

## **Coronavirus Update and Tourism News**

As Easter weekend approaches we've expanded on our regular COVID-19 updates for businesses and this week also bring you news on what we as a tourism service are working on to support our local businesses and keep our destination profile high, plus we welcome back the 'Your News' section.

### **Government Advice**

#### **Guidance on claiming employees' wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (JRS)**

HMRC has published detailed guidance for businesses on how to claim support for furloughed workers through the JRS. As well as stating what details are needed to make a claim, it also includes information on how the JRS applied to people in a range of special circumstances including:

- office holders (including company directors)
- salaried members of Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs)
- agency workers (including those employed by umbrella companies)
- limb (b) workers

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme>

#### **On 3 April The Chancellor announced the following:**

- An extension of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) to ensure all viable small businesses affected by COVID-19, rather than just those unable to secure regular commercial financing, will now be eligible should they need finance to keep operating during this difficult time.
- The Government has also announced it will be stopping lenders from requesting personal guarantees for loans under £250,000, and will be making changes to speed up approvals.
- The Government will continue to cover the first 12 months of interest fees.
- A new Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) will provide a government guarantee of 80% to enable banks to make loans of up to £25 million to firms with an annual turnover of between £45 million and £500 million.

The full announcement can be read [here](#).

#### **Additional recent Government announcements include:**

- [Cash support for food redistribution](#) during the coronavirus outbreak to prevent food waste.
- [Update on deferring VAT payments](#) because of coronavirus, clarifying that import VAT payments are not included.
- Update to the [guidance for local authorities setting out details of the Small Business Grants Fund \(SBGF\) and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund \(RHLGF\)](#), outlining information on state aid, monitoring and reporting requirements, post-payment checks and the eligibility of charities.

- The [2020 National Living Wage](#) came into effect on Wednesday 1 April.
- The [Business rates: expanded retail discount – guidance](#) has been updated to confirm that the government’s assessment that the expanded retail discount is not a state aid, and that local authorities should therefore award relief to all eligible properties.  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>)

### **Upcoming business support webinars**

UK Government’s Business Support website has a list of [upcoming webinar events](#) from government and non-government partners.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are delivering a programme of webinars on measures to support employers, employees and the self-employed through this period of disruption. You can watch a video of the recorded webinar on the [HMRC YouTube channel Coronavirus – \(COVID-19\): helping employers to support employees](#).

### **Kent Information**

#### **Statement from the R&A on the 149th Open at Royal St. George’s**

The R&A has decided to cancel The Open in 2020 due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the Championship will next be played at Royal St George’s in 2021.

The Open was due to be played in Kent from 12-19 July but it has been necessary to cancel the Championship based on guidance from the UK Government, the health authorities, public services and The R&A’s advisers.

This is the first time since the Second World War that golf’s original Championship, first played in 1860, has been cancelled.

The 149th Open will be played at Royal St George’s from 11-18 July 2021.

The 150th Open will be played at St Andrews from 10-17 July 2022.

The R&A will transfer over tickets and hospitality packages purchased for the Championship in 2020 to The Open in 2021. Purchasers who no longer wish to (or are no longer able to) attend in 2021 will receive a full refund. Further information on this process will be sent directly to ticket and hospitality purchasers in due course.

### **Produced in Kent**

Produced in Kent has set up a #HelpKentBuyLocal campaign to support and promote the many independent local businesses working incredibly hard to grow, produce, prepare, sell and deliver food and drink to the Kent community during the COVID-19 crisis.

The microsite [www.helpkentbuylocal.co.uk](http://www.helpkentbuylocal.co.uk) shows customers which local food and drink outlets are still open and/or trading online in their area. All businesses, whether or not they are Produced in Kent members, can list their services on the site for free.

Produced in Kent is urging all growers, producers, distributors and manufacturers operating in the food and drink industry to list their available stock on the respective pages to help them connect supply with demand and build local economic resilience.

Food and drink businesses still operating can list their business on [www.helpkentbuylocal.co.uk](http://www.helpkentbuylocal.co.uk) and are urged to include #helpkentbuylocal across their marketing and social media channels to help customers find them.

Produced in Kent also has a specific COVID-19 update page with information – please click on: [Covid19 update webpage \(https://join.producedinkent.co.uk/covid-19\)](https://join.producedinkent.co.uk/covid-19)

Plus there is a good news bulletin going out on a weekly basis that is aimed at customers. If you wish to subscribe to the newsletter, please click [here](#).

### **Other Coronavirus support and funding**

Thanet District Council has so far issued £3.25 million to businesses who pay their Business Rates by Direct Debit, as part of its first phase of support. The second phase, which involves the payment to eligible businesses who do not pay by Direct Debit, is now underway.

Eligible businesses must complete an online form to provide information such as bank details, company and VAT registration number, as well as the business rates account reference which can be found on the most recent bill.

Thanet businesses that qualify for government grants can apply online at [www.thanet.gov.uk/cashgrants](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/cashgrants)

For more information about who qualifies go to [www.thanet.gov.uk/info-pages/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-businesses/](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/info-pages/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-businesses/)

The **Local Government Association and the Tourism Alliance** have identified some tourism businesses that are not explicitly mentioned in the business rates relief guidance, but it is felt that they fall into the intended category. Councils are being asked to give consideration to the premises listed below for inclusion in their local schemes:

- Amusement arcades
- Vehicle rental sites
- Conference and exhibition venues
- Travel and tour operators
- Tourism Information Centres
- Tourism Boards/Destination Management Organisations
- Coach operators
- English language schools
- Travel/hospitality industry charities (offices)
- Marinas/boat hire/passenger boat facilities

**Tourism Alliance, The British Holiday & Home Parks Association and UKHospitality** have been leading a new social media campaign to **#ProtectTourismJobs**. The campaign

is to raise awareness and give a voice to tourism businesses and professionals who are suffering due to COVID-19. Key areas of focus include helping ensure seasonal workers are included in the furlough scheme, broadening the furlough scheme to include essential maintenance and security staff and making sure businesses survive the winter period. You can join the conversation on Twitter using **#ProtectTourismJobs**

### **South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)**

The SELEP is working to support businesses across the South East. As well as providing support through their Growth Hub, they are working to ensure that policy-makers at local and national level recognise the challenges businesses are facing and the pressures that the Coronavirus epidemic has caused.

If you have a spare few minutes, they would appreciate you taking the time to complete their [survey](#).

### **Kent's Land Army**

A new Facebook page has been set up to help people find jobs with Kent farmers - <https://www.facebook.com/Kentslandarmy/>

### **Tourism Service News**

As mentioned above, here is an update on what we are working on at the moment.

Key for us is supporting our local tourism businesses, which we are doing by keeping abreast of relevant information and disseminating it in these weekly bulletins. But we also recognise that your businesses may be facing issues that are not currently being addressed or fall outside of the financial assistance packages already announced. If so please do let us know as we will do our utmost to relay this to the relevant bodies and try to get answers for you.

Plus we are also taking it in turns to help staff the council's helpline for vulnerable and shielded residents, who also really need support at the moment.

In addition we have been speaking to national and regional tourism bodies and planning our consumer messaging for now and the future when we get into the recovery phase. It is really important for all of us that we keep the Isle of Thanet in people's minds at the moment, but in line with the safety messages set down by the government. It is also important that we are equipped to 'hit the ground running' when it looks like travel restrictions are lifted and people can start planning a break away. We want our area to be the one they think of first to book a trip to. To give you an idea of our activity, at the moment and in the immediate future we are:

- Using our social media channels to provide escapism for people during lockdown, showcasing stunning imagery and videos, but with a 'stay at home' message throughout. This includes repurposing our Isle of Thanet Shared Story film with a message to 'Imagine Now, Experience Later' which you can find [here](#)
- Providing inspiration for future trips, when it is safe to travel

- Collating information to showcase spotlights on what businesses and attractions are doing and how people can enjoy their services now, ie, virtual tours.
- Making the most of user-generated content
- Feeding into regional and national campaigns, ie, Visit Kent, VisitEngland and VisitBritain.

### **How you can help**

- Use the link to the '[Imagine Now, Experience Later](#)' shared story film on your websites and include it in your social media activity (bearing in mind the current government restrictions)
- Send us any virtual tours that you have of your attraction, entertainment venue, escape room, etc, that we can use to help keep the destination in people's minds through our social media channels and on our website.
- Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) (@VisitThanet) and share our social media posts.

It is really important that we all work together to deliver the best possible outcome for our destination and local businesses.

We are also happy to try and build other activities in, so if you have ideas and suggestions that you would like us to consider, please let us have them. Send to [tourism@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@thanet.gov.uk)

### **2020/21 Visitors' Map**

We have taken delivery of our 2020/21 Visitors' Map and will endeavour to get these distributed as widely as possible locally, as soon as government restrictions are lifted and it is safe to do so.

### **New Isle Magazine Issue Online**

The spring issue of Isle Magazine covering April to the end of July is now available to view online [www.islemagazine.co.uk](http://www.islemagazine.co.uk) to provide some escapism in these difficult times.

At the time of going to print it was unknown what the impact of the coronavirus outbreak would be, meaning that the events included have either been cancelled or postponed. In the magazine you can read about

- Meet four poets from Thanet's thriving poetry community
- Read about the Isle's increasing number of small music venues offering a more intimate experience
- Take the Isle quiz to see what you know about Thanet's amazing architecture

Where it has been possible copies have been delivered to outlets according to the government guidelines and posted to those requesting information on the area, including accommodation, who prefer not to do this online.

### **Your News**

Congratulations to Jane Bishop and her family at the Walpole Bay Hotel, who celebrated 25 years ownership of the hotel at the beginning of April.

[Dreamland](#) has a new FREE online activity booklet containing puzzles, word searches, colouring in and even an easy cupcake recipe to help keep the kids entertained -

[Margate Caves](#) have created some FREE Easter Activities - colouring, quiz and bunting making to keep children (and adults) entertained