

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: 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 investment across Kent and Medway.

Innovation and sustainability

This year has seen green growth come to the fore in the county. There have been a number of innovative schemes brought forward that will establish the region as a hub for low carbon technologies. Plans for the UK's largest solar farm near Faversham, a hydrogen production plant approved for Herne Bay and the leading offshore wind farms off the Kent coast already in operation, demonstrate the opportunity here. As we look forward to 2050 and the UK government's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions, there will be additional chances to attract further investment in the green energy sector.

Navigating COVID-19 and Brexit

Despite the national and global challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty of Brexit, Locate in Kent has proven its agility to maintain business and support clients across Kent and Medway to adapt and build resilience for the future. One example of this is Future Forward – a new business recovery service created to help small and medium sized businesses across the region, to continue to build success and achieve objectives. It provides 12 hours



CREDIT: FBERICOTE/TRITAX

Construction for 2.3m sq ft pre-let on plot 2 at Bericote and Tritax's The PowerHouse.London site in Dartford.

of free consultancy time from a team of expert advisors. This programme is an innovative service designed for those striving to rebuild from both the national lockdown and Brexit challenges.

When looking at the impact of COVID-19 on businesses specifically, Locate in Kent has seen a 57% rise in London-based businesses browsing commercial property in the county in the three months to 31 July 2020 when compared to the same quarter in 2019. There has also been a 15.2% uplift in commercial property enquiries in the same period. This shows a steady increase in businesses planning their future in Kent and taking advantage of its competitive offering, further increasing the county's economic landscape.

Gavin Cleary, CEO at Locate in Kent, said: *"As we continue to move forward and rebuild, businesses are looking at how they will operate in the future and ways to build resilience into their organisational plans. Our commercial property findings show the first step in more companies thinking about a move to Kent, with the benefits including cheaper commercial space compared to London prices, affordable and desirable housing for employees, unique coastal, rural and urban areas, and fast, convenient connections to London, the wider UK and internationally."*

Logistics and distribution

Logistics and distribution property investment has been strong in the last 12 months with the advancement of significant schemes, including the recent £200 million deal in Dartford which will see a warehouse for an internet retailer built on the site of the decommissioned Littlebrook Power Station and redevelopment proposals for the former Aylesford Newsprint site, which set out plans to design and build seven industrial buildings offering in the region of 177,000m² (1,905,212 ft²) of new commercial space. Fuelled by busy ports, the Channel Tunnel and three major motorways, the logistics and distribution sector has a strong presence in Kent. There will be further industrial sites located alongside Kent's motorway network coming on stream in 2020/21 that will contribute to the county's competitiveness in this sector.

Film and TV

The last year has seen the burgeoning film and TV production cluster in Kent and Medway take a leap forward with planning permission granted for the £250m film studio-led development at Newtown Works in Ashford. Alongside Maidstone TV Studios, one of the UK's largest independent high definition TV broadcasting facilities and with over 500 key locations for film and TV identified by the Kent Film Office, the county is fast becoming a hotspot for this sector. The Creative Estuary project, wider Thames Estuary Production Corridor and proposals for London Resort, a world-class entertainment resort based in North Kent, will further cement the county as a go-to location for creative industry investment.

Food and drink production

The food and drink production cluster in the county received a recent boost with the Growing Kent & Medway initiative being awarded £18m of government funding. This will help establish the region as a world-leader for the climate-smart production and processing of high-value, nutrient-rich foods and plant-based products. The county already has robust strengths in this sector from an available skilled workforce, established supply chains and excellent connectivity to domestic and global markets. Leading brands continue to commit to Kent, with Chapel Down planting a further 62ha (154 acres) in Kent in 2019, a winery co-run by Taittinger near Chilham, set to produce 400,000 bottles a year, approved in July 2020 and frozen food manufacturer Cook planning

to create 200 jobs after securing funding to build a new 2,320m² (24,972ft²) kitchen facility in Sittingbourne.

Major investments

Locate in Kent successfully helped 69 companies last year (August 2019 – July 2020) to set up, move or expand in Kent and Medway, projected to create 1,924 jobs over the next 3 years and retain 2,021 jobs. At the end of July 2020, Locate in Kent had a pipeline of 274 investment projects for companies looking to start up, expand or relocate in Kent and Medway, with 17% of them being overseas companies.

Notable investments

The 213,677m² (2.3 million ft²) warehouse and distribution hub for Amazon at Dartford received planning permission in June 2020. This scheme will create up to 2,000 jobs. They are on track for practical completion before Christmas 2020. Locate in Kent is supporting recruitment opportunities between North Kent College and the online retailer.

Ryse Hydrogen acquired a site near Canterbury and secured planning consent to build a facility to produce 'green' hydrogen. Ryse will be supplying TfL who have purchased 20 new hydrogen fuelled buses to move towards providing more sustainable methods of transportation, and being carbon neutral by 2050. Electricity will be drawn directly from the London Array wind farm.



Ryse, Herne Bay: aerial view of the proposals.

CREDIT: FLETCHER RAU/RYSE

We are supporting **Panattoni** with their forthcoming industrial scheme at M20, Junction 4 and **Clearbell**, the developer that acquired the consented scheme at M20, Junction 8. These projects will see considerable supply of B2/B8 and some B1 coming forward along the M20 corridor to drive job creation over the next five years.

Commenting on the decision to invest £180m in Kent, Tony Watkins, Development Director at Panattoni, Europe's largest privately-owned industrial developer, said: "We deliver world-class sites for world-class businesses and Aylesford fitted our exacting requirements. The site's industrial history gave us confidence in terms of providing access to a skilled workforce, it also delivers a flexible development platform and our proposals have been welcomed by the community. "Importantly, it provides a strategic location to enable our

occupiers to connect with their customers in London, the South East and to Europe thanks to the channel ports. This is why it will be our largest development to date in the UK."

Locate in Kent has supported three **hotel projects** across the line into exclusive deals. Despite the hospitality sector's current challenges, we continue to have a pipeline for more projects, although we don't expect new projects to come forward until the travel sector improves globally, expected to be later in 2021.

Get in touch today to find out more about our free business support services and network of contacts:
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The first point of contact for businesses looking to succeed in Kent and Medway.



Primed for business

Locate in Kent provides free strategic advice regarding setting up, expanding or relocating in Kent and Medway, from property searches to funding advice and everything in between. Locate in Kent has helped more than 1,250 businesses invest in the area, and has seen almost 80,000 jobs created and retained since 1997.

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