**April’s Tourism Matters: Business Opportunities, Volunteer Call Outs and Project Updates**

Dear Tourism Industry Colleague,

We hope you are having a successful start to the Easter holidays.

In this issue we welcome the new Dickens House Visitor Manager, provide details of volunteering opportunities at two of our attractions, give an update on council projects and details of an Innovation Kitchen coming to Thanet.

**Tourism and Visitor Services News**

**We Design Maps - Margate Map**

We’ve received a few enquiries asking if we’re involved with We Design Maps, who we understand are approaching local tourism businesses for advertising. This is to confirm we are not, we produce our own Visitors’ Map which includes details of local attractions for free, see below.

**Our new Visitors’ Maps 2025/26 are in**

We have taken delivery of our Visitors’ Map 2025/26. The map is aimed at visitors already in the area to show them, as much as possible, what there is to see and do here. The hope is that they will stay longer, explore more of the area and return for a repeat visit - generating income into the local economy and your business.

We would really appreciate you working with us to ensure you have supplies of the map, that they are visible and kept topped up. We can provide holders for them if you wish.

Through distribution by Brightside Publishing and ourselves, we hope that you have received copies of the new map. If not or if you require extra copies, please get in touch with the Visitor Information team on 01843 577577 or visitorinformation@thanet.gov.uk so that we can arrange for copies to be delivered.

**Dickens House Museum**

Dickens House Museum has reopened for the 2025 season, open daily Wednesday to Sunday between 1pm and 4.30pm (last entry 4pm).

We are pleased to welcome Jane Grater to the team as the new Visitor Manager. Jane joins after a long career managing front-of-house operations for a number of major West End theatres. Her interests include Charles Dickens, even winning a prize for best dressed child as the Artful Dodger in her earlier years!

**Visitor Information Services Opening Hours**

The Thanet Visitor Information Centre at Droit House, Margate is open daily from Wednesday 2 April to Sunday 27 April, 10am - 5pm. Opening hours then revert to Tuesday to Sunday, 10am - 5pm, plus Bank Holidays and daily during the May half term holiday (Monday 26 to Friday 30 May).

**Broadstairs Information Kiosk** on the promenade is open daily, 10am - 4pm until Sunday 5 October.

**Ramsgate Visitor Information** at The Custom House, Harbour Parade is open between April and September, from Monday to Saturday, 10am - 4pm and Sunday, 10am - 2pm.

**Date confirmed for Electronic Travel Authorisation fee rise**

From Wednesday 2 April 2025, all visitors to the UK who do not need a visa, except British and Irish citizens, will need an ETA, a digital permission to travel.

If you have customers from overseas, please be aware that the cost of an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) rose from £10 to £16 on Wednesday 9 April. As a reminder, eligible Europeans have been able to apply for an ETA since Wednesday 5 March 2025 and have required an ETA to travel to the UK from Wednesday 2 April 2025.

Nationals of Gulf Cooperation Council countries and eligible non-Europeans already need an ETA to travel to the UK.

**Content Call Out - Sensational summer SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) days out**

Visit Kent is inviting people to submit content for its website. They are looking for information on ‘Sharing the best SEND days out and activities in Kent this summer”.

We would be grateful if you could share details of or your SEND activities (your offering, where further information can be obtained), by email to tourism@thanet.gov.uk

We will use the information received to create content on our website.

**New Website Content**

Check out the new and updated content on our website, great for discussing with your customers or sharing with potential guests and visitors to entice them to the area.

* Easter events - [www.visitthanet.co.uk/easter](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk/easter)
* Events commemorating 85th anniversary of Operation Dynamo (Friday 16 to Monday 26 May) - [www.visitthanet.co.uk/operationdynamo](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk/operationdynamo)
* VE Day commemorations (early May) - [www.visitthanet.co.uk/veday](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk/veday)
* Bottomless brunch venues - <https://www.visitthanet.co.uk/bottomlessbrunch>
* Sea swimming and saunas - [www.visitthanet.co.uk/swimmingsaunas](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk/swimmingsaunas)
* Outdoor cinema and theatres - [www.visitthanet.co.uk/outdoorshows](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk/outdoorshows)

**Beautiful South Awards Open**

The 2025 Tourism South East ‘Beautiful South Awards’ launched on Monday 7 April. The awards are a fantastic opportunity for tourism and hospitality businesses in the South East to gain recognition for their achievements.

Categories include pubs, cafés and restaurants, accommodation, wedding and business venues, attractions, events and experiences. There are also awards for unsung heroes, dog-friendly venues and new tourism businesses.

For further information, the full list of categories and how to enter, head to [www.beautifulsouthawards.co.uk](https://www.beautifulsouthawards.co.uk/) **Entry closes at midnight on Sunday 18 May.**

Two virtual workshops are being held on Tuesday 15 and Wednesday 23 April to help businesses with the application process. [Find out more here](https://www.beautifulsouthawards.co.uk/workshops)

**Skills and Training**

**Thanet Visitor Ambassador Training**

Did you know we have a **FREE** online training tool that is ideal for new or returning staff and volunteers? The Thanet Visitor Ambassador training provides you with the tools to give visitors that all important welcome that is so important to businesses and the area.

This interactive online training is designed for anyone who comes into contact with visitors in their day-to-day role. It comprises of two short courses:

* **Welcome to the Isle of Thanet** - showcasing the tourism offering
* **Customer Care** - with tips on providing that warm welcome and great tailored service

The training takes around an hour and can be completed in bite-sized chunks.

To undertake the training head to<https://thanetvisitorambassador.co.uk/>. Everyone that completes the training receives a certificate and badge and can be kept up to date with a quarterly newsletter.

**Enhance Your Volunteers with Customer Care Training**

The Thanet Heritage Volunteer Hub is excited to offer a Customer Care training course specifically tailored for volunteers in the heritage sector. Delivered by Tourism South East, this half-day session is designed for volunteers who regularly interact with the public, helping them to enhance their communication and customer service skills.

Date: **Wednesday 23rd April, 2025**

Time: **9:15am - 1pm**

Venue: **Margate Caves**

Based on the renowned Welcome Host programme, the training has been adapted to meet the unique needs of volunteers, equipping them with the tools to create positive visitor experiences and represent their organisations with confidence.

Course Highlights:

* Understand the value of excellent customer service in a volunteer setting
* Recognise customer expectations and how to exceed them
* Make a lasting, positive impression
* Communicate effectively with diverse audiences
* Offer accurate and helpful information
* Support visitors with additional needs
* Manage challenging situations with professionalism
* Use service skills to boost engagement and satisfaction

This is a fantastic opportunity for volunteers to build confidence, develop practical skills, and contribute even more effectively to the local heritage community. To enquire please contact Karen at volunteerproject@margatecaves.co.uk

**Student Hub Vacancies**

If you are looking to recruit for the season please send through details of any vacancies to Broadstairs College, part of the East Kent College Group they can post up to their student hub. Please send details to Sean Whyley-Gunning, Student Experience Officer on sean.whyley-gunning@ekcgroup.ac.uk

**VisitBritain/VisitEngland**

**New edition of the Pink Book**

Earlier this month VisitEngland published the 13th edition of its Pink Book, outlining the regulatory requirements for accommodation providers and attractions in England.

**‘The Pink Book: legislation for tourist accommodation and attractions’** provides guidance for running an accommodation business or attraction on issues ranging from food hygiene and health and safety to business management and tax.

The latest edition includes environmental protection laws, new guidance on staff tipping legislation and additional information on the Gift Aid Small Donations scheme. It also has an update on allergen labelling, and guidance on the requirements when employing people from outside the UK, including from the European Union.

The guide can be viewed on the [VisitBritain website](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/pink-book) or purchased for £11.99 plus postage from the [VisitBritain shop](https://www.visitbritainshop.com/gb/en/pink-book).

**Thanet District Council**

**Beach Business Opportunity**

Thanet District Council is offering a limited number of licences to run seasonal businesses on some of the district’s beaches and bays. The licences run from Thursday 1 May to Tuesday 30 September 2025 and are offered on a first come first served basis.

To find out more about the opportunities available and to register your interest [please click here](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/info-pages/opportunities-to-apply-for-seasonal-business-licences-on-the-thanet-coast/) **The deadline for applications is Monday 14 April.**

**Theatre Royal Funding**

The Theatres Trust has awarded a £5,325 grant to the Grade II\* listed Theatre Royal in Margate. The grant will pay for a specialist condition survey for the rare ceiling plasterwork in the auditorium.

A total of £5million is allocated to refurbishing the theatre, through the Margate Town Deal. It is expected that the venue will reopen in autumn/winter 2027. You can learn more about the grant in the [newsroom](https://www.thanet.gov.uk/margate-theatre-royal-receives-support-from-theatres-trust-to-survey-rare-plasterwork/)

**Update on public toilets**

Thanet’s public toilets are now open according to the summer schedule. Seasonal toilets are open daily, until the end of September. A full list of public toilets and their opening hours is available on the [website](https://www.thanet.gov.uk/info-pages/public-toilets/).

The public toilets at Victoria Gardens in Broadstairs will be closed intermittently from Wednesday 9 April, for repairs to be carried out. This affects the male, female and accessible toilets. Portaloos will be in place for the duration of the work.

**Walpole Bay Tidal Pool Maintenance**

The Walpole Bay Tidal Pool in Cliftonville will be temporarily closed, between Monday 28 April and Friday 2 May. The water will be drained and as well as routine maintenance, the council will repair the sluice gates and concrete steps and replace the escape ladders.

During this time, members of the public are prohibited from entering the pool. An in-depth assessment will be done to identify any further work that may need to be carried out in the future.

**Other News**

**East Kent Colleges Group launches Innovation Kitchen**

The East Kent Colleges Group’s Innovation Kitchen is launching in late spring. Based at The Yarrow Hotel, Broadstairs, this independent space is fitted out with commercial-grade equipment, and will be available to hire.

With competitive hire rates, the space will be a great way for businesses to upscale production efficiently and cost-effectively, without the commitment to a permanent space or investing in expensive equipment. Businesses can also benefit from expert food production support and advice.

Benefits:

* Professional equipment
* Improve efficiency
* Access to product development expertise

Be the first to access this brand-new resource with exclusive preview tours. If you would like to find out more or receive updates, email Jill Sargent at Produced in Kent on jill.sargent@producedinkent.co.uk

**Southeastern introduces timetable boost from May**

Southeastern has announced improvements to its timetables from Sunday 18 May, adding more space and newer trains for customers. Changes for Thanet include:

* More carriages added to key peak time trains including the 7.02am Ramsgate to Cannon Street
* On weekdays some peak time trains on services via Deal and Dover Priory will make an extra stop at Thanet Parkway. This offers a through service from Thanet Parkway along the Dover route, improving connections from Deal and Sandwich to Canterbury West. This will save time as customers don’t need to change at Ramsgate.
* The May timetable will include longer trains during the summer (until Sunday 7 September), providing more space for customers travelling to Whitstable, Margate and Broadstairs.
* On weekdays and Sundays during the school holidays, there will be a direct service from Cannon Street to Ramsgate via Greenwich and Dartford. This service will connect stations in south east London directly to the coast at Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate.
* Southeastern will continue to improve Friday and Saturday evening services from Margate to support customers attending events at Dreamland.

[Full timetables will be published here](http://www.southeasternrailway.co.uk/travel-information/plan-your-journey/timetables)

**Your News**

**85th Anniversary of Operation Dynamo - Friday 16 to Monday 26 May**

Ramsgate Town Council, Royal Temple Yacht Club, Ramsgate Tunnels and the Ramsgate Heritage Harbours Group are coordinating a range of events and activities around the Harbour and town to commemorate the 85th Anniversary of Operation Dynamo.

More than 70 Dunkirk Little Ships will berth in the Royal Harbour, departing for Dunkirk on 21 May (approx 6am to 8am), returning on 26 May (approx 3pm to 6pm). Both sailings are weather dependent. Find out more at [www.visitthanet.co.uk/operationdynamo](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk/operationdynamo), which includes a link to the full list of events.

There is already media interest and the events are likely to attract lots of visitors to the town, so this could be a great business opportunity for you. If you would like to be involved contact town.promoter@ramsgatetc.org.uk

Check @VisitRamsgate on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/VisitRamsgate) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/visitramsgate/) for information

**Muddy Stiletos Award Finalists - vote now**

Congratulations to all the Thanet businesses that have been announced as regional finalists in the Kent Muddy Stiletos Awards

* Arts, Culture & Theatre - Dreamland
* Bar - The Clockwork Cocktail Company, Margate and Delilah's, Broadstairs
* Children’s Business - Kinder Collective, Broadstairs
* Event Venue - Chapel House Estate, Ramsgate
* Hair Salon - Mia of Margate
* Restaurant - Pomus, Margate

**Get voting for your favourite by 1pm on Monday 15 April** [**here**](https://kent.muddystilettos.co.uk/awards/vote/)

**Call out for volunteers at Ramsgate Tunnels**

[Ramsgate Tunnels](https://www.ramsgatetunnels.org/) is on the lookout for volunteers to help in their café and provide back-up for their Deep Tunnel Shelter Tours.

The schedule is adaptable, with weekend slots available. Ramsgate Tunnels is keen to advance the volunteer experience, and café volunteers receive Level II Food Hygiene training after an initial trial period.

The Tunnels invite people aged 16 and above for an informal chat or to pick up an application form. Feel free to drop by, call on 01843 588123 or email admin@ramsgatetunnels.org

**Crampton Tower Museum Volunteer Call Out**

[Crampton Tower Museum](https://www.cramptontower.co.uk) in Broadstairs is looking for volunteers to help run the museum.

Do you have an interest in model railways, local history and Broadstairs?

If you would like to help out with stewarding, organising events and maintaining the museum and grounds, please contact the museum on 07870 864770 or pop along to a volunteer meeting on Wednesdays between 9.30am and 11.45am.