

Shared Story Toolkit for Thanet businesses

Tips, advice and ideas to help your tourism business succeed





Working together

We know that Thanet is a great destination and we want to work with you to make sure everyone else knows what the area has to offer.

The most successful places have a simple shared story to tell that makes it clear what is unique and different about them.

Working with the local industry, we have developed a Thanet Shared Story for you to use. This is supported by a toolkit with lots of tips, advice and ideas to help your business celebrate and promote what is special about the whole area.

If we work together to develop and promote Thanet in the same way, we will stand out more, which means more visitors. That is not to say we want everyone's marketing to be the same – far

from it. But we hope the Shared Story Toolkit will help you make more of an impact and ultimately deliver you more business.

We also hope the Shared Story Toolkit will inspire you to incorporate a bit of what is special about Thanet in what you offer – whether it be using local produce, showing works of local artists, decorating in a certain style or renaming products and services to reflect the area. This is your chance to get creative.

The following is a taster of what the toolkit has to offer. For full details go to www.visitthanetbusiness.co.uk - this includes research, resources, image library, case studies and so much more.

The Thanet Destination Management Plan Team



“the freshest, freest place”

Charles Dickens

“the loveliest skies in all Europe”

JMW Turner

“I never stopped loving you”

Tracey Emin

The shared story

Londoners have been **escaping** to the Isle of Thanet for more than 200 years ... for the **laid back** seaside vibe ... **breathtaking** sandy beaches ... **fresh** sea air... and romantic Turner skies ...

Here at the very **edge** of the **Garden of England**, three Georgian and Victorian resorts, each with its own distinctive character – Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate – cluster around the **bays** at the far end of a **peninsula**.

There's a **retro** feel to these harbour towns, with their remarkable 18th and 19th century **architecture**, their **classic seaside heritage** and kitsch, their eclectic attractions and live arts and music venues. And there is a variety of **independent** places to shop, eat, drink and stay.

Miles of low **chalk cliffs** edge the peninsula, sheltering a string of **secluded, unspoilt sandy**

bays. Chalk **rockpools**, chalk stacks and rare chalk reefs teem with **wildlife**. These are the closest surfing beaches to the capital city: a popular choice with south-east boarders.

Artists, writers and musicians have long been inspired by this almost-island ... and continue to be drawn here. **Turner** said Thanet had "**the loveliest skies in all Europe**" ... for Dickens Broadstairs was "**the freshest, freest place**" ... and Tracey **Emin** declares in green neon on Margate seafront: "**I never stopped loving you**".

The Isle's a **historic landing place** steeped in symbolism for the story of Britain ... the **first Saxons Hengist and Horsa** arrived and settled here ... and **St Augustine** first stepped onto these shores on his way to nearby **Canterbury**.

For this is the **furthest** south east you can go in Britain ... almost touching mainland **Europe** ... yet these days only 75 minutes from central London ...

And now with the **Turner Contemporary** gallery, the return of the iconic amusement park **Dreamland**, reimagined for the 21st century, and **high-speed trains** from the capital ... **a new generation** is discovering this **original seaside escape**.



Making the most out of your marketing

Marketing is a key part of any successful tourism business. Don't worry if you do not have big budgets, lots of time or previous experience - the Shared Story Toolkit has hints and tips to help you, as well as a wealth of resources including research, copy, maps, images and itineraries.

For full details see
www.visitthanelbusiness.co.uk

Begin by writing down what you want to achieve, who your customers are, what is special about your business, who your competition is and what the best marketing channels are. Think about where your business is located and how that can help you stand out. Use the Thanet Shared Story to achieve this.

Setting your business objectives will help you decide which of the following marketing channels are right for you:

PR
ADVERTISING
PRINT
DIGITAL
SOCIAL MEDIA
SPECIAL OFFERS

There is no right or wrong way to do marketing but on the following pages is some advice to get you started.





Press Relations

Getting your story in the media can be a great way to raise the profile of your business and Thanet as a whole.

Press Relations can be low cost but time heavy. However the results make it worthwhile.

Think about working with other businesses, as journalists are interested in what there is to see and do in a destination to make it a package for their readers. The Thanet Shared Story can help you with this.

If a journalist does not consider your information newsworthy, then it will not get any coverage. So grab the attention of the media by:

- 1 Having a hook.
- 2 Knowing who you are writing for.
- 3 Being current.
- 4 Providing hard facts and statistics.
- 5 Making it easy by including images and quotes.

REMEMBER...

- *Journalists are busy people; a well-written, professional press release is the quickest way to present your story to them. It will be competing with lots of others, so your release needs to grab the attention of the editor or journalist that you've targeted.*
- *Develop and nurture your press contacts. Building up a relationship with the media can mean a better reception for your press releases.*
- *Having a press contact list will make your communications quick and easy.*
- *Press trips are a great way for a journalist to experience at first-hand what you and the area have to offer.*
- *Press events are a good way to launch a new product or service, or build a positive profile of your business.*
- *Sometimes not everything goes to plan, so knowing how to handle potential negative press is also important.*

Advertising

Advertising is one of the few marketing channels that you can control – you can reach a specific audience with a specific message. However, this does come at a cost, so you need to make sure it works for you.

The aim of your advert is to get noticed, be understood and stimulate a response, whether that is to generate an enquiry, a booking or a visit.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING YOUR ADVERT:

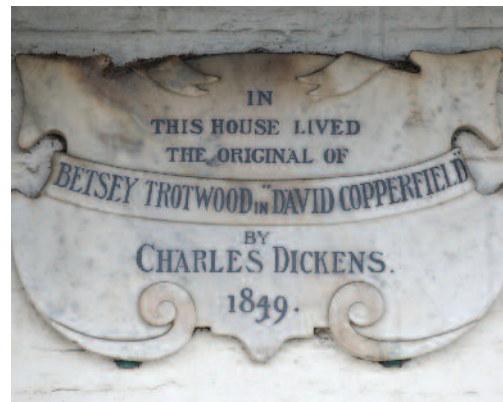
- 1 Think about your customer.
- 2 Make sure it is in the right place at the right time.
- 3 Keep it simple.
- 4 Use direct language.
- 5 Make sure you stand out.
- 6 Make sure the advert represents your business and the location. Does it support the Thanet Shared Story?
- 7 Don't forget your call to action - how people can get in touch and find out more.
- 8 Get feedback and monitor the impact of your advertising.

HOW AND WHERE TO PLACE YOUR ADVERT?

Some questions to ask before placing your advert:

- Do they have references from other businesses?
- What is the circulation/reach?
- Where is it distributed?
- What is the size/length?
- Where will it be placed?
- What is the frequency?
- Will they supply the creative or will you have to do this?
- What is the cost?
- How does this compare to the cost of other advertising or marketing options?

Remember – there is a range of different types of advertising from publications to outdoor posters, from radio to online. So think carefully about the different channels, as you will need a different approach for each.



Print

Print enables you to give information in a way that is easy to hand out, be carried away and kept for future reference for people to browse and share.

Whether you are thinking of printing a promotional leaflet, posters, postcards or other materials, in order to be effective, the message must be clear and the design should be strong.

WE RECOMMEND THREE KEY STEPS:

- 1 Start by pulling together a design brief. Include who your key market is, what is your main message, what is your must-have information, what is your style, what is the paper size and weight, how many copies do you need, what is your budget and what is your deadline.
- 2 Take time to proofread. Probably the most important part of the print process is to double check the information, as well as the spelling and grammar. Once it is signed off, there is no going back.
- 3 Think about the distribution. Print is only as effective as its distribution. So how is your print going to reach your target market?

Remember the principles of good design – you need it to be eye-catching, simple and easy to understand.

Think about your key messages and how the destination can help sell your product or services.

Don't forget that the Shared Story Toolkit has a range of high-quality images and copy for you to use.





Digital

With more people using the internet to research and plan their holidays than ever before, a business's digital presence has never been so important and there are lots of ways in which you can achieve this.



Website

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT WHEN REVIEWING OR STARTING A NEW WEBSITE:

- What do you want your website to achieve?
- What do you want the visitors to your website to do? Once you know this, you can think about the users' journey and the functionality you are going to need.
- What resources do you have?

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR WEBSITE WORK FOR YOU:

- Make your homepage stand out.
- Go mobile.
- Check accessibility.
- Remember less is more.
- Have a plan for how to drive traffic to your site.



DON'T FORGET TO:

- Identify your keywords and include them in your copy to help search engine optimisation.
- Include your web address in all your marketing.
- Work in partnership and promote the whole area – include the Shared Story, link to other relevant sites and ask them to provide a link back.



E-marketing

You can communicate your messages quickly and cheaply to your current and potential customers through email marketing. This can be a much more targeted approach than other marketing channels.

The first step to e-marketing is to build an email database. This is not about quantity but quality, as you want to send relevant information to people who are interested and are going to open your emails. Please be aware that you must obtain consent before sending an email. It is illegal to send unsolicited email messages, so include an opt-in box when recruiting people to your database.

TOP TEN TIPS FOR PRODUCING AN E-NEWSLETTER:

- 1 Choose your subject line carefully.
- 2 Keep it concise.
- 3 Keep it relevant.
- 4 Use strong images.
- 5 Add value.
- 6 Think about the timing.
- 7 Link to your website.
- 8 Involve your audience.
- 9 Make it easy for people to get in touch.
- 10 Promote other local businesses, as people are more likely to visit if they realise there is lots going on in the whole area. Maybe include a link to the Shared Story to inspire them about what Thanet has to offer.

Social Media

More and more people are using social media to research locations, attractions and accommodation before booking their holiday.

When it comes to visiting a place, people's decisions are guided by others' experiences, whether good or bad. Increasingly, people are using social media to share these experiences – influencing many more potential visitors than a few family and friends.

There are a great number of social media sites available to businesses and you don't have to be a technology guru to use them.

Here is a list of some social media sites for tourism businesses; the ones that you can quickly and easily utilise to help build relationships with your customers. It is hard to keep up with all the latest social media trends so visit the online toolkit for up-to-date information.

Remember, social media is not a quick win. You need to put in if you want to receive benefits from it. Only use what you think will be beneficial for you and what you can manage; it's better to be on one or two platforms and do them well, than have a poor presence across every channel.

Social media is a two-way communication. You will be part of a wider digital community, and it is good to link up with other businesses, get involved and share their content. This way we can tell the whole Thanet Shared Story.



TRIP ADVISOR

The leading travel review website is used by more than 32 million people every month. It provides information on destinations, hotels, restaurants and attractions, supplemented with contributions from users. There is no charge for a listing.

- Check the site – your business may already be listed with reviews.
- If you are not listed, then register.
- Claim your listing and improve the content by adding pictures and more detailed copy.
- Always respond to reviews good or bad – show you value customer feedback.
- Always apologise to customers that may not have enjoyed themselves. Feedback is a valuable tool that may result in improvements in your business.
- Thank customers for positive reviews.
- Make it easy for customers to write a review.





FACEBOOK

A social networking site with around 120 million users worldwide. The site allows businesses to create pages and share information about their products and services.

- Set up your page.
- Identify your audience - think about who you'd like to meet, and introduce yourself.
- Create compelling content - as you post updates, photos and more, think about what your customers find interesting and inspiring.
- Experiment with different kinds of posts.
- Be authentic.
- Be responsive.
- Be consistent.
- Ask questions.



TWITTER

People use Twitter for discovery, to connect with like-minded people and to deliver opinions, news and ideas to other users who have opted to follow them.

- Set up your profile.
- Follow people with similar interests.
- Join the conversation and create relationships.
- Update regularly.
- Help other people out.
- Unfollow those you are not gaining from.
- If you do have a negative comment, think before you act.



GOOGLE MAPS

Visitors are using Google Maps to plan a trip because it is easy to use and contains lots of relevant information. The site is not only used to provide direction, but also offers suggestions on local attractions, and includes photos, videos and reviews of the place.

- Try a Google Maps search for your area and see what's displayed.
- Register your business on Google Places – include photos, videos and contact details, if you're happy to be contacted by the general public.
- Encourage loyal customers to write a review.
- Review impressions and actions taken by users when viewing your listing.

Did you know that Google Maps ranks the highest for visits to a travel website, beating TripAdvisor and Expedia?



Working together

SHARING OUR STORIES

Working together will help Thanet stand out against its competitors and means more visitors for everyone.

There are lots of ways in which we can work together to position Thanet as a great destination and a friendly place to explore and enjoy.

WHY NOT THINK ABOUT:

- Using the Shared Story in your marketing.
- Networking with your neighbours.
- Finding out about your area and recommending places to your visitors.
- Researching key local events and happenings.
- Building packages with complementary businesses.
- Creating themed itineraries in partnership with other businesses.

BRINGING OUR STORIES TO LIFE

Together, we can tell people our Shared Story of Thanet, but, in order for it to make an impact, we need to make sure the visitor experience matches up to our promise.

Research shows that visitors are looking for unique and authentic experiences that reflect the local area they are in, so let's show some pride in Thanet by:

- 1 **Providing a Warm Welcome.** A warm genuine welcome is going to be the thing that creates the first and last impression of a destination. It will be this that determines whether a visitor enjoys their stay, comes back again and recommends Thanet to others - so we have to get it right. It is not rocket science, but courtesy, friendliness and professionalism are essential ingredients for a successful tourism business.
- 2 **Booking a Thanet Greeter.** Having a chance to meet the people that live and love the area can really enhance a visit and make it special. So why not think about booking a Thanet Greeter for your guests? Greeters are helpful volunteers, ready and waiting to share the local area they know and love so well – and it is free!

- 3 **Using local produce.** Food and drink are a key part of a visitor's experience. Recommending independent local cafés, bistros and restaurants, or using local produce yourself is a sure way to enhance your customer's stay.
- 4 **Promoting the Pride in Thanet Awards.** The 'Pride in Thanet Tourism Awards' find and congratulate those people in the tourism, leisure and hospitality industry, who go the extra mile to look after visitors to our area. Businesses benefit from their employees being nominated as it is great for staff morale, as well as being good promotion.
- 5 **Reflecting what is special about the area in our business.** The Shared Story is not just a tool to help you promote and market the area. It is there to inspire you! Think about what is special about the area you are located in and how it can be reflected in the product and service you offer. Give visitors a reason to come back because what you are offering is so unique.

MONITORING YOUR SUCCESS

It is important to make sure you measure the impact of all that you do. Without this, you will not be able to tell what works and what does not.

Remember to ask each of your customers how they heard about you.

Ask yourself - Did this activity work? How do I know that? Do I need to change anything? If we repeat this next year, how could it be made more beneficial to the business and to Thanet as a whole?

AND FINALLY

Don't forget the full online toolkit has further information and resources to help your business grow and succeed at www.visitthanetbusiness.co.uk.

The award-winning friendly Thanet Visitors Information team, based at Droit House in Margate are also there to help. If they don't know the answer they often know who will.

If you want to keep up-to-date with what is happening in the area the main website www.visitthanet.co.uk is great not only for visitors but residents and businesses as well.



THE THANET SHARED STORY TOOLKIT

Coming together is a beginning...



Thank you to all the tourism businesses and the Telling our Stories Group, who have given their valuable time to support the development of the Shared Story Toolkit for Thanet.
For further information please call 01843 577577 or email tourism@thanet.gov.uk