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RESEARCH REVEALS TOURISM IS BOOMING IN KENT AND MEDWAY

A major new study into the tourism economy of Kent and Medway has revealed that the sector now contributes £3.2 billion to the local economy and supports 63,000 jobs.

The independent research, commissioned by Visit Kent, is based on statistics gathered from 2009 and gives the most up-to-date picture of the visitor economy for the whole county.

The countywide results show a 10 per cent increase in economic impact from tourism, an eight per cent increase in the number of visitors coming to Kent, and a seven per cent increase in the number jobs created by the sector since the last Cambridge Model Survey was completed in 2006.

In 2009 Kent and Medway welcomed 56.6 million visitors. They spent almost £2.6 billion— up nine per cent on 2006. A further £176.2 million was spent in the

county by visitors on their second homes and boats, and by friends and relatives entertaining guests – a massive 25 per cent increase on 2006.

Sandra Matthews-Marsh, chief executive at Visit Kent, the award-winning public private partnership promoting the county across the UK and overseas, said:

“These tremendous results really demonstrate that Kent and Medway is increasingly recognised as a top UK destination both at home and abroad.

“Visit Kent is a not-for-profit organisation bringing together local authorities and our 3,000 tourism, leisure and hospitality businesses to market our county in a way that no individual business or organisation could do on its own. Together we are punching far, far above our weight.

“Our innovative partnerships, which are developing all the time, are adding so much value to our campaigns and our marketing reach. I am confident that when the next survey is done, based on data collected in 2012, the results will be even more impressive.”

The new statistics reveal that there were 4.3 million domestic overnight trips to Kent and Medway in 2009 with Medway, Canterbury and Thanet topping the table for the number of overnight visitors. Expenditure associated with domestic overnight trips was £567 million with an average spend per person of £46.78 per night and £131.49 per trip.

The 810,000 overnight trips to Kent by overseas visitors was an increase of three per cent on 2006 with Canterbury and Ashford being the most popular places to stay. Overseas visitors spent a total of £263.3 million – nine per cent more than in 2006.

All parts of the county enjoyed an increase in the number of day trips made to and within Kent and Medway in 2009, which totalled at 51.57 million – an eight

per cent increase in volume overall compared with 2006. The day trippers were also spending more – at £1.76 billion, a nine per cent increase on 2006.

Kevin Lynes, Kent County Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development, said: "Tourism has made a massive difference to many businesses and to local people and it is clearly an important growth sector for Kent. It is the only sector that allows us to build growth without laying bricks, but by using our natural assets.

"So these are excellent results and we are committed to developing our tourism, leisure and hospitality economy even further and positioning Kent as a top UK destination."

The full Economic Impact of Tourism on Kent and Medway 2009 study was supported by funding from the Interreg 2 Seas Programme SUSTRIP project.