



Green Pilgrimage – Tourism for Sustainable Economic Growth supporting Natural and Cultural Heritage KCC Action Plan

Partner Details

Green Pilgrimage Project
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UK
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Policy Instruments Impacted by Green Pilgrimage

This Action Plan aims to impact:

Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
European Territorial Cooperation programme
Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instruments addressed:

South East Local Enterprise Partnership
Interreg France England Channel IVA Programme
Maidstone Destination Management Plan
Canterbury Destination Management Plan
Dover Destination Management Plan
Folkestone Destination Management Plan
North Downs Way National Trail Strategy
Kent Downs AONB Management Plan

Kent Pilgrimage and Long-distance Walking Action Plan - Introduction

This Action Plan presents a variety of measures to promote pilgrimage and long-distance walking in Kent as an economic growth area that also supports natural and cultural heritage. The measures described are supported

by multiple stakeholders involved in this sector including districts, destination management organisations, businesses and faith organisations.

Pilgrimage is recognized as one of the **fastest growing** segments of the travel industry (**UNWTO**, 2015) and Europe's most popular pilgrim routes, the Via Francigena and ST James Way, are certified European Cultural Routes recognised by globally leading tourism destinations such as Spain and Italy as complex tourism offers with significant regional tourism budgets attached.

Interreg Europe has funded the Green Pilgrimage project to research good practice for the support of economic growth through pilgrimage and long-distance walking.

7 partners across Europe took part in the project and have identified more than xxx good practices. Each partner has prioritised a number of these good practices to include in their Action Plans.

This document summarises all the good practices and details a smaller number that Kent will focus on during 2020 and 2021. Kent County Council will seek to embed these good practices in regional and local strategies. Originally the project sought to influence the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. However, BREXIT and the importance and popularity of the topic has meant a much broader number of policies will be considered including district tourism and economic strategies, county protected landscape strategies and National Trail strategies.

Green Pilgrimage Project Partners

7 partners represent a variety of long-distance walking trails, pilgrimage routes and destinations across Europe. These are summarised below

Kent County Council, UK

Hosting the North Downs Way that is based on the pilgrim's way made famous by Chaucer, Kent has Canterbury Cathedral, one of medieval Europe's most significant pilgrim destinations. Today Canterbury Cathedral is a UNESCO world heritage site and still a significant pilgrim destination and starting point for the Via Francigena, route to Rome. Several other pilgrim routes exist in Kent in various stages of development; St Augustine's Way, the Augustine Camino, the Od Way, the Royal Saxon Way, and the pilgrim route from London to Canterbury.

Region Östergötland, Sweden

Östergötland is home to Vadstena a peaceful and spiritual pilgrimage destination in the Southern Sweden. Historical homestead of St Birgitta, Region Östergötland wish to develop the site and associated walking routes as part of a wider health and wellbeing offer linked to nature tourism. Both regional government and the Church of Sweden are developing a strategy linked to the sustainable development of this tourism sector.

National Pilgrim Centre, Norway

The only European country with a National pilgrim strategy, Norway is investing in St Olavs Way, a designated European cultural route, as a tourism offer for a variety of markets from the religious to the adventurous. Norway is also a world leader in the radical reinvention of sustainable tourism and sees pilgrimage as an important mechanism to deliver this agenda.

Institute for Tourism Research and Development, Romania

Romania is home to a rich heritage of Orthodox Churches and painted monasteries. Suceava County, in northern Moldavia, has one of the one of biggest concentrations of UNESCO world heritage centres. The ERDF Regional Operational programme seeks to increase investment in and recognition of these important assets through greater promotion of pilgrimage and long-distance walking. This is focused on the development of the Via Mariae to connect monasteries dedicated to St Mary as part of an international tourism offer for religious and adventure markets.

Norfolk County Council, UK

Walsingham is the UK's biggest pilgrimage destination with two shrines, an abbey and a flourishing pilgrimage market for catholic and Anglican audiences including a significant Tamil and Hindu following. In 2016 over 13,000 people attended the Tamil Pilgrimage to Walsingham. Most pilgrims arrive by vehicle and Walsingham stakeholders and NCC are interested in promoting a more sustainable growth of the site by developing walking routes associated with the shrine.

Puglia Region, Italy

Puglia Region has seen the success of the Via Francigena in Tuscany and has worked with the ERDF Regional Operation Programme to support the development of the Via Francigena of the south as a major tourism offer. Regional programme investments include a multi-million hostel development project to provide pilgrim style accommodation that is proven to be popular in other pilgrim routes like St James Way in Spain.

Diocese of Canterbury, UK

Faith and green advisory partner to all the partners, the Diocese of Canterbury is also working closely with Canterbury Cathedral to develop a sustainable pilgrim strategy for Kent.

Xunta de Galicia, Spain

St James Way to Santiago de Compostela is a Europe's most popular walking pilgrimage route. The city of Santiago de Compostela receives more than 2.5 million visitors per year with many of those walking some part of the route. Now, over 300,000 walk the full 100km required for the Compostela certificate. The route is managed by a range of stakeholders including the Region Development body the Xunta de Galicia. Galicia has advised the project and hosted a special study visit to transfer the good practice developed by the route since its astronomical rise in popularity from 1987 when only a little over 5,000 Compostela certificates were issued.

The Power of Pilgrimage

The continued fragility of Europe's economy means that growth and development policies often take precedence over environmental policies, threatening our cultural and natural heritage assets. The Green Pilgrimage (GP) project will show how growth and development policies can economically exploit AND protect natural and cultural heritage. Key to this is our focus on the power of pilgrimage- recognized today as one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry (UNWTO, 2015) with more than 300 million pilgrims every year.

'Now is the time to harness the power and potential of religious tourism to make a positive difference in the world.' United Nations World Tourism Organisation

Ancient pilgrim routes such as The Way of St James to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, report an annual 10% increase in numbers, particularly among non-religious. Harnessing this increased popularity to protect natural and cultural heritage is a common challenge faced by those responsible for Europe's major pilgrimage routes. GP will show policy makers how to protect natural and cultural heritage whilst developing jobs and growth along pilgrim routes through developing low impact tourism, digitalization, pilgrim accommodation and strengthening local traditions. This reconnects pilgrims with their environment, landscape and culture.

The Green Pilgrimage Project brings together 7 European partners who have spent 3 years learning best practice in the development of pilgrimage to support sustainable growth of tourism and wellbeing around pilgrimage cultural and natural heritage assets. With this aim, each partner has written an Action Plan to help shape relevant policy to increase investment and support of pilgrimage routes and heritage.

Project Aims and Outcomes

The Green Pilgrimage project and partners aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- To influence policy affecting pilgrimage related assets
- To increase awareness of pilgrimage tourism potential to support sustainable economic growth
- To seek investments for pilgrimage related assets and tourism growth
- To build positive relationships and projects with faith organisations involved in pilgrimage

Green Pilgrimage Project Progress 2017 - 2019

Research

Partners have jointly reviewed their policy impact and potential impact on pilgrimage related growth. Partners have worked closely with stakeholders to identify policy improvements and mechanisms to realise the economic potential of pilgrimage growth. Four research reports have been produced including a Policy Review of all Partner policies, a Pilgrimage Digitalisation Study, an Economic Scoping on how to economically value of Green Pilgrimage, and a Study on how to generate income for pilgrim and long-distance trails.

Good Practice

Partners have researched best practice on pilgrimage growth around Europe. 21 best practices have been identified and a smaller number have been prioritised in partner action plans.

Action Plans

Every partner has developed an Action Plan to continue policy influence and pilgrimage growth in their regions specifically during 2020 and 2021. This will embed pilgrimage ambitions into broader policy frameworks so that the Green Pilgrimage project has an investment legacy post 2021.

Partners have already gained investments and future projects to continue the legacy of the Green Pilgrimage project including trail investment in Romania, and Norway, accommodation investment in Italy, tourism investment in the UK and Sweden.

The UK Context

Britain is rich in pilgrim trails and sites: from the epic St Cuthbert's Way in the north to the equally arduous Pilgrim's Way in the south-east; from a short stroll with a picnic in Essex to a plunge in the sacred waters of a shrine in North Wales; there are many opportunities for walking in the footsteps of the saints.

"Pilgrimage is enjoying a huge revival across Europe," says Dr Ian Bradley, author of 'Pilgrimage – a spiritual and cultural journey'. "While figures for churchgoing continue to fall across Europe, the number of those making pilgrimages is steadily rising. Many people uncomfortable about sitting in pews and uneasy with institutionalised religion find it easier to walk rather than talk their faith."

In medieval times pilgrimage was incredibly popular with groups of pilgrims heading for shrines to Thomas Becket at Canterbury and the Virgin Mary at Walsingham in Norfolk. Pilgrimages were undertaken for religious reasons, but were also often something of a holiday, a chance to escape the humdrum of daily life, to meet new people along the way, to swap stories as colourfully recounted in Chaucer's Pilgrim Tales.

The tradition came to a sudden end in 1538, when Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell banned pilgrimages as part of sweeping moves to obliterate the pre-Reformation church including the dissolution of the monasteries and the abolition of saints' days. Relics could no longer be displayed for worship, and the shrines at Canterbury and Walsingham were destroyed. Pilgrimages did not reappear in England for more than 300 years.

The resurgence in interest in recent years began with the Camino de Santiago, the pilgrimage across north-western Spain to Santiago de Compostela. In 1984, 423 pilgrims completed the final 100km stretch of the Camino, entitling them to an official certificate. By 2006, the figure was 100,377 – and by 2019, it had exceeded 300,000. Of those, 6,000 were from the UK – a fourfold increase in a decade.

Ancient pilgrim routes in the UK are being redeveloped and promoted at a rapid rate. Scotland has tens of pilgrim routes dedicated to ancient saints but with a secular focus on wellbeing, heritage, local culture and an increasingly modern need to get away from it all.

Walsingham in Norfolk is a fascinating example of British pilgrimage. From the 12th century, when organised pilgrimage began to the "Holy House", until 1538 the village of Little Walsingham saw huge amounts of building activity including an Augustinian Priory and a Franciscan Friary and dozens of cottages; all this in response to the thousands of pilgrims (including every monarch from Henry III (c.1226) to Henry VIII (1511)) who flocked to

the Shrine. Today Walsingham receives 1000s of pilgrims every year including 13,000 in 2017 for a Tamil pilgrimage – an astounding impact on an otherwise sleepy Norfolk village of only 819 in the last census of 2011.

Pilgrimage in Kent

Kent is rich in pilgrim history and home to Canterbury Cathedral home to one of medieval Europe's most popular pilgrim destinations through the cult of St Thomas Beckett. Today Canterbury City retains the cultural legacy of this medieval history. Canterbury Cathedral is the biggest attraction to the district and in fact Kent receiving nearly a million visitors every year. Canterbury Tales is a popular tourism attraction bringing the pilgrim stories of Chaucer to life in an interactive theatrical show. Place names and pilgrim churches abound in Canterbury and its surroundings with the North Downs Way National pilgrim trail providing a green route to arrive and leave by foot. The Via Francigena, the UK's only walking European cultural route also starts in Canterbury before winding through France, Switzerland and Italy on its 1900km route to Rome.

Other pilgrim routes are being established and growing in popularity also. St Way of St Augustine is a 19-mile route to retrace the route of St Augustine's arrival in England from Ramsgate to Canterbury. The Augustine Camino is a privately promoted route from Faversham to Canterbury linking shrines, monasteries, and art associated with St Augustine through beautiful Kent countryside and pubs. The Old Way is being developed by the British Pilgrim Trust based on a a lost pilgrimage route, rediscovered from Britain's oldest road map – the Gough map, dated c. 1360.

The Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome, a Kent based Charity, also wish to re-establish an attractive route from London to Canterbury made famous by Chaucer in Canterbury Tales. The Royal Saxon Way is being established from Minster to Lyminge linking 24 historic churches associated with the Kings and Queens of the Anglo-Saxon period.

All these routes are growing in popularity and some basic pilgrim services are in short supply such as mid-range accommodation, baggage transfer, water points and improved pilgrim information.

There are many stakeholders in Kent interested in pilgrimage, its history and its potential to promote economic growth especially in rural regions. Many stakeholders are also interested in the health and well being benefits of pilgrimage and long-distance walking. These stakeholders include the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome, Canterbury City Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Dover and Folkestone District Councils, The British Pilgrimage Trust, Canterbury Cathedral, Visit Canterbury and Canterbury Christchurch University. Many business stakeholders are also interested in making the most of Kent's pilgrim history to develop modern tourism experiences in a market seeking authentic and unique ways to experience popular destinations.

Action Plan – Good Practices for Kent

Good Practices Identified

During the research phase of the project partners have identified 21 good practices that can promote growth in pilgrimage and long-distance walking for economic benefit and cultural and natural heritage enhancement. These good practices are summarised below

1. **Pilgrim Economy – Unique accommodations.** Market for walkers to sleep in churches. The Church Conservation Trust has developed a model for de-sanctified churches to provide unique tourism experiences linked to the pilgrimage tradition of taking rest in churches. Their model is economically viable and has proven incredibly popular with worldwide press coverage of the idea. This model could be adapted for all churches on pilgrim routes to provide basic but authentic accommodation to modern day pilgrims.
2. **Pilgrimage Economy – the opportunity.** The UNWTO has identified pilgrimage as one of the fastest growing tourism sectors. Some regions have taken advantage of this through active investment in pilgrim related infrastructure. This has been most evident in Galicia which has invested €65million Euros expecting a return of €650 million Euros from 2015 to 2020. In Romania, organised pilgrim events doubled tourism between 2010-2016 in Suceava County.
3. **Pilgrim Economy – the benefit.** Research in Galicia shows that pilgrim spend is worth 2.3 times more to the local rural economy than domestic visitor spend. This is due to the length of time pilgrims spend in remote rural areas and the kinds of services they require which support important rural resident services such as banking, pharmacies, medical centres, equipment shops and restaurants
4. **Pilgrim Economy - Accommodation availability.** All routes need adequate accommodation for pilgrim travellers. As modern pilgrims are very diverse ranging from budget travellers to high end luxury walkers, a range of accommodation needs to be provided.
5. **Landscape Markers.** Both Tuscany and Galicia have invested in place making through iconic architecture and art to identify and celebrate regional pilgrim heritage.
6. **Art and Cultural Engagement.** Italy, the UK and Norway have run successful festivals linked to pilgrim film, literature, food and historic traditions.
7. **Domestic and International Marketing.** Italy, Norway and Spain have invested in domestic and international tourism marketing both through digital campaigns and representation at trade fairs.
8. **Faith and Government.** It is very important for government and faith organisations to work closely together. Even though increasing numbers of pilgrims are not of faith, the physical buildings are managed by faith organisations and communities. Additionally, pilgrim routes and traditions are largely based on faith history and so agreement on how pilgrimage is promoted will strengthen local relationships, community engagement and route authenticity.
9. **Pilgrim Destination.** Having a welcoming and prominent destination is a fundamental ingredient of pilgrimage. The welcome in Santiago de Compostela includes counselling services, certificate options, a dedicated pilgrim centre and a dedicated ad daily pilgrim service at the cathedral.
10. **Access for All.** Galicia conducted an important study into accessibility of the Camino. Much of the route is physically inaccessible to people with a range of disabilities. Galicia have created a specific strategy to increase accessibility for both mental and physical special needs of a wide range of visitors. There are more than 138 million people in EU with access needs and addressing these needs is both a moral responsibility as well as an economic opportunity.
11. **Waste management and Environmental Impact.** The sudden growth of the Camino popularity has led to increasing issues with waste management. The sheer volume of visitors has led to unattractive littering and human waste. Galicia have organised a number of waste campaigns to address the

issues and other regions have sought to investigate measures to prevent waste issues as their routes rise in popularity. Norway is developing wilderness friendly compostable toilets and Sweden is developing a waste action plan also.

12. **Authenticity of Route Heritage.** Due to the increasing popularity of pilgrimage many new routes are being created and promoted. It is important that the routes are based on authentic historical traditions, paths and features. Research shows that visitors expect an authentic product and value the concept of walking in the footsteps of pilgrims. Local communities also much more likely to engage and take care of routes that based on authentic historical traditions firmly rooted in local heritage.
13. **Pilgrim Identities - Variety.** Research in Sweden and Spain has revealed a wide variety of pilgrim profiles. Global Swedish digital research company Karios identified 5 pilgrim profiles: Christians, history buffs, spiritual, the stressed, backpackers. Galicia pilgrims identified in 6 main types; playful, traditional, traveller, modern, expert, and young. Only 28% did the Camino for purely religious or spiritual reasons. All pilgrims identified a love of the outdoors and nature as a reason for participation. This research is important for marketing and understanding the services and information pilgrims will need.
14. **Pilgrim Identities – Nature and Outdoors** - Whatever the definition of pilgrim all have a love of nature and outdoor activities
15. **Digitalisation - information.** Sweden and Italy have both developed pilgrim apps with good route information specifically designed for pilgrims. Some pilgrims seek to escape all modern trappings whereas most expect the full range of services offered by modern technologies including geo-location, mapping, accommodation, restaurants, heritage sites, etc.
16. **Digitalisation – itinerary planners.** An advance on digital route information is the itinerary planner. This has been developed for St Olav Ways in Norway and allows pilgrims to plan their route in detail before departure. The planner allows travellers to specify the length of daily walk, the accommodation, the heritage features on route and to print and share their own bespoke itineraries.
17. **Welcome Training and Local Ambassadors.** Modern travellers increasingly expect to interact with local people and ideally local people with a strong knowledge of a unique local offer. Kent has trained local ambassadors as walk guides on the North Downs Way Pilgrim Trail and Italy seeks to develop a training programme for local people and businesses to better understand pilgrim needs, routes and heritage. This local welcome is increasingly sought after by modern travellers.
18. **National policy support.** Norway is the only European country with a national pilgrim policy. This brings together faith, government, environmental and business in an agreed strategy and action list. This is regularly reviewed and is hugely beneficial for the allocation of local, regional and national investments.
19. **Route extensions.** The Via Francigena European Cultural Route goes from Canterbury to Rome. However, the route could logically be extended both west and south. The North Downs Way national trail and St Swithuns Way follows the pilgrims route from the cathedral seat at Winchester to Canterbury, and in Italy the Via Francigena of the South retraces the steps of medieval pilgrims travelling from Rome towards Jerusalem, an important destination in Christian, Muslim and Jewish traditions. Italy has made excellent progress on the Via Francigena of the south and the UK has ambitions to extend the route to Winchester.
20. **Grassroots participation.** The engagement of local communities and businesses is essential to create a local pride in pilgrim routes but also to enable a local welcome which is a key ingredient of pilgrim welcome. Galicia has a wide range of grassroots friends of St James who lobby government to protect the route. The Camino Materano in Puglia was established with strong engagement from local businesses and walkers.
21. **Academic participation.** There are numerous academic societies and conferences across Europe dedicated to pilgrimage and related saints. Of particular note is the scientific journal *Ad Limina*. The

ultimate objective of the journal is to guarantee the future of Jacobean research, a fundamental pillar for revitalising the pilgrimages to Santiago. A strong academic interest can be encouraged in all partner regions to support local identities and traditions.

Actions to Develop Pilgrimage Tourism in Kent

Action 1 - Via Francigena Route Investment

Description

The Green Pilgrimage project has collated investment best practice across Europe including Norway, Tuscany, Puglia, and Galicia. This best of this good practice will be tested in Kent to consolidate the importance of pilgrim routes in emerging cultural and natural heritage economic development strategies in the South East of England. Similar investments from other partners such as the Via Francigena of the South, Tuscany, Galicia and Norway have shown increased visitor numbers and consequently encouraged further policy investment. This has been shared with stakeholders in the UK who would like to test the approach in Kent. Test and Trials on a short section of the UK Via Francigena with a clear brand and identity will give confidence and evidence for wider investment. Along the route we propose the following specific enhancements:

- Heritage signage and information at key locations – Tuscany has created a strong product identity through consistent and branded signage for the Via Francigena.
- Information, Wi-Fi, and water provision at 3 rural churches – Galicia has incorporated the inclusion of rural churches into the Camino experience through installation of information, services and rest stops. The provision of water and Wi-Fi in Galicia and Tuscany has both improved pilgrim service support but also helped to conserve the heritage fabric of rural churches. This will be tested at 3 churches in this pilot.
- Smart Benches/shelters – Tuscany have provided Wi-Fi points at rest areas and the test and trial will bring these together with the provision of a Smart Bench Shelter.
- Iconic art installation – Galicia has created a strong brand identity through art installation along the Camino.
- Surface improvements to facilitate the above actions
- Develop route information both digital and hard copy to promote the above actions.
- Installation of people counters, and survey mechanisms to evaluate the impact of the above
- Local stakeholder test and trial groups to monitor, support and evaluate the above

Organisations Involved

KCC, Churches, Canterbury Cathedral, Visit Kent, Dover District Council, Canterbury City Council

Implementation plan

Jan-Feb 2020

Immediate installation of people counters

Route Audit & Confirmation of enhancement locations

Some of this work has already been completed following a recent audit working with local stakeholders through the Green Pilgrimage project to identify key locations and actions required. A meeting and some site-specific survey work would be carried out to confirm the locations.

Stakeholder Test and Trail Groups formed

Some groups have already been formed. Existing networks of walking and tourism groups already exist in both Dover and Canterbury areas and have been consulted and engaged in the planning and delivery of this pilot.

We are in the process of carrying out this consultation and networking activity. These groups will be informed of the pilot project approval and agree their roles in monitoring and evaluation.

Investment Finalisation

Scoping, design, tendering, and quotes would be finalised for the signage, bench art, water and wifi points and Smart Bench. This would be completed during the first 3 months of 2020.

Mar-June 2020

This period would see the installation of the more straightforward elements of the pilot investments, the signage, information, and water points.

Early promotion of the route and the Interreg Europe work will be communicated

Jul – October 2020

The more involved aspects of the pilot investments would be installed during this period, the art bench, the wi-fi points and the smart bench.

Kent County Council have a list of contractors who carry this type of work out across Kent. We anticipate using similar types of contractors to reduce the time and cost of delivery.

October – December 2020

With the pilot investments installed the information and digital promotion of the new investments can begin to be produced using the imagery of the actual Interreg Europe investments.

Stakeholder Test and Trail Groups

These groups will meet regularly to ensure the relevant policy holders are kept informed of the Interreg Europe work and to continue the monitoring and survey of the pilot investment impact.

January 2021 – June 2021

Communication

The pilot will continue the promotion of the route and will also organise some events for press, business and key influencers to promote the Interreg Europe investments.

This will also coincide with the Green Pilgrimage final event so all the partners and stakeholders can see the success of the Interreg Europe pilot investment.

Stakeholder Test and Trail Groups

These groups will meet regularly to ensure the relevant policy holders are kept informed of the Interreg Europe work and to continue the monitoring and survey of the pilot investment impact.

The monitoring and evaluation of impact will also be consolidated in this period.

Link with policy and impact

Deep route investment as proposed was carried out in Galicia, Tuscany and lately in Puglia. In Galicia the investment showed a significant economic return as evidenced in Economic Impact studies shared with Green Pilgrimage partners during the Galicia Study Visit. Desk research has showed the same return on investment in Tuscany.

Economic policy holders in the UK are impressed with the results in Italy and Spain shared with them during the Green Pilgrimage project, but they are not convinced it would be the same in the UK context. A short section of deep investment that is monitored for impact will show the UK generated evidence to policy makers of the important returns on cultural route investments.

This evidence will support the further inclusion of cultural route investments in UK regional economic policies.

This section of trail receives a small annual grant funding as part of Natural England's support of National Trails in England and Wales allowing basic maintenance and promotion. With the economic evidence of investment return we will be able to use our small core grant to lever local funding towards continued upkeep of this trial section but also hopefully generate interest in expanding the investment to the rest of the trail. We would expect this evidence to impact several policies including all the District tourism investment strategies in Kent, the South East Local Industrial Strategy, the North Downs Way Strategic Review and local strategies of organisations like Canterbury Cathedral.

Through this work we will also grow and strengthen our stakeholder network groups, who are beginning to see the economic value of the pilgrims' route and contribute towards the upkeep of the trail in their territory through local partner engagement, an important interregional learning in Galicia and Puglia.

Monitoring the investment in terms of increased use, business engagement and impact on local economy will provide regionally relevant data to support further investment in cultural routes.

The economic impact learning from Galicia has been shared with stakeholders however no regionally relevant data exists so this action would provide that data. This will support the inclusion of cultural routes as an investment priority in the future policy context. It will also provide the necessary data to make further funding applications for new projects in other parts of the route.

Timeframe

2020 + 2021

Costs

€127,920

Sustainability

This section of trail receives a small annual grant funding as part of Natural England's support of National Trails in England and Wales allowing basic maintenance and promotion. With the economic evidence of investment return we will be able to use our small core grant to extra lever local funding towards continued upkeep of this trial section but also generate interest in expanding the investment to the rest of the trail.

Through this work we would grow and strengthen our stakeholder network groups, and local associations like the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome who will have increased professional capacity to engage in maintenance, fundraising and future enhancement.

The pilot work itself is also designed to be durable in terms of quality products that have a long life built into their design and installation.

People counters will measure the flow of visitors at the beginning of the project, throughout and at the end showing immediate increase in interest generated by the investments. Test and trial groups will also gather qualitative evidence around visitor perceptions of this route with Interreg Europe investment versus other sections of the route without Interreg Europe investment. This evidence will support continued investment from local and regional policies.

All the information above will be collated together which will allow an economic return on investment to be calculated using KCC used Economic impact modelling. This evaluation report will be used to drive further investments to replicate the Interreg Europe pilot action

Suggested Funding Sources

This has been approved Pilot Action funding through the Green Pilgrimage Interreg Europe Project

Action 2 – Pilgrimage Cultural Festivals

Description

Developing a major festival following Puglia example

Learning – the festival in Puglia had several impacts: increased awareness of the importance of cultural routes; increased economic investment in rural areas linked to the cultural route; and engagement of a wide variety of stakeholders, influencers, businesses, and institutions in the cultural route.

Organisations Involved

KCC, Churches, Canterbury Cathedral, Visit Kent, Local Authorities, others

Implementation plan

January - June 2020

Identify interested stakeholders and develop festival outline and opportunities with interested stakeholders.

July – December 2020

Agree and design programme for cultural festivals related to pilgrims particularly focusing on sustainability of product by working closely with businesses and stakeholders to build in cost recuperation and investment in heritage and landscape. Deliver training to businesses and stakeholders as identified.

January – June 2021

Deliver and promote programme with stakeholders.

July – December 2021

Evaluate programmes and festivals and promote practice to other stakeholders including training as required.

Link with policy and impact

All the identified district Destination Management Plans DMPs will benefit from the evidence and delivery of the festival or festivals. The development of sustainable self-funding festival models will enable district DMPs to integrate the delivery of future festivals as part of their ongoing programme of community and visitor engagement. If businesses can see a real impact on their income from a pilgrimage or cultural route festival, then they in turn will influence business relevant policy to support cultural route investments.

The monitoring of the festival and its social, economic and environmental impact will provide data and business need for policy inclusion of cultural route investment, as well as evidence for funding applications for new projects linked to pilgrimage and regional events.

Timeframe

2020 + 2021

Costs

€80,000

Sustainability

The festivals will be developed as self-financing delivery models.

Suggested Funding Sources

Interreg France Channel England Programme

Action 3 – Strategic Masterplan for Kent Pilgrim Routes

Description

Develop and agree a wider ranging and high-level strategic plan for all pilgrim routes in Kent. Building on Galicia and Norwegian examples.

Learning

Galicia – Masterplan details a 5-year vision and plan for the route, covering economic facts, pilgrim profiles, strategic priorities, heritage, conservation, destination management, route investment, hospitality, research and academia, and signage. This plan brings together local and regional stakeholders in one vision. NCC is the only EU country with a National Pilgrim policy setting out the respective roles of government, business, academia, NGOs, church and people. As with the Galicia plan this brings together local and regional stakeholders in one vision.

Organisations Involved

KCC, Churches, Canterbury Cathedral, Visit Kent, local authorities, others

Implementation plan

January – March 2020

The Green Pilgrimage Action plan will form the basis for the Strategic Masterplan but will be much more focused on the specific pilgrim routes of Kent. Stakeholders will be consulted on a wide range of actions to include in the Masterplan as well as the priorities and principles for future development of actions and projects.

April – December 2020

Consultation and formal agreement of plan and formal signing and adoption of plan amongst stakeholders.

Link with policy and impact

The Masterplan will inform all the policies listed and drive investment and collaborative action. Stakeholders identified have already indicated an interest in agreeing this kind of Masterplan to inform their own policy development linked to tourism and wellbeing.

Most of the other actions support specific aspects of policy impact; for example, thematic inclusion of cultural routes, tourism, heritage and culture. However, this action draws regional and local stakeholders together being a single vision. This vision can support applications for further funding of project, and also support the direction of funds towards the contents of the Masterplan.

Timeframe

2020 + 2021

Costs

€80,000

Sustainability

The Masterplan will draw up a five-year vision with short, medium and long term goals. KCC will seek to engage a relevant stakeholder such as the Confraternity of Pilgrims to Rome to take on the continued review and adaptation of the plan.

Suggested Funding Sources

KCC own funds

Action 4 – Extension of North Downs Way to Winchester

Description

Winchester is a major tourism and pilgrimage destination and a natural twinning with Canterbury Cathedral for the beginning and the end of the North Downs Way

Considerable regional investment has been directed towards the extension of the Via Francigena pilgrim route from Rome through Puglia to ultimately connect with Jerusalem. There are genuine historical reasons for the route to be extended in this way; and the importance of historical authenticity was described in some detail during the Galicia study visit. Winchester is the site of an important cathedral with historic pilgrim links and therefore the extension would provide a cathedral to cathedral route providing important pilgrim destinations in either direction of walking. This significantly improves the touristic offer of the route also.

Organisations Involved

KCC, Churches, Canterbury Cathedral, Visit Kent, local authorities, others

Implementation plan

January to December 2020

Negotiation with Natural England, Surrey County Council and other stakeholders around the feasibility of route extension.

Link with policy and impact

Evidencing link with tourism, cultural and pilgrimage. The use and impact of the route extension will be monitored to provide data on increased on the economic impact of the route. This evidence will be used a basis for further funding applications and the inclusion of cultural heritage in economic and tourism policies locally and regionally.

Timeframe

2020 + 2021

Costs

€80,000

Sustainability

This would bring the North Downs Way into line with other pilgrim routes linking two major Cathedral pilgrim and UNESCO site. This also lays the foundation for the future extension of the Via Francigena from Canterbury to Winchester to increase percentage of European Cultural Route in the UK.

Suggested Funding Sources

North Downs Way National Trail core funds

Action 5 – North Downs Way Website Itinerary and Pilgrimage Builder

Description

Changing the NDW website to enable stage planning and product purchase as well as focus on pilgrimage. Norway – the St Olav Way Itinerary planner allows walkers to plan their accommodation, meals and site visits on a day to day basis. It also provides information on nearby heritage sites as optional visits.

Galicia – there were so many websites promoting the route that it was actually difficult for users to identify the best options to use.

Via Francigena Tuscany – the website allows very detailed stage planning of each section of the cultural route. This is a very important touristic offer.

The combined learning of the good and bad aspects of each of the above will allow the development of an itinerary builder based on good and bad practice providing a much improved service to users.

Organisations Involved

KCC, others

Implementation plan

January – June 2020

Scoping of website technical opportunities and costs. Engage businesses and stakeholders in development opportunity.

July – December 2020

Make technical and communication changes. Test product with user groups.

January – June 2021

Promote new digital product with trade fairs, businesses and stakeholders.

Link with policy and impact

Evidencing link with tourism, cultural and pilgrimage. All identified policies will be engaged in the development and impact monitoring of the digital development.

Evidencing website use and correlation with increased route users will provide data for further funding applications and for the inclusion of cultural routes and cultural related tourism in policy documents.

Timeframe

2020 + 2021

Costs

€80,000

Sustainability

To be developed

Suggested Funding Sources

Possibly through Visit England Great Walking Trails funding or Interreg Channel France England programme.

Action 6

Economic indicators and monitoring

Collecting and building evidence base on all of the above to support funding applications, business need and policy wording changes.

Conclusions and Monitoring

During 2020 and 2021 KCC will monitor and develop all the above actions. Some funding is more secure than others but efforts will continue to secure all funding necessary to implement all the Actions and more.

Yearly stakeholder meetings

KCC will hold at least yearly stakeholder meetings to review the progress of all the above actions. In reality the meetings will need to be much more frequent to achieve agreement and action and are more likely to be every 3 to 4 months.

KCC implementation and monitoring. Evidence of impact and visitor numbers is lacking for Kent's pilgrim routes. Different methods for gathering this data will be investigated including mobile phone data, people counters, surveys and business data.

New Projects. KCC will continue to seek opportunities to develop new projects that can continue the legacy of the Green Pilgrimage project. This will include Heritage Lottery Fund and post Brexit government funding opportunities such as the Local Industrial Strategy for the South East of England.

Pilgrimage Network

KCC will set up a network of existing and new partners interested in pilgrimage to continue knowledge sharing in this field.

Formal Adoption

Stakeholders will be invited to sign their formal support to this Action Plan

Declared Support for the Action Plan

I support the aims and objectives of the Green Pilgrimage Action Plan as a means to support the growth of sustainable tourism in Kent in a way that supports natural and cultural heritage

South East Local Enterprise Partnership
Sarah Nurden, Manager of the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (South East LEP's local board)

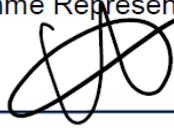


Signature.

Date. 20/4/20

Interreg France England Channel IVA Programme
Helene Pasquier, Programme Representative

Signature. Date.



14/04/2020

Maidstone Destination Management Plan
Laura Dickson, Tourism Manager



Signature.

Date. 08/04/2020

Canterbury Destination Management Plan
Kathryn Hearnden, Visit Canterbury



Signature.

Date. Wednesday 8 April 2020

Dover Destination Management Plan
Chris Townsend, Dover District Council

Signature. Date.

Folkestone Destination Management Plan
Graham Hammond, Folkestone and Hythe District Council

Signature.



Date. 14/04/2020

North Downs Way National Trail Strategy
Peter Morris, North Downs Way Trail Manager



Signature.

Date. 03/04/2020

Kent Downs AONB Management Plan

Nick Johannsen, Kent Downs AONB Director
Signature.

Nick Johannsen

Date. 03/04/20
