



Kent Tourism Business Barometer APRIL 2005

Welcome to the 2005 Business Barometer. This year, the Barometer has been harmonised with the Tourism Business Confidence Monitor conducted quarterly by Tourism South East. This monthly report provides a summary on tourism business performance from selected five top attractions, five carrier and twelve TICs. The Kent Tourism occupancy data is collected by Tourism South East. In addition, this report will include the findings from the Tourism Confidence Monitor Survey covering the period from January to March 2005.

Overview

Most of Kent Attractions and carriers have experienced a decline compared with this month last year. The main reason was the timing of the Easter Holiday which was earlier in March this year, limiting berthing issues in Calais and fierce competition between the cross channel carriers. TIC's experienced a mixed performance but showed a slight increase this month when compared with last year, due to special events and exhibitions. Medway and Gravesham TICs experienced the best performance with 20% increase from last year. Broadstairs TIC experienced the worse performance with 72% decrease from last year. The Visitor Centre in Broadstairs has become the Dickens House Museum with has much smaller space for brochure display. Kent Hotel room occupancy level was up in comparison with the same month last year.

April 2005 V April 2004

- Kent Attractions down by 20%
- Kent Carriers down by 32%
- Kent TIC's up by 0.6%
- Average Kent room occupancy level was 61.9%, up by 16%. The Overseas occupancy level was 13.2%, up by 4.1%

April news

- Special events included the Garden Show at the Hop Farm, the Sweeps Festival in Rochester and the Weald of Kent Craft Fair in Penshurst Place.
- Kent Tourism Alliance has 4 new staff in the team and there is a new Academy co-ordinator, Research co-ordinator and Tourism Assistant working in Kent Tourism
- Rachel l'Anson Kent - Tourism Research Co-ordinator
- Farah Miri-Meziane - Kent Tourism Training and Project Co-ordinator
- Sarah Belsom - Kent Tourism Research and Development Assistant
- Jill Dain – Kent Tourism Alliance Business Liaison Manager

- Sharon Dawson – Kent Tourism Alliance PA/Marketing Secretary
- Laura Stewart – Kent Tourism Alliance Campaign Executive
- Sally Wookey – Kent Tourism Alliance Exhibition Co-ordinator
- Launch of the Food Trails on the 12th April

Tourism South East Confidence Monitor January – March 2005

117 Kent businesses participated to the survey. This accounted for 26% of the overall sample

- **Performance up to end of March 2005**

Kent Businesses were less likely than other sub-regions to report better overall performance during the first quarter of this year. 31% reported that business was better overall, 37% reported that business performance was about the same, and just over a quarter (26%) reported that their business performance was worse overall compared with last year.

- **Expectation for 2005**

Kent Businesses were more cautious about their expectations for 2005 and were more likely, than other sub-regions, to expect business performance to be the same as 2004. 47% expected business to be better and 19% expected business to be down when compared with last year.

- **Type of location**

47% of businesses were located in rural areas, 27% were in coastal areas and the remaining businesses were located in urban areas.

- **External factors effecting businesses**

The majority of business, 44% operators reported that the strength of pound/exchange rate and the weather had the most significant impact on business performance over the first quarter of 2005 – mentioned by 44% of businesses. February was particularly cold and snow in Kent, caused disruption to transport networks, which will have deterred some visitors. The weather over the Easter period was also fairly unsettled. 28% of businesses mentioned the current UK economic climate, 22% also mentioned high UK retail price as a key concern to their business. The same proportion of businesses mentioned local competition and 13% of businesses mentioned competition from low cost airlines.