

Dear Laura and Kirsty,

I am contacting you during a challenging time to ask for financial support. Paula would normally have contacted you about this matter, but she is on annual leave this week.

Following the dissolution of Visit Kent and Locate in Kent in September 2025, Kent County Council (KCC) and Medway Council jointly established "Grow Kent," an in-house tourism and investment team. A priority for this team was the successful acquisition of the Visit Kent website, including all district microsites (such as Visit Thanet) and domain name ownership, from the administrator, with KCC settling the outstanding payments to the current supplier.

In late January 2026, the six districts relying on microsites were initially informed that KCC intended to procure a new website and would terminate support for the existing district platforms. Since then we have been negotiating with the lead officer at KCC for extensions to the contract for the current Visit Thanet website until later in the year, and for more time to develop a solution. This does not seem forthcoming, and we are in a challenging position to identify a solution.

We engaged a supplier and received a quote for a one-off cost of £17,000 this year, to build the site, which includes a fee for data scraping from the current site.

As a destination heavily reliant on visitor spend, which provides 19% of employment and is one of the largest sectors in the district, the continued operation of a destination visitor website is a non-negotiable priority for both the council and the local tourism industry.

We have exhausted all our available discretionary budget in Tourism, identifying an approximate £10,500 gap in the total £17,000 cost. I am contacting you to ask if your Town Councils could find a way to support this expense financially. I am suggesting that we split this cost between the three towns, as these are the areas of the district that benefit most from the website in Thanet. I am trying to find solutions for the Margate portion of the funding, as there is not yet a Town Council there. This would be a contribution from each of you of about £3,500 (I can confirm the exact amount when Paula returns from leave).

In reviewing the Tourism budget we have identified items we could stop, including ending the council membership subscriptions to Visit Kent, Tourism South East, and the National Tourism Academy. Consequently, the ability to sustain effective partnership arrangements is compromised. The council will no longer have a position to influence key partners and national tourism organisations on the Thanet's position as a tourism destination, or the council's ability to influence national policy. We also work with these organisations to provide content sharing platforms for promotions.

We shared this position with our Cabinet and they asked us to engage with the Town Councils to see if there is an opportunity for you to help fund this gap as a one-off payment this year. The team will continue to lobby KCC to get an extension on shutting

down the current website, which is proposed for August, but any guidance on funding support you could provide would be appreciated. We can then advise our partners that we can continue these memberships.

The website will continue to run as it currently does. The benefit to the Town Councils is that we will avoid reducing service delivery this year for the Thanet Tourism team, which would otherwise impact support to the sector.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this position.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Louise

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