



3 February 2011

KENT CONTEMPORARY SUCCESS BRINGS IN £18 MILLION

Kent Contemporary, the innovative marketing campaign launched by Visit Kent and backed by Kent County Council, delivered an £18 million fillip to the county's economy in its first five months.

Detailed independent research into the campaign, which features dramatic new photographs of the county, reveals a 47:1 return on investment.

Train, rail station and underground posters showcasing unusual images of Kent captured by top photographer Jean Luc Benard, Visit Kent website offers, e-newsletters, and features in popular newspapers all contributed to the success of the £400,000 campaign designed by Visit Kent and M&C Saatchi.

The aims of the campaign's first phase were to promote days out and short breaks in Kent to visitors from London, the South East and near Europe; to show that Kent is cool, contemporary and forward looking with a strong backbone of quality and heritage; and to drive traffic to the Visit Kent website.

According to the research, from May to October the campaign generated 79,000 additional overnight trips and short breaks to the county, 221,260 additional visitor nights worth almost £11 million, and 196,375 day trips from outside Kent with visitors spending £7,853,000.

Furthermore, but not included in the economic impact figures, the campaign encouraged local residents to take more overnight trips and day trips within the county with a total value of just under £11 million.

The three key innovative images for Kent Contemporary phase one were of Hever Castle, Botany Bay and the Goods Shed, at Canterbury.

The campaign photograph of Hever Castle proved to be the most memorable with Botany Bay taking second place. However, research respondents said they found the image of Botany Bay the most appealing and it was the one most likely to encourage them to visit Kent.

The photographs' fresh images even took many local residents by surprise with 41 per cent of research interviewees stating that they did not initially associate the images with their county.

During the research, respondents from Kent and across the South East who did recognise the images as from Kent were asked what the three photographs made them think about the county. The top three responses were: "Kent has a variety of great natural countryside" (68 per cent); "Kent has a rich heritage and hidden gems"; and "Kent has a stunning coastline".

Sandra Matthews-Marsh, chief executive at Visit Kent, said: "Kent Contemporary is a groundbreaking campaign which is already proving its great worth to the county.

"I am looking forward to working with more tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses and organisations committed to growing our economy to add even greater value as we move forward into the second phase of the campaign."

Kevin Lynes, Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development, said: "These are stunning results and it's great to see so many people visiting our county. This campaign has opened the eyes of many potential visitors by showing them those hidden gems that we all take for granted.

"In Kent, we have over 3,000 tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses, and their success is vital to the local economy. At Kent County Council we are committed to working with Visit Kent and their investors to promote this industry, which not only contributes more than £2.5 billion to our economy every year but also supports 50,000 jobs. So many people are benefiting from the success of the Kent Contemporary campaign and it gives us firm foundations to promote the county even more and encourage more visitors."