



Media release

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with pic:

PARTY CELEBRATES TOURISM SUCCESS IN THE GARDEN

Tourism champions and Kent and Medway's leisure and hospitality businesses have been celebrating their achievements in meeting the challenges of a highly competitive industry at the annual Visit Kent Garden Party.

Visit Kent Chairman Amanda Cottrell hosted the party at her home in Challock and congratulated her guests on this year's successes in meeting the growing demands of the staycation market and attracting visitors from overseas.

The 2011 Visit Kent Chairman's Awards, recognising the outstanding people and businesses who have gone out of their way to support to campaigns and events to boost tourism across the county, went to: Dierdre Billing, General Manager of the Ashford International Hotel; the marketing team at Shepherd Neame; group travel trade specialist Rachel Wray; Tamsin Leigh, Head of Marketing at Penshurst Place, Christine Morgenstern, Sales and Marketing Manager for English Heritage; Lady Fitzwalter, of Goodnestone Park; Charles Lambie, owner of the Westgate Towers, Canterbury; and Thanet tourism officer Paula Harbidge.

Reviewing the past year, Mrs Cottrell said it was difficult to comprehend just how many recent developments were now bringing new visitors to the county and contributing to the quality of life of Kent people.

She highlighted major projects ranging from the opening of the world-class galleries at Turner Contemporary and the regeneration of Margate Old Town, to the fresh investments into classic visitor icons such as Dover Castle, Leeds Castle, Knole and The Historic Dockyard Chatham, as well as the forthcoming opening of the New Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury.

Mrs Cottrell also welcomed the arrival of two new super P&O Cross Channel ferry services with the Pride of Britain soon to be joined by a sister ship, the Pride of France, and a number of new hotels including the Best Western Dover Marina. She also had high praise for the latest Kent produce taking markets by storm – Kent Crisps launched by Quex Foods.

Looking forward to 2012 and the tenth anniversary of Visit Kent – a public/private sector partnership promoting the county across the UK and overseas – she said the main aim must be to position Kent as the Key Gateway to the London Games and a tremendous host to the Paracycling competitions at Brands Hatch.

“The Games are such a tremendous opportunity for Kent,” said Mrs Cottrell. “We are working with all our hospitality providers and a wide range of other businesses and services to offer the warmest welcome in England.

“And hosting the Paracycling events will really help us promote cycling and cycling routes across Kent and bring new partners together to attract visitors to explore our tremendous countryside and enjoy our hospitality along the way.

“We all have been working together to building some brilliant ideas which will not only deliver for us in 2012 but set a really great strategy to build our tourism industry over the coming ten years.”

Visit Kent Chief Executive Sandra Matthews-Marsh described Mrs Cottrell as the main ingredient of Kent’s success as a tourism destination.

“Amanda brings everyone together to share ideas and visions and she is always flying the flag for Kent. She too has had a tremendous year starting with being awarded an OBE in the New Year’s Honours, being appointed to the Board of VisitEngland and more recently being selected to represent the county even further as a Deputy Lieutenant. So many well-deserved honours for her dedication to our county.”

In keeping with her role as Patron of Produced in Kent, Mrs Cottrell ensured her tourism guests were only served local produce including apple juice and wines from Biddenden Vineyards and canapés prepared by Chives, of Canterbury.
Ends

Caption: Tourism champions and representatives of the 2011 Chairman’s Award winners celebrate success at the Visit Kent Garden Party. Pictured, from left, are Michelle Hutchinson, Graham Hukins, Dierdre Billing, Amanda Cottrell, Christine Morgenstern, Rachel Wray, Sandra Matthews- Marsh, John Humphreys and Laura Salway

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