

MAIDSTONE TOURISM DMP ACTION PLANS

Actions	Timescale	Status	2015	20 16	2017
Run Workshop sessions for tourism and other businesses and organisations involved in tourism, to familiarise them with the Story and to help them think creatively about how they might use it to develop and differentiate their own offer, service or business and help to deliver the Action Plans.	S	Completed	Several events ran 2015	One Year on Event – November 2016	Update event due in October 2017
Develop an Online Shared Story Toolkit for tourism stakeholders to use, comprising Story-inspired product development ideas plus downloadable marketing copy (tailored for use in different markets) and images based on the Shared Story – so that people in the place are “singing from the same song sheet”.	S	Completed	Toolkit available on line at visitmaidstone.com/dmp	Image library set up. New photography and video commissioned and delivered. W was added to image library end of 2016	More photography and images added 2017
RIVER					
<i>Major investment plans have been identified for the river in the past. Realising some of these investments is critical to unlocking the full potential of the river for the visitor economy. Some of these investments are long term and unlikely to be completed within the lifetime of this plan but actions to move them forward need to begin now. The priorities are to make the river an attraction in its own right – a “must see” for visitors to Maidstone. To achieve that requires improving access, investing in visitor hubs along the river and enabling visitors to use the riverside as a pedestrian/ cycling green corridor to explore more of Maidstone and its countryside. This needs to be supported by events on the river and by marketing activity that profiles the river more strongly to target markets. One of the biggest challenges for improving the river is the very large number of single-interest groups. It is important to bring together all the interests and broker solutions to shared issues.</i>					
Programme of enhancements and improvements to make the river more accessible and appealing to visitors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> signing and entrance points to the river from the town centre footpath investment – signing to include distances to key points, accessibility for cyclists investment in moorings parking for river visitors 	M-L	Some activities completed. Others will be ongoing	£2m of Single Local Growth Funding has been allocated to create a cycle path along the river from Allington to East Farleigh. MBC £500,000 subject to final decision on funding. MBC Funding has been confirmed. KCC currently writing brief for detailed design. DMP group will be kept updated with opportunity for input. Tonbridge and Malling BC are not contributing to the scheme. However they <i>may</i> be some scope to extend a footpath up to Aylesford. Signage as part of Gyrotory is for vehicular signage only. Potential for pedestrian signage as part of cycle route project.	Signage and entrance points to the river being identified by group, with particular emphasis on what is stopping people accessing the river. The new gyratory and river cycle path will include signage, it is important that signage is combined with one brand (RIVER PARK?) and that we do not have a number of different styles of signs saying the same thing all next to one another. It is also important that these signs extend into the town centre. Foot path investment taking place as part of the river cycle path and new gyratory system. Group to look at any gaps in town centre and further along river path. Investment in moorings – group to identify issues with current moorings and additional	Completion of the Medway Towpath between Aylesford and Barming, which included a sustainable all-weather surface along the river bank, as well as ecological restoration. Maidstone River Park signage along the route of the Medway Towpath. Refurbishment of Fairmeadow towpath, between High Level Bridge and St Peters Bridge, which had been badly damaged by tree roots over many years. This project included new lighting, rubbish bins and seating. Additional parking for river in town centre at new Sandling Road pay & display. Major refurbishment of East Farleigh Lock Restoration of Elemental lights on

				<p>moorings.</p> <p>Parking to be investigated.</p>	<p>Maidstone Bridge and St Peters Bridge.</p> <p>Cobtree Management Estate Trust has agreed to finance a new Toucan crossing for £30,000k to enable the cycle path to be extended across Forstall Field to Cobtree Manor Estate Park. Date for this work to be confirmed.</p> <p>Fairmeadow ‘mushrooms’ removed and 16 permanent mooring rings installed.</p> <p>Signage to and from town centre to be audited following public realm improvement scheme for Week Street and Gabriel’s Hill.</p>
<p>Focus on strengthening visitor hubs on the river:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access, facilities, activities and interpretation • Explore opportunities for more camping cabins/pods (luxury camping huts – alternative to camping in the open) to enable long distance walking, canoeing etc <p>Priority hubs :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church of All Saints/amphitheatre • Cobtree by Kent Life • Lockmeadow 	M-L	<p>Some activities completed. Others will be ongoing</p>	<p>Formation of ‘Friends of Maidstone River Park’ Group to improve promotion of the river, current facilities and attractions. More people visiting and aware of the ‘River Park’ will make future events more attractive to event organisers. Opportunities for event organisers need to be better promoted. This could be done through the River Park Website (see below)</p> <p>Opportunities for camping, etc. will follow from this work.</p>	<p>It was proposed at the DMP River meeting that a friends group is established. Ian Tucker has done a considerable amount of work on this and has produced a draft website.</p> <p>The group discussed at the meeting how much of the river work DMP actions would be taken on by the Friends of the river group.</p> <p>It was agreed that work would be done to help the friends group to establish. JT agreed to pass over a model of how other friends group operate. Ian Tucker is currently working on the structure of the group.</p> <p>Maidstone River Park partnership has been created to bring together private, public and voluntary sector.</p>	<p>Volunteer-led committee progressing plans to set up a Community Interest Company and preparing a five to ten year action plan.</p> <p>New Barge café between Maidstone Bridge and St. Peters Bridge given planning permission. To open on a mooring at Fairmeadow for 2018 season. Owners will open and maintain Fairmeadow toilets for season.</p> <p>Opening of the Lodge Coffee kiosk at Teston Country Park</p> <p>Open day at Maidstone Crown</p> <p>Refurbishment of Lockmeadow Centre and opening of Gourmet Burger Kitchen</p>
<p>Create river-based events & activities that will appeal to visitors, animate the river, provide a reason to come today, contribute to extending the visitor day into the early evening. Opportunities could include – dragon boat racing, rowing events, festival of lights, regattas etc</p>	S-M	<p>Some activities completed. Others will be ongoing</p>	<p>River Park website is being produced by Ian Tucker. This will be a single place to identify all of the attractions and events along the river to be promoted. This will be aimed at both residents and visitors.</p> <p>Future events will then be more attractive to event organisers.</p>	<p>Draft Website and promotional information produced by IT. This could be adopted as the single place for anything to do with the river.</p> <p>River Park website to identify all of the attractions and events along the river to be promoted. This will be aimed at both residents and visitors.</p> <p>An audit of everything available to visitors</p>	<p>New River Event for August Bank holiday 2018 in development</p> <p>Maidstone Community Mela at Whatman Park in 2017</p> <p>Proms in Whatman Park 2017/2018</p> <p>Teddy Bears Picnic staged at Whatman</p>

			Potential events and organisers to be identified.	has been completed and included in the draft website.	Park
Build up marketing activity over time linking to countryside theme. Develop marketing collateral – maps, trails, leaflets	S-M	Some activities completed. Others will be ongoing	Maidstone River Park website created. Leaflets of canoe trail being shared on websites, and websites now linking to each other. An audit of everything available to visitors has been completed and included in the website.	Gaps and further information and trails could be produced in the future, and/or incorporated in the cycle path/ gyatory information.	Explore Kent has produced Cycle path map and leaflet. At print.
Prioritise river management – litter, dredging, landscaping, lighting, policing, anti-social behaviour, mooring, illegal camping	S-M Ongoing	Some activities completed and others will be ongoing	Ian Tucker has been nominated to Chair a 'Friends of Maidstone River Park'. This organisation (once formalised) will undertake to identify 'grot spots' and help co-ordinate clean-ups etc. EA has offered use of boats to assist in litter and vegetation clearance.	Maidstone River Park Partnership leading to coordinate volunteering, act as a voice for the river, etc 30-40 volunteers from McDonalds took part in clearing overgrown areas.	<i>Love Where You Live</i> riverside clean-up with McDonald's Maidstone and MBC. Team of 24 from McDonalds to spend 6 hours clearing from Lockmeadow to Maidstone Bridge.

CREATING A DISTINCTIVE COUNTY TOWN

This is about animating the town and providing reasons for visitors to come, stay longer, explore further and spend more – supporting local shops, places to eat, and leisure and cultural venues. It is about using the assets and resources the town has to reposition it as the County Town for visitors. These actions require close working between town partners and local businesses.

<p>Develop local markets and fairs – food (including a farmer's market), arts & crafts etc:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing provision • Develop and deliver new markets in different town centre locations and develop a calendar of markets throughout the year • Use County Town Market Charter and history as part of the positioning for street markets • Introduce street food • Develop local market management plan – litter/cleaning, selection of stall traders, 	S-M Ongoing	Some activities completed. Others will be ongoing	<p>MBC progressing with fortnightly Farmers Market on Jubilee Square.</p> <p>Other locations considered for other markets are Brenchley gardens and in front of County Hall. However issues with space/access and low footfall.</p> <p>Work with PinK to investigate Street Food</p>	<p>MBC have delivered 3 successful Farmers Markets – on a monthly basis so far. May increase to 2 per month</p> <p>MBC hold a 12-day street trading consent for market – therefore unlikely to go fortnightly until Jun 17 at earliest Considering moving Sat general market to Jubilee Square</p> <p>New market manager will be considering how guest markets can fit in with MBC's own markets</p> <p>Once Farmers' market established, can build</p>	<p>Work underway to extend planning permission and obtain an annual street trading licence for MBC to facilitate new markets and street food.</p> <p>Looking to increase frequency of Farmers market.</p> <p>Food market to run for 12 days prior to Christmas 2017.</p>
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access				up reputation for food fair.	
<p>Use themed trails and quarters to help make the town more legible for visitors and encourage exploration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify trail themes and quarters Develop a programme of animation and interpretation including: Making use of green spaces Pavement trails/digital trails using app Distinctive lighting Mark the quarters e.g. with sculpture, distinctive street sign branding, lighting etc. 	S-M	Ongoing	<p>Town Team already looking at themed trails for schools. Need to be mindful DMP relates to <i>visitors</i> – how can the Town Team’s trail be modified for tourists?</p> <p>Town Team installed lighting on Town Hall with a view to establishing it in policy to be expanded elsewhere. Need to identify which buildings could be lit, and funding.</p>	<p>A themed trail is proposed in the HLF bid for Gabriels’ Hill – for visitors as well as residents. The bid was unsuccessful.</p> <p>FrancisKnight produced: A Public Realm Design Guide which sets out the council’s intention to create a cohesive town centre with an integrated approach to achieving high quality public realm. It complements and builds on the improvements to date, such as Jubilee Square and the High Street, as well as the forthcoming programme of improvements and redevelopments of major sites due to be delivered between now and 2031.</p> <p>A Public Art Policy for borough which will become a material consideration for planning purposes. This policy has been produced for Maidstone Borough Council officers and developers. It has a borough wide remit that looks at the commissioning of public art as part of a development or regeneration scheme.</p> <p>A Street Furniture Guidelines to ensure a consistent, coordinated and high quality approach to street furniture in Maidstone town centre.</p> <p>New Historic Interpretation panels are located throughout town.</p>	<p>History trail updated and leaflet completed.</p> <p>Public Realm Phase 3 improvements to Week Street and Gabriels Hill will include a history timeline; public art; signage to key attractions and themed squares.</p>
<p>Shopfront improvements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shop front design and window displays (produce toolkit) Maintenance to frontages e.g. redecoration, brand signs 	S-M	Ongoing	<p>Ken Scott and volunteers have done audit of shop fronts in North end of Week Street. Need to discuss next steps, and funding.</p>	<p>Shop front improvements are incorporated in the HLF bid for <i>some</i> of the properties on Gabriels’ Hill. Bid unsuccessful.</p> <p>Unlikely to be funding available for other streets incl Week St. Public Realm is being improved so this could raise profile of area and incentivise owners to improve their buildings.</p>	<p>One Maidstone are campaigning to reduce A Board clutter.</p>
<p>Strengthen town’s association with the countryside through celebrating and promoting local food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage local restaurants to source local 	S-M-L and Ongoing	Ongoing Ongoing	<p>What is Produce in Kent already doing re promoting local food in restaurants? How can Maidstone promote?</p>	<p>MBC could liaise with PinK and One Maidstone to promote local produce</p> <p>Could be scope to use Granada House for</p>	<p>Local produce and markets section on Visit Maidstone website.</p> <p>Business encouraged to work with</p>

<p>produce and promote it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore potential for a new local produce centre 			Need to identify suitable location for possible local produce centre, and funding	local produce however would need to incorporate with C&R's plans.	<p>Produced in Kent.</p> <p>Monthly Farmers market with local producers in Jubilee Square.</p> <p>New 3 day food Festival - Shemomedjamo in Mote park in September 2017.</p> <p>Second food fair in Mote Park in June.</p> <p>Event organisers given list of local food traders for events.</p>
<p>ACCESS AND VISITOR MANAGEMENT</p> <p><i>There is work to do to make it easier for visitors arriving by car, coach and train to find their way into the town. This means providing information and orientation at the main arrival points and then ensuring consistent and continuous signing and information across the town. It means integrating existing signing and information with planned investment in new quarters and on the river. The new traffic-flow management planned for the bypass creates an opportunity to improve signing for visitors.</i></p>					
<p>Agree a strategy for improved access by car and coach into the town centre and support with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear uncluttered road signing Signing to car parks/coach park Visitor orientation in the car/coach parks Pedestrian signing from car parks to the town centre and main attractions. 	M-L	ongoing	<p>How can signage into town be improved?</p> <p>Need an audit of pedestrian signing from car parks into town – is it logical to visitors who are unfamiliar with town?</p> <p>Integrated transport strategy will address some of these issues.</p>	<p>New Visitor Information poster sites and What's On poster sites with maps installed or replaced by car parks</p>	<p>An audit of town centre signage will be undertaken after the public realm improvements are complete.</p> <p>Work being undertaken on car parking, P&R and buses. All Member workshop to consider early options November (mid). SPST Committee to consider report January 2018.</p>
<p>Review coach parking provision – volume, location and facilities – to reflect needs of international coach parties for shopping, and take account of potential growth</p>	M	Ongoing	<p>Coach park currently at Sittingbourne Road – not ideal location. Maidstone East possible alternative.</p> <p>If Maidstone has good facilities for drivers, more coaches will visit.</p>	<p>Discussion with parking now regarding Lockmeadow as Sittingbourne road getting too full with cars.</p>	<p>Developing coach driver offer with Visitor Information.</p> <p>Coach parking has not been included in the parking review.</p>
<p>Improve welcome and visitor facilities at the rail stations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome sign and town map on board Clear signing to drop-off/pick-up points <p>Longer term, a need to deliver new development at Maidstone East station to improve first impressions and provide additional welcome & visitor facilities.</p>	S-M-L	Ongoing	<p>Redevelopment proposals exist for Maidstone East Station and these improvements could be incorporated. £1m of Single Local Growth Fund is available in 2016/17 for the redevelopment of the Ticket Office buildings.</p> <p>Network Rail investing in Maidstone East – Maps to go on temp hoardings) North end of Week Street due to have public realm improvements. Required good maps and information</p>	<p>SE Trains added Maidstone destination information to website and supplied poster sites in London.</p>	<p>Station improvement programme at Maidstone East to link to Phase 3 public realm improvements, create a sense of arrival on new concourse with signage.</p> <p>New Thameslink service to run from Maidstone East from 2018.</p>

Events

<p>Create an Events Experts Group that brings together senior decision makers from the main venues & MBC to “join the dots” when it comes to planning & infrastructure, programming & marketing</p>	s	Completed	<p>First meeting took place November 215. Events Working groups comprises required decision makers and will invite others as they become apparent.</p>	<p>This group is now the Maidstone Events Group. Additional venues have been identified and will be asked to join. Group will meet 2-3 times per year. Next meeting February 2017.</p>	<p>New date for meeting to be set up</p>
<p>Carry out an Audit & Gap Analysis – looking at infrastructure & resources (physical & people), including venue capacities, transport links, traffic management, parking, signing, policing & crowd management. Must take into account potential negative impact on local communities & environment. Should include analysis of processes (licensing, highways, planning etc) too. Gap Analysis will then identify if new infrastructure/processes needed - & specific actions should then be developed.</p>	s	Completed	<p>List of questions for venue audit to be prepared by Jo and Barbara form an event organisers perspective and Natalie from a venue perspective.</p> <p>Now been circulated to group members for comment. Survey questionnaire being prepared to go out early January.</p> <p>Additional questions added and questionnaire sent to group for approval. To be sent out once countryside survey returned .</p>	<p>Survey sent and venues chased for response. Spreadsheet of the results has been compiled. Members of event group have been emailed to ask how best to show information and to ask for volunteer.</p>	<p>Group decided the best location for Event venue information would be in the Conference Maidstone website. Information now added to new events section on ConferenceMaidstone</p>
<p>Develop an Event Organisers’ Toolkit – to make it easier to hold an event in the borough. (We understand this is already under way – but it will need to be updated once the above Audit & Gap Analysis is completed)</p>	M-L	Ongoing	<p>This will be added to the website as above.</p>	<p>Once audit complete this will be done. Work is not underway as per the action comment.</p>	<p>Online events application process being developed by MBC</p>
<p>Set up a “No Clash Diary” – for venues to enter information on provisional as well as firm bookings. This is an “internal” tool for venues, organisers, accommodation providers and public agencies within the Borough (and neighbouring areas) to use – to help them avoid clashes, to spread events across the year, and also facilitate identification of potential “clusters” for joint development & marketing (see next action).</p>	S	Completed	<p>This has been set up using google calendar and is being tested by the group before making available to external organisers. It sits on DMP pages on visitmaidstone.com/dmp</p> <p>It has been tested. No needs to have more explnation added and then send to event organisers, SAG administration and our venues to ask organisers to add to. Thy must email activation request to add on events</p>	<p>It will move to the Conference Maidstone website along with the new events pages and required to fill in as part of the events notification.</p> <p>Regular reminder to event planners. SAG administration to be informed so this becomes part of the process.</p>	<p>Push for organisers to populate nio calash diary for 2018 and beyond as number of events is increasing.</p>
<p>Develop themed seasons/festivals, inspired by the Shared Story and by major events. May need a DMP Group sub-group – an “Events Development Taskforce”. Members of the Taskforce to be selected for their specific skills (marketing, events management, programming, fundraising).</p>	M-L	Ongoing	<p>TCM leading. Group looking at themes form 2016 onwards i.e. sporting, comedy and come with idea for next meeting.</p> <p>Food fair already being organised by Barbara</p>	<p>One Maidstone leading. Group looking at themes from 2017 onwards i.e. sporting, comedy and come with idea for next meeting.</p> <p>Apparent from 2016 that there is a strong music theme from Spring to Autumn. Group to develop brand for season and produce brand, leaflet, editorial pages to promote. Production to start Feb 2017. (No resources available, delayed until 2018).</p>	<p>Along with River Partnership early discussion on event taking Place in 2018</p> <p>One Maidstone delivering a Harvest Festival, Live Nativity and Easter Egg Hunt.</p> <p>Looking at branding for Maidstone Summer of Music 2018.</p> <p>New events in 2017 – Oktoberfest, Madness at the Kent Event Centre,</p>

					Community Mela, Shemomedjamo, Multicultural Food festival
Develop a consumer-facing “Events for Visitors Calendar” – comprising an online real time database of confirmed events for consumer marketing (website content, emarketing, social media & traditional media relations work), linked to the Culture Kent data pool. Evolution of current online events calendar on Visit Maidstone. Related to “No Clash Diary” – but serves different purpose. Drives events information on Visit Maidstone & Visit Kent websites, but also for tourism industry’s own marketing (could incorporate a “widget” for tourism providers to use on their own websites, providing a live feed). Will need to be promoted to visitor-facing businesses as well as consumers. Needs tight criteria & market focus so only features events with clear visitor-appeal, and presents them in a way that motivates visits (e.g. clustering them, using Shared Story themes etc).	M	Completed	Consumer events calendar available on visit Maidstone.com/whats-on. List and images can be enhanced and linked to social media. Event organiser can add their events on directly. Widget to pool information for other providers is being investigated.	Consumer events calendar available on visit Maidstone.com/whats-on. List and images can be enhanced and linked to social media. Event organiser can add their events on directly. Widget has been created and information circulated to accommodation providers, attractions and event organisers. Three widgets created what’s on, accommodation and Things to Do.	Widget for websites to be demonstrated at 2017 investor/stakeholder event.

Countryside					
Product audit – map & gap current provision of trails, walks and countryside & river experiences	S	Completed	As discussed in the Countryside meeting a Survey Monkey survey has been created and sent out to Parish Council’s and Visitor Attractions to collate the information across the Borough. This includes where they do their marketing and what they market and how they reach their audiences. Responses deadline is 14/2/16 and we can collate and chase missing data hopefully before next meeting on 3/3/16 2pm.	Survey has gone out to Parish Council at the beginning of January 2016 with 6 weeks to return it. Brown sign audit from Parish Councils returned a very poor result, so we completed in house. Redundant brown signs have been removed. Some parish councils have been keener than others to encourage visitors.	
Marketing audit – understand who currently markets the countryside experiences, where and how. Find best digital solution to make sure that online information for visitors from various sources is easily found. Consider how best to use/work with existing brands and sub-brands e.g. Garden of England, Heart of Kent, Our Land	S	Completed	In conjunction with above	We have had an excellent result from this and have found potential new partners to develop products with.	
Develop themed experiences and trails that use Shared Story for inspiration, include key attractions, pubs etc along trail to drive more spend	M-L	Completed	As above	Developed marketing collateral and themed experiences . Videos produced. Video will be used to promote the Borough on social media and at Bluewater.	Cycle routes and walking routes produced by Explore Kent And National Cycle Trail (River).

Develop marketing collateral – digital and offline. Rich online content.		Completed		Videos loaded on Visit Maidstone Site.	Will be available online on VisitMaidstone and Explore Kent shortly. Leaflets in production.
Audit walks and trails selected for promotion to visitors to ensure they are easy to use and attractive – safe and easy to find car parks at start points, good facilities along the way, e.g. picnic sites, interpretation, benches, viewpoints etc. Ensure the routes are consistently signed and that refreshment stops and attractions along the route provide appropriate facilities for walkers and cyclists, e.g. cycle lock ups . Develop a plan for investment to plug gaps in provision.	M	Completed		Still in assessment process and waiting returns. Some very useful information was returned to us in relation to North Downs walks and River Medway walks, with maps and info. This will prevent us doubling up on work. Meeting on 7th September to take forward ideas and areas.	UK electric bikes have developed 4 new cycle rides around the Marden, Staplehurst and Headcorn area taking in attractions and Produced in Kent sites. Will be available this Autumn as downloadable pdf on Visit Maidstone. North Downs Trail Officer and Explore Kent are checking and developing trails from train stations onto the North Downs around the Hollingbourne area. However currently not progressing due to South Eastern contract for the service due to end soon, and they are not willing to develop this until new contract in place. A driving tour for the North of the Borough has been researched. And will be developed over the winter ready for 2018.
Develop rural Visitor Information Points – “i” branded.	M	Ongoing with revised action	Work has started on Leader funding bid and potentially there will be new electronic visitor activity data as well, possibly using Scout.	Work has started on Leader funding bid and potentially there will be new electronic visitor activity data as well, possibly using Scout.	VIP points has been shelved due to match funding not being available. Visitor information website stickers to be produced and given to rural tourism related businesses
Work towards becoming Kent’s first “Walker Friendly” destination using the Cyclist Welcome and Walkers Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key towns/villages and support Walkers Welcome accreditation (prioritise villages with direct train links into Maidstone) Promotional activity 	M	Revised - not possible action	Will have to be the 4 th Walker Friendly destination but it would seem that this could be a great place for walking without the car. North Downs Way and Stations are working together and have potential to join in.		See above work on walking routes and SE trains situation. 15 old walking route leaflets found for Staplehurst are to be investigated and reproduced in a downloadable format.