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VISIT KENT DEMONSTRATES VALUE OF MARKET RESEARCH

Visit Kent, the county's tourism champions, has been sharing its research skills with industry experts from mainland Europe as part of a €3 million programme to grow visitor numbers in Kent, France, Belgium and The Netherlands

The Visit Kent research team hosted a meeting with European tourism guest speakers and representatives from the Lille-based Comite Regional de Tourisme (CRT), Westtoer, the West Flanders tourism agency, and the Hoeschool Zeeland University of Applied Sciences and the NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, of The Netherlands, at the Village Hotel, Maidstone.

The Visit Kent monthly Business Barometer, which records key industry statistics such as accommodation occupancy, visitor numbers at different attractions and destinations, as well as local and national issues affecting the sector in the county, is seen as international best practice.

The cross-Channel researchers are keen to introduce their own versions of the monthly Business Barometer to assist businesses in their regions.

Ruth Wood, Visit Kent head of Research and Development, said: “We have more than 3,000 tourism, leisure and hospitality business in Kent. Our monthly research enables them to take an overview of the marketplace and the issues affecting different businesses. The research is also designed to help identify growing trends and markets to target.

“Our European research partners are all representing destinations and consumer markets facing similar opportunities and challenges. They see this as a cost-effective way of gathering essential market intelligence to support their businesses.”

In 2009 Visit Kent and Kent County Council won their bid to lead a €3 million tourism project – SusTRIP (Sustainable Tourism Research Intelligence Partnership) – under the European Union Interreg 2 Seas Programme.

In Kent, the project includes the most detailed research ever undertaken into the visitor market to support economic impact measurement processes and an inventory of accessible accommodation and transport in preparation for an influx of visitors in 2012 celebrating the London Games, the Diamond Jubilee and the Dickens Bicentenary.

In addition, the European funding is assisting all project partners to research green tourism as part of their self-catering, camping and eco-friendly accommodation provision, the Visiting Friends and Relatives market, and the economic impact of events.

