



17 November 2011

Visit Kent Statement re: Manston Airport

**NEW INBOUND AND OUTBOUND PASSENGER ROUTES AT MANSTON
WILL STRENGTHEN OUR TOURISM ECONOMY**

Successful airports have brought significant tourism benefits to other regions and Visit Kent has given its support to Infratil, the operators of Manston – Kent's International Airport, in its efforts to attract new airlines, secure based aircraft and serve new routes. We believe this will both strengthen and stimulate the visitor economies of East Kent and the county as a whole.

For example, we worked with Infratil and Visit Scotland promoting the route between Kent and Edinburgh ahead of this year's Open in Sandwich. Taking our Garden of England campaign to Edinburgh encouraged significant numbers of visitors to fly to East Kent and the Open Golf who were unlikely to have visited without this route available.

This campaign also contributed to our success in establishing Kent as a leading golfing destination gaining recognition among the sports' enthusiasts across Europe and the development of bespoke Kent golfing holiday packages. Visit Kent achieved its goal of ensuring that the Open Golf was not a one-off, four-day flash in the pan for our county.

Proposed new international routes to and from Manston in the future will bring further opportunities. Visit Kent is supporting the airport and the airlines in encouraging the development of new routes and stressing the importance of both healthy inbound and outbound traffic to achieve a significant positive impact on the leisure and tourism business economy of East Kent.

A secondary benefit of these routes, and a successful airport, will be to attract new businesses. This will also help support our leisure economy as more businesses settle in the area using the facilities and taking advantage of our excellent hotels and restaurants as well as our many other leisure and hospitality destinations.

Overall the UK has a “tourism deficit” of £19 billion a year and about £17 billion of that flies out of the UK every year with people taking holidays abroad. There is neither evidence to suggest that the development of new routes from regional airports will contribute further to this deficit nor that domestic tourism, which is currently growing, will be adversely affected.

However, tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world and inbound tourism is our third largest export earner. Furthermore, there is evidence that one new job is created for every 100 additional visitors to the UK.

Currently the Government is investing heavily through Visit Britain to build our overseas markets to attract four million additional visitors to the UK over the coming four years. We are determined to ensure that Kent will benefit directly from that campaign.

Visit Kent understands that the development of the airport for other types of business involving limited night flights is essential in order to sustain a profitable airport.

Thanet District Council is currently engaged in a public consultation regarding these plans. It is a matter for the local authority, which has a strong record in supporting and growing its tourism economy, to determine the extent of this activity.

Sandra Matthews-Marsh

Chief Executive

Visit Kent