

AGENDA

West Kent Partnership Meeting – Thursday 22 January 2008 Kings Hill Conference Centre, 10am

Theme: Dealing with the Economic Challenge

1. Chairmanship
2. Minutes/matters arising
3. **Dealing with the Economic Challenge**
Presentation and Panel Session Item chaired by Tony Bartlett with panelists:
 - SEEDA
 - Locate in Kent
 - KCC
 - Job Centre Plus
 - FSB
 - LSC
 - Business Link Kent
4. WKP Vision and Terms of Reference – for approval - attached
5. West Kent Leader Programme – attached (Wendy Wood)
6. Co-ordinator Report – attached (Wendy Wood)
 1. Financial Report
 2. Tourism Conference 08 - feedback
 3. West Kent Business Awards - feedback
7. Hot Topics
 - Lobby to bring forward major infrastructure schemes – Infrastructure theme for April meeting
8. Dates of Next Meetings
 1. Thursday 23 April 2009
 2. Thursday 16 July 2009
 3. Thursday 15 October 2009

ITEM 4

Proposed Revised – December 08

West Kent Partnership

Vision Statement

Through promotion, representation and action, we aim to support the development of a stronger economy. Through co-ordinated working we endeavour to add value to the local delivery of public, voluntary and community services and provide a voice for the people of West Kent at sub-regional, regional and national level.

Terms of Reference

The West Kent Partnership will undertake to:

1. Promote West Kent, explore bids for external funding, and maintain a working relationship with Central Government, the Government Office for the South East, and other regional bodies including SEEDA and the Homes and Communities Agency
2. Provide an effective working relationship with the Kent Partnership and to influence its deliberations and future reviews of Vision for Kent, Kent Agreement and economic strategies to the benefit of West Kent.
3. Represent the interests of the West Kent sub region and provide a strong and influential voice on matters of particular concern to the area, especially regarding economic development and infrastructure.
4. Promote effective, joint co-operative working both within the partnership and between the Partnership and other local agencies and bodies.
5. Identify the key issues facing the West Kent area, address the need for investment and develop joint actions.
6. Identify the key issues facing the West Kent area and develop joint actions to address them.
7. Consider and influence the plans, strategies and agendas of other key agencies to ensure that West Kent interests are properly represented.
8. Aim to ensure that the plans and strategies prepared by public agencies align with emerging joint priorities
9. Add value on economic development and infrastructure issues to the community strategies for each District and Borough in West Kent, and to the Kent Agreement, promoting good practice and better joint working

Item 5 - WEST KENT LEADER

Progress report: January 2009

Contract with SEEDA

1. The contract with SEEDA for the delivery of the West Kent Leader was signed by both parties at the beginning of December 2008, after lengthy discussions on the revision of the budget profiles and programme targets. The West Kent Bid remains ahead of the field as only the second group (out of 14), to have agreed their contract with SEEDA and awarded their first grant to an applicant.
2. An opportunity was given at this stage to re-profile the budget, which allowed us to review the spend for this financial year and with the delayed start to the programme, gave the benefit of being able to move forward some of the grant money to future years. This has therefore helped to reduce the risk of losing some of the funding for recipients if there was insufficient time to process applications, as any under spend can not be carried forward to future years. Under the current economic climate, there is also the risk that there will be insufficient take up of the grant funds available for this financial year and therefore it is proposed that a letter from the Chair of the WKP should be sent to SEEDA re-iterating the need for a carry forward facility.
3. The programme targets included in the contract are the outputs which West Kent Leader will need to achieve over the life of the programme. The targets agreed with SEEDA are to be reviewed annually as part of the Business Plan process. (Appendix A)
4. At the same time as agreeing the terms of the contract, the Initial Business Plan was being developed with the assistance of the consultant who helped on the original bid. This annual Business Plan was submitted on 16th December 2008 and set out the short term objectives and priorities, specific actions to December 2009 and financial profile for that period. SEEDA subsequently approved the Business Plan and gave delegated authority for the delivery of grants on 17th December 2008. This delegated authority will be renewed each year of the programme, on the submission and approval of the revised annual Business Plan. The Executive Summary of the first Business Plan is attached at Appendix B. A full copy of the plan is available on the WKP website or a paper copy may be requested from Wendy Wood.

(e-mail: wendy.wood@sevenoaks.gov.uk / tel: 07970 551598)

Expressions of Interest (EOIs)

5. There has been a steady interest shown in the grant funding available and to date 15 EOIs have been received from throughout West Kent and from a cross section of the business and community interests in the area, as set out in Appendix C.
6. The first contract for a formal grant offer was signed on 9th January 2009 and progress is already under way for the development and marketing of a new luxury band of bath and beauty products from lavender grown near Sevenoaks.

Other developments

7. The Executive Local Action Group (ELAG), as the decision making body of the West Kent Leader, have proposed to hold a publicity launch event for the West Kent Leader grant funding programme in early spring 2009 to which the members of the WKP will be invited. The target audience will be the wider Local Action Group and other prospective applicants and will be advertised widely to rural business and farming interests.
8. At the beginning of December 2008 a temporary (part-time) West Kent Leader Administration Officer was appointed, who will be funded from the existing budget, to provide support to the Programme Manager and the West Kent Leader Local Action Group. A full programme of meetings has now been established, setting the timetable for ELAG, Appraisal Panel and Co-ordinators meetings.
9. The Programme Manager has attended / represented West Kent Leader at several business events including the Kent Downs Rural Advice Service breakfast meeting at Ashford Market; a Land Based Advisory Service workshop on farm diversification and as guest speaker at the Edenbridge, Sevenoaks and Oxted NFU AGM.

Recommendation:

10. The WKP Chairman to send a letter on behalf of the Partnership to SEEDA, re-iterating the need for a carry forward facility for the grant funds this year to 2009/10, in the light of the current economic climate.

**Grant Offer Letter and Acknowledgement- Schedule 1
Targets/ Outputs**

No jobs created in rural businesses	10
No jobs created in community organisations	1
No jobs created in social enterprise	1
No jobs sustained in rural businesses	45
No jobs sustained in community organisations	1
No jobs sustained in social enterprise	1
No of existing businesses that will grow their current activities as a result of leader investment	40
No of business start-ups	4
No of new social enterprises	1
No of new community ventures	1
No of new farming, forestry or horticultural enterprises (excluding renewable energy and tourism)	4
No of renewable energy projects	6
No of collaborative enterprises created	2
No of new tourism ventures	5
No of adults gaining basic skills from training activities	50
No of adults gaining qualifications	20
No of businesses or organisations that will reduce their consumption of energy, water and other finite resources.	5
No of new products developed	20
Population in rural areas benefiting from improved services	7500

These are minimum figures. The West Kent LAG will be expected to make the best efforts to deliver these throughout the programme and where possible exceed them. There will also be reviewed in depth at the annual business planning process.

1. Executive Summary

The West Kent Leader Programme has an over arching principle - to promote sustainable business growth within the land based and rural economies in the area. Investment through the Leader Programme is intended to improve the long term viability of businesses and to reduce their reliance on future support funding. Leader will help add value and ensure and enhance sustainable development. West Kent Leader's key objectives are to

- Improve competitiveness and financial sustainability of West Kent's farming and forestry
- Encourage innovation and diversification in West Kent's land based sector
- Promote entrepreneurship in rural West Kent
- Encourage the development of rural tourism-related businesses
- Address pockets of deprivation and encourage vibrant rural communities
- Ensure best practice in land management and promote sustainable development

This initial business plan (to December 2009) for the West Kent Leader area focuses primarily on establishing effective procedures to underpin subsequent years of support to farmers and foresters, as well as to the wider rural community.

During the plan period, through the activities identified in this business plan, we intend to have achieved the following outcomes:

- Established robust programme management procedures including appraisal and monitoring
- Generated 100 enquiries from rural businesses
- Facilitated projects/proposals with 40 businesses
- Provided grant support that directly supports 7 businesses, leading to:
 - safeguarding/sustaining at least 5 jobs
 - the development of at least 3 new local products
 - 2 renewable energy projects
 - 1 business reducing energy consumption
- Provided marketing and grant support for other rural businesses and initiatives, supporting up to 125 local enterprises

It is important to highlight that these outcomes are subject to change pending continued economic uncertainty, which is the Programme's main risk factor.

The estimated cost of the plan is £318,000.

Expressions of Interest/Applications Register

Received	Company	Address		Project Description	Comments
3.9.08	Hadlow College	Tonbridge	Kent	Hadlow College Centre of Sustainability	Not Eligible. Project already receiving finance from other SEEDA sources.
12.9.08	Oast Valley Vineyards			English vineyard of the future (to be near Edenbridge)	Not Eligible. Leader does not cover basic production costs.
17.9.08	Alchemy English Herbal Oils	Foxbury Farm	Sevenoaks	Launch of Mitchell & Peach	Application approved and contract signed 9.1.09
28.9.08	Oxon Hoath Country Estate	Oxon Hoath Road	Hadlow	Oxon Hoath Woodchip Heating	Awaiting further discussion
26.9.08	Kent High weald Project	Conservation Centre	Bedgebury Pinetum	A walk through time - guide	Awaiting further discussions
7.10.08	Medway Valley Countryside Partnership	Lock lane	Sandling	Ponds on the Downs	Not eligible - insufficient private funds
28.10.08	Kent Farmers Market Association	Beckford Oast	Penshurst	Developing Farmers Markets and Local Food Producers	Proceed to full application
29.10.08	Kent Down Mushroom Farm	Scudders Hill	Fawkham	Processing coppice wood for fuel	Proceed to full application
31.10.08	Beacon Mill	Beacon Mill House	Benenden	Restoration of mill for holiday lets	Awaiting further discussion
14.11.08	Arena Pursuits Ltd	Rosemary House		Arena Gold Apple Juice	Proceed to full application
5.12.08	Ben Moore (Company name to be confirmed)	3 Well Place Cottages	Penshurst	Coppice wood to make products	Proceed to full application
22.12.08	Hever CE Primary School	Hever	Edenbridge	Create a 'world peace garden'	Awaiting further discussions
9.1.09	Prima Pots	Kingstoll Nursery	Matfield	Develop coppice forest to use & supply wood chip, excavate lake for irrigation and diversify into fishing. Implement processes to achieve organic certification.	Awaiting further discussions
9.1.09	Westerham Brewery Co Ltd	Grange Farm	Crockham Hill	Refurbish redundant old Kent Barn for expansion of storage and office facilities	Awaiting further discussions
9.1.09	Winterdale Cheesemakers	Platt House Farm		Develop to be self sustaining by increasing output and develop new products	Awaiting further discussions

Item 6 – Co-ordinator Report

1. Financial Report

ITEM 5.1

10 Dec 08 West Kent Partnership - Budget 08/09

Code		Income	Spend to date	Annual Budget	Forecast year end	Variance year end	notes
Year 08/09	Partner income received	-55000					
	Reserves	-37265					
	Total available year 07/08	<u>-92265</u>					
	Overhead						
20500	co-ordinator costs		16123	24300	24600	-300	1
57000	supplies, services, mobile, expenses		146	700	400	300	1
56600	marketing						
	general marketing		339	2000	400	1600	2
	conference		6111	6000	6111	-111	
	Business Awards Sponsorship		2000	2000	2000	0	
55300	printing		216		254	-254	3
65700	Partnership Projects						
	committed to Leader Support			18100	18100	0	4
	Revision to Investment Strategy			6000	9500	-3500	5
	committed spend 08/09			59100	61365		
	Reserves to support Leader			-33165	-30900	-2,265	

Notes

- 1 Mileage paid from salary line rather than supplies, services, mobile, expenses, no training 08/09
- 2 Underspend on general marketing
- 3 Printing previously included under marketing
- 4 WK Leader fund will be transferred December 08
- 5 New strategy to be commissioned rather than revision, budget varied accordingly

10 Dec 08 West Kent Partnership - Budget 09/10

Code		Income	Spend to date	Annual Budget	Forecast year end	Variance year end	Notes
year 09/10	Partner income received WKP			-40,000			
	Overhead						
20500	co-ordinator costs			27000			
57000	supplies, services, mobile			500			
56600	marketing						
	general marketing			500			
	Website Refresh			1000			
	conference			3000			
	Business Awards Sponsorship 2009			3000			
65700	Partnership Projects						
	bid preparation to attract external funds			5000			
	committed spend 09/10			40000			
	reserves to support West Kent Leader Programme			-30900			
	Payment from Leader reserves			15500			
	Leader reserves to carry forward			-15,400			

ITEM 6.2

West Kent Partnership Putting the Business in Tourism Conference – Brands Hatch Thistle – 22 October 2008

The overall aim of the conference was to provide information to help tourism businesses to:

- Identify new opportunities to build more sustainable and profitable businesses
- Connect with the hospitality and leisure sectors

The intended outcomes were to:

- Provide information and advice on green tourism and online marketing to provide tourism businesses with sector specific advice to enable them to incorporate such changes into their business strategies
- Facilitate networking opportunities for accommodation providers to establish relationships with local leisure and hospitality businesses and thus develop added value for their businesses
- Deliver against Area Investment Framework strategic objective 3 – Sustain and strengthen the local economy.
- Deliver against AIF priority objective 7.1 to maximise opportunities for West Kent business to benefit from Produced in Kent initiatives by introducing more accommodation providers and attractions to local produce suppliers and promote the use of local produce within the tourism sector
- Deliver against priority for action 1.3 in the AIF to raise the tourism offer of West Kent and support the development and implementation of the heart of Kent Tourism Strategy 2006/11.
- Raise the profile of the tourism sector with partners on WKP and thus within their partner organisations

Activities to deliver outcomes were

- session on the value of adopting green tourism principles using a case study
- session on opportunities though online sales strategies particularly for the tourism sector
- networking facilitated by distribution of delegate list, refreshments served in same room, stand holders
- Conference provided business advice and opportunities to tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors within West Kent economy
- Produced in Kent members exhibiting at event
- Collaborative working with Heart of Kent to stage event

- WKP partners invited to event and papers to WKP meetings before and after conference
- Delegate feedback form to capture views on perceived success of event

Tourism is a strong sector in the West Kent economy which in 2006 supported 7918 full time equivalent jobs; made a total contribution to the local economy of £512M and brought 126,300 visitors into the area to stay overnight.

However, many hospitality, leisure and tourism businesses are small and micro businesses who do not have the opportunity or resources to access sector specific information on how to maximise the profitability of their business. The conference aimed, therefore, to help with the promotion of West Kent as a visitor experience package with inspirational and practical sessions designed to provoke business to identify new opportunities and stimulate thought as to how small changes to the way a business is run and local networking can lead to a more sustainable and profitable business.

Heart of Kent Partnership worked with the West Kent Partnership on promoting the conference and email and/or printed invitations were sent out to accommodation providers on the Heart of Kent database as well as to hospitality and leisure businesses in the West Kent area. The response rate was high and 108 delegates registered for the event.

The conference room itself was large enough to sub-divide into a large reception/exhibition/refreshment area and a semi-closed off conference area. This set up was well received by all as it allowed standholders to fully participate in the conference and for the networking at refreshment breaks to work effectively with people milling about the whole area.

There were some 15 standholders showcasing their business or service to delegates and feedback from them was largely positive. Produced in Kent cascaded the invitation to their members and some interesting local produce suppliers exhibited including a snail farm and local apple juice producer.

West Kent attractions were generous in their support of the event and either exhibited and/or provided complimentary tickets to their attractions.

Heart of Kent personnel provided excellent support at the event, manning the reception desk and managing the exhibition area and were instrumental in procuring the excellent line up of speakers who were extremely well received.

The conference sessions were:

- Vision and Marketing, Rosa D'Alessandro, AEG Europe (O2 Arena)
- Sissinghurst Castle – locally produced food – Tom Lupton
- How Green Can You Go? – Dr Andrew Clegg and Sandra Barnes-Keywood

- Tourism ExSEllence in West Kent – Bob Collier, Tourism SE
- Profit from online sales – Martyn Collins, Victor-e
- Putting the fun (back) in Tourism, Simon Calder, The Independent

Delegate feedback forms were received from 25 delegates (about 23%). Of a possible 350 responses across 14 questions to those respondents, 286 received either good or excellent, 39 were satisfactory and only 5 were poor or very poor. The O2 presentation received the widest range of responses ranging from very poor to excellent and the Simon Calder presentation was rated excellent by 21 out of 25 respondents.

The level of completion of delegate feedback forms was disappointing, despite delegates being invited to enter a prize draw on completion. This may in part, be due to delegates being extensively drawn from micro-businesses who may not appreciate, as do the public sector, the value of providing their opinions. Strategies to obtain a higher response level to be investigated for future conferences.

Delegate feedback received indicated that the sessions on green and on-line marketing were valuable and that a significant number of delegates intended making changes to their business strategy in the light of these presentations. An analysis of delegate feedback is attached.

The conference came in on budget at £6,000.

Overall Conference Outcome

- **80% of respondents will consider changes to their business strategy as a result of the event, particularly around green tourism and online sales strategies in order to make their businesses more profitable and sustainable.**
- **Respondents will be surveyed 6 months after the event to establish what changes have been implemented and if these have been successful**

West Kent Partnership - Putting the Business in Tourism - Wednesday 22 October, 2008, Thistle Hotel, Brands Hatch

Delegate Feedback forms

The aim of the event was to provide information to help tourism businesses

* identify new opportunities to build more sustainable and profitable businesses

* connect with the hospitality and leisure sectors

No of Respondents = 25 (23%)

Score	1- v poor	2 - poor	3- satisfactory	4 - good	5 - excellent
overall impression of the event				14	11
event met its objectives			2	13	10
relevance each session					
vision and marketing	4	1	3	10	7
Sissinghurst			4	13	8
How green can you go			2	12	12
Tourism ExSEllence in WK			5	9	11
Profit from on-line sales			4	6	15
putting the fun (back) in tourism			1	3	21
marketplace			7	12	6
networking			4	16	5
content of conference			2	10	14
overall organisation			1	11	14
refreshments			2	13	11
suitability/accessibility venue			2	10	14
	4	1	39	138	148

Will you consider any changes to your business strategy as

Revisit marketing and partnership opportunities
emphasising the locality, what to do, local produce offered etc

**a result of this event?
If so in what areas?**

marketing, going green, online modifications
Green approach to business, will try to identify any opportunities to lower the impact of our business on the environment, Online distribution and customer awareness
New opportunities to sell my produce
local
Focus on new tourism packages for local and beyond, complimentary wi-fi offering to consider
Advertising green aspects of business, free wireless access
This was not applicable to the nature of my business (tourism lecturer) but gave valuable information to pass to the next generation of tourism workers
Good to confirm that we are going in the right direction re online bookings. Interesting about continuing with marketing
We had already locked into online bookings and this has confirmed our need to make this a priority
Green tourism, USP - for free promotion!
Keeping website up to date
We will certainly be looking into all of the areas discussed and contacting those that we met.
More green and online improvements
Yes - add local photos to internet page and to even more local events
Use the internet more for bookings. More marketing
Greater use of website, re-focus on customer care, need to maintain quality
Increase sustainable tourism element in strategy
Possibly consider on-line booking
Green tourism opportunities for businesses - more info required from US!
Yes, green policy/sustainable tourism

**Please identify major barriers
to profitability for your business.**

I have not yet been open a year and so am being careful on costs. Eg I cannot invest in payment processing yet although I would probably recoup costs by having it.
Investment and manpower
Food hygiene legislation - cost implications. Instability of restaurant trade - chefs keep moving
Disability provision, red tape and obtaining council consultation which you now have to pay for

Difficulties for a large company dealing with large contracts in regards to food/local produce.
Access to valuable employment and work experience opportunities
Inability to erect a roadsign on the A20 to assist our 55,000 annual visitors to find us
Limited only by size of property
Getting high on Google
Current climate
Disability provision

Further Comments

I didn't find the O2 talk very relevant but all others were excellent
Very imaginative, thank you. Let's all work together to get West Kent on the map!
Concentrate more on 'positives' and 'presentation' not statistics
Simon Calder presentation was very inspiring and light hearted - excellent
Simon Calder presentation was great. Rosa (O2) was a very interesting presentation and Sandra's (Green) from a personal business point of view
Would have been interested in more about leisure industry in the area - not just accommodation
Very targeted toward accommodation providers - not leisure based business, however some fantastic highlights and confirmation that we all need to upsell our area! Simon Calder was wonderful!
London Golf Club would be delighted to host WKP events such as today's on a complimentary basis
Could we have fewer 'tourist bodies/organisations. There seem to be so many quangos these days - more centralisation would be clearer/more efficient from the tourists point of view
Much more interesting than expected
Very useful and inspiring
Simon Calder is lovely - could listen to him for hours
More ways to connect different businesses together to build partnerships
Very useful for education providers too!

ITEM 6.3

Sponsorship of Best Growing Business Category of West Kent Business Awards

The Awards Ceremony took place on 23 October, 2008 at the Spa Hotel, Tunbridge Wells

Our category winners were:

Kit for Kids – large business
Sitsmart – small business

Kit for Kids won the overall category – Best West Kent Business, 2008 and Jan van der Velde of Kit for Kids has agreed to join the West Kent Partnership.

The West Kent Partnership benefited from substantial press coverage as a result of our sponsorship. All editorial on our category was clearly branded WKP and all editorial on the Awards programme carried all sponsors logos. We have the opportunity to submit our own editorial four times throughout the programme and this was put to very good use to promote the work that we are doing and to engage with the business community.

At the Awards ceremony itself all sponsors received fantastic exposure with a slide show running on a loop throughout the proceedings and sponsors own slides being shown when their award was being given.

In summary, sponsorship has provided us with the following benefits:

- Raised profile of WKP as a champion of local businesses
- Cemented working relationships with Businesslink Kent (a WKP partner) and promoted greater understanding of the services they offer to businesses
- Secured press exposure to at least the value of the sponsorship cost
- Established relationships with proactive West Kent businesses through sponsor meetings and judging process
- Supported WKAIF SO3 – sustain and strengthen the local economy

Engagement at this level with proactive businesses in West Kent has to be to the benefit of a Partnership seeking to engage more successfully with West Kent Businesses. It is recommended that we continue as sponsors of the Best Growing Business Category of the West Kent Business Awards. For 2009 this will be at a cost of £3,000.