

NEWS RELEASE

19 November 2010

**REGIONAL TOURISM CONFERENCE SETS COURSE TO BRIDGE GAP
BETWEEN LOCAL AND NATIONAL AGENDAS**

This week's Tourism South East Conference (16 November) took place at Lingfield Park, Surrey and looked ahead to how the South East's £13 billion tourism industry can continue to prosper in the current economic climate.

Incorporating the Annual General Meeting and Tourism Council, the Conference debated the future priorities for Tourism South East and examined the opportunities presented by London 2012 and the new Local Enterprise Partnerships. Key tourism professionals from across the region including Ron Crank, Head of Sustainable Development, West Sussex County Council and Tim Howell, Managing Director, Sandy Balls Holiday Centre spoke of their perception of the challenges and opportunities presented.

In uncertain trading conditions, members confirmed their confidence in Tourism South East's extensive marketing, research and training functions and in the robust and effective programme of member benefits. Opportunities to join high-profile campaigns and to benefit from cost-effective training and research remain key priorities for members. Looking forward to 2012, the region has received London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) accreditation for 130 training camps, more than anywhere else in the country. The South East is a gateway both for competitors and visitors and customer care programmes such as Welcome Host Gold will provide the differentiation between a good welcome and a great welcome.

The South East is the region best placed to support the Government's aim of increasing the proportion of domestic tourism spending from 36% to 50%,' said Michael Bedingfield, Chief Executive of Tourism South East. 'We have the largest tourism industry outside London and this conference aimed to support this vital segment of our economy. The recent Government funding cuts mean that we will all have to find ways of doing more with less so that we can grow the tourism industry to its 10-year forecast of £188 billion nationally.

'We will be working closely with the six Local Enterprise Partnerships announced for the South East and I welcome Ron Crank's (Coast to Capital LEP) comments on the need for an entrepreneurial spirit to unlock private investment and work towards international development', added Bedingfield.

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More information about Tourism South East can be found at

www.tourismsoutheast.com

Tourism South East

Tourism South East is the official tourist board for South East England, covering Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East and West Sussex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire and Surrey.

The South East is the largest region for tourism in Britain outside of London, worth in excess of £13 billion p.a. to the regional economy (7% of regional GVA) supporting over 300,000 jobs.

the Beautiful South