

A Round Table Discussion Event (Feb 2017): Attended by 25 stakeholders involved in the Culture Kent Pilot Projects together with some key representatives from tourism, culture/the arts.



LEGACY

Culture Kent developed six pilot projects to test new initiatives and cultural tourism offers. The Round Table Discussion Event provided the opportunity for key stakeholders to reflect on their engagement with Culture Kent Pilot Projects and identify key areas of legacy which have evolved from these Culture Kent initiatives. Whilst the separate case study summaries for each pilot identify specific aspects of legacy related to individual projects, the Round Table Discussion allowed stakeholders to explore commonalities which have evolved from their work with the Culture Kent Pilot Projects:

Collaborative working with a wider range of partners:

- The pilot projects brought a wide range of partners together who had never worked collaboratively before, forging the way for future place-focused networks.
- The enabling environment and enhanced networking opportunities created by Culture Kent also generated some cross-pilot working to develop cross-over of audiences/visitors.

Shared knowledge:

- Enhanced insights into 'sectoral' differences and worldviews opened up opportunities to extend reach and for organisations to understand the synergies which could be achieved through cross-sectoral working - leading to new successful funding bids, changes in working practices, and new ways of thinking about how a cultural dimension can add to the way we use and relate to place.
- Connecting organisations with audiences through the use of Audience Finder within the Kent Cluster (the 'Kent Cluster' is a group brought together by Culture Kent to share data through the application of Audience Finder - 'a national audience data and development programme enabling cultural organisations to share, compare and apply insight' <https://audiencefinder.org/about>), enabled some organisations to identify complementary audiences and cross-promote. The continuation of this beyond the life span of Culture Kent was identified as a valuable area of resource sharing and a more effective way to optimise the use of limited marketing budgets.

Shared voice:

- Enhanced partnership working and shared knowledge of other organisations' cultural offer enabled partners to gain a better understanding of the voice/tone that those organisations want to adopt in addressing their markets/audiences. This built the confidence to cross-promote and provided an additional means of developing a more coherent sense of place; essential to the creation of cultural destinations.

Involvement with destination management planning:

- Stakeholders from a number of pilot projects have taken an active role in working with local authorities and other business stakeholders to integrate the cultural offer into destination management planning.

"Culture Kent provided coherence, clarity and a voice to bring all that together and gave it to the destination"

Round Table participant



Details of individual pilot project outcomes and legacy can be found in the Pilot Project Case Studies.

Culture Kent - a 3 year project funded by Arts Council England and VisitEngland, as part of the Cultural Destinations Programme.

Led by **Turner Contemporary** the aims of Culture Kent were to showcase Kent's cultural assets; extend reach by attracting new audiences; create new strategic relationships and develop the information and knowledge core required to strengthen the Kent cultural tourism offer.

Two summaries have been developed to disseminate the findings of the Round Table Discussion Event, to reflect Best Practice and Legacy-Ways Forward.





WAYS FORWARD FOR CULTURAL TOURISM IN KENT

The Round Table Discussion Event also provided the opportunity for stakeholders involved in the pilot projects to reflect on ways forward for cultural tourism in Kent with other key representatives from the sectors. These ideas ranged from broad strategic ways of working and integrating best practice, to some more tactical strategies that could be put into place to build on the work of the pilots and to facilitate the growth of cross-sectoral working and cultural tourism in the County. These are cited below, alongside some aspirations for future working identified by those involved in the wider organisational research. The ideas link to marketing, the visitor experience, networking and collaboration, sharing best practice, working with ‘influencers’ and ‘facilitators’ and further research:

- **Finding common ground** – develop a cultural tourism manifesto that speaks to the general imagination, is recognised and has wide buy-in from the sectors.
- **Promote destinations as a whole** – to work in partnership not in competition.
- **Focus on the visitor experience at a destination** – build on collaborative working to improve joined-up thinking and facilitate cross-promotion across the destination.
- **Share data on audiences/visitors** – use this to develop targeted communications and bespoke cultural offers.
- **Organise networking events** – to share best practice and to help the sectors to understand each other’s mission and language and address perceptions of difference.
- **Appoint a cultural ambassador** for each district in Kent.
- **Organise familiarisation visits for influencers** – such as taxi drivers, train conductors – to help them to become passionate advocates for the regional offer and to ensure they can signpost those ‘hard to find and unique places to visit’.
- **Train Greeters** to ensure they cover culture as well as heritage.
- **Capitalise on the emerging trends in food and drink** – develop closer links between culture and gastronomy to help to provide an enhanced local sense of place.
- **Explore avenues** for future research.

CREATING ‘CULTURAL DESTINATIONS’

The Culture Kent Research Programme identified a number of preconditions to achieving fully networked and meaningful cultural destinations from a visitor, organisational and place perspective.

Preconditions:

- Place-focused cross-sectoral working
- An effective enabling environment
- A healthy underlying ‘creative economy’
- Joined-up thinking and delivery
- Shared goals and vision
- An understanding of perceptions of difference
- Collaboration integrated into working practices
- Time, people and resources.

These constitute a set of principles that can provide the basis for understanding how Kent can move forward in terms of using cross-sectoral working and cultural tourism as a base to develop sustainable and resilient cultural destinations.

Thomas K, Scott J, Brebeanu R and Berkeley-Cornner R (2017) Culture Kent Research Programme Summary of Findings Report

Taking the legacy forward:

Culture Kent created an effective enabling environment for cross-sectoral working between tourism and culture/arts to develop in Kent over a 3-year period, through its various initiatives. Moving forwards, continued work is required to build on the legacy of Culture Kent which requires strategic coordination and the identification of the ‘bearers of the legacy’ – from amongst the range of DMOs, local authorities and collaborative networks that exist in Kent. It must also be noted that many of the identified preconditions to achieving a cultural destination are dependent upon sufficient public and private sector investment in both financial and human resources, over a sustained period of time.

Image credits: Page 1: Summer of Colour-Red Ladies, courtesy of Turner Contemporary. Fan Bay, photo Sebastian Edge, courtesy of Dover Arts Development. Pablo Bronstein, Beach Hut in the style of Nicholas Hawksmore, photo Stuart Wilson courtesy of Creative Foundation. Culture Kent Round Table Discussion Event, courtesy of Culture Kent. Turner Contemporary, Margate, courtesy of Turner Contemporary. Page 2: Webb-Ellis, Parlor Walls, photo Bernard G. Mills courtesy of Whitstable Biennale. Urban Playground, bOing! Festival, photo Manu Palomeque courtesy of Gulbenkian. Dutch/Light- Jyll Bradley photo Thierry Bal; courtesy of Historic Dockyard Chatham.

Written by - **Tourism and Events Research Hub**, Canterbury Christ Church University, as part of the Culture Kent Research Programme – delivered in partnership with **Visit Kent**

