



Press Release

Issued on behalf of Visit Kent

KENT TOURISM INDUSTRY LOSES UP TO £1.6 MILLION PER DAY DUE TO WEATHER MISDIAGNOSIS

Visit Kent highlights the importance of accurate weather forecasting

Weather reports can cost the UK tourism industry millions of pounds in lost revenue each day when they get it wrong, according to Visit Kent.

2009 has been the year of the 'staycation', which is great news for the UK economy. However, with the Met Office changing their 'BBQ summer' forecast to a gloomy washout, Brits have been packing their swimwear and heading off to sunnier climes.

However, it's not been as bad as expected. Kent, for example, has been one of the driest counties in the UK this summer, yet has been affected by inaccurate weather predictions which potentially could have cost Kent tourism up to £1.6 million* every day in lost revenue.

Sandra Matthews-Marsh, Chief Executive at Visit Kent, commented, "We've had feedback from our partners across the county that they've been losing a lot of expected revenue due to the fact that bad weather had been predicted, when actually, it turned out to be a good day. This amounts to millions of pounds that can be lost to the industry by people deciding to stay away on the basis of the morning's weather reports."

Visitor numbers to Kent in July were up by 11 percent**, with the state of economy being cited as a top reason for people staying in the UK, and spending less money. However, evidence from Visit Kent partners cites that visitor numbers are lower on days that rain is forecast, compared to days that are predicted to be sunny, even if the weather ends up being quite bad – therefore demonstrating the increasing power of the weather report.

Sandra Matthews-Marsh continues: "We urge weather forecasters to look at how they are presenting their reports, as even if there is a slight chance of

rain, we have seen that the language used tends to be more doom and gloom than is necessary. The power of the weather reports is such that a single word or phrase can spell out a loss in revenue that can represent thousands, and even millions of pounds to the tourism industry – money that can ill be wasted in a recession.

“We would urge visitors to talk to a local Visitor Information Centre, or direct to the venue they are planning to visit, who can tell them first hand what that day’s weather is like.”

Details of Visitor Information Centres can be found on www.visitkent.co.uk as well as suggestions of things to do should the weather prove inclement.

-ENDS-

For enquiries please contact Sarah Whelband on 01732 779087 or sarahw@westgatecomms.com

*A day trip tourist spends an average of £33.84 per day in Kent (Visit Kent figures). In August 2008 there were 1,492,583 visitors to Kent (Visit Kent Business Barometer). Source – Cambridge Model 2006

Therefore $£33.84 \times (1,492,583 / 31 \text{ days in August}) = £1,629,322$ could be lost by visitors staying away because of bad weather predictions.

**According to the Visit Kent Business Barometer July 2009. The Business Barometer is produced from information provided by a sample size of Kent tourism businesses.

About Visit Kent:

Visit Kent Limited is a public/private sector partnership supported by Kent County Council, Medway Council, the district and borough councils, Tourism South East and the leading sector tourism businesses in Kent. Visit Kent champions Kent’s £2.5 billion tourism industry by targeting UK and overseas markets.

For further information visit www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk.