



Press Release

13th March 2019
Tourism in East Kent

The Chamber has received multiple expressions of concern about the proposed downgrading of Thanet District Council's tourism department.

A report from Visit Kent published in November last year quantified the annual economic impact of Thanet tourism at £320 million with 7,000 jobs supported directly. For a district with the highest youth unemployment in the south east, these are big numbers.

The revenue from seasonal tourists sustains many of our hotels, restaurants, retailers and attractions, allowing them to remain operational throughout the year. Any significant drop in income is likely to have a toxic effect on their continued viability, especially for independent, single-centre organisations without the economies derived from shared central resources in marketing, maintenance, recruitment and supply.

Councils across our districts have markedly different policies regarding support for their local businesses. Chamber members can take some comfort from knowing that their enthusiasm for positive change and development finds a ready ear in some neighbouring districts. For instance, last year, Dover District Council decided to add tourism promotion and marketing as a key element in its corporate plan.

True to its commitment, last week Dover District Council (DDC) hosted a "Visitor and Strategy Stakeholder Workshop". Inspired by its Leader Cllr Keith Morris to: "cement the district as on the national and international map as a Destination of Choice for the future", representatives from the Dover & Thanet Chambers of Commerce were among the more than 80 participants convened by the district's newly appointed Strategic Tourism Manager.

Under the expert guidance of an experienced independent facilitator, delegates were invited to add their ideas and suggestions to an improved strategy, guided throughout the day by an emphasis on practical steps to boost the visitor economy. DDC is acutely aware of the advantages of devoting resources to promoting local heritage attractions and showcasing the outstanding natural assets of the district.

It was noted that the arrival of the Turner Prize exhibits in Margate on 28th September 2019 should continue to attract a stream of art lovers and the simply curious from far and wide until the awards are announced at the end of the year.

A recurrent theme in the discussions in Dover was the need to make the most of the 2020 Open Championships when worldwide attention will be focussed on the Royal St George's Golf course in Sandwich. Similarly, later in July, the 2020 Lambeth Conference will again see East Kent in the news as the Anglican community returns to its spiritual home of Canterbury. Senior prelates are customers too. As one Chamber member has remarked: "All those vicars and bishops are much less likely to do a runner".

But it is not just hotels, restaurants and attractions that are destined to gain from the unprecedented opportunities available. Discovery Park can compete with any venue in Europe as a multi-business science hub and DCC is keen to attract inward investment to all parts of the district.

Now that the £53 million St James Centre is up and running, outline planning permission for the restoration of Regent Cinema in Deal has been granted and CGI is steaming ahead with its plans for Western Heights and Farthingloe, local companies will be encouraged to know that there is a district council listening to their concerns and keen to take action in support.

Information

Thanet & East Kent Chamber (TEKC) provides professional business support to the private and voluntary sector. In liaison with its sister body, the Dover District Chamber of Commerce established in 1850, these East Kent Chambers of Commerce offer a powerful voice in support of their members at every level of government.

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External Websites

IoTN	https://theisleofthanetnews.com/2019/03/06/thanet-council-restructure-to-make-efficiency-savings-across-departments-including-tourism/
DCC	https://www.dover.gov.uk/News/Press-Releases/2019/Tourism-Workshop-Plans-For-Future-Growth-In-District's-Visitor-Economy.aspx
Visit Kent	https://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/library/Cambridge_Model_2018/1._Economic_Impact_of_Tourism_-_Thanet_2017.pdf
CGI	http://www.cgiplc.com/news.php
Regent	https://www.kentonline.co.uk/deal/news/cinema-and-restaurant-plans-sent-to-council-196246/
St James	https://www.stjames-dover.co.uk/
Discovery Park	https://discovery-park.co.uk/