



(l-r) Andy Scorgie (FTI), Mike Thompson (Empty Property Officer -Thanet District Council), Steve Grimshaw (Regeneration Manager - KCC), Theresa Bruton (Head of Regeneration Projects - KCC), Robin Kennedy (Private Sector Housing Manager – Dover District Council), David Ireland (Chief Executive of National Charity Empty Homes).

## 'No Use Empty' recognised at awards

KENT County Council's No Use Empty scheme was among the winners at the 2011 Regeneration and Renewal Awards, which recognises the best regeneration projects in the UK.

No Use Empty was the winner in the Partnership Working category, which received over 40 submissions. The other finalists included London Borough of Southwark, for their construction work at London Bridge Bankside, and North Solihull partnership, for their regeneration of North Solihull.

The judging panel described the No Use Empty (NUE) scheme as 'a highly effective partnership' that has been the catalyst in returning 1,677 empty homes back to use. Andy Karski, one of the judges and principal at Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design said, "It's rare to be able to do this because it can be very difficult to get a coordinated view across a number of authorities."

The judges also commended the scheme's value for money, a measure by which all entries were judged. Of the 1,677 homes brought back into use, 274 have been supported by funding from the No Use Empty Loan Fund and all loans are repaid and recycled back into the scheme. Karski added: "They have managed to achieve an awful lot through manage-

ment, persuasion and negotiation."

Steve Grimshaw, Regeneration Project Manager for Kent County Council collected the award on the night. He said:

"We were delighted just to be short-listed for such a prestigious award, so to win is absolutely fantastic. What makes No Use Empty unique is that it is delivered by Kent County Council in partnership with all twelve local authorities across the County. By pooling our resources and expertise in this way, we have been able to bring a significant number of empty homes back into use at minimal cost since 2005. I am glad that everyone's hard work over the past six years has been recognised, and the fact that various local authorities outside of Kent are keen to adopt the No Use Empty scheme is a further endorsement of our approach."

Kent County Council Leader Paul Carter said: "These awards recognise the invaluable contribution that Kent County Council is making towards regenerating our coastal towns in East Kent."

"The countywide No Use Empty project has already brought many disused properties back into use in Dover, Shepway, Swale and Thanet, through joint working between ourselves and the area's district councils.

## Locate in Kent partners with UKTI

KENT'S business strengths are set to reach a wider audience after investment promotion agency Locate in Kent signed a landmark agreement with UK Trade & Investment.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will see Locate in Kent become UKTI's sole point of contact in the county and is aimed at securing maximum levels of overseas investment for Kent.

Locate in Kent is one of only a few organisations across the country to sign an MoU with UKTI.

The investment specialists signed the deal in order to further bolster their working relationship after Regional Development Agencies – previously used as an intermediary between the organisations – were abolished.

Paul Wookey, Chief Executive at

Locate in Kent, said: "The MoU will be of mutual benefit to us and UKTI and will lead to a much closer working relationship both in London and overseas than we already enjoy."

"The agreement gives us access to a pipeline of projects that may be suited to Kent and enable us to access UKTI expertise to hone our proposition to overseas companies.

"We can now also assist UKTI in providing more in-depth responses to leads they secure, presenting a more complete response to companies interested in relocating and expanding in Kent."

"The MoU is of particular relevance now as we continue to work closely with UKTI and other partner organizations to find buyers and occupiers for Discovery Park, the Pfizer site, which has recently gained Enterprise Zone status."

## Plans to build a John Lewis at Home store in Ashford have been approved

PERMISSION was sought from the council's planning committee in October to construct a 5,390 sq. m. retail unit just off junction 9 M20.

The committee granted planning permission and the application will now be referred to the Secretary of State, as standard, and will also be subject to the completion of a section 106 agreement.

The applicant agreed to submit further landscaping plans to ensure that

the finished site will compliment the natural setting of The Warren.

John Lewis will invest £7m and create 160 new jobs in the new development, to be built on Fougères Way, south of The Warren.

The new store will be spread over two levels, with 4,076 sq. m. of retail floor space selling furniture and a variety of homewares, and is expected to open in autumn 2012.

## Green light for new commercial quarter

THE FIRST phase of office construction for Ashford's new commercial quarter has been given the green light by the council.

Ashford Borough Council's planning committee granted outline planning permission in October for a mixed use development of offices and retail units in Dover Place car park.

The development could include ground floor shops and restaurants, with office space on the upper floors.

Capitalising on the town's high-speed

domestic and international rail links, this phase of the commercial quarter will create approximately 300 jobs and entice more outside investment from companies looking to relocate.

Nearly 200 construction jobs will also be created during the build. The landowners, the Homes and Communities Agency, are working alongside Ashford Borough Council to find a private sector development partner. If approved, the plans could see the first phase of office development begin in 2013.

## Peel submit plans for Chatham Waters

Peel Land & Property have submitted an outline planning application to Medway Council to transform 26 acres of brown-field land on part of Chatham Docks into an exciting £650m mixed-use development following a successful public consultation.

The proposed Chatham Waters scheme will provide an employment-led mixed-use redevelopment of the site of approximately 1.9m sq. ft. including a commercial heart incorporating office space, education facilities, an 'EventCity', and a hotel alongside apartments and townhouses, plus landscaped public areas and a food store. The development has the potential to create approximately 3,500 jobs.

At the public consultation in September, Peel showcased plans for the regeneration of the site and met with locals to gauge the public's opinion. The findings from the consultation revealed that 90% of those questioned were in support of the scheme and over 95% were assured it would give the area a huge boost.

James Whittaker, Development Director at Peel said, "The feedback we received at the public consultation was invaluable and we are very pleased that so many people were supportive of our plans for Chatham Waters. We have taken the comments received on board and are pleased to have submitted a planning application to the Council."

## Helping businesses put down roots in the countryside

KENT'S rural offices are proving to be fertile ground for blossoming businesses with many owners seeking Locate in Kent's help to actively find out-of-town locations from which to trade.

At-home care company Home Instead Senior Care moved into its new base at the Orchard Business Centre in Five Oak Green near Paddock Wood in July. The company specialises in providing high quality care to older people in the comfort of their own homes and is renowned for its flexible and personal approach.

Director Symone Salwan, a management consultant who had previously run a recruitment and training company in Yorkshire, worked closely with Locate in Kent in her search for the ideal rural base.

"I was specifically looking for a countryside location as I like working out of town," said Symone, who employs an office-based care manager and is looking to recruit up to 40 Caregivers during the first 12 months of trading.

"I found Locate in Kent through a general office search on the internet and when I contacted them I was put in touch with Peter Symons. Peter and Karima

Kamel were fantastic. I outlined my requirements and they very quickly drew up a list of 10 possible locations."

Despite her desire to work out of town, Symone was also realistic that there was a balance to be struck between a rural idyll and the requirements of the business.

"The location needed to be central and easy to reach for my staff," she said. "We provide at-home care for a large area, stretching from Tunbridge Wells to Edenbridge, and I had to bear in mind that some of the team might not be comfortable driving across country, particularly during the winter."

Locate in Kent helped arrange viewings of the offices Symone was interested in, while their local knowledge also proved helpful in narrowing down the choice.

"Locate in Kent's help was invaluable," said Symone. "When you are starting from scratch, searching for the right commercial property can be a daunting prospect. But Locate in Kent used their expert local knowledge to narrow down the search to a manageable shortlist and helped arrange viewings of the properties I wanted to see."