



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
LONDON

Press Release

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POLL CHALLENGES GOVERNMENT TO MEET HIGH EXPECTATIONS IN THAMES GATEWAY

The results of a YouGov poll, unveiled today by CPRE[1], show that most people living in the Thames Gateway are optimistic about the Government's plans for the area's regeneration[2], but they are worried about environmental damage, transport congestion and the Government's failure to respect local opinion. Residents are optimistic about future jobs, local amenities and services, and the quality of new buildings.

A summary of the opinion poll results is appended.

The complete results are available on request, including results broken down by postcode.

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The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

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The results may come as a surprise to the Government, which has recently fielded strong criticism for a lack of leadership in the Thames Gateway programme, building the wrong kind of housing and for failing to address the area's downmarket reputation[3].

The challenge facing the Government is to make sure that people's high expectations are met and, CPRE says, this optimism may be threatened if key concerns are not addressed.

Nigel Kersey, CPRE's Thames Gateway Project Leader said:

'Public goodwill could be a major asset to the Government in getting its regeneration plans through. But goodwill risks being squandered if they can't prove that the public's big concerns are really being dealt with. Ordinary people need convincing that they will see real improvements in their quality of life.'

'Above all, the Government needs to prevent building on greenfield land, empower councils to reject sub-standard planning applications, and show that the public transport systems will cope. Listening to local views will improve standards across the board.'

CPRE strongly supports the regeneration of the Thames Gateway because, if successful, it will make available large amounts of currently derelict urban land back into use, helping to relieve pressure for urban sprawl throughout south-eastern England.

- END -

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- [1] CPRE London is the London Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England. CPRE exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. We promote positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside to ensure change values its natural and built environment. Our Patron is Her Majesty The Queen. We have 59,000 supporters, a branch in every county, nine regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in London. CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning. Our President is Sir Max Hastings.
- [2] As part of its Sustainable Communities Plan initiative, the Government is pursuing a massive building programme in the in the 'Thames Gateway Growth Area', whereby it intends that at least 120,000 new homes and up to 180,000 new jobs will be created in the area between 2003 and 2016. The 'Thames

Gateway Growth Area' consists of much of East London, together with parts of north Kent and south Essex on either side of the Thames Estuary.

- [3] For example: in November 2005, the Urban Task Force (Chaired by Lord Richard Rogers of Riverside) published a report 'Towards a Strong Urban Renaissance' which was critical of progress in a number of key policy areas; in January, the Institute for Public Policy Research published a report 'Gateway People' which cast doubt on the ability of the Thames Gateway to attract high income earners; and also in January, management consultants Hornagold & Hills published a report 'Thames Gateway - Laying the blue line', which appeared strongly critical of the quality of Government leadership for the Thames Gateway programme.

**APPENDIX: CPRE/YouGov Survey Results - All areas
(Postcode areas: DA, E, IG, ME, RM, SE, SS)**

Unweighted

Sample Size: 967 Thames Gateway residents

Fieldwork: 14th December 2005 to 9th January 2006

1) In principle, do you find the Government's programme to regenerate and redevelop the Thames Gateway welcome or unwelcome?

Strongly welcome	305
Slightly welcome	314
No opinion	168
Slightly unwelcome	91
Strongly unwelcome	85

2) In general, does the programme to regenerate and redevelop the Thames Gateway – as far as you understand it – worry you at all?

Worries me a lot	130
Worries me a little	272
Does not worry me much	263
Does not worry me at all	168
Have not really found out anything about it so far	130

3) How will the Thames Gateway programme affect each of following for the people living in the area?

a) The quality of buildings and homes in the area

Much better	107
Better	445
No change	258
Worse	112
Much worse	41

b) Employment opportunities

Much better	193
Better	478
No change	210
Worse	61
Much worse	21

c) Public services (e.g.: schools, health centres, leisure facilities)

Much better	99
Better	367
No change	273
Worse	142
Much worse	82

d) Public transport, roads and parking etc.

Much better	126
Better	314
No change	188
Worse	184
Much worse	151

4) **Do you agree or disagree with the statement that: ‘Considerable harm will be caused to the countryside in the Thames Gateway as a result of new housing, offices, roads and other development being built outside of the existing urban areas’ ?**

Agree strongly	218
Agree	294
Neither agree nor disagree	314
Disagree	123
Disagree strongly	14

5) **Do you agree or disagree with the statement that: ‘Government and local authorities are taking into account the views of local people in developing their plans for the redevelopment and regeneration of the Thames Gateway’?**

Agree strongly	18
Agree	159
Neither agree nor disagree	345
Disagree	263
Disagree strongly	178

6) **Do you agree or disagree with the statement that: ‘Good quality jobs will be generated in sufficient numbers in the Thames Gateway so that a lot of people living in the area will be able to find work closer to where they live’?**

Agree strongly	46
Agree	368
Neither agree nor disagree	315
Disagree	170
Disagree strongly	64

In addition, the following open questions were asked. Individual responses are available:

What are the principal benefits that you expect to see from the programme to regenerate and redevelop the Thames Gateway?

Those who find the programme unwelcome, what are your principle concerns/ worries about the programme to regenerate and redevelop the Thames Gateway?

What one thing do you think the Government should do for the Thames Gateway to bring about the greatest improvement in quality of life in the area?