

Visit Kent

Kent Annual Sustainable Tourism Action Plan Report

2023 / 2024

TO POSITIVELY IMPACT KENT'S COMMUNITY, CLIMATE AND NATURE

#PactsForImpact



FOREWORD

One year ago, we were proud to launch our Sustainability Action Plan. We set out our ambition to be a leading sustainable destination, supporting businesses and consumers to do the right thing for our places and planet.

One year on, we have much to celebrate – not least the huge collaboration we have had through our strategic board. My thanks to our colleagues from Kent County Council, Kent Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Kent Downs Natural Landscape, Produced in Kent, Stagecoach, Arriva and Southeastern for all their hard work and support to make this ambition a reality.

My thanks too to all the businesses who have already taken the first step towards a more sustainable future for our sector. We have been so impressed with the strides that businesses have already taken to do their bit to support the environment, with 26 businesses now recognised as Impact Heroes, demonstrating that doing the right thing can be good for business and good for the planet.

In recent years we have seen growing demands from consumers for sustainable travel options and we were delighted to agree a partnership with Good Journey to encourage more of our visitors to travel in a sustainable way. Delivering inspiring, sustainable content remains critical to changing customer behaviour and we look forward to continuing to work with partners across the county to showcase all the Garden of England has to offer.

But there is much still to do. There is a huge opportunity to encourage more of our visitors to switch from the car to public transport, but that necessitates strong collaboration to address the difficult challenge of the “last mile”. That is why the support of our transport partners is so critical and why small, but strategic changes, such as the alignment of our Big Weekend with the free bus service supported by KCC’s Bus Service Improvement Plan, or the extension of the train timetable to support major events at Dreamland, can make a major difference to customer behaviour.

Together, the work that we have achieved over the past year has ensured that sustainability is now at the heart of our visitor economy. We are proud that the work that we have done has been recognised as leading the way in sustainable destination management by Visit England and we look forward to working with partners across the county to ensure that tourism can be a force for good for our communities, our economy and our planet.



Deirdre Wells OBE
CEO
Visit Kent

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INTRODUCTION

Our Sustainable Tourism Action Plan is based on the collaboration between ourselves, businesses, the community and visitors in playing a part towards an efficient and just transition towards a Net Zero and nature positive future.

In this, our first Annual Report, we focus on our three main priority action areas: climate, nature and community and showcases how we and other key partners and businesses have progressed on protecting these natural assets on which the industry relies on.

A delicate balance needs to be struck when managing tourism, if not managed thoughtfully and purposefully it can lead to negative impacts on climate, nature and community. The relationship is two-way and the approach set out from our plan ensures that visitors will continue to be able to enjoy all that the Garden of England can offer for generations to come. Visitors are also increasingly invested in sustainability and consumer demand is driving change. A 2023 report by Booking.com showed that 76% of global travellers said that they want to travel more sustainably over the coming 12 months, as more and more visitors choose travel providers and destinations that are able to offer lower carbon, nature friendly experiences - run by those businesses that are 'purpose-led' in their approach.

As international Net Zero and biodiversity target deadlines are approaching, our annual sustainability report gives a wider insight into how Kent's visitor economy is performing and sets baselines for indicators that will help to track progress of our sustainability journey. The report also includes a snapshot of current and new initiatives from leading tourism businesses to inspire and educate others that are thinking of making positive steps within their own business.

As this will be the first year of reporting, this report is very much about setting baselines, outlining ambitions, activity, and successes over the last year, alongside being a key opportunity to reinforce some of the main challenges experienced by the destination and our priorities over the coming year. We hope that the report can help further emphasise our ambition for Kent to become a more sustainable destination and ensure we are committed to monitoring key targets and reporting in a clear and transparent way.



Our action plan is based on three fundamental approaches to deliver a continuous cycle of positive action within the local tourism industry:

COMMITMENT



Our first step in commitment was to create and publish our action plan, making a sustainable future for Kent our goal.

The work has been driven by the Act for Impact Working Group. The group is made up of strategic organisations who are committed to working together on sustainable tourism initiatives and solving the wider sustainability issues present in Kent.

Our Impact Resources are also there to inspire tourism businesses with practical steps that they can commit to take in their own operations.

COLLABORATION



Collaboration is one of the core Visit Kent values and runs through everything we do. The action plan identifies some major systemic challenges which we can only tackle with local and national strategic partners.

So with groups such as our Act for Impact Working Group and the Local Visitor Economy Partnership network, we're working together on new initiatives and identifying fund sources to find solutions to large-scale sustainability issues.

We have also developed new partnerships including Good Journey who are helping to improve visitor behaviour by helping to incentivise sustainable travel.

CELEBRATION OF CREATIVITY



There are already a plethora of creative and innovative sustainability initiatives taking place across the county which can inspire visitors and businesses alike.

With our growing list of Impact Heroes, we are building a valuable bank of creative solutions and best practice which is in turn inspiring other businesses to take innovative action.

This also helps to communicate the unique stories and businesses behind these industry-leading initiatives in an authentic way which consumers can relate to, helping to position the county positively and support behaviour change.

ACT FOR IMPACT WORKING GROUP

The Act for Impact Tourism Working Group consists of key sustainability leaders from the Kent tourism industry, public sector and nature conservation organisations. Medway Council, District and Borough Councils feed in through the Kent Climate Change Officer Group. The purpose of the working group is to ensure close collaboration on delivering the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan and throughout the last year they have contributed significantly in helping us identify key projects that will help us further protect the destination.



“...TO POSITIVELY IMPACT COMMUNITY, CLIMATE AND NATURE. TOGETHER WE COMMIT TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR TOURISM IN KENT, ONE BUILT ON SHARED, INTERNATIONAL GOALS TO RECOVER AND ENHANCE THE ECONOMY, THE WELLBEING OF OUR COMMUNITIES, AND OUR IRREPLACEABLE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT”



**KENT DOWNS
NATIONAL
LANDSCAPE**

[Website](#)



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KENT**

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**KENT WILDLIFE
TRUST**

[Website](#)



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STAGECOACH

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Sustainability Tourism Action Plan



Progress against the detailed actions is tracked through an ongoing monitoring programme using **7** different data sources to capture **16** different social, environmental and economic impact indicators. The following report sets out the first year baseline metrics for the plan.

Impact Heroes



Our Impact Heroes are continually growing as more businesses are coming up with unique and creative ways to implement sustainability within their current business model. We have now got **26** innovative businesses ranging from breweries, restaurants, transport providers and more who inspire other businesses and offer unique experiences to visitors.

Impact Resources



Our **10** Impact resources ranging from lower carbon to Sustainable, Local and Seasonable Food, Drink and Crafts offers an extensive range of guidance for tourism businesses to make use of. Each also contains external links targeted specifically for local tourism businesses in Kent, simplifying the research process.

The Kent Sustainable Tourism Action Plan set out 14 different action areas around climate, community and nature. As part of this we identified three key priority actions for Kent's visitor economy around local produce, nature positive initiatives and low carbon transport.



FOOD FOR GOOD



Reduce food's climate and nature impact by actively increasing local, seasonal, organic and plant-based options on menus and increasing demand by celebrating Kentish produce.



GO NATURE POSITIVE



Support nature positive tourism initiatives that conserve, preserve or restore landscapes, habitats and wildlife. Pilot an innovative nature pay back scheme encouraging visitors to 'pay it back' to Kent's nature and wildlife.



GO LOCO2



Shift visitors to low carbon and active travel when travelling to and around the destination by making it easier for visitors to find information and to choose these options.

VISIT KENT SUSTAINABILITY

KEY ACTIVITY 2023/2024



11

Business resources/toolkits produced including a consumer messaging guide



Launched our **Kent Sustainable Tourism Action Plan** at the May 2023 Parliamentary Reception



Launched our dedicated B2B **Sustainability support Hub** – which has had **5,381** page views as of the end of March 2024 & over **700** unique users from the industry



The Act for Impact Tourism Working Group established with quarterly meetings taking place with 8 strategic partners



Visit Kent presented to the **VisitEngland Advisory Board** on our work on sustainable tourism



Involved in **4 national working groups** shaping the national approach to regenerative tourism



Sent our first **annual business survey** to gather feedback from Kent visitor economy businesses on their sustainability journey - allowing us to gather 16 baseline metrics to inform our monitoring programme, alongside helping to shape business support & guidance & future sustainable activities.

Visit Kent's Sustainability Champions Group established



Internal quarterly meetings & implementing internal actions around food waste, energy use, behavioural change signage, reducing the carbon impact of business travel - including use of public transport & car sharing & reducing the carbon footprint of our business events

17

B2C sustainable features produced generating just under **43,000** page views in 2023

It's in our Nature...

Our flagship campaign "**It's in our Nature...**" showcased Kent's heritage, welcome & natural landscapes

The digital campaign generated **1.56M** impressions

& **94,463** clicks across the Meta Network & featured as a digital advert in Gatwick airport for 2 weeks



26

Businesses onboarded to our Impact Hero Programme



Collaborated with Southeastern, HS1 & wider partners on **The Green Guide** showcasing 23 local businesses & achieved coverage in 10+ national publications



A '**sustainable tourism in Kent**' landing page shared on our B2C website - highlighting sustainable activities, transport, Impact Heroes & sustainable features

KENT BIG WEEKEND™

Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th June 2023

Delivery of our hero resident campaign **The Kent Big Weekend** which saw a total of **152,085** applications in 2023 & **The Big Free Bus Weekend** with Kent County Council in 2023



Partnership with **Good Journey** who champion car-free travel & offer a platform whereby attractions offer discounts to visitors arriving by train, bus, bike or foot. We hosted a joint webinar on welcoming car-free visitors and included them in **12** features & **4** newsletters.



CLIMATE



The impacts of the climate crisis can already be felt by communities around the world, and Kent is no exception. In fact, Kent has the highest risk of local flooding of all local authorities in England. floods, soil erosion, coastal erosion, droughts and hot weather, are all becoming more and more common, as temperatures and sea levels increase.

Nations, communities, businesses, organisations and individuals are now taking action to reduce carbon emissions in order to limit global temperature rises. To do this, we must halve emissions by 2030 and reach Net Zero by 2050 or before. We must address and reduce Kent’s tourism emissions as much as possible through our action plan and support Kent County Council’s [Environment Strategy](#) and the [Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy](#).

Achieving modal shift to low carbon transport options is vital. Travellers are becoming more aware of aviation’s impacts and the need for lower carbon forms of transport. Visit Kent is actively promoting rail and bus travel to both the UK staycation market and key inbound target markets and priorities must be considered in this context. This is why we’re actively involved in the campaign to bring back international rail passenger services to Ashford and Ebbsfleet. Alternative forms of land-based transport are also promoted to inbound visitors where possible – particularly as part of the last-mile solution. Where no viable alternatives exist, it is important to encourage visitors to stay for longer, to maximise the benefits for local communities and nature. How we use the planet’s resources is crucial. Food is often less considered as a climate impact of our holidays. Reducing food waste (we throw away a third of food) and focussing on local, seasonal produce means Food for Good is a central focus of our action plan.

GO LOC02

- Promote the use of lower carbon transport methods to and within in the county by encouraging domestic visitors to further utilise train & bus services and reduce car use.
- Encourage inbound visitors to reduce flights and encourage visitors to travel overland and increase length of stay.
- Encourage the use of bikes and e-bikes and more active travel activities, alongside electric car use and promotion of EV charging points.
- Continue to work with public transport providers to promote greater uptake in travel incentives for visitors.

Make the Switch

- Reducing energy use among tourism businesses and visitors and encourage businesses to measure and set energy reduction targets.
- Encouragement to switch to green energy tariffs.

Food for Good

- To actively promote and support tourism related businesses to increase the use of local, seasonal, organic and plant-based options and use of local suppliers to reduce food miles.
- To continue to monitor and promote the recognition of Kent’s quality food & drink offering among visitors.
- To promote and support diverse and exciting local food & drink tourism experiences, alongside food & drink events and providers working hard to offer lower carbon foods and nature-friendly menus.

Say No To Waste

- To encourage tourism businesses and visitors in Kent to actively reduce waste, including reusing and recycling.
- Encourage the reduction of food waste among local tourism businesses and visitors.








IMPACTS & ACTIONS: CLIMATE

Our Sustainable Tourism Action Plan outlined detailed actions that Visit Kent, local tourism businesses and other key partners can take between now and 2030 to help with an transition towards Net Zero and a nature positive future. These will be tracked through an ongoing monitoring programme using 7 data sources to capture 16 social, environmental and economic indicators. The following table and those in subsequent sections, summarise key actions and targets under the 3 key umbrella impact areas - climate, community and nature and look to outline activity and baselines for the targets set. Please note a full matrix can be found in the [Kent Sustainable Tourism Action Plan](#) and website figures are from May 2023-end of March 2023.

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
<p>GO LOCO2</p>	<p>To increase the number of domestic visitors arriving by train instead of car, by monitoring arrival method, integrating within messaging and lobbying for more integrated ticketing and value-for-money train services.</p>	<p>16% of domestic visitors arriving via train on their previous visit - Visit Kent Annual Visitor Study 2023.</p>
	<p>To increase the number of visitors arriving by bus by monitoring arrival method, integrating within messaging and working with key bus operators to promote bus travel, particularly to residents travelling from within Kent.</p>	<p>3% of domestic visitors arriving via bus on their previous visit – Visit Kent Annual Visitor Study 2023.</p>
	<p>Encourage inbound visitors to reduce flights, in favour of overland travel. To target the markets that can reach Kent overland rather than flying. And encourage those that do fly to stay for longer, by monitoring average length of stay.</p>	<p>Inbound visitors' average length of stay - 5.1 nights - Kent Economic Impact Cambridge Model based on 2022 data.</p>
	<p>To increase the number of electric charging points at tourism businesses where on-site parking is available & provide online resources to help tourism businesses and signpost to available funding.</p>	<p>21% of businesses offer electric vehicle charging (EV) points where on-site parking is available - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p>
	<p>Encourage bikes and e-bike and to increase the number of tourism businesses offering bike friendly services for visitors & those taking part in the Cyclists Welcome accreditation scheme.</p>	<p>7% of businesses stated they are part of the Cyclists Welcome accreditation scheme & 45% of businesses offer bike friendly services - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p>
	<p>Encourage more active travel activities for visitors and residents through increasing the promotion of walking & cycling routes and tours and to increase the number of visitors walking or cycling as part of their previous visit.</p>	<p>9,521 page views for active travel features in 2023/2024 11% of domestic visitors walking/cycling on their previous visit – Visit Kent Perception Study 2022.</p>
	<p>To increase the number of visitors using buses during their stay, by monitoring transport method & through online content and working with transport operators.</p>	<p>10% of domestic visitors travelling via bus on their previous visit – Visit Kent Perception Study 2022.</p>

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
<p>MAKE THE SWITCH</p> 	<p>Encourage tourism businesses in Kent to measure and set energy reduction targets and publish commitment to energy reduction on their websites.</p>	<p>31% of businesses have a commitment to energy reduction published on their website & an additional 17% have one but it's not currently available on their website - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p> <p>Visit Kent offices introduced guides to saving energy posters around the office, alongside other measures around reducing energy use set out in Visit Kent's operational sustainability and social values policy.</p>
	<p>Visit Kent to publish online resources, including support and potential funding signposting for local businesses to help them monitor, set targets and reduce energy use.</p>	<p>Online resources shared on our B2B Sustainability Hub - with a total of 1,055 page views, with 189 unique users with an average engagement time of 1m 49s.</p>
	<p>Visit Kent to feature inspiring businesses in its online Impact Heroes section.</p>	<p>26 businesses featured on our Impact Heroes page - with a total of 1,867 page views, with 407 unique users with an average engagement time of 1m 22s.</p>
	<p>To increase the number of tourism businesses on green energy tariffs and publish online resources to help businesses.</p>	<p>14% of businesses stated they are currently on a green energy tariff - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p> <p>Online resources shared on the Visit Kent B2B Sustainability Hub.</p> <p>Visit Kent offices are using a green electricity supplier.</p>
	<p>Visit Kent offices to use a business carbon calculator to help measure their carbon footprint, to measure and report on annual reductions.</p>	<p>Visit Kent have identified a carbon calculator tool and have begun collecting data and will begin to track and monitor this for 2024/2025.</p>

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
FOOD FOR GOOD 	Visit Kent to work closely with <u>Produced in Kent</u> to encourage tourism businesses to use local produce, by tourism businesses actively increasing local, seasonal, organic and plant-based options on menus.	59% of businesses are actively working to increase the use of local or seasonal produce & 41% of businesses are actively working to increase the use of organic or plant-based food options - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.
	To increase the promotion of businesses working to offer local, seasonal, organic and plant-based produce.	27,653 page views for local produce features for 2023/2024.
	Visit Kent to feature inspiring tourism businesses innovating around food/drink and culinary tours/experiences, in its online Impact Heroes section.	12 businesses featured on our Impact Heroes page related to food & drink - 448 page views.
	To promote & support the Taste of Kent fair and awards in June 2023, building connections with local producers/food & restaurant industry to 'localise' menus and food offerings.	255 entries to the Taste of Kent Awards and a 5.46 million press coverage reach.
	Visit Kent, Produced in Kent and local tourism industry to encourage visitors to attend local food and drink festivals as well as markets in Kent throughout the year.	9,007 page views for features in 2023/2024.
	Visit Kent to continue to monitor and ensure recognition among visitors of Kent's quality food and drink offering - quality of Kent's food & drink to remain in Top 5 (rated excellent or very good) attributes for visitors.	Rated joint 5th place among domestic visitors – Visit Kent Perception Study 2022.
	Visit Kent to promote diverse & exciting local food & drink tourism experiences, by increasing the reach and engagement for food & drink content & an increase in the belief that the quality of Kent's food and drink offering is 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' & sampling the local food & drink is a reason to visit the area.	84% rated the quality of Kent's food and drink offering as either 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' & 19% selected sampling local food & drink as a reason to visit Kent – Visit Kent Domestic Perception Study 2022.

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
<p data-bbox="116 827 469 859">SAY 'NO' TO WASTE</p> 	<p data-bbox="509 363 1656 551">Encourage all tourism businesses in Kent to actively reduce waste year on year (preventing, reusing and recycling) - Tourism businesses, including Visit Kent, to publish their commitment to waste reduction on their websites and Visit Kent to help businesses by publishing online resources and guidance on waste management.</p>	<p data-bbox="1719 307 3198 420">35% of businesses have their commitment to waste reduction published on their website - an additional 21% have one but it's not currently available on their website - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023 & online resources shared on the Visit Kent B2B Sustainability Hub.</p> <p data-bbox="1702 457 3215 570">Visit Kent offices introduced recycling bin posters and a food waste bin, alongside other measures around reducing waste set out in Visit Kent's operational sustainability and social values policy including reusing and recycling.</p>
	<p data-bbox="536 664 1629 731">Visit Kent to share tips on waste reduction as well as local refill stations with visitors.</p>	<p data-bbox="1802 675 3102 712">Figure to be tracked after March with new introduction included in features from May 2024.</p>
	<p data-bbox="509 787 1656 896">Tourism businesses in Kent to take steps to actively reduce food waste annually & Visit Kent offices and events, to set individual targets for food waste reduction, share these online and take action to reduce.</p>	<p data-bbox="1692 787 3218 896">55% of businesses currently have in place initiatives to encourage waste reduction - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023. As part of Visit Kent's operational sustainability and social values policy, this includes reducing food waste at meetings and events and seeking to recycle food waste where possible.</p>
	<p data-bbox="526 953 1639 1020">Visit Kent to share online resources around food waste reduction with tourism businesses.</p>	<p data-bbox="1812 953 3092 990">Online resources shared on our B2B Sustainability Hub - with a total of 1,055 page views.</p>
	<p data-bbox="526 1076 1639 1144">Visit Kent to celebrate Impact Heroes who are reducing food waste and using food waste innovatively, to create a circular economy and saving money.</p>	<p data-bbox="1945 1095 2958 1133">485 page views to impact heroes pages related to reducing food waste.</p>
	<p data-bbox="519 1200 1646 1309">Encouragement of 'tourist households' e.g. self-catering or camping visitors, to reduce their 'food print': reuse, take left over produce home and only 'buy what they'll eat' through increased marketing messages.</p>	<p data-bbox="1752 1238 3158 1275">Exploring opportunities for a partnership with Kent food hubs and the KCC circular economy team.</p>
	<p data-bbox="519 1361 1646 1429">Increase the number of businesses in Kent using food distribution programs to redistribute surplus food.</p>	<p data-bbox="1719 1399 3178 1437">14% of businesses currently using food distribution programmes - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p>



SPOTLIGHT: VISIT KENT & GOOD JOURNEY

Visitor travel behaviour remains a key challenge for us to tackle as data shows 77% of visitors travel to the county by car. Our collaboration with Good Journey helps to incentivise car-free travel and modal shift among visitors through rewards and offers with partner businesses.

Good Journey promote car-free days out across the UK that are easy and affordable including discounts on iconic spots and hidden gems for your next Kentish adventure. With great transport links into and around Kent with transport providers such as Southeastern and Stagecoach, and opportunity for active travel on Kent's cycling and walking routes, there are plenty of opportunities for a range of businesses to get involved in this initiative.

Good Journey is a non-profit company. Businesses who join Good Journey reduce vehicle traffic to their sites. This helps them to cut carbon, meet their sustainability goals and reduce congestion in car parks and access roads. By promoting car-free travel, these businesses also open up their sites to the 24% of households without a car. New businesses get 20% off when they sign up for two years of Good Journey membership, which includes marketing and promotion support, expert green travel advice and easy directions for car-free visitors.

Good Journey are car-free experts who promote days out across the county that are easy and affordable including discounts on iconic spots and hidden gems for your next Kentish adventure.

As part of the partnership, Visit Kent proactively weave messaging around Good Journey offers into consumer content and support with the engagement and onboarding of businesses within the county. Good Journey has so far been included in **12** of our features including our B2C landing page (travelling with Good Journey) which garnered **27,050** page views and **4** newsletters which were both sent through to our investors and consumers. We also delivered a **Welcoming Car-Free Visitors to your tourism business** webinar which we ran with the Good Journey team earlier this year. Since then, a good number of businesses have joined Good Journey and can be found on their map, including Balfour Winery, Romney Marsh Shepherds Huts and Kent-based UK Electric Bikes, with more in the pipeline.



Find out how to cut carbon and welcome car-free visitors through Good Journey membership [HERE](#)
To book a discovery call with the Good Journey team get in touch with loretta@goodjourney.org.uk





SPOTLIGHT: THE GREEN GUIDE

The LNER Green Guide 2024 is an online short print run brochure that showcases a range of businesses from restaurants to hotels, breweries and more which all contribute to sustainability in one way or another. All of the destinations are accessible from the St Pancras/ King's Cross area of London by Southeastern high speed rail and beyond through national and international rail connections. Working collaboratively with Southeastern, HS1 and wider partners on the creation of the Green Guide enabled us to really showcase some of Kent's leading sustainable tourism businesses and put Kent on the map as a sustainable travel destination.

The project resulted in significant positive PR coverage. For visitors looking to come to Kent from the wider LNER network, Southeastern network and London, this is a really useful tool that will help them navigate the Garden of England and explore the various sustainability initiatives that are growing across the county through exciting experiences. A total of **23** businesses are featured including some of our very own impact heroes such as:

- [Curious Brewery](#)
- [Rebel Farmer](#)
- [Romney Marsh Shepherd Huts](#)
- [Whitstable Oyster Company](#)
- [The Foundry Brew Pub - Canterbury Brewers and Distillers](#)

The Green Guide showcases a range of destinations and businesses from restaurants to hotels, breweries and more which all contribute to sustainability in one way or another.



southeastern

hs1 high speed one

YOU CAN FIND THE GREEN GUIDE ON SOUTHEASTERN'S WEBSITE ALONGSIDE THEIR VERY OWN CARBON CALCULATOR TO ENSURE YOU'RE TRAVELLING AS SUSTAINABLY AS POSSIBLE.

LNER

THE FOUNDRY BREW PUB - CANTERBURY BREWERS AND DISTILLERS

BEST FOR: Top local tipples

ADDRESS: The Foundry Brew Pub, 77 Stour Street, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 2NR

Housed in a former Victorian foundry, The Foundry Brew Pub offers a variety of home brewed beers and ciders alongside a locally sourced, sustainable menu served up with a side of history.

Once responsible for producing cast metal items for Canterbury and beyond, The Foundry draws on the history of its location to create unique brews with distinctive flavours and an experience like no other. Opt for a brew or two, a magnificent meal or discover how the brewery goes from grain to glass through its on-site tour and tasting.

And when you can finally drag yourself away, look out for the old Foundry's lampposts still present in Canterbury today.

Courtesy of Southeastern southeasternrailway.co.uk

canterburybrewers-distillers.co.uk

LNER

DUKE OF CUMBERLAND

BEST FOR: Staying with Britain's oldest brewer

ADDRESS: High St, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 1AP

Situated in the heart of the charming coastal town of Whitstable, this historic pub boasts a prominent position at the top of the High Street. Dating back to 1867, the Duke of Cumberland is full of character while also providing modern, stylish accommodation and a locally-sourced, seasonal menu.

Guests can enjoy on-tap beer from Shepherd Neame, Britain's oldest brewer which is located less than 10 miles down the road. The local brewery draws water from a well deep beneath their Faversham site and has recently invested in a wastewater reduction scheme to reduce water consumption by 40%.

Courtesy of Visit Kent visitkent.co.uk

dukeofcumberlandhotel.co.uk

LNER

GUSBOURNE

BEST FOR: Award-winning local wines

ADDRESS: Gusbourne Estate, Kenardington Road, Appledore, Kent, Ashford, TN26 2BE

The boutique Gusbourne winery lets nature be its guide when it comes to crafting its award-winning wines. Stroll through the vineyards, treat yourself to a glass (or two) of its delicious, famous sparkling wine, and learn more about Gusbourne's complementary planting and sustainable practices, including using organic fertilisers and willowflower blocks to protect biodiversity.

Courtesy of Visit Kent visitkent.co.uk

gusbourne.com



A few words from our Climate Impact Heroes




Frasers

Organisation purpose:


Frasers of Coldharbour Farm is a eco-estate and thriving hospitality business operating with a strong environmental ethos. We offer self-catering and bed and breakfast in our 5 Star Gold accommodation. In parallel with this we have an on-site restaurant offering breakfast, brunch, lunch, afternoon tea and evening meals. Additionally, we host corporate away days, team-building, product launches, family parties, baby showers and weddings. Our accommodation is housed in redundant former agricultural buildings. The conversions were executed with the highest level of design. High levels of insulation were installed. We utilised local craftsmen to make all the doors and windows from Kentish Oak.

Impact initiative:

It has been a thirty-year process to diversify from a high-input mixed farm to an eco-estate, which is now a thriving habitat for wildlife. With ‘offsetting’ Frasers now operates as net-carbon neutral.

Impact & benefits of initiative:

Our many environmental initiatives have proudly resulted in us being awarded many accolades for our sustainability. In 2021 we were awarded the KEIBA for ‘Commitment to the Environment’, 2022/23 saw us win the Taste of Kent award for ‘Sustainable Food and Drink Business’. In February 2023, in the inaugural Sustainable wedding awards we were awarded the ‘Sustainable Supply Chain Award’ and were highly commended in the ‘Sustainable Change Maker Award’.



Copper Rivet Distillery

Organisation purpose:

We are a craft distillery and fine dining restaurant located in Chatham, Kent. Our purpose is to create great-tasting spirits without compromising on quality. We have a glass-to-grain ethos and produce gin, vodka, and whisky.

Impact initiative:

Sustainable spirit-making processes. We use locally sourced grains from the Isle of Sheppey and the Isle of Grain. We have implemented measures in our distilling process to reduce our environmental impact.

Impact & benefits of initiative:

From a sustainability point of view, we have been able to cut our use of energy and water by improving our distillery processes. In the last two years, we have been able to cut our use of service water (wastewater) by three thousand litres a day. We have installed a separate holding tank which allows us to reuse the same water for different steps in our fermentation process. We have also been able to cut water and energy use by installing a water flow meter. As well as being economically better, we do not have to cool the liquids using energy. We also installed an automatic booster system on our gas boiler which monitors the pressure levels in the tanks and switches off the gas that would be unnecessarily needed. All these small changes make a big difference in our environmental impact. We have been able to create a more sustainable product for our customers and our experiences can educate our customers on environmental impacts they may not be aware of.



We know we currently face a biodiversity crisis, with approximately one million plant and animal species facing extinction. We know that biodiversity draws in carbon and helps in the fight against the climate crisis too.

At the UN Biodiversity Conference COP15 in 2022 an agreement was reached to preserve a third of the planet’s lands, coastal areas and oceans by 2030 and tourism has an important role to play. It is often the nature - whether landscape, seascape or wildlife that visitors come to Kent to see (47% of visitors to Kent say it is one of the main reasons they visited). The benefits of nature to our health and wellbeing have been well documented.

Kent is a rural county with a thriving agricultural and horticultural sector. The Kent Downs National Landscape makes up almost a quarter of the region. Kent is one of the most wildlife-rich counties in the UK and has 116 sites of national/international importance for conservation. The impact of nature as a positive ‘pull’ force for visitors is also set to increase as the Kent Downs National Landscape aspires to achieve UNESCO Global Geopark status in the future.

Protecting and regenerating Kent’s nature has never been more crucial and our sector must play a role in the emerging Making Space for Nature Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Educating visitors about accessing the landscape in a mindful way, and raising awareness of the value of nature, is also key. Our action plan works to promote more nature positive tourism and to support Kent’s Biodiversity Strategy. Visit Kent plans to identify funding to develop a pilot nature pay back scheme as a key ambition of the action plan. Such a scheme would provide tourists and tourism businesses with a tangible way to give back to nature in the region. Working collaboratively with potential nature-based beneficiaries, monies would be ring fenced for nature recovery and regeneration programmes.

GO Nature Positive

- More nature positive tourism initiatives –those that conserve, preserve or restore landscapes, habitats and wildlife.
- Encouraging nature positive initiatives among tourism businesses
- Promote local nature-positive tourism
- Promote local nature-based visitor volunteering schemes

Avoid Over Tourism

- Managing visitor dispersal to reduce negative effects on nature.
- Visit Kent to continue to adopt marketing approaches that disperse visitors and avoid overcrowding. Continue to monitor visitor numbers / tourism’s impact on nature, landscapes and communities, by collaborating with key partners.

Cherish Our Waters

- Visit Kent chairs the Southern Water & South-East destinations tourism group
- Use clean water wisely and help protect and restore waterways /coastlines / marine environments
- Encourage minimisation of pollution in local waterways, coastlines and marine environments by ensuring contaminating substances don’t reach drains and pipes.
- Visit Kent and tourism businesses in Kent to take steps to minimise their water use.



Stop Deforestation



- Help end deforestation with more ethical procurement and supply chain choices
- All tourism businesses and Visit Kent offices and events, to minimise use of forest-risk commodities e.g. palm oil, soy, leather, rubber, cocoa, paper.





IMPACTS & ACTIONS: NATURE

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
<p>GO NATURE POSITIVE</p> 	<p>BACK TO NATURE: a nature pay-back scheme for visitors - Establish a working group to agree structure of the scheme</p>	<p>We developed an outline brief with partners and submitted an application for funding.</p>
	<p>Encouraging nature positive initiatives among tourism businesses by monitoring tourism businesses encouraging nature wherever possible in their green spaces.</p>	<p>69% of businesses encourage nature positive initiatives and use of green spaces where possible - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p>
	<p>Promote local nature-positive tourism and encourage visitors to enjoy <u>Kent Downs AONB</u>, woodlands and reserves responsibly as well as nature-friendly attractions and experiences via marketing channels, including website. And to maintain or increase number of visitors who would definitely consider nature based immersive experiences.</p>	<p>Percentage of respondents who would consider - River Tours - 38%, Wildlife Reserve Experiences - 36%, Guided Hikes & Walks - 31%, Nordic Walking - 31%, Running Tours - 14%, Equestrian Activities - 20% Woodland Bushcraft Experiences- 24% - Visit Kent Domestic Perception Study 2022.</p> <p>47,779 page views to feature content related to nature & wildlife in 2023/2024.</p>
	<p>Maintain or increase number of residents engaging with green/outdoor spaces when working from home.</p>	<p>73% of residents stated they engage with green/outdoor spaces when working from home - Kent Residents survey Wave 6 2023.</p>
	<p>Promote local nature-based visitor volunteering schemes and opportunities.</p>	<p>2,828 page views based on nature positive and nature-based volunteering features from 2023/2024</p>
	<p>Visit Kent to continue its staff volunteering days for staff to take part in a local, nature-based volunteering activity and wellbeing days in lieu of work.</p>	<p>Visit Kent hosted 3 staff wellbeing/volunteering days in 2023/2024, and for the year ahead we speaking with partners to support their initiatives.</p>
<p>AVOID OVER TOURISM</p> 	<p>Visit Kent to continue to adopt marketing approaches that disperse visitors and avoid overcrowding. Continue to monitor visitor numbers / tourism's impact on nature, landscapes and communities, by collaborating with key partners - Achieve a good spread of visitors to districts throughout the year.</p>	<p>The gap between the highest and the lowest volume of visitors is 3.7 times the volume - with the aim to close this gap.</p>
	<p>Visit Kent to continue to encourage visitors throughout the seasons and to all sites as well as the main, popular locations through curated and inspirational content - Decline in the total number of respondents who “feel there are too many visitors in their local area”; and whether there is an increase in those who agree that tourism “protects and enhances nature and the environment”.</p>	<p>10% of residents agreed there are too many visitors in their local area and 50% agreed that tourism protects and enhances nature and the environment– Kent Residents Survey Wave 6 2023.</p>

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
<p>CHERISH OUR WATERS</p> 	<p>Visit Kent and tourism businesses (including food production businesses) in Kent to take steps to minimise their water use & Visit Kent to help businesses by publishing online resources and guidance on water use reduction which will also help save money for businesses.</p> <p>Encourage minimisation of pollution in local waterways, coastlines and marine environments by publishing online resources and continuing to lobby Southern Water on the impact of sewage dumping and specifically the implications for local tourism.</p> <p>Businesses, local authorities and Visit Kent to encourage visitors to take litter away with them or dispose of it responsibly and share information with visitors and staff on beach clean ups.</p>	<p>38% of businesses actively working to reduce water consumption - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023 & online resources were published on the Visit Kent B2B Sustainability Hub on water use reduction. As part of Visit Kent's operational sustainability and social values policy this sets out to minimise water use as much as possible.</p> <p>Online resources were published on the Visit Kent B2B Sustainability Hub.</p> <p>Visit Kent attended 2 strategic meetings with Southern Water.</p> <p>322 page views to the Visit Kent's Beach Clean Up in Kent feature in 2023/2024.</p>
<p>STOP DEFORESTATION</p> 	<p>All tourism businesses and Visit Kent offices and events, to minimise use of forest-risk commodities e.g. palm oil, soy, leather, rubber, cocoa, paper and to share online resources and guidance.</p>	<p>Online resources were published on the Visit Kent B2B Sustainability Hub.</p> <p>48% of businesses are working to minimise the use of forest-risk commodities e.g. palm oil, soy, leather, rubber, cocoa, paper - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p> <p>Visit Kent offices use renewable printing paper with Eco Label, focusing on digital and only printing when necessary.</p>



Spotlight: It's in our Nature...

It's in our Nature...

VISIT KENT
BUSINESS
GARDEN of ENGLAND

To maximise on visitors desiring more sustainable, local and experiential breaks, and as we continued to recover from the pandemic, we developed our campaign, “*It's in our Nature...*” for 2023. It sought to show how delicious food and drink, a wonderful natural environment and a warm welcome among many other facets are all in Kent's Nature. The campaign had a wide variety of buy-in partners across the county, which received packages of digital-only activity, and showcased the broad offer, both nationally and internationally. Promoting nationally gave us the opportunity to compete with destinations internationally, and place Kent over a trip to Spain for example - you can get just a good of an experience right here in England!

One of the campaign's aims was to ensure that people stay longer in the county, so they are not just coming for a single day trip. We encouraged visitors throughout the content and promotion to consider a wide variety of accommodation to extend their stay. This fell particularly within the sustainable goals of the campaign as it would provide footfall to a wide range of businesses and not just have day trippers coming and going without also spending on a yurt or local pub with rooms for a night or two, getting a locally sourced breakfast and visiting further attractions in the community.

A mainstay of the campaign was the feature content, of which each partner had at least one piece on our website. In this content, we ensured that the partners involved put forward a variety of businesses, which especially focused on the natural world and promoted local businesses. For instance, in the Tunbridge Wells ‘*Wealden Gems*’ piece, we showcased attractions who encourage engagement with nature, such as Bedgebury Pinetum which contains over 12,000 specimens of trees, and The Goudhurst Inn who use plentiful local food and drink. To complement the written content we also had three days of photography in the county where local businesses were shot - from shepherds huts, lavender fields, refill shops and more. The districts and businesses were then provided with the photos to help promote themselves.


In the 2023 campaign, Kent Wildlife Trust were also partners and we wrote two pieces of feature content for them, promoting these on paid social channels. Not only did this provide KWT another opportunity to showcase their stellar work within protecting Kent's natural environment, but we could assist in putting Kent's name out there as a sustainable destination. In their feature content we made sure to highlight key messages of the KWT, and encourage the likes of children to also get involved in their efforts.

2024

As the campaign was successful in 2023, we decided to continue it for 2024, and build on what we have already achieved. For the coming edition we have retained nearly all of the partners from 2023, and have brought on Stagecoach as new partners. As sustainable transport across the county is very important to reduce the impact of visitors, continuing the above push on sustainability, as well as having Stagecoach referenced throughout the campaign will encourage people to consider leaving the car behind and enjoying hassle free travel!



2,192,735 impressions on the digital campaign
49,194 page views across IION content
20,990 entries (a record at the time) into the It's in our Nature... competition with 210k impressions


IT'S IN KENT'S OUR NATURE TO BE WELCOMING, ACCESSIBLE, SUSTAINABLE, AND TO PROVIDE GOOD VALUE.





Spotlight: Kent Green Action & Great Big Green Week

Great Big Green Week is a national celebration of community action to tackle climate change and protect nature. In Kent we have created our own map of events to help our residents find activities and get involved with what is happening in their community.

It's an interactive space so people can add pins to the map for events and, new this year, for different organisations that are actively helping communities live in a better balance with nature. Visitors can also add to an ideas board and complete a quick survey to help inform our team about what green action is already going well and what people may need more support with.

Impact

A very powerful thing we can do to encourage more environmental action is to connect people with what is happening in their community because people generally care deeply about their community, green spaces and wildlife around them. Therefore many are most motivated to invest their time and energy locally, on a scale where they can make a positive impact and see and feel the benefits of their action.

A secondary benefit is showing people that there is already a lot of activity across Kent, gently making environmental events and action more visible and normal for people across our county.

Finally, this exercise helps grow our Greener Kent campaign because we can support local groups, highlight what they are doing in future and build a network of partners across Kent which we hope to develop into a stronger collective voice advocating for nature and our green spaces and engaging more people across Kent.

Development

We plan to host an online workshop for community groups in the autumn to discuss how we can support each other with more environmental action in their communities and if there are campaigns we could work together on.



“A VERY POWERFUL THING WE CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE MORE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION IS TO CONNECT PEOPLE WITH WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THEIR COMMUNITY...”





A few words from our Nature Impact Heroes



Stable Oak Cottages

Organisation purpose:

We are a self catering accommodation business based in the North Downs, our objective is to engage our guests with nature and the wildlife. We use local produce where possible and our soaps are made by my cottage cosmetics, smoked trout from parkwood trout farm all based in Harrietsham and meat produce from charing also Biddenden and wooden spoon's are all kent based. We have planted over a 1000 trees and our ethos is sustainability.

Impact initiative:

To have as small a footprint as possible.

Impact & benefits of initiative:

We now have breeding grass snakes and lizards from leaving wild section's of our land also a great variety of wild birds from trees and hedging.

We do have many returning guests because of the location but I'm not sure its because of our ethos although many comment on the sustainability side.



Badgells Wood at
Birling Estate

Organisation purpose:

Birling Estate is situated in the Kent Downs National Landscape. We believe in being a place where people, nature and enterprise can flourish in harmony. Our vision is to become an exemplar regenerative estate through our approach to farming, forestry and diversification enterprises.

Everything we do is driven by a love for the land and for nature. Our diversification enterprises are viewed through a lens of climate change, biodiversity gain, health & wellbeing, and culture & heritage and we aim to provide a positive impact either through our own operations or by educating others.

Impact initiative:

The campsite offers 50 pitches across more than 30 acres, which means that visitors are fully immersed in the woodland environment, with enough private space to reconnect with nature and escape the stressors of modern life.

We offer forest bathing, meditation, Qi Gong, wildlife photography, archery, axe-throwing, bushcraft, and children's summer camp activities. We are also expanding to offer a new selection of events in 2023, including woodland art, yoga, foraging, fire cooking and woodland dining experiences.

Impact & benefits of initiative

We believe in the principles of circular economy – eliminate waste and pollution, circulate products and materials, and regenerate nature. Our off-grid campsite has been set up to have minimal impact on the surrounding environment and a small carbon footprint, our initiatives include solar panels, composting WC's, bio-degradable cleaning products, waste recycling, sourcing firewood and natural building materials from the estate, we employ locally, and use locally sourced products wherever possible. Our sustainably managed woodland is coppiced to encourage biodiversity. The coppiced sweet chestnut trees are utilised for the estate's building materials and the timber is processed in our on-site sawmill. In this way, we recently completed a tree-house and adventure playground at Badgells Wood.



A few words from our Nature Impact Heroes



Kent Wildlife Trust



Organisation purpose:

Kent Wildlife Trust is the largest conservation charity in the county. Wildlife is in crisis. The natural world isn't just something for us to enjoy; it sustains us. The decline of nature puts our very survival and prosperity under threat. It doesn't have to be like this. Our vision is for a better, wilder future. We engage with politicians, business leaders, landowners, communities and people in order that we can all work together to protect wildlife.

Impact initiative:

Wilder Blean Project

Impact & benefits of initiative:

It is still early days for the Wilder Blean project, but benefits are already being seen in the West Blean woodland. The European bison, Exmoor ponies, Iron-age pigs and Longhorn cattle are successfully creating the more dynamic habitats required for increasing biodiversity and greater climate resilience.

The introduction of animals to the woodland has changed the way this area of the reserve is managed, reducing human and mechanical interventions. There has been a great deal of public interest in the project, from the local area, across the UK and around the world. New audiences have engaged with us as a result, increasing awareness of our work more widely. We have also embraced the interest in the Wilder Blean project to develop a successful tourism-focused programme of events and experiences, increasing our opportunities to educate and inspire wider audiences and diversify our income sources.

3

Community

Kent’s community of residents not only staff the local tourism industry - providing visitors with the very best service - but they also help to maintain and conserve the cultures, stories, traditions and way of life that are distinctive to the area. They are fundamental in helping to create the authentic ‘sense of place’ that makes Kent such a special place to live in and visit.

Tourism contributes £2.6bn to the Kent visitor economy, generating stable, year-round job opportunities for local people and helping to preserve the cultural heritage of Kent.

The tourism industry in Kent must be inclusive, placing emphasis on equality and ensuring diversity in employment, as well as for career progression and training opportunities too. Kent must be welcoming and inclusive to visitors from all backgrounds as well as ensuring it is accessible for those with additional requirements, including hidden disabilities.

Working with Kent’s local residents and communities to ensure tourism is developed in partnership with local voices is vital, as we know that tourism - when done well - has a positive impact on the wellbeing of local residents. Local people are valuable ‘visitors’ too, regularly taking day trips, as well as acting as hosts to friends and relatives.

Kent’s community includes innovative sustainability and social impact leaders and businessowners, who are all helping to drive forwards the sustainability agenda. These innovators - our Impact Heroes – should be celebrated and will help inspire others.

Good Local Jobs

- Providing stable, fairly paid jobs for local people
- Tourism businesses, including Visit Kent, to provide fairly paid jobs for local people and ensure long term training and development prospects for staff, and apprenticeships as well as a healthy work-life balance.

Wellbeing Matters

- Ensure tourism contributes positively to local residents’ wellbeing
- Ensure tourism in Kent positively contributes to the wellbeing of residents and pride in their local area by increasing engagement with local audiences and regularly monitoring data through our annual resident research

Equal + Diverse World

- Ensure all staff / potential staff and visitors / potential visitors, feel welcomed
- Tourism businesses to have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) policy in place and actively promote ED&I
- Tourism businesses including Visit Kent, to ensure they have policy and procedures in place that ensures modern slavery (slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude) are not tolerated
- Tourism businesses to review accessibility of their service (on and offline) and take steps to improve
- Visit Kent and all tourism businesses to ensure diverse and representative marketing
- Visit Kent to actively promote local events, festivals and places that celebrate underrepresented groups


Culture


- Impact on cultural heritage
- Tourism businesses and relevant local authorities to work together to ensure that local cultural attractions benefit from tourism as much as possible.







IMPACTS & ACTIONS: COMMUNITY

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
<p>GOOD LOCAL JOBS</p> 	<p>Tourism businesses, including Visit Kent, to provide fairly paid jobs for local people and ensure long term training and development prospects for staff, and apprenticeships as well as a healthy work-life balance - Increase or stability of the number of people employed in tourism.</p>	<p>74,462 jobs supported by tourism (10% of total employment) - Kent Economic Impact Cambridge Model based on 2022 data.</p>
	<p>Tourism businesses to work towards paying staff the real living wage & strive to offer flexible working where possible and promoting a healthy work-life balance for all staff & training, apprenticeships and staff retention.</p>	<p>48% of businesses are currently/working towards paying staff the real living wage & 55% offer flexible working hours where possible' & 62% of businesses currently offer opportunities for staff training and apprenticeships - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p> <p>Visit Kent have a hybrid working policy in place that was updated in April 2023.</p>
	<p>Encourage widespread and year-round economic benefits for the local community by increasing or maintaining the number of residents who work in tourism, increasing/maintaining perceptions that tourism increases employment opportunities/improves the local economy and to improve/maintain perceptions of working in the industry.</p>	<p>88% of respondents agreed that “tourism increases employment opportunities” and 92% agreed that “tourism improves the economy”</p> <p>7% of respondents work in tourism</p> <p>63% of respondents agreed that “working in tourism is an attractive career”</p> <p>– Kent Residents survey wave 6 2023.</p>

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
<p data-bbox="186 868 393 939">WELLBEING MATTERS</p> 	<p data-bbox="516 305 1642 452">Ensure tourism in Kent positively contributes to the wellbeing of residents and pride in their local area by increasing engagement with local audiences and regularly monitoring data through our annual resident research by improving or maintaining responses.</p>	<p data-bbox="1702 249 3208 358">89% of respondents agreed they are “satisfied with my life”, 82% of respondents agreed they “live in a beautiful area”, 67% of respondents agreed their local area is calm and peaceful”, 93% agreed “am happy with my lifestyle” & 86% “feel safe”.</p> <p data-bbox="1702 403 3208 512">17% of respondents agreed that 'tourism reduces their ability to access local facilities' & 43% agreed that tourism 'increases prices for local amenities' and 64% agreed that tourism 'limits parking spaces' – Kent Residents survey wave 6 2023.</p>
	<p data-bbox="516 566 1642 712">Visit Kent to actively engage local residents in Kent’s natural, cultural and heritage assets and support businesses by providing insights into the “Hyper Local” audience and opportunities through dedicated consumer content and resident campaigns such as the Kent Big Weekend.</p> <p data-bbox="516 757 1642 904">Monitoring residents’ engagement in wellbeing related activities, measuring online data for resident content and campaigns, alongside Kent Big Weekend participant responses remain stable or increase when asked are you, or would you be proud to show your friends and family around Kent.</p>	<p data-bbox="1702 622 3175 731">Percentage of respondents who engaged in wellbeing activities- Health & Wellbeing Experiences (e.g. meditation, yoga, retreats, Tai Chi, spas) 9%, Active & Outdoor Experiences (e.g. canoeing, archery, mountain biking) 15% – Kent Residents survey wave 6 2023.</p> <p data-bbox="1862 776 3048 810">833,317 page views for the Kent Big Weekend campaign and hyper-local features.</p> <p data-bbox="1692 855 3215 926">95% of respondents agreed they are, or would you be proud to show friends and family around Kent - Kent Big Weekend Participants Survey 2023.</p>
	<p data-bbox="516 1208 1642 1316">Visit Kent and all tourism businesses to take steps to maintain the wellbeing of their staff by continuing wellbeing initiatives and maintaining positive responses to the annual employee wellbeing survey.</p>	<p data-bbox="1702 1035 3208 1181">Visit Kent wellbeing initiatives include wellbeing activities and Wellbeing Champions group for staff, Healthshield plan for staff and families, annual anonymous employee wellbeing questionnaire and regular reminders to take ‘green time’ for staff during the day. Staff wellbeing targets are also included in staff appraisals.</p> <p data-bbox="1735 1226 3175 1298">Positive responses were received as part of the annual employee wellbeing survey, around work/life balance, general support with wellbeing and embedding a supportive culture.</p> <p data-bbox="1702 1343 3208 1414">Visit Kent offices also introduced posters around the office reminding staff of our wellbeing resources and how to use the helplines that are included in staff benefits.</p> <p data-bbox="1702 1459 3208 1568">41% of businesses run staff wellbeing/team building days, 35% of businesses have a staff wellbeing survey/monitoring employee job satisfaction & 28% offer health promoting initiatives for employees - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p>

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
<p>EQUAL + DIVERSE WORLD</p> 	<p>Tourism businesses to have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) policy in place and actively promote ED&I and to deliver inclusion and diversity training for Visit Kent staff and vacancies to be advertised working with Ethnic Minority communities in Canterbury.</p>	<p>41% of businesses have an equality, diversity, and inclusion policy on their website and an additional 21% do but it's not currently available on their website - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p> <p>Visit Kent's ED&I policy is available here. Visit Kent jobs are advertised with Ethnic Minorities in Canterbury (EMIC).</p>
	<p>Tourism businesses including Visit Kent, to ensure they have policy and procedures in place that ensures modern slavery (slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude) are not tolerated and reporting mechanisms are in place.</p>	<p>21% of businesses have policy and procedures in place that ensures modern slavery (slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude) are not tolerated) on their website and an additional 38% do but it's not currently available on their website.</p> <p>Visit Kent's Modern Slavery policy is available here.</p>
	<p>Tourism businesses to review accessibility of their service (on and offline) and take steps to improve and produce accessibility guides and engage with VisitEngland's accessibility programme. Visit Kent to engage with VisitEngland LVEP accessibility programme.</p>	<p>30 access guides created with AccessAble and VisitEngland for 8 businesses.</p> <p>45% of businesses have an accessibility guide published on their website - an additional 10% have one but it's not currently available on their website - Kent Annual Business Survey 2023.</p>
	<p>Visit Kent and all tourism businesses to ensure diverse and representative marketing that is outwardly welcoming to all, including reviewing imagery and event briefs and to collaborate with diverse online influencers.</p>	<p>Throughout Visit Kent's marketing activity, from feature content to influencer trips, we ensure that we include under-represented groups. We also ensure that we have feature content celebrating everyone in society such as Pride festivals, and in general feature content we also work to ensure we include imagery of under-represented groups at the businesses as the priority. In May of 2024, we received a grant for a new suite of photography, and our number one requisite for the models in the photos was to showcase the broad range of society - such as those with disabilities.</p>
	<p>Visit Kent to actively promote local events, festivals and places that celebrate underrepresented groups within the local community, as well as those businesses who are finding ways to ensure diverse visitor groups are welcomed. And ensure the Kent Big Weekend is promoted to and encourages diverse participation from businesses and visitors.</p>	<p>2,064 page views - Celebrating Diverse Cultures (3 features - Pride in Kent art and culture festivals and wow factor in Kent).</p>

THEME	ACTIONS/TARGETS	BASELINE/2023-2024 REPORTING
<p data-bbox="203 405 379 438">CULTURE</p> 	<p data-bbox="513 283 1652 358">Tourism businesses and relevant local authorities to work together to ensure that local cultural attractions benefit from tourism as much as possible.</p> <p data-bbox="513 395 1652 470">Residents' responses increase when asked whether "tourism preserves historic buildings and monuments."</p> <p data-bbox="513 508 1652 583">Work together to secure funding and investment that enhances and preserves heritage and increase opportunities to engage with heritage and cultural assets.</p> <p data-bbox="513 620 1652 695">Visit Kent to actively promote those tourist attractions that help preserve and conserve the local cultural heritage of the area.</p>	<p data-bbox="1699 395 3202 470">92% of respondents agreed that 'tourism preserves historic buildings and monuments' - Kent Residents Research wave 6 2023.</p> <p data-bbox="1699 508 3202 545">87,977 page views to feature content related to arts, culture and heritage & entertainment in 2023/2024.</p> <p data-bbox="1699 583 3202 658">Visit Kent have supported 4 local authority partners with securing successful Levelling-up projects around heritage and culture.</p>



Spotlight: RECONNECT KENT STEM - 'LESSON IN A BOX'



Following the great success of 'Reconnect Kent Lessons in a Box - Secret Treasures of Kent', this extension project aimed to continue to reconnect children and families to their local area, using the counties rich heritage and stories to bring learning to life and address learning gaps in a fun and engaging way.

This project looked to reengage young people in learning and encourage schools to take educational trips, whilst inspiring families to explore what's on on their doorstep. By supporting teachers with ready-made lesson plans linked to the National Curriculum, we set out to address learning gaps by providing useful and relevant resources, whilst highlighting the value of educational visits to local attraction partners.

HOW WE DID IT

- We engaged six Kent attractions to help develop dedicated STEM focused lesson plans, which included - Kent Wildlife Trust, Jetstream Tours, Royal Engineers Museum, Biggin Hill Memorial Museum, Kent Mining Museum and Port Lympne Hotel & Reserve.
- Working with attraction partners, we combined core STEM themes to develop the 'Engineers Assemble' concept. Working with specialist educational tourism consultant, Dominic Wong, lesson plans, resources and materials were developed to meet the KS2 National Curriculum Requirements. The children were set a number of challenges to design and create new models to help attractions come up with a solution to their engineering problems. Submissions were then judged, with the winning school enjoying a trip for their class.
- The six-lesson module aimed to bring excitement, fun and purpose into the classroom, helping children to appreciate their local environment and become mini engineers. We then worked with a local design agency to bring the vision to life. This included an 'Engineers Assemble' toolbox which contained materials, six bags containing a range of information about each attraction, along with resources to build their engineering designs for each site and worksheets. The teachers requested a free box to be sent out to them through an online form.

3,541
children took part in the
reconnect activities

150
entries - with all 120 boxes
snapped up by Kent teachers



WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

The team, attraction partners, consultants and design agency all worked hard to ensure that the children had fun whilst they were learning and being creative. This is reflected in the feedback from teachers about how well students engaged with the interactive approach. The resources were also designed to be used again in future years. The project enabled attractions to rebuild their outreach programmes and improve their overall educational offering, through working with a leading expert in educational programme design and collaborating with other learning teams around the county.

Local Seasonal Food is playing its part in Kent's Sustainable Future

Produced in Kent is a proud community that champion local, seasonal food, drink and craft and work with many businesses who are embedding sustainable practices in everything they do. By using locally grown, seasonal produce, Kent's tourism sector can help make significant steps towards a more sustainable future. Local food is a key part of creating a sense of place and food production has shaped our landscape and communities for generations and continues to do so.

Local seasonal food is by nature climate friendly, but our members are going so much further in their aims to reduce their carbon footprint. Farming that promotes bio-diversity and soil health, reduces inputs and transport miles. Food producers using greener energy, reducing and reusing waste, and using sustainable packaging options. Hospitality venues showcasing local and seasonal food, creating their own kitchen gardens and reducing waste. All providing local employment and adding value to their local communities. We have seen some great examples:

- [Greensand Ridge Distillery](#), make all their fermented and distilled spirits from surplus produce from local farms, what they make is dictated by what's available and the whole operation runs on green energy.
- [Canterbury Brewers and Distillers](#) have used the heat from their brewing and distilling processes to heat their pub and restaurant. Their latest creative innovation is trialling the growing of mushrooms on the spent grain, producing high quality food from what would be classed as a waste product.
- Kent's thriving wine industry is also making its contribution. [Terlingham Vineyard](#) don't use any artificial pesticides or herbicides and encourage natural wild grasses and flowers that grow amongst the vines, welcoming bees, butterflies and spiders that accompany them! In 2022, their by hand, low input methods led to a negative 11.9 tonne footprint, which means they are actually a carbon sink.
- We also have great examples of businesses leading the way as Businesses for Good. [Fudge Kitchen](#) took the step in 2022 to become employee owned after 40 years, putting the future of the business in the hands of its amazing people.
- Meanwhile Louis Hurst, founder of [HatHats](#) believes "a business that makes just money, is a poor business' and has developed the HatHats Foundation, to give back to the local community, through its Invisible Lattes and much more.



Local food is a key part of creating a sense of place and food production has shaped our landscape and communities for generations and continues to do so



A few words from our Community Impact Heroes



Whitstable Maritime

Organisation purpose:

Celebrating our Coastal Connection. Our registered charity has four related objectives; celebrating Whitstable’s maritime heritage, supporting the town’s coastal economic development, addressing marine environment issues, encouraging well-being

Impact initiative:

Rescue and restoration of a 42-foot 1906 Oyster Yawl built on Island Wall and worked all its life on the Swale. Now registered as a National Historic Ship with a 60 year Business Plan, involving 240 sailings for 8 months of the year from 2025 with over 1,500 clients per year (40% charity rate / 60% commercial rate). The project incorporates traditional boat-building skills, research in to former local boatyards, and environmental concerns eg. use of wind-power for cargo and dredging. The offer to tourists will be both experiential (Sail Training) and heritage. Principal markets are Kent, London and North European ports.

Impact & benefits of initiative:

To-date: re-established traditional Shipwright skills and boat-building in Whitstable Harbour.
The visitor programme is currently limited to a Partnership scheme with 20 organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors.



The TN card

Organisation purpose:

Loyalty reward card for the TN postcodes, supporting our local independents and mental health charity West Kent Mind.

Impact initiative:

Encouraging our community to support local business which is a more sustainable way to shop - reducing food miles and transportation costs. Memberships are digital to reduce our own impact on the environment.

Impact & benefits of initiative:

Over 2000 members across Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Sevenoaks are now enjoying rewards for supporting local businesses.
More than 750 local businesses are now supported and showcased through the scheme, from local food producers and hospitality to shopping, health and beauty, theatres and local days out.
£18,000 has been raised for West Kent Mind in our first three years.

As the report shows, we have made some positive first steps in the first year of the action plan driven by collaboration and a data led approach. We have successfully embedded the learnings and legacy from the Interreg Experience project into Kent's approach to building a regenerative tourism destination and now have a clear set of measurable baselines to monitor our impact on community, climate and nature. However, this is a long-term commitment and systemic challenges need to be addressed collaboratively at a national and local level in order to really shift the dial and ensure that the visitor economy plays its part in delivering positive social and environmental impacts. As a Local Visitor Economy Partnership, Visit Kent is able to ensure that the sector isn't just considered as an afterthought and is seen as a catalyst for change but this also requires resource and funding which is why identifying and securing funding to scale up the actions set out in this plan will be a top priority in the year ahead.



Destination Management Plan:

Visit Kent will launch a new Destination Management Plan which fully aligns with the sustainable tourism action plan including key priorities around people and planet.

Securing funding for sustainable tourism initiatives:

We will work with public, private, non-profit and academic partners to identify sources of funding to scale up the delivery and impact of this action plan.

Social and environmental impact monitoring:

We will continue to improve our approach to monitoring impact by exploring sustainable destination accreditations and benchmarking tools with the Act for Impact Working Group. Nationally we are involved in VisitEngland LVEP working groups to shape new approaches to measuring social and environmental impacts.

Sharing best practice:

Kent businesses have shown that they're keen to take action, value practical guidance and want to learn from each other. We will provide more opportunities for impact heroes and businesses to come together through peer networks to share best practice and the challenges of their sustainable tourism journey.

A seat at the table:

Locally we are actively involved in the development of the Making Space for Nature Local Nature Recovery Strategy ensuring that our sector are engaged and represented. Nationally we are a leading sector voice on issues such as the impact of water quality which we will represent the county on through our involvement with the Tourism Alliance.

Positioning Kent as a sustainable tourism destination:

We will continue to weave responsible tourism messaging throughout our content and the "It's in our Nature" campaign will run for a second year with buy in from partners. We will also continue to support Kent Downs National Landscape with their ambition to secure UNESCO Geopark status and leverage opportunities around this.

Workforce and volunteers:

Visit Kent will launch a new sector specific skills initiative to encourage more local people to pursue a career in the sector, address workforce challenges and engage volunteers.

Accessible Tourism:

Working with VisitEngland we will roll out a new accessibility toolkit and access guide hub for businesses. We will also implement new accessibility feature search terms on the Visit Kent website in line with new guidance.

Contact Us

If you have any questions about our Sustainable Tourism Action Plan or Annual Sustainability report or would like to get involved please email -

enquires@visitkent.co.uk

Or visit the Visit Kent B2B website or social channels below.



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