

Meeting: Culture, Tourism and Sport

Date: 7 December 2022



VisitEngland background briefing

Purpose of report

For information

Summary

Lyndsey Turner Swift, Deputy England Director at VisitEngland, will join the Board for a discussion about VisitEngland's work and key issues for the visitor economy. This paper updates members on issues they might wish to discuss.

Is this report confidential? No

Recommendation

That the Board note the report

Contact details

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VisitEngland background briefing



Background

1. VisitEngland, working alongside VisitBritain, is the national tourism agency. It is a non-departmental public body funded by DCMS. Its statutory duties are to:
 - Encourage people to visit Great Britain and people living in Great Britain to take their holidays there.
 - Encourage the provision and improvement of tourist amenities and facilities in Great Britain.
 - They also have a statutory duty to advise any minister or public body on matters relating to tourism in Great Britain as a whole.
2. In light of the challenges faced by the tourism industry following the pandemic, its corporate priorities for 2022/23 are to:
 - Rebuild international visitor value - position Britain as a dynamic, diverse, sustainable and inclusive destination, prioritising regional and seasonal dispersion and improved productivity.
 - Build our future - transform the way we work to compete in a digital world, build our strengths in data and diversify our funding.
 - Build the English visitor economy - lead and enable a sustainable and resilient visitor economy in England.
 - Build our influence - be the trusted voice in tourism. Support growth by shaping policy and providing insights.
 - Build our team - work as a global team. Ensure our structure and skills best deliver on the strategy.

Independent review of Destination Management Organisations

3. In March 2021, DCMS commissioned an independent review of the DMO landscape in England, evaluating its current funding, structure and performance, with a view to making recommendations on whether there may be a more efficient and effective model for supporting English tourism at a local and regional level and delivering the government's tourism policy agenda. The review was chaired by Nick de Bois, Chair of the VisitEngland Advisory Board, acting in an independent capacity
4. The [LGA responded to the review](#), setting out our view that DMOs would benefit from stronger coordination and direction at a national level, and noting the ongoing pressure on council finances.

5. The review made a [series of recommendations](#) in August 2021, which recognised a number of the points made by the LGA, and which were, in the main, supported by government.
6. This included an approach to accredit and consolidate the fragmented landscape of DMOs, investing in those that can demonstrate the ability to deliver strategic contributions to the growth and management of the local visitor economy – broadly comparable in concept to Arts Council England’s National Portfolio Organisations.

Recent tourism announcements

7. On 25 November 2022, [DCMS announced a pilot scheme](#) to test the new approach to restructure Destination Management Organisations (DMOs).
8. NewcastleGateshead Initiative in the North East was selected to lead a pilot in partnership with Visit Northumberland and Visit County Durham working across seven local authority areas. The partnership will receive £2.25 million to help successfully develop and market the region.
9. The aim of the partnership model is to extend the tourism season and attract more visitors from across the UK and abroad through initiatives such as the creation of Tour de Yorkshire, following the Tour de France stage in Yorkshire back in 2015, or the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham this summer.
10. On 2 December, Government confirmed the [signing of a new mayoral devolution deal](#) with Cornwall. The deal “sets out that Government will work with Cornwall Council on ways to encourage more tourists throughout the year and support the supply of safe and sustainable short term holiday accommodation” including working “more closely with Cornwall Council when considering any changes to alleviate the challenges of second homes and short-term lets.” The deal also includes £500,000 to “support Cornish distinctiveness, including the protection and promotion of the Cornish language.”

Implications for Wales

11. The review was England only, and tourism is a devolved matter.

Financial Implications

12. None.

Equalities implications

13. Academic research has highlighted that domestic marketing is not effectively reaching all parts of our communities and identified the need for better data to enable market segmentation. If the pilot is successful, accredited DMOs should be able to improve data collection and analysis.

14. It is also likely that, coupled with skills devolution, there will be opportunities to improve workforce diversity and inclusivity through this approach.

Next steps

15. Workshops and engagement has taken place with frontline officers involved in tourism. However, now that core proposals have been developed, there is a need to engage and test these ideas at the political level, as well as with senior officers. LGA officers will support VisitEngland to develop an engagement and communication plan to do this.