

Appendix 2 Sector Support Fund (SSF) Application Template

1. Project Title

Gourmet Garden Trails

2. Project Location

Kent (Incl. Medway), Essex (Incl. Thurrock, Southend), Hertfordshire, Cheshire, Peak District National Park & Derbyshire and West Sussex. This funding would also enable us to extend the project into East Sussex.

3. Lead point of contact for Project

Name	Deirdre Wells
Organisation	Visit Kent
Job Title	CEO
Telephone	07751 788606
Email	Deirdre.wells@visitkent.co.uk

4. Lead contact in County Council/ Unitary Authority (if different from above)

Name	Steve Grimshaw			
Organisation	Kent County Council			
Job Title	Strategic Programme Manager			
Telephone	03000 417084			
Email	Steve.Grimshaw@kent.gov.uk			

5. Description of Project (No more than 300 words)

This narrative should include evidence of impact in at least three of the four SELEP Federated areas and links to sector based working groups

Gourmet Garden Trails (GGT) is a Discover England Fund (DEF) funded project that showcases England's beautiful gardens and unique food and drink. Locations and organisations currently involved in the project include Kent, Essex, Hertfordshire, Cheshire and The Peak District and Derbyshire, with the addition of West Sussex and The RHS for this next phase. With this funding we would also be able to extend into East Sussex.

In light of Covid-19, VisitEngland have released additional funding to adapt existing projects to focus on the domestic market to drive the recovery of the visitor economy. It encourages visits to regions outside London over the winter to extend the season and capitalise on emerging trends for local, rural and experiential products.

Since the full launch in 2019, GGT has:

- Engaged 164 businesses across the project areas
- Delivered an inspirational platform along with 20 multi-day itineraries
- Built partnerships with 7 distribution partners and collaborated on several in-market campaigns
- Delivered a B2B travel trade hub with resources for sales team
- Produced a bank of seasonal imagery and video
- Secured 10 familiarisation and press trips

For full details of previous activity, please see attached SSF report.

The amplification of Gourmet Garden Trails will prioritise:



- Adapting product for and targeting the domestic market by capitalising on the growing trend for enjoying local food, local produce, and local landscapes.
- Geographical & product expansion including East Sussex.
- Developing further seasonal content to expand the year-round offer.
- Introduce the GGT product to the USA, as an additional market to Germany and Netherlands, through virtual engagement in preparation for market recovery.
- Making the product self-sustaining through integration with VisitBritain's <u>TXGB</u> distribution platform. The platform also offers a cheap solution for small businesses to become bookable and increase digital reach.
- Increased press engagement in both domestic and international markets.

6. Federated Board endorsement

Please indicate which Federated Boards have endorsed the project, including dates of any relevant meetings.

The project has received "in principle" endorsement from three of the federated boards:

KMEP: sarah.nurden@kent.gov.uk

OSE: <u>ilewis@castlepoint.gov.uk</u>

Success Essex: Tristan.Smith@essex.gov.uk

TES: Richard.dawson@eastsussex.gov.uk

We have support in principle from federated board colleagues. Owing to the tight timetable, the Boards have agreed that we may submit the bid citing their support, but will confirm their approval once they have had the time to review the final bid in detail.

7. Project links to SELEP Economic Strategy Statement (ESS)

Please identify which objectives within the current ESS that this project will assist in delivering

Promoting innovation is a key part of the SELEP strategy and section 2.44 of the "Growth Deal and Economic Plan" states that this will be driven by businesses themselves. The visitor economy is recognised in the strategy as an area where the region has (or could have) strong competitive advantage, something which we recognise as applying to Kent. The Gourmet Gardens Trails project has developed an innovative tourism platform covering the SELEP areas of Kent, Essex and Medway with the aim of boosting the visitor economy and would extend this to East Sussex if successful.

A substantial proportion of the region's tourism assets are located in rural areas and the Gourmet Gardens Trails, by definition, mainly benefits rural tourism (although not excluding urban destinations). We note from section 2.46 of the SELEP Plan that tourism is recognised as a sector which presents new growth and business opportunities. In addition, regeneration projects linked to the creative sector such as those in Folkestone described on page 158 of the SELEP Plan have been proven to increase visitors and grow the local economy. Regeneration projects and programmes which focus on higher value attract inward investment in recent years by the opening of "boutique" hotels, gastropubs and investment in higher quality accommodation in some pubs. This assists in the revival of 'traditional' resorts which were allowed to decline due to lack of investment, changing trends in tourism and a spiral of decline. We are seeing this being reversed in key places – many coastal resorts are now "on trend" and attracting a new generation of visitors.

Covid-19 has heavily impacted the visitor economy, with footfall across the region reduced by over 90% in April and May and ONS data tells us that rural and coastal areas have been disproportionately impacted by enforced



business closures. Therefore, targeted support is needed to ensure that these areas see a quick recovery to help businesses can survive the winter and protect jobs. Data from VisitEngland tells us that the most likely destinations to benefit from early visits will be those with wide open spaces, beautiful landscapes, local produce and engaging and innovative experiences. However, the market will be competitive with destinations from across the country targeting the same pool of visitors to aid recovery. Gourmet Garden Trails will engage domestic visitors looking for compelling, high-quality experiences and is therefore an ideal tool to drive visits to the hard-hit coastal and rural areas as well as extend the 2020 season beyond the end of the summer and into autumn/winter.

Through inspirational itineraries, GGT entices consumers off the beaten track into more rural areas of the regions involved where we will seek to increase both visitors and income to these rural areas. This will also aid with the dispersal of visitors away from popular areas that have received large numbers of visitors since lockdown was eased.

Uptake of the TXGB distribution platform will have the effect of connecting SELEP area rural tourism businesses of all sizes particularly SME's with distributors, helping them reach a wider audience and open up new markets. The platform integrates with existing booking systems to increase productivity but also provides a quick and cheap way for smaller businesses to introduce a booking system. Having a booking system has become even more important as a result of social distancing to manage capacity and collect track and trace data.

With a focus on gourmet cuisine and particularly locally produced food we will look to work with businesses who are 'traditionally' in food production but have perhaps diversified into tours and experiences, such as cheese, wine and pick your own. We have seen businesses needing to adapt and introduce more diverse revenue streams to make their businesses more sustainable as a result of Covid-19 and Brexit. This product will help to drive demand and investment in rural diversification projects, protecting jobs – both directly in the visitor economy of the region and indirectly through suppliers and supporting sectors.

Our strategy is to focus on delivering higher value visitors with a lower impact on the environment to deliver a sustainable recovery. This fits well with the SELEP strategy as tourism is seen as low value in terms of output and reducing carbon emissions. Focusing on programmes and campaigns that promote quality and encourage increased spend per visit is a key goal.

Our partners include key travel organisations covering domestic rail, and cross channel ferry and rail organisations to encourage travel through these SELEP area gateways, capitalising on previous investment in these areas and supporting collaboration between these organisations and our tourism businesses, thus supporting future growth within the SELEP regions.

The Visitor Economy is a significant engine of growth for the SELEP region, worth over £8.6bn, supporting more than 177,000 jobs as of 2015. In West Kent it is recognised as "strong and growing" in the SELEP Plan (page 166) with cultural led investment in Tunbridge Wells identified as a key driver. Leisure and tourism are "important parts of the East Kent economy" (page 46); tourism accounts for 14.5% of all industry in Wealden, the highest percentage in East Sussex (page 106) and tourism is one of the "important contributors towards the employment growth" of East Sussex (page 90). This project will not only contribute towards the protection of these jobs but going forwards the visitor economy has been proven to be a quick job creator in a recession so will be important in underpinning the recovery.

The visitor economy has a significant effect on attracting people to live and work in the region. A vibrant tourism industry supports place making and a region which has a wide range of leisure, cultural and heritage assets has a strong appeal and greatly assists in encouraging businesses to locate or relocate. With the rise in home working, we expect that there will be an opportunity for the SELEP area to attract more skilled workers and businesses outside of the capital looking for reduced rents, good connectivity and a better work life balance.

We note from page 106 that there is a need to establish an intervention fund to upgrade and expand tourist accommodation and facilities to better exploit the growth potential of the tourism sector. We believe that this application falls within the scope of a requirement to assist tourism businesses in the region to improve the quality of their product and the way in which they market their offer.



8. Total value (£s) of SSF sought (net of VAT)

£25,000

9. Total value (£s) of project (net of VAT)

£217,750

10. Total value (£) of match funding (net of VAT)

£192,750

11. Funding breakdown (£s)

Source	2020/21	Total				
SSF	£25,000	£25,000				
Other sources of funding (plea	Other sources of funding (please list below, add additional rows if necessary)					
Insert name of funding						
VisitEngland Discover	£175,000	£175 000				
England Fund	£175,000	£175,000				
Project Partners:						
Visit Kent						
Visit Herts	£17,750	£17,750				
Marketing Cheshire	217,730	£17,730				
Experience West Sussex						
RHS						
Total Project Cost	£217,750	£217,750				

12. Details of match funding

Insert details of match funding, including who is providing match, at what value, on what terms and what assurances are there that the match will be provided

We have submitted an application to VisitEngland for £175,000 from the Discover England Amplification Fund and expect to hear the result on 14th August 2020. As one of the major projects with positive results from the last funding round and a product that can be easily adapted for the domestic market, we expect a positive result from the application.

In addition to this, we have secured commitment for cash co-financing from the following organisations subject to the success of the DEF amplification application:

Visit Kent	£5,000
Visit Herts	£3,000
Marketing Cheshire	£1,000
Experience West Sussex	£5,000
RHS	£3,750
TOTAL:	£17,750

Further to this, we have commitment of monetised in-kind support from the following organisations subject to the success of the DEF amplification application:

Visit Kent	£5,000
Visit Herts	£2,500



RHS TOTAL:	£15,000 £37,500
Visit Essex	£5,000
Visit Peak District & Derbyshire	£5,000
Marketing Cheshire	£5,000

We are also in discussions with East Sussex County Council about joining the project and investing £5,000 in cash co-financing. This would be subject to securing the sector support funding which would enable us to provide the resource needed to engage business and extend the product to a new destination which would usually be delivered in-kind by the partner destination.

13. Expected project start and completion dates

The project will commence in September 2020 and run until March 31st 2021.

14. Key Milestones

Key Milestones	Description	Indicative Date
Product Audits	Audits complete	August 2020
Onboarding of new product	Product uploaded to B2B/B2C websites	March 2021
Photography & Video	Provide our key travel trade contacts with new high-quality imagery and videography for use in selling 2021 itineraries	Assets uploaded to Trade Hub – Nov 2020 – Feb 2021
Virtual Educational Tours	Virtual tours will provide the trade with the technical and detailed information to enable operators to develop engaging content for their customers whilst travel is restricted and ensure a quick restart to sales once restrictions are lifted	Completed in December/Jan Distributed in Jan/Feb
New itineraries live on B2B/B2C	Creation of new seasonal itineraries, and working with tour operators and partners to create new themed itineraries such as cycling and gardening and those for the domestic and North American markets	November 2020
Sales live through B2C website	The main focus on our activity will be the domestic market, encouraging booking through GourmetGardenTrails.com, powered by TXGB, allowing the project to start developing its own income to support the running and future development of Gourmet Garden Trails.	November 2020
Press pack	Current press pack updated	September 2020
Product webinars	Webinars of GGT product x 5 (2 x NL, 2 x DE, 1 x USA) – with the help from VE international team	NLx2: complete: March 2021 DEx2: March USAx1: March



B2B marketing Campaign	B2B marketing campaign with 3 x	Start: Jan 2021
	wholesalers (1 x NL, 1 x DE 1 X	
	USA)	
Domestic Educational/press trips	To target the UK trade audience,	Jan - March 2021
	we would look to deliver (where	
	possible) 2 x domestic educational	
	trips, one in partnership with the	
	Coach Tourism Association (Kent,	
	Essex, Herts) – with a focus on	
	domestic markets	
Domestic PPC Campaign	Running a domestic market PPC	August to March 2021
	campaign, utilising our video,	
	photography, itineraries and	
	additional content to direct	
	customers to GGT	

15. Benefits created by 2021 (list benefits with number/amount and cash value if applicable)

Type of Benefit	Number of benefits created	Cash value of benefit (£)			
Please refer to table below for details					

Agreed metric	Total achieved up until 30 th June 2020	Additional outputs expected	Revised Target	Date expect to achieve	Comments
O2: New Itineraries developed	15	8	23	March 2021	
O3: New website developed and live	1	0	1	N/A	New sections added to B2C and B2B website for new project partners
O4: Familiarisation visits completed (Trade / Press)	10	2	12	March 2021	Delivered to a domestic audience of trade and press combined
GGTO1: Number of new promotional videos created	5	2	7		For new project partners
GGTO2: Number of image libraries developed	5	2	7		Further image libraries will be created for new partners. Further seasonal photography will be developed for all destinations
GGTO3: Itinerary building tool developed	1	0			
GGTO4: Number of	20	8	28	December 2020	



itineraries featured on platforms (TXGB and/or B2C)					
GGTO5: Number of businesses trained	60	40	100	March 2021	All new business will receive training material. Possible addition through TETTW
GGTO6: Number of businesses onboarded to TXGB	Awaiting info from TXGB	30	100	March 2021	All new businesses will be onboarded in parallel to TXGB
GGTO7: Press toolkit developed	1	0 developed, 1 updated		Sept 2020	Press pack will be updated to accommodate new partners and information
GGTO8: Number of advertising campaigns arranged and/or live	3	5	8		1x domestic B2C 1x domestic B2B 3x international B2B
GGTO9: Travel Trade toolkit developed	1	0 1 updated	1	March 2020	The GGT Trade Hub will be updated as product comes online
GGTO10: Number of travel trade shows attended	6	0	0		If shows do open up then Visit Kent will take GGT product to any attended shows.
GGTO11: Number of overseas agents trained to sell GGT products	115	30	145	March 2021	Delivered via Webinars
Number of domestic agents trained	N/A	25	25	March 2021	Through Webinars with UKinbound, CTA and direct
Number of domestic visitors to website		60,000	60,000	March 2021	Based upon success of previous PPC
Number of domestic sales (TXGB & partner agents)		1.5% of Visits to B2C website 150 bookings through	1.5% of Visits to B2C website 150 bookings through		We will monitor this conversion rate and welcome advice from VE on its suitability



		TXGB & Partner agents	TXGB & Partner agents	
Seasonality metrics	N/A	30% of bookings within shoulder season	30% of bookings within shoulder season	
Virtual Educational tours created & distributed	N/A	5	5	1 per cash match partner destination

16. Value for Money - Benefit/Cost Ratio

Please insert your Benefit/Cost Ratio (i.e total value of benefits divided by total costs). Please indicate how you have quantified your benefits and over what period those benefits are expected to realised

Please note: The above tables are based on initial analysis and expectation of outcomes/impacts. Through the development of the project more insight into the target market and potential limitations of technology will be gained and these metrics will be reviewed accordingly. They also assume no substantial impact by local lockdowns.

Metrics will be agreed with an independent agency, as part of the VisitEngland evaluation. As such, we will be closely monitoring the impact of the benefits mentioned in section 15, by tracking digital results, and we will work with VisitEngland-appointed evaluators to ensure that relevant metrics -given the impact of Covid-19 - are used to evaluate the success of the project.

Given the unprecedented situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic, previous performance data cannot be accurately used as baselines, as early forecasts indicate it will take a few years for the industry to reach prepandemic levels. This in turn, affects our ability to put forward a worked-out projection around additionality. The latest forecast done by VisitBritain for 2020 shows a projected decrease in domestic tourism spending of 49% and a decline of 63% in spend for inbound tourism.

The project activity also comes at a time when safeguarding jobs is more important than ever. If, as forecasted by VisitBritain, tourism revenue decreases by £64.6bn compared to 2019, we can expect around 1m people in the industry to be at risk of being made redundant. Given that a new Full Time Equivalent tourism job is created/protected with every £54,000 increase in tourism revenue, the proposed project activity will contribute to protecting jobs that are at risk.

Although it's not possible to define a target at this stage due to uncertainty in the national forecasts, we are able to calculate the number of bookings the project must achieve to deliver a cost / benefit ratio of 3:1.

The Kent Cambridge Model Economic Impact of Tourism report for 2017 calculates that the average overnight visitor spends £190.73 per trip and each day visitor spends £33.89 per trip. As part of the previous Gourmet Garden Trails evaluation, SQW and VisitEngland calculated that the projected average spend for an international GGT visitor was £219 average spend/visit by 2024 - adjusted in February 2020 - to reflect Visit Britain IPS data (2018) of additional expenditure. This means that on average we would need to generate 283 overnight visitors or 1,593 day visitors, or 246.5 international visitors to protect one FTE visitor economy job.

To achieve a 3:1 ratio in visitor spend, Gourmet Garden Trails would need to generate visits that deliver £653,250 in tourism revenue, thus protecting 12.1 FTE jobs.

Based on pre-Covid-19 Kent average spend, this would be equivalent to 19,275 day trips or 3,424.3 overnight trips. In reality, Gourmet Garden Trails would specifically target the higher value overnight stays over domestic day trips. While attracting international markets is still a priority in the medium to long term, we envisage that this market will take longer to recover. This is equivalent to just 489 persons visiting overnight per destination. It should also be



noted that this is a conservative estimate in terms of economic benefit as it doesn't take into consideration supply chains and induced jobs.

17. Value for Money - Other Considerations

Please detail benefits that cannot be quantified or cannot be quantified without lengthy or expensive analysis. This narrative should include details on why the benefit can't be quantified. If your BCR does not meet the standard 2:1 – please use this section to set out why the investment should be considered

The project will provide the integration with the TXGB distribution platform which will start to generate a revenue stream therefore making the product self-sustaining for the future.

Support for businesses to become more resilient going forwards by helping them to extend the season, diversifying their business, open up to new markets and increase productivity through TXGB. The project would also support local businesses in the supply chain to the visitor economy that have been hit equally hard by Covid-19.

Supporting a strong recovery for the visitor economy will make the area more attractive for investment especially within the food and drink and horticulture sectors which are a priority across the region.

A vibrant visitor economy has been proven to be a catalyst for regeneration and positive social impact by creating opportunity and increasing quality of life for residents.

Many of these long-term impacts which will deliver wider benefits which are interdependent and will contribute to wider recovery. While we will measure business engagement, it is not within the scope of the project or budget to measure the long-term financial benefits to businesses. The goal to make the product fully self-sustaining is a long-term aim which would not be achieved until after the project is complete.

18. Dependencies and Risks

Please detail any scheme dependencies, risks and delivery constraints which may impact on the delivery of the project and or the benefits achieved through SSF investment in the Project

- Covid-19: The pandemic has devastated the tourism industry which is why a quick-win project is needed now. However, the current travel restrictions and danger of a second spike in the UK or key markets means that planning for educational trips etc is challenging. Our focus should be to maximise the domestic footfall over Summer and Autumn 2020, onboarding and engaging further partners, honing the product, in time for a ramped-up engagement of European and USA markets for 2021. The activity and budget have the ability to adapt to the market conditions and any travel restrictions.
- Brexit: Consumer interest and confidence in the UK as a destination has been affected by Brexit. We will work with VB and distribution partners to monitor the impact, which may result in diverting budgets towards other markets.
- Staff retention: The loss of key project staff could impact the delivery timescales of the project. All GTP staff engaged on the project are permanent members of staff and all project management is coordinated through Asana to ensure all processes are monitored to allow easy handover.
- Delay in funding approval: This could impact delivery and match funding potential, in particular, activity planned for the summer. Through the discussion period with VB we shall put plans in place to receive quotes and plans for press/fam trips to ensure swift delivery. Onboarding documents will be updated and sent to delivery partners to progress at risk before funding is confirmed.



- State Aid Compliance: GTP will continue to monitor State Aid compliance of all project delivery and will seek assurance from delivery partners and potential beneficiaries to ensure state aid/de minimis compliance.
- Not receiving Discover England Amplification Funding: GTP would put the project on hold and source alternative funding streams.

19. State Aid Implications

Please indicate how your project complies with State Aid Regulations

We are currently awaiting VisitBritain's state aid requirements for this particular project. However, the previous DEF funded projects were notified by the UK Government in February 2018 to the European Commission under Article 53 (Aid for culture and heritage conservation) of the General Block Exemption (651/2014 OJ L187/1 of 26th June 2014).

NB: A declaration of compliance with EU or other State Aid Regulations will be required prior to any SSF being provided. If your project is awarded SSF it will be subject to a condition requiring the repayment of funding in the event that the European Commission or UK Government determines that the funding constitutes unlawful State Aid

20. Contracting Body

Please provide the name of the organisation to act as contracting body and give details of a contact within the organisation, including phone number and email.

If the contracting body is **not** one of the SELEP County or Unitary Councils, please detail the organisation that has been chosen, why the organisation has been selected and the benefits this arrangement will bring to the project. Any known risks of this organisation acting as contracting party should be identified here. Essex County Council as Accountable Body will make the final decision on whether any organisation is a suitable contracting partner.

Kent County Council have agreed to act as the contracting body for the project. Our main point of contact is Steve Grimshaw, Strategic Programme Manager, Economic Development and his contact details as follows:

Email: Steve.Grimshaw@kent.gov.uk

Tel: 03000 417084

Mobile: 07795 343484

21. Project Governance Structure

Please explain the project governance structure (ideally as a diagram with accompanying text), including the Project Manager, Senior Responsible Officer.

Steve Law, Head of Programme Delivery and Business Development will manage the project with Deirdre Wells OBE, CEO the senior responsible officer. The overall project performance is overseen by VisitBritain including the monitoring of KPIs and project evaluation.

VisitBritain/ VisitEngland



	Go To Places board
	Project Delivery Group (project partners, destinations
22. Declaration	
Declaration Signature (Lead applicant)	I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and correct
Print Name	Deirdre Wells OBE
Organisation	Visit Kent
Date	14 August 2020

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