

## Inward Investment

### Investment promotion activities

Locate in Kent is the official investment promotion agency for Kent and Medway, offering a free, impartial and confidential service. Our networks, knowledge and expertise make us the first point of call for businesses looking to succeed in Kent.

Whether a company is starting up, looking to expand or relocate, Locate in Kent can offer support in a number of ways: from property search, relocation support, business growth advice and access to funding. Over the last 12 months, Locate in Kent has recognised a number of trends in the types of property enquiries received.

### Co-working space

Across Kent and Medway, increasingly businesses are identifying co-working spaces as integral to their ability to scale up and remain agile to their markets. It is no longer good enough for these businesses to locate themselves in oppressive office environments if they want to recruit the best talent and create a culture of productivity.

According to a 2018 report by Cushman and Wakefield, flexible workplace providers accounted for a fifth of all office space in Central London last year, with competition in major cities now intensifying. Globally there has been a tripling in size of co-working space since 2006, to approximately 11,000 centres.

Locate in Kent is already seeing a trend in demand for smaller office spaces, with requirements for increased quality and flexibility. With a growing desire for better work-life balance and unique work environments built for a multi-generational workforce, businesses are regularly looking to co-working space to meet this need.

We are in the midst of an upsurge in development of multi-use and co-working space. More than 40 co-working spaces are up and running in the county offering everything from communal desks to fully serviced offices, with a further 10 in the pipeline. Recent additions to the Kent co-working landscape include the Coachworks project in Ashford. Led by Carl Turner, who won plaudits for his PopUp Brixton project, this scheme has transformed a disused cornmill in Ashford town centre into a vibrant hub for creative start-ups with a new food and event space next door.

Kent Space, meanwhile, launched its new co-working space this summer, the first in Ebbsfleet Garden City. Faith in Strangers, a new 340 capacity co-working space opened in September in a former Margate nightclub, delivering a new multi-use arts venue and thinking space where 'strangers can become collaborators in pursuit of new ideas.' The Hive, Tunbridge Wells; the Old Co-Op Building in Dover and Neptune Co-Working in Herne Bay are amongst those set to follow.

### Food and drink production

Food and drink production is synonymous with Kent and we have a long history of success and innovation in this sector. Our location between the UK's largest concentration of households in London and as the gateway to global markets means we are home to a large number of high-value food and drink production, processing, packaging and logistics companies.

With leading organisations already based in our region, from AC Goatham in Medway to Chapel Down Plc in Tenterden and the UK's largest greenhouse complex at Thanet Earth in Birchington, we are seeing a growing interest from organisations looking to join Kent's cluster of more than 2500 food and drink businesses. With access to an excellent supply chain, industry experts and innovative technology, the pull of Kent as a go-to location for food and drink manufacturing is clear.

“**Kent gives us access to a large pool of highly skilled workers. We are based in a highly populated area with a lot of local talent and experience in the construction sector.**

Barry Foster, Managing Director, BJF Group

“**Kent has really allowed us to triple the size of our business. From being a hub for manufacturing, it makes it very easy for us to get materials, recruit skilled staff to join the team, and grow our business.**

Troy Barratt, Managing Director, Contracts Engineering



PHOTO: LOCATE IN KENT

**Contracts Engineering moved into their new factory in Sittingbourne in January 2019.**



PHOTO: DRAGON COWORKING

**Dragon Coworking in Rochester.**

The growth opportunities are apparent as our region continues to innovate to grow more productively using less space and water, to distribute using fewer food miles and process to create healthier products with reduced waste. Leading edge organisations such as NIAB EMR and the Natural Resources Institute from the University of Greenwich at Medway are ensuring that Kent stays at the forefront of research and innovation in food production.

### Major investments

Locate in Kent successfully helped 70 companies last year (August 2018 – July 2019) to set up, move or expand in Kent and Medway, projected to create 1,665 jobs over the next 3 years and retain 1,960 jobs. At the end of July 2019, Locate in Kent had a pipeline of 260 investment projects for companies looking to start up, expand or relocate in Kent and Medway, with 30% of them being overseas companies.

### Notable investments included:

- Precision Sheet Metal Manufacturing company, **Contracts Engineering**, moved to their new 13,000 sq ft factory with 3,000 sq ft office in Sittingbourne in January 2019 which will enable them to significantly increase their production capability.
- Fine foods brand **Macknade** will open a food and drink hub at number one Elwick Place, Ashford this autumn. The unit, a stone's throw from Chapel Down's Curious Brewery, is 5,123 sq ft, and the largest retail space available at the central Ashford Development.
- **Pfizer** is continuing its commitment to the UK Life Sciences sector by investing £5m in advanced paediatric manufacturing at its Discovery Park site in Sandwich, Kent. Pfizer's investments at Discovery Park total £36m since 2018, leading to renewed growth and 80 new scientific jobs.

Get in touch today to find out more about our free business support services and network of contacts: [www.locateinkent.com/property-search](http://www.locateinkent.com/property-search)

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Kent fine food brand Macknade will open a food and drink hub at one Elwick Place, Ashford, this autumn.

“ Kent's an amazing place to start a business, particularly in the food and drink space. It's a big market in its own right, so it's a great place to seed your business. We have great transport access, which makes it really easy for us to attract buyers, who are based in London to come and see us.

Stephen Russell, Co-founder, Copper Rivet Distillery



The Copper Rivet distillery is set in a magnificent Victorian Pump House on Chatham Dockyard.