

## **Free business resilience webinars and updates 7th May**

Welcome to this week's e-news featuring two new Government fund and loan schemes relevant to small businesses, which we hope will benefit some of you who have been unable to access any financial support yet.

We would also like to draw your attention to the Visit Kent section and encourage you to register for the **FREE Business Resilience Webinars** they are running.

If you know somebody who would like to read our e-news, please forward it on, or let them know they can register to receive it themselves on [www.visitthanet.co.uk/tourismmatters](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk/tourismmatters)

### **Thanet District Council News**

The council has now paid government cash grants to 2,514 local businesses totalling £27.6m. This has reached 83% of all eligible businesses in the district.

There are still more businesses that qualify who have yet to apply. The council is working hard to make contact with these organisations to tell them about the grants and point them towards the [online form](#) . We urge you all to check the council's [website](#) to see if you are eligible. If you're still unsure, you can contact the Business Rates Team directly: [businesscashgrants@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:businesscashgrants@thanet.gov.uk)

The council has also produced a [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) with detailed information about the support available for businesses.

### **Government Information**

#### **New top-up to local business grant funds scheme announced to help small businesses including bed and breakfasts**

A [discretionary fund](#) has been set up to accommodate small businesses previously outside the scope of the business grant funds scheme, with up to £617 million to be made available for local authorities in England.

This additional fund is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs. Local authorities have been asked to prioritise businesses such as bed and breakfasts that pay council tax rather than business rates, as well as businesses in shared spaces, regular market traders and small charity properties. This is indicative guidance, and we are awaiting further information.

Businesses must have under 50 employees and be able to demonstrate that they have seen a significant drop of income due to coronavirus restriction measures.

There will be three levels of grant payments. The maximum will be £25,000, with other grants of £10,000 available. Local authorities will have discretion to make payments of any amount under £10,000.

Local authorities may choose to make payments to other businesses based on local economic need and the allocation of funding will be at their discretion. Further guidance for local authorities is required and this will be set out next week (w/c 11 May). Early preparations have begun and, once details are published, the council will design an

application process and set out the qualifying criteria on its website. We will provide an update on this, particularly for relevant businesses, when this information is available.

### **Bounce Back Loans Scheme**

The new [Bounce Back Loans Scheme](#), for small and micro businesses affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, is now open for applications.

Businesses will be able to borrow between £2,000 and £50,000 with the cash being made available within days. The Government guarantees 100% of the loan and there won't be any fees or interest to pay for the first 12 months. Loan terms will be up to six years.

The scheme will be delivered through a network of accredited lenders. The Government has also agreed with lenders that a flat rate of 2.5% interest will be charged on these loans.

### **Updates to Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) guidance**

The following changes have been made to the CJRS guidance:

#### [Employee Guidance](#)

- Furloughed employees who are union or non-union representatives may undertake duties and activities for the purpose of individual or collective representation of employees or other workers.
- Confirmation that company directors paid annually are eligible to claim.
- Employees receiving maternity allowance during a period of maternity leave should not receive furlough pay at the same time.

#### [Employer Guidance: eligibility](#)

- Updated in line with changes to employee guidance.
- CJRS grants are not classed as state aid.
- Changed the date from 28 February to 19 March 2020 in the section on TUPE transfers and payroll consolidation.

#### [Employer Guidance: how to calculate the grant](#)

- The June daily maximum wage rates have been added to the table now that the scheme has been extended.
- Improved clarity in the employer National Insurance contributions section, confirmed the direct percentage method or tables method can be used and added new information for company directors.

### **Other Government updates**

- [An update has been made to the information on tax](#) on the guidance for Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLCF).
- [HM Treasury and HMRC](#) are setting out new timelines for tax policy consultations and other work in the light of the current COVID-19 crisis.
- [The social distancing guidelines have been updated](#) to further clarify the requirements of the Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020, and add information on clinically vulnerable people.

- HMRC will begin contacting customers who may be eligible for the Government's [Self-Employment Income Support Schemed \(SEISS\)](#). The claims service will open on 13 May, the claims process will be very simple, and those eligible will have the money paid into their bank account by 25 May, or within six working days of completing the claim.

### [VisitBritain/VisitEngland](#)

#### **New industry standard in development**

VisitBritian/VisitEngland have been working across the industry and with the Government to ensure that tourism is able to recover as quickly as possible once restrictions are lifted.

Whilst timelines and clear guidance from the Government are key, there is a need to develop a common industry standard quality mark that would provide a 'ring of confidence' for tourism businesses, attractions and destinations, as well as reassurance to visitors that businesses have clear processes in place as restrictions are lifted.

Discussions are ongoing, but plans include businesses completing a free online assessment to check they are taking the necessary steps to adhere to the official Government guidelines. They would then be provided with a quality mark that they could use and a certificate that recognises they have gone through the process. Certificates would be downloaded from the VisitBritain/VisitEngland website once businesses had completed the self-certification.

Alongside this, and following UK Government guidelines, they would also like to see a major domestic campaign when restrictions are lifted to give reassurance to the public regarding travel.

### [Visit Kent](#)

#### **Business Resilience Webinars**

As part of the Interreg Experience project, Visit Kent is launching a series of free webinars designed to help tourism businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic. The inspiring and interactive sessions will help prepare tourism business as we begin to welcome back visitors in a new world of social distancing. Click on the links below to sign-up.

- Monday, 11 May - 10am to 12pm  
[Learning to Adapt and Diversify Your Product](#) - delivered by Digital Tourism Think Tank
- Wednesday, 20 May - 10am to 12pm  
[Creating Virtual Content](#) - delivered by Sleeping Giant Media
- Tuesday, 26 May - 2pm to 4pm  
[Communicating in a Crisis](#) - delivered by Pillory Barn
- Monday, 1 June - 2pm to 4pm  
[Maximising Opportunities Across Google Solutions](#)- delivered by Sleeping Giant Media

### **Tourism Service News**

[Visitthanetbusiness.co.uk](http://Visitthanetbusiness.co.uk) is our B2B website where you can find out more about the tourism service and where we sit within Thanet District Council. You can also read more about the new Destination Management Framework; the research we have undertaken and the business support that we offer.

There is a **free online toolkit** for local tourism businesses, with useful 'how to' information on marketing, PR, social media and a library of over 700 free images you can use to help promote the destination and your business. If you have not already registered to access the toolkit, you can do so by clicking 'Register' in the top, right-hand corner.

The toolkit content will help you to continue putting out positive messages, for both the destination and your business. This will ensure that our profiles remain in the forefront of people's minds when they are able to travel again.

### **Content Call Out**

Education and skills sharing - many consumers are looking to use their time to learn new skills during lockdown and furlough. With this in mind, we're calling out for educational activity that consumers can access from home, be it bread-making workshops, yoga classes or educational videos. If you have something for consideration, please send it to [tourism@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@thanet.gov.uk) by Monday 11 May.