

# Kent Connects - A Partnership Success Story

## Case Study - One-stop Promotion for Voluntary and Community Groups

### At A Glance:

#### Project

Thanet Community Information Portal

#### Implementation Partners

Thanet District Council, Kent County Council and Red Ant Design

#### Key Challenges

Helping local authorities with minimal resources provide third-sector organisations with an affordable means of promoting themselves to residents.

#### Solution and Services

An online directory of community groups and voluntary organisations which they can update themselves with the latest news and opportunities. The technical solution is a portal which is linked from the host authority's website.

#### Implementation Highlights

European funding financed development costs and Thanet District Council co-ordinated implementation. Take-up was immediate and the site has been shortlisted for national awards.

#### Key Benefits

- Low cost
- Easy to self-administer and moderate
- Simple access and intuitive navigation
- Scalable – a model for use elsewhere.

“This is a great example of technology providing a simple, affordable and scalable solution to an everyday problem: in this case how to help the voluntary sector promote what’s on offer to local residents. An instant success when pioneered with Thanet District Council, we are making the community information portal prototype available to other local authorities to use.”

*Antony Parker,  
Business Implementation Manger, Kent Connects*

### Promoting the Valuable Work of the Third Sector

Voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) play a huge role in society, offering local services, facilities, events and opportunities relied on by residents of all ages and circumstances. Many VCOs are cash strapped and seek support from their local council. Whilst recognising the importance of VCO's to their communities local authority funding and resources are also stretched. To enable this to go forward, Kent Connects agreed to develop an online promotional directory which local authorities could host and offer to VCOs for free.


“The portal is going to help us to appeal to new clients – we don’t have our own website – and I guess now we don’t need one!”

*User feedback*

### European Funding

The proposal attracted European funding after Kent Connects secured an Interreg grant through one of its partners, Kent County Council. The grant provided £5,000 towards development, undertaken in collaboration with Red Ant Design.

### Host Authority



Through its partnership approach, Kent Connects worked with a small working party of local authority officers. Thanet District Council volunteered to test the prototype, working with Red Ant Design to refine the technical specification, usability and design. Local clubs, societies and voluntary groups in their borough were then invited to sign up for free.



## Instant Success

The Community Information Portal immediately proved popular with VCOs, offering a range of features:

- Contact details for each VCO
- Information about their services and facilities, searchable by area and provision
- Calendar of events
- Job and volunteer opportunities
- News updates
- Email alerts.

“I was nervous about using the portal but your online instructions were easy to understand. I was pleased to manage on my own and also with the on-screen results.”

*User feedback*

“A classic case of the simplest ideas being the best.”

*User feedback*

## Small Costs, Big Rewards

Within four months of going live, the Thanet Community Information Portal had 380 VCO registered users and approximately 3,000 visits, with numbers rising quickly. The total number of VCOs using the site is now over 500, about half the total number in the area. Early feedback soon confirmed that the site – free to users and with only minimal upfront costs to Thanet and Kent Connects – was helping users save resources on alternative forms of marketing.

The site can be viewed at [www.thanet.gov.uk/communityportal](http://www.thanet.gov.uk/communityportal).

*Kent Connects is an award-winning partnership of all the Kent and Medway authorities, Kent Fire & Rescue Service and Kent Police, a powerful alliance of public service providers. Together we tackle the technological barriers to the joining up and sharing of public services. We do this through co-ordinated research and development, commissioning and procurement and networking and training events. We also provide a number of partnership services.*

## Further Information:

for further information, please visit [www.kentconnects.gov.uk](http://www.kentconnects.gov.uk)  
or email the Kent Connects Partnership Office at [enquire@kentconnects.gov.uk](mailto:enquire@kentconnects.gov.uk).