

Priority 1 - Vibrant Towns

While Thanet's rural hinterland and villages will benefit from a stronger visitor economy, the opportunity for growth continues to lie in the three towns. Visitor spend will create more vibrant high streets but to generate that spend requires planning and support. Enlivening the days-into-evenings – building on recent growth in the food/drink sector – would persuade visitors to stay longer and spend more.

Increased activity and animation of the towns – from arts & crafts retail spaces and studios to pop-up galleries and exhibitions, from artisan food and drink producers, street markets and events to changing opening patterns – should be led by businesses and the 3rd sector, working with community organisations and town councils. Through the government's 'Towns Fund' the council has been successful in their pitch for funding for the High Street Heritage Action Zone, and is competitively bidding for the Future High Street Fund – both in Ramsgate. Margate has been named as one of the Town Deal places and the council is working with stakeholders to develop the proposition. The vision for both Ramsgate and Margate is to support the growth of the visitor economy and understand how the sector can diversify the towns' current offering. This would be a positive response to the changing nature of retail and would enhance and enliven the attractiveness of the town centres.

Lack of volume and choice of visitor accommodation restricts the ability to grow higher-value tourism and at times to secure large-scale events. A concerted proactive campaign and targeted activity is needed – TDC working with Visit Kent and Locate in Kent – to deliver more retail and visitor accommodation, especially in the town centres.

Vibrant Towns – short to medium-term actions

What	When	Who
<i>Town Animation</i>		
▶ Bring together community organisations/representatives to consider how each town can enliven their offer for visitors with a particular focus on the transition period from day to evening and the shoulder periods of spring and autumn.	2020	TDC and community organisations
▶ Each town to identify the actions relevant to its own area but this may include: public realm, events, lighting, decoration, planting, re-purposing vacant premises, markets, pop-up restaurants and galleries. Where grant funding is being sought or secured, actions should align with those funding objectives e.g. developing mixed uses in Margate town centre under the Town Deal proposals and improving facades in Ramsgate under the High Street Heritage Action Zone.	2021-2023	Community organisations with Town Councils & Businesses
<i>New and Improved Accommodation</i>		
▶ Encourage the upgrading of existing B&Bs, to improve the quality of existing bedstock. Promote and highlight all improvements and investments to the trade, media and prospective visitors on social media, to show how the quality is improving.	Ongoing	Tourism Team (TDC)
▶ Support the development of new serviced accommodation to include midrange hotels, lodge and camping pods and high-quality independent B&Bs.	Ongoing	TDC and Locate in Kent
▶ Promote sites with potential and support developers at pre-planning stage (from the Tourism Team) to develop concepts that meet local needs.	Ongoing	TDC and Locate in Kent