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# NEW MINISTER TAKES THE REINS



**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Iain Wright MP has succeeded Baroness Andrews as Chair of the MKSM Inter-Regional Board.**

The first IRB meeting under his leadership was held in Bedford last month. Speaking in the House of Commons afterwards, Mr. Wright said:

*"At the [IRB] meeting last week, I was impressed by the amount of energy, ambition and positive feeling that I witnessed. Such ambition is needed to ensure that we create places where people will want to live.*

*"Tomorrow, I shall speak at the second annual Milton Keynes and South Midlands conference in Kettering. I will take the opportunity to emphasise the challenge that faces the sub-region, and to pledge my support to champion what people in the area seek to achieve".*

Subjects discussed at the IRB meeting included the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review on the sub-region, the appointment of Hilary Chipping as the new MKSM Director, the third MKSM Annual Monitoring Report (more on p.2) and some of the main risks to delivery at both strategic and local levels. Strategic issues included the need for strengthened economic development to deliver an increase in jobs (both quantitative and qualitative) and skills and to support growth, identifying strategic infrastructure and investment priorities and mechanisms and increasing the delivery of affordable housing across MKSM. Significant concerns were also expressed at the revenue implications of accommodating growth and the failure of the current funding formulae used by Government to take proper account of these. The recent settlements for many public sector agencies including Northamptonshire's local authorities highlights this problem. The Minister undertook to raise this matter with John Healey the Local Government Minister.

The next IRB meeting is scheduled to be held in Corby on 6<sup>th</sup> March.

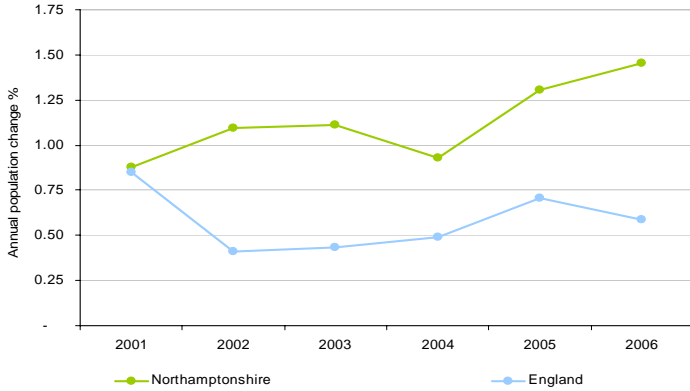
## CONFERENCE IS A ROARING SUCCESS

The 2007 MKSM Conference held in Kettering on 22nd November was attended by around 300 representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The keynote speech given by Iain Wright MP was followed by speakers from a range of key national and local agencies. Conference papers, as presented to the delegates on the day, are available for £99 from Neil Stewart Associates: <http://www.neilstewartassociates.com/conferences/packs/orderPack.php?id=sa240>. Alternatively, relive the experience online! [http://www.policyreview.tv/system.php?page=conf/intro&conf\\_id=54](http://www.policyreview.tv/system.php?page=conf/intro&conf_id=54)

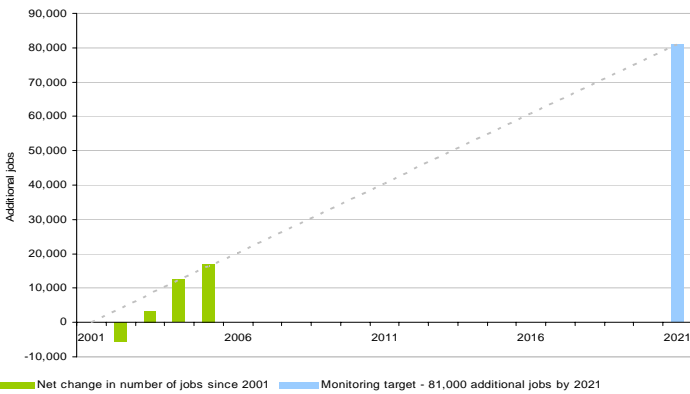
# SPECIAL FEATURE: 2006/07 AMR HIGHLIGHTS

**The 2006/07 MKSM SRS Annual Monitoring Report documents progress in the Sub-Region since 2001. Here are some highlights relating to the Northamptonshire Growth Areas.**

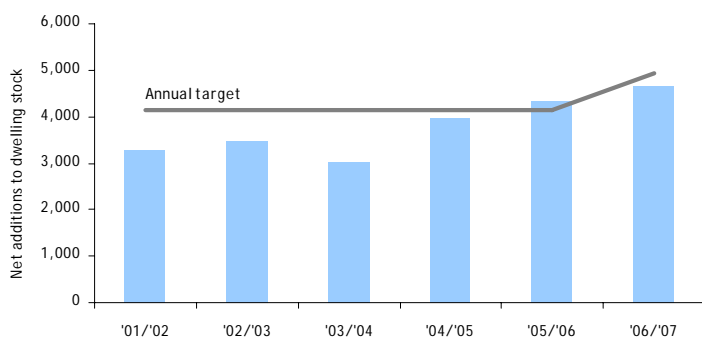
The population of Northamptonshire is growing quickly, from c.631,000 in 2001 to c.669,100 in 2006 (ONS). This growth rate of 6% greatly exceeds the national growth rate of 0.5%. The population is younger than the national average, with more people aged under 16 years than of retirement age.



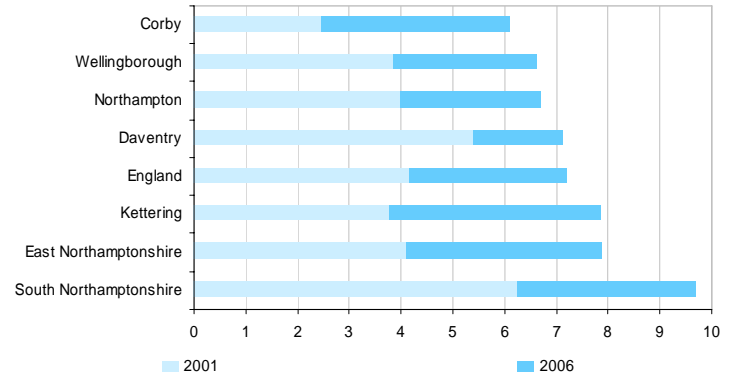
The economy of the county is performing well, with strong growth experienced in many of the growth sectors. According to the Annual Business Inquiry an additional 17,000 jobs have been created since 2001. More detailed employment studies are currently being commissioned, which will ensure that more accurate local data is available to monitor progress.



The annual number of housing completions rose for the fourth year running to 4,660, 41% higher than in 2001. However the total number built since 2001 is c. 3,000 below the target set in the Sub-Regional Strategy. With sufficient support for infrastructure funding the Local Delivery vehicles are confident that targets can be achieved.



Levels of affordable housing completions remain an issue in some parts of the county. Whilst the number of affordable dwellings completed each year has more than doubled since 2001, worsening affordability means that this issue continues to grow in importance. The position is particularly stark in South Northamptonshire, where lower quartile house prices are almost 10 times higher than lower quartile pay.

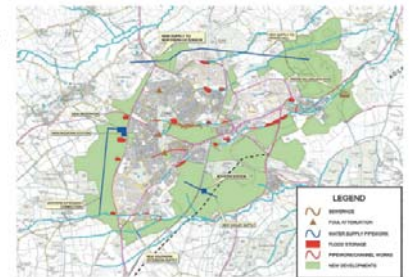


The transport delivery programme is being developed further through an MKSM-wide prioritisation which is being undertaken for the newly formed Strategic Transport Board. The results of this will feed into the second Regional Funding Allocation.

Investment in community and environmental infrastructure continues, with many good examples being reported.

### CASE STUDY: CORBY WATER CYCLE STRATEGY

The Corby Water Cycle Strategy was produced by the Environment Agency, Anglian Water Services, Corby Borough Council and North Northamptonshire Development Company and launched in March 2007. It explains the water infrastructure that will be required to allow Corby to grow, including a specification of what must be done to manage water supply and treatment in the area as well as managing the natural water environment for the benefit of the local community. The water infrastructure is expected to cost around £76 million and will be provided in phases over the next 25 years.



MKSM Governance arrangements are continuing to develop. The Inter Regional Board, chaired by Communities minister Iain Wright supports and encourages the alignment and integration of government department and agency priorities and investment programmes. The new MKSM Director, Hilary Chipping, is due to start in January 2008.

The full MKSM 2006/07 Annual Monitoring Report can be accessed at: <http://www.northamptonshireobservatory.org.uk/publications/document.asp?documentid=1119>

## PLANNING

### Examination of the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy

The Inspector, Mr Eric Searle, opened the public hearing into the soundness of the Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October. It is taking place at the Kettering Conference Centre and has so far sat for 10 days. A further 2 days are programmed on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> February 2008 to consider the latter sections of the CSS including policies addressing climate change, affordable housing and monitoring.

The most contentious issues arising from the Examination so far have been:

1. Whether there is a need to identify strategic gaps between settlements. Development interests and Northamptonshire County Council argued that countryside restraint policies provide adequate protection, whilst the JPU, Borough Council of Wellingborough, local residents and others contended that an additional strategic policy was warranted given the growth pressures facing North Northamptonshire.
2. Whether the transport priorities set out in the CSS are appropriate, in particular how much development can progress ahead of the A14 improvement and whether the Kettering Eastern Avenue should be given greater prominence.
3. The lack of certainty over infrastructure investment. On a positive note, work coordinated through North Northants Development Company on a waste water capacity study enabled the Environment Agency to conditionally withdraw its objection to the CSS housing trajectory.
4. Developers seeking the identification of additional or bigger sustainable urban extensions to meet housing delivery targets. The JPU has maintained that focus should remain on an orderly development of the sustainable urban extensions rather than a rushed release of smaller sites on a 'first-come' basis. It has argued that the locations for development put forward by developers could not be included in the CSS without rendering it unsound.
5. Debate over whether the CSS needs to make provision for a single large B1 office site and for greater provision for B8 strategic distribution development in order to meet jobs targets.
6. Debate over distribution of development in line with the spatial strategy, including whether too much development is going to take place in the rural areas and smaller towns, whether Rushden has been given a big enough role and whether the CSS retail strategy is appropriate.

Once the CSS examination is completed, the Inspector will prepare his binding report, setting out whether the CSS is sound or, if not, whether it is possible to amend it in order to make it sound. It is hoped that this will be available to allow the Joint Planning Committee to adopt the CSS at the end of April.

For more information go to: <http://www.nnjp.org.uk/>

## NEW DIRECTOR TO SPEARHEAD GROWTH AREA

### The Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM) Executive is pleased to announce the appointment of Hilary Chipping who will take up the new senior position of Director to the MKSM Inter-Regional Board.

Accepting the appointment in November 2007 Hilary said:

"I am delighted with the appointment and looking forward to the challenges ahead. This is a new position and an exciting opportunity personally to shape and develop the role. The challenges faced by MKSM as the largest of the Government's four main Growth Areas are substantial, not least as the area straddles three different regions. The competition for funding and investment is high but MKSM has the potential to make a major contribution to housing and jobs growth nationally. We need to secure the infrastructure investment necessary to make this happen and at an early stage in the process, but also to ensure that communities are well planned, thriving and ultimately sustainable places where people want to live and work. I hope to continue to build on the strong tradition of partnership working established through the MKSM Inter-Regional Board and its structures, and to strengthen understanding about the MKSM offer and opportunities, and our relationship with Government and other sectors".

Hilary has joined us from the Highways Agency where she was appointed Director of Network Strategy in 2001 and before that she was Divisional Manager of the Roads Policy Division at the Department for Transport. She also has experience in central government on housing policy and finance, as an economist in housing, water services, and local government finance. With extensive experience in a variety of high profile posts Hilary will be a key asset to the MKSM Inter-Regional Board and a champion for the sub-region.

One of the first tasks for the Director will be leading the development of the MKSM Business Plan. This will set out the challenges and opportunities for MKSM, and its offer to business, investors, Government and others, as well as identifying the strategic infrastructure and interventions required and investment needed to deliver additional housing and jobs in the sub-region.

On behalf of the MKSM Executive, Danny Brennan said: "We are pleased to secure such an experienced and high level candidate for the position. This is a newly created post and a highly challenging one. We are confident that Hilary will bring leadership and drive to further strengthen the MKSM partnership, its ability to deliver, and ensure that the growth challenges we face and the MKSM offer is recognised by Government, its agencies and other key public and private sector interests".



## RESOURCES

### GAF3: Northamptonshire to receive £58.9m

Earlier this month the Government announced that £58.9m of the third round of Growth Area Funding will be allocated to Northamptonshire between 2008 and 2011.

The announcement proposes that North Northamptonshire should receive a total of **£28.8m** and West Northamptonshire **£30.1m** (this includes allocations for 2009/10 and 2010/11, which are indicative). c.£172m has yet to be allocated nationally so it is hoped that the final figures will be higher than the current allocations.

The Growth Area Fund is designed to support the provision of community facilities and infrastructure and will complement mainstream funding for transport, education and health services.

For the first time local partners will have greater flexibility in deciding where money is needed most. The new block grant approach means decisions on which projects will secure funding will be made locally rather than by central government. These projects have yet to be decided - watch out for an update in the next issue of the ebulletin.

### Building better incentives for local economic growth: reforms to the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives (LABGI) scheme

LABGI was introduced by the Government in 2005 to provide a financial incentive for local authorities to promote sustainable economic growth by allowing them to benefit from increases in revenue derived from business rates. The scheme has already had a considerable impact across the county through Northamptonshire County Council investment of LABGI funding in Northamptonshire Enterprise Ltd.

The Government has recently consulted on a range of reforms to the scheme to be introduced in 2009/10. The County Council and other partners have expressed their concern that the amount of funding to be channelled through LABGI has been cut considerably. £50 million will be available, which will double in its second year as it becomes a full and permanent part of the local government finance system. Proposed objectives include ensuring that local authorities have a permanent incentive for business growth that is fully integrated with the local government finance system to ensure security necessary for making long term plans. It should create a stronger, simpler and more predictable link between local growth and local incentives, fairer mechanisms for every authority and a balance between the stability of funding and timeliness of rewards.

Government is considering ways in which LABGI payments can work with three year settlements while providing a strong incentive that rewards local authorities quickly for positive actions. However, in order to give full three year certainty to LABGI payments, rewards would need to be lagged by three years - meaning that authorities would have to wait three years before receiving the benefits of the impact of growth in their areas. This is clearly a concern in the growth areas.

A detailed consultation with firm proposals and options on the future LABGI scheme will be published by Government in Spring 2008.

For more information go to:

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr\\_csr/documents/pbr\\_csr07\\_local.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr_csr/documents/pbr_csr07_local.cfm)

### Walkers & cyclists Connect2 £50m success

**Two Northamptonshire walking and cycling schemes will benefit from the success of the Sustrans' Connect2 project in the People's £50 Million Lottery Giveaway to the tune of £4m.**

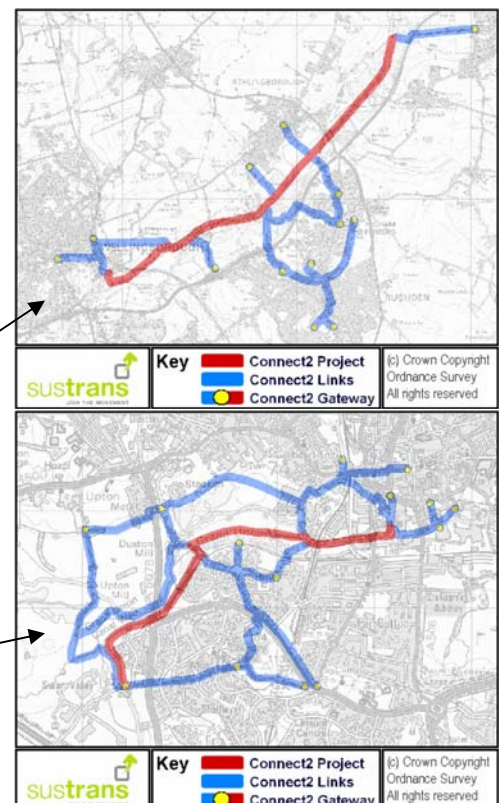
The two schemes will revitalise walking and cycling in parts of Wellingborough, East Northamptonshire and Northampton by creating new routes for every day journeys. Crossings and bridges will be created over busy roads, railway lines and rivers, linking into networks of local paths.

#### Wellingborough, Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Irthlingborough and Raunds

All these towns lie on the edge of the Nene Valley. The river and its flood plain defines their location and separates them from each other. Major roads including the A45 have completed their isolation. This scheme connects the five towns together with direct, attractive walking and cycling routes. It will create a route along the old gravel haul roads in the valley floor making a direct route to Wellingborough Station. Once these routes are in place, it will be possible for many residents to travel by active and sustainable methods that are convenient and beneficial to both their health and the environment.

#### Northampton, Briar Hill and Upton Park, River Nene connection

Two bustling main roads cross the River Nene near Northampton centre. Neither serves cyclists in comfort or safety. It is the same for people wishing to ride up or down river since development on both banks has long ignored access to the water. The project plugs many of the remaining gaps by sponsoring new paths, along and across the river connecting to homes, workplaces, shops and cultural facilities.



These maps are intended to be used as a picture of the far reaching nature of the scheme. The details of all projects are still being discussed, so these maps are not a promise of where routes will go.



## DELIVERY

### GARRETT EMMERSON APPOINTED THE FIRST CHAIR OF THE NEW MKSM STRATEGIC TRANSPORT BOARD



Garrett Emmerson, Director of consultants Steer Davies Gleave and Member of the Commission for Integrated Transport, has been appointed the first independent chair of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Strategic Transport Board.

Commenting on his appointment, Garrett Emmerson said "I am delighted to be taking this important position working on behalf of this major growth Area and particularly at such an exciting time with the recent announcements on Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 and more particularly in terms of transport the publication last month of *Towards a Sustainable Transport System*, which includes the government's response to the Eddington and Stern reports and outlines the vital role of transport in supporting sustainable economic growth".

The Board was set up in June 2007. Membership consists of the Leader or portfolio holder for each transport/principal authority and Board level representation from the Regional Development Agencies, English Partnerships, and the Local Delivery Vehicles. It also includes senior officials from the Regional Assemblies, the Highways Agency, Network Rail, Department for Transport and the Government Offices.

Commenting on the decision Councillor Jim Harker, Leader of Northamptonshire County Council (who hosted the inaugural meeting) said "The communities of Milton Keynes and South Midlands face some huge challenges in the coming years in attempting to accommodate the growth planned for the sub-region. None of these are bigger than the provision of adequate transport infrastructure and sustainable transport networks.

"I am delighted that all of the major delivery bodies have now come together to form a joint Strategic Transport Board, which will be of immense help in developing and delivering the strategic inter-urban transport networks needed to support housing growth and economic development."

The Board's remit includes preparing, and keeping under review, a robust Business Plan for strategic transport which identifies the strategic investment priorities for MKSM and growth. It will also performance and risk manage the delivery of the strategic transport priorities. This will be done by promoting, facilitating and encouraging effective joint working on strategic and inter-regional matters, including possibly via a Multi-Area Agreement or similar performance framework. It will also lobby on matters of joint interest for MKSM.

The move to greater sub-regional working for MKSM is seen as wholly consistent with the findings of the Eddington Report which highlighted the need for stronger sub-regional transport governance and delivery structures to ensure that transport contributes effectively to growth, economic development and regeneration.

For further information please contact Garrett Emmerson, Tel: 020 7919 8500, E Mail: [garrett.emmerson@sdgworld.net](mailto:garrett.emmerson@sdgworld.net)

### Rail operators plan December changes

Both new rail franchises in Northamptonshire began on November 11<sup>th</sup>. London Midland now provides the train services for Northampton and Long Buckby with East Midlands Trains providing the services for Kettering and Wellingborough.

Both new companies have consulted on their draft December 2008 timetable and intend to make many positive introductions:

- Twice hourly services from Northampton to Birmingham via Long Buckby.
- Hourly service from Northampton to Crewe. This train also restores Long Buckby's direct service to London.
- A new hourly service from Kettering to London.

However, the County Council and other partners have raised some areas of concern:

- The reduction in services north of Kettering to only 1 per hour from the present 2.
- The lack of detail surrounding how Corby will be served.
- The loss of the 07:12 Virgin Pendolino service from Northampton to London.
- The timing of trains from Northampton to London.
- The length of time the service from Northampton to Birmingham takes.

The County Council and other partners are continuing an open dialogue with the train companies to address these issues.

### Market Square to thrive again



Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited (NEL) has awarded Northampton Borough Council funding for a £100,000 project to reverse the decline of the market and find ways to bring new life to the square and main shopping street.

A steering group will look at how this space could be used in a different way, comparing Northampton with some of the best squares in the UK and abroad to see what lessons can be learned, and creating a business plan for the area. Public consultation will be an important part of the process, in particular asking what events or activities people would like to see.

The report will be completed by March 2008.

## DELIVERY

### Art in Salcey Forest

October 2007-Spring 2009, Salcey Forest

Six new sculptures by Linda Johns ([www.lindajohns.com](http://www.lindajohns.com)), presented as an art walk in the beautiful setting of Salcey Forest, are open to the public every day.

*One sculpture, **Body Weave III**, shown here on a misty October morning, was installed 5th October 2007 (see F on the [map](#)). The complete art walk will be installed Spring 2008.*



### November has been a busy and successful month for the RNRP Team at numerous Awards Ceremonies...

Following the Commendation awarded by the East Midlands Royal Town Planning Institute to the Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite in October, the Suite was also Highly Commended at the Association for Geographic Information (AGI) Awards. The Awards Dinner took place at the Thistle, Marble Arch on Thursday 22nd November, where RNRP received a Commendation in the Innovation and Best Practice (Local Government) Category. For more information visit the Awards page on the AGI Website at

[www.agi.org.uk/bfora/systems/xmlviewer/default.asp?arg=DS\\_AGI\\_AGENDAART\\_90/list.xsl/114](http://www.agi.org.uk/bfora/systems/xmlviewer/default.asp?arg=DS_AGI_AGENDAART_90/list.xsl/114)

The ECA&GI Suite received further accolade from the Landscape Institute winning the national Award in the Strategic Landscape Planning Category, and a further Commended in the Landscape Policy Category. The Salcey Forest Treetop Walkway also received a Commendation in the Institute's coveted Design 1-5 ha Award. For more information visit the Awards page on the Landscape Institute Website at

[www.landscapeinstitute.org/news\\_and\\_events/news/articles/2007/11/29/Outstanding\\_landscape\\_architecture\\_schemes\\_recognised\\_at\\_awards\\_ceremony/](http://www.landscapeinstitute.org/news_and_events/news/articles/2007/11/29/Outstanding_landscape_architecture_schemes_recognised_at_awards_ceremony/)

The River Nene Regional Park Team also took part in the Northampton Business Excellence Awards Ceremony, as reported in the Business section of the Chronicle & Echo last week. This took place on Wednesday 21st November at Hangar One, Sywell, where the RNRP won the Environment Award for creating a green network of environmental projects throughout the county and championing the delivery of green infrastructure. For more information read the Press Release on the RNRP Website, [www.riverneneregionalpark.org](http://www.riverneneregionalpark.org) or For winners and photos of the event visit the Northamptonshire Business Excellence Awards Website at [www2.northamptontoday.co.uk/biz-award-winners-07/catagories-winners-07.htm](http://www2.northamptontoday.co.uk/biz-award-winners-07/catagories-winners-07.htm)



### The Green Infrastructure Environmental Grant Scheme

RNRP have finalised grant allocations of over £329,000 from its Green Infrastructure Environmental Grant Scheme up to March 2008. Department of Communities & Local Government's growth area funding has been awarded to 27 innovative projects, ranging from small schemes providing wildlife gardens and children's allotments at schools and playgroups, to larger projects restoring historic landscapes which improve the green infrastructure within Northamptonshire and parts of Peterborough. For more information go to press releases on the RNRP website.

All RNRP News, Press Releases, Events and projects can be accessed on the new website at [www.riverneneregionalpark.org](http://www.riverneneregionalpark.org). Sign up for free and become a member to receive updates and access the blog/discussion hub (coming soon....)

The successful communication of news and progress on projects and activities within the Northamptonshire growth areas relies on your contributions to the e-bulletin. Thanks to all who contributed to this edition.

If you have any news for the next e-bulletin please contact Kieran Palmer: [kpalmer@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:kpalmer@northamptonshire.gov.uk). Please let us know in advance if you anticipate any major news on key developments or significant milestones which you would like to highlight as a special feature. For any other enquiries, please contact Ian Achurch: [iachurch@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:iachurch@northamptonshire.gov.uk).

All issues of the e-bulletin can be found on the Northamptonshire County Council website:

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Environment/MKSM/ebulletin.htm>

Issue 16 of the e-bulletin will be circulated in Spring 2008.

Prepared on behalf of partners by Northamptonshire County Council, December 2007.