



**VISIT KENT/GO TO PLACES BUSINESS PLAN**

**NOVEMBER 2020**

***RESPOND, RE-BOOT, RE-BUILD***

**INTRODUCTION :** The Covid-19 pandemic has been an existential threat to the UK's visitor economy. Visit England estimates that there will be a 48% drop in domestic tourism this year and that international visits are unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels before 2023 at the earliest. The impact on businesses within the destinations managed by Go To Places - Kent and Herts – have been no less impacted by the crisis, with visitor figures down by up to half in the normally buoyant Summer season.

These challenging times have called for a step-change in the activity of the organisation, with a priority on business support and guidance; sector representation; and a more nuanced message for cautious travellers.

The current “stop/start” nature of our operating environment has necessitated an ability for the operational model of the organisation to reflect the changing environment. Despite the positive news about a vaccine, it is likely that the industry will continue to face uncertainty for some time, which makes planning extremely difficult. However, we have identified three distinct phases and core activity and skills which will be required to support our stakeholders as we move through each phase. They are : **Respond, Re-boot and Re-build**. Each of these phases will require a specific set of activities of the organisation, targeted to responding to the challenges and opportunities the industry faces at each stage. The overall aim, through this phased approach, is to **restore visitor numbers and value to their pre-Covid levels by 2024**.

## **RESPOND**

*Estimated timeline – November 2020 for 6 months*

**Community transmission is still high; industry subject to some restrictions – including periodic lockdowns; consumer confidence remains low**

**MISSION : Providing swift and flexible support to help tourism businesses during the crisis**

**Priority Activity :**

- **Business Support and guidance**
- **High-quality research to inform our..**
- **Lobbying and Advocacy for the sector**
- **Training and support for businesses to innovate and diversify**
- **Targeted consumer campaigns focussed on boosting consumer confidence and extending the season**

## **RE-BOOT**

*Estimated timeline – April 2021 til April 2022*

**Community transmission is low/vaccine rolled-out; operating restrictions lifted; consumer confidence returning**

**MISSION : To re-launch the visitor economy**

**Priority Activity :**

- **Re-engaging visitors through major campaigns, eg Big Weekend**

- Super-charging consumer confidence – focussing particularly on the “local” and capitalising on the nearby London market
- Re-engaging businesses & restoring private sector income to at least 75% of pre-Covid levels
- Leveraging Interreg Experience to develop compelling new product and itineraries
- Harnessing major events
- Stepping up our engagement with international travel trade

### ***RE- BUILD***

***Estimated timeline – Sept 2021 onwards***

***Crisis is over; normal operating parameters; travel behaviours returning to normal***

***MISSION : To build back better – developing a sustainable, high-value visitor economy which delivers jobs and growth across our destinations.***

**Priority Activity :**

- Using our data to inform strategic decisions
- Developing our place-making capability
- Working strategically with national and local partners
- Advocating for long-term investment – in infrastructure, accommodation, transport
- MICE
- Promoting Kent as a premier sustainable destination
- Accessible destination
- Welcoming visitors from all backgrounds

**OVERALL OBJECTIVE :** To support businesses to survive the crisis; restore consumer confidence, visitor numbers and spend; and work strategically to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.