Proposal for a Cinque Ports Day

1. Introduction

It is proposed that the Confederation of the Cinque Ports establish an annual **"Cinque Ports Day"**: a day on which all 14 member towns celebrate their shared heritage, present-day communities and continuing membership of the Confederation.

Each member town would mark the occasion locally in its own way during the daytime. Representatives from across the Confederation would then come together for a joint evening celebration hosted by one of the member towns.

The Confederation comprises 14 member towns across Kent and Sussex. Although each town has its own identity, history and traditions, all share the distinctive heritage and civic values associated with being a Cinque Port.

2. Reasons for Establishing a Cinque Ports Day

Celebrating a shared identity

The Cinque Ports are one of the country's most historic civic confederations. A dedicated annual day would provide a visible and accessible opportunity to explain that history while showing that the Confederation remains active and relevant today.

Involving all 14 member towns

The office of Speaker rotates between the five Head Ports and the two Ancient Towns. The Speaker acts as the chairman and principal representative of the Confederation.

Cinque Ports Day would complement the Speakership by giving every member town, including the corporate members, a regular and active role in the Confederation's civic life. It would not replace or compete with the Speakership but would run alongside it as a wider celebration involving all 14 communities.

Strengthening relationships

The day would bring together councillors, civic leaders, voluntary organisations, schools, businesses, community groups and residents from across the Confederation. This would encourage closer working relationships and the sharing of ideas and good practice.

Promoting civic pride

Each town could use the occasion to celebrate its own history, residents, volunteers, organisations and achievements. Local events would help residents understand why their town is a member of the Confederation and what that membership represents.

Engaging younger generations

Schools, youth councils, cadet organisations and young volunteers could be directly involved. Educational activities could explore local maritime history, civic responsibility, the environment and the importance of public service.

Supporting tourism and local businesses

Coordinated promotion across all 14 towns could create an annual visitor attraction. Heritage trails, guided walks, markets, exhibitions and cultural events could encourage visitors to explore more of the Cinque Ports area.

Sharing the organisational burden

Hosting would rotate annually between all 14 member towns. Each town would therefore host the principal Confederation event only once every 14 years, making the financial and administrative burden more manageable.

3. Suggested Management Arrangements

Annual host town

One member town would act as host each year according to an agreed 14-year rotation. The host would organise the principal evening gathering and coordinate the overall programme with the Confederation.

The host town could also arrange a daytime civic or community event, but other members would remain responsible for activities within their own areas.

Annual theme

Each Cinque Ports Day would have a common theme agreed in advance. The theme would provide a shared focus while allowing each town to interpret it according to its own circumstances, priorities and traditions.

The theme should ideally be announced at least 12 months before the event to allow sufficient planning time.

Coordinating group

A small Cinque Ports Day coordinating group could be established, consisting of:

- a representative of the Confederation;
- representatives of the current and following host towns;
- the Speaker or the Speaker's representative;
- the Confederation's communications or administrative representative; and
- additional advisers where appropriate.

The group would agree the date, theme, common branding, publicity arrangements and broad expectations for participating towns.

Local organisation

Each member town would appoint a local Cinque Ports Day coordinator. This could be an elected member, council officer or nominated community representative.

Local councils would decide the scale and nature of their own programme. Activities could range from a simple flag-raising ceremony or school assembly to a full programme of community events.

Joint evening celebration

The day would conclude with a gathering in the host town. This might include:

- a civic reception;
- a parade or procession;
- performances by schools, choirs or community groups;
- presentations relating to the annual theme;
- recognition of volunteers and community achievements;
- an address by the Speaker;
- participation by the Lord Warden or their representative, where available; and
- a ceremonial handover to the following year's host.

Attendance should include representatives from all 14 towns, while the formality and scale of the event could vary according to the host town's facilities and resources.

Finance

The host town would determine its own event budget. The Confederation could consider providing a modest annual contribution towards shared publicity, branding or ceremonial costs.

Each participating town would normally meet the cost of its own local activities and representation. External grants, sponsorship and partnerships could also be explored, provided that they are appropriate to the civic standing of the event.

Branding and publicity

A common Cinque Ports Day identity should be developed for use by all members. This could include:

- a shared logo;
- standard publicity templates;
- a dedicated webpage;
- coordinated social-media material;
- educational resources for schools; and
- a programme showing activities across all 14 towns.

The purpose would be to present the day as one Confederation-wide celebration rather than a collection of unrelated local events.

Review

After each event, the host town should prepare a brief report identifying attendance, costs, successful activities and lessons for future hosts. This would create a body of practical guidance and prevent each town from having to design the event entirely from the beginning.

4. The 14 Member Towns

In alphabetical order, the current members of the Confederation are:

1. Deal
2. Dover
3. Faversham
4. Folkestone
5. Hastings
6. Hythe
7. Lydd
8. Margate
9. New Romney
10. Ramsgate
11. Rye
12. Sandwich
13. Tenterden
14. Winchelsea

The order of host towns might be better served alphabetically for the ‘Cinque Ports Day’.

5. Suggested Annual Themes

Possible themes for Cinque Ports Day could include:

- **Volunteering and Community Service**
- **Our Maritime Heritage**
- **Protecting Our Coastline**
- **Young People and the Future**
- **The Natural Environment and Biodiversity**
- **Community Resilience and Emergency Preparedness**
- **Local Businesses and High Streets**
- **Tourism and Heritage**
- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Arts, Music and Culture**
- **Education and Lifelong Learning**
- **Civic Service and Local Democracy**
- **Fishing, Farming and Local Food**
- **Climate Change and Coastal Communities**
- **Remembrance and Service**
- **Transport and Connections Between Our Communities**
- **Celebrating Diversity and Inclusion**

- **Innovation Within Historic Towns**
- **The Armed Forces and the Defence of the Coast**
- **Friendship and Cooperation Across the Confederation**

Themes could occasionally coincide with significant national anniversaries, royal occasions or important events in the history of the Cinque Ports.

6. Conclusion

An annual Cinque Ports Day would provide a practical and inclusive way of celebrating the Confederation's shared identity while recognising the individual character of each of its 14 member towns.

The rotating-host arrangement would spread responsibility fairly, allowing every member to take a leading civic role once during each 14-year cycle. Local daytime activities would involve residents directly, while the joint evening gathering would demonstrate the continuing unity of the Confederation.

Cinque Ports Day could therefore become an important annual occasion: honouring the past, celebrating present-day community life and strengthening the Confederation for future generations.

Cllr. John Rivers *July 2026*
Chairman
New Romney Town Council