

# KENT GARDEN *of* ENGLAND

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## PRESS RELEASE

[www.visitkent.co.uk/golf](http://www.visitkent.co.uk/golf)

### **The Open Championship returns to Kent and Royal St George's Golf Club**

*(Canterbury, Kent – July xx, 2011)* The Open returns to Kent and Royal St George's Golf Club this week, the only venue in southern England for golf's most prestigious major championship.

This is the 14th occasion the historic links at Sandwich has welcomed the Open – it was the first venue outside of Scotland to host an Open, in 1894 – placing Kent, known as The Garden of England, in the world golfing spotlight.

Royal St George's Golf Club forms part of Kent's 'Regal Golf Coast,' which includes Royal Cinque Ports (venue of the Open Championship in 1909 and 1920), Prince's (the Open venue in 1932), Littlestone (a Final Qualifying course for the 2011 Open) and North Foreland.

Overall there are more than 100 golf courses in the county, which also features modern classics such as London Golf Club (a European Tour Destination and home of the 2009 European Open and where work will soon start on the county's first five-star golf and spa hotel resort) and Chart Hills (designed by Sir Nick Faldo and ranked 82nd in *Golf World Magazine's* Top 100 Courses in the UK and Ireland) plus landmark castle courses, including Leeds Castle.

In an article published in *Kent Golf* magazine, Royal St George's Secretary Christopher Gabbey said: "In many ways, there is an argument to say the Open should come down this way slightly more often than elsewhere because we are the only one in the south.

"It means a lot to the county. When the Open is in your neck of the woods, it's terrific."

Previous winners of the Open Championship at Royal St George's include Greg Norman (1993), Sandy Lyle (1985) and golfing legend Walter Hagen (1922 and 1928). American Ben Curtis was the winner of the most recent Open Championship at Sandwich, in 2003.

The club has made changes to the bunkering on its 18<sup>th</sup> hole to make it more demanding for the Open Championship as well as adding five new tees and 100 yards of additional length to the course.

With new fast train services to London, the Channel Tunnel rail link to continental Europe, plus improvements to roads, more than 200,000 spectators are expected to descend on the Kent coast during Open week, with tens of thousands more from the UK and nearby European countries anticipated to take golf breaks in the county in the months before and after the event.

Visit Kent ([www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk)) has recently announced a new partnership with Golfbreaks.com (Europe's largest golf travel company) and Shepherd Neame (the renowned Kent-based brewer, pub and hotel operator) to promote an array of carefully selected golf breaks and special-offer packages featuring many of the county's best courses, including Royal St George's.

Sandra Matthews-Marsh, Chief Executive of Visit Kent, said: "Kent is an outstanding golf destination with so much variety and value – we look forward to welcoming back the Open Championship, and everyone who comes to stay and play in the Garden of England."

“With a deserved reputation as the Garden of England, our pubs, restaurants, guest houses and hotels are renowned for their hospitality, offering quality Kentish produce.

“As well as visitors from America, the UK and South East England, we are seeing more and more visitors from continental Europe. Indeed, we have a special cooperation with the golf courses of the Cote d’Opale and are seeing golfers from both sides of the Channel enjoying the courses in Kent and northern France.”

For more information about golf in Kent, visit [www.visitkent.co.uk/golf](http://www.visitkent.co.uk/golf).

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**Press release issued on behalf of Visit Kent by Landmark Media International**

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**About Visit Kent**

Visit Kent Limited is a public/private sector partnership supported by Kent County Council, Medway Council, the district and borough councils, Tourism South East and the leading sector tourism businesses in Kent. Visit Kent champions Kent’s £2.5 billion tourism industry by targeting UK and overseas markets, improving quality and skills and growing the tourism product.

**Notes to Editors**

Visit Kent is working with Dover District Council, Kent County Council, Canterbury City Council, Shepway District Council and Thanet District Council, with Kent Police and other partners, to support and deliver a safe and successful Open Golf Championship, and maximise the benefits to the county.

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