

5.5a. District Dashboard Folkestone & Hythe

Folkestone & Hythe is a district of stark contrasts – second only to Canterbury in terms of holiday bed-nights, it is bottom of the pack in terms of business nights, coming just below Gravesham. F&H falls in the mid-third of Kent districts in terms of MICE capacity, but is in the top three for group tour capacity. F&H has the largest 3* and budget capacity of the county, with 19% of the county's total provision, but in the bottom third for 4* provision, alongside Swale and Thanet. According to the Cambridge Model Impact Analysis for 2017, F&H has the highest proportion of visitors in paid accommodation of all the districts of Kent, at 72%. Airbnb provision is moderately high, and it has noticeably experienced the highest levels of growth (2016-19), with a predominance of entire home rentals. Provision is focused along the coast, and, interestingly, seems to be providing accommodation in an area largely untapped by more formal accommodation supply. **Rental demand** metric is also high.

13/13 for **BUSINESS NIGHTS**: 88,200 bed-nights = 3.5% of total for Kent
2/13 for **HOLIDAY NIGHTS**: 909,100 bed-nights = 11.3% of total for Kent

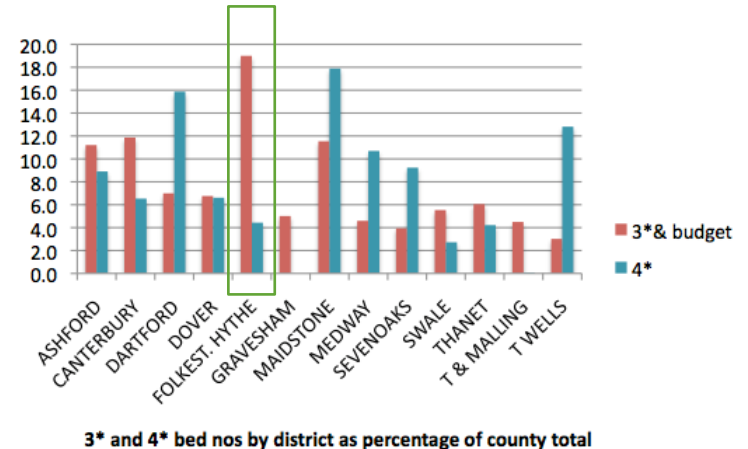
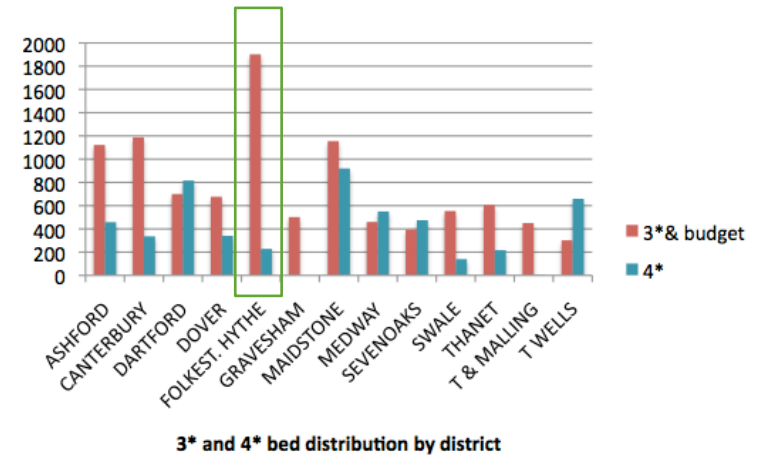
7 **MICE-ready** accommodation establishments = 6.5% of county total
Total **MICE capacity**: 1045 = 6.4% of county capacity within accommodation establishments

Largest single MICE venue capacity: 400



Group tour-ready establishments: 8 = 8.7% of Kent total

Airbnb: 598 **ACTIVE RENTALS** with a **rental growth** of **604%** between 2016 (Q2) and 2019 (Q2). **Rental demand** 87 (joint 3rd /13)



Sources of data for district dashboards: Extrapolated from Destination Research 2018, Visit Kent Business Barometers, CCCU Accommodation Database audit and Airdna webpages (subscription to district level data).

5.5b. Folkestone & Hythe (interview findings)



Visitor Offer

Folkestone & Hythe has a diverse tourism offer, comprising beaches and seaside towns, arts, culture and heritage, countryside, villages, and a varied natural landscape, including the Kent Downs AONB, and the SSSI of Romney Marsh and Dungeness. Folkestone played a significant part in the First World War, and the town's war time heritage is commemorated by the Memorial Arch, which is an important asset in Folkestone's visitor offer. The nuclear power station at Dungeness is a popular visitor attraction. Visitor management and sustainability are important priorities in controlling the pressures on some of the fragile areas of the district.

Key Drivers for the Visitor Economy

Folkestone is home to the headquarters of Saga, which is a major employer locally. An important driver of tourism in Folkestone is the Folkestone Triennial, which is run by Creative Folkestone, and the recent development of the Harbour Arm by the Folkestone Harbour and Seafront Development Company has made it an important tourist attraction, at the same time as driving investment in regeneration and property development on Folkestone's seafront. The support for the creative sector has encouraged small-scale independents and freelancers to locate in the Old Town, alongside the organisation for digital creatives, Screen South. The Council is keen to attract more creative, digital and media companies, including independent film makers, and to maximise the benefits Folkestone offers through its gateway position as the location for Eurotunnel, and its high speed rail link to London.

Drivers



Main:

Visitor offer – culture and heritage in the towns of Folkestone and Hythe; arts festivals and events; beaches, nature and rural villages.

Supplementary:

Connectivity – gateway position as the location for Eurotunnel; high speed rail link to London.

Potential:

Infrastructure projects – Otterpool Park (10,000 home development bordering the M20 near Lympne, to be delivered over the next 30 years); planned London Ashford Airport expansion.

5.5b. Folkestone & Hythe (interview findings)



Gaps in Provision

Tourism is recognised as an important component of the Folkestone & Hythe economy in the Economic Development Strategy, although the emphasis is on a drive to create higher value jobs. The Council's focus to date has been on enhancing the physical environment of the district to make it more attractive for visitors. However, it is recognised that there is scope for improving the quality of the offer by upgrading existing accommodation stock. The spa market is served by the seafront Hythe Imperial Hotel, and Port Lympne has recently made significant investment in its accommodation, including glamping. There is felt to be need for additional quality hotel provision on Romney Marsh, particularly in light of the planned expansion of London Ashford Airport.

Links to Key Planning and Policy Documents

Local Plan (Tourism Chapter): <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/webapp/local-plan/written/cpt6.php>
(approved July 2020)

COVID Economic Recovery Plan – in preparation, due for publication autumn 2020

Core Strategy (currently under review): <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/article/273/Core-Strategy-Review-2020>

Priority gaps

Additional quality hotel provision on Romney Marsh (London Ashford Airport expansion)

Support for inward investment:



Enabling environment:

Council spending is generally earmarked for public realm improvements, whilst encouraging tourism sector businesses to collaborate and invest together. The Tourism Business Board, which is supported by the Council, is currently focused on supporting recovery, with a priority of extending the shoulder months through marketing and promotion through the EXPERIENCE programme.