

**Draft for stakeholder comment**

# **A TOURISM DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR SHEPWAY**

**FOLKESTONE, HYTHE, ROMNEY MARSH AND NORTH DOWNS**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**2016 – 2020**

**REPORT FOR SHEPWAY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**September 2016**

**Folkestone**

Hythe & Romney Marsh

Shepway District Council



[www.shepway.gov.uk](http://www.shepway.gov.uk)

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# 1. Introduction

This is an executive summary of the Shepway Destination Management Plan (DMP), providing an overview of the core elements and the Action Plan.

## 1.1. The importance of tourism in Shepway

Tourism contributes significantly to Shepway's economy<sup>1</sup>; in 2013 it generated £235.2 million for the District, supported 12% of its employment and more than 3,000 jobs.

Shepway's tourism is characterised by a number of key attractions and events, its heritage, the arts and its cultural offering, but more importantly by its rich and diverse landscape and coastline offering a number of clearly distinctive areas that are destinations in their own right. Each area tends to attract different market sectors and, whilst this is one of the challenges in delivering the DMP, it offers opportunities for a diverse tourism offer, for greater collaborative working across the area and greater retention of visitors.

## 1.2. Aims of the DMP

The DMP's main aim is to support and grow the visitor economy to the benefit of Shepway businesses, making the most of local resources and assets, identifying and addressing key gaps, and positioning Shepway strongly to take its next steps towards 2020. A mid-term review is planned for January 2018.

The DMP considers all aspects of destination management and aims to engage a broad range of stakeholders in its delivery. Central to the DMP is a deliverable Action Plan based on shared responsibilities.

The DMP builds on current and planned activity setting out a direction and actions based on meeting clearly defined strategic priorities. The DMP seeks to bring groups and organisations together, stimulate collaboration and build partnerships.

The approach focuses on Shepway as a whole but identifies the four "character areas" – Folkestone, Hythe, Romney Marsh and the North Downs – as tourism destinations in their own right and seeks to address their needs. In some cases this requires cross-boundary working with neighbouring local authorities and businesses.

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<sup>1</sup> Shepway Cambridge Model 2013

### 1.3. How the DMP was developed

The DMP and its Action Plan were developed through research and consultation undertaken from April to September 2016. An initial market analysis and review of tourism performance was followed by a programme of engagement with key stakeholders including workshops, interviews and an online survey. The DMP presents the resulting strategy and the Action Plan for its implementation.

The DMP is based on shared ownership and responsibility for delivery, working with organisations, businesses, groups and individuals that have a stake in the local tourism sector, including public, private and voluntary sectors. It identifies a range of actions to take the tourism sector forward, up to December 2020, in line with the current Shepway EDS.

#### Definitions:

- Throughout the DMP, **'Shepway'**, **'the district'** and **'the destination'** refer to the entire district. References to the individual towns and areas within the district are made clear.
- **'Visitors'** refers to anyone visiting Shepway for leisure or business. This includes people visiting friends and family (VFR).
- The **'visitor economy'** encompasses everything to do with the **'visitor experience'** – from initial marketing communications to their welcome and all provisions for their needs and activities during their visit. This goes much further than accommodation, eating out, booking tours and visiting local attractions, as visitors may be using public transport, car hire, car parking, taxis, visiting local entertainment venues, our parks, beaches and countryside. It impacts on local employment and procurement so can also benefit local producers, retailers and suppliers of services.

#### Abbreviations:

ABC – Ashford District Council  
AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
BOSCO – Boulogne & Shepway Cooperation Organisation  
CF – Creative Foundation  
EKC – East Kent College  
FTC – Folkestone Town Council  
FTCM – Folkestone Town Centre Management

HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund  
KWT – Kent Wildlife Trust  
ND – North Downs  
NDW – North Down Way National Trail  
PROW – Public Rights of Way  
RDC – Rother District Council  
RMP – Romney Marsh Partnership

RMVC – Romney Marsh Visit Centre  
SCC – Surrey County Council  
SDC – Shepway District Council  
TIC – Tourism Information Centre  
VFR – visiting friends and family  
WCCP – White Cliffs Countryside Partnership

## 2. Challenges and opportunities for Shepway

The research and consultation identified a number of key challenges faced in Shepway which the DMP sets out to address:

1. **A confused marketing message:** there are issues around the destination's identity. Shepway has four quite distinct areas each seen as destinations in their own right: Folkestone, Hythe, Romney Marsh (including Lympne) and the North Downs. Although it was agreed that a single brand for Shepway was inappropriate, there is a need to tell a consistent story about the district's areas and towns.
2. **An uncoordinated approach to marketing and promotion:** tourism marketing is fragmented and inconsistent and current marketing channels are not working together. Decisions need to be made on where efforts and support should be focused.
3. **A lack of co-ordination and joined up delivery:** there are many organisations and groups involved in different aspects of tourism delivery. There is a need to bring their efforts together, to stimulate collaboration and to provide business support which should in turn strengthen the offer, avoid duplication of effort and improve the sharing of information.
4. **A paucity of visitor information:** there is limited visitor information locally and poor directional signage in some areas. Folkestone Town Council and the Kent Wildlife Trust's Fifth Continent Programme on the Romney Marsh both have activities in place to address some of these issues, providing further opportunities within the DMP.
5. **A lack of clarity in the product offer and uncoordinated product development:** there are opportunities to make more of Shepway's assets and offers by developing packages and experiences around the arts, heritage, sports and niche activities which will support and grow the visitor economy. This requires more collaboration and partnership working.
6. **Access and transport:** whilst the district benefits from great access by road and public transport, there is a need to improve the links between the countryside and towns and transport serving the rural areas, as well as manage road congestion and the impacts of Operation Stack.
7. **General appearance:** there are concerns over litter, dog fouling, anti-social behaviour and the general appearance of some areas. Such issues will negatively impact on the visitor economy, highlighting the need to work in partnership with organisations that manage the public realm.
8. **A need for investment:** there is a need for tourism investment by the private and public sector - to increase the variety and quality of the offer, increase occupancy, spread seasonality, improve public amenities and grow the tourism economy.
9. **The need for business data:** current data collection is limited and there is no co-ordinated central approach. To support businesses operating within the visitor economy it is necessary to monitor and measure performance. A better understanding of our tourism trading conditions will support our forward planning as well as the case for new business investment and funding bids.
10. **Limited resources:** the DMP calls for change and real progress to be achieved within a short time frame but with limited resources. Building on current and planned tourism activity through a more co-ordinated approach should help ensure buy-in and participation of stakeholders.

### 3. The strategic direction for Shepway

The DMP's strategic direction has been informed through the research, analysis and consultation with local stakeholders undertaken through the development of the DMP.

#### 3.1. The Vision for tourism in Shepway

**By 2020 Folkestone, Hythe, Romney Marsh and The Downs are recognised as unique, exciting places to visit, with vibrant towns and traditional villages, easy to get to and around, located in breathtaking countryside and the historic Kent coast, offering relaxation, entertainment, arts, sports, heritage, cultural activities and accommodation to suit all needs.**

#### 3.2. Our Goal for tourism in Shepway

Our goal is to maximise the potential of the tourism sector to the local economy by generating greater economic benefit from our visitors; seeing the district prosper with tourism contributing significantly in terms of jobs, income and profits not only to those directly involved with the sector, but to the wider community and economy.

#### 3.3. Priorities for action

These objectives set out how we intend to achieve our Vision and Goal for tourism in Shepway:

➤ **Objective 1: Develop a sustainable delivery structure that supports consolidation of effort and monitors business performance**

We will develop an effective delivery structure that aims to increase the value of the visitor economy by supporting consolidation of effort and monitoring business performance.

➤ **Objective 2: Co-ordinate development and promotion of our tourism product**

We will provide a more consistent message around our identity, strengthen our current offer by improving the co-ordination and promotion of existing product and, develop new product utilising our natural and built assets. Recognising and understanding the diversity of the district, we will support each area's needs whilst stimulating collaboration and partnership working between the different locally based stakeholder organisations and groups to help shape the story of the district as a whole.

### ➤ **Objective 3: Improve the visitor experience**

We will invest in the visitor experience to enhance our offer, prioritising accommodation, food and drink and the night time economy, inspiring our target markets to visit, stay longer and spend more in the local economy. The DMP will contribute to regeneration and support economic growth in the district, attracting further investment in the range of services that Shepway can support. Business performance data will be collated, providing a strong evidence base that can be demonstrated to potential investors.

## **3.4. Identifying Shepway's target markets**

One of the first steps in determining how the Vision, Goal and objectives are going to be achieved is to understand Shepway's key market sectors. To generate the maximum economic benefit from our visitors we want to focus on attracting people who are most likely to visit us and spend more. The better we understand our current and potential markets, the more targeted and cost effective our marketing will be.

Our day visitors are important and we are already attracting a high proportion, so the focus for this plan is on:

- a) Increasing the number of people who stay overnight,
- b) Increasing the number of nights they stay and,
- c) Increasing the amount they spend.

The target markets that we will focus on are:

- **Domestic visitors:** mostly located within 2-3 hours travelling time, coming from London, the southeast counties and Essex.
- **International visitors:** France and Germany should be targeted as a priority, together with the secondary markets of Belgium, Ireland and The Netherlands.
- **Leisure visitors:** through feedback from our tourism businesses, previous visitor surveys and national research on domestic visitors, five key target market audiences have been identified:
  1. Country loving traditionalist
  2. Young professionals
  3. Multi-generational families
  4. Special interest groups and enthusiasts
  5. Local residents hosting visiting friends and family (VFR)

**Business visitors:** whilst currently comparatively few in number to Shepway, business visitors are valuable to the local economy and there is an opportunity to grow this sector with a focus on overnight stays. Business visitors comprise a sixth target market audience for Shepway.

## 4. Delivery of the DMP

This section outlines how the delivery of the DMP will work, who will be responsible and how the model can evolve. This is core to achieving the Goal and Vision of the DMP.

### Who will lead:

- The Tourism Working Group, which co-ordinated development of the DMP, will evolve into the DMP Steering Group with overall responsibility for co-ordination, implementation and monitoring of Action Plan delivery.
- The Group will sit as the central point of contact, commission work where needed and provide advice and guidance to delivery bodies.
- SDC currently chairs the DMP Steering Group and will continue as a core member, providing a secretariat function.
- The DMP Steering Group will be formalised and its functions outlined through a Terms of Reference.

### Who will deliver:

- Shepway-wide actions will be overseen by the DMP Steering Group or designated organisations/contractors with a specific remit (e.g. SDC and FTC for maintaining and managing their own assets).
- Local area actions will be delivered by existing or newly established local working groups or accountable organisations/businesses in that area.

### Structure:

- The DMP Steering Group will meet quarterly to review progress, and more frequently in the early stages to implement priority actions.
- Quarterly reports will be provided to the DMP Steering Group from the local working groups/accountable bodies.
- Regular updates/e-newsletters to all stakeholders will share progress and put out calls for support if needed.

### Resources:

- The DMP Steering Group will collectively assist in identifying and sourcing funding and resources for relevant district wide actions.
- Local groups/accountable businesses/organisations will identify and source funding and resources for delivering local level actions.

## 4.1. DMP Steering Group

The DMP Steering Group is currently comprised of:

- Shepway District Council
  - Folkestone Town Council
  - Romney Marsh Partnership
  - Visit Kent
  - BOSCO
  - Business sector representatives from:
- 
- Burlington Hotel (+ representing Folkestone Hythe & District Hotel & Catering Association)
  - Creative Foundation
  - Grand Hotel (+ representing Folkestone Town Centre Management)
  - Grand Burstin Hotel
  - Hythe Imperial Hotel
  - Strand House (Roger De Haan's Private Office)

Additional representatives will be co-opted as required for their specialist expertise and to ensure representation from each part of the district. The DMP Steering Group will review the chairmanship of the group and consider widening its representation to include:

- Heritage
- Rural areas and interests
- Training / education
- Transport

The primary focus for the DMP Steering Group in the first stages of delivery is on putting the proper processes in place to ensure long term delivery of the Plan, enabling it to evolve and grow.

## 4.2. Work 'themes'

To enable us to meet our objectives, four themes of work have been identified to deliver our Vision and Goal:

- **Marketing and communications**  
Developing a clear identity for the destination and distinct character areas, co-ordinating marketing and promotional activity and improving the provision of tourism information.
- **Product development**  
Co-ordinating packaging and promotion of existing product and develop experiences, itineraries, activities and events.
- **Business support, education, partnership working**  
Developing business-to-business communications, networking, training and product-awareness raising opportunities.
- **Place making**  
Improving or supporting the enhancement of places.

## 5. The Action Plan

The Action Plan identifies and draws together many activities already taking place or under development in Shepway. New partnerships are proposed to progress some of these actions where needed. This will lead to a more coordinated approach to managing the destination and will encourage greater partnership working and communication between the many different parties operating in the tourism sector in Shepway.

A great number of ideas for the Action Plan were put forward at the DMP consultation workshops, some of which are included as individual actions, whilst others have been merged or incorporated into an activity with a larger focus. However, some ideas need further development and have not been included at this stage. There are also already many initiatives underway in Shepway which are already being successfully taken forward and so are not included in the action plan.

Resource and costs are important considerations in delivering the Action Plan and therefore flexibility is needed. Determining responsibilities and timeframes for delivery, setting Key Performance Indicators and costing the individual actions will be clarified as the Action Plan evolves. One of the first actions of the DMP Steering group will be to review the progress of current activity and prioritise and identify the resources available to progress both the new and proposed activities.

A review of the DMP is planned for January 2018, at which point all existing ideas will be revisited and new ones identified, with a view to incorporating them in the next phase of delivery.

<b>Work theme 1: Marketing and communications</b>			
<b>Code</b>	<b>Actions: current activity</b>	<b>Who's involved</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
WT1: A1	<b>Review current web presence</b>	FTC, SDC, FTCM, Fifth Continent, Folkestone tourist info, private sector	6 months – by end March 2017
WT1: A2	<b>Audit printed materials</b>	FTC, SDC, Fifth Continent, FTCM, parish and town councils	6 months – by March 2017
WT1: A3	<b>Review provision of information at tourism information centres</b>	SDC, FTC, RMVC	From May 2017 – ongoing
WT1: A4	<b>Review communications of events information</b>	FTC, SDC Events & Licencing Manager, FTCM, Fifth Continent, Folkestone Status, Folkestone Festivals	Ongoing
WT1: A5	<b>Develop B2C social media campaign</b>	FTC, CF, Folkestone Status	Ongoing
WT1: A6	<b>Deliver BOSCO programme of tourism activity</b>	BOSCO, FTC, SDC, participating businesses	Ongoing

Code	Actions: new and proposed activity	Who's involved	Timeframe
WT1: P1	<b>Marketing hackathon for event promotion:</b> To create a centralised platform/app to display info on events across district.	Holiday Extras, Code Harbour network, CCCU, FTC, Academy FM/Folkestone Status, SDC	6 months – by March 2017
WT1: P2	<b>Develop an identity / brand toolkit:</b> For each area within district (+ utilising brand identity approach developed for Romney Marsh).	Marketing & Communications Working Group, Romney Marsh Partnership	12 months – by October 2017
WT1: P3	<b>Participate in Visit Kent marketing campaigns:</b> Partner on promotional activities and funding bids.	Visit Kent, partner organisations	Ongoing
WT1: P4	<b>Explore development of an Arts App for Folkestone</b>	CF, arts organisations, private sector	To be confirmed
WT1: P5	<b>Develop campaigns to promote England Coastal Path</b>	Explore Kent, Visit Kent	To be determined

<b>Work theme 2: Product development</b>			
Code	Actions: current activity	Who's involved	Timeframe
WT2: A1	<b>Develop Arts focused tours:</b> Develop arts led tours and workshops to attract more visitors to Folkestone out of season. Potential to develop similar activities across district.	Folkestone Art Room, participating businesses, FTC	Launch summer 2017
WT2: A2	<b>Develop a Heritage and History package linking Napoleonic and WW1 &amp; 2 features and assets:</b> Develop itineraries and supporting promotional activity.	Shorncliffe Trust	9 months to develop
WT2: A3	<b>Explore potential for the development of the Shorncliffe Backdoor Training area:</b> Proposed visitor/education centre and improved access to site.	Shorncliffe Trust	Time for site negotiation TBC
Code	Actions: new and proposed activity	Who's involved	Timeframe
WT2: P1	<b>Target business travel sector:</b> Targeted campaign with district's larger hotels to attract business sector.	FTCM	Set up by spring 2017 – ongoing
WT2: P2	<b>Develop Heritage Tours:</b> To attract more year-round visitors. Initial focus Folkestone, eventually expanding across district.	FTC ,local historians, guides, heritage attractions, businesses	From May 2017 – ongoing
WT2: P3	<b>Develop themed coach tour itineraries:</b> 1. Aimed at tourists staying in London, develop full day tours to explore district. 2. Prospect French Coach tour operators to visit district.	Paul Kimber (1), BOSCO (2), FTC, participating businesses, Visit Kent	Launch summer 2017
WT2: P4	<b>Explore opportunities to develop Shepway speciality Food &amp; Drink experiences:</b> Build Food & Drink story on Romney Marsh; develop trails/packages across district.	RMP, Fifth Continent, Visit Kent, participating producers, venues and retailers.	From May 2017 – to be determined

### Work theme 3: Business support, education and partnership working

Code	Actions: current activity	Who's involved	Timeframe
WT3: A1	Research and build tourism database.	FTC, SDC, Visit Kent	Ongoing.
WT3: A2	<b>Fifth Continent Training Programme:</b> For Romney Marsh tourism businesses.	KWT (as Fifth Continent project lead), RMP	2017 – 2019
Code	Actions: new and proposed activity	Who's involved	Timeframe
WT3: P1	Support re-establishment of North Downs business network.	FTC , rural bodies	6 months – by March 2017.
WT3: P2	Support development of a Romney Marsh Tourism Association.	RMP, KMT (as Fifth Continent project lead)	9 months – by May 2017.
WT3: P3	<b>Develop an education programme for the tourism sector:</b> Explore potential for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Local Greeters/champions/ Ambassador scheme/s</li> <li>. Product training for cab drivers and hotel front line staff</li> <li>. Networking events for tourism businesses</li> </ul>	EKC, SDC, FTC, Visit Kent, FH&DHCA, HB&TA, Fifth Continent, tourism businesses	Establish in 12 months / ongoing programme.

### Work theme 4: Place making

Code	Actions: current activity	Who's involved	Timeframe
WT4: A1	<b>Stage 2 Production of a Sustainable Access Strategy for Romney Marsh and Rye Bay (SSSI) area:</b> To identify tourism and recreation pressures and propose management interventions and solutions.	SDC , RDC	By October 2016
WT4: A2	<b>Production of a Heritage Strategy for Shepway:</b> To assess key features and identify opportunities for conserving and developing their potential as tourism assets.	SDC, KCC, local partners	By March 2017
WT4: A3	<b>Development of the Cinque Port Cycle Way:</b> From Folkestone Harbour to Dungeness and Lydd.	Cycle Shepway, KCC, SDC, PROW, Sustrans	By October 2017
WT4: A4	<b>Development of the North Downs Way National Trail strategy:</b> To develop a strategy and enhancement projects along the trail.	NDW National Trail Officer, KCC , SDC	TBA
WT4: A5	<b>Cycle path development on Royal Military Canal:</b> To produce a canal strategy to identify where footpath links and cycle routes along the canal can be improved or introduced.	ABC, RMP, Sustrans, PROW	TBA

Code	Actions: new and proposed activity	Who's involved	Timeframe
WT4: P1	<b>Improvements to signage and directional information across district:</b> Review signage and directional information and establish improvements strategy.	SDC, FTC, Fifth Continent, local parish and town councils, KCC, Visit Kent	To be determined
WT4: P2	<b>Review streetscape management:</b> Identify problem areas suffering from litter, anti-social behaviour and requiring an appearance upgrade. Develop strategy to address issues.	SDC, Veolia, The Town Sprucer and volunteers	To be determined
WT4: P3	<b>Develop a strategy to improve walking and cycling access between town and countryside:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Between Folkestone and North Downs and Heritage Coast.</li> <li>. Identify potential route to link harbour and town in Folkestone.</li> </ul>	SDC, NDW National Trail, Kent Downs AONB Unit, PROW, Explore Kent, KCC, Sustrans	To be determined
WT4: P4	<b>Celebrating famous sons and daughters of Shepway:</b> Explore feasibility of installing life size statues of famous Shepway residents.	Shepway Heart forum, local historians, history groups and FTC Museum	To be determined
WT4: P5	<b>'FOOTPRINTS'</b> To commemorate the WW1 soldiers route from Shorncliffe Camp to Folkestone Harbour. Footprint locations to be selected with historians, SDC, KCC Highways Services, local Councils.	Shepway Heart forum (Richard Moffatt), other partners to be confirmed	To be determined