

# THE UNEXPECTED EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP



**Interreg**  EUROPEAN UNION

France ( Channel  
Manche ) England

**EXPERIENCE**

European Regional Development Fund



**UNMISSABLE**  
*England*

**VISIT KENT**

**BUSINESS**

GARDEN *of* ENGLAND



## Experience Travel Trends that resonate with the Unexpected Experience theme

**Local & Authentic** – The visitor is looking for an authentic experience, where they can feel less like a tourist and more like a local. In the search for authenticity, the most popular experience is one that takes them behind the scenes to gain an insight into a different way of life/ culture or industry.

**Under Tourism** - Getting away from the crowds and the tourism hotspots to discover something different ... discovering 2<sup>nd</sup>/ 3<sup>rd</sup> cities and the rural offer

**Pop Culture** – An immersive experience that links them to their pop culture loves. Even better if this can be found in an unexpected location

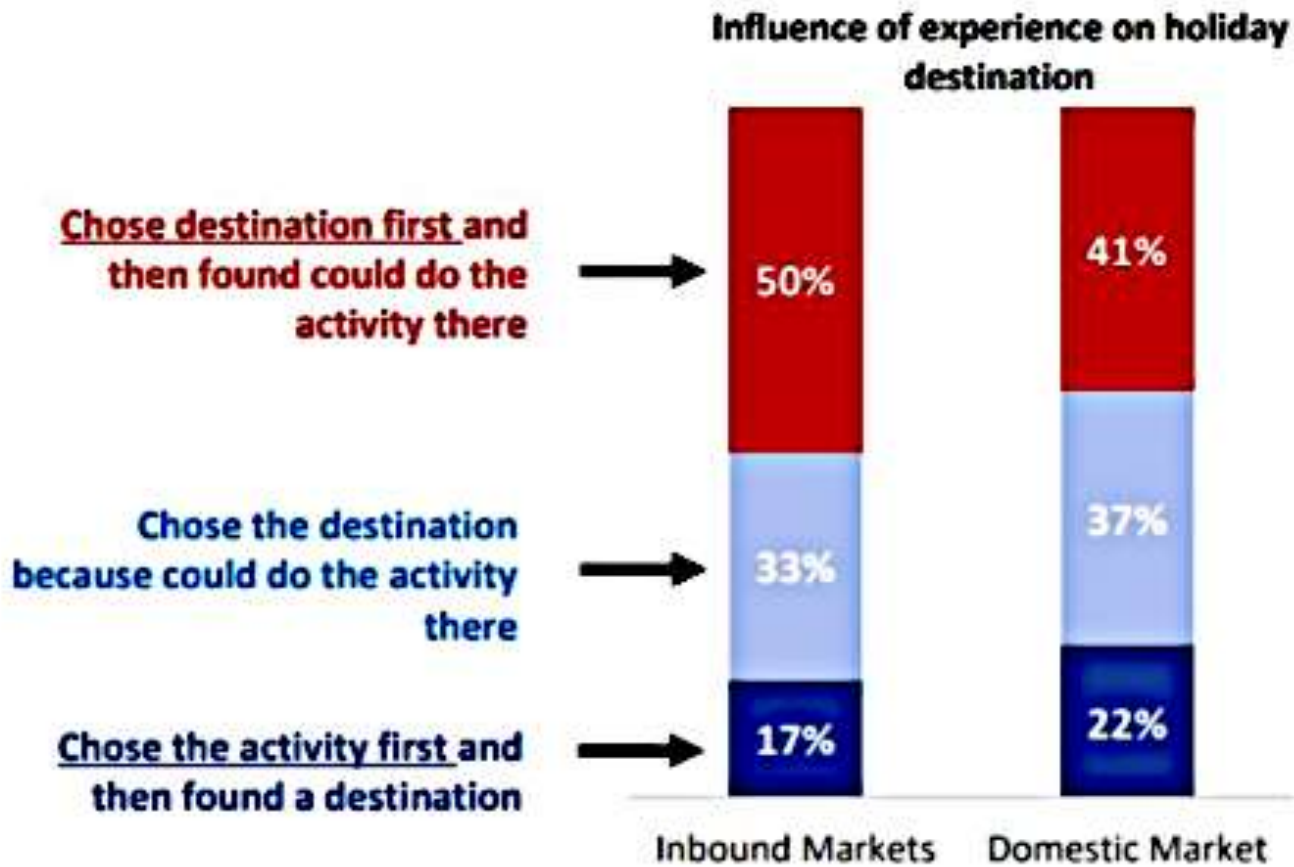
**Tech & Safety** – Information & reassurance. Covid-19 has temporarily reduced the level of instantaneous travel but additional planning provides the opportunity to seek out something more unique

**Culinary travel** – We are booking trips with our stomachs and are willing to explore with their tastebuds! The number 1 travel experience.

**Transformative Travel** - Is an experience that leaves us 'positively' changed or opens our minds, this can be through education, wellbeing and mindfulness, or by gaining a deeper insight and understanding.

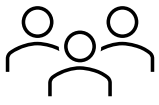


# The Benefits of experience tourism for Kent



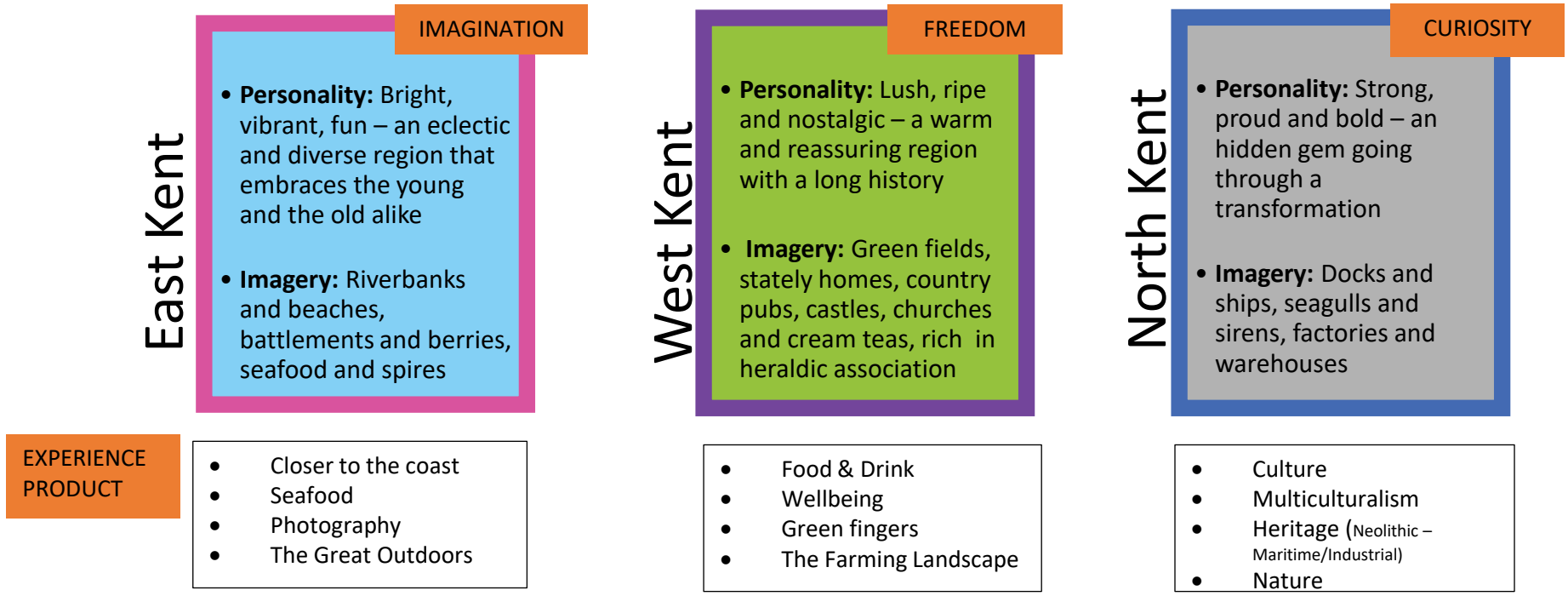
Developing travel experiences, is an effective way for a destination to reach and influence customers. From recent VisitBritain research, we already know that:

- ✓ **BOOK IN ADVANCE** - When booking an experience, 65% of the domestic market book before leaving home.
- ✓ **WILL TRAVEL OUT OF SEASON** – Many experiences are even better out of the main visitor season and can help drive footfall over these periods.
- ✓ **EXPERIENCES INFLUENCE DESTINATION CHOICE** - Nearly 60% of the domestic market are influenced by an experience when selecting a destination



# Putting the Visitor First

For an experience led product to be successful, it has to be customer led. Today’s visitors are looking for something that is authentic, unique and makes them feel like a local rather than a visitor. Due to the county’s size and breadth of offer, Visit Kent developed the Visitor First strategy in-order to spotlight the unique proposition of East, West and North Kent, giving them a clear brand voice. Championing the experience-based product, this enables a destination to amplify and even develop the brand message.



**East Kent** reflects an almost endless list of experience opportunities that align to the historic, nostalgic, creative and retro image of the coast. There is however an opportunity to strengthen this brand voice by capitalising on the countryside.

**West Kent** finds its brand strength in the established heritage offer, which although always popular with the visitor, can sometimes be a slight hindrance when trying to establish an immediacy to travel. Opportunities around the growth of the food & drink product via year-round accessibility to the vineyards along with wellbeing and self-improvement all offer opportunity

**North Kent** is dominated by a coastal /industrial image with leading attractions such as the dockyards and naval heritage. However, the emerging strength of the cultural offer, reinforced by the opportunity to build on the region’s multiculturalism will bring hidden gems to the fore, for visitors to discover.



# Options Analysis for North Kent – Core Strengths

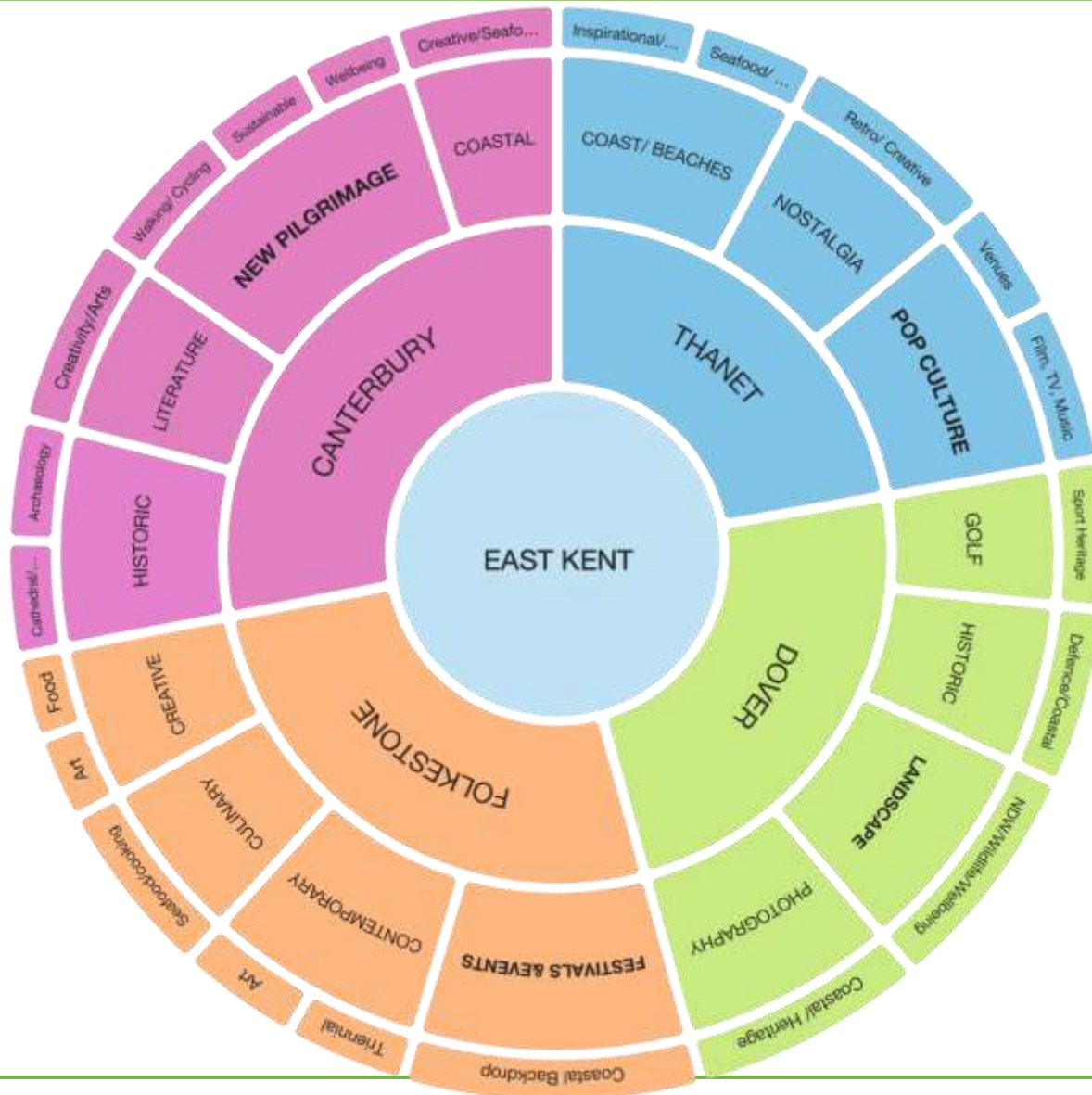


Inspirational Journeys product gaps and opportunities:

- ✓ Multiculturalism – food markets, festivals, Gurdwara
- ✓ Gaming – escape rooms, virtual reality
- ✓ Culture – arts, creativity and events
- ✓ Hidden heritage
- ✓ Walking tours – lesser known stories
- ✓ Industrial heritage
- ✓ Nature and wildlife – Scorpion hunting
- ✓ Outdoor fitness and sports – archery, axe throwing



# Options Analysis for East Kent – Core Strengths

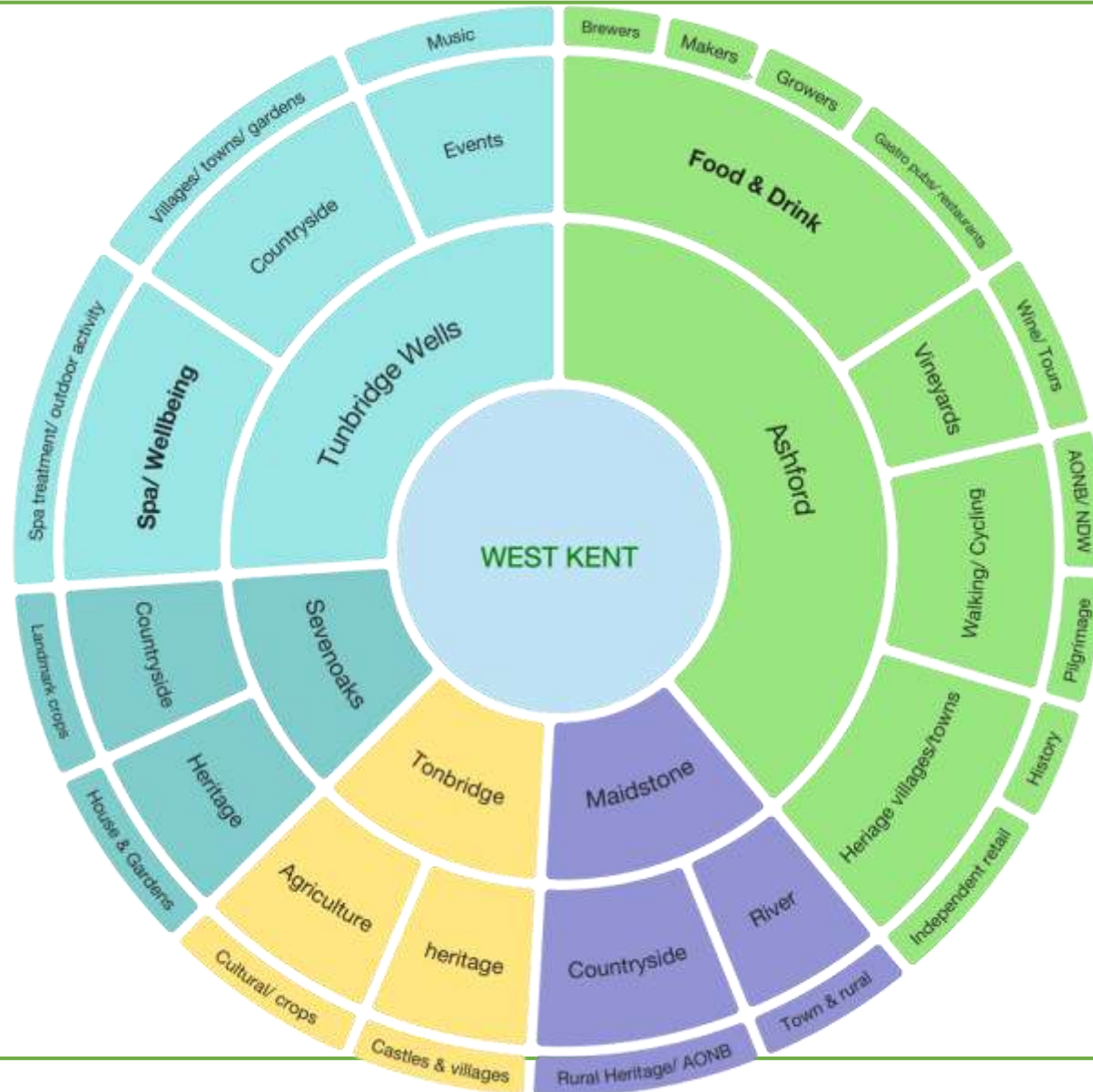


## Unexpected product gaps and opportunities:

- ✓ Nostalgia & Retro – Escape rooms
- ✓ Pop culture – TV, Film, music
- ✓ Culinary – seafood, vegan, foraging
- ✓ Coastal – kite surfing, paddle boarding
- ✓ Contemporary art – creative courses
- ✓ Heritage - Archaeological digs
- ✓ Horrible histories
- ✓ Military history - Denge sound mirrors, wartime tunnels etc.
- ✓ Fossil hunting
- ✓ Unique landscapes - Dungeness



# Options Analysis for West Kent – Core Strengths



Unexpected product gaps and opportunities:

- ✓ Agriculture and viticulture – hands on experiences
- ✓ Heritage unlocked
- ✓ Unexpected experiences in traditional settings
- ✓ Food and drink – foraging, wild cooking
- ✓ Wellbeing – outdoor activities – forest bathing
- ✓ Outdoor pursuits – sandstone climbing

# Building on the current product for Gravesham Borough

**Cultural heritage** – Dickens has a strong association across the county, but Gravesham holds hidden gems such as Gads Hill and locations that have influenced his storylines like the Leather Bottle Inn, Cobham. These sites could form the basis for a rural walking tour product linking to the NDW, building on the established Gravesend historical tours. River based product & fortifications also have a bigger part to play in the Gravesend experience.

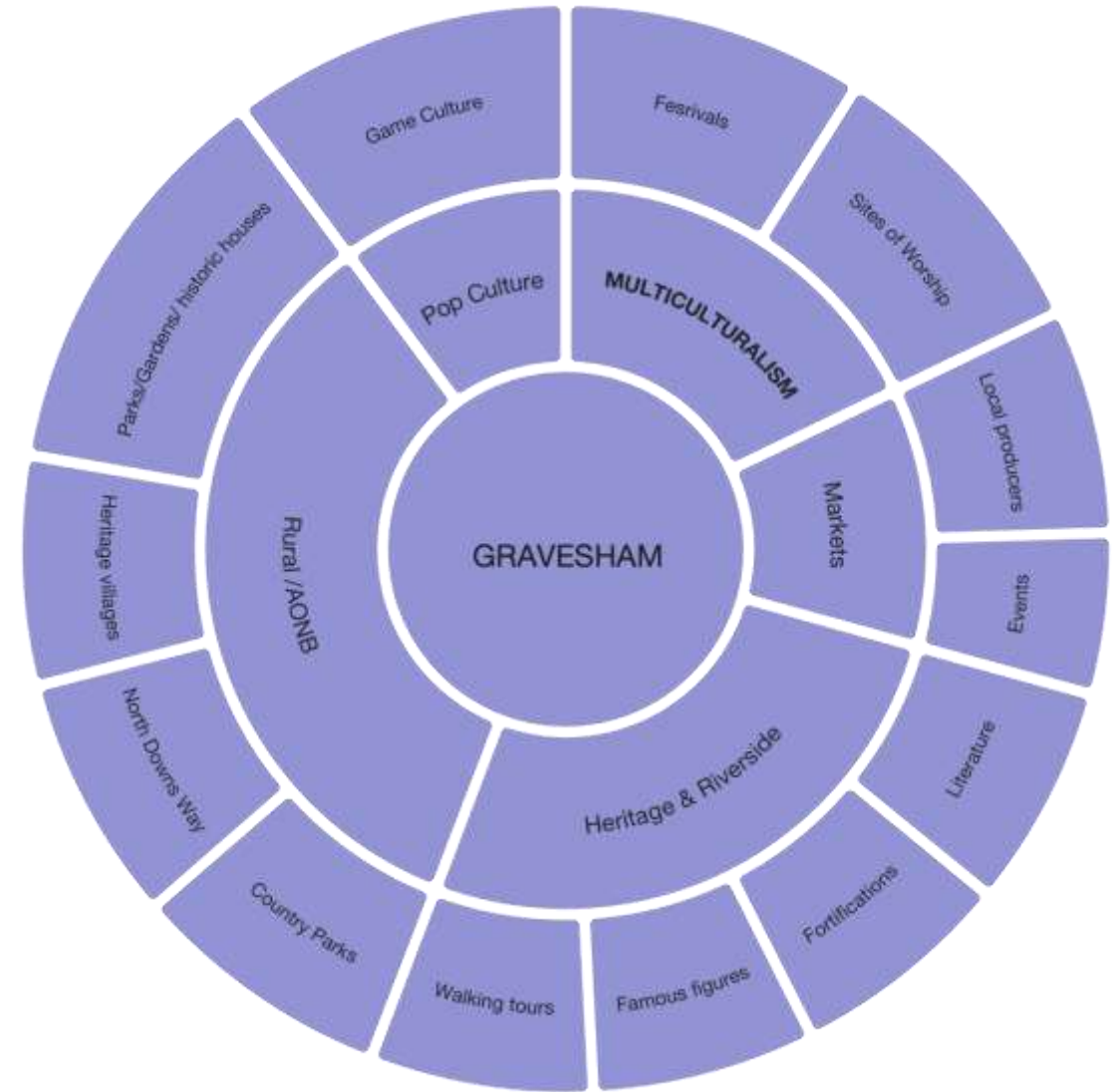
**Markets**– Market footfall like general retail has been significantly impacted by Covid 19, however footfall pre covid was known to fluctuate. The Borough market building has a fantastic heritage with the potential to build on the current market offer with events and cultural festival themes.

**Multicultural offer** – The Gurdwara does have the potential to develop an independent and group visitor market, but needs to establish an attraction’s operating model to sit alongside the day to day worship. Although additional, it is achievable and can generate a considerable economic return for the community, as seen in Neasden. Raising the profile of key festivals, linking these to possible events at the market could generate a reason to travel, generating a wider interest beyond the community.

**Pop culture:** Linking into the playcation trend for gaming, panic rooms and off season events would also strengthen Gravesham’s appeal to a teen family market which could then align to the London Resort offer.

**Food & Drink:** The interest in English wine has grown exponentially over the past 10 years and food related experiences are the no. 1 bookable product on most platforms, indicating an opportunity for Gravesham to develop this area.

Strengthened and enhanced via a sustainable commitment







# Gravesham Borough Product Priorities – Opportunities & Gaps

	Primary Themes	Gaps analysis for selected themes
Gravesham	Multi-culturalism	<p>This product area has significant growth potential for Gravesham; <b>Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara has the potential to capitalise on group tour interest similar to that seen with the Neasden Temple</b> (Pre Covid). At present interest is quite localised, however a review of the cultural events programme could engage a wider audience.</p> <p>BIDs across the country use <b>cultural events to create a ‘reason to travel’</b>, where the event encourages visitor footfall into retail areas. E.g. Bath BID ran a ‘De Los Muertos’ festival in October 2019 to offer a cultural alternative to the Halloween retail event – This included pop up Mexican dining, music and screenings of recent children’s films alongside street decoration.</p> <p>A number of cultural events already exist in the district, but to enable this to expand, would require a central events delivery programme reliant on a public/ private sector partnership model.</p>
	Markets	<p>The Market area needs footfall.... and consumers need a reason to visit beyond just purchasing of items from the stall holders.</p> <p>A <b>‘canteen social’ event around family dining linking to the cultural events calendar could revitalise this product.</b> Actions that would support this type event would be; free parking scheme for the events days and linked offers with the Gravesend Ferry etc...</p> <p>Equally, the development of a <b>‘hands on’ food and drink course programme could run on market days, or experiences associated to a wider events calendar</b>; these could include for example, wine tasting and pairing, how to grow your own mushrooms and cooking with mushrooms.</p>



## Markets & Multi-Culturalism



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**Chris Brant**  
**Unmissable England**

# NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES



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# EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Develop an all-year round product offer that will not only help your business to grow but also help your business become more resilient to future challenges.



# THE PROJECT PERKS

- 1 1:1 Specialist Consultation**  
Specialist consultancy to support the development of a business plan for the launch of your new product
- 2 Product Testing**  
Market testing of your concept with consumers and travel trade, and feed back to further develop your product
- 3 Content Development**  
New photography for your product and inclusion in inspirational content
- 4 Consumer marketing**  
Inclusion in targeted off-season consumer campaigns to market your product
- 5 B2B distribution**  
Distribution of your product to the travel trade through our established B2B connections and networks

The total estimated value of what you receive is £6,000



# APPLICATIONS

125 places available on the programme

70 + applications received in the first round

Deadline to apply 8<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Collaborative / joint applications encouraged



**Farmers. Producers. Artists. Sailors. Surfers. Chefs. Yoga Instructors.  
Vineyards. Distillers. Pubs. Creators. Photographers. Attractions. Hotels.  
Foragers. Astronomers. Upcyclers. Historians. Bird Watchers. Actors**