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PRESS RELEASE with pic

COAST EXPERT BOOSTS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEBATE

Top television presenter, journalist and geographer Nicholas Crane shared his in-depth knowledge of the country's coastline and the many challenges its towns and villages face at this year's Kent Coastal Conference held overlooking the sea at Turner Contemporary.

Mr Crane, who initially presented BBC's Coast series and more recently Town, joined a host of speakers for the day focusing on the importance of sustainable tourism in regenerating coastal towns and environment initiatives to protect and enhance the county's diverse coastline.

They were welcomed to the county's eighth annual coastal conference by Thanet South MP Laura Sandys.

Sandra Matthews-Marsh, Chief Executive of Visit Kent, outlined the importance of tourism to Thanet where local attractions, leisure and hospitality businesses contribute £217 million to the local economy each year.

She said that recent research across the tourism sector in East Kent revealed existing businesses and potential entrepreneurs had already identified new markets and were all set to develop rapidly and create new jobs. All they needed was the right support to help them lead the economic recovery and drive forward successful regeneration initiatives as currently taking place in Margate thanks to Turner Contemporary.

Other speakers included Richard Morsley, of Turner Contemporary; Jan Leandro, of The Dreamland Trust; Dave Hughes, of Tourism Plus; and Rebecca Hoffman, of Explore Kent at Kent County Council.

The conference organised by Chris Drake, Kent County Council Coastal Officer, was funded by the European Development Agency and Visit Kent. As part of a major Interreg IVA project, Visit Kent works with coastal partners in other parts of Europe to share knowledge and expertise about the developing the tourism industry.

As part of this project, Samson Imache, of the Pas-de-Calais, and Annelies Gobert, from Westtoer, joined speakers to describe initiatives to support coastal destinations on the other side of the Channel.

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Caption: TV presenter Nicholas Crane with, from left, Laura Sandys, Sandra Matthews-Marsh and Chris Drake at the Kent Coastal Conference

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For images of Kent, go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/visitkent/>*

Notes to Editors

- Visit Kent Limited is a public/private sector partnership supported by Kent County Council, Medway Council, the district and borough councils, and the leading sector tourism businesses in Kent. Visit Kent champions Kent's £3.2 billion tourism industry by targeting UK and overseas markets, improving quality and skills, and growing investment in the tourism product. For further information go to www.visitkent.co.uk or visitkentbusiness.co.uk.
- Interreg IVA is an EU funding programme which aims to promote joint working and cross-border co-operation between partner organisations on either side of a European land or maritime border. Interreg is part of the European Regional Development Fund.

The '2 Seas' Interreg IVA programme is one of two programmes involving Kent. European partners in this programme are France, Flanders and The Netherlands.

For further information go to www.interreg4a-2mers.eu

