



GO TO PLACES



Visit Kent Strategy 2021 - 2024



Vision

To be a world class destination management team that delivers innovative and desirable places for visitors, residents and businesses.

Mission

To build and grow innovative and desirable places that enrich people's lives through our collaboration, insights and expertise.



Collaborative

Leveraging local and national partnerships to maximise the benefits for our destinations

Innovative

Dynamic industry leaders that can adapt to changing markets and opportunities

Our Values

Perceptive

Insights and market intelligence are at the heart of every decision we make

Inclusive

Delivering a positive impact on local communities and creating welcoming destinations for all

Background



Visit Kent is the official Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for Kent and Medway, responsible for championing the county’s visitor economy which is worth over £4.1 billion and supports more than 81,000 jobs. We are recognised as one of the country’s leading DMOs, targeting UK and overseas markets to raise Kent’s profile as a premier destination, improving quality and skills within the industry and growing investment in tourism. We operate a not-for-profit model with a mix of funding from the public and private sector bringing together an engaged network of partners including attractions, accommodation, food and drink businesses, transport, retail, local authorities, cultural organisations, universities and range of other stakeholders that make up our visitor economy. Visit Kent has been successful in accessing national, regional and European funding to leverage further investment and support for the sector in Kent. Our consultancy arm, Go to Places, also allows the Visit Kent team to deliver at scale a broad range of services such as research and placemaking to partners within, outside and in partnership with Visit Kent.

The recent [independent review of Destination Management Organisations](#) clearly sets out the market failure which has been experienced in many destinations and the need for strong strategic leadership to ensure the sector fulfils its potential and supports wider strategic goals. The challenges that the sector has faced over the last 18 months has only reinforced the importance of the role that Visit Kent plays in bringing stakeholders together and the value that the visitor economy brings to our places. The report also emphasises the need for a stable mixed funding model with Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships **“realising the value of tourism”, “working in partnership” and “ensuring the visitor economy is fully integrated into their economic strategies.”** The frameworks and partnerships developed by Visit Kent with support from Kent County Council, SELEP, Medway and District Council partners, demonstrates best practice but we must build on this to place Kent in a position to capitalise on opportunities as a result of this review.

The impact of the pandemic on the visitor economy meant the team had to quickly **respond** to the crisis with sector specific support and advice, emergency communications, monitoring and lobbying, as set out in the [2020 Annual Review](#), as a result partnerships with other business support organisations in the county have strengthened working together closely on a number of projects. This was followed by work to **reboot** footfall and **rebuild** confidence as we saw the sector gradually reopen, however, despite this work being critical for businesses, Visit Kent also saw more uncertainty in funding from the private sector as a result of the impact on businesses.

This strategy sets out a three-year plan divided into three interconnected strands which focus on close alignment with local and national strategies by placing the visitor economy firmly at the heart of our destinations to enable the wider recovery:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Rebuild | Driving the recovery of the visitor economy, our places and communities |
| Grow | Grow the Kent brand as a world-class destination to visit, live, work, invest and study |
| Sustain | A long-term commitment to a sustainable, desirable and innovative destination, where businesses and communities thrive |

The core activity set out in this plan delivers against local priorities for **growth, jobs, skills, the environment, communities, health and wellbeing, sustainable development and regeneration** and therefore should be primarily supported by the public sector. Additional funding unlocked as a result of funding bids will be designed to enhance activity to provide more impact or deliver against national strategic priorities. Additional private sector contributions would primarily focus on the delivery of increased destination marketing activity.

Recovery of Kent's Visitor Economy

Prior to the pandemic, Visit Kent supported the value of the visitor economy to increase by over £1.2bn in a decade supporting over 80,000 jobs in the County. Current forecasts predict that the sector won't recover to pre-pandemic levels until 2025, therefore this three year strategy will focus on supporting the sector to rebuild, capitalising on growth opportunities and delivering sustainable destination management to recover the sector value and jobs ahead of the average UK destination.

This infographic summarises the volume and value of tourism and the impact of visitor expenditure on the local economy in 2019. The results are derived using the Cambridge Economic Impact Model under licence by Destination Research Ltd.

66.5M VISITORS



£4.1BN VALUE 81,458 JOBS



KENT'S PERFORMANCE

2017 → 2019



PURPOSE OF TRIP TO KENT



HOLIDAY 35%
THOSE ON HOLIDAY
STAY 3.6 NIGHTS
IN THE AREA AND
SPEND £233.15
FOR THE DURATION OF THE
TRIP



BUSINESS 16%
THOSE ON BUSINESS
STAY 2.9 NIGHTS
IN THE AREA AND
SPEND £240.87
FOR THE DURATION OF THE
TRIP



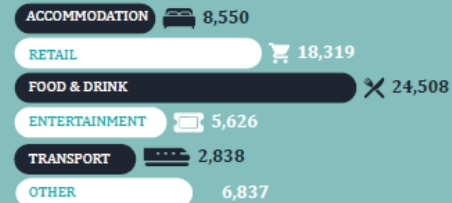
VFR 44%
THOSE VISITING FRIENDS AND RELATIVES
STAY 3.2 NIGHTS
IN THE AREA AND
SPEND £91.66
FOR THE DURATION OF THE TRIP



5%
OTHER PURPOSES
INCLUDING OVERSEAS
STUDY VISITS

VALUE AND VOLUME

TOURISM JOBS



DIRECT EXPENDITURE



VISITOR BREAKDOWN

OVERNIGHT VISITORS
4.9 MILLION VISITORS
17.2 MILLION NIGHTS
£899 MILLION VALUE



DOMESTIC VISITORS
3.7 MILLION VISITORS
10.7 MILLION NIGHTS
£560 MILLION VALUE



OVERSEAS VISITORS
1.1 MILLION VISITORS
6.5 MILLION NIGHTS
£340 MILLION VALUE



DAY VISITORS
61.7 MILLION VISITORS
£2.25 BILLION VALUE



Visitor Economy

Revitalises Highstreets

Creates Communities

Brings People Together

Attracts Skilled Workers

Attracts Inward Investment

Celebrates Culture

Improves Health & Wellbeing

Supporting Wider Recovery

This three year strategy will **place the visitor economy firmly at the heart of our destinations** to enable the wider recovery of the economy and our communities. Close alignment with inward investment, placemaking and cultural strategies will help to deliver vibrant places which offer people a good quality of life and attract people to **live, work, study, invest and visit.**

Measuring Impact

Traditionally the Visitor Economy has been measured solely on the economic impact. In addition to measuring the **volume and value of visitors and jobs supported**, this three year strategy sets out a range of activities and indicators that will be monitored to demonstrate the positive impact on **resident physical and mental wellbeing** and **reduction in environmental impact** through consumer behaviour change and business adaptation.

Environmental impact

Sustainable Destination

Social Impact

Economic Impact



Visit Kent Strategy 2021 - 2024

VISIT KENT
BUSINESS
GARDEN of ENGLAND

Industry
insights




GO TO PLACES
Bringing people together, helping places thrive

Informed by data and industry knowledge

Rebuild

Support local & national placemaking initiatives and economic recovery strategies

Respond to industry challenges with national partners & deliver timely sector-specific business support locally

Deliver a positive impact on local communities & improve resident wellbeing

Grow

Develop innovative, year-round Experiences which support businesses and engage visitors

Work with partners to increase the quality and capacity of Kent's accommodation to increase overnight stays

Continue to develop new markets & audiences through targeted marketing & distribution

Sustain

Strong partnerships & collaborative activity under a compelling destination brand to deliver economies of scale

Strategic destination management to deliver sustainable and inclusive destinations

Unlock funding through the development of bids with cross-sector and regional partners

Aligned to support the delivery of local and national strategies

Business support

Research

Distribution

Product development

Content creation

Digital marketing

Partnership development

Lobbying & funding

Continually measuring impact, monitoring data and identifying opportunities



Rebuild

Aims

To support the recovery of the visitor economy, our places and communities by:

- Feeding into local and national placemaking initiatives and economic recovery strategies.
- Responding to industry challenges with national partners & deliver timely sector-specific business support locally
- Delivering a positive impact on local communities and improve resident wellbeing.

Approach and key deliverables

- Actively engage in local placemaking initiatives and development of recovery strategies to ensure the visitor economy is used to enable high street and destination recovery.
- Lead the SELEP Revi-VE project to support tourism businesses in Kent, Sussex and Essex to rebuild post-Covid and support wider place-making initiatives.
- Chair the Visitor Economy District Officers group.
- Chair the Promoting Kent group, working with county wide partners to promote Kent as a great place to live, visit, study and invest.
- Maintain proactive engagement with national industry bodies to ensure that the Kent visitor economy has a strong voice.
- Engage in national lobbying activity and campaigns to improve perceptions around a career in the industry.
- Gather insights into industry challenges through regular forums, stakeholder engagement and surveys.
- Provide ongoing sector specific training, resources and support for businesses and signpost to other support programmes through the Visit Kent Business website, events and communications.
- Ensure key messages around supporting local communities, buying local, being active, engaging positively with outdoor spaces and the cultural offer is central to content planning.
- Deliver the annual Kent Big Weekend resident campaign to encourages residents to explore their local area and become ambassadors to drive visiting friends and relatives market.

Key partnerships

- Industry partners (VisitEngland, TIER, Tourism Alliance, UK Hospitality, People 1st)
- Kent County Council, Medway Council, District Councils
- SELEP, KMEP
- Creative Estuary, Kent Cultural Transformation Board, Medway Place Board
- Kent Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts
- Locate in Kent, Produced in Kent
- University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University

Local and national strategies supported through activity

- [Kent Cultural Strategy](#) and [Medway Cultural Strategy](#)
- [Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) and [Kent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Kent and Medway Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan](#)
- [South East LEP Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy](#)
- [Medway 2035](#)
- [South East LEP Skills Strategy](#)
- [KCC 14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy](#) and [Kent and Medway Employment Plan](#)
- [Tourism Recovery Plan](#)

Measuring Impact

- Number of placemaking partners engaged through SELEP Revi-VE.
- Number of placemaking and recovery strategies where visitor economy is mentioned.
- Number of jobs supported directly & indirectly through supply chain.
- Number of vacancies in the sector compared to national average.
- Engagement with B2B channels and communications.
- Annual residents survey.
- Engagement in Kent Big Weekend.
- Resident engagement with content with a focus on deprived and minority audiences.

Grow



Aims

To capitalise on growth opportunities for the visitor economy which align with local strengths by:

- Developing a year round offer of innovative experiences which offer sustainable and compelling itineraries for the visitor
- Reaching new markets (domestic and international) through targeted campaigns and distribution.
- Increasing overnight stays through the development of high-quality accommodation
- Supporting the sector to grow their people and businesses through technical advice, market insights and skills development

Approach and key deliverables

- Engaging 125 business through the Interreg Experience project to develop and launch at least 125 new products.
- Develop a national and international campaign to maximise impact of the Lonely Planet Kent's Heritage Coast award and create legacy.
- Proactively work with partners to identify and target high-value thematic opportunities, such as golf tourism, cruise, local produce, wine tourism and business events.
- Support businesses to develop their experiential and hybrid business events offer.
- Educate businesses on how to work effectively with the travel trade and develop destination itineraries around key themes and flagship attractions, weaving in new experiential products.
- Proactive engagement with key travel trade partners to increase awareness of Kent product including familiarisation trips and attendance at industry events.
- Use insights from the visitor and non-visitor perception study to identify emerging markets, barriers to visits and target segments.
- Targeted approach to digital marketing focusing on driving overnight visits from priority segments supported by influencer activity and tactical campaigns to secure data capture.
- Work closely with Locate in Kent to attract investment in high-quality accommodation.

Key partnerships

- Distribution Partners (Tour operators, DMCs, OTAs)
- Industry Partners (UKInbound, VisitBritain)
- Kent County Council, Medway Council, District Councils
- Interreg Channel Programme and project partners
- Port of Dover, GetLink, Cross channel operators (Eurotunnel, P&O Ferries)
- SELEP, KMPE
- Locate in Kent
- Wine Garden of England

Local and national strategies supported through activity

- [Kent and Medway Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan](#)
- [South East LEP Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy](#)
- [Medway 2035](#)
- [South East Strategic Economic Plan](#)
- [West Kent Economic Priorities for Growth 2019-22](#)
- [Tourism Recovery Plan](#), [Tourism Sector Deal](#)
- [International Business Events Action Plan](#)

Measuring Impact

- Businesses supported or trained.
- Businesses promoted as part of the destination-wide activity.
- Number of new experiences developed and taken to market.
- Engagement with travel trade and business event distribution partners.
- Products featured in travel trade brochures and programmes.
- Reach of Lonely Planet campaign and PR activity.
- Increased reach and engagement with priority audiences.
- Volume and value of visits to Kent with a focus on overnight stays and length of stay.



Sustain

Aims

To continually improve the destination and maximise opportunities for Kent by:

- Providing strategic destination management to deliver sustainable and inclusive destinations.
- Unlocking funding through the development of bids with cross-sector and regional partners.
- Building strong partnerships to deliver collaborative activity under a compelling destination brand.

Approach and key deliverables

- Provide long-term expertise and strategic thinking to enable the sustained success of the Kent visitor economy.
- Encourage businesses to make changes to reduce carbon and adopt sustainable practices by providing best practice advice and signposting to low carbon support and funding.
- Develop a partnership with AccessAble to offer lower cost access guides and advice on improving accessibility for businesses in Kent through economies of scale.
- Work with VisitEngland and organisations such as Quality in Tourism to ensure businesses can find the support and advice they need to be compliant and get accredited.
- Promote sustainable tourism products, the use of public transport, active travel options and encourage responsible behaviours through a new sustainability pledge.
- Actively seek funding opportunities using in-house capacity and expertise to lead bids in partnership with cross-sector and regional partners which build on the foundation of core funding.
- Identify emerging opportunities as a result of the DMO review and position Kent to access potential funding to deliver on national priorities and support for the sector.
- Deliver regular networking events, industry updates and forums focused on a particular segment, product theme or market (e.g. Cruise Partnership, Golf in Kent, Travel Trade Group).
- As the sector recovers, re-engage lapsed private sector partners and increase partnerships with experiential products, local producers, meeting venues and activity providers.
- Offer public and private sector partners opportunities to participate in and buy into destination campaign activity providing increased reach, buying power and access to new audiences.
- Provide opportunities for partners to attend travel trade and business events shows under a strong destination brand, providing access to VisitBritain representatives and economies of scale.

Key partnerships

- AccessAble, Quality in Tourism, Green Tourism, Cycling UK
- VisitEngland
- Other regional and UK Destination Management Organisations
- Kent County Council, Medway and District Councils
- SELEP
- Kent Downs AONB, Kent Wildlife Trust
- Explore Kent, Kent Connected
- Public Transport Partners (Southeastern, Stagecoach, Arriva, Community Rail Partnerships)

Local and national strategies supported through activity

- [Kent Environment Strategy](#)
- [Active Travel Strategy](#)
- [Local Transport Plan](#)
- [Kent Downs AONB Landscape Management Plan](#)
- [Energy Strategy for the South East](#)
- [Tourism Recovery Plan](#)
- [Independent review of Destination Management Organisations in England](#)

Measuring Impact

- Number of businesses with access guides.
- Engagement with information shared with businesses to promote best practice and support.
- Number of consumers who sign up to sustainability pledge.
- Funding bids submitted.
- Funding leveraged through bids.
- Number of businesses attending events.
- Number of private sector partners.
- Participation in collaborative activity and additional buy in.