Londoners have sold their ex-council flats and bought spacious detached houses in some of the most sought after areas of the Island.
- 4.1.23 The Island's new popularity with house buyers is fuelling house prices and to some extent helping to 'crowd out' from the housing market local people who earn relatively low wages.
- 4.1.24 The following tables give a general breakdown of property price appreciation on the Island between January - March 2000 and July - September 2002.

House prices appreciation in ME12 4 postcode				
	Average house price for			
	Detached	Semi detached	Terraced	Flat/Maisonette
Jan-Mar 2000	£102,604	£56,388	£45,055	-
July-Sept 2002	£155,284	£77,850	£81,920	-
% Price change	51%	38%	81%	-

House prices appreciation in ME12 3 postcode				
	Average house price for:			
	Detached	Semi detached	Terraced	Flat/Maisonette
Jan-Mar 2000	£110,443	£78,093	£62,590	-
July-Sept 2002	£154,474	£102,061	£91,712	£46,666
% Price change	39%	30%	33%	-

House prices appreciation in ME12 2 postcode				
	Average price for:			
	Detached	Semi detached	Terraced	Flat/Maisonette
Jan-Mar 2000	£90,129	£64,492	£42,737	n/a
July – Sept 2002	£156,712	£100,072	£71,857	£34,875
% Price change	73%	55%	68%	n/a

House prices appreciation in ME12 1 postcode				
	Average price for:			
	Detached	Semi-Detached	Terraced	Flat/Maisonette
Jan-Mar 2000	-	£57,599	£45,606	£24,915
July – Sept 2002	-	£77,799	£68,272	-
% Price change	-	35%	49%	-

House prices appreciation in ME11 5 postcode				
	Average price for:			
	Detached	Semi detached	Terraced	Flat/Maisonette
Jan-Mar 2000	-	£52,427	£42,166	-
July – Sept 2002	-	£87,198	£56,152	-
% Price change	-	66%	33%	-

4.1.25 As part of the Healthcheck a 'housing affordability survey' was undertaken to estimate the number of people living and working on the Island who could afford a basic starter home on the strength of their earnings alone. At the time of the survey (December 2002) the cost of the average basic starter home was estimated to be around £85,000. For such a price, most High Street banks would be prepared to provide a 95% mortgage provided the borrower earned at least £21,533 per year.

4.1.26 The survey revealed over 72% of the people who live and work on the Island are unable to afford a basic starter family home on the strength of their wages alone.

House Affordability Survey Results	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Sheppey companies (numbering 675*) employing less than 50 employees were sent Housing Affordability Survey Questionnaires. 130 Questionnaires completed and returned. 	
Number of people employed by the 130 responding companies	3,013
Number of employees that live OFF the Island	847 (28%)
Number of employees that live ON the Island	2,184 (72%)
Number of employees that live on the Island and paid £18,352+ P.A.	602 (28%)
Number of employees that live on the Island and earn less £18,352 P.A.	1,582 (72%)
Number of companies paying ALL employees less than £18,352 P.A.	55
Number of companies paying between one and ten employees £18,352+ P.A.	62
No of companies paying at least ten employees £18,352+ P.A.	13
(Over 95% of all Sheppey companies employ less than 50 employees)	

- 4.1.27 Swale Borough Council has undertaken a detailed survey of local housing needs. That survey (Swale Housing Needs Survey 2001) acknowledged the problem of affordability and the need for more affordable housing, especially for young adults, as a means of reducing concealment (i.e. people who could not afford to be in the housing market and are living within another household), a common feature of the housing market on the Isle of Sheppey. Data provided by Swale Borough Council shows that between 1999 and 2002, it received 2,082 cases of homelessness. Only a small minority of these cases were from the Island and it is thought that strong family ties/bonds among local people helps to keep homelessness cases on the Island low.

Number of homelessness on the Isle of Sheppey.					
	<u>1999</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>Total</u>
Total homelessness cases received	574	462	482	564	2,082
Homeless placed in temporary Accommodation	72	176	172	164	584
Homeless from Sheppey placed in temporary accommodation	14	49	66	49	178
Sheppey homeless as a % of those in temporary accommodation.	19%	28%	38%	30%	30%

- 4.1.28 The main causes of homelessness are parental or landlord evictions. Of those some are fortunate to be placed in temporary accommodation. The average stay in bed and breakfast is six weeks before being moved to more suitable temporary accommodation. Where re-housing is approved, the current waiting time for a permanent property is nine months.
- 4.1.29 Whilst there is clear indication for the need of affordable housing, there are many that oppose new housing development on the Island. They feel that developments such as Thistle Hill and Kingsborough Manor have only served to draw more people on to the Island, rather than serving local need. Many Islanders are also concerned that essential services such as extra school places, doctors' surgeries or play areas have not correspondingly increased.
- 4.1.30 There is concern among local people that after the completion of the second Swale Crossing, more housing developments will likely follow and this will change the character of the Island for the worse. As one individual commented in the interview stages "One housing association in particular has 'dumped' some very difficult families on the Island."
- 4.1.31 **Need to Improve Healthcare Facilities.**
- 4.1.32 Besides the Second Crossing of the Swale, the need to improve healthcare provision has been the major concern among local people. The nearest major hospital with a maternity and a 24-hour accident and emergency unit is in Medway some 12 miles distant. Access to this hospital or other hospital services currently not available on the Island can be very difficult especially if one depends on public transport.
- 4.1.33 In 2002 the new Sheppey Community Hospital was opened in Minster at a cost of £13m. This hospital replaced the old Victorian hospital at Wards Hill in Minster.

4.1.34 Besides the services that migrated from Wards Hill, the following additional services were provided in the new hospital;

- Ophthalmic clinic
- Retinal clinic
- Psychiatric clinic
- Dentist
- The number of beds was increased from 39 to 48, some of which the hospital uses for rehabilitation.



The Islands New Community Hospital completed in 2002

- The opening hours for the minor injury unit were increased from 9:00am to 9:00pm every day.

4.1.35 Critics of the new hospital claim that besides the addition of extra minor services, this new facility is a carbon copy of the old one and Islanders still have to travel to Medway to access services such as maternity, cardiac, major emergencies etc, and the new hospital closes after 9:00pm in any event.

4.1.36 Given the poor transport links to the Medway Hospital, one can readily empathise with the local people who insist on more hospital services to be provided locally. However, it is generally thought that Sheppey's population, being relatively small, doesn't warrant a district general hospital.

4.1.37 **The Health of the Islanders.**

4.1.38 In the process of the Healthcheck interviews held with local people, a significant number expressed concern about what they regarded as a cluster of asthma and respiratory related incidents on the Island. To them the main suspect is the air borne pollutants present in the air. Although at present there is no conclusive scientific evidence indicating that Sheppey suffers from abnormal rates of respiratory diseases.

4.1.39 Over the past 15 or so years, Swale Borough Council has carried out various short and long term surveys of air and noise pollution. These surveys include those for ambient concentrations of heavy metals in the air around the steel works in Sheerness and numerous noise surveys in the same area. Overall, the results of air pollution have indicated that whilst the steel works does make a contribution to ambient concentrations of metals and total suspended particulate matter, no relevant air quality health guidelines have been exceeded.

4.1.40 A health study on behalf of West Kent Health Authority (Swann 1998), found above average levels of heart and lung disease on the Isle of Sheppey based on hospital admissions. However, there was insufficient information and no evidence to conclude that air quality played any significance in the results of the study.

4.1.41 A very limited research project carried out by a student of the University of Greenwich during 1999 on a subject entitled ' The distribution of particulate

matter on the Isle of Sheppey, in relation to a steel plant' drew no new conclusions over any previous survey work.

- 4.1.42 Data provided by West Kent Health Authority seems to suggest that overall Sheppey's hospital admission for asthma related condition is not much out of the ordinary. However, a cluster of admissions around Sheerness West stands well above the expected average.

EMERGENCY ADMISSIONS - ASTHMA RELATED CONDITIONS (1 ST APRIL - 31 ST MARCH 2002)				
Electoral Ward	Number of admissions	Number of patients	Resident population	Rate/1000 pop
Sheerness West*	15	14	6198	2.42
Kemsley	5	5	3997	1.25
Milton Regis	7	7	6200	1.13
West Downs	3	3	2796	1.07
Teynham and Lynsted	6	5	5599	1.07
Murston	7	7	6799	1.03
Eastern*	5	5	5501	0.91
Grove	6	6	7198	0.83
Roman	6	6	7202	0.83
Newington	2	1	2497	0.80
Sheppey Central*	3	3	4502	0.67
Minster Cliffs*	3	3	6802	0.44
Queenborough and Halfway*	3	3	7401	0.41
Borden	1	1	2500	0.40
Woodstock	3	3	8102	0.37
Swale PCT Total	75	72	89586	0.84
*Isle of Sheppey Electoral Wards	29	28	35603	0.81

- 4.1.43 It is important to point out that the above data only covers the severe cases of asthma requiring hospital admission. In practice a majority of asthma cases would not need hospital treatment and would be dealt by local GPs. What is not known at the moment is whether there is abnormally high numbers of asthma sufferers being treated by the GP. The Healthcheck Initiative will seek further expert information to determine whether a study covering this area is needed.

- 4.1.44 Analysis of data provided by the ambulance service indicates respiratory related incident constitutes the largest percentage of emergency call-outs for ambulances on the whole of Sheppey.

999 Calls on From Sheppey June 1999 – December 2002

Call-Out For:	Numbers	% Rate	Call-Out For:	Numbers	% Rate
Breathing Problems	1,633	13.2%	Back Pain	115	0.9%
Falls/Back Injuries	1,501	12.1%	Not Known	97	0.8%
Chest Pain	1,389	11.2%	Burns/Explosion	90	0.7%

Traumatic Injuries, Specific	723	5.8%	Headache	90	0.7%
Haemorrhage/Lacerations	713	5.8%	Allergies/Rash/Etc	50	0.4%
Abdominal Pain/Problems	682	5.5%	Choking	48	0.4%
Sick Person (Spec Diagnosis)	659	5.3%	Heart Problems	45	0.4%
Unconscious/Passing Out	637	5.2%	Eye/Problems/Injuries	40	0.3%
Unknown Problem (Collapse)	631	5.1%	Animal Bites/Attacks	29	0.2%
Overdose/Ingestion/Poisoning	573	4.6%	Stab/Gunshot Wound	28	0.2%
Convulsions/Fitting	465	3.8%	Carbon-mono. Inhalation.	14	0.1%
Assault/Rape	441	3.6%	Drowning/Diving Accident	12	0.1%
Pregnancy/Childbirth/Miscarriage	436	3.5%	Ind. Machinery Accidents	6	0.0%
Traffic Accidents (Rta)	379	3.1%	Heat/Cold Exposure	5	0.0%
Diabetic Problems	255	2.1%	Cardiac General	2	0.0%
Cardiac/Respiratory Arrest	215	1.7%	Electrocution	1	0.0%
Stroke /(Cva)	211	1.7%	Kidney / Renal	1	0.0%
Psychiatric/Suicide Attempt	145	1.2%			
Total Number of Ambulance Call-out 12,361					

4.1.45 The Healthy Living Centre.

4.1.46 Due to higher levels of multiple deprivation, the Isle of Sheppey tends to suffer from higher levels of poverty related health problems. Peoples' living conditions, lifestyles and unhealthy eating habits are thought to contribute to medical conditions such as heart disease, cancers etc. Certainly there appears to be a thriving market for fast food considering the number of cafes and takeaways that the town can support.

4.1.47 A new Healthy Living Centre In Sheerness opened early in 2003, and this unit aims to instil healthy living values and lifestyles among local people, in particular the young and the elderly. It is expected that as this initiative continues to develop, new roles will be added to its core activities. Already the Centre Manager has provided a list of new services, which he would like to provide in the future. A target objective is to work with the Healthcheck Manager to help identify which new services could be worked up into full-blown projects.



Sheppey's Healthy Living Centre completed in 2003

4.1.48 One important off-shot from the Healthy Living Centre is the concept of the 'Green Gym' which is operated by the British Trust of Conservation Volunteers (BTCV). About 15 people per week use the Green Gym and the Trust has New Opportunity Funding to run this service until 2004. Thereafter, the service will be entirely run by local volunteers. These volunteers will need help and support from time to time to ensure they service continues to operate.

- 4.1.49 It is estimated that about 44% of all children in Sheerness East and 59% in Sheerness West wards live in income deprived households. The two wards have high rates of fertility, lone parent households and teenage pregnancy. The cumulative effect of these and other factors often serve as barriers to employment and result in many becoming caught within a 'benefit trap'. Closely related to the benefit trap is the so-called 'benefits dependency culture' where people choose to withdraw completely from seeking employment.
- 4.1.50 The reasons for the existence of a benefit dependency culture are fairly obvious. It is estimated that a lone parent with a six month child, in social housing and claiming all benefit entitlements would need to earn a minimum of £18,000 per annum to be better off working. However, data from a survey of local employers indicated that there are few employees on the Island paid wages at this or a higher level.
- 4.1.51 The Government is aware of this problem and for that purpose, and unlike the New Deal for young people, the New Deal for Lone Parents lacks the compulsion element to move lone parents from welfare and into work.
- 4.1.52 Although statistically no evidence was available, it is commonly perceived that there is a propensity for benefit dependency to become an inter-generational problem. As one interviewee commented "Their mother didn't need work and they (teenage pregnant girls) don't see why they should work when they can get all they want on the Social's..... getting pregnant to them opens a window of opportunities"
- 4.1.53 **Sure Start.**
- 4.1.54 There are a number of organisations, including Sure Start, who are keen to break the cycle of dependency by collaborating with parents-to-be, parents and their children to ensure that young people are given a better opportunity in life than they have previously been afforded.
- 4.1.55 Sure Start is in its second year of operation and nearly 400 parents are involved in its activities that include:
- Breast feeding peer support training
 - Childcare training.
 - First aid training.
 - Driving lessons for parents.
 - Aqua natal classes.
 - Baby massage.
 - Music and movement group.
 - Story time and library activities.
- 4.1.56 Sure Start is still evolving and further services and activities, which include a Children and Families Centre, have yet to be added. It is anticipated that this will also house a doctors' surgery, neighbourhood nursery and a family welfare centre along with Sure Start services. It is anticipated the construction cost will be around £2M. The role the Healthcheck initiative in

this process will be determined by the needs identified by the leading bodies.

4.1.57 **Youth Activities.**

4.1.58 The 'job culture' among the Island's youth has been a focus for the local media over recent months. It appears a small hardcore of unruly young people are terrorising neighbourhoods and leaving behind a trail of destruction. Whilst some estates have been dubbed as "little Beirut" and labelled as 'no-go areas' by the media, the job problem is not limited to those most deprived areas. Even more prosperous parts of the Island appear affected to some degree.

4.1.59 The effects of yobbery and delinquency can be devastating for communities and result in the degeneration of an area. For example, shop fronts, which are often the target for vandals often become encased in unsightly boards or steel shutters. Vulnerable members of the community become frightened to venture out for fear of being attacked. At worst some people may choose to leave the estate or asked to be re-housed.

4.1.60 Whilst the job culture is inexcusable, it is also true that there are limited activities or facilities for young people. A number of young people were interviewed and the following are extracts from what was said;

- "...you (the interviewer) are from the Council, why can't you build us a roller-skate?" fourteen years old from Sheerness and a regular roller skater outside Strode Baptist Church.
- "... my dad drops me at the train station and comes and picks me up..... but sometimes he drives me there." Twelve year old boy from Leysdown describing his experiences of getting to Gillingham ice skating ring.
- "...it is boring (the Island).... there is no indoor place to go." A teenage girl from Minster.
- "... there should be a multiplex cinema on the Island because there is nowhere (on the Island) to watch a film" a teenage boy from Minster.

4.1.61 Some older people interviewed thought that the Island had several open spaces for young people to enjoy. However, in the same process young peoples tastes were more sophisticated and required a wider variety than older generations would appear to comprehend.

4.1.62 With its back facing the sea, Sheppey lacks a critical mass of population to warrant a multiplex cinema, or many other facilities that young people wish to see provided locally. However, despite its small population, it is possible the Island could establish some form of community owned facilities, such as a cinema in the future. The Healthcheck initiative is committed to investigating these possibilities.

4.1.63 **Misuse of Drugs Culture.**

4.1.64 In January 2003, Sheppey was a subject of media attention following a successful police raid that resulted in several drug dealers being arrested

and subsequently jailed. However, information provided by Sheerness Addiction Centre suggests that the Island does not suffer from higher rates of drug prevalence compared with other areas. Contributory to this has been the co-ordinated approach towards educating young people about the perils of drug abuse.

4.1.65 In the past two years, Sheerness Addiction Centre has handled approximately 300 drug case referrals. It currently provides addiction assessment, prescribes detoxification, one-to-one counselling, needle exchange, harm minimisation, acupuncture etc, to its service users.

4.1.66 Sheppey Community Against Drugs (SCAD) is another local organisation that is working with schools and young people to promote drug education. According to the SCAD's manager, there is a perpetual struggle to find the necessary funds to keep the organisation running. He added "if we were to have a wish list, there could only be one item on it and that is a need for some established regular funding. As we currently stand, we will be forced to reduce our activity by about 50% if no further funds are confirmed by June".

4.1.67 **Leisure facilities.**

4.1.68 In addition to providing excellent walking opportunities for local people, the coastline offers a variety of water based recreation activities such as sailing, canoeing and wind surfing to those who can afford them.

4.1.69 It is widely thought that the Island's water recreation activities are underdeveloped and not fully exploited. It is also widely believed that a majority of people that participate in water sports are not from the Island. Links between water sports users and the local economy are thought to be weak, as these visitors tend to be self-sufficient.



Sheerness Beach – one of Sheppey's under utilised resources

4.1.70 Besides the need to strengthen the Island's water recreation activities per se, there are other elementary issues that need resolving. For example;

- there is a by-law that forbids the launch of any water crafts between Garrison Point (located in the Port Of Sheerness) and Minster Cliffs to protect the shipping lanes.
- Swale Borough Council has a by-law that stipulates that water craft with speeds above eight nautical miles per hour cannot operate around the beaches. Under normal running conditions most jet skis exceed this speed limit.
- Queenborough Lines, the moats that protect Sheerness offer enormous possibilities for safe water borne activities.

4.1.71 Jet skis are a major safety problem. It is illegal for them to launch from any of the slips but many do whilst others come over from launching points in the Thames. Apart from the Kingsferry Bridge, where authorised jet skiing can take place, the activity across the Island is unregulated. Young people below the age of 16 years have been seen operating such watercraft from Barton Point and it is thought it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously injured or killed in an accident. This problem will get worse as the Kingsferry Bridge launching point will be lost when work starts on the new crossing.



Bartons Point

4.1.72 One of the areas on the Island with the potential for developing a water sports facility is Bartons Point. This site has access to the inland waterways and is adjacent to the seafront. The site has been a subject of a study sponsored by Swale Borough Council and it was thought that Minster College wanted to develop it into a water sports facility that could attract users from further a field. Swale Borough Council, which owns site is keen to develop this site in line with environmental guidelines, which include maintaining the open aspect of the area.

4.1.73 For indoor sports recreation, a single leisure centre situated in Sheerness services the Island. Sheppey Leisure Centre is comprised of;

- an ageing swimming pool that is in need of modernising;
- adjacent and detached from the swimming pool is a modern gymnasium, with the recently completed Healthy Living Centre attached to it.



Sheerness's ageing swimming pool

4.1.74 The Island has also a private gym, which is situated at the Shurland Hotel in Eastchurch Village. It is estimated this gym has about 250 members of which about 70% are male. Whilst no social breakdown of the gym's membership was provided, the majority of its

members are in employment and also car owners. In several respects it is an exclusive gym.

- 4.1.75 The cost of joining either of the gyms above or participating in leisure centre activities can be prohibitive for those with low-incomes and benefits recipients. Although Sheppey Leisure Centre offers reduced fees for people on benefits, people are excluded from enjoying the fitness and leisure activities because of the cost.
- 4.1.76 It is also thought that poor transport links with the eastern side of the Island has an effect on people's ability to access the leisure centre services. For most evenings, Eastchurch, Leysdown and Warden Bay are inaccessible by public transport.
- 4.1.77 **Financial Exclusion.**
- 4.1.78 Anecdotal evidence gathered from a variety of sources suggests that the Isle of Sheppey suffers from high rates of financial exclusion. There are hundreds of provident societies customers and it is known that unlicensed money lenders operate in the area.
- 4.1.79 It also appears the use of banking by Islanders is relatively low compared with the rest of Swale. For example, Harpers, the operator of leisure centres in Sheerness and Sittingbourne indicated that of all members that pay by direct debit, 16% use the Sheppey gym whilst remaining 84% use the gym in Sittingbourne. Although Harpers actively encourages its members to pay by direct debit, it appears the Islanders prefer to pay by cash. The leisure centre manager suspects that lack of access to a bank account is a contributing factor.
- 4.1.80 During the interviews, a local bank branch manager, who previously had managed a branch in Sittingbourne, said that "... the nature of customers on the Island is noticeably different to Sittingbourne."
- 4.1.81 The Council and a number of other local organisations are keen to address some of the issues relating to financial exclusion. As a result a tripartite partnership scheme between Swale Borough Council, Amicus Group (a social housing provider) and Kent Reliance Building Society is being developed to provide banking access, low cost loans and to encourage financial prudence to those who are unable to access mainstream bank services. This scheme is still in its infancy and has yet to fully evolve. The Healthcheck Manager is committed to nurturing this scheme and extending it to cover all of the Island residents.
- 4.1.82 **Diversity of Needs.**
- 4.1.83 The common fallacy held is to assume that Sheppey's communities are homogenous. The Healthcheck process has found that each community has unique characteristics, aspirations and needs, which help to distinguish it from the neighbouring areas. For example, the Healthcheck process found that Queenborough, which is situated in a relatively deprived ward, had a high degree of civic pride among its residents. The people there were more organised and also took pride in the town's history. They were keen to engage and work with outside organisations to improve their area.

- 4.1.84 Each Island community has its own project proposals and aspirations it wishes to pursue. A majority of these projects are ad hoc and need cash. For example;
- the Healthcheck Manager has been approached to help Leysdown Village Hall. Funding is needed to purchase the disused building next door and to modify it to meet the needs of the village hall's needs; The Healthcheck Manager is likely to play a secretariat role to ensure the village hall is able to access the necessary funding.
 - Leysdown has an active Traders Association, which has identified a number of local improvements it would like to undertake. Some of these projects can be realised with the right resources being available. Each project needs to be assessed to determine how the Healthcheck process can help;
 - The Old School at Queenborough. This is a Victorian two-storey building with arrears of maintenance, which Queenborough Town Council recently acquired. Funding in excess of £350,000 to bring back the building into community use is being sought.
 - Eastchurch village would like help to improve its play area for the young and to find the necessary funding to ensure the UK-online computer suite in its village hall continues to operate after the initial funding from NOF runs out in 2005. These are examples of the many project ideas received by the Healthcheck Manager
- 4.1.85 Some requests for assistance have come from individuals or organisations, which are unable to achieve their aims and aspirations due to a lack of manpower or information. For example two churches have approached the Healthcheck Manager for assistance. One needs help to access extra funds to expand its community activities whilst the other wants the input to develop a community centre in Sheerness.
- 4.1.86 Another example of projects that have come forward is the "Sheppey Needs Broadband" campaign. The local MP along with the local newspaper approached the Healthcheck Manager to help mobilise local support and to put pressure on BT to install a broadband internet connection on the Island. Unfortunately, British Telecommunications will not lay fibre optic cables (necessary for broadband connection) unless it receives expressions of interest from a number of potential subscribers on the Island. Similar project proposals like those above are anticipated in the future and each one will be appraised as to how they fit with the Healthcheck initiative.
- 4.2.1 **Evaluation of Sheppey's Communities.**
- 4.2.2 **Communities at a crossroads.**
- 4.2.3 Sheppey's communities are at a crossroads. The past, which is characterised with social apathy and lack of opportunities, is beginning to be replaced with higher expectations. The driving force behind this change is the promise of the long awaited second crossing of the Swale.
- 4.2.4 Although the construction of the bridge will not commence until 2004, anticipation is already affecting the Island in several ways For example, local estate agents and local people all agree that the number of people moving

onto the Island has noticeably increased. People who owned houses on the Island before the second crossing was announced, have seen their properties values significantly increase, adding to the local 'wealth effect'. One local estate agent commented "People feel more wealthier" and he added " ...this is reflected in the way they are looking after their houses"

4.2.5 The expectation is that the new crossing will change the Island for the better. The assumption is that investors will seek to take advantage of the relatively low cost of land, industrial premises and wages on the Island, resulting in new job creation.

4.2.6 **New Bridge – a curse or blessing?**

4.2.7 Some people old enough to remember when the Kingsferry Bridge (the bridge that currently links Sheppey to the mainland) opened in early 1960s recall that some vital services that had been available from the Island until then were lost. They claim that the then new bridge increased mobility and choice and some Islanders, especially those with cars, opted to use services on the mainland. Unable to compete, and with reduced demand, some services previously available on the Island were eventually withdrawn.

4.2.8 The current bridge has also helped to shield Sheppey from excessive new development. Swale Borough Council has allowed limited industrial or housing development on the Island in order to minimise further pressure on the current road infrastructure. This to some extent has helped to maintain and preserve the character of the Island.



Second Swale Crossing – a curse or blessing

4.2.9 To ease the housing shortage, in 2001 Central Government announced that it would allow the construction 200,000 new homes in the southeast. All residents are likely to be affected by this allocation and it is possible Sheppey will bear some of the allocation when the new bridge is completed. This is the downside of the new bridge.

4.2.10 **Single Issue Campaigners.**

4.2.11 Compared with surrounding areas, the Island communities appeared to exhibit high levels of social need, many of which were 'community specific' (i.e. affecting a particular locality on the Island).

4.2.12 For each 'community specific' need, every village often had highly motivated protagonists, keen to enlist the support of anyone that can help them to resolve the issue. This type of co-operation and a strong philanthropic spirit was evident throughout the entire Island. The down side of this approach is that it gave a sense of disparity as each group or individual appeared keen

only to promote its 'single issue'. At times, even where it was logical to collaborate with others, some people had difficulty in thinking this through and instead favoured the 'go it alone' and 'keep all the glory' approach.

4.2.13 What the Island seems to lack are visionary proactive individuals or a group that is able to perceive and steer the development of the Island as a single entity. Some people felt that the Island has received enormous external funding compared with the rest of Swale but the cash has been veneered thinly across many projects and as a result there are few social projects that stand out.

4.2.14 The Sheppey Area Committee is perhaps the only platform that represents the interest of the whole Island. However, this is a political platform and local politicians are very often busy people with full-time jobs to pursue. There is also a noticeable trend of local people choosing to disenfranchise from the political process. It appears many people are instead choosing to actively support single-issue campaigns. This along with growing voters' apathy could partly account for the decline in numbers of people choosing to vote in local elections. Of all councillors elected in May 2002 none received more than 33% of the registered local voters. One long-serving Councillor remarked, "I used to get a lot more votes than these days."

4.2.15 To help facilitate the sharing of information among the organisations collectively involved in the economic and social regeneration of Sheppey, the Healthcheck Manager intends to establish an Economic and Social Regeneration Forum. All Sheppey Councillors will be invited to attend as community leaders and to offer their expertise.

4.3.1 Summary of Replies Received from Individuals Relating to the Island's Social and Community Life.

4.3.2 In addition to the replies received from the Community and Social Steering Group, a number of people were interviewed to ascertain their views and perceptions of the Island. The following table summarises some of the questions and the answers received from the Community and Social Steering Group and the members of public.

Question Relating to Cultural Facilities.	
Questions	Evaluation of Answers Received
Does the Island have an adequate range of cultural facilities e.g. theatre, cinema, art gallery, museum or library?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people felt the facilities were inadequate as one respondent commented "There are some very large gaps, however I don't think that we have enough people to warrant anything too big, if you have a car these things are in easy access if not then I would imagine its very difficult." • Another interviewee expressed "We desperately need a cinema, we don't need those big ones.... just something that would suit the Island, I feel there is a demand for this. As for art, some of the churches and libraries display things and varying times of the year, but I do feel we need more"
Are there regular events that have the potential to draw the whole community together (e.g. fairs, festivals, carnivals, Christmas lights etc)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of current events such as the Sheppey Show and the Pirates could potentially be developed to attract visitors to the Island. • "Yes there are regular events but it's trying to get the people involved, it's the same people who do these things year after year. Having said

that we have some great events on the Island and there certainly is the potential to develop these events.

Question Relating to Sports Facilities.

Questions	Evaluation of Answers Received
Are local sports and leisure facilities on the Island in good condition?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people felt the sports facilities were in good condition however there were a minority who felt they have not received the up-keep they require. • On average about 750 people in winter months use Sheppey Leisure Centre. In the Summer months, when the children are off school and along with the influx of visitors on the Island, that average raises to 1500 people. • The Leisure Centre has experienced many incidents of vandalism. Its Manager mentioned "We have big problems with vandalism ...in the last six months the buildings have been broken into between twenty-five and thirty times"
Are there adequate opportunities to pursue outdoor sporting activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people felt that there were sufficient opportunities for people to undertake outdoor activities such as horse riding, walking or enjoying water sports. However, they were concerned with the quality of the facilities. • "I would say the Island has its fair share, but I would question whether the Island uses the existing facilities to the full potential".
Which activities attract people to the Island?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An amusing list of activities, which included the nudist beach in the eastern of the Island, were cited. • Most people thought that the bird reserves, fishing, yachting, wind surfing, jet skiing etc, attracted people to the Island. A number of people also felt that Sheppey was not maximising the economic benefits from these activities.

Question Relating to Public Health.

Questions	Evaluation of Answers Received
Do the ambulance, police and fire services meet their own response time targets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sub-group thought that these services met the response times in the majority of cases. However they were mindful as how the lifting of the Kingsferry Bridge affected the ambulance service. The following are extracts on the comments received. • "...if the ambulance is off the Island it does take longer to reach here...I have seen them racing to the Island when the bridge has just come down" • "There have been a lot of babies born on the A249" • "People may have lost lives because they could not get to the hospital in time"
Are the numbers of doctors and dentists meeting the appropriate standards (i.e. parking and access for the disabled)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are eight doctors surgeries spread across the Island. With the building of the Healthy Living Centre, which will also house a surgery, it is thought the GP's services are improving. • It was felt that some dentist were operating from converted houses.. It is not known whether these practices met all appropriate standards.

5.1.1 Access to the Island.

5.1.2 The Isle of Sheppey is separated from the mainland by a narrow stretch of water, known as the Swale. The Island's only link with the mainland is via the ageing Kingsferry Bridge, which was constructed in the early 1960s. Prior to that, access to the Island was via a single lane wooden bridge.

5.1.3 All road and rail traffic on and off the Island depends on this bridge. By design, it is a lifting bridge, which enables large watercraft to pass underneath it. At the time of its construction, car ownership was a preserve of the privileged few on the Island and priority was given to the maritime traffic without much



Instant traffic queues caused by the lifting of the bridge

thought about future growth of car ownership. In reality watercrafts using the river have public right of way and road traffic has to stop, allowing for the bridge to be lifted and ships to pass by. An Act of Parliament would be needed to change public rights of way from maritime traffic to road traffic.

5.1.4 Initially this bridge was designed to carry a maximum of 13,000 vehicles per day. Today, an average of 29,000 vehicles use it daily. On average the bridge is lifted about seven times everyday. During this process, all road traffic (including the emergency service vehicles), come to a standstill. A turn around cycle for lifting and lowering the bridge is around eight minutes, which interprets to a minimum of 20 minutes for those at the back of the instant traffic jam that is created. Some of the worst delays occur when the bridge jams in the up position, something it is doing more frequently as it ages. The result is a build-up of traffic queues stretching for miles in both directions and in severe cases it can take several hours before the traffic flow returns to normal.

5.1.5 Now an aged structure, the bridge is also subject to periodical maintenance and repairs. To minimise the disruption to the traffic flows, the repairs are often undertaken between the hours of midnight and early morning. During these times the bridge is usually about three feet into a lift and the Island is completely cut off. Hospital emergencies are carried from one side to the other across the part lifted bridge to an ambulance on the mainland side.

King Ferry Bridge Closures Between April and November 2002

Date	Hours	Hours closed for.
25 April 2002	00:30am to 5.30am	5 hrs
26 April 2002	00:30am to 5.30am	5 hrs
24 June 2002	00:30am to 5.30am	5 hrs
25 June 2002	00:30am to 5.30am	5 hrs
03 July 2002	00:30am to 5.30am	5 hrs
04 July 2002	00:30am to 5.30am	5 hrs
01 Sept 2002	00:30am to 4.30am	4 hrs
02 Sept 2002	00:30am to 4.30am	4 hrs
17 Sept 2002	00:30am to 4.30am	4 hrs
18 Sept 2002	00:30am to 4.30am	4 hrs
19 Sept 2002	00:30am to 4.30am	4 hrs
05 Nov 2002	00:01am to 5.00am	5 hrs
06 Nov 2002	00:01am to 5:00am	5 hrs

The Highway Agency has indicated that:-

- 2002 was not a representative year because there were lot of road resurfacing problems on the bridge
- A recent study revealed that in April 2002 the average number of lifts per day was five.
- The average lift cycle duration was between six and seven minutes.



The Island is inaccessible by road or rail during maintenance

5.1.6 The A249, which feeds from the M2 and the M20 motorways, forms the single point of entry to the Isle of Sheppey. In 1996 the section that links the Kingferry Bridge to the M2 was replaced by a new dual carriageway, having previously been a single lane trunk road, struggling to cope with the traffic it carried.

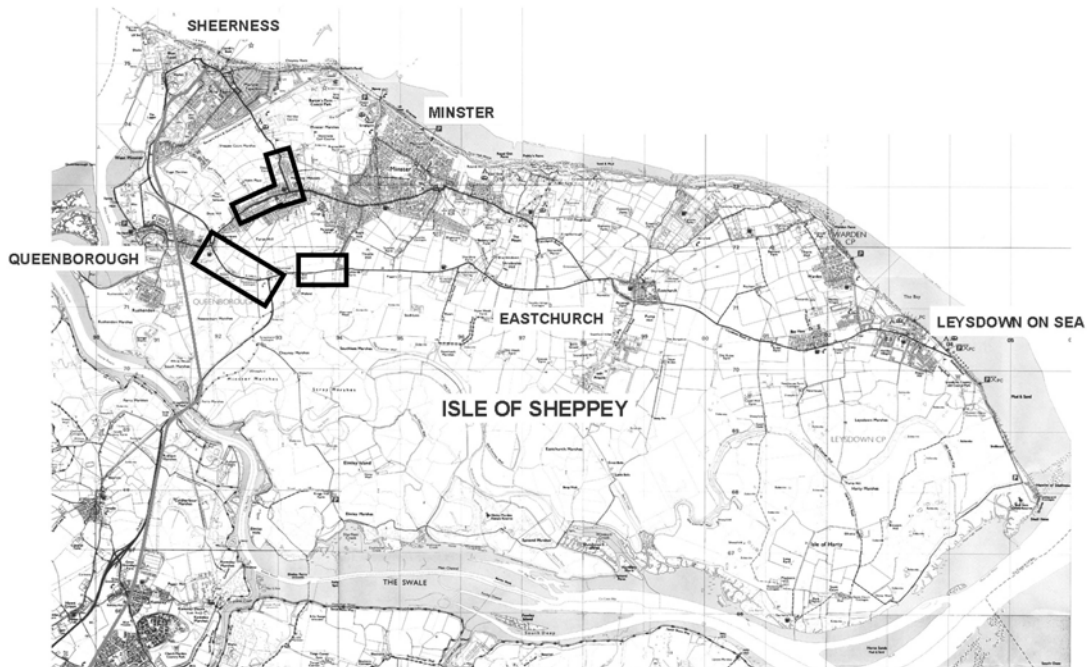
5.1.7 Local residents and the business community welcomed the provision of the new dual carriageway. Journey times between Sheppey and the motorway were significantly reduced. However, the failure to extend these improvements from the bridge onto the Island often results in traffic bottlenecks during peak time, as the carriageway narrows to a single lane.

5.1.8 Road access on the Island.

5.1.9 Besides the traffic delays caused by the lifting of the bridge and the narrowing of the A249 at the point of crossing, there are other hotspots within the Island's road network where traffic jams regularly occur. These include;

- the section on the B2231(the lower road) between the Cowstead Corner and the traffic lights at Barton Hill Drive;

- the section between Queenborough Corner roundabout and Cowstead Corner;
- the section on the A250 (Queenborough Road) between Queenborough Corner and Halfway. ;
- the stretch leading to the T junction where Barton Hill Drive meets Minster Road.



Traffic hotspots on the Island

5.1.10 It is estimated that during the summer months the population of the Island doubles in size. This is caused by the annual influx of visitors that commences around the Easter holidays when the 56 holiday parks on the Island open up. The build up continues throughout the summer months until the end of the school holidays in August/ September, when the numbers begin to recede as the autumn approaches. Despite the annual influx and the growth of car ownership among local people, there has been very little by way of road improvement on the Island. Those of note are;

- Construction of the village bypass in Eastchurch, completed in December 1989;
- Construction of the Millennium Way in Sheerness, completed in 2000;
- Completion of the pedestrian prioritising scheme in the High Street, Sheerness.

5.1.11 The Island has an excessive number of unmade roads. Most of these are in Minster and around some of the 'well-to-do' housing areas. Although Swale Borough Council is committed to developing these roads to adoptable standards, its efforts to undertake the works is subject to funding being available.

5.1.12 **Rushenden Link Road.**

5.1.13 For many years, the people of Queenborough and Rushenden have been campaigning for improved road access to the industrial estates that lay between these two residential communities. The campaign has centred on preventing the HGV traffic that has to pass through central, residential parts of Queenborough to access the industrial estates. Also residential traffic to Rushenden village has to pass through Queenborough.

5.1.14 The solution identified within the Swale Local Plan is a link road connecting Rushenden and the A249 via Neatscourt, an area allocated for employment development. The cost of the road is estimated to be around £5.68m. This sum would also include £1.2m for building a bridge over the railway line.

5.1.15 Provision of this scheme is subject to the completion of the A249 Iwade to Queenborough works, incorporating a second crossing of the Swale, and thus cannot be provided prior to this. It is also unlikely that development at Neatscourt, across which the road passes, to provide the main access, will be in a position to provide the Rushenden Link Road in its entirety, and in particular the crossing of the rail line. Without this, the value of the road would be greatly reduced by failing to address the issue, around which its inception was based.

5.1.16 **Transport Aesthetics.**

5.1.17 It is widely believed that the 'gateways' into towns can make a powerful and lasting impression upon visitors. As a result many aspiring communities across the country have spent millions of pounds improving the aesthetics of such gateways, in order to change the image and refine the character of their towns.

5.1.18 Through the processes of the Healthcheck, many people expressed the need to improve the gateways to the Island and the following are a few of the ideas that were suggested:

- "...if it [the Kingsferry Bridge] was flood-lit, it would be visible [at night] from many miles and would give Islanders the feel of coming home"
- *".... we have the opportunity to incorporate public arts into the new bridge"*
- *"...the roundabout could be used to promote the Island heritage"*
- *".... unsightly boards are the first thing you notice on the A249"*
- ".... not much to present to the visitors...it [Sheerness Railway Station] could do with a new coat of paint"
- *"....It is the only town with a refuse dump close to its train station"*

5.1.19 Other immediately obvious issues relating to the quality of the gateways to the Island include;

- the approach to Sheerness-on-Sea Railway station has buildings many people would find unsightly. The station is often littered with fast food rubbish;

- burnt out cars are often abandoned on the main roads. This often gives visitors an impression that the Island is ridden with car and other forms of crime;
- poor landscaping adjacent to the main roads on the Island. Flowerbeds, shrubs, grass verges, trees etc could be used to address this more effectively.



Sheerness Railway Station and the area around it need improving

5.1.20 Car Ownership.

5.1.21 Data from 1991 population census indicates that Sheppey has low levels of household car ownership when compared with the surrounding areas. Whilst it is possible the number of households with cars may have increased since 1991, it is thought that car ownership is still lower on the Island compared with the surrounding areas. For those without access to cars, the use of public transport or taxis remains the only viable option for travelling on and off the Island.

1991 Census Data. Household Without Cars

Wards	Numbers of Households	Household with no cars	% With no cars
Eastern	1,827	333	18.2%
Minster Cliffs	2,426	456	18.8%
Queenborough and Halfway	2,825	838	29.7%
Sheerness East	2,173	901	41.5%
Sheerness West	2,572	1296	50.4%
Sheppey Central	1,795	412	23.0%
Sheppey Total	13,618	4236	31.1%
Faversham Totals	11,758	3188	27.1%
Sittingbourne Totals	19,294	4691	24.3%

Data from 2001 Census has yet to be released.

5.1.22 Public Transport.

5.1.23 From the outset, it is worth noting that most people will always want more bus or train services. This is because public transport is seen through 'an egalitarian lens' and is regarded as a service, which should be readily available to the general public. Even people who hardly use public transport often prescribe to this view.

5.1.24 **Rail Transport** - Sheppey has two railway stations situated in Sheerness and Queenborough. It is estimated that around 18,000 people on the Island live within 2.5 miles of either station. On weekdays and Saturdays there are two train journeys every hour to Sittingbourne and one per hour on Sundays.

At Sittingbourne, passengers from Sheppey can connect with trains to London or other Kent destinations.

- 5.1.25 It is not known how many people depend on the Sheerness to Sittingbourne railway line. Data provided by Connex Southeast, the local train operator, shows that last year (April 2001 to April 2002) 192,000 tickets were sold for journeys between Sheerness and Sittingbourne. However, this figure does not represent the number of passengers or the number of journeys made. This is because the sale of an 'unlimited travel ticket' would count as a single ticket but could result in hundreds of train journeys over a year.
- 5.1.26 A survey of train users on the Swale line was undertaken in September 2002 to find out what improvements passengers wanted on the line. Over 40 passengers were asked to suggest action that would improve their train journeys. A number of suggestions were mentioned. Most Swale line users wanted clean trains and stations, improved security, integration between bus and railway services etc.
- 5.1.27 In 2002 Network Rail announced that it was intending to upgrade the Sheerness to Sittingbourne railway line. The improvements were due to commence in the summer of 2003 and would have included the instalment of new points to enable the line to handle increased train capacity. Due to budget reviews, Network Rail has put this scheme on hold until 2004.
- 5.1.28 **Bus Transport** - Arriva plc has a near monopoly of bus transportation on Sheppey. It operates a number of bus services across the Island and to other mainland destinations. Arriva also operates a number of 'periodical' bus services to nearby, major shopping destinations. A summary of these services is provided in the table below.

Periodical Shoppers Bus Services from Isle of Sheppey.			
Service No.	Destination	Date Available	Estimated Journey Time*
338	Chatham	Mondays only	4:40 hrs
337	Bluewater	First Saturday of the month	8:40 hrs
336	Maidstone	Tuesdays and Fridays	4:40 hrs

*Estimated journey time from Leysdown.

- 5.1.29 The company provides approximately eight bus journeys to Sittingbourne every working day. On Saturdays, the number of journeys is reduced to four and on Sundays the service does not operate.
- 5.1.30 On the Island, Arriva operates a three-route bus service. Collectively, these routes link Sheerness to all other key settlements, but the commercial constraints upon the operation of these services within rural areas creates difficulties for those dependant upon the bus and public transport more generally.
- 5.1.31 For example, from Leysdown, there are 15 bus journeys on school days. These journeys are spread to reflect morning and afternoon peak-time travelling hours. Between the peak-times, the service is reduced to one bus every hour. The last bus service from Sheerness to Leysdown departs at 5:55pm. After 6:40pm, all bus services from Leysdown cease.
- 5.1.32 Until last year (2002), Kent County Council (KCC) used to pay a transport subsidy to a local bus company to provide an evening service to Leysdown. However that contractual relationship broke down in November 2002 and

KCC had to re-tender the service. The resulting price quotes proved expensive and as a result that service was deleted. Arriva, who also tendered for that contract has indicated that to provide a three-journey evening service would cost in excess of £40,000 per year.

5.1.33 On Sundays during the winter months, there is a bus service every two hours from Leysdown. Similarly on Sundays, the train service to Sittingbourne is reduced to one per hour. A person visiting someone in Medway Hospital would need to change train at Sittingbourne, catch a London bound train to Chatham and then catch a bus to the hospital. It is easy to see how a simple visit to the hospital can consume almost a whole day for those who depend on public transport.

5.1.34 It is not exactly known how many people on the Island depend on bus transport. However, it is known that;

- there are 2,500 disabled persons and old age pensioners who hold bus passes;
- there are 1,100 students issued with bus passes. 1,000 of these are in ME12 postcode and the remaining 100 in ME11.

5.1.35 **Swale Unified Network (SUN)** - Swale Unified Network is a Swale-wide transport scheme aimed at people who are unable to access public transport. It is operated by Kent County Council and has the following elements: -

- **Car hire for the disabled** - this facility was introduced due to non-availability of a wheelchair accessible, flexible, car / bus service. Two MPVs with wheelchair access were placed in service with a local taxi operator. They operate as private hire vehicles under local taxi regulations, but offer a discounted rate of 15% to eligible members of the scheme.
- **Dial a ride service** – this service operates on the Island three days per week (not weekends) between the hours of 9:00am and 7:00pm. Essentially it is a registered bus service but with no fixed route. The scheme is open to Sheppey residents who either;
 - 1 live in a rural area with an address more than 500 metres from a regular bus route;
 - 2 or live in either a rural, or an urban, area and have some form of mobility impairment that makes travel by public transport difficult or impossible.

5.1.36 Membership for the scheme on the Island has been growing and in January 2003 Kent County Council increased its cover, from two days to three per week. An average 35 journeys per week are made using this service. Virtually all journeys are to Sheerness for shopping.

Swale Unified Network Dial-a-Ride Membership On Isle of Sheppey	
Eastchurch	3
Halfway	2
Leysdown	14
Minster	31
Queenborough	11

Rushenden	5
Sheerness	9
Warden Bay	13
Total Membership	88
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of members qualify on the criteria of 'mobility impairment' 	

5.1.37 **Cycle Routes and Footpaths.**

5.1.38 Sheppey is a relatively flat Island and its terrain along with beautiful countryside makes it an ideal place for cycling. Unfortunately there isn't much to encourage local people or visitors to switch from cars to using bicycles as a means of transport.

5.1.39 The Island is not covered by the National Cycle Route network, but instead has a patchy and incompleting Regional Cycle Route, which is supposed to run from Sheerness to Kingsferry Bridge and beyond.

5.1.40 One of the reasons for providing the Regional Cycle Route was to enable cyclists to travel on and off the Island safely. However, since sections of this route have yet to be built, cyclists currently using the A249 must contend with dangerous and fast flowing traffic.

5.1.41 Nearly all of the Island's major roads have no dedicated cycle paths. Some (like the B2231) can be considered inherently dangerous to cyclists because of the fast moving traffic they carry. Although the Local Development Plan points out the need to provide safer cycle routes, especially around schools, this policy has yet to materialise. Extending cycle routes around the Island needs to be considered as a means of promoting healthy and sustainable transport alternatives. Improved cycle routes also have the potential of generating benefits for the local tourism industry, by tapping into the growing market for cycling holidays.

5.1.42 Country Lanes, one of the UK companies that organises cycling holidays has experienced fast growth in the last few years. The company has informed us that a bulk of its clientele come from the USA. Their product appeals to middle-aged middle class social groups who want to experience the UK's countryside, and in the process build up their fitness levels.

5.1.43 Sheppey is endowed with beautiful countryside, nature reserves and wetlands, which support some of UK's rare animal and plant life. The Island has several footpaths that enable thousands of ramblers and nature lovers to enjoy the Island's natural attributes.

5.1.44 In the process of the Healthcheck interviews some people pointed out that unlike many other Islands, Sheppey does not have a recognised coastal footpath enabling people to walk around the Island. We were also informed that the Ramblers' Association used to organise walking excursions around the Island. However, organising logistical support for participants especially in places where proper footpaths don't exist proved hard and as a result the excursions ceased some years back.

5.2.1 **Evaluation of Sheppey's Transport System.**

5.2.2 Second Crossing Bridge

5.2.3 The absence of the Second Crossing along with the current poor road links with the mainland has largely been responsible for the lagged industrial development of the Island. The Government is now committed to providing the new crossing, as part of the A249 Iwade to Queenborough Improvements, with construction to commence in March 2004. For most people and businesses, the Second Swale Crossing can't come soon enough.

5.2.4 The promise of the Second Crossing alone is already acting as a social and economic catalyst, with many residents looking to the future with a newfound confidence. However, until the new bridge is completed, Island communities will continue to pay a premium in the form of delays and disruptions caused by the current bridge.

5.2.5 Bus Transport.

5.2.6 During the evening, demand for public transport on the Island falls to a level where some bus routes cannot operate without a subsidy being paid to the bus operator. According to Kent County Council, transport subsidy cannot be justified if few people use the service. It is on these grounds a subsidy for the evening bus to Leysdown was withdrawn last year.

5.2.7 For some, public transport is the only option for getting around, and this plays an important role in creating barriers for those seeking employment and wishing to access a whole range of services, including education, health, leisure facilities and shopping.

5.2.8 Information from Jobcentre Plus indicates that besides skills, lack of transport is the second major barrier preventing the unemployed from accessing work.

5.2.9 A survey of 59 people claiming unemployment benefit aged between 17yrs and 58yrs and living at the eastern end of the Isle of Sheppey was undertaken in January 2003. All claimants had no private transport and the vast majority also had no driving licences. The aim of the survey was to try to understand how transport affected their ability to work

5.2.10 Each unemployed individual was invited to complete a questionnaire during his or her fortnightly review with Jobcentreplus. 39 (66%) responses were received of which 2 were disregarded, as the answers to questions were contradictory. The remaining 37 were analysed with the results as follows:-

Survey of Job Seekers Claimant. Transport Needs.	
Questions	Answers
1. Do you feel it is harder for you to get a job because of where you live and lack of your own transport?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 35 (95%) replied yes.• 2 (5%) replied no.
2. Would you consider using a moped or power assisted bicycle to travel to work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24 (65%) replied yes.• 13 (35%) replied no.
3. Of the 24 who said they would be prepared to use a loaned moped.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All were prepared to travel to Sheerness or Queenborough for employment• 17 (71%) said they would also use a moped to travel to Sittingbourne.

- 5.2.11 There is a growing trend for employers to move away from traditional working practices. Some are opting for flexible working hours where employees are expected to work irregular shifts or late in the night. Such work patterns can serve as barrier to employment for those without private transport.
- 5.2.12 It is not known how public transport affects the education of young people on the Island. Across Kent some schools provide after-school activities. Could it be some pupils on the Island are unable to participate in such activities for lack of public transport in the evening?
- 5.2.13 The new Sheppey hospital provides an evening surgery for boys and girls who need sex advice. The surgery was deliberately established to run after school hours so that young people could access this vital service. A local representative of Swale Primary Care Trust with a remit of preventing teenage pregnancies on the Island mentioned that lack of public transport in the evening to the hospital was a concern.
- 5.2.14 **Sheppey's Wheels to Work Scheme.**
- 5.2.15 The Healthcheck initiative is in favour of establishing a Wheels to Work Scheme on Sheppey. This scheme will seek to help people who are unable to work because they lack private transport and are unable to depend on public transport to get to work.
- 5.2.16 Any unemployed person who can prove that she/he has a job or training offer and is unable to take it due to lack of transport will be loaned a moped for up to six months so that the transport barrier could be overcome.
- 5.2.17 An expression of interest to fund this scheme has been submitted to the Countryside Agency. An announcement is expected in the next four months. If successful, the project will seek to use Leader+ to match-fund the Countryside Agency monies. It is anticipated that the scheme will cover the whole Island.
- 5.2.18 **Sheerness to Sittingbourne Community Rail Partnership.**
- 5.2.19 Another transport scheme the Healthcheck Initiative is keen to support is the Sheerness to Sittingbourne Community Rail Partnership. This scheme will seek to improve train stations and the journey experience along the Swale line. Communities with rail stations will be encouraged to adapt them and to work with other agencies to improve their aesthetics, security, facilities etc.
- 5.2.20 Within this scheme, Sheerness train station, which has been given special status as the 'Gateway to a Market Town' will be allocated further resources. Funding for this scheme is currently being considered by the Countryside Agency and an announcement is expected in the next four months.
- 5.3.1 **Summary of Replies Received In the Interview Stage Relating to Transport.**
- 5.3.2 In the interview stages, members of the Transport Steering Group along with a number of local people gave their views and perceptions of the Island's transport facilities. The following table summarises some of the questions and the answers received.

Questions relating to transport provision.

Questions	Evaluation of Answers Received
Assess the ease of access to the main towns and villages from the main road network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone interviewed thought it was hard to get on to the Island.
What improvements are planned on the Island's road network (excluding the Second Crossing of the Swale)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although this information is readily available in the Local Plan, very few people were able to point out any planned road improvements on the Island. With regards to the Second Crossing scheme, not one respondent knew the date when construction will commence. Some people took the attitude of "I will believe it when I see it."
Identify how long it takes to travel from Sheerness to Sittingbourne, Maidstone or Ashford by public transport or whether it is possible at all?	<p>Members of the Steering Group felt that:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Sheerness to Maidstone journey took 1.5 hours by bus. There is no direct bus or train service to Ashford. A journey from Sheerness to Chatham took about 45 minutes by train during normal hours. There is a train service to Sittingbourne every 30 minutes during normal hours. A bus service is also available every two hours. Sheerness to Canterbury takes about 60 minutes and Sheerness to London takes about 90 minutes by train. <p>(Because there is no co-ordination between bus and rail transport on Sheppey, journeys starting or ending in Minster or the eastern side of the Island will take longer than the times indicated above).</p>

Question relating to Ease of movement.

Questions	Evaluation of Answers Received
Identify any traffic 'hot spots', and possible ways to resolve them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the Transport Steering Group felt that car parking bays on the High Street in Sheerness should be removed. Preference was towards a High Street free of all car traffic.
Identify roads and areas that need improving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most people named roads and areas where traffic queues regularly occurred as priority for improvement. Although the high volume of cars were responsible for these queues, no one suggested any measures to limiting their volume. "....on Sheppey the car is supreme" A comprehensive list of improvements came from Leysdown Traders Association. They were keen to pursue the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Bus Shelter improvements. Traffic calming measures on Shellness Road & seafront parking bays. Traffic Survey (incl. look into traffic warden issues) Improved tourism Signage. A pelican crossing in Leysdown. A 'Welcome Gateway' to the town with sculptural feature and plantings.

6.1.1 **Sheppey's Tourism Industry - Introduction.**

6.1.2 The Market Town Healthcheck initiative comes at a time of significant change for the tourism industry and presents opportunities for future tourism development and project initiatives for the Isle of Sheppey. The recent merger of the Southern and South East Tourist Boards to form 'Tourism South East' must be a focus of attention for all tourism stakeholders whether in the public, private or voluntary sectors. The focus will be on support for the industry at both strategic and local levels 'to ensure sustained and improved industry performance'. More importantly the definition of tourism is to be widened to include travel, tourism and leisure – all vital component parts to the Island's economic well-being. Critically additional funding will be made available by the Regional Development Agency (SEEDA) for tourism initiatives through the newly formed Tourism South East. The Borough Council, the tourism industry and in particular, the Isle of Sheppey, must now consider carefully the benefits that this new partnership has to offer and elect to be an active part of it. The aim of Tourism South East will be to improve the performance of the travel, tourism and leisure industry in the region. We need to be part of this change, playing our part in the action and embracing the many challenges ahead.

6.1.3 Sheppey's holiday industry developed at the turn of the 20th Century with a new and curious awareness of emerging British resorts, the benefits of fresh air and seawater bathing. Little has changed in the past 100 years as the product has developed and evolved to have mass appeal to generations of families.

6.1.4 It is now estimated that during the summer months the population of the Island doubles in size. This growth is caused by the annual influx of visitors, which begins when the 37 caravan parks open usually around Easter. This build up of semi-permanent residents continues throughout the summer months until the end of the school holidays in August/ September, when the numbers begin to recede as the autumn approaches. Most of the visitors to the Island stay in the plethora of these holiday parks across the Island.

6.2.1 **Island Visitor Attractions.**

6.2.2 In addition to its natural environment of coast, country and marshland, the Isle of Sheppey has a number of small-scale heritage attractions that attract and retain thousands of visitors every year. A diary of events with two growing festivals also forms part of the widespread tourism appeal.

6.2.3 **Natural Environment.**

6.2.4 To most people that live in north Kent and south of London, the Isle of Sheppey offers the first opportunity to enjoy traditional seaside holidays in one of its three main resorts – Leysdown, Minster and Sheerness. The Island's resorts hold a number of beach awards which increase the Island's popularity providing visitors with family friendly facilities and access to safe, clean bathing waters for swimming and other informal leisure and recreational pursuits.

6.2.5 The popularity of waterfronts for leisure and recreation is as popular today as it was at the turn of the 20th Century. With over 7,000 summer holiday units on the Isle of Sheppey, representing over 50% of the county's stock of this type of accommodation, it is not surprising that the Island remains a

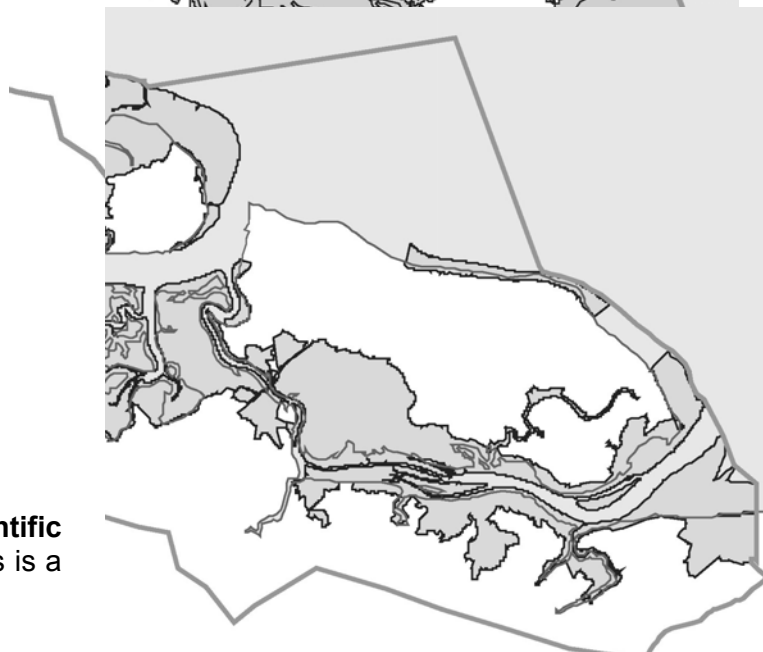
popular visitor destination. However, the product has changed very little in the past 60 years unlike visitor aspirations which provide businesses with a constant challenge in the changing holiday market as the appeal for traditional resorts in the UK diminishes in the face of cheaper overseas competition.

6.2.6 The recent organisational changes at the Borough Council must provide fresh impetus to the importance of the resorts sector in developing the Isle of Sheppey's economy. The Local Authority must take some responsibility for ensuring that the sustainable development of the Island's resorts continues to keep pace with growing visitor expectations and demand.

6.2.7 However, Sheppey's landscape, especially on the southern side of the Island, has special and distinct characteristics that appeal to a much wider audience. Unlike the surrounding countryside on the mainland, there are fewer trees, there is marshland and the terrain is relatively flat. Significant parts of its rural area hold special designations with little or no development permitted. The flat terrain and the land designations help to give its rural scenery a character of unspoilt open space where limited farming and wildlife co-exist harmoniously whilst simultaneously providing a stark contrast to the traditional resorts on the northern side of the Island.

6.2.8 Local farmers are encouraged and some are paid, to be custodians and stewards for managing and protecting the natural environment. Much of Sheppey falls under several land designations. These designations in part help to protect and preserve the natural and unique character of the Island. These designations include:-

6.2.9 **Special Protection Area -**
This is a European designation for wetland birds. The designation covers areas that are continuously or intermittently covered by tidal waters. The western coastal line that overlooks the Medway Estuary and much of the Swale coastline falls under this designation .



6.2.10 **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) -** This is a

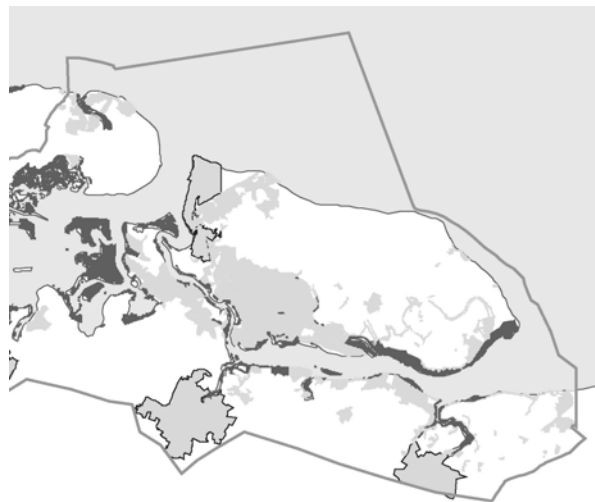
national designation, which is administered by English Nature. About seven percent of England and Wales's countryside is covered by this designation. On Sheppey SSSI include salt marsh, inter-tidal muds and grazing marsh which are all situated in the southern part of the Island. A strip of land on the North coast has also been designated for its geological importance, having preserved some of the country's most complete fossil records of plants, seeds and animals of tropical rain forests.

6.2.11 **Special Landscape Areas and Areas of Local Landscape Interest** - This is a County Council designation, which includes marshes around North Kent. Nearly all the land south of the Island falls under this designation.

6.2.12 **North Kent Marshes Environmentally Sensitive Area** – Sheppey was designated as part of NKM ESA in 1993. The designation covers 13,715 hectares and forms almost a continuous strip of coastal grazing marsh from Whitstable to Gravesend. The ESA is a voluntary scheme, which enables landowners and farmers to receive payments to maintain and, where possible enhance the distinctive landscape and the associated wildlife.

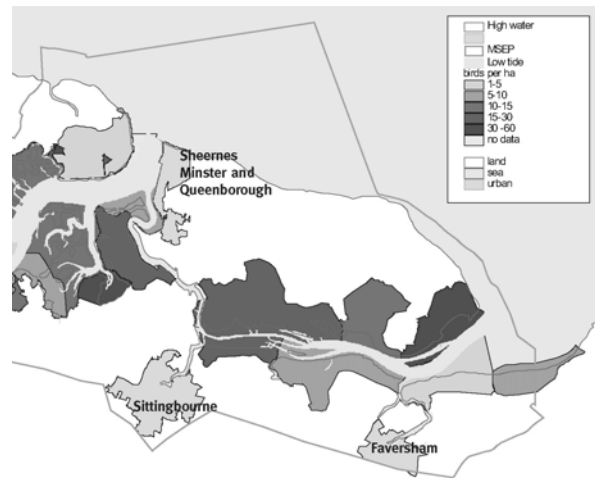


6.2.13 **Salt Marsh and Freshwater Grazing Marsh** – are formed on mudflats that have gained sufficient height to be colonised by specialist plants capable of surviving being frequently submerged in salt water. The plant roots and stems help bind the mud and surface vegetation, which slow down the flow of water and encourage more silt to be deposited. This process enables the salt marsh to develop and maintain its height. Grazing marshes are periodically flooded pastures or



meadows with drainage ditches containing brackish or fresh water. The majority of grazing marshes on the Island are semi-natural in origin. The habitat is the result of containment, drainage and grazing of salt marsh.

6.2.14 Sheppey wetlands also help to support large numbers of bird species. A local bird atlas to encourage greater interest and understanding of how bird distribution within the estuary varies spatially and seasonally for different species is available from Medway and Swale Estuary Partnership. Bird counts are undertaken at high tide when they tend to congregate in roosts. Between April 1994 and March 1999, fifty-nine species of bird were counted on the Medway and Swale Estuary. Wetland bird species can be separated into waders and wildfowl. Waders are shore birds with long legs and bills and pointed wings. Species have different diets based on the characteristic and shape of their bills. Wildfowl are aquatic birds, typically with webbed feet, short legs and long necks. Among the birds counted there are twenty-six different waders and thirty-three species of wildfowl.



6.2.15 **Built Heritage and Man-Made Features.**

6.2.16 The Island is dotted with buildings of historical and architectural interest, of which 107 are listed. The irony however is that some of the more important listed buildings are inaccessible to the general public or visitors. It appears the majority of people are oblivious to their existence let alone know their potential economic value.

6.2.17 At face value it appears that Sheppey is not capitalising on its built heritage. For example, within the Ports parameter there are several listed buildings most pertaining to the naval and maritime history of the Island. Due to the Port's health and safety policies together with customs issues the port remains secure and unable to give public access to some of the most significant buildings. Regrettably some are in poor state of repair and of little or no economic benefit to the port authority. Example of such buildings is the cathedral-sized Boat Store, which is grade-two listed and built entirely of cast iron cladding



Muswell Manor – home to UK's first flight

in 1854. This building is considered to have national architectural interest, as it is the UK's oldest iron clad building. It is now rusting away to waste. Another important built heritage site that is inaccessible and in a state of decay is the Shurland Hall in Eastchurch. Sir Thomas Cheney built this majestic building in the reign of Henry VIII. Like the dockyard buildings it remains under the watchful eye of English Heritage but is now entombed in scaffolding and cocooned in plastic sheets to stop the elements destroying it further.

6.2.18 It is estimated that there are 107 listed buildings on the Isle of Sheppey of which there is no promotional information about them in the public domain. As a result most are unnoticed by visitors and local people. It is as if these buildings are unvalued or considered as 'more trouble than they are worth'.

6.2.19 What is needed is a comprehensive Island heritage strategy, which would look at such buildings and many other neglected heritage sites, set priority for development and establish mechanisms to maximise the economic benefit from those sites.

A Sample Selection out of 107 Listed Buildings on the Isle of Sheppey.

Grade	Address	Description
II	Beach House, Beach Street Sheerness.	Early C19 2 story brick house.
II	Bell Farm Park House, Minster Sheerness.	Early C15 or C16 timber framed weatherboard hall house.
II	Windmill, The Broadway Sheerness.	Remains of windmill in grounds of Sea view Hotel.
II	Aviators' memorial, Eastchurch Sheerness.	Semi-circular wall in Portland stone to commemorates the first flight in 1909.
II	Clock Tower, Town Centre Sheerness.	Erected 1902 to commemorate coronation of King Edward VII.
II	Kingshill Farmhouse, Elmley Sheerness.	Name derived because James II was here whilst escaping from Sir Edward Hales.
II	Park Farmhouse, Harty Ferry Road Harty Sheerness	Probably C16 timber framed building refaced with black painted brick.
II	Church of St Thomas, Harty, Sheerness.	Isolated rag stone church with Norman remains.
I	The Abbey Gatehouse, Minster Sheerness.	C13 part of the remains of Minster Abbey.
A	The Abbey Church, Minster Sheerness.	Built between 1123-1136 by Archbishop Corbeuil.
II	Houses 51 to 65, High Street Queenborough.	A terrace of cottages dated 1701 (Evans row).
II	72 & 74 High Street Queenborough.	A pair dated on a plaster plaque over door 1706 with the initials ERE.
II	Church House, 76 High Street Queenborough.	Said to have belonged to Lady Hamilton. Circa 1700.
B	Holy Trinity, High Street Queenborough	Small church with west tower dating from C11.
II	Shurland Hall, Leysdown Road Eastchurch Sheerness.	Built by Sir Thomas Cheney during the reign of Henry VIII.
II	Navel Terrace, 1 to 8 Sheerness Docks Sheerness.	Built 1824-1827 terraces of navel houses.
II	Houses, 1-15Regency Close Sheerness Dockyards.	1829-33 Architect George Taylor.
II	Monument, Sheerness Dockyard.	"King William" Lion Monument C17.
II	Figurehead, Sheerness Dockyard.	Figurehead of HMS Forte 1900.
II	Shed No 104, Sheerness Dockyard.	Built 1830 2 storeys building with granite plinth& cornice.
II	Shed No. 23A & 23B, Sheerness Dockyard.	Circa 1820 by Holl, a series of warehouses& offices.
II	Walls of great basin, Sheerness Dockyard.	C1814 built by Sir John Rennie
II	Shed No 19, Sheerness Dockyard.	Built 1824-1829 brick warehouse
II	Shed No 78, Sheerness Dockyard.	Built 1859 The Boat Store (UK oldest Iron building).
II	Muswell Manor, Wing Road Leysdown Sheerness.	Used by the Wright & Short Brothers for early flight.

6.2.20 Historic Heritage.

- 6.2.21 It can be claimed with much justification that Sheppey has been robbed of its place in aviation history. Other parts of the UK, with little or no claim to aviation history reap many more benefits from aviation heritage than Sheppey, which gave birth to the UK's aerospace industry and where the first Englishman took to the air.
- 6.2.22 The centenary of the first flight is in 2009 and the Island needs to organise events to celebrate this important anniversary of national, if not international significance and historical importance. The organising of the celebrations should not be confined to Sheppey alone but anyone with an interest in aviation should be encouraged to contribute and participate in them. The UK's Aerospace industry should also be approached for assistance in staging these celebrations.
- 6.2.23 Besides being the home of the first flight, one of the key scientists that worked on the Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb was from Sheppey. The Island's soil is rich in fossils and remains and skeletons of strange animals have been unearthed here. The Island has a rich naval history. Lord Nelson was not a stranger on Sheppey. Some of the ships that fought in some of the UK's major sea battles and helped to extend the realms of the empire were built in Sheerness. Collectively these historical attributes are enough to justify a single museum or a 'centre of curiosity and imagination.' Any of these would have mass appeal across Kent and beyond and would draw the new kind of visitors Sheppey desperately needs.

6.3.1 **Holiday Parks.**

6.3.2 It is estimated there are around 37 holiday parks and caravan sites on the Isle of Sheppey. Between them they house around 7,000 units – chalets and fixed or static caravans, equating to half of such units in Kent. A high proportion of caravan parks can accommodate touring caravans. It is thought the aggregate capacity for touring caravans amounts to around 2,000 bays.

6.3.3 Nearly all chalets on Sheppey are owned or leased out long-term to families from London and elsewhere. Most are used as a second home or rented out especially at weekends. Swale Borough Council regards all chalets as a second home and domestic council tax is levied on them.

6.3.4 Some chalets have been in the same families and passed on as bequests to the next generations. As a result there are inter-generations of families that keep returning to the Island. “It is imprinted in their genes to come back. Their parents brought them here when they were young, having grown up now they are also bringing their children” as one individual remarked to why some families keep returning to the Island.

6.3.5 Most fixed caravans are privately owned but unlike the chalets, they are not considered as second homes but are regarded as a business activity of the site owner and a business tax is levied on the holiday park.

6.3.6 Most of Sheppey’s holiday parks were established in the 1950s, when the bulk of UK’s population went to the seaside for holidays. A significant number of visitors then, as now, come from London. In the early years, most of chalets were site-owned but as disposable incomes in the 1960’s increased, ownership as opposed to renting increased and today nearly all (including fixed caravans) are privately owned.

6.3.7 **Quality of Holiday Parks.**

6.3.8 Self-sufficient Holiday parks are the main attraction that entices a bulk of visitors to the Island. To sustain the visitor flows, it is important that all sites continuously adapt and invest in facilities to keep up with ever-increasing customers’ expectations. A small number of sites have achieved this and do provide exceptional quality service.

6.3.9 The state of some holiday parks and the quality of service they provide continues to concern the Borough Council’s tourism section which is responsible for promoting tourism products to visitors. For example there are chalets that have accumulated maintenance arrears and have degenerated to mere shacks. Often site managers are unable or unwilling to compel their owners to undertake the necessary maintenance but equally some sites are cash-stricken and are unable to make the necessary investment needed to meet even the minimum grading standards. The result is that many caravan parks do not attain a level of quality of service or of facilities that might comfortably meet visitor expectations.

6.3.10 Of the estimated 37 caravan sites on Sheppey, only 12 belong to The British Holidays & Holiday Park Association. Only 11 meet the necessary grading standards.

Know Graded Caravan Sites on the Isle of Sheppey	
Caravan Site	Rating
Ashcroft Coast Holiday Park, Eastchurch.	**** Holiday Park
Bramley Park Ltd, Eastchurch.	*** Holiday Park
Coconut Grove Holiday Park, Eastchurch.	**** Holiday Park
Copperfields Holiday Park, Eastchurch.	**** Holiday Park
Nutts Farm Caravan Park, Leysdown on Sea.	** Holiday, Touring & Camping Park
Palm Trees Holiday Park, Eastchurch.	**** Holiday Park
Priory Hill Holiday Park, Leysdown on Sea.	**** Holiday, Touring & Camping Park
Riverbank Park, Sheerness.	*** Holiday, Touring & Camping Park
Seacliff Holiday Estate Ltd, Minster-in-Sheppey.	** Holiday, Touring & Camping Park
Warden Springs Holiday Park, Eastchurch.	** Holiday, Touring & Camping Park
Willow Trees Holiday Park, Minster-in-Sheppey.	** Holiday Park
* Acceptable - Park is clean with good standards of maintenance & customer care	
** Good - All the above + improved level of landscape, lighting, refuse disposal & maintenance.	
*** Very Good - Three Star represents the industry standard. Facilities are well maintained.	
**** Exceptional – Highest levels of customer care. Facilities in pristine condition.	

6.3.11 Besides the quality issues, there is a broader debate about the economic value of holiday parks on Sheppey's economy and whether the local tourism industry needs to 'reposition' itself to appeal to new and more profitable markets.

6.3.12 Following consultation there are people who believe that the majority of holiday parks have passed their 'sell-by date' and that new forms of tourism product need to be developed. To them, the quality standards of caravan parks have degenerated to the levels where they are increasingly appealing to people with low disposable income or trapped by and dependent upon state benefits. They see Centre Parcs, Pontin's, Haven, Oasis etc as being the natural inheritor of the trade and providing the entry-level standards, to which many of the local holiday parks are unable to attain.

6.3.13 **Quality of Serviced Accommodation.**

6.3.14 Serviced accommodation (hotels, guest house and bed and breakfast establishments) is important not only to visitors but to the resident and business communities too. To the business sector, they provide venues for business meetings, conferences and training sessions, and to the resident community they provide a venue for family events. The status of all guest accommodation is as important to the local tourism industry as it is to the users of such facilities. Hotels in particular, play an ambassadorial role and their general state can determine whether visitors make repeat business or pass on favourable word-of-mouth recommendations. It is therefore important that local hotels strive to achieve at least the minimum standard whilst demonstrating a willingness to attain the very highest standards.

- 6.3.15 To encourage higher hotel accommodation standards across the borough, the Tourism Development Officer of Swale Borough Council invokes the policy of promoting only graded and classified accommodation. This policy is applied as an incentive to encourage owners of non-graded accommodation to invest and raise standards to meet at least the minimum grading and classification levels.
- 6.3.16 Unfortunately a significant proportion of serviced accommodation on the Island is not graded. The number of graded beds has also been declining to the point that there is no graded accommodation in Sheerness at all. Hence the list of graded hotels the Tourism Office can promote to visitors is reducing.
- 6.3.17 There is also a growing and worrying trend that some 'visitor' accommodation is being used by organisations and agencies to support those relying upon welfare benefit. It is difficult to monitor the true extent of this growing industry, as owners/managers of premises are reluctant to divulge details of their business activities particularly where there is anecdotal evidence of provision both for the visitor and those on state handouts.

Quality of Hotel Accommodation on Sheppey				
Year	Total Serviced Bed Spaces	% of Serviced Bed Spaces Graded	Total Self-Catering Bed Spaces	% of Self-Catering Bed Spaces Graded
Sept. 2000	352	61.36%	70	51.43%
Jan. 2002	344	49.4%	179	93.2%

- 6.3.18 Local businesses would welcome the presence of a four star hotel in Swale. A survey undertaken by Swale Borough Council in 2001 overwhelmingly suggested that local business would benefit from the presence of a four star hotel in the area. 60% of responding companies expressed the view that current hotel provision in the borough did not meet their business needs. 58% used out-of-the borough venues for conferencing or training seminars. Only 31% said they were happy with current hotel provision. Of concern is the amount of business 'leakage' to out -of-area where there is both choice of accommodation and supply.

6.4.1 Under Developed Tourism Capacity.

- 6.4.2 Throughout the Healthcheck Interviews relating to tourism, one response that kept being repeated was the underdeveloped tourism capacity on the Island. It appears the Island is not currently maximising the economic benefits from its tourism attractions. For example:

1. there are weak links and lack of interdependency between the various attractions and Sheerness. The town appears increasingly to be cut out of the tourism industry. With thousands of visitors that come to the Island every year, one would expect Sheppey to have a thriving night economy. Yet this aspect of tourism remains underdeveloped. These problems are in no small way the result of the failing transport links that exist on the Island not least of which will hamper any significant development of a night-time economy;

2. Sheerness would be the logical place to develop the night economy, But responsibility for driving forward such an initiative would need to be clarified to ensure long-term success;

3. in tourism 'big' is often better. Beside the caravan parks, most attractions can be considered as 'small' and in some cases diluted. For example Sheppey has three museums scattered around the Island. Consideration needs to be given to the long-term success of such ventures and what alternatives might exist. For example, are three museums sustainable? Would one museum bringing together the component parts provide an alternative? Visitors see Sheppey as a destination. A single museum would enrich visitors' experience, generate economies of concentration and allow for better marketing and resources. The challenge will be to engage support in persuading the three museum entities to merge and work together for the common-good of the Island. There would also be an opportunity to include other projects such as aviation to be part of a growing museum expansion;



Under exploited water leisure activities

4. due to their underdevelopment, the Island water sports and leisure industry generates very little economic benefits to the Island. Most participants, of which most are non-Islanders, tend to be self-sufficient. They often bring all the provisions they need; the jet ski, the surf boards, the sailing boats, sandwiches and the beer;

5. there are activities one would expect to see on an Island which are currently not in evidence or limited. These would include excursion boats providing around-the-Island trips or offering fishing trips. Perhaps more ambitious would be a waterbus taking commuters, tourist and shoppers to neighbouring destinations such as Medway Towns, Bluewater Retail Centre or London;

6. Sheppey has two major annual festivals with the potential to develop further and to become an attraction in their own right, encouraging further day visits. These festivals are the Pirates Festival and the Sheppey Show, which take place in the summer. Despite the meagre cash support they receive from sponsorship, both festivals have proved especially popular with the local people. More cash support is needed to develop these festivals into major visitor attractions. The Healthcheck initiative is committed to augmenting these and other festivals.

6.4.3 Sheppey has its own unique identity derived from its special characteristics and status that separate it from the rest of Swale and Kent. The Tourism Steering Group acknowledged this and it was suggested the Island might benefit from its own unique brand and being promoted as 'single product' to

visitors. For this reason, the Healthcheck initiative is in favour of establishing a local visitor attraction forum with the aim of improving the marketing of the Island.

6.5.1 Evaluation of Sheppey's Tourism Industry.

6.5.2 The mainstay of Sheppey's tourism in the foreseeable future will continue to be based around holiday parks. Whilst there is evidence that some holiday park owners are making the necessary investment to upgrade their services and to keep up with visitors' expectations, regard must be paid to the many sites that currently fall below the graded standards.

6.5.3 Lack of private investment in facilities constitutes the main reason why many of the caravan parks fail to meet the minimum grading standards. It is not known if such sites will continue to operate in the long term or whether they will wither away.

6.5.4 UK's tourism industry is changing and new trends are emerging all the time. At the present short respites, weekend breaks and eco-tourism are on the upward-trend. However, Sheppey's accommodation infrastructure appears to be heading in the opposite direction and looks incapable of capitalising on the emerging trends.

6.5.5 It is widely accepted that Sheppey needs to develop new visitor attractions to supplement existing ones. The opinion is that new attractions need to be 'big' and capable of generating attention beyond Kent. Such developments need identifying and thinking through. Strong partnerships committed to developing and driving the industry forward will need to be established.

6.5.6 Existing tourism products could benefit from closer working. A review of local attractions needs to be undertaken with regards to improving co-ordination, generating synergy and maximising social and economic benefits to the Island.

6.5.7 Way Forward.

6.5.8 Sheppey's tourism economy is at a crossroads. The mainstay of visitor attractions, the caravan parks, cannot be relied on to attract the same numbers of visitors in the future. New attractions need to be developed and existing ones improved. Sheppey needs to make an economic choice and decide how it wants its tourism industry to develop. As a starting point, a thorough study including an audit of existing product is needed. The Healthcheck initiative is in favour of such a study.

6.6.1 Summary of Replies Received In the Interview Stage Relating to Tourism.

6.6.2 In the interview stages, members of the Transport Steering Group along with a number of local people gave their views and perceptions of the Island's tourism industry. The following table summarises some of the questions and the answers received.

Questions Relating to Tourist Attractions.

Questions.	Evaluation of Answers Received.
What are the main tourist or visitor attractions on the Island (including festivals and events)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand, sea, camping, natural heritage/reserve were seen as the key visitor attractions. • Two festivals were also named - Pirates and Sheppey Show.
How important is tourism related employment to the local economy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to most people tourism is important to the Island's employment. • Local 'seasonally adjusted employment data' doesn't exist. It is therefore not possible to estimate the levels of seasonal employment generated by tourism industry. However most people suspected that in the summer employment levels in the caravan sites rise.
Are there any obvious gaps within the Island's tourism industry?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over dependency on caravan sites and lack of quality accommodation and other attractions were seen to constitute gaps in the tourism market. • Sheppey also had no real icon (attraction) that could form part of the Island identity or branding. • The Island's underdeveloped tourism potential was another area people associated with the 'gap.' • It was felt that there was much scope to strengthen links between tourism and Sheerness could be improved. Sheerness' Town Centre Manager has been exploring ways how to strengthen those links. The development of Sheerness' night economy is seen as that process.

Questions Relating to Visitors to the Island.

Questions.	Evaluation of Answers Received.
How many visitors come to the Island every year?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is estimated the population of the Island doubles in the summer months. However, this data needs re-verifying.
Is the number of visitors on the Island increasing or reducing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Caravan and Chalet Parks had greater turnover of people in 1950's when holiday market was developing but now families are keeping them as second home." • Anecdotal assessment suggests the numbers and the length of stay is falling.
Could you identify the various groups of people that visit the Island?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people thought a majority of visitors came from South London. According to caravan site managers all age groups are represented. • There was a presumption among some people that most visitors were from lower incomes groups. • Nature lovers and ornithologists were among the groups of visitors that come to the Island.
Is it possible to specify how long each visitor group stay on the Island?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was suggested by the Tourism Steering Group that the trend for day visitor was rising. This was an emerging market, which the Island could seek to develop further. • At present most caravans and chalets can only be used for up eight months in a year. There is a growing demand for this period to be increased to 10 months. If this is approved, visitors will be able to stay for two more months and this could be good for the local economy.

Questions relating to Income From Tourisms And Visitors Expectations.**Questions.**

Do you know how much income is generated by the tourism industry on the Isle of Sheppey?

Evaluation of Answers Received.

- It is not known how much income is generated by Island tourism. An in-depth study covering this and other areas was suggested by the Tourism Steering Group.

Does the number, range and quality of visitor facilities e.g. accommodation, quality of restaurants match expectations and needs?

- There are a number of quality issues that need addressing across the industry. There is also much scope for improvements.

Questions relating to Heritage Sites.**Questions.**

Are there historical/heritage sites currently not associated with tourism that can potentially be developed for the benefit of the Island's economy?

Evaluation of Answers Received.

- A myriad of sites, potential sites, ideas and wish list were mentioned. Among those mentioned included;
 - 1 a marina at Queenborough Creek ;
 - 2 exploiting maritime coastline;
 - 3 Eastchurch (aviation history) – museum is needed,
 - 4 Barton's Point – development of a major water sports facility;
 - 5 exploiting the natural and built heritage of the coastline;
 - 6 open up Sheerness Docks for tourism;
 - 7 "there is much heritage – but it is not recorded or promoted" etc.

Has Sheppey got an ad hoc body that promotes the Island and its visitor attractions?

- Members of the Tourism Steering Group felt that a partnership comprised of local visitor attractions representatives needs to be established to promote the Island.

7.1.1 Project Proposals.

7.1.2 A myriad of needs and aspirations were encountered among the Island's communities in the process of the Healthcheck. A limited number of these have been selected as project proposals for the Healthcheck to pursue in the future.

7.1.3 A list of project proposals is outlined in this section. However, that list is not inclusive of all needs identified in the Healthcheck process. Neither does it represent all projects the Healthcheck initiative will seek to pursue in the future. This is because Sheppey is an area of high deprivation and funding agencies are targeting their cash into the area. It is therefore possible that unanticipated funding opportunities with the potential of adding value to the Healthcheck may arise in the future. When such opportunities present themselves, each will be evaluated to determine the role and the extent of involvement for the Healthcheck initiative.

7.1.4 It is also worth recognising that most community organisations on the Island lack the necessary resources and expertise to meet or achieve all their objectives and most will seek help whenever they can find it. For example, the Healthcheck Manager was reluctant to pursue any projects until the Healthcheck Report was completed. However, as soon as knowledge of the Healthcheck process circulated, a number of individuals and organisations came forward seeking assistance on a number of issues. Some of the issues were time-specific and could not be postponed and whilst others were such that declining to assist would have undermined the good-will of local people. As a result it was necessary for the Healthcheck Manager to pursue limited projects in parallel with the study. Such requests will continue to arise and inevitably the Healthcheck process will become involved in some cases.

Some of the Projects Pursued in the process of the Healthcheck study June 2002 – April 2003.

Issue	Healthcheck's Involvement	Outcomes
Broadband Campaign For Sheppey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrote to all Sheppey companies to mobilise support for broadband Internet connection. Co-ordinated promotional activities Establish an e-mail portal for e-mails of support from local people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support & registration of local companies on BT's website increased to a level that Sheerness may soon reach the threshold required by BT to install broadband cables.
Help Strove Crescent Baptist Church Find Funds to extend its community activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting brokered between funders & Church. Reference given to funders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some grant award received but more cash is required.
Leysdown Village Hall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help the village hall find cash to extend the village hall. Possibly locate a village cinema in the extended hall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Sign-posting hand holding exercise' to the village hall Brokered meeting with possible funders. Improved possibility of a community cinema in Leysdown
New role for URC Church in Sheerness Town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcheck Manager invited to be part of the Steering Group. Assist with community consultation to identify needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process is on going. Possible venue for community cinema, conference hall.
Help to improve public transport on Sheppey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involved in the emerging Community Rail Partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separate partnerships for Community Rail transport and Sheppey Wheels to

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participant on the Community Rail Partnership Steering Group. • Establishing a partnership to develop Sheppey's Wheels to work Scheme. 	Work Scheme established with clear objectives.
Combating financial exclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representing Sheppey and Swale Borough Council at the Steering Group of Swale Loans & Saving Scheme. 	Scheme is up and running but needs broadening out to wider population.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects like these are difficult to anticipate and on aggregate are expected to consume a sizable amount of the Healthcheck Managers' time and resources. 		

7.1.5 Identified Projects.

7.1.6 The projects identified can be considered as 'pointers' to the necessary actions needed to make a significant impact. The projects described and would need developing further when pursued in the future. Where possible, names of organisations with the potential to lead or participate in some of the proposed projects have been provided. However, this is not to say that these organisations are committed to support the proposed projects if they were to be pursued.

Economic Development Project Proposals.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Farm Survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More data on local agricultural economy is needed 3.2.24. • Audit of redundant farm building with alternative economic potential is required 3.2.27. • Determine business support farmers need to encourage diversification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with agencies with interest in farming to help undertake the survey. • Design and implement the Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local farmers. • National Farmers Union. • Community Regeneration, Swale BC. • Tourism Development Officer, Swale BC. • Planning Department, Swale BC. • Land Owners. • English Nature etc. • Country Landowners Association (there is an Island representative!)
Economic Diversification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheppey is over dependent on vulnerable economic sectors 3.2.59. • Employment in manufacturing is falling 2.1.5. • Economy needs to attract new sectors 3.2.58. • Increase average wage rate 4.1.17, 4.1.25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the culture of enterprise and provide the infra structure in which small business and business starts-ups could flourish. • Improve 'supply side' factors such as skill levels, access to training, quality industrial units and land etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEEDA. • Economic Development Unit, Swale BC. • Local education & training providers. • Learning Skills Council etc • KCC.
Local Labour Scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefits of new development needs to trickle down to local people – either by way of employing local labour, training opportunities & subcontracting. • New construction projects are anticipated during and after the construction of the Second Swale Crossing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop systems in which local people can economically benefit from new developments on the Island and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Departments in North Kent. • Learning Skills Council. • Land/property developers. • Construction companies. • Jobcentre+ • Training providers • KCC

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Increase the use of ICT and E-commerce among local businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is believed that local companies have not embraced ICT and e-commerce compared with other areas in the Southeast. • Surveys undertaken by Kent County and Swale Borough Councils indicate low penetration of ICT skills among local people and companies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a forum to encourage greater penetration of ICT and e-commerce among local businesses. • Continue to campaign for installation of broadband connection on Sheppey. • Consider 'wireless' as an alternative to broadband. the alternatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Employers. • Communication providers • Local media. • Business Link. • Training providers

Please note that the figures at the end of some sentences in the 'Project Justification' section in the tables relate to the paragraph numbering in the document pertaining to the proposed project.

Town Centre Project Proposals.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Study to look at ways the areas around the Train Station could be improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Station forms the 'Gateway' to Sheerness. Area around the station needs improving 5.1.18, 5.1.26. This proposal is supported in Swale Borough Local Plan. Network Rail is considering replacing the points on this railway line and this could represent an ideal opportunity to revamp the whole station. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A scoping study is needed to identify how the area around the Train Station could be improved. A focus group comprised of local representatives and those with the stake in the area to consider and progress this action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network Rail. Countryside Agency. Retailers. Highways. Land owners. Local business. Community Rail Partnership.
Pilot to explore the effects of partial closure of High Street during certain period of the year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empirical evidence from other parts of UK indicates that pedestrianising the core shopping area can increase retail business in the Town 3.3.27. The partial closure could bring economic benefits to town retailers and market traders and in the process increase the supply of car parking spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with retailers and other stakeholders in the Town Centre to establish and run a controlled partial High Street closure and evaluate the benefits to shoppers and retailers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retailers. Swale Borough Council Highways. Town Centre users etc.
Improve car parking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of car parking spaces have reduced 3.3.50, 3.3.51. Evidence around the country indicates that supermarkets are increasingly charging non-customers for using their shopper's car parks. Other areas around the town need to be considered for developing as car park. 3.3.52 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the possibility of moving the market into the High Street. Consider developing the areas around the Water Tower as a car park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parker Estates. Swale Borough Council.
Rehabilitate redundant buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheerness has a number of ugly, redundant buildings 3.3.56. Most of these buildings add to the poor image of the town. At present these buildings have failed to attract commercial interest but this could change in the future as the town runs out of land for development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify possible uses for buildings and sites in town and consult with owners and commercial interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owners. SEEDA Swale BC

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Develop Sheerness evening economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evening Economy has the potential for growth 3.3.40. • Not maximising the economic benefits from the local tourism industry. • There is a critical mass of people in the summer months to justify developing this aspect of the Town Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a forum to explore how the evening economy could be strengthened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retailers. • Police. • Licensing – Swale Borough Council.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Welcome Pack to Estate Agents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anecdotal evidence suggests significant number of houses purchased in recent years accounted to non-Islanders (i.e. people moving on the Island). 4.1.21 • Further housing development will follow after the construction of the second bridge. • New housing developments may change the character of the Island for the worse. • Need to generate civic pride. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate information outlining the benefit of using and taking pride in the Island's facilities (including retail) needs to be posted with local estate agents. This will be given to Those seeking to purchase property. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estate Agents. • Tourism Development Officer. • Housing Developers.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Improve Town Festivals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheppey has two major annual festivals with the potential to develop further and to become an attraction in their own right encouraging further day visits. • It is always an annual struggle to find sufficient resources to put up a decent Christmas lights display in the Town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To further develop these festivals into significant visitor attractions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retailers. • Swale Borough Council. • Various festival committees. • Funders.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Improve Shop Frontage & Alleyways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some shops are in need of renovation. Their poor state of repair adds to the poor image of Sheerness. • Some alleyways linking to the High Street are in need of repair and improving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the possibility of establishing incentives to encourage retailers to improve shop fronts. • Action to improve alleyways needs consideration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retailers. • Swale Borough Council Highways. • Landlords etc

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Community Project Proposals.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Increase the profile of Sheppey in Kent and beyond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Island has potential to undergo a social and economic transformation as a result of Second Crossing 5.2.4 Bridge construction and outcomes is expected to generate interest from national media and will provide Sheppey publicity and the opportunity to increase its profile beyond Kent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beside capitalising on local media interest, we will seek to entice national television radio to look at make a documentary on the construction of the Second Crossing and its effects on the Island community. A "media handling group" to answer press enquiries relating to the bridge needs establishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners need identifying. Lead contractor.
House Affordability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local people are being crowded out of housing market. Lack of social and affordable starter homes Unconfirmed suggestions that housing cost is affecting the recruitment of key workers on the island. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase availability of affordable housing and evaluate the assistance given to key workers moving into the area. Further consideration and consultation required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant partners need to be identified.
Support for Healthy Living Centre (See Annex Three for further details).	<p>The Healthy Living centre requires assistance to develop the following initiatives:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older persons activities. Sheppey community involvement project. Consultation regarding Sea Study Centre. Evaluation of Sheppey Matters' partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance required is developmental work and help to establish the projects (For further details of these projects please see Annex Three). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (See Annex Three for further details).
Measures to prevent young boys from become 'Teenage Fathers'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly all teenage pregnancy preventative measures on Sheppey are aimed at females. For pregnancy prevention measures to be successful boys also need to be educated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the possibility of establishing some proactive measures, focusing on teenage boys, to educate them about the peril of becoming teenage fathers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partnership needs developing but will include the Primary Care Trust, Sure Start and a host of local agencies already involved in this area of activity.
Community Cinema & Extend Youth Activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are limited activities or facilities for young people 4.1.60 Sheppey lacks a cinema. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support organisations working with the youth to address identified needs for young people. Explore possibility of a community cinema on Sheppey. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners need to be identified.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Develop Barton's Point.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barton's Point is an area that has been identified as having the potential of being developed into a water leisure activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To find an appropriate developer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swale Borough Council Possibly education establishments and land developers etc.
Financial Exclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Island suffers from high levels of financial exclusion 4.1.78. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a form of Loans & Saving scheme to encourage financial prudence among those excluded from mainstream banking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kent Reliance Building Society Amicus Group Swale Borough Council
Establish Island Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Island is dominated by 'single issue' campaigners 4.2.12. There is a lack of inclusive, Island-wide fora to help steer policy and to plan for the future 4.2.13. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an Island-wide forum - comprised of representatives from a range of communities Establish links with key decision making mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership to be established.
Proposals From Swale Borough Council's Community Development Officer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Community Development Officer of Swale Borough Council has submitted the following projects to the Healthcheck Initiative for consideration. Whilst the ownership of these proposals is Swale Borough Council, the Healthcheck process may be approached for assistance to develop or implement them. For details of the projects, please Annex Four. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A

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Transport Project Proposals.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Road Information system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The construction of the Second Swale Crossing will cause road traffic and rail disruptions. Medway Ports is already developing a system to warn its drives and cargo operators about the delays. This system needs to be developed further to benefit local people and businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Medway Ports to extend the serve to all islanders. Compiling a database of local e-mail addresses will be needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medway Ports Swale Borough Council Highways Agency Local people and businesses. Contractor responsible for construction.
Rushenden Link Road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This road is important for the future development of Queenborough and key employment sites for the Island 5.1.13. At present all traffic to the industrial estate has to pass through Queenborough, with impacts upon residents and town centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to raise the profile for the need of this road. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crown Estates. SEEDA, Swale Borough & Kent County Councils. Thames Gateway Kent Partnership.
Improve Gateways and public arts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gateways to towns and road aesthetics on Sheppey need improving. The aim is to create an appealing and impressive environment worthy of civic pride. 5.1.16 – 5.1.19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit gateways as a starting point. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highways Departments in Swale Borough and Kent County Councils. Public Arts South East. Local businesses and people.
Community Rail Partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey indicates that local rail passengers want improve journey experience 5.1.26. Local communities and passengers want to be involved and have a say in the way their train service is provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress to establishing a Community Rail Partnership is already underway. Bid for funding is being developed to employ an officer and to help undertake the proposed improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connex Southeast. Network Rail. Countryside Agency. Swale Borough Council. Passengers, businesses and local residents. Rural Transport Partnership. Kent Rural Community Council.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Sheppey Wheels-to-Work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To unemployed people, lack of transport is the second major barrier to work 5.2.8. • Bus service has reduced to eastern side of the Island 5.1.32 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative solutions to overcome transport barriers to employment. • Establish a Wheels-to-Work Scheme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Agency. • Island Partnership. • Swale Borough Council • Jobcentre+. • Potential users.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Footpath around the Island.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheppey does not have a recognised coastal footpath enabling people to walk around the Island 5.1.44. • There is tourism potential and benefits to rural hospitality businesses if such a path was established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the feasibility of establishing such a path. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramblers Association. • Local landowners. • Kent County Council (Public Rights of Way Officer) • Swale Borough Council (Highways Unit) • Tourism Development Officer. • Relevant businesses.

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Tourism Project Proposals.

Project Proposal	Justification for the Project	Action Needed	Potential Partners.
Comprehensive Evaluation of the Island's Tourism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Island's tourism and the issues affecting it have been judged as complex and beyond the scope of the Healthcheck. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcheck and members of the Tourism Steering Group are in favour of an in-depth evaluation of the local tourism product. A comprehensive study of the industry is needed to give a steer on how the sector should be developed in the future. Identify funding sources for such a study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be identified.
Heritage Strategy for Sheppey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheppey's heritage is under-exploited. 6.2.19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive heritage strategy is needed as tool to set local priority and to attract external funding. To develop a steering group to progress the initiative forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be identified.
Celebrate the First Flight centenary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheppey is the home of UK's earliest avionics industry. The 100th anniversary of the first flight in UK is in 2009. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action to celebrate this important heritage needs organising. A local partnership to progress this initiative needs establishing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners/stakeholders need to be identified and involved in the process.
Centre of Curiosity and Imagination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Island has a number of curious events that could support a learning centre and to stimulate curiosity among people of all ages. Such a Curiosity Centre has the potential of generating new form of tourism, which the Island desperately need and could attract thousand of visitors every year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal needs consideration and potential partners identifying. Project would need Kent-wide support and would require a partnership of education establishments, private and public sector organisations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be identified.

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Annex One.

Composition of Healthcheck Steering Groups.

Economy Steering Group		
Representative	Company	Type of Organisation
Mark Baldock	Island Partnership	Local Training Provider
Alan Ogilvie	Town Management Unit	Sheerness Town Centre Manager
Tim Burton	Branch Manager	(Halifax Bank Plc
Jeff Holroyd	National Farmers Union	Farmers Representatives.
Peter Jolley	Economic Development Unit	Swale Borough Council
Andy Hyland	G. Hogben & Sons	Funeral director, based in High Street

Transport Steering Group		
Representative	Company	Type of Business
Richard Backhouse	Kent Rural Community Council	Community Rural Transport facilitator.
Mark Johnson	Highways	Swale Borough Council
Paul Burton	Sheerness Jobcentre	Jobcentre+ (Employment Service)
Tony Willcocks	Arriva Plc	Bus operator.

Tourism Steering Group		
Representative	Company	Type of Business
Jonathan Fryer	Sheppey Local History Society	Island Historical Society
Lyn Newton	Tourism Development Unit	Swale Borough Council
Martin Hall	Medway & Swale Estuary Partnership	Nature & Wildlife conservation

Social & Community Sub-group		
Representative	Company	Type of Business
Peter Speakman	Community Development	Swale Borough Council
Philip Ayre	Strode Crescent Baptist Church	Community Group
Rose Hodges	Strode Crescent Baptist Church	Community Groups
Kevin O' Reilly	Sheppey Healthy Living Centre	Voluntary Sector
John Fowler	Sure Start Sheerness	Voluntary Sector.
Elisabeth Winterbone	Member of Public	-
Tina Miles	Amicus Housing Group.	Social Housing Provider
Simon Hill	Sheerness Community Learning Centre	Community Learning Centre

Composition of Job Steering Group

Job Steering Group		
Representative	Company	Type of Business
Carol Smith	Market Town Initiatives, Countryside Agency	Governmental Agency.
Alan Turner	Rural Projects, Environment Department Kent County Council	Local Government.
Avinash Thakker	Sheppey Healthy Check	Healthcheck Co-ordinator.
Kieren Mansfield	Economic Development Unit, Swale Borough Council.	Swale Borough Council.

Alan Ogilvie	Sheerness Town Centre Manager	Town Centre management.
Elisabeth Winterbone	Member of Public	-
Tina Miles	Amicus Housing Group.	Social Housing Provider

Annex Two.

Deprivation Score For Sheppey.

- 1 In the tables below, the rank of each ward is set against the 8,414 council wards in England or the 331 wards in Kent. Wards are cardinally arranged (e.g. 1, 2, 3 ... to 8,414) depending on their level of deprivation. For example, a council ward that is assigned a rank of 1 would be considered the most deprived. The higher the ranks of the ward, the more it is deprived.

Rank of Income Deprivation			
<u>Sheppey Council Wards</u>	<u>Rank out of 25 Wards in Swale</u>	<u>Rank out of 331 Wards In Kent</u>	<u>Rank out of 8,414 Wards In England</u>
Sheerness West	1	8	417
Sheerness East	2	21	955
Eastern	4	42	1413
Queenborough and Halfway	6	60	2045
Sheppey Central	14	112	3387
Minster Cliffs	16	115	3430

Rank of Employment Deprivation			
<u>Sheppey Council Wards</u>	<u>Rank out of 25 Wards in Swale</u>	<u>Rank out of 331 Wards In Kent</u>	<u>Rank out of 8,414 Wards In England</u>
Sheerness West	1	11	742
Sheerness East	2	20	1044
Eastern	3	23	1088
Queenborough and Halfway	7	90	2947
Sheppey Central	8	94	2989
Minster Cliffs	9	102	3291

Rank of Health Deprivation			
<u>Sheppey Council Wards</u>	<u>Rank out of 25 Wards in Swale</u>	<u>Rank out of 331 Wards In Kent</u>	<u>Rank out of 8,414 Wards In England</u>
Sheerness West	1	8	877
Eastern	2	18	1285
Sheerness East	3	35	1763
Sheppey Central	5	54	2324
Minster Cliffs	6	70	2617
Queenborough and Halfway	7	101	3224

Rank of Education Deprivation			
<u>Sheppey Council Wards</u>	<u>Rank out of 25 Wards in Swale</u>	<u>Rank out of 331 Wards In Kent</u>	<u>Rank out of 8,414 Wards In England</u>
Sheerness West	7	26	964
Eastern	10	54	1451
Sheerness East	11	55	1487
Sheppey Central	12	82	2063
Minster Cliffs	16	124	3298
Queenborough and Halfway	17	132	3393

Rank of Housing Deprivation

<u>Sheppey Council Wards</u>	<u>Rank out of 25 Wards in Swale</u>	<u>Rank out of 331 Wards In Kent</u>	<u>Rank out of 8,414 Wards In England</u>
Sheerness East	1	21	866
Sheerness West	2	22	886
Queenborough and Halfway	4	42	1330
Eastern	6	56	1618
Sheppey Central	20	176	3752
Minster Cliffs	21	184	3923

Rank of Access to Services Deprivation

<u>Sheppey Council Wards</u>	<u>Rank out of 25 Wards in Swale</u>	<u>Rank out of 331 Wards In Kent</u>	<u>Rank out of 8,414 Wards In England</u>
Eastern	1	4	208
Queenborough and Halfway	10	119	2656
Minster Cliffs	13	139	3157
Sheppey Central	14	141	3212
Sheerness West	20	252	5977
Sheerness East	25	304	7605

Rank of Child Poverty deprivation for Sheppey Wards.

<u>Sheppey Council Wards</u>	<u>Rank out of 25 Wards in Swale</u>	<u>Rank out of 331 Wards In Kent</u>	<u>Rank out of 8,414 Wards In England</u>
Sheerness West	1	11	435
Sheerness East	4	41	1,458
Queenborough and Halfway	5	45	1,612
Eastern	6	48	1,652
Minster Cliffs	13	107	2,964
Sheppey Central	19	146	3,977

Annex Three.

Proposed Projects For Sheppey Healthy Living Centre.

Project	Help requested from Sheppey Healthcheck
<p>Older Persons Activities Project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consultation day held in July 2002 (attended by 60 people) identified a need for activities at the centre to tackle social isolation of many older people living on the Island. • A project is being developed by the Healthy Living Centre, which will involve appointing an activities coordinator to set up a wide range of social, educational and arts activities in the centre. • External funding bids are being developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help with further consultation. • Assistance to progress funding bids • Support with implementation of project (especially with regard to transport links for older people living in the east of the Island.)
<p>Sheppey Community Involvement Project (SCIP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project is being developed by a partnership that includes Sheppey HLC, Swale PCT (Mental Health Promotion), SBC, Leisure Connection Ltd and MACA (a mental health charity). The aims of the project are; • <i>to establish and develop a Project that will provide opportunities for the local people of Sheppey to engage with meaningful activities that will meet their individual recreational, vocational and educational needs;</i> • <i>to promote social inclusion and integration within the Island Community to enable them to maintain a sustainable lifestyle;</i> • To improve the physical and psychological well being of the Island Community. • Appoint a coordinator to work in partnership with local agencies and run appropriate projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help organise further consultation and community involvement; • Assist to progress funding bids; • Help with implementation of project. • Explore ways of improving transport links to encourage increased participation from people on the eastern side of the Island.
<p>Consultation regarding Sea Study Centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Sea Study Centre (next to the HLC) could be included within a 'phase two' healthy living centre capital project.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with consultation and help to develop the development
<p>Evaluation of Sheppey Matters' partnership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A working group has been set up to take forward the evaluation of Sheppey Matters' partnership arrangements. • The working group hopes to work in partnership with postgraduate students and an academic partner to evaluate the partnership working. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance Working Group Meetings and help to progress the initiative.

Annex Four

Project proposals submitted by Swale Borough Council's Community Development Officer for the Healthcheck consideration.

1. Documentary film of Sheppey's Aviation History – to be made in collaboration with Sheppey College, Film producer, Southern and South East Arts etc.
2. Opening of Marshland Visitor Centre and development of Marsh Video cam network to allow Schools to observe local wildlife without leaving the Class
3. Renovation of Community Centre in Queenborough as a Youth Centre.
4. Provision of CCTV on new Sheerness Relief Road and in parts of Sheerness West
5. Improvements to Children's play facilities in Parish and Swale Parks and Open Spaces.
6. Provision of augmented Citizens' Advice Bureaux and Money Advice Service on Sheppey – over 3 years.