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Will Port Ramsgate miss the boat on a half-billion investment?

Government investment through the Levelling Up Fund offers the chance to trigger a half a billion pound investment in a Port Ramsgate Maritime Village development. This is not pie in the sky. It's pledged by credible developers. Just think what that could do for local jobs and prosperity. Heard of this project?

The leadership of Thanet District Council (TDC) seem determined to ignore the opportunity and go for investment of a far smaller available sum on chasing the dream of a ferry service.

That is a dream based on the bygone days of Sally Line. Over the last decade or more, TDC have engaged in negotiations with at least nine ferry companies, culminating in the scandalous Seaborne Freight. No result, and a £30 million pound plus cumulative loss. The Port was losing money even before that, when they *had* a regular ferry service.

Now TDC appear on the verge of spending millions on refurbishing the Port to attract another ferry. What ferry companies do TDC have in mind?

TDC has published [Ramsgate Port Narrative](#) as the current plan. Regarding what ferry companies, the 'Evidence for Demand' in the Narrative states: 'this project [the proposed Ro-Ro service] is not linked to any particular operator'(p6-7).

Surely that is not good enough evidence of demand to justify the significant expenditure of scarce public money. Are any particular operators committed? If so how many? What is the estimated number

of dockings per month? We should be able to get quantitative answers without breaching commercial confidentiality.

Given past failures, TDC should show more of the business plan justifying this investment as best value for money. Alarming there is no convincing evidence so far that TDC has such a plan. Leader Cllr Ash Ashbee has said in the past that she wants all the facts on the table. Do it.

There is a fear that a TDC deal with a local and important port authority is in the offing, to deliver non-attended freight as the core activity for nearly half the total area of the Port; turning it into a trailer park.

That's pass-through activity. That is not going to increase jobs in Ramsgate. That is not going to attract people to Ramsgate to spend money. What's more it is dependant, to give Ramsgate an edge, on continued difficulty trading with Europe. Current evidence from Westminster indicates that's going to change; it could easily be that Ro-Ro is a no-no.

As an alternative, take a look at [the proposal from architects TaylorHare](#) for a Maritime Village mixed development to reenergise the Port. It includes the offer of a joint venture with TDC. It is a plan backed by half a billion pounds of pledged inward investment for Ramsgate and Thanet. It is worth scrutiny, review and development as a potential platform for future prosperity.

Remember that the [High Level Feasibility Study](#), commissioned by TDC to kick-start a new Ramsgate Port Master Plan, said (on page eight) that a Maritime Village development of the Port will deliver the best result for Thanet.

Then ask your councillor, or if you are a councillor ask yourself and your leadership: What precisely are the plans for Port Ramsgate and what evidence is there that Ro-Ro is the best option?

We would love to know the answers that you get by sharing with vision@ramsgate-regen.net
