

STRAITS COMMITTEE



A COMMON VISION AND STRATEGY

About the Straits Committee

Believing that closer cooperation between the territories bordering the Dover Strait area and the Channel-North Sea region can create new opportunities for residents, businesses, local stakeholders and communities, six local authorities from four countries - the Département du Nord and the Département du Pas-de-Calais (France), the Province of West Flanders and the Province of East Flanders (Belgium), the Province of Zeeland (the Netherlands) and the Kent County Council (United Kingdom) - launched **The Straits Committee** in 2020.

The Straits Committee is a multilateral forum for dialogue, providing a flexible framework for its members to work together within the boundaries of their responsibilities, and for extending cooperation to local stakeholders such as from the voluntary sector, education or the world of business. The member authorities meet up to four times a year at the Straits Executive Committee where each authority is represented by an elected official.

A vision and strategy for the Straits Committee

In launching the Straits Committee, the member authorities agreed to develop a shared vision and strategy to guide their joint working for the area's future development. The following document, prepared for the Straits Executive Committee, proposes a 10-year vision. It summarises where the members of the Straits Committee intend to work together to promote economic development and fluidity of trade, help resolve disruptions, tackle climate change, and support young people.

The Straits Committee: our 2030 vision in summary

- To be recognised as the place where the UK and continental Europe meet and thrive.
- To have learned from the Covid-19 crisis, working together when future disruptions occur.
- To see vibrant cross-border clusters emerge, nurturing new industries and growth sectors.
- To be delivering on CO2 emission reduction commitments and putting the area on the path to net-zero across all sectors.
- To be an area where the views of young people are seen as pivotal to making better place to live and grow up in.

The members of the Straits Committee would be pleased to engage with all stakeholders interested in the future of the area to develop and take forward this vision.



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The Straits Committee: an efficient framework for co-operation

In 2030, the Straits area will be recognised internationally as the place where the UK and continental Europe meet and thrive. The Straits Committee will have contributed substantially to the success of the area, attracting investment for cross border initiatives of tangible benefit. Valuing good neighbourly cooperation, the Straits Committee members will make use of each other's strengths and expertise to strengthen their economies and territories, and develop better local solutions to economic, environmental, and social challenges

Key actions:

- We will organise an annual conference for stakeholders from across the Straits area to focus on key themes for co-operation.
- We will create a Straits Committee network of Contact Points, map expertise in the Straits on priority topics, build on existing cross-border networks and create new working-groups.
- We will create a "Small Project Initiative" to nurture cross-border, grassroots initiatives and help important cross-border project ideas to develop and seek funding.



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The Straits Committee: co-operating through disruption

By 2030, The UK and EU will have settled into a new trading relationship. The Straits area will remain the gateway of choice for UK-EU trade, and demand for travel - whether for business or leisure - will remain strong. The Straits Committee will pay close attention to ensuring that businesses can access locally the information they need to trade across the Straits and identify where support can be improved. Stronger, greener cross-border supply chains that support local economic resilience will be encouraged.

Learning from experience gained during the Covid-19 crisis, the Straits Committee partnership will work closely together whenever future disruptions occur, improving the flow of information and intelligence in order to better face future challenges together.

Key actions:

- We will promote close cooperation between business support organisations within the Straits to identify where support can be improved, particularly for small businesses.
- We will capture issues on the ease of travel for work, study and leisure and work with stakeholders to make recommendations for improvements to the relevant authorities.
- We will share intelligence on Covid-19 recovery responses, explore joint initiatives on tourism recovery and on access to the labour market, particularly for younger people.



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The Straits: A gateway between the UK and the EU, delivering a thriving, dynamic and mutually reinforcing economy

By 2030, the Straits Committee will have helped vibrant cross-border clusters emerge. Research and knowledge institutes, businesses, public authorities, and citizens will be working together in areas where the Straits has significant assets, such as clean and blue energy and the green economy; new materials; innovation and technology; smart transport and logistics; healthcare economy; and agri-food, including fisheries and sea products. With the support of the Straits Committee, several initiatives from these clusters will have developed into fully fledged cross-border projects.

The Straits Committee will also support the modernisation and digital transformation of industry, and the introduction of circular economy value chains by supporting contacts and knowledge exchange between knowledge institutes and research centres, SMEs, producers, consumers and local authorities.

Key actions:

- We will act as an incubator for cross-border clusters, at least their initial stages, piloting a first cluster action in the blue/green economy by 2022.
- We will exchange best practice on strengthening digital literacy and on tackling digital poverty.
- We will work to ensure all Straits Committee economic development initiatives are screened for coherence with climate commitments and sustainability considerations.



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The Straits: A shared natural environment and place to live with the resilience to address the challenges of climate change

By 2030, the Straits area will be delivering on CO2 emission reduction commitments, putting the area on the path to net-zero across all sectors, including mobility and housing. The Straits Committee members will show climate leadership, setting an example in areas under their control, and promoting new initiatives and the sharing of good practice across all sectors and at all levels elsewhere. New solutions will be encouraged on drought and flooding, coastline management, the cross-border management of water resources, and the protection of biodiversity on land and at sea. Alongside these measures, the Straits Committee will encourage climate adaptation and the transition to a more circular and bio-based economy.

Key actions:

- We will develop and support cooperation initiatives to protect the natural and living environment of the Straits Committee, as well as increasing its resilience, in particular its coastline, natural habitats and biodiversity on land and at sea.
- We will stimulate research, knowledge exchange and the implementation of projects and policies on shared water management to fight against drought, floods and salinisation, and to safeguard the availability and quality of water resources in the Straits Committee area.
- We will encourage initiatives in agriculture and fisheries to promote more sustainable production methods, reduce CO2 emissions and create shorter value chains.



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The Straits: an area of opportunity for young people, designed with young people

By 2030, more and more young people will be participating in cross-border work experience or cultural and educational initiatives and improving their intercultural skills. Exchanges of good practice between the Straits partners will be used to help reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

The views of young people will be seen as pivotal to making the Straits a better place to live and grow up in, and to improving job opportunities and well-being in the area. The Straits Committee members will seek out new and inspirational participative policy approaches so young people of the Straits are fully involved in shaping their future.

Key actions:

- We will share information and strategies on cooperation between business and education on work experience, traineeships and/or international coaching structures, social inclusion, wellbeing and health.
- We will improve access to cross-border and cultural exchanges for young people in the Straits to foster openness to other cultures.
- We will organise an event for young people from all over the Straits area to participate designing the policy of the Straits Committee.



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This summary has been prepared on the basis of the Integrated Vision and Strategy for the Straits Committee final report submitted to the Straits Executive Committee by Reeleaf in March 2021.