

Appendix 2 Sector Support Fund (SSF) Application Template

1. Project Title

RE-BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND DEMAND IN THE VISITOR ECONOMY

2. Project Location

This project will be rolled out across the South East LEP area supported by the key visitor economy partners of Visit Kent, Visit Essex, East Sussex CC and Sussex Modern. Visit Kent is the official Destination Management Organisation for both Kent and Medway and Visit Essex is responsible for tourism across Essex, Southend and Thurrock. Sussex Modern is the only cross-county destination marketing organisation in Sussex. It supports the growth of self-guided tourism and overnight stays from visitors outside of the region.

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)

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. Covid-19 heavily impacted the industry, with footfall across the region reduced by over 90% in April and May.

Consumer confidence has also been affected, 50% of regular visitors to attractions remain extremely nervous. Hence, reassuring visitors that our destinations are safe and exciting places to visit is essential. The seasonality of tourism makes it especially vulnerable and the loss of earnings during peak season means that businesses will struggle to survive the winter, particularly in rural and coastal communities.

To address this, partners from Kent, Essex and East Sussex are proposing a significant programme to aid the recovery of the SELEP visitor economy.

This package of support, set out in the milestones in section 14, will include major digital campaigns to drive off-season visits, increase consumer confidence and disperse visitors along with dedicated local campaigns to kickstart the 2021 season.

These will reflect the distinctive and diverse offer of each region while reassuring visitors, supported by a collaborative approach to deliver economies of scale and maximise ROI. We will build on the learnings from destination confidence initiatives, such as [#RespectProtectEnjoy](#),

and on the insights that come out of Visit Kent's Interreg Experience Autumn product testing campaign, to deliver pan-LEP benefits.

The project seeks to address key opportunities and challenges, including:

- **Raising destination awareness and supporting sustainable tourism management through visitor dispersal**
- **Support consumer confidence in travelling by public transport**
- **Using key themes to showcase the diverse and high-quality tourism offer to key domestic markets and increase length of stay**
- **Protect businesses and safeguard jobs by extending the season**
- **Product development and business support to address seasonality**
- **Build positive engagement and confidence among SELEP residents**

6. Federated Board endorsement

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

KMEP: sarah.nurden@kent.gov.uk

OSE: ilewis@castlepoint.gov.uk

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)

Covid-19 has heavily impacted the visitor economy, with current VisitEngland forecasts predicting a drop of £64.6bn in total visitor spend compared to 2019. Therefore, targeted support is needed to help businesses survive the winter, protect jobs and support a sustained recovery. This requires support over and above businesses as usual as the market will be competitive with destinations from across the country targeting the same pool of visitors to aid recovery in their areas. The emerging economy recovery plans across the SELEP region all identify that visitor economy as a sector mostly badly effected by Covid-19.

The importance of the Visitor Economy is referenced a number of times in SELEP strategies. 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). In Essex tourism contributes £3.4billion to the economy and employs 65,000 people. This project will not only contribute towards the protection of a substantial number of visitor economy jobs that are at risk but going forwards the tourism industry has been proven to be a quick job creator in a recession so will be important in underpinning the recovery.

The visitor economy employs a higher than average proportion of young people and it will therefore be crucial to support a strong recovery that delivers year-round jobs as set out in priority 2 of the ESS

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. 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. The networks developed through the pan-LEP business resilience activity will help to drive investment in rural diversification projects and increase productivity and aligns with priority 1 of the ESS to support innovation and adaptation.

In the creating places section of the, SELEP recognises that the tourism industry is linked with the coast, the quality of our natural and built environment, and our cultural offer. A substantial proportion of the region’s tourism assets are located in rural and coastal areas and ONS data tells us that rural and coastal areas have been disproportionately impacted by enforced business closures. Tourism investment has proven to be a catalyst for regeneration in the SELEP region 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, vineyards 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. From this we can see that having a strong vibrant visitor economy should sit at the heart of any place-making initiative as a great place to visit is also an attractive place to live, work and invest. Therefore, supporting the recovery of the visitor economy should be central to priority 4 of the ESS to ensure these communities continue to improve.

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

£200,000

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

£356,835

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

£156,835

11. Funding breakdown (£s)

Source	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Total
SSF		85000	115000	200000
Other sources of funding (please list below, add additional rows if necessary)				
Visit Essex match in-kind		10000	20000	30000
Essex County Council cash match		10000	10000	20000
Sussex Modern match in-kind		11700	14040	25740
Sussex Modern cash match		12000	8000	28000
East Sussex County Council match in-kind		548	547	1095

Visit Kent match in-kind through Interreg Experience	20000	0	20000
Visit Kent match in-kind	16000	16000	32000
Total Project Cost	173248	183587	356835

12. Details of match funding

The match funding detailed below represents a total value of £156,835 or 44% of the total project value.

Cash match

The Sussex Modern cash match is confirmed from core funders as follows:

- Philanthropy – £16,000 for support of Sussex Modern – no terms, sum assured
- South Downs National Park – £12,000 for support of Sussex Modern - no terms, sum assured

Essex County Council cash match of £20,000 is confirmed and would need to be spent on Essex specific activity.

Match in-kind

Match in-kind through staff resource, totalling £88,835 will be provided across all 3 delivery partners – Visit Kent, Visit Essex, East Sussex County Council and Sussex Modern.

Each funding partner will deliver the following outputs:

- Project management of destination activity, including on-boarding local businesses;
- creation of locally-focussed campaign content;
- local campaign delivery;
- informing destination research; and
- collaboration on project evaluation.

In addition to this, Visit Kent will provide further in-kind benefits to the value of £20,000 through activity delivered as part of the [Interreg Experience](#) project. This will support the creation of assets used in campaign activity, consumer sentiment research and insights which will feed into a LEP-wide report drawing on insights gathered from activity in each county and business resilience resources and case studies which can be shared with businesses from across the region through the LEP-wide workshops and webinars. The Interreg Channel programme encourages the sharing of best practice and would view legacy benefits as a positive impact of the funding.

13. Expected project start and completion dates

The project will commence in October 2020 and run for one year

14. Key Milestones

Key Milestones	Description	Indicative Date
Consumer sentiment and audience research	Partners will analyse findings from audience and market research drawn from across their own channels. Using these insights, along with national level secondary sources	October 2020 – November 2020

	<p>and Interreg Experience consumer research, we will identify emerging consumer trends to inform strategies and campaign planning to support the recovery of the LEP visitor economy. It will also contribute to setting a benchmark for evaluation.</p>	
Business resilience and engagement	<p>Deliver a suite of LEP-wide webinars/workshops on consumer research, off-season product development, marketing, adapting your business model to operate viably to support business readiness. These would promote sharing of best practice between businesses using case studies drawn from other projects taking place in the LEP region including Interreg Experience and Sussex Modern. This will support businesses to pivot and develop winter offers.</p> <p>Visit Essex and Visit Kent will draw upon existing partner networks. The Sussex Modern team will grow their partnerships with like-minded brands and organisations for activation at key points during the 2021 reboot campaign (e.g. accommodation providers, gardens, coffee shops, breweries, bars, local producers, artist and maker communities, arts venues, retailers and leisure experiences).</p>	November 2020 – March 2021
Campaign development and creation of assets	<p>The partners will share learnings and best practice which will inform the development of integrated audience development and consumer confidence campaigns for each destination. The campaign plans and creative collateral will also be informed by the key audience, sector and market trends identified above.</p> <p>The curation of new and adaptation of existing assets for each destination will capitalise on</p>	<p>October 2020 - March 2021</p> <p>To accommodate different campaign timings</p>



	<p>emerging trends and showcase the unique landscapes and cultural offers of each area including products such as England’s Creative Coast and Wine Garden of England.</p>	
<p>Consumer confidence campaign activation</p>	<p>Using the plans developed in the previous stage, partners will deliver a series of integrated B2C campaigns across digital, social, outdoor, PR and influencer channels. The timings and weighting of the campaigns for each destination will be determined by the needs of the destination and also the government guidance that is in place at the time.</p> <p>However, the overall aims of these campaigns will look to address shared challenges seen across the LEP area such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increasing consumer confidence and positioning our destinations as safe and appealing ● Driving spend and investment in the visitor economy by raising awareness and consideration of the key cultural, landscape and experiences across the region ● Taking pressure off the traditional honeypot sites. ● Encouraging visits during quieter periods to sustain the much needed cash flow which will help businesses survive through the winter. ● Targeting high-spending audiences from priority locations, with a focus on independent, self-guided visits and short breaks. <p>The campaigns will build on the #RespectProtectEnjoy messaging to educate visitors on the Countryside Code and promote responsible and safe tourism. They will also align</p>	<p>December 2020 – August 2021</p>



	<p>with national messaging to build confidence including the Visit England’s “Good to Go” industry standard.</p> <p>As part of the campaigns we will also explore using hooks such as major events, anniversaries or new openings taking place across the region in 2021 and use them as a platform to increase destination awareness and drive future visits.</p> <p>Partner audience insights and campaign performance will be gathered to inform the overall evaluation of the project.</p>	
<p>Local “reboot” campaigns</p>	<p>In order to reboot the visitor economy for the 2021 season, partners will deliver campaigns which will stimulate the visitor economy by celebrating local businesses and engaging residents. The campaigns will encourage residents to discover and rediscover hidden gems across the South East, increasing pride in their local communities and boosting VFR visits to the area.</p> <p>Each destination campaign will be open to all LEP residents and will take place on a dedicated weekend to stimulate trips around the region and deliver triple the benefit. Each partner will also cross-promote the other weekends to deliver an increased reach.</p> <p>We are working to determine whether all partner weekends could be administered through the existing Big Weekend platform which will be white labelled with localised branding. By adopting a shared system and approach, all campaigns would benefit from reduced administration, improved communication and easy GDPR compliant data capture. As part of the project the platform will be further developed to deliver better</p>	<p>March 2021 - June 2021</p>



	<p>functionality and reporting for all partners using the platform.</p> <p>Current consumer insights tell us that the recovery will be driven by more local and regional travel. With at least 40% of post-lockdown trips being for the purpose of visiting friends and relatives, this further suggests the need to deliver a campaign for this market.</p> <p>We know from previous post-Big Weekend campaign research that businesses see high levels of return visits and additional spend as a result of participating. A shared approach to post-campaign research would also be applied to better understand the positive social impact of this activity on SELEP residents.</p>	
<p>Evaluation</p>	<p>A programme of continuous testing, evaluation and adaptation will be implemented by all partners throughout the campaign delivery to ensure activity and content is optimised and respond to key trends.</p> <p>Drawing on the metrics from the digital campaigns, as well as the results of the post-residents campaign surveys, an overall project-level evaluation will look at how effective the campaigns were at stimulating visits to the LEP area and the positive social impact that a vibrant visitor economy has on residents.</p> <p>Insights from this report will help us to better understand how to adapt to the changing consumer trends, inform future campaigns as well as support the continued recovery of the SELEP visitor economy.</p>	<p>January 2021 – September 2021</p>

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 (£)
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Secondary consumer sentiment and trend report	1	We have assessed the benefit value based on the programme activity as a whole using data from the industry standard economic model which is used to calculate the impact of the visitor economy. Further details in section 16
Delivery of LEP-wide workshops/webinars drawing on insights and best practice	4	
Number of businesses engaged through resilience workshops	160	
Development of campaign plans using an insight-led approach	6	
Creation of inspirational campaign assets including:		
Image libraries	3	
Inspirational videos	3	
Campaign content	30	
Total campaign reach across all digital media spend	6,000,000 impressions	
B2C newsletters sent to support campaign activity	6	
Number of press releases issued	6	
Number of influencers / press contacts engaged	12	
Local reboot campaign businesses engaged	200	
Local reboot campaign toolkits	3	
Local reboot campaign websites	3	
Local reboot campaign residents reach	2,000,000 page views	
Local reboot post-campaign surveys to businesses and residents with reports	3	
Project evaluation report	1	

16. Value for Money – Benefit/Cost Ratio

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 pre-pandemic levels. This in turn, affects our ability to put forward a detailed impact projection around additionality and jobs safeguarded. 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 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 to increase visitor spend will contribute to protecting many jobs that are at risk across the LEP area.

Although it's not possible to define a target at this stage due to uncertainty in the national forecasts, we are able to demonstrate, based on 2017 average spend data and previous campaign performance, that this activity will deliver a cost / benefit ratio far in excess 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. This means that on average we would need to generate 283 overnight visitors or 1,593 day visitors to protect one FTE visitor economy job.

To achieve a 2:1 ratio in visitor spend, the campaigns would need to generate visits that deliver £713,670 in tourism revenue, thus protecting 13.2 FTE jobs. Based on the pre-covid Kent average spend, this would be equivalent to 21,058 day trips or 3,742 overnight trips, but in reality would be a combination of the two. 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.

The project will deliver three local reboot campaigns which will primarily generate day visits as well as consumer confidence brand campaigns in each destination mainly targeting higher-value overnight visitors.

Looking at the results of the 2019 Kent Big Weekend alone, this generated over 18,000 visits through winnable tickets equating to £610,020 spend on that weekend alone. This doesn't factor in the additional audience reached through campaign activity, those who applied but didn't win tickets or ticket winners that returned or visited other attractions throughout the year as a result of the campaign. Through this project we will replicate this across three counties and also open up the opportunity to a wider audience across the entire LEP area which will see the impact multiply. As a result, even factoring in that the average spend for a resident day trip is smaller, it would still deliver the target spend.

Therefore, we can expect to achieve a benefit / cost ratio above 2:1 even before we factor in the consumer confidence brand campaigns which will target high value overnight visitors.

As part of the project, we have built in an external evaluation which will review the overall impact of all project activity drawing on campaign metrics, national impact data and county-level economic model reports.

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

17. Value for Money – Other Considerations

This coordinated programme of activity across the LEP region will have the cumulative effect of increasing the profile of the region and improving perceptions of our destinations not only to domestic visitors and residents but also potential investors, students and skilled workers. We know that 19% of inward investors are visitors first and quality of life is an important factor in the inward investment decision making process. With a shift in working behaviour as a result of Covid-19, there is an opportunity for the SELEP region to attract skilled workers to the area who are now able to work from home more often and capitalise on cheaper commercial property rates by promoting the area to businesses looking to reduce overheads by relocating out of city locations.

The project will deliver increased collaboration between visitor economy businesses across the SELEP region through the sharing of best practice and insights. This will support more innovation and adaptation which will help businesses to become more resilient and productive coming out of the covid-19 pandemic. Building on the partnerships developed through England's Creative Coast, this project will also see increased collaboration between East Sussex, Essex and Kent destinations which will reduce the situation where partners are competing for the same visitors at the same time through a coordinated approach. This will help to get better value for our media spend, find opportunities to create economies of scale and to raise the profile of our destinations. Through this increased collaboration, this will put us in a strong position to leverage other funding streams going forwards including a potential SELEP tourism zone bid.

18. Dependencies and Risks

- **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 local lock-downs means that we have designed the proposed activity to be flexible so we can respond to the rapidly changing situation. Our focus is to maximise the domestic footfall over Autumn and Winter and support a strong recovery in 2021 but delivery dates and target audiences can be adjusted. Business resilience workshops will be delivered virtually to mitigate any risk of holding a face to face meeting and to maximise attendance from across the LEP area. The level of disruption we see over winter will have an impact on the results of the campaigns, however, with increased disruption the need for interventions to retain jobs and increase confidence will be even more important.
- **Brexit:** The South East, and particularly Kent, are especially vulnerable to negative perceptions, uncertainty and transport disruptions as we head towards the end of the Brexit transition period. Again, a level of flexibility built into these activities will allow us to adapt to any challenges that occur as a result of Brexit. The campaigns would also help to mitigate any negative perceptions created as a result of media coverage.
- **Managing crowded public spaces:** When lock-down restrictions were first eased some popular destinations in the South East saw an influx of people. Effective destination management supports the dispersal of visitors to spread the economic benefit while reducing localised impact. The campaigns will focus on dispersing visitors from honeypots to lesser-visited places through inspirational content and itineraries.
- **Staff resource:** All organisations offering staff resource delivery as match in-kind have the right level of expertise needed to deliver the proposed activity. There is a risk that staff resource may be diverted to other activities in the event of a local lockdown or second wave. In this scenario, activity would need to be adjusted in response to the restrictions and therefore the delivery timeline would move in line with this as would the allocation of staff resource.
- **Interreg Experience:** The funding for the Interreg Experience programme is secured and the in-kind activity is all scheduled to be delivered ahead of or in-line with the project key milestones. The main risk to delays in Interreg Experience delivery are linked to Covid-19 as described above and flexibility has been built in to enable us to adjust timelines where necessary. There is strong governance in this project to ensure delivery through the Lead Partner, Norfolk County Council and the Joint Secretariat.
- **State Aid Compliance:** Visit Kent 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.

19. State Aid Implications

This programme of activity will be delivered for the support of all businesses in the visitor economy across the SELEP area, therefore the assistance does not give an advantage to one or more undertaking over another or have the potential to distort competition.

We are aware of State Aid exemption for tourism developments but we are aware of the need to ensure that we are not in contravention of the terms set out in the letter dated 22nd November 2013 from DCMS a copy of which can be downloaded from the following web address:

https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/state_aid_letter_from_dcms.pdf

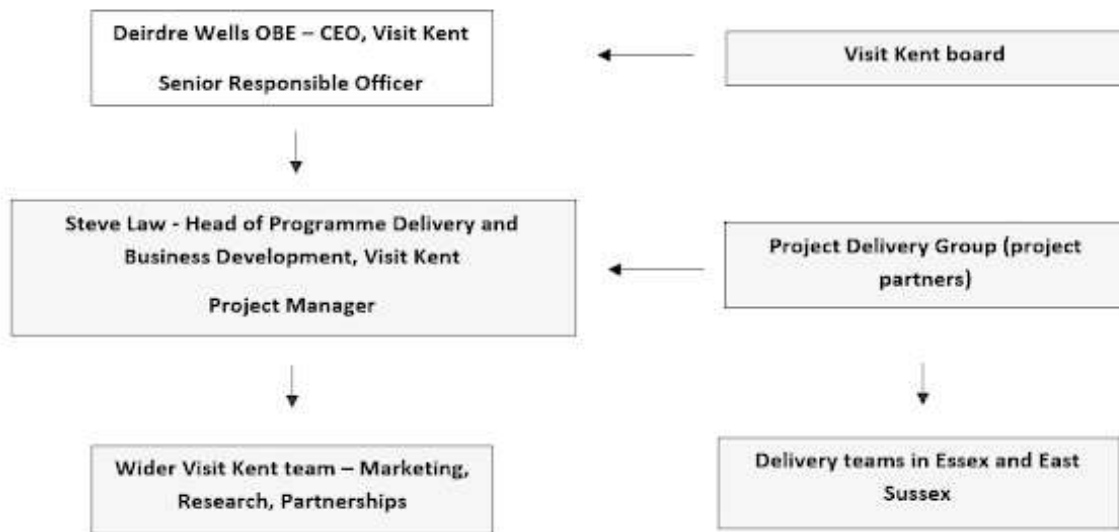
20. Contracting Body

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

The project would be led by Visit Kent with Deirdre Wells OBE the responsible officer and Steve Law, Head of Programme Delivery and business Development the overall Project Manager. The Project Manager would be responsible for quarterly Sector Support Fund reporting. We would form a Project Delivery Group comprising all project delivery partners to ensure activity is aligned across the LEP area and all shared benefits are realised.



22. Declaration

Declaration I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and correct

Signature (Lead applicant)





Print Name	Deirdre Wells OBE
Organisation	Visit Kent
Date	14 August 2020

A version of this document will be made available on www.southeastlep.com