

Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan - Comments	Visitor Economy Framework Action Plan - Feedback
Individual response - would like to play a lead role in a visitor economy board for Visit Swale; Isle of Sheppey business	Acknowledged and advised will revert following consultation period to engage in setting up industry board
Individual response - are there plans to have tourism signing for the Isle of Sheppey?	Advised there are plans and this is being developed through the Community Forum (Oasis Academy lead organisation); funding has been identified and matter is being pursued through KCC/Highways Authority and Highways England. Provided details of Community Forum
The Medway Swale Boating Association (MSBA) is building on work of Faversham and Oare Creeks Heritage Harbours and broadening remit. An additional focus on heritage aspects (eg Boat Store) as part of the visitor response. Key contacts for conservation (Officer) and heritage lead (Member) requested	Details provided on Officer and Member key point of contacts to establish contact and engage in future meetings with Peel Ports (Dominik Zalewski – Senior Manger Marine Operations, London and Medway Zoom meeting planned for 10.8.2020 to start dialogue around local interests but MSBA did not engage with Officers; followed up and no response to date
A new website for promoting local businesses (using video uploads) established seeking access to promote commercial opportunities businesses	Acknowledged; currently being considered for integration into Healthy and Active web pages (part of Visit Swale)
<p>The growing popularity of The Leas in Minster presents on-street car parking pressures; need to identify measures to support popularity of destination with increased scope for visitor car parking. The large ground area from Barton's Point to The White House is unused and therefore, should be made into a nice car park for visitors, then as the road is extremely busy, pedestrian crossings should be provided, especially as a large number of the visitors are families with small children</p> <p>An idea would also be to include a toilet, shower block and a refreshment kiosk, on the upper block which could be a Bistro Restaurant</p> <p>If you made the area into a car park, it would solve the issue of travellers pitching up and leaving their rubbish</p>	<p>Council is in the process of installing a height and gate restriction on both grassed areas. There are currently no plans to introduce fees.</p> <p>With regard to the wider suggestion this can be picked up as part of concession review.</p>
Individual response: would like to support development and delivery of visitor economy in Swale	Acknowledged and requested further information including skills and details of whether there was a particular geographic area of interest or borough wide

	Awaiting response
<p>Faversham Society Response to Consultation on Swale Visitor Economy Action Plan.</p> <p>We are pleased to see the development of this Action Plan and the emphasis on placemaking. Sense of Place is important to residents and visitors alike. The Faversham Society's purpose is focused on maintaining, conserving and developing our town's sense of place. The Faversham Society seeks to <i>Cherish the Past, Adorn the Present, Create for the Future</i></p> <p>Recent work with young people for the Neighbourhood Plan has revealed considerable interest in Faversham's heritage and conserving and developing it for the future. Placemaking is increasingly at the heart of tourism and visitor economy development. Swale is defined by the waterway after which our borough is named. The Swale and the creeks and watercourses which feed the creeks bring the four parts of the district together. The Watling Street also provides a strong historical linkage but excludes Sheppey and most of the AONB. To develop Swale's identity for residents, visitors and potential visitors we need to promote some common themes.</p> <p>As the programme for the postponed "Our Shared Heritage" conference shows, Swale is rich in archaeology, railway heritage, defence, barges and trade, bricks, paper making, gunpowder, brewing and agriculture. It has downs, marshland, chalk streams, coast, mudflats, beaches, woodland, some of it ancient, nature reserves, SSSIs and an AONB. Experiential themes could be developed, drawn-out and marketed through "green route" heritage trails.</p> <p>In our view more could be made of Swale's natural heritage and this would help spread the benefits of the visitor economy to villages and rural areas. We are discussing the development of "green route" walking and cycling trails linking</p>	<p>Acknowledged</p> <p>Council has a good working relationship with Faversham Society and maintains regular contact through Historic Swale and Tourist Information Centre operation as well as a range of projects already in train such as Interreg Experience project with Visit Kent and Kent Downs AONB which has a focus on walking and cycling but also making links with the tourism product too i.e. food and drink sector, accommodation, visitor attractions and in longer term (post Covid-19 era, events)</p> <p>Council has made the introduction to Will Palin and the Sheerness Dockyard Church project as there could potentially be collaborative working and a shared interest in the connecting theme of 'estuary' and 'maritime'.</p>

Faversham and Sittingbourne to the AONB to benefit both residents and visitors.

To use Faversham as an example, we receive large numbers of visitors for the swimming pools and significant numbers for our heritage and heritage events. The biggest economic benefit to the town probably comes from our regular markets, the Best of Faversham and the Antiques Markets which attract regular visits by people from across Kent and some from London. The District would benefit by encouraging more residents to visit other parts of Swale. National research and our experience in Faversham is that VICs are used by tourists, day visitors and residents and in our view the Action Plan should encourage more visiting within Swale.

While each of the four areas would benefit from distinctive marketing ensuring that the different experiences within Swale are clearly communicated to potential visitors, it is also important to generate both repeat day visits and overnight tourism through cross-promotion and marketing using themes which bring together different attractions and areas. Walking, cycling, bird watching and landscapes are obvious “products” which have not yet been promoted to their full potential and which would bring together different parts of Swale; it is the very variety of the local landscape which makes walking and birdwatching such assets.

Destination identities need to be developed with respect for the communities which host day visitors and tourists.

Residents have created the sense of place over many generations – the destinations belong to those who live here, and the way the places are marketed needs to reflect each community’s sense of place and identity. The Society was disappointed not to be mentioned in the Action Plans and similarly surprised that Historic Swale and the many other heritage groups are not mentioned. The heritage offer, which is a significant part of the visitor economy and motivator for visits is almost entirely run by volunteers, and most heritage

The more recent High Street recovery project has also acknowledged the part that street markets play in engaging residents and visitors alike as an integral part of economic performance of town centre locations.

Social media and increasing numbers of interactions via Facebook in particular are promoting more internal visitor exchanges. Can Identify targeted media campaigns to support further enhancement. Blogs are supporting improved destination performance and are being further enhanced with guest writers too focussing on specific themes such as landscape, birdwatching and photography

Agree – local residents have a role to play in acting as ambassadors and can create unique Shared Stories and contribute to Blogs as Guest Writers

attractions struggle to fund development and marketing. The current fashion for public-private funding of marketing initiatives generally precludes participation by voluntary sector organisations.

We had brought together all the heritage attractions in Faversham and were beginning to work together; this has been frustrated by the pandemic but will be an active area once face-to-face meetings are possible again. This group includes the Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group which has an annual excavation and the Kent Police Museum due to open this year. The Heritage Map was designed to bring together all the visitable heritage. We were grateful for SBC support of the printing of our Heritage Map this year – it also has a web presence

<https://favershamsociety.org/faversham-heritage-map/>

The Open Houses programme which we ran for 50 years ended in 2019 – insurers are no longer willing to insure the risks associated with opening private properties. We had plans for two Festival weekends in July each year. It seems unlikely that we shall be able to plan these to take place before July 2022. Support for relaunching Festival events from SBC departments will be important in relaunching events which are important both for residents and visitors. The Swale Migration Stories project will create an additional attraction and is engaging young people in a heritage initiative.

There are three major development projects in Faversham which arise from the Heritage Strategy which will assist with the development of visitor economy.

The Council works with many individual businesses from all sectors and would not wish to single out individual organisations

The Council looks to Faversham to replicate the good practice of partnership working and is using the Visit Faversham model to develop similar working practices on Sheppey initially

The Council acknowledges that events are a critical part of the success of Faversham's visitor economy and will look to work with partners when government guidance permits us to do so

The Council was pleased to work with Sheppey Matters on the Sheppey Migration

1) **Maritime Heritage Quarter:** capitalising on TS Hazard and Town Quay this would create a new destination attraction and assist in realising the regeneration objectives for the creek basin following the installation of a moveable bridge and the aspirations of the Faversham and Oare Heritage Harbour Group. There is also scope for an element of visitor economy development on Swan Quay if the owner can be tempted to engage with the Maritime Heritage Quarter. TS Hazard could serve as the northern gateway to the Cinque Ports and provide natural heritage interpretation for area and the Westbrook (chalk stream), through Stonebridge Pond, the creek and out to the marsh. The water course from the source of the Westbrook to the Swale would provide an excellent educational resource for schools as well as adding to the visitor attractions in the area.

2) **The railway engine- and carriage sheds and turntable.**

This area is in the Heritage Strategy as a priority and we are keen to assist SBC and Network Rail in developing this additional heritage area as part of the visitor economy. The current area manager and the station manager at Faversham are both keen to see this development.

3) We are supporting the efforts of Faversham Town Council to secure funding for the Charters and the **Doddington Library** has been moved to the Town Hall – there is an opportunity to display some of the rare books from the Doddington Library alongside the Charters

Specific Comments on the Work Streams

1. Branding and Identity

a. Destination towns and AONB

b. Develop the identity of Swale as an area rich in natural and built heritage and with festivals which celebrate living cultural

Stories and to play an important role with regard to the successful outcome of the Heritage Lottery Application. Moving forward, the Council's Community Engagement and Social Inclusion Officer will work to add-value to the project

Have shared with Conservation Officer and meeting is being scheduled to include new assistant to see how we can take matters forward

heritage

c. The Faversham and District Camera Club has been very helpful to the Society and a number of its members have a keen interest in heritage. We have a photographic archive at the Society which could be trawled for images for promotion.

2. Business Support and Partnerships

a. There is scope for collaboration with Canterbury and Rochester to promote the Watling Street and pilgrimage route. We could collaborate with Waltham Abbey and Cumbria to promote gunpowder. The development of a Maritime Heritage Quarter would enable us to cross-promote with the National Maritime Museum, Chatham Historic Dockyard, Upnor Castle, Sheerness and the Cinque Ports. Once the Railway Heritage in Faversham is under development we shall be able to market it throughout the region and alongside the Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway and the Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway.

b. Faversham businesses close down at around 15:30 on most days; this is unhelpful to the visitor economy.

c. The annual Heritage Fair started by the Faversham Society and now run by Historic Swale supports the visitor economy.

d. The Faversham Museums Together group has begun to function as a partnership – stifled by Covid-19 but the heritage map is well received and with FTC support has been placed in a display case in the car park.

e. Southeastern are a particularly powerful potential partner in the development of the Swale visitor economy.

3. Product Quality & Development

a. We fully support the emphasis on experiential product but would like to ensure that this includes amongst other things strolling in quiet countryside, nostalgia, art and photography. Brass rubbing and Heritage Trails could be added here.

b. Heritage on the creeks and the Swale should also be seen as “water activities”.

c. Additional moorings in Faversham Creek would be advantageous

d. Support for the relaunching of festival in late 2021 and 2022 will be necessary if they are not to be victims of the pandemic, a loss to residents and the visitor economy.

4. Transport & Public Realm

a. We actively promote the full visitor offer in Swale from the Faversham VIC and are grateful for the financial support from Swale for this. We are keen to work with SBC to enhance the offer.

b. Signage is an issue in Faversham – visitors often struggle to find their way to the Creek, the Physic Garden and St Mary of Charity, all of which are significant attractions.

c. We keenly support sustainable tourism but doubt the need to develop a new toolkit – it would be more cost-effective to promote existing guidance.

d. We would welcome the opportunity to work with Swale to develop new volunteering experiences and recruit to them

e. There is scope to encourage day visitors to arrive by rail and a review of parking to encourage visitors to extend their stay would assist the development of the visitor economy.

f. There is a shortage of public seating in Faversham

g. Both the new Travelodge in Sittingbourne and the Premier Inn in Faversham are easily accessible from the railway stations and could be marketed for car-less

Londoners and others. They are potentially prime partners for visitor economy development and they have national distribution channels.

h. We should encourage a riverboat service from London

<p>along the Swale.</p> <p>5. Community Engagement</p> <p>a. Our Walking with History tours are very popular. We would encourage the development of a cadre of local guides, being guided by a genuinely local person enhances the visitor experience.</p> <p>b. Residents could be encouraged to visit other parts of the District</p> <p>c. It would be wise in “selling” expenditure on the visitor economy to residents to emphasise the providing of improved leisure and recreational activities for visitors and residents alike</p> <p>6. Tactical Marketing</p> <p>a. We strongly support marketing efforts with partners beyond Swale and cross-promotion</p>	
<p>a) Response from: The Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne (HRGS). We are a non-profit making organisation, set up in 2004, by a group of local volunteer historians. We run group research projects and support members with their individual research interests. We have run the exhibition and research rooms in the Forum, Sittingbourne, called The Heritage Hub since January 2015 and have attracted over 30,000 visitors. As we have a public visitor attraction, that is usually open 5 days a week (Tuesdays to Saturdays 10am to 4pm), covid and volunteers permitting, HRGs is willing to be an outlet for leaflets and marketing publicity materials.</p> <p>b) HRGS are pleased to see the development of this Swale Borough Council (SBC) Action Plan and the emphasis on placemaking, as we see a Sense of Place as an important aspect to residents and visitors alike. HRGS has an obvious history bias and believe that identity should be at</p>	<p>Acknowledged</p>

the heart of the development of a tourism and visitor economy strategy. We would like to highlight that the local heritage offering which is a significant part of the visitor economy and motivator for visits is almost entirely run by volunteers. Most heritage attractions struggle to fund development and marketing. When consultants are brought in, they have previously alienated the voluntary sector organisations. Offering a small heritage retainer as an incentive for voluntary heritage groups to provide content would seem reasonable.

- c) This report will address the documents action plan as far as it pertains to Sittingbourne, utilising the same headings. HRGS would welcome the opportunity to be listed as a 'delivery partner' in the Action Plan, in the following sections:

1: Branding and Identity

As part of building an identity for Sittingbourne, it would be advantageous to build a new Sittingbourne Museum and Heritage Centre, which could also include a tourist information site.

1.1 Refresh destination stories based on new visitor insights and 1.6 for information on the Heritage Hub; give input into 1.3.1 Assess if a full destination branding exercise is required to support visitor economy as well as wider placemaking;

In this section we would promote Donald Dean VC stone, Brickmaking
Papermaking & the Lloyds Mill

The Avenue of Remembrance

We would look to see if we could find volunteers to support 1.4.8 to help set up a working group with key partner businesses and organisations to support key social media content themes including shared hashtags e.g. gardens, food, history.

We would look to see if we could find volunteers to support 1.5.1 to develop Visit Swale content authors group.

1.5 - Develop destination content bank

Areas for consideration for Sittingbourne are:

- 1) Opening of The Dolphin Barge Museum and accessibility to the wharf and the barge Raybel
- 2) Investing in and promoting the architecture of the Milton Regis High Street
- 3) Refurbishment of Periwinkle Mill
- 4) Refurbishment of the Avenue of Remembrance
- 5) Promotion of the heritage of The Rose and other 'Inns' along Sittingbourne High Street
- 6) A rekindling of the twinning with Ypres in Belgium

2: Business Support and Partnerships

HRGS would welcome the opportunity to receive the various training packages listed in this section.

2.1.3 - We believe we would have volunteers who would support your action of receiving specific destination welcome training.

2.2.1 – HRGS volunteers are currently learning and creating a Trip Advisor page, and would welcome training

on this subject.

2.2.2 – ‘Walk and Talks’ are extremely popular, and HRGS would encourage the development of a cadre of local ‘qualified’ guides, locally recruited, to enhance the visitor experience.

2.3.2 HRGS belongs to Historic Swale and Wheels of Time, and regularly swaps leaflets with members of these groups.

2.3.5 As a heritage attraction, HRGS would have reservations in including links to nearby accommodation on our website, as this could suggest we are ‘recommending’ them.

2.5 Increase regional collaboration – HRGS would suggest closer links with Southeastern and the Kent Community Rail Partnerships who are a particularly powerful potential partners in the development of the Swale visitor economy.

3: Product quality and development

3.1.1 Whilst HRGS would be willing to consider our existing talks and events for a tourist diary. It is a fine balance from offering what we provide as a commercial venture. For many of our volunteers, this is their retirement hobby, and not offered on a commercial basis. Because we are a not for profit group, we need to be wary of making commercial advisements and commitments. We would also need to consider what implications it might have on our existing insurance policies.

3.6.1 Develop walking & cycling offer - Perhaps the revitalisation and updating of the 'Swale Heritage Trail' which was published in 1995 (by SBC & KCC), could be developed as a "green route" walking and cycling trails linking Faversham and Sittingbourne to the AONB to benefit both residents and visitors. HRGS already has an online self-guided walk around Rose Hill available on our website: <https://hrgs.co.uk/rose-hill-trail/>. HRGS are looking at the updating of their 'Cat Trail' – Historic Town Walk around Sittingbourne and also plan to develop a walk that takes in the Avenue of Remembrance.

4: Transport & Public Realm

4.2.2 The Heritage Hub would be willing to have an audit completed by access-able.

5: Community Engagement

5.1.1 – HRGS could provide "People Like Me" stories from our list of Famous local People (workloads permitting).

5.1.2 – "Encourage residents to share their favourite places/hidden gems via social media and groups" HRGS already promotes this via our website and facebook - 'Out and About': <https://hrgs.co.uk/out-and-about/>

5.2.1 Kent Big Weekend and Heritage Open days - HRGS would like to participate in this, but have insufficient volunteers to accommodate this amongst all the other things we offer.

5.2.2 Develop town apps for businesses to offer residents incentives and offers – we would like to know more about

<p>this.</p> <p>6: Tactical Marketing</p> <p>6.2 Develop campaigns with regional partners (Heritage links) – HRGS would like to know more about this.</p> <p>6.2.4 – Film locations - have you considered making contact with TV film production companies to offer places around Swale for filming. Port Issac in Cornwall for example has a mass of tourist and benefits from the Doc Martin series.</p> <p>6.5.3 - Have you considered? – champing: https://champing.co.uk/ This is the unique concept of camping overnight in historic churches, brought to the world by The Churches Conservation Trust, the national charity protecting historic churches at risk</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Historic Swale Response to Consultation on Swale Visitor Economy Action Plan (consultation closing date 4.9.2020)</p> <p>1. Response from: Richard Emmett, Chair of Historic Swale CIO. Historic Swale is an umbrella charity which supports member attractions and organisations in the 3 areas (Faversham, Sittingbourne, and Sheppey) which make up the Swale district to collectively showcase the diverse and fascinating heritage which the Borough offers.</p> <p>2. Historic Swale welcomes the Action Plan and hopes to participate in whatever areas it can. What has to be remembered is that for the majority of our heritage sites,</p>	<p>Acknowledged</p>

we are run by volunteers, who already have their own interests and responsibilities. Wherever possible we hope to work in partnership with Swale Borough Council.

3. It is noted that Historic Swale is listed as a delivery partner in the plan, I will bring the points raised to our members at the next Historic Swale members meeting, planned for October 2020. In particular, section 2.3 the annual leaflet swap (which some members already do via Wheels of Time), and linking attractions on websites; regarding 3.1 and offering 'experiences', Historic Swale members are probably well placed to offer such events, however, for many this is their retirement hobby, and not offered on a commercial basis; 4.2 – we will ask our members to provide information on disabled access.
4. Under point 2.4 and 2.5, Historic Swale was set up for cross promotional networking, however, since the removal of administration support, previously provided by Swale Borough Council, this conduit has been struggling to fulfil this external networking function. If council support could be reinstated, this would enable data collection and cross border networking.
5. The Swale Migration Stories project which is being championed by Historic Swale will create an additional attraction and is engaging young people in a heritage initiative. Historic Swale would welcome the opportunity to add this to the heritage offering.