



21 April 2011

## **GROUPS GIVE KENT THE THUMBS UP IN NATIONAL AWARDS**

A host of Kent and Medway attractions and businesses have been shortlisted in the national 2011 Group Travel Awards – much to the delight of the county's tourism champions at Visit Kent.

Lynnette Crisp, head of marketing at Visit Kent, said: "It is incredible to have so many of our county's top businesses and Visit Kent investors among the finalists.

"As a public private partnership promoting our county at home and overseas, we have been deliberately growing our group travel market. We have been researching what group travel organisers need to make their visits successful for their groups and working with our investors to meet those needs.

"We were pleased to welcome the Group Travel Organisers' national conference to Kent earlier this year and the feedback from members was tremendous.

"This is a further vote of confidence in Kent and Medway from the frontline people hosting groups of visitors to our attractions and taking advantage of our transport providers, facilities, accommodation, and leisure and hospitality businesses."

Finalists for the awards, which are all nominated by group travel organisers include: The Historic Dockyard Chatham (Best Attraction for Group Visits – more than two hours); Canterbury (Most Group-Friendly UK Destination); Bluewater (Best Shopping Venue for Groups); Holiday Inn and Jarvis (Most Group-Friendly Hotel Chain or Group); University of Kent (Best University Accommodation for Groups); Eurostar, Eurotunnel, P&O Ferries, and SeaFrance (Best Sea Crossing Operator for Groups); Hever Castle (Best Venue Offering Guided Tours); and Leeds Castle (Best Product Information for Groups).

English Heritage Group Visits Guide 2010/11 and the National Trust Groups Guide 2010, which include their Kent properties, have also been shortlisted. Flybe, which operates flights from Manston, Kent's International Airport, is a finalist in the Best Airline for Groups category while Kent-based Saga is in line for one of two Best Tour Operator awards.

The winners of the Group Travel Awards will be announced at London's Park Plaza Riverbank hotel on Friday, June 10.

Reaching the finals of these prestigious group travel awards comes close on the heels of Medway's triumphs at the UK Coach Awards. Medway Council was named as the UK's Most Coach Friendly local authority and the council's tourism officer, Mary Sewell, was recognised by the industry as an "unsung hero".