**December’s Tourism Matters: Year’s Success, Project Updates and Best Wishes for 2024**

Dear Tourism Industry Colleague

Welcome to December’s Tourism Matters and our last for 2023. In this issue we take a look back at some of the highlights of 2023, with a focus on achievements within the tourism team, local industry and the wider district:

* Margate provided the backdrop for ‘Empire of Light’ on cinema screens around the world
* ‘Year of the Coast’ celebrations
* Launch of the ‘bag drop’ scheme at Margate’s Visitor Information Centre
* New accommodation - No 42 by Guesthouse in Margate
* New attractions - ARK (Cliftonville Cultural Space), The WonderWorks (previously Hornby Visitor Centre), Granville Theatre in Ramsgate
* Dickens House Museum celebrated its 50th anniversary since opening and a new Dickens Town Trail was produced
* Broadstairs Information Kiosk moved to a new location
* Businesses and events celebrated a variety of anniversaries
* Check out our ‘[We’re in the News](https://www.visitthanet.co.uk/press/)’ page to read some of the great media coverage for Thanet this year.

**We would like to wish you all the best for Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year**

Keep up to date with the latest event information and seasonal content on our website [www.visitthanet.co.uk](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk)

If you know somebody who would like to read our e-news, please forward it on, or better still let them know they can register to receive the newsletter first hand at [www.visitthanet.co.uk/tourismmatters](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk/tourismmatters)

**Tourism and Visitor Services News**

**Visitor Information Services Festive Opening Hours**

The Thanet Visitor Information Centre at Droit House, Margate is open Wednesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm throughout December, with the exception of the festive period:

**OPEN:** Wednesday 20 to Saturday 23 December and Wednesday 27 to Saturday 30 December 10am to 5pm

**CLOSED**: Sunday 24 to Tuesday 26 December and Sunday 31 December, and Monday 1 and Tuesday 2 January 2024

**REOPEN**: Wednesday to Sunday from Wednesday 3 January 2024, 10am to 5pm

**Ramsgate Visitor Information** at The Customs House is closed from 3pm on Friday 22 December until 11am on Tuesday 2 January

**2023 Visitor Information Service Performance**

It has been a busy season at Thanet Visitor Information centre, Droit House, Margate. Our team answered almost 60,000 enquiries between April and October, with 15,000 of these during the summer holidays alone.

The team has introduced a ‘bag drop’ service, allowing visitors to explore Margate luggage-free, and it’s been extremely popular.

Over 250 new Visitor Ambassadors have been recruited through the [online training programme](https://thanetvisitorambassador.co.uk/) to welcome visitors to the Isle.

**2023 Dickens House Museum Performance**

Dickens House Museum has had a successful season, opening to the public from April to October, as well as over two weekends in December for Christmas events.

The team of 14 enthusiastic volunteers welcomed 7,700 visitors into the museum during 2023 with 550 more as part of group visits.

This year marked the 50th anniversary of the museum’s opening. To celebrate, we created a new Dickens Town Trail, highlighting the author’s connections to the town. So far, visitors have picked up around 2,000 leaflets. The trail is available to download [here](https://www.visitthanet.co.uk/attractions/dickens-town-trail-101920/).

**Attraction Christmas Opening**

We have put together a web page, advising visitors and residents of opening times for attractions over the festive period [www.visitthanet.co.uk/xmasopen](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk/xmasopen)

If your details aren’t listed, please send us an update at [tourism@thanet.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@thanet.gov.uk)

**VisitBritain/VisitEngland**

**VisitEngland launches new accessibility toolkit**

VisitEngland has launched its new ‘Accessible and Inclusive Toolkit for Tourism Businesses’ in England.

The toolkit includes practical guidance on providing an inclusive welcome, designing accessible buildings, employing disabled people and creating quality accessibility information.

The free toolkit includes case studies, top 20 tips and downloadable business specific checklists to help you plan and prioritise improvements, as well as more aspirational technical design guidance. About 30 organisations have contributed to the toolkit, including some of the leading disability charities and tourism and hospitality trade associations.

Read more about the toolkit and download a copy from the [VisitEngland website](https://visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive)

**Save the Date: English Tourism Week 2024**

VisitEngland’s annual celebration of the English tourism sector returns in 2024, between Friday 15 and Sunday 24 March.

English Tourism Week is an opportunity to show support for this valuable sector and champion the sector’s amazing people and places. It provides the opportunity to highlight the huge contribution tourism makes to the UK economy, to stakeholders, the industry, government, media and more.

Save the date and keep an eye out for information on how you can get involved on the [VisitEngland website](https://www.visitbritain.org/working-us/english-tourism-week)

**Visit Kent**

**Save the Date: Kent Big Weekend 2024**

Kent Big Weekend 2024 will take place on Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 April, with loads of prizes and experiences on offer to help Kent residents explore the range of opportunities for a fun day out, right on their doorstep.

Visit Kent will contact businesses in January, when you can provide information on the tickets that you’d like to include in the Big Weekend event. Why not have a think about how you’d like to be involved over the festive period?

**Thanet District Council**

**Give your feedback on plans for the Theatre Royal Margate**

Thanet District Council is inviting members of the public to view the proposed plans for the Theatre Royal and 19 Hawley Square.

A drop-in session took place on Thursday 7 December, and the plans remain on display on the outside of the Theatre Royal in Addington Street, Margate. You can view the plans on the council’s website [thanet.gov.uk/theatre-royal/](https://www.thanet.gov.uk/info-pages/theatre-royal/) and you can give your feedback via an online survey on [yourvoice.thanet.gov.uk/theatre-royal](http://yourvoice.thanet.gov.uk/theatre-royal), until **5pm on Wednesday 20 December**. Paper copies of the survey can also be picked up from the reception area of the Council Offices in Cecil Street, Margate.

The council has also launched the search for a new operator for the theatre.

[Read more on the council’s website](https://www.thanet.gov.uk/council-invites-residents-to-give-feedback-on-plans-for-the-theatre-royal-in-margate/)

**Margate Winter Gardens Update**

On Monday 20 November, Thanet District Council launched a marketing campaign to attract potential operators for the Winter Gardens. The campaign is being led by industry experts Colliers, with the aim of attracting expressions of interest from organisations who can bring the Winter Gardens back as a successful leisure proposition, whilst retaining its stunning heritage features. [Read more about the Margate Winter Gardens project here](http://thanet.gov.uk/council-launches-search-for-a-new-operator-for-the-margate-winter-gardens/)

**Update on the Ramsgate Clock House**

The Ramsgate Clock House (formerly the Maritime Museum) in Ramsgate Royal Harbour has been returned to Thanet District Council in preparation for its refurbishment as part of the Levelling Up Fund programme in the town. This means that the council can move to the next phase of the project to renovate the building as a heritage hub with a hospitality space. This involves detailed surveys and investigations and urgent works to stop the building deteriorating any further. [Read more about the Clock House refurbishment project here.](http://thanet.gov.uk/update-on-the-ramsgate-clock-house-renovation-project/)

**Public Toilet Review**

Thanet District Council is proposing to invest £1.25 million in the first phase of improvement works to ten public toilets across the district. A report setting out the proposals for repair and improvement was considered by the council’s Overview and Scrutiny Panel on Wednesday 6 December, and will be considered for approval by the Cabinet tonight (Thursday 14 December).

The list of toilets recommended for initial repair, based on priority, are:

* West Bay, Westgate-on-Sea
* St Mildreds Bay, Westgate-on-Sea
* The Centre, Margate
* Joss Bay, Broadstairs
* Broadstairs Harbour
* Viking Bay (chalet block), Broadstairs
* Ramsgate Pier Yard

[Read more on the council’s website](http://thanet.gov.uk/council-submits-public-toilet-review/).

**Plans to review parking in Thanet**

Thanet District Council is going to be carrying out a strategic review of parking across the district. Following the review, a new Parking Strategy will be developed to set out the future of parking requirements for the whole of the district, balancing residents’ needs with growing visitor numbers.

Members of the public and businesses will be invited to give their feedback on the review, at a series of in person and online events in early 2024. [Read more on the council’s website.](http://thanet.gov.uk/council-announces-plans-to-review-parking-in-thanet/)

**FREE Christmas Parking**

Thanet District Council is providing free car parking every Saturday in December at the Alpha Road Car Park in Birchington.

Free parking is available every Saturday throughout the year at:

* Mill Lane Car Park, Margate
* Harold Road Car Park, Cliftonville
* St Peter’s Park Road Car Park, Broadstairs
* Cannon Road Car Park, Ramsgate

**Your News**

Congratulations to Emily, part of the [**Powell-Cotton Museum, Quex House and Gardens**](https://powell-cottonmuseum.org/) team who was shortlisted in the Beautiful South Tourism Awards for Excellence ‘Unsung Hero Award’ category. The awards took place on Tuesday 12 December in Brighton and Emily was awarded Bronze. Well done to Emily

It is a double celebration for [**Chapel House Estate**](https://chapelhouseestate.co.uk/)**,** Minster which was recently announced winner of the ‘Best Start Up Business’ in the [Business Awards Kent](https://www.businessawardskent.co.uk/) Canterbury area including Thanet. Plus at the Beautiful South Tourism Awards for Excellence they achieved Gold in the ‘Wedding Venue of the Year’ category. Well done to the team.

**Turner Contemporary Partner Newsletter Sign Up**

Be the first to hear about Turner Contemporary’s upcoming shows, discover more about their exhibitions and artists and learn about their fundraising campaigns and community activities by signing up to their Partner Newsletter. [To sign up click here](https://turnercontemporary.us14.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=f02a1f07b612f576c990d56bc&id=dd5d613ca2)