



A GREEN ECONOMY FOR THE WILDER BLEAN

a regenerative tourism model

A scoping exercise to identify potential regenerative tourism funding mechanisms to finance long-term nature recovery across the Blean Woods complex

REPORT PREPARED BY
Sarah Loftus
Responsible Tourism Consultant

16th January 2025

Executive Summary

DEVELOPING REGENERATIVE TOURISM IN THE BLEAN

This report provides a comprehensive scoping exercise to identify potential sustainable funding mechanisms for financing long-term nature recovery across the Blean Woods complex through regenerative tourism approaches. Building on prior studies conducted in 2019 and 2023, it explores new approaches and further develops a number of initiatives presented in the 2023 review. These efforts focus on working in partnership within a regenerative tourism framework and enhancing the Blean's profile as a destination.

Key findings underscore the importance of a collaborative approach, recognising that the Kent Wildlife Trust cannot deliver these initiatives independently. By working with partners such as Visit Kent, local tourism businesses and community stakeholders, the report highlights how shared resources, expertise and networks can lead to impactful and sustainable outcomes.

The selected initiatives for development over the next three to five years include income-generating ideas such as a Wilder Blean-inspired gin, a Kent Big Five Safari experience and the development of a corporate membership programme for the local tourism sector. These initiatives not only offer financial benefits but also promote deeper visitor engagement with nature recovery efforts and stronger relationships with local tourism businesses.

In addition, this report recommends exploring innovative mechanisms such as a "CanterPay" reward system that encourages sustainable visitor behaviour, as well as the rollout of a green certification scheme to encourage the tourism sector to adopt sustainable business practices. These initiatives fit within the regenerative tourism model and offer the dual benefits of promoting sustainability whilst enhancing the visitor experience.

Considering that the Blean is a small destination with predominantly small and micro businesses, the report suggests using it as a pilot area for several of these initiatives before rolling them out across the East Kent region or countywide.

Given the crucial role of financial sustainability, Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) should implement sound financial planning and robust management strategies for these initiatives, ensuring they effectively support nature recovery while mitigating risks associated with mismanagement or partner-driven agendas.

"We can never have enough of nature"
Henry David Thoreau

By embedding a regenerative tourism model within the Blean strategy, KWT and partners can position the Blean as a leading example of sustainable and regenerative tourism in Kent and nationally. This strategy aligns with the objectives of the [Kent Sustainable Tourism Action Plan](#) and [Kent Destination Management Plan](#), which in turn align with the national approach to regenerative tourism.

Challenges identified in previous studies, such as the Blean's lack of recognition as a destination, the need for improved market presence and tourism data, could be addressed through these collaborative partnerships and strategic development efforts.

In conclusion, the report emphasises the need for the KWT to prioritise partnership working, adopt regenerative tourism principles and focus on long-term implementation of the selected initiatives. Together, these efforts can secure sustainable financing mechanisms, support lasting nature recovery and solidify the Blean's position as one of Kent's vital natural assets.



© KWT.

Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Aims of the exercise	5
1.2 How the exercise was undertaken	5
1.3 Working in partnership	6
1.4 Working within the Kent Sustainable Tourism Action Plan framework	6
2 IDENTIFYING A DELIVERY FRAMEWORK	7
2.1 The Flora and Fauna International model	7
2.2 The Regenerative Tourism model	10
2.3 The benefits of partnership working in tourism	14
3 A FUTURE TOURISM TAX	16
4 VISITOR GIVING	18
4.2 Visitor giving case studies	19
4.3 Feedback on visitor giving from Blean based businesses	23
4.4 Considerations for the KWT and Wilder Blean	23
5 REWARDING VISITORS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHOICES	25
5.1 CopenPay	25
5.2 Examples from other parts of the world	28
5.3 Developing a KWT awards scheme	29
6 COLLABORATING WITH THE CANTERBURY BID	30
6.1 Work of the Canterbury BID	30
6.2 Engaging with the Canterbury BID	30
6.3. Example project to propose to the Canterbury BID	31

7 DEVELOPING BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS	32
7.1 Canterbury Brewers & Distillers at the Foundry	32
7.2 A Kent Big Five: opportunities for a multi-day Kent Safari	33
7.3 Additional income generators	35
8 BUSINESS SUPPORT	37
8.1 A corporate membership scheme for the tourism sector	37
8.2 An information source for local tourism businesses	38
8.3 A certification scheme for Kent	38
9 A PROPOSED DELIVERY PLAN	40
9.1 Focusing efforts for maximum impact	40
9.2 Options for implementation	42
9.3 Financial sustainability and risk management	42
9.4 Delivering short term options	44
9.5 Delivering medium term options	46
9.6 Delivering long term options	50
9.7 Unlocking additional opportunities through collaboration	50
10 CONCLUSION	52
APPENDICES	53
GLOSSARY	53

1) Introduction

The Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) has commissioned Sarah Loftus to undertake a scoping exercise to identify potential sustainable funding mechanisms to finance long-term nature recovery across the Blean through regenerative tourism approaches. This work follows on from two previous studies undertaken in 2019 and 2023:

- Developing the Kent Wildlife Trust's Wilding Eco-tourism offer: a feasibility study exploring the KWT's aspirations to create an eco-tourism offer based on its wilding project in the Blean Woods complex (2019).
- Identifying nature-based enterprise opportunities for the Wilder Blean: a review and update to the 2019/20 eco-tourism feasibility study to support the KWT's development of a nature-based enterprise strategy in the Blean Woods complex (2023)

Henceforth referred to as the 2019 study and 2023 review.

1.1 AIMS OF THE EXERCISE

Whilst drawing on the previous work, this exercise focuses on ways in which KWT can generate income for the Blean, with the main objectives of the brief being to:

- Identify ways of creating funding for long-term landscape-scale nature recovery across the whole Blean landscape, and;
- Identify ways in which businesses and landholders could contribute to nature recovery.

In addition, it attempts to:

- Investigate ways of raising funds for nature recovery work, including the potential for ring fencing funds from a future tourism tax.
- Determine relevancy of the Fauna & Flora approach or other regenerative tourism models.
- From the findings, develop a suite of projects to deliver the activities that generate income for nature recovery work across the Blean.

1.2. HOW THE EXERCISE WAS UNDERTAKEN

This scoping exercise was conducted through research and consultation undertaken in October and November 2024. Desktop research included a review of tourism delivery frameworks, existing tourism taxes implemented in the UK and visitor giving schemes. Income generating business opportunities set out in the 2023 review are developed further.

Online research was undertaken alongside direct consultation – by email or telephone – with:

- Operators of visitor giving schemes
- Canterbury BID
- Visit Kent
- Blean and Canterbury based businesses
- Tour operators

1.3. WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Issues currently faced by landscape recovery practitioners are neatly summarised by Rewilding Britain as follows:

- Major rewilding projects are struggling to navigate a confusing funding landscape.
- Government funding schemes are under-delivering.
- Rewilding projects and funders are frequently not finding each other.

Rewilding Britain recognises the need for private and philanthropic sectors to accelerate large-scale rewilding and acknowledge 'eco-tourism' as one of the mechanisms for financing rewilding. They also highlight the need to enable locally and community led partnerships to upscale rewilding¹.

As highlighted in the previous studies, and as emphasised by Rewilding Britain, it is clear that a partnership approach is the only approach that is going to deliver for the KWT and Blean. Working in partnership is the common theme for all tourism models and delivery frameworks, and is the dominant theme throughout this scoping exercise.

1.4. WORKING WITHIN THE KENT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

As a partner of the Kent Sustainable Tourism Action Plan (STAP), KWT needs no clarification of its goals and objectives. A brief overview of the most pertinent themes and actions are covered which should steer the shaping of a delivery framework for the KWT. The priority themes which provide the strategic backbone of the STAP should also form the basis of this delivery framework:

- Community: the importance of working with local residents and communities to ensure tourism is developed in partnership.
- Nature: KWT is perfectly placed to promote more nature positive tourism to support Kent's Biodiversity Strategy.
- Climate: the need for lower carbon forms of transport and the importance of promoting rail and bus travel.

This report starts with a review of potential delivery frameworks for the KWT before looking at income generating ideas – some that can be implemented immediately and others that will require further collaboration, and time, to put into effect. These include a number of opportunities put forward in the 2023 review which are developed further here.

¹ Rewilding Britain: <https://www.rewildingbritain.org.uk/about-us/what-we-say/research-and-reports/rewilding-finance>

2) Identifying a delivery framework

Successfully delivering income generating opportunities for funding nature recovery requires an appropriate delivery framework. To identify a framework within which KWT and partners can deliver, the brief requests a review of the Flora & Fauna International (FFI) model to determine if it is relevant to the Blean.

There are in fact many models, any of which could potentially be adapted to address the specific needs of the Blean – but as the principle of regenerative tourism runs throughout the Kent Destination Plan (DMP) and Kent Sustainable Tourism Action Plan (STAP), for the purposes of this study the focus is kept on these two frameworks.

2.1 THE FLORA AND FAUNA INTERNATIONAL MODEL

FFI is one of the oldest international wildlife conservation charities, working closely with conservation partners in 48 countries. Their focus is on protecting and restoring habitats, saving species from extinction and developing sustainable livelihoods.

FFI has long recognised that successful conservation must involve local communities in both decision-making and implementation. Their approach is based on a partnership-led model (with an emphasis on long-term collaboration) integrating community involvement into its conservation work, with projects flexed to local needs.

Local people are put at the centre of conservation, and, working with in-country teams and partners, they provide advice, training, tools and mentoring. FFI also works on financial modelling and sustainable finance initiatives to support their activities, aiming for shared benefits in terms of both environmental sustainability and socio-economic development.

Following is an evaluation of FFI's approach based on its known methodologies and strategies.

2.1.1. COMMUNITY-FOCUSED CONSERVATION

FFI places local communities at the heart of its conservation work, making them partners in conservation rather than simply beneficiaries. This participatory approach ensures that communities have a voice in how their programmes are developed and implemented, empowering them through:

- **Inclusive decision-making:** communities collaborate with FFI to design and implement conservation plans, ensuring alignment with their needs, traditional knowledge and practices, giving them a direct stake in the outcome and fostering a sense of ownership.
- **Leveraging traditional knowledge:** FFI recognises the importance of traditional ecological knowledge and seeks to integrate this into modern conservation practices.

2.1.2. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

A core part of FFI's work is improving livelihoods in a way that supports the communities' development and conservation goals and reduces pressure on natural resources, such as:

- **Alternative livelihoods:** e.g. sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism and handicrafts provide income opportunities that lessen dependence on damaging activities like illegal logging and poaching.
- **Entrepreneurship and training:** building local capacity through training in e.g. hospitality, sustainable farming and wildlife management empowers communities to manage resources effectively and profitably.

2.1.3. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

FFI places a strong emphasis on educating local communities about the importance of biodiversity, the environment and the challenges of climate change through:

- **Workshops and training:** to raise awareness about conservation and the link between environmental health and human well-being.
- **Youth engagement:** to cultivate long-term environmental stewardship.

2.1.4. CO-MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

FFI works with governments, local authorities and communities to create joint management plans making conservation efforts more locally driven through:

- **Co-management agreements:** where communities share decision-making responsibilities.
- **Strengthening local institutions and governance structures:** to support communities to manage and protect natural resources.

2.1.5. CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND ADDRESSING TRADE-OFFS

FFI employs a number of strategies to help mediate conflicts that arise when conservation goals clash with local economic activities such as hunting, logging or agriculture:

- **Building trust:** engaging communities helps build trust which is crucial in resolving disputes and ensuring that conservation efforts are accepted.
- **Benefit-sharing models:** where conflicts arise, FFI helps design benefit-sharing models where communities receive tangible benefits, such as revenue from tourism or sustainable harvesting, in exchange for their cooperation in conservation efforts.

2.1.6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

FFI takes a long-term approach, often working with communities over extended periods to ensure that their conservation programmes are adaptive and they continue to be supported throughout the process. Employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, ongoing monitoring and evaluation systems measure the effectiveness and success of its initiatives and impact, allowing them to adjust, adapt or expand as necessary.

2.1.7. CHALLENGES OF THE FFI APPROACH

While FFI's community-based approach is widely respected, it does face a number of challenges:

- **Power imbalances:** can emerge between local communities and external stakeholders such as NGOs or governments, sometimes limiting local agency in decision-making processes.
- **Scalability and cultural sensitivity:** some community-based models that work well in specific contexts may not be easily scalable. FFI's approach, though highly effective in many cases, can face challenges when trying to apply it across diverse cultural and ecological settings.
- **Funding dependence:** many community programmes depend on external funding, which, due to its very nature, can create challenges in terms of long-term sustainability, especially if donor priorities change.

2.1.8. IN CONCLUSION

FFI's community-based conservation model aims to empower local communities, promote sustainable livelihoods and integrate local knowledge into conservation strategies. Their focus on co-management, capacity-building and education aims to strengthen both conservation outcomes and community well-being. However, it can face challenges related to in-destination power dynamics, funding sustainability and cultural impact.

Overall, FFI's approach demonstrates that conservation is more successful when local communities are engaged as active stakeholders in the process.

The focus of FFI's conservation work is very different to that of the KWT, largely due to the locations in which it is working and the range of specific conservation challenges it is striving to address. A review of FFI's case studies shows they're working predominantly in developing countries, usually in rural areas and often with indigenous peoples. The focus of each project is on a specific threat or single issue, such as seahorse protection, mangrove restoration or managing the impacts of an alien species. The Blean faces a much broader range of issues, including pressures from its neighbouring urban areas.

A key learning to be taken from FFI's approach is its emphasis on co-management and partnership working which relies on a deep understanding of in-destination ownership and the dynamics between various partners. Additionally, their model highlights valuable practices such as supporting local communities through training, youth engagement and conflict resolution. These aspects of FFI's partnership approach are highly relevant to the KWT and the Blean, offering actionable insights for developing future collaboration and community involvement.

2.2 THE REGENERATIVE TOURISM MODEL

The principles of regenerative tourism run throughout the Kent DMP and Kent STAP which work in synergy to ensure that “active management of the visitor economy balances economic impact with positive social and environmental impact through stewardship of the destination and cross-sector collaboration”. Visit Kent – an accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and the lead organisation on both Plans – is actively involved in shaping the latest VisitEngland strategy and the national approach to regenerative tourism.

As a key partner in the Kent STAP, it clearly makes good sense for KWT to adopt the same approach and engagement with Visit Kent on the development of its own tourism strategy and delivery framework is recommended.

Following is an evaluation of the Regenerative Tourism model and its relevance to KWT.

2.2.1. UNDERSTANDING REGENERATIVE TOURISM

Definition: Regenerative tourism represents a sustainable way of travelling and discovering new places. Its main goal is for visitors to have a positive impact on their holiday destination, meaning that they leave it in a better condition than how they found it. A concept that goes beyond “not damaging” the environment and that aims to actively revitalise and regenerate it, resulting in a positive cycle of impacts on local communities and economies: sustainable regeneration.²

Going against the grain of years of tourism management and marketing to appeal to consumer demand, regenerative tourism instead focuses on the supply-side, i.e. the host communities and ecosystems, rather than just the visitors’ needs and wants of the market-demand approach.³

The concept has been around for a while, emerging in discussions about sustainable development and tourism in the late 2010s, but has gained recognition as a distinct approach over the past 10 years. It can be described as an evolution of sustainability concepts, aiming for a net-positive impact on destinations and communities. While the foundational ideas of regeneration—e.g. restoring ecosystems and empowering communities—have long existed, the formal application of these principles to tourism gained traction as the industry began to critically evaluate its sustainability practices, especially during and following the pandemic.

The key difference between regenerative tourism and other forms of sustainable and responsible tourism is that it is the only model to make an explicit connection to living systems. Its core emphasis on leaving destinations in a better state than they were before makes it very relevant to KWT’s ambitions for nature recovery in the Blean.

Case study 1 looks at how the Regenerative Tourism model has been applied by the Broughton Sanctuary in North Yorkshire and demonstrates how the model can support rewilding initiatives.

² <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/regenerative-tourism>

³ <https://www.earth-changers.com/purpose/regenerative-travel-what-is-it-and-what-is-it-not/>

2.2.2. CASE STUDY 1: REGENERATIVE TOURISM IN BROUGHTON SANCTUARY, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Nature recovery and conservation efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 1000 acres of intensive sheep pasture has been transformed into a diverse mosaic of woodlands, meadows and wetlands as part of a rewilding initiative. Planting native species and managing habitats for wildlife not only benefit the local ecosystem but also offer visitors an opportunity to reconnect with nature and witness the positive effects of regenerative practices.
Regenerative agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regenerative farming techniques prioritise soil health and carbon sequestration, resulting in organic, locally sourced food for visitors contributing to climate change mitigation and supporting rural communities. Guests can participate in nature recovery tours and land management workshops.
Community engagement and empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The estate has established partnerships with nearby villages and supports local businesses, becoming a source of economic stability for the area. The on-site Business Park hosts over 50 companies employing 600+ people. The "Stay Longer" initiative encourages visitors to extend their stay, encouraging deeper engagement with the local area and contributing more significantly to the community.
Sustainable infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investments in sustainable infrastructure include solar panels, biomass boilers, and rainwater harvesting and wastewater treatment systems, reducing the estate's environmental impact. The Broughton Sanctuary and Avalon Wellbeing Centre websites are hosted on servers utilising 100% renewable energy.
Recognition and awards	<p>The dedication to regenerative tourism has garnered significant recognition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included in National Geographic Traveller's 2024 Cool List of 30 most exciting destinations to visit, highlighting its innovative approach to tourism and conservation. Commendation in the Responsible Tourism Awards' Nature Positive category.
Visitor experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guests can immerse themselves in the rewilding process through activities including wildlife spotting, tree planting and nature recovery projects. The "Lens on Nature" experience offers daily habitat spotting, bird watching and opportunities to contribute to citizen science projects, enhancing visitors' connection to the environment and understanding of regenerative practices.

How is the Broughton Sanctuary experience relevant to KWT and Blean?

Broughton Sanctuary is a good example of how the regenerative tourism approach can be used to integrate environmental restoration through rewilding with visitor engagement. Through its holistic approach to sustainability, conservation, community engagement and education, the Sanctuary demonstrates how tourism can be a regenerative force through healing ecosystems, supporting local communities and enriching the visitor experience.

2.2.3. KEY STRENGTHS OF REGENERATIVE TOURISM

The strengths and benefits of the regenerative tourism approach are manifold:

- **Environmental restoration:** the focus is on repairing ecosystems and reducing pollution.
- **Community well-being:** it engages local communities in decision-making processes and prioritises their social and economic resilience.
- **Economic empowerment:** it creates income opportunities for local businesses and landscape nature recovery initiatives.
- **Cultural revitalisation:** it encourages the preservation and celebration of local traditions and fosters pride and identity among residents.
- **Visitor engagement:** it educates visitors on their impact, creating a sense of responsibility and fostering deeper connections with destinations.
- **Long-term vision:** it aims for holistic, systemic change rather than short-term fixes.

2.2.4. POTENTIAL CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPING REGENERATIVE TOURISM:

Factors to be aware of in applying the regenerative tourism approach:

- **Implementation:** it requires collaboration amongst a diverse set of stakeholders and significant resources to design and execute.
- **Measuring impact:** it can be difficult to quantify regenerative outcomes.
- **Economic viability:** it may initially experience slower returns than traditional tourism models.
- **Over-tourism risks:** even well-intentioned initiatives can inadvertently draw excessive visitor numbers, straining resources and infrastructure. This can be counteracted through careful planning, monitoring, appropriate marketing to disperse visitors and attracting people out of season.
- **Awareness and buy-in:** achieving widespread understanding and support from visitors, businesses and local government and other bodies can be challenging.

2.2.5. IN CONCLUSION

The key learning to be taken from this evaluation is that regenerative tourism can only be achieved through ongoing collaboration with decision makers, tourism operators, communities and visitors.

The model may need adapting to align economic goals with landscape regeneration but can be transformative for destinations and communities. Its success, however, depends on careful planning, developing and maintaining effective partnerships amongst local communities, businesses and local bodies, as well as ensuring a commitment to continuous improvement.

In spite of the challenges cited above, KWT has long-standing partnerships with key stakeholders in the Blean (e.g. RSPB, Wildwood Trust, Woodland Trust) and, in implementing some of the actions presented in this and previous studies, could overcome challenges around buy-in, implementation and economic viability.

The regenerative tourism approach has been adopted at a national and county level, as well as by the UK National Parks. It is therefore clear that KWT should base its strategy on this model.

2.3 THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN TOURISM

It is clear from the results of this and previous studies that KWT needs a partnership based approach to finance long-term nature recovery through tourism. KWT does not have the resource or tourism expertise to deliver on its own, but can support Visit Kent as the lead tourism body. Implementation and distribution of products and experiences can be achieved in partnership with tour operators and established businesses.

A number of actions set out in the 2019 study and 2023 review have been achieved. Potential partners have been identified and we know what is needed to progress. It appears that a key problem to overcome in moving forward is a lack of resource and the need for funding. Partnership working can help to overcome this with other partner organisations being able to deliver where best placed to do so.

In basing its delivery framework on the principles of regenerative tourism, collaborating with established partners, tourism businesses and the local communities will be a given, so it is worth recapping on some of the benefits that partnership working can bring:

1. Resource sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pooling financial, human and technical resources can reduce costs and increase efficiency.• Sharing expertise and knowledge across a range of partners can plug skills gaps, bring innovation and improve decision-making.
2. Broader market reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative marketing initiatives can access wider audiences.• Joint branding initiatives can enhance destination appeal and competitiveness.
3. Sustainable development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative working encourages integration of sustainability practices across all partners.• Working in partnership to develop regenerative tourism will benefit local communities and contribute towards long term landscape nature recovery.
4. Risk sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risks can be shared and better managed collectively.• Diverse perspectives help in developing contingency plans and solutions.
5. Community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with local communities ensures tourism aligns with their needs and aspirations.• Local involvement can result in a more authentic experience.
6. Economic benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joint initiatives can create new business opportunities which support the local economy and employment.• Collaborative investment in infrastructure benefits all stakeholders.
7. Enhanced reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrating collaboration can build trust amongst visitors, investors and stakeholders.• Partnerships often result in initiatives with greater credibility, boosted image and visibility.

It is worth noting that KWT recognises that it can't deliver on its own in its Wilder Kent 2030 Group Strategy. Working in partnership to develop and deliver the initiatives set out in this document will help KWT work towards achieving the following strategic goals:

- **Strategic goal 2: Inspire and Collaborate** – scaling-up engagement to reach a larger, more diverse range of people: achieved through working in partnership with key partners and stakeholders.
- **Strategic goal 3: Strengthen and Grow** – diversify KWTG's income sources and strengthen its systems, whilst operating sustainably: achieved through developing income generating opportunities in partnership with tourism providers and other supporting businesses.

It will also, as previously highlighted, help the KWT meet the stated objectives of the Kent STAP.

In conclusion, tourism is, by its very nature, a partnership based industry. No tourism business or body can operate successfully in isolation. With its expertise in landscape nature recovery, KWT is well placed to work with and support the local tourism industry in the Blean and beyond.

2.4. APPLYING A PARTNERSHIP BASED REGENERATIVE TOURISM MODEL TO THE BLEAN

The following provides an example of how the regenerative tourism model could be applied in the Blean as well as district or county wide:

1. Assessment and stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community involvement: engage local residents, businesses and community groups to understand needs, values and priorities. • Environmental audit: assess the ecological health of the destination. • Cultural inventory: identify cultural heritage that needs protection and revitalisation.
2. Develop vision and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a shared vision focusing on the area's long-term ecological and social health. • Set measurable goals, e.g. reducing environmental impacts, enhancing biodiversity, increasing local economic participation.
3. Implement regenerative practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmentally positive action: i.e. rewilding for landscape nature recovery. • Cultural preservation: incorporate local crafts and cuisines in tourism experiences. • Tourism revenues: ensure direct benefits to the community, landscape nature recovery and cultural heritage projects. • Economic sustainability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promote locally-owned businesses and experiences. – Create training programmes for locals in regenerative tourism principles and nature recovery.
4. Visitor engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational experiences: tours, workshops and volunteering opportunities connecting visitors to conservation and community initiatives. • Behavioural influence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourage sustainable practices such as low-impact activities. – Provide incentives for longer stays to reduce the carbon impact of travel.
5. Monitoring, evaluation and adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use metrics, surveys and economic impact studies to monitor progress. • Adapt strategies based on feedback and evolving environmental conditions. • Roll out or replicate strategies in other areas.
6. Marketing and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the commitment to regeneration in promotional materials. • Share success stories to inspire similar practices in other destinations.

3) A future tourism tax

The brief required an investigation into tourism tax and how such a tax could be implemented at some point in the future.

Funds raised through tourist taxes can be ring fenced for protecting places of interest, sustaining the local community, restoring the natural environment, improving the visitor experience, encouraging longer stays, and supporting the objectives of Local Transport Plans. However, at present, neither the central government in England, nor its local councils have the power to introduce a tourist tax⁴.

Nonetheless, some have found legal ways of working around this and a number of English cities have introduced, or are planning to introduce, a tax through Accommodation Business Improvement Districts (ABIDs):

- The Manchester City Visitor Charge was implemented in April 2023 by the Manchester ABID. A fee of £1 plus VAT per room or unit per night is added to the final bill for guests staying in participating accommodation within the ABID zone. In its first year, the levy raised £2.8 million.
- Liverpool's ABID was established in April 2023. The levy is payable by accommodation providers with a rateable value of £45,000 or more, with a cap of £50,000 per property and is currently 1.6% of the accommodation's rateable value, rising to 4.5% in 2025 when it is expected to raise £939,000 per year.
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole approved a tourist tax in May 2024, requiring 70 large hotels to charge guests a fee of £2 per room per night. The levy was expected to generate around £12m to support the region's tourism over five years, with funds used to develop events and help sustain the local community. However, 40 hotels lodged an appeal and the introduction of the tax is currently on hold.

In other parts of the UK:

- A Welsh tourism tax involving a £1.25 nightly levy may be introduced in 2027.
- A Visitor Levy Bill has been passed by Scotland's MSPs and its introduction is planned for 2026. Local authorities will decide if they want to introduce a charge (and at what level) on accommodation as a percentage of the cost of an overnight stay, minus commission paid to online booking services and for room add-ons. The proposed Levy is meeting opposition amongst smaller tourism businesses.

Where taxes have been introduced, there is an expectation that money raised is reinvested locally. It is not known if any of the above destinations are already using, or are intending to use funds generated to support neighbouring natural/rural areas.

So far, tourist taxes in the UK are implemented by regions, districts or cities where the ABID model is viable. The move towards devolution will, in time, present an opportunity for a future tourism tax which would probably be implemented at a county or unitary level. This will in turn provide an opportunity to argue for a proportion of the funds generated to be allocated to rural areas and to mitigating the impact of visitors on the environment.

⁴ The House of Commons Library, 26 Sept 2024

In conclusion

Whilst the implementation of tourist taxes in the UK remains limited and fragmented, the examples above highlight the potential for such levies to generate significant funds for reinvestment in local communities and tourism infrastructure.

The ABID model has emerged as a practical workaround for cities like Manchester and Liverpool, despite legal and logistical challenges. Meanwhile, future plans in Wales and Scotland signal a growing acceptance of tourism levies as a means to balance visitor impact with community sustainability.

As devolution progresses, the opportunity for broader, county-level implementation could pave the way for a more unified approach. As such, KWT and eNGO partners should instigate discussions with local authority leaders and Visit Kent to shape a future levy for Kent. In a rural and coastal county, revenue would not only support urban centres and cultural attractions but also extend much-needed benefits to rural and natural areas, and foster a more sustainable and inclusive tourism strategy across the UK.



Heath Fritillary Butterflies East Blean Woods © Beth Hukins

4) Visitor Giving

Consideration has been given to the potential for establishing a Visitor Giving scheme as an additional source of income for KWT and Wilder Blean.

A key initiative in the Kent STAP is the development of a nature payback scheme for visitors. The Plan states that Visit Kent will work with 5-10 local tourism partners on a pilot nature payback scheme whereby key nature-regenerative schemes (including KWT) can benefit from contributions from visitors who voluntarily 'opt in' to 'pay it back' to Kent's nature and wildlife.

4.1. HOW VISITOR GIVING WORKS

Through voluntary donations, Visitor Giving is a way for visitors to contribute directly to the places they enjoy. Tourism businesses of all types – accommodations, eateries, attractions and event venues – can collect donations that their customers feel moved to give by adding them to their bills. These donations can add up to a significant amount of funding whilst providing a flexible way for businesses to engage with their customers and the cause they are supporting.

Whilst accommodation providers can add the donation either at the time of booking or to the final bill at check out, visitor attractions and event organisers can collect donations through a ticket or entry fee. In local shops, visitors can donate when buying merchandise.

A donation of £1 or £2 per booking is considered an acceptable amount to add on to a bill or suggest as a donation. The two methods for collecting donations on sales are:

- **Opt-in:** guests are asked to make a voluntary donation, either at the time of booking or on their final bill. This method is low maintenance.
- **Opt-out:** a donation is automatically added to the booking or final bill and guests are required to opt-out if they do not want to make the donation. This option may result in a greater collection rate, but many businesses feel less comfortable about automatically adding the donation.

There are more than 20 visitor giving schemes operating around the UK, such as Love the Broads, Love the Forest (in the New Forest) and Pay it Forth (administered by the RSPB for Inner Forth Futures). The following takes a brief look at four schemes operating in England with the first three conducted through direct consultation and the fourth – the Lake District Foundation – through desktop research.

4.2. VISITOR GIVING CASE STUDIES

4.2.1. CORNWALL WILDLIFE TRUST:

In 2021, in the wake of the pandemic, the CWT was looking for different ways of supporting their local businesses. As a result their Visitor Gifting scheme was launched. Cornwall has a high visitor return rate and the Trust recognised that visitors are becoming much more aware of the impact of their holidays and want to give back to the environment. Their scheme enables visitors to donate via the places where they stay, eat and shop.

How it's currently working:

- Participating businesses decide on whether they use the opt-in or opt-out option. They have found that the opt-out version is far more effective in collecting funds, however some businesses worry about upsetting their customers so the majority go with the opt-in function.
- The two businesses that use the opt-out version each collect between £1,200 and £3,000 a year. The rest, using the opt-in version, collect in the region of £200 a year.
- The CWT also provides style donation boxes and can support collections at events and activities.

Benefits:

- The CWT has found that the scheme builds customer loyalty by enabling them to support the protection of the places they visit and the wildlife they come to see.
- Member business feedback shows that visitors like supporting local wildlife.

The CWT is keen to work closely with and support the Cornish hospitality industry but has noted that businesses have been struggling over the past couple of years. As a result they have experienced a number dropping out of the Visitor Gifting scheme. The CWT is therefore developing a business support scheme, as part of its Wilder Business Network, which has included the production of two guides:

- **Wild Wonders of Nature:** provides information on all CWT's free to visit reserves and their wildlife, and also covers wildlife disturbances. The idea is to work with the hospitality industry and provide the guide as a white label document which the businesses can brand and give to their guests. The guide (Attached as Appendix 1) costs approx. £2,000 to produce.
- **Become a More Wildlife Friendly Business:** intended as a starter guide, the CWT decided to keep it simple, aimed at achieving easy wins for businesses. (Attached as Appendix 2.)

The CWT's Wilder Business Network currently has 70 – 80 members, 60% of which are hospitality (mainly accommodation) businesses. There are three levels of membership: Bronze £250 p.a., Silver £500 p.a. and Gold £1,000 p.a.

Aimed at helping businesses become more sustainable and wildlife friendly, all members receive the above two guides and Gold members also receive a CWT consultancy visit, providing more in depth advice.

The Wild Business Network is currently generating around £30,000 a year.

4.2.2. CARING FOR THE COTSWOLDS

This scheme allows visitors to make donations to the Cotswolds National Landscape through the Go Cotswolds website and via local businesses.

How it's currently working:

- The scheme has been running for approx. 10 years and has just eight members: a distillery, farm park, discovery trail, photographer, three local tour operators and one accommodation.
- Donations are voluntary.
- Some businesses choose to match fund the donations collected.
- Each member decides how to collect the donations. The majority of their funds come in through customers opting-in to donate (usually £2) with an online purchase.
- The Cotswolds Farm Park builds in a donation to their annual membership, taking £0.50 per transaction.
- The most loyal member donates approx. £5000 per annum.
- Donation boxes are also provided but are described as “not worth the hassle of collecting”. The accommodation provider – luxury self-catering cottages – has a donation box only and contributes the smallest amount each year.
- The Cotswolds Distillery is their largest donor, providing options to donate both online and on instore sales. The owner is described as “really passionate about the area” and has produced a locally inspired hedgerow and grassland infused gin.

Benefits:

- The relationship building element of the scheme is hugely important and very successful, with Caring for the Cotswolds effectively engaging both locals and visitors in their projects.
- They are able to support a large number of conservation projects through the scheme.
- Initial sign up of businesses to the scheme and working with them on an ongoing basis is not resource intensive.

Drawbacks:

- The most resource intensive element of the scheme is the large number of projects they support.
- They would like to expand the scheme and recruit more members but do not currently have sufficient resource to do so.
- The way the scheme is currently operated is quite administratively heavy. Depending on each member's internal system, the donations go into a protected pot and are calculated at the end of each financial year so that they receive just the one donation per year. If they had the resource, they would change to a flat fee set in membership tiers.

Recommendation:

- Caring for the Cotswolds suggested that if working with a small area, like the Blean, to get businesses on board KWT should sell the fact that it is going to have an impact on their immediate vicinity, e.g. two miles down the road.

4.2.3. SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK TRUST

This Visitor Giving scheme was initially launched and run by a consultant. Launched pre-pandemic, it started well but stopped operating for some time before being resurrected by a couple of member businesses. The scheme is now run by the South Downs National Park Trust, the official charity of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA).

How it's currently working:

- The Trust partners with tourism businesses – predominantly accommodation – which generate donations from their customers through their booking systems.
- They aim for £2 per visit either through the opt-in or opt-out functions, with the latter generating much more. For example, a glamping site generated just £14 in a year using the opt-in option, whilst a hotel, using opt-out, generates £8,000 a year.
- They've also had much success with a medium/high end restaurant which raises up to £3,000 a quarter, again using the opt-out function.
- Their other members generate around £200 a year.
- The Trust asks for collections to be sent every six months.
- The Trust provides promotional materials, supports members with promotional activity, and can provide annual certificates.
- The scheme currently generates around £15,000 per annum however they are planning to sign up another large hotel, so this could increase significantly.

Advice given:

- The Trust advises that businesses want to support and partner with the National Park, making the scheme good for relationship building. However much depends on the context of what you've got to work with so, focus on medium to large businesses and don't waste time on small businesses, including Airbnb properties as the platform does not currently provide a voluntary donation function.
- In addition, working with chains is too complicated as booking systems are centralised and usually managed far from the destination.
- The amount of admin required in setting up a visitor giving scheme is small. Its greatest requirement is for marketing and promotional support from the communications team.
- It requires an MOU which is non-binding. No checks are required as it largely relies on goodwill.

Other donation raising activities:

- The SDNPA is planning to introduce micro roundups in their two visitor centres – i.e. a round up technology on their tills – which they advise only work with large sales volumes. Through this they estimate raising between £7,000 – £13,000 a year.
- Donation points (tap card) are installed around the park, which "just about wash their face" and are more for raising awareness.
- The SDNPA runs corporate donation schemes through which they generate approx. £10,000 per annum.
- The Trust is planning to sign up to LinkedIn's lead generation function.
- The SDNPA places a big focus on leveraging landowner relationships: green finance, Woodland Carbon and ReNature Credits for BNG etc.

4.2.4. THE LAKE DISTRICT FOUNDATION

The Lake District Foundation was established as a charity in 2017 after 23 years operating as Nurture Lakeland. It works with the National Park Authority and Cumbria Tourism to improve the Park. The foundation invests in the region through grant-giving programmes, working with businesses and community groups on environmental and cultural projects. Its Visitor Giving scheme raises money from visitors and the tourism industry to support nature conservation projects. It has changed its ways of collecting funds to now offer a variety of options to support the National Park.

How it's currently working:

- Business engagement: local businesses partner with the Foundation to implement the scheme.
- Donation mechanisms:
 - Opt-in: visitors can make voluntary donations when paying for accommodation, tickets etc.
 - Round-up: customers can round up their bills, with the difference going to the Foundation.
 - Point-of-sale donations: businesses encourage small fixed-amounts at checkout points.
- Sponsor equipment or items: visitors can choose an item to sponsor such as a gate, fingerpost or bridge. Sponsors can add a personalised plaque, ranging from £250 to over £1,000.
- Sponsor a Park Ranger: to help fund the work of the Park Rangers, starting at £15.
- Sponsor an Apprentice: to help fund training and equipment, starting at £10.
- Use of funds: the funds collected support projects such as wildlife preservation, habitat restoration, footpath repairs and community-driven initiatives.
- Awareness and transparency: the scheme promotes awareness of the environmental challenges faced and ensures transparency by reporting on the projects funded and their outcomes.

Benefits of the scheme:

- The steady stream of income provides a sustainable funding source to complement grants.
- Funds raised support crucial projects whilst mitigating the impacts of tourism.
- Visitors are educated about the environmental challenges faced by the Lake District, inspiring them to take an active role in its preservation.
- Local business participation generates a sense of shared responsibility for the Park's conservation.
- It promotes sustainable tourism by directly addressing the environmental impacts of increased visitor numbers, helping to maintain the Lake District's appeal as a world-class destination.
- It also enhances the Lake District's reputation as a destination committed to environmental sustainability, attracting 'eco-conscious' tourists and businesses.
- Through its collaborative efforts, it has strengthened relationships between the Foundation and other stakeholders, creating a unified approach to tackling local challenges.

In summary, the Foundation has invested over £2.8 million into the region, helped reduce carbon emissions by over 1,100 tons, supported initiatives such as repairing pathways on Scafell Pike and planted more than 30,000 trees, proving to be a successful initiative delivering benefits to the landscape, local businesses and visitors. It supports the Foundation's mission of ensuring the Lake District remains a vibrant, sustainable and thriving destination, balancing tourism growth with conservation priorities and maintaining its appeal as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

4.3. FEEDBACK ON VISITOR GIVING FROM BLEAN BASED BUSINESSES

A selection of Blean-based businesses were contacted to gain their views on participating in a Visitor Giving scheme, all of which were consulted in the previous review (2023).

4.3.1. BLEAN BEES – TILLY BAYES

Tilly is open to the idea and sees how it could potentially raise substantial sums. She feels that if tourism businesses make use of the Blean, they should contribute towards it. Tilly also feels that the scheme must be very clear about what the money raised is going to fund, i.e. it should be ring fenced and used for Blean focused projects only.

Tilly would feel comfortable asking her guests for a donation, but is unsure of how, or when, during the booking process to add the function. She asked if it would be possible to donate to KWT directly or perhaps through a QR code. Many of her bookings come through Airbnb which does not provide a function on its platform enabling hosts to add a direct, voluntary donation.

Over the course of the past year, Tilly had approx. 400 bookings. Asking for £2 per booking and with a 50% take up, would generate around £200.

4.3.2. AUGUSTINE CAMINO – ANDREW KELLY

Andrew likes the idea of Visitor Giving and would be willing to participate but, as his main fund raising focus is for the churches along the route, he would not be able to raise money for KWT.

4.3.3. BRIGHT SKY GLAMPING – TONY

Tony was not so open to the idea for two reasons. First, he would not know how to administer the scheme on his booking platforms, and second, he feels that businesses already pay substantially to CCC and KCC through business and council taxes, and even car parking in Canterbury (which he described as extortionate). The money collected, he feels, should be used to support areas such as the Blean and said that “KWT should be knocking on CCC and KCC doors”. Tony is, however, still keen to participate in the business ideas discussed as part of the 2023 review and this is discussed further in Section 7.

4.4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR KWT AND WILDER BLEAN

A visitor giving scheme would provide an opportunity for KWT to develop relationships with a far greater range and number of businesses, raising awareness of the landscapes it manages and the challenges it faces. This ultimately builds a greater sense of ownership and responsibility, especially applicable to tourism businesses which depend on the beauty, health and vibrancy of their local landscapes. This should extend to popular visitor destinations around the Blean.

The benefits to be had from implementing a visitor giving scheme can be many, as set out in the report entitled Visitor Giving Payment for Ecosystem Service Pilot 2014⁵:

- Developing positive relationships between tourism and conservation at a local level and improving residents' attitudes towards visitor impact.
- Making use of relationships with businesses and their networks to promote the work of the wider organisation and activities supported (not just the visitor giving element).
- Engendering a sense of ownership amongst many of the individual and business members who become keen to put something back into the area rather than expect a great deal out of membership of the scheme.

Whilst this report (attached as Appendix 3) was published some time ago, the points it makes are still pertinent. But as is clear from the three Blean businesses consulted, a far broader consultation to determine the potential take up level would be needed.

⁵ Visitor Giving Payment for Ecosystem Service Pilot, Final Report February 2014, prepared for DEFRA

The Blean is a much smaller area than any of those operating elsewhere in the UK and, bearing in mind that its local businesses are generally small or micro, with many not operating all year round, establishing a visitor giving scheme to support the project area would require extending to Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay or even East Kent. This would take advantage of a far greater number of larger tourism businesses, many of which have a vested interest in the Blean as a destination.

However, as previously highlighted, a county wide nature payback scheme is a key initiative of the Kent STAP and a visitor giving scheme for the Blean should form part of that discussion. The Blean could be trialled as a test project with a view to rolling it out across Kent to support project work in other reserves. The KWT should continue to work closely with Visit Kent – the lead on this initiative – as they can undertake the business engagement that the KWT does not have the capacity to deliver.

Finally, loyalty should be rewarded. The Cornwall Wildlife Trust provides a useful example of how support can be given to member businesses through its guides and consultancy advice. This could be replicated in the Blean and indeed across Kent. This was a key recommendation in the 2023 review and is further discussed in section 8.



Wilder Blean Festival © Tom Cawdron Photography

5) Rewarding visitors for sustainable choices

Rewarding visitors for making sustainable choices is gaining traction and fits well within a regenerative tourism model. One such example is CopenPay in Copenhagen which was launched in the summer of 2024 and immediately became a widely reported tourism story.

Following is an evaluation of the scheme and an overview of how it could work in the Canterbury district. Considering it from a Blean perspective was not felt appropriate as it is too small an area and does not have sufficient numbers of tourism businesses to engage with.

5.1. COPENPAY

Launched by Visit Copenhagen, CopenPay is a rewards programme designed to encourage tourists and residents to engage in sustainable behaviours. The programme, which ran as a pilot from 15th July to 11th August 2024, aimed to transform green behaviour into currency for cultural experiences, whilst promoting environmentally responsible tourism practices.

It was developed by Wonderful Copenhagen based on the findings of a 2023 sustainability report by Kantar, which found a significant gap between people’s desire to act sustainably and their actual behaviour. Whilst 82% said they wanted to adopt more sustainable practices, only 22% indicated that they had made any concrete changes to their habits.

CopenPay aims to bridge this gap by rewarding tourists who make environmentally friendly choices during their stay.

5.1.1. HOW COPENPAY WORKS:

Eco-friendly actions	Visitors participate in activities such as cycling instead of driving, using public transport, participating in canal and park clean-ups or volunteering at urban gardens.
Earning rewards	By doing so they earn rewards ranging from free meals to complimentary access to cultural attractions and guided tours. For example, arriving at certain museums by bike or public transport could earn a free cup of coffee or discounted entry.
Trust-based system	The pilot ran on a trust-based model, reflecting Danish values and fostering a sense of mutual trust and responsibility. Participants self-report to claim their rewards – presenting proof through, e.g., a bicycle rental receipt, public transport ticket, or photos of themselves cycling or participating in litter picking.
Participating attractions	Over 20 attractions participated in the pilot, including museums, cafes and recreational facilities. Each offered a specific reward for designated sustainable actions such as free or discounted meals, guided museum tours, wine tastings and kayak rentals. The majority of rewards were offered by city-run attractions.
Purpose and impact	The primary goal of CopenPay is to bridge the gap between tourists' willingness to act sustainably and their actual behaviours. By encouraging and rewarding green choices, Copenhagen aims to reduce the environmental impact of tourism and inspire a more conscious, sustainable mindset among visitors.

Further information can be found on Visit Copenhagen’s website⁶.

⁶ <https://www.visitcopenhagen.com/copenpay>

It is important to note that CopenPay was not designed to increase tourism or revenue. Rather, the focus is on how visitors behave whilst in the destination. The city's ambition is to shift the narrative of tourism from being an environmental burden to being a catalyst for positive change. As such, marketing is conducted 'in-destination'.

The pilot is currently under evaluation to assess its effectiveness and potential for future implementation. However it is already known that it resulted in a 21% increase in the use of sustainable transport and 1124 tons of waste was collected by visitors.

Whilst Wonderful Copenhagen believes it could, in the future, serve as a model for other cities seeking to promote sustainable tourism through community engagement, it has already done so with similar schemes operating in destinations as far flung as Hawaii and Palau.

5.1.2. HOW IT COULD WORK IN THE CANTERBURY DISTRICT

Canterbury district could be a good candidate for the CopenPay model, with the Blean woodland complex and its neighbouring tourism businesses potentially playing a big part. It could be a promising way to manage tourism more sustainably and promote sustainable actions among visitors.

Several factors would need to be considered for successful implementation as outlined here:

Why Canterbury district is a good candidate for the CopenPay model – e.g. CanterPay	
Historical, cultural and natural attractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canterbury District is home to a wide range of landmark attractions and tourism businesses that could participate in the scheme. It also has the surrounding areas of countryside and coastal towns attracting a steady stream of visitors.
Focus on sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canterbury, and indeed Kent, has a stated commitment to sustainability in tourism. A CanterPay programme could align with local government goals to reduce carbon footprints and protect cultural heritage.
Existing tourism infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canterbury's well-developed tourism infrastructure, including public transport, cycling and walking paths, can support sustainable activities. However last mile can be a barrier.
How it could work	
Through sustainable action, work with:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southeastern Railways and Stagecoach to encourage visitors to use public transport. Local bike hire operators to promote cycling Walking tours in the city and surrounding areas. Local environmental community groups to organise litter collections in the Blean and on the beaches. KWT and Blean-based partners to offer volunteering opportunities. Local farms, gardens, the Riverside Group and KSCP to offer volunteering opportunities and reward experiences.
Rewards system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discounted entry to attractions in an around the city. Vouchers for local eateries and markets. Discounts on guided tours or cultural events.
A trust based model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement self-reporting for actions supported by an app or QR-code system. Local businesses verify sustainable behaviours through e.g. bike parking stamps or a passport.

Challenges to consider	
Engagement and adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that both tourists and local businesses see value in the initiative. • Educating tourists about the programme and its benefits.
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess whether current public transport and cycling paths are sufficient to support increased use. • Address any gaps in eco-tourism offerings.
Funding and resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding sources, such as local councils, tourism boards, or private sponsorships. • Establish partnerships with local businesses to offer rewards.
Community buy-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with residents and businesses to avoid concerns about overcrowding or resource strain.

Whilst the Copenhagen model does not aim to increase visitor numbers, as the scheme becomes well known it could in time have that effect. From a Canterbury perspective, it could potentially disperse visitors across the district, alleviating some of the strain from the major landmarks to smaller or lesser known attractions. It would also likely attract more sustainably-minded visitors.

There would be a number of steps to implementing the scheme:

Implementation	
Identify lead	I.e. Visit Kent LVEP or Canterbury BID
Feasibility study	Assess interest and infrastructure readiness.
Stakeholder engagement	Collaborate with stakeholders including: City Council, Canterbury BID, Blean partners (Wildwood Trust, RSPB, Woodland Trust, KSCP), Canterbury and district businesses, transport providers and environmental and community groups.
Pilot	The scheme could be piloted in a specific area or during a key event, such as the Canterbury Festival, or with the Universities during Freshers Week.
Monitor and evaluate	Gather feedback and refine the programme before a full rollout.

5.1.3. IN CONCLUSION

Implementing an initiative based on the CopenPay model to the Canterbury district (for the purposes of this exercise, henceforth referred to as CanterPay) could have a number of positive impacts:

- Enhance the district's reputation as a leader in sustainable tourism.
- Enhance awareness of Canterbury's rural areas, including the Blean woodland complex.
- Disperse visitors across the district.
- Reduce environmental impact on Canterbury's cultural and natural heritage.
- Strengthen collaboration between Canterbury stakeholders.

Whilst not intended as an income generator, by encouraging a greater dispersal of visitors, some of the lesser visited attractions could potentially reap greater financial benefits.

KWT's expertise in conservation and landscape nature recovery, and its reserves and volunteering opportunities, make it an invaluable partner for a CanterPay initiative. KWT's involvement could ensure that the programme is not only environmentally effective but also community-oriented and sustainable in the long term.

5.2. EXAMPLES FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

Initiatives rewarding visitors for sustainable behaviour can be found in other parts of the world, such as:

- **Italy:** Trenitalia Frecciarossa, Italy's main train service, rewards passengers for choosing train travel over cars or planes by offering points for every sustainable trip which can be redeemed for future travel or discounts at partner hotels and attractions.
- **Singapore:** as part of its Singapore Green Plan 2030, Singapore is developing a reward system for tourists who use green transport options and hotels. Rewards may include free or discounted entry to attractions and offers for sustainable shopping.
- **Australia:** the Sustainable Destinations and Rewards Program rewards visitors who choose sustainable travel options with points or discounts when using public transport, staying in certified accommodations, or engaging in local conservation projects.

Reward schemes are also incorporated into a number of green certification schemes, such as:

- **UK:** the Green Tourism certification scheme rewards tourists who book certified accommodations with "Green Points" or discounts that can be used during their stay.
- **Finland:** the Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) Certification Program rewards tourism businesses for adopting sustainable practices. Tourists who visit STF-certified businesses earn rewards such as discounts on eco-activities, vouchers for sustainable products and access to exclusive green events.
- **Austria:** Green Hotels Austria rewards travellers who use bikes, public transport and book certified hotels with eco-points which can be redeemed for discounts at restaurants, local activities and next hotel bookings.

Green accreditation is discussed further in section 8.

5.3. DEVELOPING A KWT AWARDS SCHEME

Building on the Wilder Kent Awards, KWT could create an awards programme for tourism businesses, recognising their nature recovery achievements. As discussed in the 2023 review, this would require KWT resource but could start small with a pilot in the Blean with an eventual roll out across Kent. It could be focused on environmental actions, or could encompass community and social actions too. It could be run alongside a green certification scheme.

Businesses would appreciate the recognition and the promotional benefits such an award would bring. It would give them proof of their commitment which they can display on all their marketing materials and produce, thus further promoting KWT.

Such schemes generally charge a joining fee as well as an ongoing membership fee and there is no reason why the KWT shouldn't do the same. Alternatively, it could be done in the form of a donation. In either case, it could bring an extra revenue stream to KWT.



Wilder Kent Awards Gold Winners ©KWT

6) Collaborating with the Canterbury BID

The Canterbury BID was approached for their view on the introduction of a tourist tax. Lisa Carlson, the BID's Chief Executive, advised that they are "currently looking at options for Canterbury" and has offered to keep KWT updated on their plans. The BID would be considering options for the Visit Canterbury area, which is the Canterbury district, and would therefore include the rural areas and tourism. Lisa advised that it is still very early days, and consultation will be required. They are also waiting to see what happens with the devolution timetable.

Whilst a tax would take many years to implement, there are other potential opportunities to engage with and tap into the support provided by the Canterbury BID.

6.1. WORK OF THE CANTERBURY BID

The BID is a non-profit organisation funded by businesses in the City which pay a levy of 1.8% of their rateable value to support the BID's work. The money is ring-fenced and can only be spent on initiatives agreed to in the BID's business plan. Their primary focus is on improving the trading environment, promoting the city as a destination and enhancing the visitor experience. Tourism projects that align with these objectives can, potentially, receive funding or other forms of support.

As well as funding events, festivals, the City's decorations and providing free business support, the BID works with Visit Kent and Canterbury City Council (CCC) to promote the City and manages the day-to-day running of the Visit Canterbury website. The BID also partnered with Visit Kent to develop a Destination Management Plan to position Canterbury as a cultural heritage destination.

As the Canterbury BID's primary focus is on the City, funding typically focuses on projects that benefit businesses within the BID area. If the BID considers the Wilder Blean project too far removed from their core area – i.e. if it is too focused on the reserve itself and not on the broader visitor experience across the City – it may not be eligible for BID funding.

However, the recent publication of a new guide to the wildlife of the river – "Canterbury's Wild Stour" – is one example of the support it may be able to provide to its natural areas. Funded by the BID, this leaflet was produced by the KSCP and is available at the Visitor Information Centre in The Beaney (see Appendix 4).

6.2. ENGAGING WITH THE CANTERBURY BID

A first step to gaining support for the Blean from the BID is to explore any available collaborative initiatives or funding opportunities. KWT could consider preparing a proposal as an 'open call' for funding. It is also recommended that KWT attends the BID's businesses and stakeholder events held to discuss projects or opportunities.

Collaboration with businesses in the City is strongly recommended. Given that the BID is focused on supporting City-based businesses, it's beneficial for KWT to engage with those that have a vested interest in supporting tourism to the Blean. A partnership that brings benefits to both the Blean and local accommodations, eateries, shops and other businesses (such as the Canterbury Brewers & Distillers), could strengthen KWT's case for funding or support from the BID.

A number of potential initiatives could be pitched to the BID and it is worth referring to the 2019 study and 2023 review. As was highlighted, the Blean Woods complex has little presence in the online market place and no presence as a destination in its own right. Coverage of the Blean on the DMO websites is still limited. The Safari experience, Crab & Winkle Way and various Blean businesses are listed, whilst the individual woodlands, reserves and walks feature on ExploreKent.org. Overall, information on the Blean as a destination is sparse, and usually limited to West Blean and Thornden Woods.

Rectifying this would be a first step to working with the BID. Another could be to gain support and funding for a reprint of the Big Blean Walk.

6.3. EXAMPLE PROJECT TO PROPOSE TO THE CANTERBURY BID

An update and reprint of the Big Blean Walk, produced by the KSCP, is recommended in the previous studies and provides an example of how KWT and partners (i.e. the KSCP) could gain support from the Canterbury BID. If it is pitched to align with the BIDs goals of promoting tourism, supporting local businesses and enhancing the visitor experience in Canterbury, it may be possible to source funding.

Reasons why the BID might fund an update and reprint of the Big Blean Walk:

- **Promoting tourism and the Blean:** the Walk is a useful tool to promote the Blean as a destination, helping to draw visitors to Canterbury into the natural environment. If it helps visitors discover local businesses in Canterbury, it could increase footfall and revenue.
- **Supporting local businesses:** if the reprint can be designed to drive visitors to local businesses, the BID may see it as a mutually beneficial project and may be more inclined to fund or co-fund it. Businesses could be encouraged to sponsor specific sections of the walk and the BID could use its influence to secure this support and additional funding.
- **Partnership and collaboration:** if the Walk is framed as a collaborative effort that supports not only KWT and KSCP but also local businesses and the broader community, the BID may be more willing to fund it and help facilitate partnerships with other stakeholders.
- **Enhancing the visitor experience:** the BID is focused on increasing foot traffic and therefore promoting local attractions, including natural areas, can enhance the visitor experience.
- **Marketing:** a well-designed and marketed guide could also serve as a promotional tool for Canterbury. If a physical reprint is not enough to justify funding on its own, the BID may be interested in supporting digital versions that include maps and points of interest, helping to expand its reach and make it more widely accessible.
- **Sustainable tourism:** the BID supports initiatives that focus on sustainable tourism. The Blean is a key natural asset for the City and supporting such an initiative would align with the BID's broader vision to enhance Canterbury's appeal as a sustainable destination.
- **Collaboration and branding:** by supporting a reprint, the BID could align itself with KWT in promoting sustainable tourism, making it a shared project. Opportunities to feature the BID's logo on promotional materials would make the project more appealing as it ties into their community engagement and local branding efforts.

7) Developing business partnerships

The 2023 review outlined a number of opportunities to develop experiences and promotional activities in partnership with local businesses that could generate an income for KWT. These were selected due to the fact that they do not require much resource to develop and implement, and could be pretty much ready to go. The onus is on KWT to take advantage of these opportunities, the first of which is to partner with the Canterbury Brewers & Distillers (CB&D) on the creation of a Wilder Blean inspired gin.

7.1. CANTERBURY BREWERS & DISTILLERS AT THE FOUNDRY

Foremost amongst these opportunities is partnering with John and Jodie Mills of the CB&D, to produce spirits and beers inspired by the Blean. A meeting was held to discuss the idea further and both confirmed they are still keen to work with the KWT.

A detailed description of their activities and history was provided in the 2023 review so is not repeated here other than to highlight that Jon and Jodie place a great focus on championing all that is Canterbury, forging local partnerships and keeping their product range very local. With a strong sustainability ethos, they would be a good fit as a business partner.

7.1.1. WHAT THEY COULD DO WITH KWT:

- Jon is interested in partnering the KWT to produce a Wilder Blean branded beer and/or spirits. In the longer term, a range of products, each featuring an 'eco-system' engineer on its label, could be produced (and a special put on tap) but for now, the plan would be to commence with a gin with a clear link to the Blean – i.e. flavoured with botanicals found in the woodland complex.
- Jon would work with the KWT to identify the herbs growing in the area but would source them commercially (as he does for the Cathedral gin) as he needs a guaranteed supply that is not affected by seasonality, to ensure consistency of product and to obtain larger quantities than could possibly be foraged.
- A yeast could quite easily be captured in the Blean and the KWT may wish to consider a partnership with one of the universities on this.

7.1.2. BRAND DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

This requires more in-depth discussion between CB&D and KWT, but the key points to come out of the latest meeting are:

- This would be a one off brand requiring a bespoke design.
- The CB&D could commission the design of the brand (with KWT's input) or KWT could design it in-house. The branding would need to carry the CB&D logo.
- If CB&D creates the brand design (as they did for the Cathedral), this would incur a one-off fee to cover the design work by the artist and Jon's time.
- A straight forward design would cost approx. £500. If including embossed elements, raised words and metallic material for a more premium product, the cost would be around £700.
- If KWT decide to design in-house, Jon would provide the bottle specifications.
- If producing a range of products, more designs will be needed. Jodie recommends starting with the one spirit, see how sales go, then consider launching a range of different products and, in due course, merchandise such as glasses.

NB: if incorporating an image of a bison on the label, both KWT and CB&D need to be mindful of the Żubrówka vodka, which carries an image of a bison and is described as having been "for centuries intrinsically connected with the bison grass growing" in Poland's Białowieża forest. The potential for trademark infringement should be considered and advice sought.

7.1.3. PROMOTING AND MARKETING A BLEAN INSPIRED GIN

- CB&D recommend producing the gin as a small batch, keeping it as an exclusive product.
- In promoting the gin, Jon would tell the story about the Blean, its history, the wilding initiative and why it's important to the woodland.
- CB&D would conduct marketing, sales promotions and PR, but KWT would also need to drive publicity. Jon advised that "if their partners don't put work into it, it's not going to work".
- A launch event was suggested with press invited.

NB: from past experience the CB&D has found that if a big level of publicity is created, this can create an enormous spike in sales, so they will need to be prepared and have sufficient quantities in stock. Sales tend to drop off soon after but uplift can be expected at Christmas and, for example, Mothering Sunday, so it requires a careful balance.

7.1.4. PRICING

- Jon would sell the gin to KWT on the same basis that he does to the Cathedral. The current sale price is £20.50 plus VAT for a 50cl bottle.
- As a craft gin, Jon would sell it at £33 (making £6.50 a bottle).
- Jon suggested adding a £2 donation to KWT on anything he sells, thereby generating additional income for the Trust which could be ring-fenced for the Wilder Blean. (Note that £5 from every bottle sale of their Gamecock dark rum goes to the Whitstable Maritime Charity to support their restoration project.)
- If KWT also wishes to sell the gin, it could decide its own price. The Cathedral gin is currently priced at £35 per bottle.

7.1.5. SALES

- Jon advised that quantities sold would be largely driven by KWT. It could be sold solely by KWT in its own shops and online, or the CB&D could also handle sales through their online shop, at the Foundry and at various events and festivals throughout the year.
- Lessons can be learnt from the Canterbury Cathedral experience. Their gin was designed as an exclusive product to be sold only by the Cathedral, but as they are not shifting stock the CB&D started selling it, with the Cathedral's permission. A visit to the Cathedral shop confirmed why only small amounts are sold, with one bottle only displayed on a high shelf behind the till.

NB: Jon does not think this will be a "massive money making exercise" but it would be a tremendous PR exercise. If KWT wishes to pursue this idea, contact with Jon should be made as a priority.

7.2. A KENT BIG FIVE: OPPORTUNITIES FOR A MULTI-DAY KENT SAFARI

The 2019 study recommended a safari experience in the Blean, an idea which KWT subsequently developed and still delivers today as the Wilder Kent Safari: Bison Ranger Experiences. Walking with Cows at Heather Corrie Vale has since been introduced. Here we look at building on these experiences to develop a multi-day safari to find Kent's Big Five, in collaboration with local businesses and tour operators.

7.2.1. DEVELOPING A KENT BIG FIVE

A Big Five is an effective way of highlighting a destination's wildlife and encouraging people to think about an area as having wild places, especially urbanised areas. As described in the 2019 study, the IUCN and Rewilding Europe declared the wolf, lynx, brown bear, wolverine and bison as Europe's Big Five. The following individual countries have since nominated their own:

- The Netherlands: roe deer, red deer, wild boar, seal and beaver, chosen by the Dutch government ministry for forestry and management of nature reserves.

- Spain: Iberian lynx, Iberian wolf, Eurasian brown bear, Spanish imperial eagle, bearded vulture – all iconic and difficult-to-see animals that live in inland areas.
- Poland: wolf, lynx, European bison, elk and beaver.

Big Five examples in other parts of the world include:

- **South America:** giant otter, maned wolf, jaguar, tapir and giant anteater. Regions within the continent have identified their own, such as:
 - Patagonia: puma, Andean condor, huemul (a south Andean deer), guanaco (a camelid) and ñandú (lesser rhea) in Chile's Torres del Paine National Park.
 - Brazil's Caiman Ecological Reserve in the Pantanal: jaguar, tapir, capybara, marsh deer and giant anteater. The reserve is rich in bird and wildlife and its accommodation, the Casa Caiman, has modelled itself on the African safari experience.
- **Borneo:** Pygmy elephant, orangutan, Proboscis monkey, crocodiles and Rhinoceros hornbill.

The European Big Five were chosen through a Belgian TV programme and a process of ranking animals based on a number of criteria: appearance, behaviour, rareness and the emotions they trigger. A team of wildlife experts helped determine the final selection from an original longlist of 15 candidates. The whole exercise generated a good level of publicity which could be replicated here.

KWT is best placed to lead on identifying a Kent Big Five, working with Visit Kent to lead on press and publicity. The selected animals need to be iconic in the county and possible to see in the wild/semi-wild, such as the bison, grey or common seal, beaver and red chough. The preliminary list could, perhaps, also feature the red kite, heath fritillary, hazel dormouse, nightjar or nightingale. Choosing and ranking the wildlife could be undertaken with the local community through, for example, a competition involving KWT members, schools and Kent residents. Whichever way the KWT proceeds, the publicity generated could be great for the Trust, the county and its wildlife.

Note, the Cornwall Wildlife Trust is also considering creating a Big Five.

7.2.2. SCALING UP THE SAFARI EXPERIENCE

Having established a Big Five for Kent, the KWT safari could be scaled up to a multi-day experience including other reserves and areas where the species can potentially be seen. Encouraging visitors to spend longer in the area to experience more of its wild areas has added benefits for accommodation providers, eateries, local producers, guides and activity providers.

The experience could be packaged as a two or three day adventure including reserves such as Pegwell Bay, Ham Fen, parts of the River Stour and the White Cliffs as well as the Blean. KWT is best placed to decide which reserves it features, but it should be kept flexible so that the experience can be adapted to the seasons, sensitivities of the reserves (impacts will need to be monitored) and the likelihood of wildlife sightings.

In developing an extended experience, there are a number of considerations, not least the need to work with an established tour operator:

- A tour operator has the necessary expertise and resource to handle the logistical complexity and to package and distribute the experience, as well as the market reach to target higher value audiences such as corporate groups, tailor made and bespoke bookings.
- The experience would be subject to the Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018 (PTRs). This was covered in the 2019 study and a full explanation is provided on Appendix 5, but to recap as per current Visit Britain guidance⁷:
 - If you offer, or allow customers to buy at least two of the following elements: transport, accommodation, vehicle hire and other significant visitor service, then you are probably subject to the PTRs.

⁷ Visit Britain: <https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/pink-book/holiday-packages>

- PTRs cover circumstances where you sell different elements yourself, work with another business to sell different elements, or provide the customer with a targeted offer to purchase an element from another business.
- PTRs include requirements relating to how products are marketed, booked and delivered.

The PTRs are currently under review so could change but, irrespective of this, tour operators have the necessary insurances and financial regulations in place to meet the requirements, which KWT does not.

- KWT needs to consider the partners to work with on delivery of the experience, i.e. local guides and experts.
- Visit Kent has established contact with appropriate tour operators, which should have a commitment to sustainability at the heart of their business.
- Alanna Kite at Visit Kent has been approached to discuss the idea and she in turn can pitch it to DMCs and ground handlers.
- Partnering with local glamping and accommodation providers with the right sustainability credentials is essential. A number of contacts have been established during the previous work (e.g. Nethergong, Bright Sky and Blean Bees).
- Income generation for KWT: pricing of the experience should build in KWT costs for services delivered as part of the package, and a donation per booking.

7.3. ADDITIONAL INCOME GENERATORS

A number of other potential income generating ideas were pitched in the 2023 review, all based on experience development, which could still be pursued:

7.3.1. CANTERBURY RINGS: WORKING WITH DAVID LECKIE, CHAIR OF THE CANTERBURY RAMBLERS

KWT could approach David to discuss and support developing a series of paid for, led walks in the Blean as part of the Canterbury Walking Week which has been incorporated into the Canterbury Festival. The walks could be based on David's Canterbury Rings – four walks he created, three of which pass through parts of the Blean. He also leads history walks in the City and woodlands, again which could be developed further and charged for.

7.3.2. WILDLIFE STAKEOUT PHOTOGRAPHY DAY: WITH TANIA HOSER, IMAGES OF CANTERBURY

Tania is a cinematographer, author, teacher and stills photographer, and gives guest lectures. She was on the BAFTA Photography Factual panel judging wildlife cinematography. Through her Images of Canterbury business she delivers macro wildlife and birdlife photography workshops at Stodmarsh and one-to-one photography training.

The discussion in 2023 largely focused on her idea of putting together a Wildlife Stakeout Experience in the Blean woodland complex, which could involve the use of temporary or pop up hides, as well as running joint macro-wildlife photography events. Both ideas need further exploration. In terms of income generation for the KWT: pricing of the experience should build in KWT costs for services delivered as part of the experience, and a donation.

Tania has not been contacted this time around as she spends the winter months overseas, but KWT could initiate discussions with Tania in the spring. If the idea progresses, she would require information on woodlands, wildlife and logistics.

7.3.3. PICNIC IN THE BLEAN: WITH NETHERGONG – HANNAH JENKINS

In previous discussions with Nethergong, Hannah was open to ideas and expressed a keenness to work with KWT. Nethergong can host day camps and retreats, weekend retreats with a focus on exploring nature, walking groups, or set up a temporary campsite in the Blean.

One idea put forward was for a Picnic in the Blean, with food and entertainment around nature discovery, which could raise money for the wilding project through donations. KWT's costs or any services delivered as part of the experience should also be incorporated. KWT is recommended to make contact in 2025 to progress this and the Big Five safari idea further.

7.3.4. STARGAZING: WITH BRIGHT SKY GLAMPING – TONY AND KERRY

In spite of the lack of enthusiasm for a visitor giving scheme, Tony would be happy to discuss a joint stargazing event and would be open to discussing the Big Five Safari idea with a view to hosting in their holiday cottage.

Due to the poor weather in the summer of 2023, they did not run the glamping side of their business in 2024 and, whilst it hasn't been ruled out for 2025, they are looking for other ideas to develop. They have not yet built their star gazing platform but may proceed in 2025.

There is no light pollution along Denstroude Lane, so star gazing opportunities are good. They would be happy to partner with KWT on other activities such as small walking groups, yoga trails, pop up cookery events. Again, a donation could be built in as well as KWT's costs for delivery of any elements of the experience.

KWT should contact Tony to discuss further.

7.3.5. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES: AT THE BARN CAMPING, NEIL'S PLACE FARM – JACK BOGGIA

In 2023 Jack was very keen to develop a series of events with KWT. It would be worth pursuing a discussion as he had plans to open up his farm to schools and young people, for educational events involving showing his livestock (e.g. hatching chicks), as well as nature and wildlife activities.

The farm could also potentially be encouraged to partner in a CanterPay scheme.

In conclusion

The CB&D gin-making initiative and the Kent Big Five Safari Experience represent opportunities for KWT to enhance its offerings whilst supporting its conservation objectives.

Partnering with CB&D to create a Wilder Blean-branded gin not only aligns with KWT's values but also provides a unique product with strong local ties and potential for significant PR and income generation. Similarly, the development of a Kent Big Five safari experience could capitalise on the region's natural heritage, drawing visitors to discover iconic wildlife species whilst supporting local business partnerships and the KWT through donations and KWT's costs for delivery built into the package.

Both ventures are creative, resource-efficient due to working in partnership, and hold the potential to raise KWT's profile, generate income, and further engage the public in protecting Kent's wild places.

8) Business support

Developing and delivering a programme of support for Blean based tourism businesses provides an opportunity for KWT to educate tourism and other landowning businesses in nature recovery, rewilding and conservation whilst engaging with a greater range of key players in the area.

Many of the ideas put forward here were discussed in the previous studies, with the 2023 review outlining specific activities that could be implemented requiring only a limited resource. As this exercise is focused on identifying sustainable funding mechanisms to finance long-term nature recovery across the Blean, the focus is kept on activities that can generate an income or form part of a wider income generating package.

Here we take another look at some of those proposed options which could form part of a business membership scheme for Kent.

8.1. A CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMME FOR THE LOCAL TOURISM SECTOR

KWT could create a membership programme specifically for the tourism sector, which could form part of KWT's Wilder Business programme, sitting within the broader programme of Corporate Support. A tourism specific programme could be piloted in the Blean before rolling out county wide and could include a package of support that enables KWT to draw on the expertise of other partners to help deliver where resources are short, e.g. Visit Kent, Wildwood Trust, KSCP and RSPB.

The 2023 review suggested supporting development of a Blean based tourism networking group. Whilst not an income generator, it would form the basis of KWT's engagement efforts and be a key communications channel. In due course it could form the basis of a county wide tourism business membership network.

The CWT case study (covered in section 4) demonstrates how an effective programme can engage the tourism industry in nature recovery whilst generating an income for the Trust. Support is provided as part of their Wilder Business network, 60% of which are hospitality businesses. Membership levels offer differing levels of support, some of which, interestingly, mirror that proposed in the 2023 review (recapped below).

KWT could establish a tourism specific membership scheme on a similar basis, i.e. with different tiers each offering different levels of support, but with support tailored specifically to the tourism sector, for example:

Bronze level:

- Networking opportunities and invitations to corporate events.
- Listing on a KWT Business Supporter directory and in the Wilder Kent magazine.
- A supply of multiple copies of Wilder Kent magazine to make available to visitors.
- Personalised certificate for the business to display.
- Discounts on KWT goods.

Silver Members could also receive, in addition to the above:

- Sector specific nature recovery factsheets (see 8.2.2.).
- Familiarisation visits to KWT reserves.
- Environmental business support.

Gold Members could also receive, in addition to the above:

- Consultancy visit to undertake an ecological survey and provide tailored nature recovery advice.
- A certificate presented in person with dedicated social media post and a feature in the KWT Wilder Kent magazine.

Pricing in due course could be based on KWT's existing Corporate Membership Packages, i.e. Bronze £150, Silver £450 and Gold £1000. A potential risk is a low uptake with businesses not seeing an immediate value in membership. This could be mitigated through the offer of introductory discounts and highlighting the tangible benefits.

8.2. AN INFORMATION SOURCE FOR LOCAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

The provision of the following information sources were proposed in the 2023 review:

8.2.1. WILDER BLEAN PROJECT INFORMATION

Feedback gained from tourism businesses indicated a clear need for information describing the Wilder Blean initiative for inclusion in their welcome folders. It should include information on how to get there and what they can do and see. Tailored specifically to visitors to the Blean, this would be a quick win in engaging tourism businesses, and could also be replicated elsewhere.

8.2.2. WILDLIFE AND NATURE RECOVERY FACT SHEETS

All tourism businesses are landowners, whether they have an estate, farm or garden. Some of those consulted in 2023 asked for quite specific advice on topics such as pond creation or planting native trees, shrubs and hedges. Such information could be provided in a series of factsheets tailored towards different categories of business, such as camp sites, serviced accommodation and pubs, each covering topics such as nature recovery in your gardens, pond creation and management, supporting the Blean's birds, butterflies, moths and more. This would help businesses put nature recovery at the heart of their operations and make their experiences more sustainable.

8.3. A CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR KENT

Recognising and rewarding environmental efforts and supporting sustainable business practice could result in a deeper, more long lasting engagement through demonstrating tangible actions around nature recovery and improving landscapes for wildlife.

The 2023 study proposed two options for pursuing 'green certification' in the Blean: one would be to partner with an existing certification scheme, whilst the other would be to develop its own scheme. Work is taking place at a national-level to review accreditation schemes to build consumer trust and recognition. As a partner of the Kent STAP leading on environmental, conservation and nature recovery work, KWT should ensure it plays a key part in these conversations and how this is applied in Kent.

There are a myriad of certification schemes operating worldwide at a business, industry sector and destination level. It is important to only consider those that meet the GSTC criteria and are independently certified. Self-certified schemes do not have the same level of respect or recognition.

Those operating in the UK include:

- **Green Tourism:** awarding all categories of tourism business and destinations gold, silver or bronze according to actions successfully undertaken across a range of environmental and social indicators. Members pay a joining fee and ongoing membership fee. The largest and longest running scheme in the UK, it was first launched in Kent in 2004 by the Kent Downs AONB. During the 2000's it had between 14-25 members. Today there are just 15 members in Kent, none of which are in the Blean or Canterbury area and just one of the original members (Palace Farm Hostel, Doddington) remains. It is understood, anecdotally, that the cost is the main drawback.
- **B Corp by B Lab:** measures companies' holistic social and environmental performance. There are a number of B Corp businesses in Kent, but none yet are tourism related except for Audley Travel, an international tour operator. B Corp is growing and is one to look out for.

- **Green Destinations:** an assessment and reporting system to evaluate, monitor and improve the quality and sustainability of destinations. Acorn Tourism Consulting is a Green Destinations representative. No UK destinations appear on their map although it is understood that Plymouth has achieved Green Destination status.
- **Global Destination Sustainability (GDS Movement):** a DMO led destination focused scheme mainly in city regions, providing tools, resources, and certifications to help destinations worldwide measure, improve and communicate their sustainability efforts. Glasgow and Belfast currently feature in their top 40 list.
- **David Bellamy Blooming Marvellous Pledge for Nature:** over 350 camping and caravanning sites and holiday parks have been awarded gold, silver or bronze by the scheme which focuses 100% on wildlife conservation. Members pay a joining fee and ongoing participation fee and receive regular advisory visits by scheme advisors to check on progress. It also includes signing up to a yearly wildlife challenge, designed to create a new project to help wildlife. As it is purely environmentally focused it would not conform to the GSTC criteria.

It is recommended that, in future discussions around any certification scheme for Kent, that other standards implemented by businesses are also recognised such as ISO 14001, which has been achieved by Hampton by Hilton Canterbury. BREEAM and LEED – both measuring sustainability of buildings – are increasingly being used, including here in Kent.



Hedgehog at Tyland Barn ©KWT

9) A proposed delivery plan

9.1. FOCUSING EFFORTS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

Given the breadth of opportunities outlined in this report and the 2023 review, it is not feasible for KWT to implement every idea presented. Limited resource necessitates a strategic approach that prioritises a select number of initiatives. By focusing on a few key options developed collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders within a regenerative tourism framework, KWT can ensure its efforts are impactful and sustainable.

To this end, KWT should identify the most economically promising and resource-efficient opportunities that align closely with its objectives and capacity, allowing it to channel its energy and resources into developing and delivering these projects effectively. As the selected initiatives are based on collaborative working, KWT will need to ensure that it realises the financial benefits.

By focusing efforts and building on lessons learned through monitoring and evaluation, KWT can create a strong foundation for long-term success and resilience. It is recommended that the progress and impact of the chosen initiatives be monitored and evaluated over a 3–5 year period, providing valuable insights into their effectiveness, long term sustainability and potential for scaling up or replication. This approach allows KWT to adapt its strategies based on real outcomes and ensures that efforts remain aligned with the overarching goals of nature recovery and sustainable funding for the Blean.

By structuring these initiatives across short, medium and long term timeframes, KWT can effectively manage its resources whilst working towards achieving its broader nature recovery goals.

9.2. OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The initiatives outlined in this report present significant opportunities for KWT to pursue, chosen for their strong alignment with the Trust's mission, their potential for meaningful impact and their feasibility for implementation across short, medium and long-term timeframes. Notably, whilst four of the selected initiatives are intended to generate income for the Trust, two—CanterPay and green certification—are not designed as direct revenue streams. However, their inclusion is essential as if these initiatives are rolled out in the destination by other organisations, it is imperative that KWT actively contributes to shaping their outcomes.

9.2.1. GIN-MAKING INITIATIVE WITH THE CB&D (SHORT TERM)

A partnership with the CB&D to produce a Wilder Blean-branded gin offers a low-resource, high impact opportunity. This initiative aligns well with KWT's values whilst providing an immediate avenue for income generation and public engagement. By creating a unique product inspired by the Blean, KWT can foster local partnerships and raise awareness of its work. The small-batch nature of the product also allows for exclusivity, generating interest and creating a strong PR opportunity. This project could be developed and launched relatively quickly, making it an ideal short-term priority.

9.2.2. KENT BIG FIVE SAFARI EXPERIENCE (MEDIUM TERM)

Expanding the existing safari initiatives into a multi-day Kent Big Five experience delivered by an established tour operator represents a medium-term opportunity with potential to boost regenerative tourism in the region. By identifying and promoting five iconic wildlife species, KWT can draw attention to Kent's natural heritage and encourage longer visitor stays.

This initiative would require close partnership working with Visit Kent and collaboration with local businesses to create a seamless and engaging visitor experience. Whilst more resource intensive than the gin-making initiative in the longer term, a Kent Big Five safari has the potential to generate economic and conservation benefits over time.

9.2.3. MEMBERSHIP SUPPORT PROGRAMME (LONG TERM)

Developing a corporate membership programme tailored to the tourism sector presents a long-term strategy for collaboration and generating a steady income. This initiative could be tested with a pilot in the Blean or Canterbury district before expanding Kent-wide.

By providing resources, recognition and guidance to local businesses, KWT can build a network of committed partners who actively support conservation and rewilding efforts. Although this programme requires more planning and resource, its potential to generate consistent income and strengthen relationships with local stakeholders makes it a valuable long-term investment.

9.2.4. A CANTERPAY INITIATIVE (LONG TERM)

This is not an income generating initiative, but has the potential to disperse visitors over a wider area, incentivise positive action for nature and encourage longer stays. Inspired by Copenhagen's CopenPay, a CanterPay initiative would reward visitors for making sustainable choices, thereby enhancing the district's reputation for regenerative tourism whilst reducing associated negative impacts. This long-term project would require developing strong, committed partnerships with local businesses, transport providers and community organisations.

Developing and implementing CanterPay would require a robust infrastructure for tracking and rewarding actions, supported by an app or QR-code system. Potentially co-ordinated by Visit Kent or Canterbury BID, collaboration with local stakeholders and businesses would be essential for its success. This would not be an initiative led by KWT due to insufficient capacity and the wider objectives of the scheme, but the Trust should ensure it plays an active part in its development and implementation.

9.2.5. A VISITOR GIVING SCHEME FOR KENT (LONG TERM)

Aligning closely with the Nature Payback initiative (one of the Nature Positive Actions in the Kent STAP) and delivered in partnership with Visit Kent and the Kent STAP working group, this long-term initiative would have significant potential to support the KWT's conservation objectives by providing visitors with a direct way to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the Blean. KWT should play an active role in developing a mechanism for visitors to contribute directly to KWT's nature recovery work in the Blean woodland complex.

By positioning the Blean as the pilot for the Nature Payback scheme, KWT could test and refine the Visitor Giving model before expanding it to other areas. This initiative not only provides a steady stream of funding but also strengthens relationships between KWT, local businesses and visitors, creating a shared sense of responsibility for protecting Kent's natural heritage.

9.2.6. GREEN CERTIFICATION IN KENT (LONG TERM)

A certification scheme for Kent represents another potential long-term opportunity for KWT to be involved in shaping development of sustainable tourism in Kent. As the key partner for environmental, conservation and nature recovery work, KWT should ensure it plays a central role in conversations around funding, implementation and delivery of a certification programme.

KWT could play an active role in the development and implementation of any scheme and charge for these services by:

- shaping the nature-friendly business criteria and assessments
- providing relevant advice on wildlife conservation and nature recovery to businesses in a toolkit
- providing 1:1 consultation and training for businesses
- aligning it with the Wilder Kent Awards

The KWT can help establish a framework that recognises and rewards businesses committed to sustainability, potentially piloting the scheme in the Blean. Green certification would not only elevate the reputation of the area as a sustainable tourism destination but also encourage continuous improvement amongst participating businesses.

9.3. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

KWT must recognise the need for sound financial planning and robust management strategies to ensure that the selected income-generating initiatives – the Wilder Blean Gin, Kent Big Five Safari and visitor giving scheme – effectively support nature recovery. Without careful oversight, there is a risk of these ventures being diluted by partner-driven agendas or mismanagement, leading to missed opportunities and financial shortfalls. KWT's approach must emphasise consistent monitoring and tightly controlled contracts to secure its financial interests. Each initiative requires clear agreements delineating responsibilities and revenue-sharing structures to mitigate risks and protect KWT's income streams.

Additionally, as a charitable organisation, KWT must evaluate whether the charity is the appropriate entity to retain profits or reserves from these initiatives. There may be tax implications or legal costs associated with drafting and managing contracts, which require thorough assessment. These financial considerations are crucial to ensuring that KWT's initiatives not only align with its mission but also comply with legal and regulatory standards, securing their viability and long-term benefit to nature recovery in the Blean.

Following is a series of outline delivery plans for each of the proposed initiatives.

9.4. DELIVERING SHORT TERM OPTIONS

9.4.1. A PROPOSED STEP BY STEP DELIVERY PLAN FOR THE BLEAN GIN-MAKING INITIATIVE WITH THE CB&D:

Activity	Timeframe	Activities
Initial planning and partner engagement	Months 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalise partnership with CB&D. Define project scope and product details – e.g. botanicals, design elements, pricing and distribution/sales channels. Draft a project timeline with clear milestones.
Product development	Months 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with CB&D to identify Blean-inspired botanicals. Develop branding and packaging, ensuring alignment with KWT's ethos. Address legal and regulatory requirements for production and distribution.
Pre-launch preparation	Months 6-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce the first batch of gin. Plan a launch event, inviting key stakeholders. Coordinate promotional activities: press releases, social media campaigns and via partner channels
Launch and initial sales	Month 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host the launch event to generate buzz and public interest. Begin distribution through KWT outlets and CB&D channels. Monitor initial sales and feedback.
Ongoing monitoring and evaluation	Months 9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track sales performance and customer feedback. Adjust production and marketing strategies based on insights. Report on progress and assess potential for future product expansion.
Risk assessment		
Supply chain challenges	Ensuring a consistent and sustainable supply of botanicals is critical to maintaining product quality. CB&D will manage this aspect.	
Market demand	Low consumer interest could lead to unsold stock: mitigate by conducting market research and piloting small-batch production to gauge demand	
Branding misalignment	Branding must reflect KWT's values and resonate with its target audience to avoid negative perceptions.	
Market saturation	The craft gin market is competitive; a clear, unique selling point is essential to stand out.	
Trademark conflicts	Potential challenges from similar products: mitigate by conducting a trademark review before finalising branding.	
Financial friction	Financial benefit not coming to KWT: mitigate by tight partnership agreement.	

Evaluation indicators	
Sales performance	Revenue generated within the first year and then on an annual basis.
Public engagement	Media coverage, social media reach and customer feedback.
Conservation impact	Funds allocated to the Wilder Blean conservation efforts as a result of gin sales.
Partnership success	Feedback from CB&D and other collaborators on the partnership's effectiveness.

9.5. DELIVERING MEDIUM TERM OPTIONS

9.5.1. A PROPOSED STEP BY STEP DELIVERY PLAN FOR CREATING KENT'S BIG FIVE SAFARI EXPERIENCE:

Activity	Timeframe	Activities
Promotional campaign to create Kent's Big Five	Months 1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a public engagement campaign to select the Big Five, involving Visit Kent, KWT members, schools, Kent residents. Use social media platforms, local press and online surveys to gather input and generate excitement. Collaborate with media outlets to highlight the campaign and educate the public about Kent's diverse wildlife. Host events such as wildlife talks and workshops to promote participation and raise awareness. Hold a launch event to announce Kent's chosen Big Five
Concept development and stakeholder engagement	Months 3-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Visit Kent to identify a tour operator to develop and test the concept of the safari experience. Engage local businesses to build partnerships and refine the concept of the tour. Develop a detailed project plan, including routes, logistics, and seasonal adjustments.
Resource and infrastructure preparation	Months 7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create interpretive materials, e.g. maps, wildlife guides and educational content. Train guides and staff on the safari routes and key species. Ensure necessary infrastructure, such as trails and observation points, is in place.
Pilot testing and feedback	Months 10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct pilot runs of the safari with a small group of participants, including stakeholders and potential customers. Gather feedback on the experience, logistics, and overall satisfaction. Refine the programme based on insights from the pilot.

Marketing and launch	Months 13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a targeted marketing campaign.• Promote experience through online platforms, local media, and tourism networks.• Consider commission-based OTA channels.• Launch the safari experience with a press event and introductory offers.
Implementation and monitoring	Months 16–24	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll out the full programme, continuously monitoring participant feedback and wildlife impact.• Adjust routes, schedules, and promotional strategies based on ongoing insights.• Begin planning for potential expansion to include additional reserves or species.
Risk assessment		
Wildlife reliability	Success may depend on the visibility of key species which can be affected by changes in wildlife behaviour or habitat conditions.	
Environmental impact	Increased visitor traffic could lead to habitat disturbance or degradation. Strict monitoring and management are required if people seek the species out independently.	
Financial friction	Financial benefit not coming to KWT: mitigate by tight partnership agreement	
Partnership reliance	Dependence on external businesses and stakeholders could pose challenges if priorities shift or resources are constrained.	
Evaluation indicators		
Visitor numbers	Total participants in the safari experience over the first two years.	
Economic impact	Revenue generated for KWT and partner businesses.	
Conservation benefits	Measurable contributions to wildlife protection and habitat restoration.	
Participant feedback	Customer satisfaction ratings and qualitative insights from surveys and reviews	

9.6.1. A STEP BY STEP DELIVERY PLAN FOR A TOURISM SECTOR CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMME

Activity	Timeframe	Activities
Initial concept and stakeholder engagement	Months 1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a clear value proposition for the programme, highlighting benefits for businesses and alignment with KWT goals. Identify and engage key stakeholders, including local businesses, industry groups and tourism partners. Conduct a feasibility study to assess interest, potential uptake and resource requirements.
Programme design and pilot development	Months 7-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design the membership structure, including tiers, benefits and pricing. Develop resources and materials, such as promotional content and sector specific information factsheets. Recruit a pilot group of Blean businesses to test the programme, ensuring representation across different tourism sectors.
Pilot implementation and feedback	Months 13-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch the pilot programme with selected businesses, providing full support and monitoring engagement. Gather feedback from pilot participants to refine the offering. Evaluate the pilot's success based on member satisfaction, participation rates and income generated.
Full programme rollout	Months 19-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine the programme based on pilot insights and prepare for wider implementation. Launch a targeted marketing campaign to recruit additional members. Establish ongoing support structures for members, including regular communication and events.
Sustainability and expansion	Months 25+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the programme's performance and make improvements. Explore opportunities for expansion to additional regions or sectors. Leverage the programme to build stronger partnerships and advocate for broader conservation efforts.
Risk Assessment		
Business engagement	Ensuring sufficient interest and buy-in from local businesses is critical to the programme's success.	
Resource allocation	Developing and managing the programme requires dedicated resource.	
Resource costs	Programme costs more to resource than it makes for KWT in income generation	
Retention issues	The programme must deliver tangible benefits to members to maintain participation and avoid attrition.	

Evaluation Indicators	
Membership numbers	Total businesses enrolled in the programme
Revenue generated	Financial contributions from memberships to support conservation work.
Member retention	Percentage of businesses renewing their membership year-on-year.
Conservation impact	Measurable outcomes funded through the programme, such as habitat restoration projects or species monitoring initiatives.

9.6.2. AN OUTLINE PLAN FOR DEVELOPING A CANTERPAY INITIATIVE

Activity	Timeframe	Activities
Feasibility study and concept development	Months 1-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a feasibility study to identify infrastructure requirements, key stakeholders and potential challenges. Develop the concept, including user incentives (e.g. discounts, points) and mechanisms for tracking sustainable actions. Identify partners such as Visit Kent, local councils and transportation providers. Identify potential funding sources.
Stakeholder engagement and partnership building	Months 7-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with local businesses, public transport operators and community organisations to secure buy-in and partnerships. Develop agreements outlining roles, responsibilities and benefits for participating stakeholders. Create a steering group to oversee the initiative's implementation.
Technology and infrastructure development	Months 13-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and develop the CanterPay platform, including a mobile app or web-based interface for users. Integrate tracking systems, such as QR codes or NFC technology, to log sustainable actions. Pilot the platform with a small group of users in Canterbury (e.g. during Freshers Week, Canterbury Festival) to test functionality and gather feedback.
Marketing and public awareness campaign	Months 19-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a targeted marketing campaign to introduce CanterPay to the public (Kent residents and domestic/international visitors) emphasising its benefits for users and the environment. Use social media, local media and community events to raise awareness and drive participation. Highlight success stories and testimonials from pilot users to build credibility and interest.

Full rollout and monitoring	Months 25-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand the initiative across the district, getting additional businesses and users on board.Monitor usage patterns, user satisfaction and environmental impact.Adjust incentives, technology and promotional strategies based on ongoing insights.
Evaluation and expansion	Months 37+	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conduct a comprehensive evaluation to measure the initiative’s success against key performance indicators.Explore opportunities to expand CanterPay to other areas in Kent.Leverage insights and data to secure additional funding and partnerships for future growth.
Risk assessment		
Technological challenges	Ensuring the platform is user-friendly and reliable is critical to its success.	
Stakeholder engagement	Securing long-term commitment from partners and businesses may require ongoing effort.	
Resource intensive	KWT would have limited and specific involvement with this initiative.	
User adoption	Achieving widespread participation depends on effective marketing and clear incentives for users.	
Evaluation indicators		
User participation	Number of users actively engaging with CanterPay.	
Business involvement	Total businesses participating in the initiative.	
Environmental impact	Reduction in carbon emissions or other measurable benefits linked to sustainable actions.	
User feedback	Satisfaction ratings and qualitative insights from participants.	

Objective of the initiative

To facilitate the adoption of a Green Certification scheme amongst tourism businesses in Kent, promoting sustainable practices that align with environmental and regional priorities.

Governance roles

- Lead organisations: Visit Kent and the Kent STAP Working Group of which KWT is a member.
- Role of KWT: Provide advice and share expertise in nature recovery and rewilding to guide the scheme's implementation and to support participating businesses.

Key Phases

Phase 1: Assessment and selection of a certification scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify established certification schemes that align with the Kent STAP's sustainability goals (e.g. Green Tourism UK, Green Destinations, the GDS Movement or similar). • Evaluate the scheme's compatibility with the needs of the local area. • Establish a partnership with the chosen certification body. • Confirm a pilot area – i.e. Blean or Canterbury district.
Phase 2: Stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise informational workshops to introduce the certification scheme to local businesses and stakeholders. • Highlight benefits such as increased marketability, resource efficiency and alignment with consumer trends toward sustainability. • Address concerns and provide clarity on the certification process.
Phase 3: Implementation framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a support structure to assist businesses in joining the certification scheme, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Guidance on meeting certification criteria. – Access to technical advice and resources including nature recovery. – Step-by-step support throughout the application process. • Coordinate with the certification body to facilitate recruitment and assessments.
Phase 4: Launch and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a promotional campaign to encourage participation, leveraging Visit Kent's communication channels and partnerships. • Showcase success stories from businesses already certified to inspire others. • Collaborate with local media to highlight the region's commitment to sustainable tourism.
Phase 5: Monitoring and Continued Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the certification body to track participation rates and monitor the performance of certified businesses. • Offer ongoing support and training to help businesses maintain and improve their certifications. • Share updates and successes through regional tourism channels.

Resources and funding

- Seek funding through local and national sustainability focused initiatives or grants.
- Utilise existing resources and networks of the chosen certification body to minimise overheads.
- Establish a fee structure for participating businesses and regions required for certification.

Timeline

- Months 1–3: Assessment and selection of the certification scheme.
- Months 3–5: Stakeholder engagement and introduction of the scheme.
- Months 6–12: Initial recruitment of pilot businesses and refinement of the support framework.
- Month 14: Official promotion and broader rollout.

Expected outcomes

- Streamlined adoption of sustainable practices across Kent's tourism sector.
- Increased visibility and competitiveness for certified businesses.
- Stronger partnerships among Kent's tourism stakeholders.
- Tangible contributions to Kent's environmental and socio-economic goals.

9.7. UNLOCKING ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH COLLABORATION

The additional income-generating ideas outlined in Section 7.3 present further opportunities for the KWT to enhance its offer and support its conservation objectives, but this is dependent on capacity and resource. These initiatives, ranging from star gazing events to a wildlife stakeout photography day, could generate income for the Wilder Blean while fostering greater engagement with the local community and visitors. Alternatively, Visit Kent, with its broader tourism remit and established networks, could take a lead role in delivering these ideas.

Furthermore, the previous studies highlighted the key challenges faced in the Blean, including its lack of recognition as a destination in its own right, the lack of any sense of arrival, the need to upgrade key entry points, its poor marketplace presence and a dearth of tourism data.

The collaborative partnership approach required to implement the initiatives selected for this report offers an avenue to address some of these challenges, potentially opening up additional funding sources and paving the way for the KWT to establish the Blean as a more cohesive and prominent destination in Kent's tourism landscape.

In conclusion

The delivery plan outline here presents an opportunity for the Wilder Blean and wider area to align KWT's conservation goals with innovative, community-based, sustainable tourism strategies. By working within a regenerative tourism framework, these initiatives aim to secure long-term funding and support for nature recovery and generate an income.

Key benefits include:

1. Sustainable economic support: initiatives such as Visitor Giving and the development of a Wilder Blean-branded gin provide practical ways to generate consistent income while raising awareness about conservation efforts.

2. Community and stakeholder engagement: collaborative efforts with local tourism businesses and community organisations develop a greater sense of collective ownership of the landscape, cultivating pride in 'their place' and increasing levels of participation.

3. Environmental and cultural impact: the proposed projects, from rewarding sustainable choices to promoting the Kent Big Five Safari, aim to contribute towards nature recovery, protect biodiversity and celebrate our natural heritage whilst enhancing the visitor experience.

Moving forward, the successful implementation of these initiatives will require continued collaboration, innovative thinking and a constant commitment to adapt based on feedback and ever evolving challenges. By embedding nature recovery into the region's economic and cultural fabric, the Wilder Blean can continue building on its reputation for landscape nature recovery and become a model for regenerative tourism.

10) Conclusion

This scoping exercise highlights the transformative potential of integrating sustainable funding mechanisms with community-driven approaches to nature recovery in the Wilder Blean. By adopting the regenerative tourism approach and developing collaborative partnerships, it provides a strong framework for achieving long-term nature recovery through community engagement and tourism sector participation.

Financial sustainability is central to the success of these initiatives and ensuring good financial planning and risk management is critical to protect income streams and mitigate any potential challenges. Each income-generating initiative should operate under tightly controlled contracts and income sharing agreements to avoid financial shortfalls or dilution of conservation goals by partner-driven agendas.

The key insights and strategies identified throughout the report emphasise the importance of:

- **Partnership-driven solutions:** collaborating with local businesses, community groups and tourism operators ensures shared responsibility which can only amplify the positive impacts of KWT's conservation efforts.
- **Innovative funding mechanisms:** the report explores a number of income generating ideas such as visitor giving, multi-day safari experiences and a co-branded gin making initiative, all with a view to securing financial resources whilst increasing public awareness and tourism sector participation.
- **Regenerative tourism practices:** encouraging environmentally friendly behaviour amongst visitors and integrating tourism with nature recovery provides mutual benefits for both the landscape and the local economy.

Looking ahead, the Wilder Blean has the potential to serve as a beacon for conservation-led economic development, balancing the needs of nature, local communities and visitors. Achieving this vision will require commitment, adaptability, financial oversight and continued investment in partnership working.

By implementing the initiatives outlined in this report, partners can create a resilient and thriving ecosystem in the Blean, and beyond, that not only sustains biodiversity but also enriches the lives of all who engage with the Wilder Blean. This could be described as a journey towards a greener economy that other regions can ultimately learn from and emulate whilst KWT continues to build on its reputation for landscape-scale nature recovery and become a model for regenerative tourism.

Appendices



Appendix 1: Wild Wonders of Cornwall – Cornwall Wildlife Trust white label leaflet

Appendix 2: Become a more wildlife friendly business – Cornwall Wildlife Trust factsheet

Appendix 3: Visitor giving payment for ecosystem service pilot 2014 – report

Appendix 4: Canterbury's Wild Stour – leaflet

Appendix 5: Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangements Regulations 2018

Glossary

Throughout the study the Kent Wildlife Trust is referred to as the KWT or the Trust

The Blean: the area referred to as the Blean, or the Blean Woods complex, is as stated by the KWT, the Wilding project area stretching from and incorporating the East Blean Woods across to the South Blean as far as Selling Station and Chartham Hatch

DMO: Destination Management Organisation, referring to Visit Kent, Visit Canterbury etc.

CCC: Canterbury City Council

KSCP: Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership

Kent STAP: Kent Sustainable Tourism Action Plan

Kent DMP: Kent Destination Management Plan





kwtg.uk/blean-wildscape