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With pic – Sandra Matthews-Marsh, Chief Executive of Visit Kent

KENT AND MEDWAY VISITOR BUSINESSES BLOOM IN JUNE

Many of Kent and Medway's tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses enjoyed a major boost in June according to the latest figures released by Visit Kent.

After a relatively slow start to the year, June's warmer weather and a late half term saw attractions welcoming seven per cent more guests than for the same month last year. There was also a seven per cent increase in the number of passengers taking advantage of cross Channel services.

The business and conference sector saw a ten per cent increase in bookings – many picking up visits that had been postponed as a result of difficulties in making travel arrangements earlier in the year when the volcanic ash cloud was disrupting flights.

Larger hotels enjoyed a six per cent increase in guests while smaller serviced accommodation providers, such as B&Bs and guesthouses, saw their figures go up one per cent on last year.

Meanwhile, tourist information centres had a ten per cent increase in enquiries from people booking tickets, seeking accommodation or wanting to find out more about local attractions. A rising proportion of these enquiries were from cruise passengers seeking to spend more time in the county while joining and leaving their ships at the Port of Dover.

“This is excellent and very welcome news,” said Sandra Matthews-Marsh, Chief Executive of Visit Kent.

“The start of the 2010 was difficult – not least because the weather did not favour our many outdoor attractions and coastal resorts. The warmer weather has seen people flocking to the coast and our Blue Flag beaches to enjoy the summer sunshine and savouring our splendid gardens and historic houses.

“The market overall is still highly competitive and challenging particularly for our cross-Channel service providers and our hotels and guest houses.

“Our excellent and varied attractions make Kent and Medway ideal for local and London people choosing to enjoy a staycation this summer. Following the launch of our major advertising campaign– Kent Contemporary – we are also seeing a marked increase in interest from visitors to London thinking of heading out of the city to enjoy the Garden of England.

“I am particularly delighted that more cruise passengers are taking the time to enjoy our county as this has been a key aim of the Visit Kent Cruise Partnership working closely with county attractions, transport providers and, of course, the Port of Dover.

“Furthermore, business confidence is growing. At least half of our serviced accommodation providers are now expecting to be performing better in the coming three months than for the same period last year.”

Full details of the Visit Kent monthly Business Barometer research are available at www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk. The Business Barometer is just one of the many research projects undertaken by Visit Kent to support tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses and enable them to react swiftly to market trends.

Visit Kent is responsible for marketing Kent and Medway as a visitor destination to the UK and overseas and championing the tourism sector's many businesses.

Kent and Medway welcome more than 45 million visitors every year contributing £2.5 billion to the local economy and supporting 50,600 jobs.

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For further media information, please contact Delphine Houlton, Georgette McCready or Andy Rayfield, at Maxim, tel: 01892 513033

Notes to editors:

- Visit Kent Limited is a public/private sector partnership supported by Kent County Council, Medway Council, 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 investment in the tourism product.
- The Visit Kent Business Barometer, recognised as best practice in the UK tourism industry, is part of the European 2 Seas Interreg programme – Sustainable Tourism Research Intelligence Partnership.