



Project

1. Context and strategic dimension

The context for the project centres on the various strategic interests operating at different scales with the (English) Channel as their focal point of reference. These interests demonstrate an increasing need to co-operate far beyond the eligible area of the current Franco-British INTERREG IIIA programme.

During the current period of increasing European integration, this North-West part of the continent is re-configuring itself in relation to previously accepted imperatives, as well as adding in new ones brought about by societal change.

2. 3 strategic dimensions.

The English Channel is the busiest maritime thoroughfare in the world

- More than 600 vessel movements both through and across the Straits (of Dover) every day.
- It is one of Europe's gateways to the world, and North-South an important communications route between Britain and Continental Europe.
- One of the prime considerations of this strategic dimension is safety, repeatedly evidenced by recent accidents at sea.
- The strategic interests provided by economic development are less immediately obvious, but nonetheless they represent the backcloth for the future growth of regions bordering the Channel.
- Maritime traffic will continue to increase, so what powers of imagination, what capabilities, will be required of English and French stakeholders alike to exploit this situation?



Important exchange link between Britain and the continent. This provides the second strategic dimension.

- Recent decades have witnessed very important increases in volume of traffic, frequency of service and number of connecting routes, marking a qualitative jump with what existed previously.
- All modes of transport included, the number of people moving between the continent and the British Isles is estimated at 100 million. Just counting ferry and rail crossings, one still arrives at a total of 45 million passengers.
- To this considerable movement of people must be added an equally large flow of goods.
- To the organisation of such traffic should be added the key issue of economic spin-off: how does one ensure that the adjacent regions benefit from a "cross-roads" rather than "corridor effect" where people and goods simply pass through without contributing to local development?

A zone of multiple interacting and overlapping activities.

- The busy, indeed congested, use of the Channel provides a prime and central motivation for adopting a combined approach.
- The safety of maritime transport must be a shared responsibility. Although this represents a particularly visible and pressing issue, it is far from being the only one. The Channel area is a shared space, a small Anglo-French internal sea.
- Coastal areas have always been areas where pressure and competition between the different activities are intense. It is particularly the case on both opposite shores of this internal sea, which also have some issues in common.
- Environmental issues, from protection of seashores to the preservation of natural sites and fauna, need to be combined with increasing urbanisation, tourism, fishing activities and marinas, economic and port uses, new projects for major economic development, above all Port 2000 in Le Havre and the project for a new port in Southampton.
- This is not a comprehensive list but it illustrates the overlapping uses of and around what has become the Pond, the Anglo French internal sea.