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PRESS RELEASE

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Open Championship golf tees up potential £70 million windfall for Kent

(Canterbury, Kent – July xx, 2011) The return of the Open Golf Championship to Kent this year is set to result in more than £70 million of income for the county.

And the long-term legacy of holding the prestigious event is likely to result in many millions of pounds being generated for Kent's economy through visitors from home and abroad enjoying golf and leisure breaks in the Garden of England.

Indeed, a strategic tie-up between Visit Kent (www.visitkent.co.uk), Golfbreaks.com (Europe's largest golf travel company) and Shepherd Neame (the renowned Kent-based brewer, pub and hotel operator) will serve to position the county as one of Europe's foremost golf destinations.

More than 200,000 spectators are expected to descend on Royal St George's Golf Club, Sandwich, from July 14-17, with tens of thousands more attracted to take breaks in the Garden of England in the years after the Open.

Kent offers golfers a choice of more than 100 courses to play. Royal St George's is 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 this year's Open) and North Foreland.

Complementing this quintet are 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) plus Chart Hills (designed by Sir Nick Faldo and ranked 82nd in *Golf World Magazine's* Top 100 Courses in the UK and Ireland).

According to an independent research study, commissioned by the R&A – organiser of The Open Championship – and EventScotland, the 2010 tournament at St Andrews generated a Scotland-wide economic impact of £47.4 million with the local area of Fife benefiting by £40.1m.

This year, with a record number of spectators expected (nearly 10% more than the 182,500 who attended in 2003), plus improved travel links from nearby London and continental Europe into Kent, the county could enjoy a record windfall from the Open. Golf courses, hotels, restaurants, travel companies and other local businesses are all set to benefit, creating more than 1,000 jobs directly and indirectly.

The 2003 Open Championship – won by American Ben Curtis – had a significant positive economic impact for Kent, according to an economic impact study carried out after the tournament. Hotels increased their revenues by an average of 21% for the month of the Open, and golf courses increased turnover by 29% on average, resulting in six additional staff being hired at each course, on average. In total, it is estimated 1,323 jobs (full-time equivalent) were created directly and indirectly in East Kent.

Sandra Matthews-Marsh, Chief Executive of Visit Kent, said: "Royal St George's hosting the Open Championship offers Kent a significant opportunity to benefit – not just during Open week but in the months and years following the Championship, too.

"We, in tandem with our many partners including Golfbreaks.com and Shepherd Neame, are working hard to attract golfers and leisure visitors to enjoy short and long breaks in the Garden of England, and enjoy our wonderful variety of golf courses. We are sure the long-term legacy of the 2011 Open for Kent will be economic benefits running into many millions of pounds."

For more information about golf in Kent, visit www.visitkent.co.uk/golf.

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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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