# VisitEngland Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs)

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## Introduction

**This toolkit, provided as part of VisitEngland’s tailored support for Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs), is your guide to creating, growing and sustaining an accessible destination.**

"As the conductors of tourism at a local level, LVEPs play a key role in developing an accessible and inclusive visitor economy.

This new toolkit provides the most comprehensive set of guidance to date on how LVEPs can drive initiatives that enhance the welcome and provision of inclusive experiences for all.

VisitEngland looks forward to working with all recognised LVEPs to help realise the extensive benefits for domestic tourists, international visitors and local communities with accessibility requirements."

Ross Calladine, Head of Business Support, VisitEngland, Government-appointed Disability and Access Ambassador for Tourism

The [2021 Tourism Recovery Plan](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/992974/Tourism_Recovery_Plan__Web_Accessible_.pdf) recognises the importance of accessible tourism:

“The (2019) Tourism Sector Deal set out an ambition for the UK to become the most accessible tourism destination in Europe by 2025. The UK government remains committed to this target. An inclusive and accessible tourism offer that meets customer needs is good for both businesses and consumers.”

By aligning the growth priorities of your LVEP with this vision, you can play a central role in making it a reality. Understanding the needs of this market and developing an accessible destination is therefore an important part of your role. Read [VisitEngland’s Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-0) for practical guidance on welcoming customers with accessibility requirements.

**Creating an accessible destination may feel like a challenge.**

For destination managers and your businesses,there may be limited understanding about the size and nature of the accessible tourism market. This can lead to a lack of confidence and misconceptions. For example, many assume that the majority of disabled people are wheelchair users, and that any changes needed to become more accessible will therefore be costly and complex. In reality, it is estimated that around 7% of disabled people in England use a wheelchair (source: [NHS wheelchair data](https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/national-wheelchair/) and the [Department for Work and Pensions Family Resources Survey 2018-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-201819)) and there are many small 'no cost' and 'low cost' solutions which can make a huge difference.

For disabled visitors,the perceived lack of a warm welcome can be a major barrier.

Yet, there is no mystery to accessible tourism: at its heart it is about conveying to every visitor that:

* We know you;
* We understand you;
* We value you.

“The path for business is simple - do what you are best at. There is no need to become experts in disability. Attack this market as you would any other.”

“Disabled people don't want 'special' products .... they are hungry to be included in the mainstream consumer experience.” - **Rich Donovan, CEO of the Return on Disability Group**

**“A warm welcome, backed up by improved accessibility and relevant information, can help businesses and the destination as a whole deliver amazing customer service to everybody, and to demonstrate how much you value your customers and clearly understand their needs”. -** [**Simple View Blog**](https://www.simplevieweurope.com/blog/read/2017/07/accessible-tourism-a-competitive-opportunity-for-destinations-and-businesses-b94)

Remember that accessibility cuts across all your target markets: it is not just restricted to the leisure market. It also impacts on the business events market, where major events (such as national or international sporting events) can act as a potential catalyst for change.

### How to use this toolkit

Drawing on best practice case studies from within the UK and internationally, this toolkit provides you with the information and guidance you need to create an accessible destination.

The toolkit is divided into three sections. Each is divided into a number of topic areas with top tips and more in-depth information and guidance when you need it:

1. **Laying the Foundations:** An introduction to the essential ‘building blocks’ of accessible tourism.
2. **Kick-Start programme:** A low cost, high impact destination development programme which utilises the resources you already have to showcase your destination’s accessibility.
3. **Enhanced programme:** A programme requiring additional resources to provide intensive business support.

Laying the Foundations outlines the key areas you first need to develop to create an accessible destination. It has a flexible structure, enabling you to dip into the sections which are relevant to you. If you are new to accessible tourism, it will be helpful to read each section. If your accessible tourism offer is more developed, you may prefer to simply dip into the topics where you feel you need additional support.

The Kick-Start programme builds on these foundations. It offers a step-by-step process to help you create clear destination accessibility information which will highlight your existing accessible tourism products and support visit planning. It is recommended as an initial development programme for all destinations, once the key foundations are in place.

The Enhanced programme is designed to take your accessible destination development one step further. It covers a process developed by VisitEngland over the past decade which utilises additional resources and professional support to enhance the accessibility of key venues. The programme enables businesses to offer a more assured experience for disabled visitors, which are then showcased through a targeted marketing campaign. It is recommended as a follow-on programme to the Kick-Start programme.

The toolkit, which will be updated on a regular basis, will not only help you to develop your accessible tourism offer, but will begin to change the culture of your LVEP and the businesses it supports, by integrating accessibility and inclusion into all your activities.

### Contributors

This toolkit has been created in consultation with a range of destination managers to ensure that it is useful, practical, and pragmatic. VisitEngland thanks the following for giving their time and expertise:

* Lindsay Rae, Deputy Director - Visit Peak District & Derbyshire
* Will Myles, Managing Director - Visit Isle of Wight
* Malcolm Bell, CEO - Visit Cornwall
* Gemma Proctor, Sustainable Tourism Officer - Cumbria Tourism
* Richard Hunt, Strategic Lead, Visitor Economy - Suffolk Growth Partnership
* Richard Swancott, Digital Marketing & Social Media Executive - Enjoy Staffordshire
* Ian Thomas, Destination Director - Newcastle Gateshead Initiative
* Sarah Barrowby, Partnerships & Projects Officer - Scarborough Borough Council

*“Tourism is about emotions: offering and delivering those amazing “wow” experiences and moments for visitors which become treasured memories. Accessible destinations are the ones which deliver this best” -* **Chris Veitch, Inclusive Tourism Consultant**

## Section 1. Laying the Foundations

**At a glance:**

**An accessible destination - the building blocks**

1. Why do this?
2. Learning from other destinations
3. Leadership and culture change
4. Strategy and policy
5. Working with stakeholders
6. Supporting your businesses
7. Providing accessibility information
8. Celebrating success
9. Destination audit
10. Funding

The following sections outline the building blocks for creating accessible tourism in your destination. Each is equally important.

Considering these elements will help to ensure that any specific accessible tourism development programmes you undertake, such as the Kick-Start and Enhanced programmes outlined later in this toolkit, have the best chance of success.

### 1: Why do this?

**Top Tips:**

* **Learn more about accessibility to support your work**
* **Understand the drivers for creating an accessible destination**
* **Explore the guidance and support outlined in the business toolkit to help you**

“Empathy is very important. We need to make sure that no one feels different, making sure that disabled people and others with access requirements who visit for the day, a month or a year get the same experience as everybody else and not a different one.” - **Will Myles – Managing Director, Visit Isle of Wight**

#### Understand the benefits of accessible and inclusive tourism

Accessible tourism benefits your destination in several ways, including:

* Improving customer service and the visitor experience;
* Meeting the needs of underserved markets i.e. disabled people;
* Responding to changing markets i.e. an ageing population;
* Tapping into the growth of ‘3G’ family holidays and breaks (where three generations of a family travel together);
* Ensuring that valuable business is not lost: one person with accessibility requirements can influence a whole group's travel plans;
* Contributing to sustainable and responsible tourism product development;
* Growing visitor numbers, both domestically and inbound;
* Supporting resilience and recovery in times of crisis e.g. the COVID 19 pandemic;
* Creating more job opportunities for disabled people;
* Boosting the image of your destination.

“We would love to do more with multi-generational holidays and the older market, people who are 75 and over wanting to revisit holidays that they had in their youth.” We need to remember that inside many older people is the mind of a 30-40 year old, you can be looked on as old but inside you are not and still want to do many things” -

**Malcolm Bell – CEO, Visit Cornwall**

#### Explore the Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses

The [VisitEngland Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-0) provides further information on the legal, commercial and ethical importance of accessibility, including guidance related to:

* Customer groups and their accessibility requirements;
* Providing an inclusive welcome with integrity and empathy at its heart;
* Providing inclusive features and facilities (whether physical, digital or operational);
* Marketing your accessibility to potential and existing disabled customers;
* Becoming a more inclusive employer and creating an inclusive internal culture;
* Measuring success.

“Although we are focusing on the big economic benefit in making improvements in accessibility in the visitor economy, there are improvements linked with health and wellbeing for local residents as well”. - **Richard Hunt – Strategic Lead: Visitor Economy, Suffolk Growth Partnership**

Encouraging your LVEP team to explore the business toolkit will ensure that you have a common understanding of accessible tourism and that you are able to provide consistent information and advice to your businesses.

**Action Tip: Explore the Business Toolkit**

To help with the familiarisation process, you may wantto hold an in-house workshop with all your LVEP staff to:

* Introduce the business toolkit content;
* Discuss how everyone can promote the toolkit to your businesses, partners and stakeholders.

An LVEP Business Toolkit Workshop tool is available in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of this toolkit.

### 2: Learn from other destinations

**Top Tips:**

* **Benchmark your destination against others to see how your accessible tourism offering compares**
* **Network with other LVEPs and other organisations operating at a regional level, enabling you to learn from each other**
* **Tap into existing resources for inspiration**

#### Benchmark your destination

Benchmarking your destination against others is a good starting point, both to assess your current level of accessibility and to learn from the experiences and established good practice of others.

The drive towards making tourism more accessible began over 40 years ago in England. This means that, whether you are just starting out on your accessible tourism journey or have a more developed offering, there are lots of opportunities to learn from the experiences of others.

The examples provided throughout this toolkit will help you with this process. It will also be important for you to keep up to date with developments in the accessible tourism sector as you progress.

**Action Tip: Benchmark your destination**

To help you with the benchmarking process, you can view examples of destination organisations already have a well-developed accessible tourism offering:

* [Visit Peak District & Derbyshire](https://www.visitpeakdistrict.com/blog/accessible-places-to-visit-in-the-peak-district-and-derbyshire)
* [Visit Buckinghamshire](https://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/accessibility)
* [Visit Kent](https://www.visitkent.co.uk/stay-and-eat/getting-here/accessible-kent/)
* [Visit Cornwall](https://www.visitcornwall.com/accessibility)
* [Visit Bristol](https://visitbristol.co.uk/your-visit/accessible)
* [Visit Bath](https://visitbath.co.uk/plan-your-visit/accessible-bath)
* [Visit London](https://www.visitlondon.com/traveller-information/essential-information/accessible-london)
* [Visit Lincoln](https://www.visitlincoln.com/about-lincoln/accessible-lincoln/)
* [Newcastle Gateshead](https://newcastlegateshead.com/plan-your-visit/accessibility-in-newcastlegateshead)
* [Visit Windsor](https://www.windsor.gov.uk/visitor-information/travelling-with-a-disability)

Take a look at the following examples of their provision:

**Consumer-facing website**

* Do they have a section on their consumer website dedicated to accessibility information?
* Do they have a filter system or ‘search’ function, enabling potential visitors to find tourism products which meet their access needs with ease?
* Does accessibility and inclusion run as a thread throughout all their content and campaigns?

**Business-facing website**

* Do they provide support or resources for their businesses to understand accessible tourism? What form does this take?
* Do they have a business-to-business marketing campaign based around accessible tourism?
* How does their business information and support on accessibility differ from what you are doing? What can you learn from this?

“I’m a real believer in sharing best practices.. Destination managers can learn so much from each other”- **Neil Chapman - Managing Director, Hovertravel**

#### Network

Networking is another way for you and your businesses to learn from others.

Proactively connect with other LVEPs, enabling you to learn from, and support, each other. You could also consider partnering with another LVEP - ask your VisitEngland Regional Development Lead for advice on suitable partner destinations. If accessible tourism is new to you, it makes sense to partner with a destination whose accessible tourism offering is at a more mature stage. Alternatively, if you are already at a more advanced stage, you may want to volunteer to mentor another destination just starting out.

**Action Tip: Network**

* Check if any of your existing networks are looking at accessibility
* Suggest that accessible tourism is a topic for future meetings, networking events or conferences
* Consider creating a subgroup focussing on accessible tourism to share information and good practice. This should include key stakeholders in your destination such as your Local Authorities.
* Look at other networks which might be helpful, such as the [European Network for Accessible tourism](https://www.accessibletourism.org/) (ENAT).

#### Tap into existing resources

Case studies and best practice guidance are provided throughout this toolkit, including national and international best practice and examples from different destination types such as rural, urban and coastal areas.

### 3.  Leadership and culture change

**Top Tips:**

* **Procure accessible tourism training for your team**
* **Share your vision for accessible destination development with businesses and stakeholders**
* **Incorporate access and inclusion into your day-to-day activities to facilitate culture change.**

#### Lead on accessible and inclusive tourism development

As the organisation leading on destination development, it is important that you have a clear vision for accessible tourism which is reflected in your strategy and ways of working. To facilitate this, you and your team need to understand accessible tourism and the value of creating an accessible destination.

**Action Tip: Lead on accessible and inclusive tourism development**

Procure accessible tourism training for your team, covering:

* An overview of accessible tourism;
* The barriers for disabled people and others with accessibility requirements, both at business and at destination level, and the solutions which can help to overcome them;
* Marketing accessibility and Accessibility information;
* Action planning: what will you do differently as a result of the training?

A [list of disability awareness training providers](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-0#training-providers--3) is included in the business toolkit.

Your leadership role also extends to your businesses and stakeholders. By sharing your strategy and vision for accessible destination development with them, you can begin to create a holistic, destination-wide approach to accessible tourism development.

**Action Tip: Vision and strategy**

* Develop a vision / mission statement and strategy for the development of accessible and inclusive tourism in your destination, which aligns with your overall vision for your LVEP
* Share your vision and strategy with your businesses and your wider stakeholder group to:
* Demonstrate your commitment to accessible tourism development;
* Engage with other key stakeholders, businesses and local communities;
* Encourage them to become actively involved in your plans;
* Develop ownership of the role they play in improving destination; accessibility.

“LVEPs have a leadership role. They can fulfil this by giving encouragement and sharing best practices within their network and members.

They can also be role models of best practice themselves. For example, by featuring inclusive images within marketing materials, which shows leadership and demonstrates what others should do. It may motivate their business partners to think more about this if it was not previously on their agenda.” - **Neil Chapman - Managing Director, Hovertravel**

#### Change culture

Through effective leadership, you can encourage long term culture change: new ways of working where accessible tourism is part of mainstream activities and not an ‘add on’.

Consider ways in which you can get your team on board and involved, so that they take ownership of accessibility development.

Incorporating access and inclusion into all your activities will support this culture change. It may also help to amplify its importance to your businesses more effectively than only hosting ‘stand-alone’ accessibility events.

Whilst culture change does not happen overnight, time, consistency and patience will help new ways of working become ‘just the way we do things round here’.

**Action Tip: Mainstream accessibility**

Include accessibility criteria within your:

* Training programmes;
* Procurement briefs;
* Funding opportunities;
* Awards programmes.

Think about the workshops you regularly hold and consider how you might integrate accessibility within these, for example:

* + A marketing workshop could include ‘marketing your accessibility’;
	+ A photography workshop could include ‘creating inclusive imagery’;
	+ A website workshop could include ‘Providing online accessibility information’;
	+ A social media workshop could include ‘Inclusive social media hints and tips’;
	+ A customer service workshop could include ‘Welcoming visitors with accessibility requirements’.

Remember to include signposting to the [Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-0) in all of the above.

“Accessibility and inclusion should always be an integral part of destination planning and marketing. Being an accessible destination not only helps visitors to feel like they are truly appreciated and welcomed wherever they go, but it also enables tourism businesses to access a valuable share of the accessible tourism market.

Improving accessibility provides an invaluable opportunity to obtain loyal customers, increase overnight stays, boost visitor spend, extend the tourism season and, above all else, provide memorable and enjoyable experiences for people with additional access needs. It benefits all visitors and doesn't always require major or expensive changes.

There are many ways that destinations can get involved, from hosting workshops and training on accessibility, to ensuring that accessibility is at the heart of key events such as conferences and networking events.

Visit Peak District & Derbyshire has been committed to seeking funding to improve accessible tourism in the area, and we're proud that our recent European Regional Development Fund project, 'Growing and Developing the Visitor Economy in Derbyshire', identified accessibility as a key strand. As a result, we've helped hundreds of local businesses improve their accessibility and inclusivity, fuelling their growth as a result.

Accessibility funding and workshops have served as a catalyst for change for many local tourism businesses, and we're proud to have 40 accredited Accessibility Champions – and counting – in the Peak District and Derbyshire, who fly the flag for accessible tourism in the area.” - **Lindsay Rae – Deputy Director and Head of Industry Engagement, VisitPeakDistrict and Derbyshire**

### 4. Strategy and policy

**Top Tips:**

* **Include an objective on accessible tourism as part of your LVEP strategy/vision**
* **Identify the steps needed to achieve this within your Destination Management Plan**
* **Monitor your progress against this plan on a regular basis**

#### Adapt your Destination Management Plan

VisitEngland has created a [guide to Destination Management Planning](https://www.visitbritain.org/guide-destination-management-planning). As the main strategy document for your destination, your Destination Management Plan (DMP) should include accessible destination development.

**Action Tip: Destination Management Plan**

You could incorporate accessible tourism into your destination management plan in several ways:

* Identifying accessible destination development as one of the principles and aims for your destination over the next five years;
* Specifying accessibility as one of your ‘brand values’;
* Highlighting accessible tourism as part of your strategic direction and priorities accompanied by a set of clear objectives;
* Including accessible tourism in the vision statement for your destination e.g., ‘to create an accessible, inclusive tourism destination for the benefit of all our visitors and local communities’;
* Specifying the key steps required to achieve the above in any action plan for destination development. These may include:
	+ The identification of access barriers within your destination e.g. by carrying out destination access audit;
	+ The removal of these barriers to the greatest extent possible;
	+ The development of accessible information, facilities and services;
	+ Marketing and promoting the accessibility of your destination, its businesses and tourism products.

For example, the [DMP fromShropshire](https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/25328/shropshire-dmp-2023-25-jan-2023.pdf) reflects the benefits of wellbeing for local residents and accessibility as part of their sustainability agenda.

In addition to your DMP, your LVEP Growth Plan includes a section on aligning with Government priorities, which includes accessibility and inclusivity. You should look to include the approaches set out in this toolkit within your Growth Plan at the next review point, which may include elements of the ‘Laying the foundations’ section and/or one of the two programmes. Your VisitEngland Regional Development Lead can support you with selecting appropriate actions.

Your DMP and LVEP Growth Plan should support a continuous process of learning and improvement both within your LVEP and the wider stakeholder group. This will help to ensure that all future development actions and initiatives will be in line with the overall goal of accessible destination development.

#### Monitor progress

Setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at destination level will help you to monitor your progress. You could also ask businesses participating in the programme to keep a list of the changes they have made and the impact these have had, including positive feedback from visitors which they are happy to share.

**Action Tip: Monitoring progress**

Consider the KPIs you can set at destination level, which could include:

* The number of businesses in your region with Detailed Access Guides;
* The number of Changing Places toilets you have;
* The number of page views on your website accessibility page;
* The number of businesses who are listed within this section;
* The number of businesses who have submitted applications for any accessibility award categories you have.

### 5. Work with stakeholders

**Top Tips:**

* **Accessible tourism needs to be developed across the entire tourism value chain to improve destination accessibility**
* **Working closely with stakeholders will help to achieve this**
* **Including people with lived experience within this process is important**

#### Understand the Tourism Value Chain

Any chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and the tourism value chain is no different: if one ‘link’ in the chain is inaccessible for a potential visitor, it is likely that their custom, and that of anyone travelling with them, will be lost. It is also likely to pose challenges for local communities. It is therefore important to consider all the links in your value chain when developing your accessible tourism offer. For example you may have accessible accommodation, but if visitors are unable to visit any local restaurants that meet their requirements, they are much less likely to book.

#### **Identify key stakeholders**

The organisations operating at destination level across the value chain, along with visitors and local communities, are your stakeholders. They include:

* Local businesses – tourism and non-tourism related. These are covered separately in the ‘Supporting your businesses’ section of this toolkit;
* Public realm providers, including Local Authorities;
* Transport providers;
* The local community, including people with lived experience.

Working closely with each of these groups is essential to improving destination accessibility.

#### Work with transport providers

Transport providers serving your destinationneed to ensure that they offer accessible rail, bus and taxi services to move people to, from and around your destination with ease. Many providers offer information about their accessibility, and the Kick-Start programme highlights how you can utilise this. Where transport providers do not offer accessibility information you can encourage them to provide it, highlighting the importance of offering this level of detail for your visitors and local communities.

“Public transport is such a crucial part of giving many people access to tourist destinations who would otherwise struggle to get access. So many of the big policy issues come together when you talk about accessible transport, including reliability. People need to know they are going to get the space and assistance they may need, are going to get there on time and it is going to be good value. For so many disabled people the major modes of transport outside of the private vehicle are taxis, private hire vehicles and buses.”- **Keith Richards Chair and Non-Executive Director. National Centre for Accessible Transport (NCAT)**

**Case study: Blackpool Buses App**

Blackpool Transport’s buses and trams has a mobile app to help people get around the Fylde Coast. Visitors can plan journeys, buy tickets and track buses and trams in real time, all in one travel assistant.

Thanks to funding from the Access Fylde Coast project, Blackpool Transport made it a high priority to ensure that the app offers good information for disabled people. Using the 'Venue Facilities' tab, vistors can see in advance the accessible facilties that are going to be available to them when they arrive at their destination.

Working jointly with their app developers and Access Fylde Coast, they profiled 50 visitor attractions and added BSL videos, large format text and accessibility information for each one.

This was part of a wider scheme of work carried out by Access Fylde Coast, funded by the Coastal Communities Fund, aimed at improving accessibility for residents and visitors to the area.

**Case Study: Hovertravel**

Hovertravel is an example of a transport provider which excels in its accessible and inclusive provision.

It is committed to ensure that access and travel on its hovercraft, in its terminals and during all elements of the end-to-end journey, are as comfortable and safe as possible.

Their accessibility initiative, HoverCare, has been chosen by the UK Government as a case study to provide guidance on the [Inclusive Transport Leaders Scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/inclusive-transport-leaders-scheme) which aims to improve transport for disabled people. HoverCare is an award-winning service for any Hovertravel customer requiring assistance with their travel, whether they have reduced mobility requirements or just need a little extra help with their journey.

In every team at Hovertravel, there is a HoverCare ambassador. Alongside their usual roles, ambassadors undertake specialised disability awareness training, including level 2 guide dogs training and specific training relating to mental health awareness. They then relay this expertise back to their teams and use what they have learned to ensure that accessibility is at the forefront of Hovertravel’s customer service. Their responsibilities also include hosting ‘Try Before You Fly’ days and helping to evaluate mystery shopper reports.

They offer their customers a Hovercare Card, which helps ensure that when they travel they can receive extra assistance without having to ask.

The Sunflower lanyard scheme is also recognised. Customers can choose to wear a Sunflower to indicate they may require additional support, assistance, or simply a little more time while traveling. Employees have been trained using the bespoke Sunflower training.

Customers are offered a range of accessibility aids such as:

* Ear plugs;
* Ear defenders;
* Wheelchairs;
* Walking frames;
* Walking sticks;
* Hearing loops.

Recent accessibility developments include the installation of Changing Places facilities at both terminals. These were fully funded by South Western Railway’s Island Line through their Customer and Communities Improvement Fund.

#### Work with the public realm and the natural environment

Together with transport providers, the public realm creates the foundations which support destination accessibility. The term ‘public realm’ refers to all parts of the built environment to which the public has free access, includingthe natural environment.

Spaces, roads, parks, paths and trails need to be well surfaced, well lit and provide good signage. They also need to be supported by an accessible infrastructure which includes accessible toilets, Changing Places toilets and accessible parking provision. Stakeholders within the public realm and the natural environment include:

* + Your Local Authority, District and Borough Councils, some of whom will have their own Access Officer;
	+ Town Teams and Town Centre Managers;
	+ Your National Park Authority - many National Parks offer accessible trails, adapted cycle hire, Trampers and ‘Miles Without Stiles’ barrier-free routes.

**Case study: The London Plan**

The [London Plan](https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/planning/london-plan/the-london-plan-2021-online/chapter-3-design#policy-d8-public-realm-169692-title) (Policy D8, Public Realm) is an example of how the public realm should be viewed. It states that development plans and proposals should “ensure the public realm is well-designed, safe, accessible, inclusive, attractive, well-connected, related to the local and historic context, and easy to understand, service and maintain.”

Unless you are within a Local Authority it is likely that you will have no direct control over the public realm, so developing a relationship with these stakeholders is important. This will enable you to outline the value of accessible tourism and explore how partnership working on accessibility improvements could spread investment costs between your organisations. You could also encourage these key partners to incorporate accessibility improvements into their own development plans.

**Action Tip: Work with the public realm and the natural environment**

To help build your relationship with public realm stakeholders and begin to build a shared vision, you could look to:

* establish a destination accessibility working group with your transport providers and Local Authority
* identify common objectives, set priorities and agree a timetable for action
* plan together – and co-ordinate planning cycles
* undertake a joint audit of your destination’s accessibility or an analysis of its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), being honest about any gaps and weaknesses in the visitor journey which can then be addressed
* work together to ensure that consistent messages about the benefits of accessible tourism are promoted to businesses within the destination
* jointly signpost to where relevant support can be found e.g. the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses
* seek to jointly influence businesses in different sectors of the economy that serve tourists, such as retail.

**Case study: Newcastle**

As part of a regeneration programme for Newcastle, bus routes are being taken out of the city centre due to pedestrianisation.

Ian Thomas, Destination Director at the Newcastle Gateshead Initiative (NGI) observes that “this has implications for anyone living outside of the city with accessibility requirements, especially those with a mobility impairment. If they can no longer catch a bus which stops near the places in the city centre they want to visit, it doesn't matter how pedestrianised it is because they won’t be able to get there. Some of the changes you think you are making for the good may not actually help people”.

Ian gives another example of how aspects of the local infrastructure had a negative impact on the visitor economy: “We also had a local example of people booking a restaurant but not being able to get in because there was no dropped kerb nearby. How many other businesses may be missing out because of similar barriers in the public realm?”

Where possible, ensure that your Local Authority is aware of any concerns you have about factors within their control which may have a negative impact on the visitor economy.

The following case studies provide information about initiatives in the public realm which have improved inclusion and increased opportunities for businesses. They show what can be done and it may be helpful to share these with Local Authority partners, both to highlight good practice and to inspire change.

**Case study: The South Bank, London**

As part of the legacy of the 2012 Olympics, London’s South Bank underwent a £4m makeover to make it more accessible for visitors. The project was a partnership between Lambeth and Southwark Councils, the Greater London Authority, English Heritage and local businesses.

The South Bank is a destination in itself and links the area’s main attractions, restaurants, cafés and bars. It was recognised as being a difficult area to navigate, especially for people with accessibility requirements. Visitors, especially wheelchair users, had to take long detours if they wanted to stay on relatively level surfaces, avoiding cobbles.

**Stakeholders**

Before embarking on changing the area, the authorities working on the project engaged with disabled people in the area by:

* Inviting them to undertake an accessibility audit of the South Bank, together with accessibility professionals. This generated detailed recommendations which were tracked right through the design process.
* Working with Greater London’s Built Environment Access Panel to act as a sounding board for designs as they were developed.
* Liaising with Southwark’s own local groups representing disabled people, including the Southwark Disablement Association, to provide feedback at the detailed design stage.

**Improvements undertaken:**

* Removal of kerbs to create a level surface;
* Resurfacing a historic street using granite. This provided a smooth, accessible surface in keeping with the historic nature of the area;
* Removing a step at one of the area’s piers, enabling a viewing area to be opened;
* Installing new benches with arm rests and back rests;
* Improving wayfinding by delivering a new raft of [‘Legible London’ Signage](https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/boroughs-and-communities/legible-london)’.

**Benefits**

The enhanced accessibility delivered benefits not only for disabled people, but for all visitors and the local community. Providing an area which could be visited by more people, for longer periods, also generated increased footfall for businesses, improving the wider visitor economy.

Through the successful delivery of the Accessible South Bank project, South Bank is now in partnership with [AccessAble](https://www.accessable.co.uk/) which provides accessibility information about venues. It now has over 50 venues, cultural attractions, hotels and public spaces providing detailed information for visitors with a wide range of accessibility requirements.

**Case study: Hull City Council**

Street clutter, such as street café furniture, bollards and advertising boards can be a major problem for people who are blind or partially sighted.

Hull City Council worked with local disabled people’s organisations, the Hull Access Improvement Group and the RNIB to address this issue, becoming the first council in the UK to launch its street charter. ‘Who Put That There?’ was a three-year plan to put a clear highway policy at the heart of local decision making. This also included tackling temporary road works, overgrown branches and shrubs, bins, cars parked on pavements and shared space schemes.

#### Work with the local community

As well as benefitting from accessible destination development, local communities can also help to shape it.

The impetus for change and the development of accessible tourism will not always come from you but from within your local community where individuals or groups such as **Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs)**, often with first-hand, lived experience of disability, may already be working to improve the local area.

There is great value in engaging with these individuals and groups whose efforts to improve accessibility not only benefit the local community, but also visitors to the area and the regional tourism economy.

As an LVEP, you can proactively look for these ‘change makers’ with a view to including them in your accessible tourism development process by:

* Tapping into their expertise to help shape your approach and identify other individuals and businesses you may want to involve;
* Utilising their experience to create case studies or blog posts for your website to help engage and inspire others;
* Inviting them to tourism networking events or conferences either as participants, exhibitors or speakers.

Once you have identified relevant groups, or individuals, you can ask:

* What are their priorities for improving the destination?
* What businesses and venues do they feel are particularly accessible?
* Would they like to be informed as you develop the accessibility of your destination?
* Would they like to be involved, for example as mystery shoppers?
* Do any of them have experience as trainers or auditors?

Many Local Authorities facilitate DPOs, sometimes called Disability Partnership Boards or Disability Action Groups. Engaging with these groups will enable you to ask people with accessibility requirements about venues they would recommend as accessible. This ‘co-production’ will also help to create an important sense of ownership within the local community.

**Case study: Elizabeth Dixon, Stratford-upon-Avon**

One example of an individual making a difference is Elizabeth Dixon, Independent Disability Advisor, living in Stratford-upon-Avon and founder of [accessibletratforduponavon.co.uk](https://www.accessiblestratforduponavon.co.uk/)

[“My Accessible Stratford-upon-Avon guide](https://www.accessiblestratforduponavon.co.uk/My%20Accessible%20Stratford%20upon%20Avon.pdf) is funded by donations from a Stratford charity, the Town and District councils and Shopmobility. It was collated by me and local sixth formers using a pro-forma I'd prepared. I know from Shopmobility, our Visitor Centre and the Town Hosts they find the basic information in the guide useful for visitors, especially the specific map for blue badge parking and accessible toilets!”

**Case Study: Hebden Bridge Disability Access Forum (HEBDAF)**

Visit Calderdale engaged with the Hebden Bridge Disability Access Forum (HBDAF) who created a [map of accessible routes around Hebden Bridge town centre](https://www.visitcalderdale.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/HBaccessmapFront-Backfinalsep-2022-1-1.pdf). The map shows wheelchair-friendly pavements, accessible toilets, parking spaces and bus stops. The back of the map lists the premises which have step-free access (a maximum 2.5cm rise for safe wheelchair use), hearing loops and accessible toilets.

Visit Calderdale offer the map as a resource for visitors and the local community on their website.

Stickers on shop windows indicate that the business has a portable ramp, with shopkeepers quickly responding to a knock on the window to attract their attention. The portable ramps are an easy and cost-effective way of enabling wheelchair users, and people unable to manage steps, to access the area’s shops.

**Action Tip: Disabled People’s Organisations (DPOs)**

To find out about disabled people’s organisations near you:

* Visit the [Shaping Our Lives](https://shapingourlives.org.uk/user-led-organisations/) website, which lists over 320 DPOs throughout the country;
* Contact service providers in your region who support people with accessibility requirements, such as [Leonard Cheshire](https://www.leonardcheshire.org/) and [Macintyre](https://www.macintyrecharity.org/);
* Reach out to your local [U3A](https://www.u3a.org.uk/): a nationwide learning and activity network for older people;
* Talk to your local [National Council of Voluntary Organisations](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/#/) who will have details of smaller organisations and charities in your region.

You may choose to reach out to these stakeholders individually or hold a joint workshop or roundtable where people can share their experiences.

### 6. Support your businesses

**Top Tips:**

* **Understanding business motivations and concerns can help to increase engagement**
* **Positioning accessibility as a business improvement tool will support this**
* **Providing training, networking and conferences on accessibility will help to share knowledge and best practice**

#### Engage with businesses

Supporting your businesses to improve their accessibility is a key part of your LVEP’s role. Understanding what is important to them can help you to ensure that your communications around accessibility have impact and that your support is targeted effectively.

“Businesses tend to focus on what they cannot do rather than on what they could do. They are often frightened of offending e.g. with terminology – we get asked “is it ‘disabled people’ or ‘people with disabilities’?”- **Lindsay Rae, Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire**

SMEs may not always respond to the headlines outlining the volume and value of the accessibility market and the fact that they may be missing out. Each business will have its own vision and aims, and what motivates one business may not motivate another. Priorities may include:

* Remaining in business due to external pressures of high running costs / reduced demand;
* Improving competitiveness;
* Creating a Unique Selling Point;
* Enhancing customer service and quality of experience;
* Addressing seasonality;
* Serving the local community better;
* Improving resilience in times of crisis.

Enhancing accessibility is not only a way of improving the visitor experience for customers with accessibility requirements, but also a continuous business improvement tool which supports all of the above. Including this message in your communications can help to increase engagement with your businesses.

There may be other perceived barriers to engagement. Understanding and addressing these is equally important. Those running ‘lifestyle businesses’, for example, may have a large proportion of regular customers and not feel the need to increase visitor numbers. For these businesses, the message may be to ‘grow with your customer’. As regular visitors grow older, they are likely to acquire more accessibility requirements. Making accessibility improvements will therefore help to retain them by continuing to meet their needs.

The Potential Business Barriers tool in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit provides other examples of perceived barriers for businesses, along with some suggested responses.

Ensuring that accessibility is a common thread which runs through all your business support activities will help to maintain momentum and position accessible tourism as part of your mainstream offer.

“A key barrier to accessible tourism development is the nature of industry, as businesses have so much on their plate. Our experience shows they would love to do more, but feel they have more important things to spend their money on and they say that with regret. They are also frightened of getting it wrong – ‘If I don't know how to do it, I would rather not do it’ – and of being harangued on social media if they do.

Raising awareness is not always an easy process. It can take a lot of time for businesses to have a full understanding of visitor requirements. There are also lots of businesses whose premises offer some challenges e.g. they may have a ground floor bedroom but also have a gravel carpark to negotiate or steps with no handrail – and they are not sure how to deal with this.” - **Malcolm Bell – CEO, Visit Cornwall**

**Action Tip: Engage with businesses**

To help mainstream accessibility into all your business support activities you could:

* Ensure that any guidance that you publish highlights the benefits of accessibility and emphasises inclusive tourism as a priority for your destination;
* Include accessibility as a theme within all the business support events you hold;
* Include the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses, and the importance of providing accessibility information, as an agenda item at business networking events, such as your annual visitor economy conference;
* Host a webinar for your businesses and partners on the business toolkit. Record this if you can so that it can be accessed by businesses who could not attend;
Include regular messaging about any accessibility training available within your regular communications with businesses.

The PowerPoint presentation on the Business Toolkit in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit can be used to promote the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses at your destination events.

Hosting short webinars on a regular basis to keep businesses up to date with progress on any accessibility initiatives will help to maintain momentum. These may also act as a tool to engage with new businesses. Remember to record any webinars so that they become part of the wider resources that businesses can tap into at any time.

When reaching out to your businesses, it is also useful to consider their other sources of advice, including local and national membership organisations /Trade Associations such as:

* [UK Hospitality](https://www.ukhospitality.org.uk/)
* [the LEP Network](https://www.lepnetwork.net/)
* [Federation of Small Businesses](https://www.fsb.org.uk/)
* [Business Disability Forum](https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/)
* [Chambers of Commerce](https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/)

Ideally these organisations should also be promoting the same message about the benefits of accessibility. Working with them will help to ensure consistent messaging within your destination.

#### Offer training

Offering training is a fundamental part of the business support package your LVEP provides. This should include workshops, webinars and networking opportunities on accessibility as part of your regular training offering and programme of events.

Training will help managers and front-line staff to understand the accessible tourism market, the barriers which visitors with accessibility requirements may face and how these can be overcome. By improving the skills, knowledge and confidence of staff it will support them in providing a warm welcome to every customer. [View a list of potential training providers](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-0#training-providers--3).

As part of any training, you may also want to encourage businesses to work towards a common set of minimum accessibility standards, such as providing accessibility information and providing training for front-line staff. Signposting businesses to the Top 20 Tips and Action Checklists within the [Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-0) will highlight other key steps they can take to improve their accessible and inclusive offering. It will be useful to bear these venues in mind when identifying businesses to include in your Kick-Start programme.

**Action Tip: B2B top tips**

Consider running a B2B campaign featuring the Top 20 Tips on providing an inclusive welcome, which are shared on a regular basis through your usual social media channels. This is a ‘low cost’ approach for you and a quick and easy way for businesses to digest and learn.

#### Networking and mentoring for businesses

Facilitating networking with others, whether formal or informal, is a practical way to engage businesses, share knowledge and increase confidence.

You could also encourage informal mentoring where businesses support each other to develop their accessible tourism products. A more formal mentoring process forms part of the Enhanced programme.

#### Facilitate conferences

Conferences around the theme of accessibility are another good way for businesses to network and learn. These may include accessible tourism specialists, local businesses and suppliers of products which support accessible tourism. Further information on hosting accessibility conferences can be found in the Enhanced programme.

### 7. Providing accessibility information

**Top Tips:**

* **Providing accurate accessibility information is important for your LVEP and the businesses you support**
* **Ensuring that your LVEP website meets website accessibility guidelines is also key**
* **Disability and Health awareness days can be used as part of your marketing strategy**

Information is important for us all when making travel plans. For disabled visitors, having access to relevant accessibility information is often a vital element which guides destination choice.

[The Euan’s Guide Access Survey, 2022](https://www.euansguide.com/news/2022-access-survey-results-disabled-people-are-excluded-from-everyday-life-by-poor-disabled-access-information/) found that 91% of disabled people will try to find accessibility information about a new place before they visit. Where this is missing, 58% of people will avoid visiting because they assume the venue is inaccessible. This is reinforced by a [2018 survey by AccessAble](https://www.accessable.co.uk/articles/new-survey-highlights-major-accessibility-gap-for-uk-s-20-million-disabled-people-and-carers) which found that 98% of disabled people will check accessibility in advance, and 81% will expect to find this information on a venue’s website.

The first step a business can take to improve their accessibility is to ensure they provide accessibility information, e.g. via an AccessAble Detailed Access Guide, which you should encourage. You can also actively encourage your visitors to look for businesses which provide these guides.

The need to provide relevant, accurate information alongside effective marketing also applies to LVEPs. This principle is at the heart of the Kick-Start programme, which enables you to maximise accessibility information for your destination using few resources.

As a first step, you will need to ensure that your LVEP website meets [W3C / WCAG](https://www.w3.org/) website accessibility standards. You will also need to create an ‘Accessibility’ section on your LVEP website which potential visitors can find with ease. The Kick-Start development programme will help you to populate this section with your destination’s existing accessible tourism products.

**Case study: Parallel Windsor**

“In July 2023 [Parallel Windsor](https://www.parallellifestyle.com/windsor2023), a festival of inclusivity, with events for all ages, health conditions & abilities, was held in Windsor Great Park. We were keen to ensure that people had the information they needed to make informed choices for their visit.

We reached out to the businesses that are leading the way in the borough such as [Legoland Windsor](https://www.legoland.co.uk/plan-your-day/before-you-visit/accessibility/), [Ascot Racecourse](https://www.ascot.com/accessibility-2020), [Windsor Castle](https://www.rct.uk/visit/windsor-castle/mobility-access#/) and [The Crown Estate](https://www.windsorgreatpark.co.uk/en/visit/accessibility) and asked then to support our initiative, which they were all keen to do. [Access Guides](https://www.accessable.co.uk/royal-borough-of-windsor-and-maidenhead) were developed for Windsor & Eton by [AccessAble](https://www.accessable.co.uk/) and a free Disability Essentials e-learning programme was made available for any local businesses wanting to improve their welcome and customer experience. This was accompanied by a webinar highlighting the opportunities of the accessible tourism market, hosted by AccessAble, Parallel Windsor and the local Disability & Inclusion Forum.

We created a section on our website dedicated to providing information for disabled travellers and added a link to the Access Guides along with other useful information to support visit planning.

We really feel that this not only improved the accessibility of the Parallel Windsor event, but also the destination as a whole.” - Julia White, Visitor Manager, VisitWindsor

#### Utilise disability awareness days

The [Business Disability Forum](https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/) (BDF) highlights how disability and health awareness days can be useful for organisations as part of their accessibility marketing strategy. You could utilise these to help you raise awareness about your work on accessibility and inclusion. Knowing about these key dates well in advance will help you to prepare relevant communications or activities. The BDF’s advice is:

Before you decide to focus on a specific day, week or month, you might think about:

* whom you want to engage with and what you want to achieve?
* how will you ensure your activities are informed and driven by disabled employees or users of your products or services?
* what the lasting legacy might be afterwards?’

The BDF also has a calendar on their website which you can check to see which [awareness days and dates](https://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/media-centre/disability-awareness-dates/) are planned.

One which is strongly recommended to help give a boost to your work on accessibility is [Purple Tuesday](https://purpletuesday.co/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIqNabst_W_gIVkr7tCh25twTmEAAYASAAEgIjsPD_BwE). This annual event, of which VisitEngland is a Founding Partner, gives another route to help amplify your voice and showcase your work.

Communicating some of these key dates with your businesses will encourage them to take part too.

**Case Study: Purple Tuesday**

**What is Purple Tuesday?**

Purple Tuesday is a national initiative that aims to improve the customer experience for disabled people and their families 365 days a year. It calls on organisations to improve their services, remove barriers and make their experiences accessible to all.

Each year, Purple Tuesday recognises all the positive changes that organisations have made to improve the disabled customer experience on a global disabled customer celebration day, held on the first Tuesday of November.

In 2022:

* 6,000 organisations participated from across all sectors and of all sizes, from well-known corporates to micro enterprises;
* over 7,000 improvements to accessibility were made;
* five countries participated;
* 23 million people were reached by the initiative.

**How to get involved**

Your LVEP can sign up to be a Purple Tuesday participant for free. To get involved, you will need to:

* complete this [registration form](https://purpletuesday.co/Get-Involved/Overview);
* make one commitment that will improve your accessibility;
* implement the change during the year;
* recognise your disabled visitors and the improvements you have made as part of the global celebration day held in November.

Participating organisations are sent marketing assets to promote their participation in the movement, as well as learning resources to support their employees to become more disability aware.

#### Marketing campaigns

While the Kick-Start programme provides guidance on how to populate your accessibility information for promotion on owned and earned channels, the Enhanced Programme provides more detailed guidance on creating a specific marketing campaign, including:

* Commissioning inclusive photography;
* Planning your campaign;
* Determining your target market;
* Selecting appropriate marketing channels;
* Creating relevant content.

### 8. Recognise good practice

**Top Tips**

* **Recognise the businesses who join your accessibility programmes and promote their successes**
* **Produce regular case studies to share learning and inspire others to continually improve**
* **Signpost to local and national accessibility / inclusion awards and encourage business in your region to apply**

There is a saying that ‘success breeds success’ and it is often true that learning about the successes of others can motivate us to follow a similar course of action in the hope that we will attain similar results. Celebrating success, which recognises good practice, is therefore an important part of accessible tourism development. It can both recognise the individuals and businesses who are taking part and motivate others to want to come on board.

There are several things you can do as an LVEP to share good practice:

#### Produce regular business case studies

Select several businesses across the tourism value chain which have made good progress and create case studies around them.

**Action Tip: Produce business case studies**

To develop relevant accessibility case studies, you could ask relevant businesses:

* How easy or difficult has it been for them to implement change?
* What successes have they had?
* What has helped?
* What has hindered?
* Do they have examples of no cost and low cost ‘quick wins’ which have made a difference?
* Do they have an Accessibility Champion? If so, what has been the impact on staff and the business?
* Have they worked with other businesses to give or get support?
* What has the impact been on revenue?
* What has the impact been on customer experience?
* Do they have visitor feedback which illustrates progress?

#### Gather feedback

Gathering feedback is another way to help you understand what you are doing well as a destination and to highlight areas for improvement.

**Action Tip: Gather feedback**

* Invite feedback from other stakeholders across the region, such as your local disability groups, to ascertain what the local community is saying about your initiative and the impact it is having on them.
* Gather visitor feedback about the destination as a whole using visitor surveys and social media to illustrate progress made.

#### Share successes

Use newsletters, blogs, social media, networking events, press and PR channels to share successes and case studies with businesses, stakeholders and the wider community. This will enable other businesses to learn about the tangible benefits of improving accessibility. Communicating progress will also help to engage local communities and enhance the reputation of your region as one which makes everybody welcome.

**Action Tip: Share successes**

It may be useful to:

* Include a call to action in your communications, highlighting how other businesses can get involved;
	+ Share case studies with your VisitEngland Regional Development Lead. These can be circulated throughout the LVEP network to inspire others and potentially be included in future editions of this toolkit.

#### Promote local and national accessibility / inclusion awards

Awards are a great way of celebrating success, recognising the very best at both local and national level. Promote local and national accessibility / inclusion awards and encourage business in your region to apply, helping to raise their profile and that of your destination.

Where appropriate, you could also consider applying for awards as an LVEP which recognise your accessible tourism development work.

**Case Study: Chester – EU Access City Award 2017**

In 2017 Chester entered the EU Access City Award. Winning the award reflected the importance they placed on accessibility and the strategy they followed to achieve this. Key things they addressed were:

* Improving destination accessibility with a specific focus on bringing the challenging medieval infrastructure in reach of everyone, ensuring that disabled visitors could access as much as possible;
* Providing auxiliary services such as accessible toilets and Changing Places Toilets in and around the destination to provide support for people who might otherwise be unable to enjoy a day out;
* Providing accessible transport networks near the destination such as an accessible bus fleet, wheelchair accessible taxis and rail networks;
* Supporting services and policies such as a good ShopMobility offer, a variety of accessible parking locations, a 100% wheelchair accessible hackney fleet and an accessible public realm;
* Having a mechanism for regular consultation and co-production with disabled stakeholders;
* Providing information, advice and guidance in accessible formats.

Winning the award inspired them to do even more to improve the lives of disabled people in Chester and across the borough.

Find out more about what made Chester winners in this award [in this detailed case study](https://www.age-platform.eu/sites/default/files/AccessCityAward2017.pdf) and video.

Award winners could raise their own profile as well as that of their destination through the PR and promotional activity they receive. This represents effective marketing at no additional cost to the business or the destination.

**VisitEngland Awards for Excellence**

[VisitEngland’s tourism awards](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/visitengland-awards-excellence) champion the very best of the country’s tourism industry, celebrating quality, innovation and best practice. The **Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Award** category recognises tourism businesses that excel in providing an inclusive customer experience, particularly for those with accessibility requirements.

Further [information on accessibility initiatives and awards](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-6#accessibility-initiatives-and-awards) for accessible and inclusive tourism are provided in the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses.

**Action Tip: Promote local and national accessibility/inclusion awards**

* If you do not already include the Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Award as part of your local awards competition, introducing it will help to recognise the hard work of your businesses in creating more inclusive visitor experiences.
* It will also help to highlight accessible tourism within your region and to a wider audience.

### 9. Destination audit

**Top Tips:**

* **Commissioning a destination audit can be used to support your Kick-Start or Enhanced development programmes**
* **Working in partnership with public realm stakeholders is important to achieve this**
* **A destination audit can help inform your action plan for accessible destination development**

#### Understand destination audits

A destination accessibility audit can be valuable at any stage in your accessible tourism development, either as a stand-alone activity or part of a wider destination plan in partnership with other stakeholders, such as a Local Authority. It can also be used to support your work in either the Kick-Start or Enhanced programmes.

This type of audit would not cover a whole LVEP region or county in detail, but may cover:

* A city or town;
* A ‘honeypot’ within a destination;
* A combination of the above.

#### Commission a destination audit

Commissioning a destination audit can help you to identify businesses which have taken positive action, some of whom may have been previously overlooked. An audit also helps to locate potential barriers within the public realm and identify areas for improvement, such as dropped kerbs that may need to be introduced, more suitable seating provided, or tactile paving installed. Working in partnership with your Local Authority and the wider public realm on this is therefore important and may also enable you to tap into alternative sources of funding.

An audit will help inform an action plan for your destination over the next five to ten years and is crucial if the tourism value chain is to become truly inclusive, barrier free and enhance the visitor experience for everyone. It can also help you identify potential businesses to be involved in any accessible tourism development programme you undertake.

As always, it is vital that disabled people are involved in audits where possible. You will want to employ a professional to undertake this, but the guidance given in the [Access Audit Toolkit](https://www.accentuateuk.org/?location_id=4722) published by Accentuate may also be useful.

“We have some real successes and pioneering attractions in the sector including Alton Towers, The Trentham Estate and National Memorial Arboretum.

We are going to commission an audit later in the year as part of our activities, as accessibility and inclusivity have come out as key strands in our visitor economy action plan and something that our operators want us to focus on.”*-* **Richard Swancott, Digital Marketing Executive, Enjoy Staffordshire**

### 10. Funding

**Top Tips:**

* **Search for available funding using the** [**VisitEngland Grant Funding and Bid Writing Toolkit**](https://www.visitbritain.org/grant-funding-and-bid-writing-toolkit) **and the resources below**
* **Consider partnering with other regional organisations to spread the cost of initiatives**
* **Promote relevant funding streams to your businesses**

#### Source funding

The Kick-Start programme is designed to help you begin to develop your destination accessibility using the resources you already have. Its primary focus is information provision. However, depending on what your aims are for this programme, you may want to seek a small amount of funding to support you through this work. You may also need funding to support other activities, such as a destination audit to help inform your development plans.

The Enhanced programme requires a bigger budget for which additional funding is likely to be required. The provision of seed funding for businesses also forms part of the programme.

You may also decide to offer funding for your businesses outside of any specific development programme as outlined in the case study below, for which the ‘Seed Funding – Example List of Fundable Items in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit may be useful.

**Case Study: East Devon Tourism Network**

The [East Devon Tourism Network](https://eastdevon.gov.uk/business-and-investment/business-and-investment-information/east-devon-tourism-network/) (EDTN) is a forum for tourism businesses to connect, collaborate, and share good practice.

The network was created as part of a [tourism strategy](https://files.eastdevon.gov.uk/papers/cabinet/070922bpcabinet%20tourism%20strategy%20for%20east%20devon%20appendix%20a.pdf) for East Devon which launched in 2022. The key elements of the strategy are to support the tourism sector to become more sustainable and inclusive. It encourages growth through a commitment to sustainability, accessibility, quality and collaboration.

The EDTN have allocated money from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund into a Sustainable Tourism Fund, for businesses to either purchase, install and utilise specific equipment to decarbonise their operations or to improve the accessibility of their premises. Tourism businesses are able to apply for 50% matched funding towards the cost of relevant equipment, with grants of between £2.5K and £5k available.

Information provided on the [East Devon website](https://eastdevon.gov.uk/business-and-investment/business-and-investment-information/culture-leisure-and-tourism-fund-cltf/) gives an overview of the fund and the application process. Examples of equipment which can help to improve accessibility are also provided to help inspire businesses.

If you need to source additional funding to support your accessibility development work, information and guidance is provided in the [VisitEngland Grant Funding and Bid Writing Toolkit](https://www.visitbritain.org/grant-funding-and-bid-writing-toolkit).

#### Work in partnership

There are many regional organisations who are also working to enhance your destination. Working with, or forming project partnerships with them, may help you to fund and resource your accessible tourism development project. Potential partner organisations include:

* Local Authorities, district and borough councils;
* National Park Authorities and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Conservation Boards;
* Business Improvement Districts (BIDs);
* Local Enterprise Partnerships;
* Wildlife Trusts.

#### Promote funding for businesses

Let your businesses know about any funding or grants available to help them develop their accessible tourism offering. You can also signpost them to the [funding information](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/find-funding) provided in the VisitEngland Business Advice Hub.

#### Moving on

The building blocks within this section cover the essential elements needed to lay the foundations for an accessible destination.

The rest of this toolkit helps to bring elements of these building blocks together, providing guidance on two specific accessible tourism development programmes:

* **The Kick-Start programme.** Recommended as a first step for all LVEPs, this programme is designed to support you in starting your accessible destination development, using the resources you already have.
* **The Enhanced programme**. Requiring additional resources, this programme offers a process of intensive business support to enhance destination accessibility, enabling you to market the accessibility of services and products with greater assurance.

## Section 2: Kick-Start programme

**A low cost, high impact approach to accessible tourism**

**At a glance:**

* Introduction to the Kick-Start programme
* Kick-Start programme aims
* Step 1: Prepare
* Step 2: Provide accessibility information on your LVEP website
* Step 3: Initiate a business to business engagement campaign
* Step 4: Initiate a business to consumer promotion campaign
* Step 5: Review and Evaluate

### Introduction to the Kick-Start programme

The ‘Kick-Start’ programme utilises the building blocks within the Foundation section and offers a low cost, high impact approach to accessible destination development.

This approach is not reliant on large budgets and lots of resources. Instead, it is designed to help you work with what you already have. Using information as a critical lever, the programme supports you to identify, enhance and market your existing accessible tourism products.

For many visitors with accessibility requirements, relevant accessibility information is so critical that it can be the deciding factor in destination and business choice.

Some destinations already have an ‘Accessibility’ section on their website, but many don’t. This creates difficulties for visitors with accessibility requirements, as it means they need to do a general search across your region for venues which meet their needs. This is a time-consuming process which may yield varied or few results. Many may give up, choosing to visit a destination whose website enables them to find the information they are looking for more easily. These visitors are likely to be travelling with friends and family, so your destination stands to win or lose not just one potential visitor, but potentially a whole group.

A lack of accessibility information provision could therefore be one your greatest barriers to this market, but also presents one of your greatest opportunities**.**

Providing clear, relevant accessibility information on your destination website enables your destination, and your businesses, to attract more visitors at very little cost, and is the primary outcome of the Kick-Start programme.

### Understand the Kick-Start programme

**Step 1: Prepare**

Set clear aims and objectives, identify a Project Manager, create a project plan and identify the tasks, timeline, risks, resources and any budget required. Identify the stakeholders you need to work with across the tourism value chain to make the programme successful, including people with lived experience.

**Step 2: Provide accessibility information on your LVEP website**

Ensure that your LVEP website meets current accessibility standards. Identify your region’s existing accessible tourism products and services through desk-based research, involving public realm stakeholders, disabled people’s user groups and the local community. Provide accessibility information on your LVEP website which includes your existing accessible tourism products and services.

**Step 3: Initiate a business to business (B2B) engagement campaign**

Launch a B2B engagement campaign to engage additional businesses. Encourage them to provide accessibility information, signposting them to the business toolkit and any training available.

**Step 4: Initiate a business to consumer (B2C) promotional campaign**

Launch a B2C promotional campaign, using owned and earned channels, to highlight destination accessibility, ensuring that the campaign incorporates inclusive imagery. Monitor its impact.

**Step 5: Review and evaluate**

Review the objectives and milestones you set at the beginning of the programme to evaluate success. Gather relevant data to support future funding applications for this area of work, including the Enhanced programme, which offers a process for further development.

Whilst it is recommended that all destinations follow the Kick-Start programme as a first step, the two programmes are not mutually exclusive. Where resources and funding permit, you may choose to include elements of the Enhanced programme within your Kick-Start programme, such as:

* Procuring the support of a Professional Accessibility Mentor;
* Holding a destination-wide conference;
* Providing tailored training, or;
* Facilitating a Mystery Shopping programme.

It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the steps within the Enhanced programme at an early stage to determine whether there are any elements you wish to incorporate now. This will also help you to plan for the future and consider the funding and resources required.

###

### Step 1: Prepare

**Top Tips:**

* **Set clear aims and objectives**
* **Identify a Project Manager**
* **Create a project plan, agree measures, identify resources, stakeholders and budget required in partnership with your LVEP team**

Create a project plan to help you manage and track the process and meet the objectives of the Kick-Start programme within your chosen timescale for delivery.

#### Facilitate a project planning workshop

To introduce your team to the Kick-Start programme it is recommended that you run an in-house workshop.

**Action Tip: Facilitate a project planning workshop**

Run a Kick-Start project planning workshop with your LVEP team to:

* Introduce the Kick-Start programme to your LVEP team;
* Involve them in creating an action plan;
* Identify the contributions they will make to the project / action plan;
* Identify stakeholders.

#### Set your aims and objectives

Setting clear objectives for the programme will provide your LVEP team and wider stakeholder group with a shared understanding of what you want to achieve.

The aims and objectives of the Kick-Start programme are outlined in the Action Tip below. You may wish to add to these to reflect regional considerations.

**Action Tip: Set your aims and objectives**

Familiarise yourself with the aim and objectives of this programme below and consider whether there are any supplementary objectives you wish to add:

**Kick-Start programme aim:**

To improve the information on our destination’s accessible tourism offering

**Kick-Start programme objectives:**

To achieve this we will:

* Identify existing accessible and inclusive products across the tourism value chain working with our stakeholders, including visitors and local communities, to achieve this;
* Provide clear, consistent, relevant and accurate information about these products on our LVEP website;
* Ensure that consumers can find this information easily and that our website is accessible for all potential visitors;
* Initiate a B2B marketing campaign to engage more businesses and grow our accessible tourism offering;
* Launch a B2C promotion campaign to showcase our accessible tourism products and engage visitors;
* Signpost businesses to relevant disability awareness training;
* Review this process and our offering to continuously improve.

#### Agree evaluation measures

Identify measures, or key performance indicators (KPIs), which can be used at the evaluation stage to determine whether the programme has been successful.

**Action Tip: Agree evaluation measures**

Some suggested KPIs for the Kick-Start programme are:

* The number of outbound clicks on the link from your industry website to the VisitEngland Accessible & Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses;
* The number of businesses engaging with you to be part of your B2C campaign;
* The number of stakeholders you have engaged with and identify the contributions they have made to the project;
* The number of businesses with accessibility information;
* The number of businesses undertaking staff training on accessibility;
* The number of hits on the Accessibility page of your website;
* The number of hits on AccessAble information for your region, if relevant.

Include some questions in visitor surveys to understand awareness of your destination’s accessibility and the effectiveness of the information provided. You may also want to evaluate the visitor experience: did visitors received a warm welcome?

Monitor any feedback about any aspect of your project from users, including your website and the quality of information you are providing.

#### Identify risks

Consider potential risks which may arise and develop a plan to mitigate or manage them. This will help to minimise disruption to the project and help to ensure that it is delivered on time. Risks may include things like:

* A business changes their accessible facilities part-way through the programme and does not inform you, leading to inaccurate information on your website;
* Highlighting accessibility in your destination could lead to complaints from visitors who have had negative experiences in the past.

#### Identify resources and budget required

Whilst this programme is designed to work with the resources you already have, you will still need to consider the tasks to be undertaken, what needs to be delivered and who will be involved. If you have decided to incorporate any of the elements of the Enhanced programme in this process, additional capacity may be required, such as recruiting expert support. Where this is the case, additional funding will need to be allocated from within existing budgets or sourced externally.

#### Create a project timeline

Developing a realistic timeline for the Kick-Start programme will enable you to plan effectively. As a rough guide, allow up to one year to deliver this programme as part of your ongoing activities. The actual time needed will be dependent upon the resources you are able to allocate. It is worth bearing in mind that the capacity of businesses to engage with the programme will be affected during peak periods.

**Action Tip: Create a project timeline**

Consider each of the phases within the project and identify a timescale for each.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project phase** | **Indicative timescale** |
| Step 1: Prepare  | 1 month  |
| Step 2: Provide accessibility information on your LVEP website | 2 months |
| Step 3: Initiate a B2B engagement campaign | 3 months |
| Step 4: Initiate a B2C promotion campaign | 3 months |
| Step 5: Review and Evaluate | 2 months |

#### Identify a Project Manager

For the programme to be effective, you will need to identify a Project Manager from within your LVEP team to lead it. They will help to develop and subsequently manage your project plan, communicating effectively with team members, businesses and stakeholders to maximise engagement.

#### Identify key stakeholders

You cannot deliver this project alone; partnership working is essential.

A key part of the process at this early stage is therefore to identify the stakeholders across the value chain that you need to work with and influence to achieve the programme objectives.

Share your objectives with your key stakeholders, enabling them to support and contribute to your action plan as well as helping to deliver it.

**Action Tip: Identify key stakeholders**

Below are some suggested stakeholders you may wish to engage with to support, develop and promote your programme:

* Accommodation providers, attraction, hospitality, tours, adventure / sports related businesses;
* All transport companies serving the region;
* Trade / membership organisations;
* Chambers of commerce;
	+ Your Local Authority, district and borough councils, some of whom will have their own Access Officer;
	+ Town teams and town centre managers;
	+ BID managers;
	+ Your national park authority and AONB – (many national parks offer accessible trails, adapted cycle hire and ‘Miles Without Stiles’ barrier-free routes);
	+ Representative user groups e.g., disabled people, older people, families;
	+ Surrounding destination organisations - (given that visitors will not recognise administrative boundaries, you may wish to work with neighbouring destinations to extend the reach of your improvement programme to help ensure that visitors have a consistent experience).

#### Create a working group

To help you manage the stakeholder relationships and to begin to develop a network, you may want to create a small sub-group of key stakeholders to share information and contribute to the project and ongoing development.

**Case Study: Visit Windsor accessibility sub- group**

At Visit Windsor, an accessibility sub-grouphas been formed to further their accessible tourism work, encouraging more local businesses to improve their provision for visitors and residents with accessibility requirements. The group is mainly made up of their major business stakeholders who are working hard to improve the experience of disabled visitors, improving the diversity and inclusion in their workforce and actively engaging with the [Disability Confident scheme.](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign)

The group membership comprises:

* 75% local businesses
* 10% local residents
* 15% Visit Windsor/Local Authority staff.

The vision of the group is “To build a world-class destination for every visitor” with a focus on:

* Employment – bridging the divide.
* Staff training – being more welcoming.
* Marketing & promotion – encouraging visitors to stay longer, do more and spend more money.
* Information – helping visitors make informed choices.

They are learning from each other and are keen to share their knowledge and experience with the wider business community.

### Step 2: Provide accessibility information on your LVEP website

**Top Tips:**

* **Ensure that your website meets current website accessibility standards**
* **Create an ‘Accessibility’ section on your website which is easy to find**
* **Populate this section with your existing accessible tourism products, including suggested itineraries.**

#### Create an accessible LVEP website

The provision of accessibility information is at the heart of this programme. It is important therefore that your own website is accessible, to provide information for potential disabled visitors and demonstrate best practice to your businesses.

Further [information on creating an accessible website](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-6#ensuring-digital-accessibility) can be found in the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses and there are various sources of guidance on the accessibility of apps, including [W3C](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/mobile/) and from the [UK Government](https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2021/05/04/making-great-accessible-mobile-apps/)

**Action Tip: Create an accessible LVEP website**

* ask a web developer to carry out a technical accessibility review of your website against the current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standard and develop a plan to improve it, where required.
* ensure that the requirement for your website to meet WCAG standards is part of the specification when commissioning any new website or digital software such as an app.

#### Identify existing accessible tourism products and services

Identify existing accessible tourism products and services across your region through desk-based research. This should involve working with stakeholders from transport, the public realm and the natural environment, as well as disabled people’s user groups and any existing community initiatives.

Many of your businesses, and your partners, will already have products and services which are accessible and inclusive. Some will also already be providing online information about their offering.

This step in the Kick-Start programme is to identify these venues and services, as well as to connect with providers whose services are important to visitors with accessibility requirements. This will enable you to start populating an ‘Accessibility’ section of your website.

#### Use the information checklist

An information checklist has been developed to help you identify and collate your destination’s existing accessible tourism products and services ready for showcasing them on your website.

**Action Tip: identifying existing accessible tourism products and services**

Identify relevant businesses in your destination whose accessibility information you can use to populate the Accessibility section of your website. The information checklist in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit will assist you with this process.

Sources of information include:

* AccessAble Guides for businesses in your destination;
* third party websites showcasing accessible accommodation;
* accessibility information in your region provided by transport providers including:
	+ railway stations;
	+ coach companies;
	+ local bus companies;
	+ ferries and hovercraft;
	+ airports.

#### Consider your membership policy

Within this information gathering process there is a potential challenge. Some of the accessible tourism businesses and services you identify may not be members of your LVEP. Yet, if you only highlight members’ products, you will not be offering the widest choice for potential visitors and reducing the opportunity to fully develop the accessibility of your destination as a result. You may wish to consider the implications of this and the challenges this presents to your aim of improving accessibility. How do you overcome this challenge if you are to offer real choice for potential visitors with access requirements?

**Action Tip: Consider your membership policy**

Identify how you will address the challenge of finding accessible tourism products in your region which are not currently members of your LVEP. Could you offer a level of free membership? Is there another approach you could take?

“Since 2020, Enjoy Staffordshire has offered a free membership package to tourism and hospitality businesses in the county.

Our main objective was to support the sector’s recovery post-pandemic, but it has also helped us become a more inclusive organisation, opening access to SMEs who had struggled to engage with our DMP’s activity.

The package includes a free listing on the Enjoy Staffordshire website, with a short description of their business, an image, contact details, and a link to the member’s website.

Membership lasts 12 months, at which point they can upgrade to one of the other packages or renew at the same level.

For consumers, opening our membership to as many businesses as possible has ensured we can present a full picture of the facilities available for visitors – including information on accessibility.” - **Richard Swancott, Digital Marketing Executive, Enjoy Staffordshire**

#### Create an ‘Accessibility’ section on your LVEP website

You may already have an ‘Accessibility’ section on your website - if you haven’t, you will need to create one. Pulling the accessible tourism products in your destination into a dedicated section will enable visitors with accessibility requirements to plan visits more easily.

**Action Tip: Create an ‘Accessibility’ section on your LVEP website**

In summary, your destination accessibility information should:

* Be easy to find from the homepage of yourwebsite within an ‘Accessibility’ section;
* Include a ‘welcome’ paragraph;
* Be incorporated within any search or filter functionality, if you have one, enabling visitors to find accessible tourism products by product type and/or accessibility features;
* Include photography that represents the diversity of your visitors;
* Ensure the website has information sections for each element of the tourism ‘value-chain’ including:
	+ Transport and parking (‘Getting here’ and ‘Getting around’);
	+ Accommodation;
	+ Food and drink;
	+ Attractions;
	+ Activities and experiences;
	+ Festivals and events;
	+ Award-winning venues;
	+ Useful links and local initiatives;
	+ Accessible toilets and Changing Places toilets;
	+ Meeting, wedding and conference venues.

**Incorporate website accessibility filters**

The ability to search for relevant tourism products by accessibility features is another helpful tool for potential travellers. Again, a web developer will be able to advise you on this and a search function should be part of the specification for any new website.

Work commissioned by VisitEngland is currently being carried out to develop an ‘open source’ accessibility question set. The aim is for this to be used across tourism distribution websites to produce a consistent set of accessibility filters and search criteria. Once the question set has been finalised it will be made widely available and added to this toolkit.

Some destination websites, such as [Visit Peak District & Derbyshire](https://www.visitpeakdistrict.com/) and [Discover Yorkshire Coast](https://www.discoveryorkshirecoast.com/discover/accommodation/searchresults?sr=1&avail=on&stay=2023-04-30&dur=1&fuzzy=0&r1=1&rooms=1&rtfa=on&facgrp=ACC) already offer the ability to search for tourism products based on accessibility criteria.

**Populate the ‘Accessibility’ section of your website**

Once you have gathered as much relevant information as you can, you can begin to populate the ’Accessibility’ section of your website. Remember, this is not a one-off exercise, and it will be useful to have a process in place to ensure that any new accessibility information is identified and added accordingly. Ask your partners to keep you informed of any new developments or initiatives they may have.

**Action Tip: Populate the ‘Accessibility’ section of your website**

Use the accessible tourism products, services and experiences you have found during your desk-based research to populate the ‘Accessibility’ section of your website.

Remember to:

* Check the accuracy of this information regularly;
* Test any links provided to ensure that they are working and signpost to relevant information;
* Ask for feedback from your users;
* Deal with any problems or inaccuracies identified as soon as possible;
* Provide a date when the section was last updated. This will help to give reassurance that the information is current and therefore more likely to be accurate.

The links below provide some examples of how others present their accessible tourism products:

* [Visit Peak District & Derbyshire](https://www.visitpeakdistrict.com/blog/accessible-places-to-visit-in-the-peak-district-and-derbyshire)
* [Newcastle Gateshead](https://newcastlegateshead.com/plan-your-visit/accessibility-in-newcastlegateshead)
* [Visit Bath](https://visitbath.co.uk/plan-your-visit/accessible-bath)
* [Visit Bristol](https://visitbristol.co.uk/your-visit/accessible)
* [Visit Buckinghamshire](https://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/accessibility)
* [Visit London](https://www.visitlondon.com/traveller-information/essential-information/accessible-london)

#### Commission inclusive imagery

Ensuring that the imagery used in your marketing and on your website reflects the diversity of your potential visitors will help everyone to feel welcome. Ask your accessible businesses if they can share any inclusive assets with you. Guidance on commissioning inclusive photography can be found in the Enhanced programme.

#### Create itineraries

By using all the relevant information that you have identified, you can create suggested itineraries for visitors. These may be made up of a mix of places to stay, visit and eat or based around themes such as ‘food and drink’, ‘heritage’, ‘walking trails’, ‘Changing Places toilets’ etc.

When creating itineraries, it is worth considering pace: visitors with accessibility requirements may require extra time, so consider spreading an itinerary over more days to allow for this.

**Action tip: Create itineraries**The following list highlights a selection of accessible itineraries which you may want to browse for inspiration:

* [VisitKent – Accessible Itinerary](https://www.visitkent.co.uk/stay-and-eat/getting-here/accessible-kent/accessible-itinerary/)
* Visit Peak District and Derbyshire – [Accessible days out and places to visit in the Peak District and Derbyshire](https://www.visitpeakdistrict.com/blog/accessible-places-to-visit-in-the-peak-district-and-derbyshire)
* Euan’s Guide, Scotland – [Castles and Battlefields](https://www.euansguide.com/campaigns/accessible-highlights-series/), part of the Accessible Highlights series
* Visit Buckinghamshire - [The Long Weekend - 48 accessible Hours](https://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/article/the-long-weekend-48-accessible-hours)
* VisitEngland – [7 Amazing Experiences in the North York Moors](https://www.visitengland.com/accessible-holidays-accommodation-attractions-north-york-moors)

#### Support business information provision

Your businesses also have an important role to play in enhancing your destination’s accessibility by providing relevant accessibility information. This includes:

* Providing online accessibility information/producing an AccessAble Detailed Access Guide;
* Utilising photos to clearly showcase their business;
* Ensuring that any videos have subtitles;
* Providing floorplans, where appropriate;
* Including maps, where relevant.

Remember to include this guidance in any training you provide. Further [advice on how businesses can maximise their accessibility information](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-6) is included in the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses.

### Step 3: Initiate a business-to-business engagement campaign

**Top Tips:**

* **Initiate a B2B campaign to engage businesses**
* **Encourage businesses to provide accessibility information and promote the business toolkit, including the action checklists**
* **Signpost businesses to available training.**

#### Create a B2B engagement campaign

Creating a B2B engagement campaign will help to highlight your commitment to developing an accessible destination. It will also provide your businesses with easy ways to become involved with your Kick-Start programme and to demonstrate their commitment to accessibility and to making every visitor welcome.

VisitEngland are looking to develop a consistent B2B campaign name and identifier for use by all LVEPs. This toolkit will be updated to reflect the outcomes of this process once it is completed.

For businesses to participate it is recommended that they have accessibility information, as a minimum. This is their first step towards improving and promoting their accessibility. You should also signpost your businesses to relevant accessibility training provided either by yourself or third parties.

Providing accessibility information and taking part in your Kick-Start programme is not a guarantee of accessibility for everybody, but demonstrates a clear commitment to understanding and meeting visitor accessibility requirements. In turn this also helps disabled people and others to make informed choices about where they visit.

The campaign should:

* Provide an easy way for businesses to become involved;
* Highlight the opportunities offered by the accessible tourism market and ‘demystify’ accessible tourism;
* Encourage businesses to provide accessibility information to enable effective visit planning.

**Action tip: Create a B2B engagement campaign**

Initiate a B2B campaign which:

* Includes an information / ‘sign up’ page on your business facing website to allow access to specific resources such as webinars which you may host. This allows you to track interest and to follow up with businesses on the progress they are making.
* Uses social media to reinforce your messages.

You could also hold a launch event for your Kick-Start programme, where funds permit.

**Case Study: Newcastle Gateshead Initiative**

[Newcastle Gateshead Initiative](https://www.ngi.org.uk/) recently launched their [Everybody Welcome](https://www.ngi.org.uk/ew/) initiative. Its aim is to showcase accessible tourism products throughout the Newcastle Gateshead region.

The Everybody Welcome name was chosen because it provides reassurance that accessible tourism is really all about what visitor economy businesses know best: the ‘welcome’. The brand identifier, an open door, helps to reinforce this.

A banner promoting the initiative runs across the top of the [NGI website homepage](https://www.ngi.org.uk/), and there is a dedicated [Everybody Welcome](https://www.ngi.org.uk/ew/) page where businesses can easily sign up for the programme. The page also summarises the size of the accessible tourism market and highlights the benefits to businesses of being involved.

The campaign is backed up by a PR and social media marketing campaign running over several months.

#### Address perceived business barriers

It is important for any B2B engagement campaign not only to set out the benefits of meeting the needs of travellers with accessibility requirements, but also to address the perceived business barriers (available in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit) which may have stopped some from meeting these needs previously.

### Step 4: Initiate a business to consumer promotion campaign

**Top Tips:**

* **Initiate a B2C promotional campaign highlighting your destination’s accessibility on your owned and earned channels**
* **Ensure this incorporates inclusive imagery**
* **Monitor its impact.**

#### Initiate a B2C promotional campaign

Having completed the previous steps in the Kick-Start programme, it’s now time to shout about what you have by promoting your destination’s accessibility to consumers. This can be achieved utilising existing destination PR and marketing communications.

Promotion will help to ensure that both your potential visitors and local communities become more aware of accessible venues in your destination. It will also help to reinforce your messaging to businesses and demonstrate the marketing benefits to them of being part of the programme.

It is envisaged that any B2C campaign branding will be consistent with that used in the B2B campaign outlined in Step 3 of this programme. VisitEngland will publish specific guidance on this for LVEPs as soon as it is available.

Further guidance on marketing to visitors with accessibility requirements can be found in the Marketing section in the Enhanced programme.

**Action Tip: Initiate a B2C promotional campaign**

Initiate a B2C campaign on your existing channels which:

* Promotes the businesses featured in your ‘Accessibility’ section of your website;
* Explains that this is not a guarantee of business accessibility, but emphasises the commitment of a business to provide a warm welcome to everybody;
* Indicates that each business participating as a minimum has accessibility information on their website to help them make informed choices and support visit planning.

#### Principles to follow when providing information and marketing accessibility

[Purple Goat](https://www.purplegoatagency.com/) is an inclusive disability-focused marketing agency. CEO and Co-Founder Martyn Sibley provides guidance on providing information and marketing your destination’s accessibility:

“Here are my three top tips for LVEPs to address disability representation, even with limited budgets and resources:

1) Include disability-friendly information on your website and promotional materials: Make sure your website and promotional materials are designed with accessibility in mind. This includes using clear, easy-to-read fonts, providing captions for videos and images, and using descriptive text for links.

2) Highlight accessible destinations and activities: Include information about accessible destinations and activities in your marketing materials. This will help disabled people to plan their trips and feel confident that they will be able to participate in the activities they are interested in.

3) Work with disability content creators and advocacy groups: Partner with social media and local disability advocacy groups to get feedback on your accessibility efforts and to identify ways to improve. This will help you to ensure that your efforts are inclusive and meaningful to people with disabilities.

By taking these steps, tourism destinations can ensure that their promotional materials are inclusive and accessible to disabled people, and they can attract a wider range of customers. It's important to remember that promoting accessibility is not only the right thing to do, but it can also be good for business."

### Step 5: Review and evaluate

**Top Tips:**

* **Review the objectives and milestones you set at the beginning of the Kick-Start programme**
* **Evaluate your success**
* **Gather any data you have to support future funding applications**

#### Review and evaluate your Kick-Start programme

Look back at the objectives and milestones you set at the beginning of your Kick-Start programme and review your progress. As part of your review it is also important to understand the impact of your programme campaigns from a B2B and B2C perspective.

You could also consider setting up a Google alert to help keep you informed about your destination’s changing accessible tourism offering on an ongoing basis.

#### Gather data

Gather data as part of the review and evaluation process. This includes:

* Quantitative data: facts and figures;
* Qualitative data: case studies and quotes.

These could help to support any applications you make to fund future accessibility development work, such as the Enhanced programme.

### Step 6: Celebrate Success!

**Top Tips:**

* **Share your successes with your businesses and stakeholders**
* **Celebrate what you have achieved**
* **Continuously improve**

#### Share your successes

Having gone through the programme and evaluated your progress, you will know where improvements need to be made and additional work undertaken. More importantly, you will be able to identify your successes.

Share these successes with your wider business network and stakeholder groups both within and outside your destination. This will help to:

* Engage other businesses with your ongoing programme;
* Promote the accessibility of your destination;
* Enhance its reputation.

#### Celebrate your achievements

Celebrate what you have achieved and encourage businesses in your programme to enter accessibility awards.

Further information on awards is provided in the Foundation section of this toolkit.

#### Continuously improve

Whilst it is important to recognise what has been achieved through your programme, it is also vital that you remember that this is not ‘the end’ of the journey. Going forward, it is important to continue building accessibility into the mainstream offering of your LVEP.

**Action Tip: Continuously improve**

Look at how you can build and improve upon the work you have done by:

* Continuing the initiatives and networks you have started;
* Incorporating accessible tourism in your day-to-day activities;
* Ensuring that your website is continually updated with accessible tourism products, such as those developed during the Enhanced programme if you undertake this at a later date;
* Providing opportunities for new businesses to be part of your accessible tourism portfolio;
* Sharing what you have learned by offering to mentor another LVEP just starting out.

#### Moving on

Having kick-started your accessible tourism journey, you may want to develop the accessibility of your destination further. The Enhanced programme enables you to take a selection of businesses through an intensive development process to boost your destination accessibility further and market them with confidence to your target audience.

## Section 3: Enhanced programme

**Enhancing destination accessibility through focused business development**

**At a glance:**

* Introduction to the Enhanced programme
* Enhanced programme aims
* Step 1: Prepare
* Step 2: Engage businesses and launch the programme
* Step 3: Provide a business support and development package
* Step 4: Host a celebration and networking event
* Step 5: Launch a B2C marketing campaign
* Step 6: Review

### Introduction to the Enhanced programme

The Enhanced programme is designed to build on the Kick-Start programme, by developing businesses which offer an enhanced level of provision to add to your accessible tourism portfolio. The aim of the process is to increase the skills, knowledge and confidence of participating businesses to improve their customer offer and grow visitor numbers. The process is also designed to engage additional businesses, stakeholders and the local community in your accessible tourism initiatives.

This process has been developed by VisitEngland over the past decade through the Accessible Itineraries Project (2012-2014), the Access For All Project (2014-2016) and the North York Moors Accessibility Project (2021-2023).

An overview of the two most recent programmes is provided below:

**Case study: VisitEngland Access for All Project**

This project, partly funded by the European Commission, ran from October 2014 to March 2016 and involved seven destination organisations and 56 businesses across England in a product development process. This was then followed by a national marketing campaign.

The aims of the [Access For All Project](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/access_for_all_project_roundup_and_results_15.08.16.pdf) (2014-2016) were:

* To develop and promote high quality accessible tourism itineraries encompassing all the elements of the tourism value chain;
* To support tourism businesses to improve information, customer service and facilities for the benefit of people with accessibility requirements;
* To foster partnerships between key tourism stakeholders and disability stakeholders;
* To support destination organisations to become local champions of long-term accessible tourism development.

Destination leads were supported by specialist access advisors throughout the process which included access audits of participating businesses, the development of accessibility improvement plans and a mystery shopping process to provide additional feedback. Accessibility Champions were trained at each business, whose front-line staff also took part in accessibility awareness training, supporting them to provide a warm and inclusive welcome for all visitors.

A consumer marketing campaign, which included the development of three supplements in the Daily Express Sunday magazine, editorial features and adverts, was supported by a social media campaign and promotion on destination websites.

**Outcomes for destinations:**

* five out of seven destinations said that they had learned a lot;
* all said that promoting accessible tourism had become a little or a lot more important to them;
* all were keen to continue relationships made with local access groups;
* and all had medium to long-term plans to further develop accessible tourism in their destination.

**Outcomes for businesses:**

* 72% of businesses said they had learned a lot;
* almost all businesses said they felt prepared to welcome visitors with accessibility requirements;
* and all but one business said they would recommend participation in a similar project.

**Outcomes from the marketing campaign:**

The total incremental spend generated by the advertising campaign was £32.7 million, compared with a target of £12 million.

[Watch the video on the Access For All Project](https://youtu.be/iCZDlbfQjc8)

**Case study: VisitEngland North York Moors Accessibility Project:**

Twelve businesses in the North York Moors region, from experiences to attractions and accommodation, were involved in the project, which ran from October 2021 to early 2023.

The [North York Moors Accessibility Project (2021-23)](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-inclusive/north-york-moors-accessibility-project) aimed to:

* Develop and promote a high-quality accessible tourism itinerary for the North York Moors, bookable for people with accessibility requirements in Germany and/or the Netherlands;
* Support tourism businesses in the North York Moors to improve information, customer service and facilities for the benefit of both domestic and international visitors with accessibility requirements;
* Support destination organisations (DOs) in the North York Moors to become local champions of long-term accessible tourism development;
* Act as a ‘test and learn’ project to inform a potential wider roll-out.

Guided by Professional Accessibility Mentors, businesses undertook a development process which included an accessibility audit of their business and the development of an improvement plan, with a ‘mystery shopping process’ providing additional feedback and impetus for improvement. An online Accessibility Guide was created for each business to showcase their accessible offering, and guidance given on providing relevant accessibility information online.

At least one member of staff from each business undertook Accessibility Champion training, and front-line staff undertook online training to increase their skills, knowledge and confidence. Supporting each business through the process was a peer mentor from a similar business which had a more developed accessible tourism offering.

The destination organisations in the region - the North York Moors National Park Authority and Discover Yorkshire Coast - were integral to the process and were given guidance on creating an ‘Accessibility’ section on their own websites. Two destination-wide conferences, one at the beginning and one towards the end of the project, helped to raise awareness of the programme and inspire others to engage with the accessible tourism market across the region.

Following this development process, an international marketing campaign targeted at the Dutch market, showcased the region and the accessible tourism products developed in a promotional video on YouTube and an article in the specialist Support Mag magazine. This was supplemented by a domestic PR campaign using disabled influencers and own channel content on VisitEngland.com.

The international campaign generated over 9 million impressions, with the domestic campaign generating over 1.6 million impressions. In May 2023 the campaign was awarded Digital PR Campaign of the Year by TravMedia.

All those involved in the project have moved their accessibility ‘offer’ along, feeling more confident and better equipped to welcome people with accessibility requirements. The expert advice, training, seed funding for accessibility equipment and general momentum from being involved has helped to develop accessibility in the region further and more quickly than otherwise would have happened.

The quotes provided throughout this Enhanced programme section of the toolkit are from people who took part in the VisitEngland North York Moors Accessibility Project, offering first-hand insight into the process.

“Working with VisitEngland on the North York Moors Accessibility Project has been extremely valuable for both ourselves and each of the businesses involved across our region.

It truly galvanised commitments to go above and beyond the basic requirements and has resulted in an ambitious and progressive offer for those with additional accessibility requirements. We are delighted to have taken part and to see the work recognised with a national award.” - **Catriona McLees - Head of Marketing and Communications, North York Moors National Park Authority**

“Being part of the VisitEngland and North York Moors accessibility project enabled us to gain an insight into the various challenges faced by disabled people, and to gain a better understanding that disability needs are very broad, and accessibility requirements are varied.

The businesses that took part in the project were a real driving force in championing the accessible offer to their individual visitors and to the area as a whole” - **Janet Deacon, Head of Culture and Tourism, North Yorkshire Council**

These projects, and the lessons learned from them, have helped to inform the Enhanced programme.

### Understand the Enhanced programme:

**Step 1: Prepare**

Set clear aims and objectives, identify resources and budget required and procure funding. Identify a Project Manager, procure support and create a project plan.

**Step 2: Engage businesses and stakeholders, then launch the programme**

Identify and engage businesses for development and host a destination-wide conference to launch the programme and engage stakeholders.

**Step 3: Provide a business support and development package**

Provide a package of business support and development, utilising Professional Accessibility Mentors to facilitate, for each business:

* An accessibility audit;
* The development of an improvement plan;
* The creation of an Accessibility Guide;
* Guidance on providing good quality access information on their website;
* ‘Mystery shopping’ visit(s);
* Peer mentoring;
* Accessibility Champion training;
* Online training for front-line staff.

**Step 4: Host a celebration and networking event**

Host a second destination-wide conference to share what has been achieved, celebrate success and enable businesses to network, learn and plan next steps.

**Step 5: Launch a B2C marketing campaign**

Shout about what you have, to get more visitors looking and booking.

**Step 6: Review and evaluate**

How did it go? Identify key learning points and plan next steps.

**NOTE: This programme will require you to find additional resources and funding over a minimum 2-year period.**

### Step 1: Prepare

**Top Tips:**

* **Facilitate a project planning workshop**
* **Set clear aims and objectives, identify resources and budget required and procure funding**
* **Identify a Project Manager and procure support**

A good project plan will help to ensure that your Enhanced programme meets its objectives and is completed on time and within budget.

The following offers a set of steps to create a clear project plan. It mirrors the project planning process in the Kick-Start programme, with the aim of delivering different objectives.

#### Facilitate a project planning workshop

Involving your project team in the planning process will help to create ownership of the process at an early stage.

**Action Tip: Facilitate a project planning workshop**

Run a project planning workshop to:

* Introduce the Enhanced programme to your LVEP team;
* Involve them in creating an action plan;
* Identify the contributions they will make to the project / action plan;
* Identify stakeholders.

Remember to:

* Share the project plan with all parties responsible for any deliverables within it, so that they are clear about:
* Their responsibilities and what is expected of them;
* The timescale they are working to.

Remind everyone involved to flag any problems with their deliverables as soon as possible.

Download a suggested framework for facilitating an Enhanced Project Planning Workshop from the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit.

#### Set your aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the Enhanced programme are outlined below. You may wish to add to these to reflect regional considerations.

**Action Tip: Set your aims and objectives**

Familiarise yourself with the aims and objectives of this programme and consider whether there are any supplementary objectives you wish to add.

**Enhanced programme aim:**

To develop our destination’s accessible tourism offering and promote this effectively to our target market.

**Enhanced programme objectives:**

To achieve this we will:

* Provide a programme of professional support and guidance to a selection of business across the tourism value chain. This support will enable those businesses to understand and improve the information, facilities and customer services they provide for visitors with accessibility requirements;
* Engage other businesses and stakeholders across the region through destination wide conferences;
* Enhance the online accessibility information provided for potential visitors at destination level, encouraging more people to look and book with confidence;
* Launch a B2C marketing campaign through owned, earned and paid channels to showcase the accessible tourism products across the destination, with the aim of increasing visitor numbers.

#### Agree evaluation measures

Identify measures which can be used at the evaluation stage to determine whether the programme has been successful.

**Action Tip: Agree evaluation measures**

You could use the following list of example KPIs to measure the success of your project:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Area of work** | **Suggested KPI** |
| **Business engagement**  | Agreed number of suitable businesses from across the value chain signed up to the programme. |
| **Accessibility audits** | An Accessibility audit completed for each business and a detailed accessibility report and improvement plan provided. |
| **Monitoring of online training for front-line staff** | At least 90% of identified customer facing staff at each business completed 100% of the online accessibility training. |
| **Mystery Shopper programme** | At least one mystery shopping visit by a person with accessibility requirements to each business with feedback documented (up to maximum of three). |
| **Accessibility Guide creation** | A high-quality Accessibility Guide available for each business, ideally an AccessAble Detailed Access Guide. |
| **Business website review and guidance** | An Accessibility section available on the website of each business containing quality accessibility information. |
| **Peer Mentoring programme** | Each business has received at least two calls from their business mentor. |
| **Delivery of two destination wide events** | Two full day in-person destination-wide events delivered. |
| **Accessibility Champion training** | A full day face-to-face training session delivered to around 30 people that delivers against the key learning outcomes. |
| **Online training provider** | The online disability awareness e-learning programme provides bug-free usage with an uptime of at least 99%. |
| **Seed funding** | £1,000 allocated to each participating business to facilitate accessibility improvements identified within their improvement plan.  |
| **Marketing** | KPIs for marketing will need to be added. These will depend upon the marketing activities undertaken and the channels used and may include number of impressions or growth in incremental spend. |

#### Identify potential risks and mitigation

Identifying potential risks within the project will enable you to put contingency plans in place to mitigate these.

**Action Tip: Identify potential risks and mitigation**

Consider the potential risks which may arise during your project and develop a plan to mitigate or manage them. Some examples are provided below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Potential risk** | **Suggested mitigation** |
| Lack of project team resources | Identify project team resources required to undertake the process, allocate clear roles and responsibilities and recruit additional support, if required. |
| Low engagement of businesses with project | Clearly outline the benefits of being involved in the programme including:* The support provided and its estimated monetary value;
* Business improvement opportunities;
* Networking opportunities;
* Staff skills development;
* Improved customer service;
* Enhanced visitor satisfaction.

Allow a long lead time to identify and engage appropriate businesses, including one or two 'star' attractions within your destination prior to the official project start.Select businesses with a reasonable level of accessibility to start with, so that they are coming into the project with either a reputation for good access and inclusion or a motivation to want to be involved. |
| Business drops out part way through the process due to operational reasons / business is dropped from the programme due to a lack of commitment or engagement. | Be aware that this is a possibility.Determine whether the business can be replaced quickly and develop a ‘reserve’ list of businesses who could come on board if required. |
| Lead contact within a business leaves, is ill or is changed part way through the process. | Try to identify two people as leads within each business. This will help to ensure continuity within the process |
| Participating businesses are unable to attend key events within the development programme e.g.* Accessibility Champion training
* Destination-wide event
 | Provide a full outline of the whole programme from the outset explaining:* The different activities and elements that will take place;
* What will be involved;
* The benefits from attending;
* What commitment is needed from the businesses;
* Key dates.

This will enable participants to schedule their time as required.Remind businesses at each event of the programme of events, the next steps in the process and the key dates coming up.Consider sending out an e-newsletter periodically throughout the process to keep everyone informed and engaged. |
|  | Seek reassurance of adequate staffing levels from PAMs as part of the tendering process.Consider undertaking the management, co-ordination and administrative elements of the project within your LVEP team. This includes the management and co-ordination of:* The mystery shopping process;
* The peer mentoring process;
* Monitoring online training completion;
* Monitoring and chasing.

This could be achieved by establishing a co-ordinator role within your LVEP team.The time needed to achieve this should not be underestimated and you need to ensure that you have sufficient capacity to deliver this. This would leave the PAMs to focus on key areas including:* Undertaking audits;
* Event delivery.
 |
| PAM leaves or is ill part way through the process | Seek reassurance of adequate staffing levels from PAMs as part of the tendering process. |
| Long delays between the businesses being audited by the PAMs and receiving their reports and improvement plans  | Ensure the PAMS have capacity to undertake and produce the audits in a timely manner.Consider agreeing a specific timeline with the PAMs with sufficient time between the audit of the business and the delivery of the audit report and improvement plan.Consider whether businesses could populate some of the basic aspects of the audit themselves. This could be achieved by signposting businesses to the [Action Checklists](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive#action-checklists--3) within the Accessible and inclusive tourism toolkit for businesses. These elements could then be checked during the audit.Seek reassurance of adequate staffing levels from PAMs as part of the tendering process |
| Online training is not engaging enough for some users | Ensure, when commissioning online staff training, that the materials are:* Engaging;
* Interactive;
* Impactful;
* Relevant to different roles within tourism businesses.
 |
| Completion of online training is difficult to monitor | Ensure training provider demonstrates the reporting functionality prior to appointment to check it meets your requirements. |
| The destination has nowhere to showcase its newly developed accessible tourism products on project completion / participating businesses are unable to signpost visitors to the region’s wider accessible tourism offering | Undertake the Kick-Start programme prior to the Enhanced programme in order to produce an accessible tourism resource within an ‘Accessibility’ section of your LVEP website. This can then be supplemented during the Enhanced programme. |
| Momentum is lost after the project is completed | Identify a co-ordinator role within your LVEP team to:* Maintain the momentum created through the programme
* Facilitate ongoing networking and learning opportunities
 |

####

#### Identify resources and budget required

There are a range of elements within this programme which will require funding. You will need to consider each of these to create a realistic overall budget for the programme. This will vary depending on the number and size of businesses you engage and your timescale for delivery.

**Action Tip: Identify resources and budget required**

Consider each of the elements of the programme which require funding and determine a budget for each one. The following provides an indicative budget range for each element.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project element** | **Indicative budget** |
| Specialist support from a Professional Accessibility Mentor (PAM):**Business Engagement activities, including:*** assisting with business selection;
* half day in person business engagement workshop;
* destination partner meeting.

**Business Development activities, including:*** auditing of 12 businesses;
* monitoring online training by front-line staff;
* facilitation of a Mystery Shopping process and Mystery Shopper expenses;
* facilitation of a peer mentoring programme;
* the creation of a Detailed Access Guide for each business;
* business websites review and guidance;
* destination website review and guidance;
* facilitation of two destination wide conferences including venue and food and beverage costs.
 | **£50,000 - 90,000** |
| Accessibility Champion training, delivered in person or via webinar | **£2,000 - £3,000** |
| Online training for front-line staff | **£2,500 - £5,000** |
| Seed funding to support initial business improvements | **£1,000 per business** |
| Marketing | Budget dependent upon level of marketing activity required and channels utilised  |

#### Create a project timeline

Developing a realistic timeline for each phase of the programme will enable you to plan effectively. The exact timeline within this process will depend on your own circumstances and those of your businesses. You may, for example, choose to begin the business support and development package before the initial destination-wide event. It is also important to consider the overall timing of the project to ensure that the training and development elements fall at a time when the majority of participating businesses are quieter and therefore better able to participate.

**Action Tip: Create a project timeline**

Consider each of the phases within the project and identify a timeline for each. An indicative timeline from the North York Moors Accessibility Project is provided for guidance.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project phase** | **Indicative timescale** |
| Step 1: Preparation* Resources and budget
* Development of project plan
 | 1 month |
| Step 2: Engagement* Identify businesses
 | 3 months |
| Steps 3 and 4: Business Development | 8 months |
| Step 5: Marketing | 10 months |
| Step 6: Evaluation | 2 months |

#### Identify a Project Manager and procure support

Within this process, a Project Manager from within your destination organisation is needed to manage things such as obtaining funding, budgets, timelines and stakeholder management. The Project Manager will be the important link between your LVEP, Professional Accessibility Mentors (PAMs), participating businesses and your wider stakeholders.

It is recommended that you also recruit a Professional Accessibility Mentor(s) (PAMs) who will support the programme. Consider making this appointment at a very early stage so that the PAM can contribute to the development of your project plan.

**Action Tip: Identify a Project Manager and procure support**

Identify a Project Manager who is able to:

* Build up a relationship with the tourism businesses, the PAMs and the wider stakeholder group;
* Communicate with key contacts;
* Be on hand to answer queries;
* Chase up on actions to help keep the project on track;
* Understand the challenges of running a business alongside participation.
* In the longer term, the Project Manager may also:
* Act as a central reference point for accessible tourism in your destination;
* Keep the momentum going by providing opportunities for businesses to network and learn on an ongoing basis.

“The support that the Project Manager in particular gave was fantastic. What I really liked about her role and the way she actually did it was that if I'd forgotten to do something or if things were dragging a little bit she would ring and chase me up; I really value that because sometimes, you know, other things take priority, and you forget to do things. So that role is really important as a backup to the PAMs, who are dealing with that day-to-day stuff. That was a really good model” – Experience provider.

#### Source funding

Sourcing the funding to implement this programme is an important next step. The [VisitEngland Grant Funding and Bid Writing Toolkit](https://www.visitbritain.org/grant-funding-and-bid-writing-toolkit) provides practical advice on finding funding available and signposts to further helpful resources. Additional signposting on funding is provided in the Laying the foundations section of this toolkit.

#### Recruit professional support

For the project to be successful, you will need to procure professional support. Each of the roles required is outlined below, along with tools providing guidance on recruitment and suggested KPIs.

**Professional Accessibility Mentor (PAM)**

A PAM will provide specialist guidance and support. Their principal role is to support you and your participating businesses through the programme. They will be specialists in accessibility and inclusion, ideally within a tourism context. Their experience and expertise will help you and your stakeholders gain maximum benefits from the process.

**Action Tip: Professional Accessibility Mentor (PAM)**

Recruit a PAM who can:

* Contribute to the development of your project plan;
* Assist with the selection of tourism providers for inclusion in the programme;
* Advise on key messaging and the development of a communication timetable;
* Audit the accessibility of participating businesses;
* Manage and monitor the completion of online training by front-line staff;
* Manage a mystery shopping process;
* Support businesses to provide relevant online accessibility information;
* Review the accessibility information provided on your LVEP website;
* Manage a 1 to 1 peer mentoring programme;
* Manage the delivery of two destination-wide conferences.

The PAM brief in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit provides:

* An example role description for a Professional Accessibility Mentor (PAM);
* Suggested Key Performance Indicators for a PAM within this process;
* Guidance to support recruitment and selection.

“I would absolutely say they (the PAMs) have been the stars of the show, if it wasn't for them it might be a very different experience. I think their knowledge and experience has really made the project for me: that their experience is personal experience, which makes it so much more relatable as they've been there and done that themselves. So for them to be able to communicate those experiences from a very hands-on level was just an eye opener: to learn from it and to ask questions -it's been amazing” – Accommodation provider

**Accessibility Champion training provider**

The role of a training provider is to design, deliver and evaluate programmes which
meet the training needs identified within the Enhanced programme. This includes delivery of Accessibility Champion training and potentially training for front-line staff, if not provided via e-learning.

**Online training provider**

The role of an online training provider is to provide online training for customer-facing staff at the businesses participating in the process. The focus for this is supporting them to provide a warm welcome for visitors with accessibility requirements. You may also want to consider offering the training to others, including marketing staff, to create a consistent level of understanding within each business.

**Peer mentors**

Providing a peer mentor for each of the participating businesses offers an additional source of support and guidance. A mentor should either be someone from a similar business type who is further along the road in their accessible tourism journey or has gone through a similar development process within their business.

**Mystery shoppers**

Visits from mystery shoppers with accessibility requirements enables businesses to receive direct feedback from your target market. This feedback is a powerful addition to the information generated by an accessibility audit. It can help to both identify the things which businesses are getting right and highlight the additional things they can do to improve.

#### Develop a stakeholder map and communication plan

Identify who your key stakeholders are within this process. They include your businesses and the organisations outlined in Step 5 of the Laying the foundations section of the toolkit, including:

* Local businesses – tourism and non-tourism related;
* The public realm and natural environment;
* Transport providers;
* The local community, including people with lived experience.

**Action Tip: Develop a stakeholder map and communication plan**

For each of your stakeholders, identify each of the following to form the basis of a communication plan:

* What do they need to know?
* When they need to know it?
* How they need to be involved?

Examples of key messages for stakeholder groups are outlined below:

* Aims and objectives of the programme
* The benefits of being involved
* Their roles and responsibilities within the programme
* Project milestones, activities and timeline of events
* Key dates
* Deliverables
* Project updates
* Marketing plan.

### Step 2: Engage businesses and launch the programme

**Top Tips:**

* **Identify and engage with businesses across the tourism value chain**
* **Recruit a selected number of businesses to the process**
* **Hold a destination-wide conference to launch the programme and engage a wider selection of businesses with your accessible tourism initiatives**

**Identify suitable businesses**

Embarking on the Enhanced programme requires a greater investment of time and resources to build product, capacity and capability compared to the Kick-Start programme. In addition, the businesses undertaking the process will be included within your marketing campaign. It is therefore important to ensure that the ‘right’ businesses are selected for inclusion.

**Action Tip: Identify suitable businesses**

Identify businesses across the Tourism Value Chain who may be suitable to be involved, including:

* Accommodation providers – both serviced and non-serviced;
* Activity providers;
* Attractions;
* Food and beverage retailers;
* Transport;
* Public realm operators.

In each of these sectors, it is important to:

* Target the ‘must go to’ venues within your destination;
* Select businesses which already have good level of physical access (the project budget and timeline will make major physical adjustments unfeasible);
* Choose businesses who are motivated to be involved;
* Allow a reasonable lead time between starting to identify and engage businesses and the start of the business development phase to help businesses plan and prepare.

You may also wish to identify a ‘reserve list’ of businesses who are willing to join the process, if one or more of your participating businesses drop out of the process during the early stages.

“Businesses were selected because they had a reasonable level of accessibility
 to start with, so they were coming into it with either a reputation for good access
 and inclusion or a motivation to want to be involved; and I think that is important” – PAM

“We [already] used to get a lot of accessible visitors but this project made us realise the scope and breadth of the opportunity we can provide. I think we were just hoping to make some overall general improvements. I don't think we realised how much of a bigger opportunity there was to do something here” – experience provider.

“I think we were fair but not exemplary beforehand. Signing up to this was a great chance for someone to tell us what we didn't know, and highlight things that don't apply to our lives, but do apply to quite a lot of people's lives” – attraction.

#### Engage businesses

Engaging with your businesses needs to be done against the backdrop of a very clear and public commitment that accessible tourism is seen as a key area of tourism development in your destination and part of your strategic vision.

A clear promotion plan such as the Newcastle Gateshead Initiative’s [Everybody Welcome](https://www.ngi.org.uk/resources/news/everybody-welcome-initiative-aims-to-put-north-on-the-map-for-accessibility/) programme will provide a route for messaging and a mechanism for engagement. The additional marketing this provides creates an additional incentive for businesses to become involved.

**Action Tip: Engage businesses**

When engaging with businesses:

* Outline the reasons for them to be involved including:
* The [benefits of accessible tourism](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-3) to their business;
* The opportunity to receive free specialist business support which would otherwise be costly;
* The chance to feature in an accessible tourism marketing campaign for the region which should drive additional bookings / visits.
* The opportunity to:
- Meet other businesses and organisations within the region;
- Network;
- Learn from others and share experiences;
- Be able to suggest itineraries for visitors by knowing what
 else is on offer across the area.
* Provide reassurance, addressing potential business barriers;
* Be clear about what you are asking them to committo by sharing your top-line project plan.

TheBusiness Briefing document in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit will help to clarify the process for participating businesses.

#### Recruit and select businesses for the programme

Once you have identified a selection of suitable businesses, bring them all together with a view to recruiting them to the programme.

**Action Tip: Recruit and select businesses for the programme**

Host a business engagement meeting or workshop with the businesses you have identified to:

* Develop their understanding of the project;
* Re-emphasise the benefits of being involved;
* Share the details of your project plan;
* Raise awareness of the activities involved;
* Highlight the level of commitment required at each stage;
* Enable them to meet your team, the Project Manager, PAMs, stakeholders and the other businesses.

At the end of the meeting you can:

* Invite interested businesses to sign up for the programme;
* Secure relevant dates in diaries early on with those agreeing to take part e.g.
	+ Destination-wide conferences;
	+ Accessibility Champion training.
* Outline the purpose of each element. This will enable businesses to understand the difference between each element in the programme timeline and why it is important to be involved in all of them;
* Invite businesses signing up to identify a business lead for the programme who can spearhead activities within the business. Two business leads for each business are ideal to ensure consistency in the event of illness, staff change or staff turnover. The business leads may also be the Accessibility Champions for the business.

“I definitely recommend people get involved because it gave us the confidence to use the ideas we had, it gave us access to experts and that's been incredibly valuable to be able to take things forward in our business” – experience provider

“We thought: are we going to be taught to ‘suck eggs’ here, especially as we’ve been special needs teachers for 20 years …? We learnt plenty ... it was a chance for us to ‘press refresh’ … and get an actual professional opinion” – accommodation.

#### Host a launch event

Hosting a destination-wide event provides an opportunity to launch the programme publicly and engage wider businesses and stakeholders from across the destination, such as those involved in your Kick-Start programme.

**Action Tip: Host a launch event**

Host a destination-wide event to launch your Enhanced programme, inviting:

* Speakers, including accessible tourism specialists;
* Participating businesses;
* Other businesses across the tourism value-chain;
* Exhibitors, including specialist equipment providers;
* Disabled people’s organisations (DPOs) and disabled people;
* Relevant charities;
* Older people;
* Others with accessibility requirements.

The objectives of this type of event are to:

* Introduce accessible tourism and the destination’s aspirations and activities in this area;
* Enable delegates to learn more about accessible tourism and the information, facilities and services which can make a difference;
* Engage with stakeholders to gain their support;
* Enable networking and information sharing across the region;
* Provide delegates with some simple top tips on improving access and inclusion to take away;
* Form a larger network of people and businesses who are motivated to champion accessible tourism in the region on an ongoing basis.

“I'm a big believer that if you're in a room with a bunch of like-minded people pulling in the same direction, there's always going to be a positive outcome” – accommodation.

“Brilliant … the guest speakers, the layout of the day, the fact that they had exhibitors to speak to and there was that time to network” – destination organisation

“They [PAMs] told their story, and what accessibility means to them and what they must consider before they visit somewhere… little things that you wouldn't think about. It was really, really helpful from that point of view of just opening this whole other world of visits that you had never really thought about. So it was a nice all-around learning experience and how far you can take it, but also how just doing the little things also helps massively” – attraction.

**Action Tip: Event logistics**

When hosting an event of this type, it is important to:

* Use an accessible venue which can accommodate the number of attendees expected. Using a venue which has signed up to take part in your programme would be ideal. As a minimum, the venue should have:
	+ Level access (via a ramp or lift):
		- into the building;
		- into the conference room(s);
		- to an accessible toilet;
		- onto the stage (where relevant).
	+ The ability to cater for a range of dietary requirements;
	+ Good acoustics;
	+ Microphones.
* Ask delegates whether they have any accessibility requirements which will need to be catered for, such as provision of a hearing loop or BSL signer. Read the [action checklists for business event organisers and event venues](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive#action-checklists--3) for more guidance on creating an accessible event;
* Consider what time of year is likely to be most appropriate for visitor economy businesses;
* Decide how to market the event using your website, newsletters, social media etc. You could also target membership organisations to encourage their members to attend and utilise local media to help promote the conference;
* Ensure that your messaging is clear, communicating the fact that accessible tourism is part of your vision for the destination;
* Publish a detailed agenda for the day: this will help potential delegates to be clear about its purpose and the value of attending;
* Proactively contact businesses who have not already engaged with accessibility to date. This will help to avoid the risk of only attracting those already engaged in accessibility and help to widen your audience.

In addition to inviting the right mix of stakeholders, hosting the event at an accessible venue and considering how to publicise it, it is also important to ensure that the day is informative, interesting, engaging and interactive.

**Action Tip: Event content**

Consider the elements you wish to include in the event. This may include:

* Exhibitors**,** including equipment and service providers relevant to accessible tourism. Invite them to bring along equipment for delegates to ‘have a go’, providing inspiration for delegates and an interactive element to the day. Exhibitors may include:
	+ Accessible play equipment providers;
	+ All-terrain wheelchair manufacturer;
	+ Hearing loop suppliers;
	+ Sensory equipment provider;
	+ Changing Places toilet suppliers.
* Speakers who can provide a range of perspectives on accessible tourism, such as:

	+ National accessible tourism specialists including Ross Calladine, Head of Business Support for VisitEngland and Government-appointed Disability and Access Ambassador for the tourism sector;
	+ Businesses who already excel in accessible tourism;
	+ Businesses who have taken part in similar programmes;
	+ People with accessibility requirements who are willing to share their experiences, including the challenges they meet and the changes which make a difference.

As an example of a speaker, [watch Katie Clarke](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaVVaUye6dA) of Visits Unlimited talk about her experience as the mother of a disabled daughter and the challenges she faces preparing for a day out.

* A sign up process for your ongoing accessibility development programme e.g. the Kick-Start programme. You may want to:
	+ Display a QR code around the room which takes them to the webpage for your programme, making it easy to sign up on the day;
	+ Follow up with businesses who have not signed up on the day to ask if they need further information or support;
	+ Get in touch at regular intervals via email to encourage businesses and see how they are doing. This may include a newsletter to give a ‘shout out’ to any best practice and highlight the progress businesses are making across the destination.
* Signposting to the business toolkitto inspire and encourage businesses to make changes using the top 20 tips and [action checklists](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive#action-checklists--3).
* Introducing a business Accessibility Champion, either from your region or elsewhere
* Providing the opportunity for delegates to introduce themselves and their business and provide feedback to help you understand any informal network relationships that could be built, for example an attraction and an accommodation provider encouraging reciprocal promotion of each other’s accessibility information and perhaps creating customer offers between them.
* Encouraging networking and information sharing between businesses.

The sample Destination Accessibility Conference Agenda in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit offers an example for inspiration.

### Step 3: Provide a business support and development package

**Top Tips:**

* **Provide a comprehensive business package which provides training, audits and information support**
* **Monitor progress against your project plan on an ongoing basis and mitigate potential risks**
* **Communicate progress with your stakeholders regularly.**

The steps in the business support package in the Enhanced programme are outlined below:

#### Facilitate a peer mentoring programme

Create a peer mentoring programme for participating businesses. This can be achieved by matching them with someone from a similar business type with a more developed accessible tourism offering, or with someone who has gone through a similar development process within their own business. Developing a relationship with someone with greater experience, skills or knowledge can help individuals to learn and businesses to grow. Along with providing support, a mentor can act as a ‘sounding board’ throughout the process.

There are benefits for mentors too, giving them an opportunity to consolidate their knowledge and continue their own learning and development, with the added satisfaction that they are supporting others.

**Action Tip: Facilitate a peer mentoring programme**

* Determine who will manage your peer mentoring process: your Project Manager, your PAM, or another member of your team?
* Recruit peer mentors by:
* Approaching businesses who have successfully participated in your Kick-Start programme;
* Reaching out to venues in your region who have a good reputation for their accessibility and inclusion;
* Reviewing organisations in your area who have won accessibility awards;
* Reaching out to your VisitEngland Regional Development Lead for inspiration.
* Be honest and upfront about:
* What the process involves;
* How much time they will need to commit;
* The likely frequency of meetings.
* Select individuals who are:
* Approachable, friendly, knowledgeable and willing to listen, share learning, support and challenge;
* From the same part of the tourism value chain as their prospective mentee e.g. transport provider, accommodation provider, attraction;
* From a similar sized organisation;
* Able to allocate time to the mentoring process.

The Peer Mentor Brief in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit provides:

* An example role description for Peer Mentors;
* Guidance to support recruitment and selection;
* Tips and an example slide deck for peer mentor training.

Providing some basic training for mentors at the start of the process will:

* Help to set and manage expectations within the group;
* Build relationships between mentors;
* Develop a common understanding of what the mentoring process entails and how to manage it effectively;
* Agree ‘top line’ topics and/or key outputs for each meeting.

This sample agenda and slide deck for hosting a mentoring workshop in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit offers a framework to support this process.

“It's been really good to have the peer mentor programme: that I can just pick up the phone to [my mentor] and say, we've come up against this roadblock, how did you manage this?” – experience provider.

#### Provide Accessibility Champion training

There are many different elements which create successful and sustainable change but, ultimately, it is *people* who make change happen. Having skilled, knowledgeable and motivated individuals within an organisation who can champion improved provision, and support colleagues through a process of change, is therefore extremely important.

England’s Inclusive Tourism Action Group (EITAG), which comprises a range of leading accessible tourism stakeholders, created an Accessibility Champion brief for individuals fulfilling this role. It is important that the Accessibility Champions within this programme receive training to support them in fulfilling this brief.

**Action Tip: Provide Accessibility Champion training**

Provide Accessibility Champion training, preferably delivered in person, for one or two key individuals within each participating business.

The Accessibility Training Provider Brief in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit provides:

* An example role description for the training provider;
* Suggested KPIs for a training provider within this process;
* Guidance to support recruitment and selection.

A [list of training providers who specialise in access and inclusion](https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible-and-inclusive/visitengland-accessible-and-inclusive-0#training-providers--3) is provided in the business toolkit. You may be able to find a PAM who has the skills and knowledge to be able to provide Accessibility Champion training alongside their other deliverables within the process.

You may want to:

* Appoint an Accessibility Champion within your LVEP, such as your project lead, and have them attend the Accessibility Champion training provided for participating businesses;
* Encourage all your businesses to consider creating this role;
* Keep track of those businesses who do create this role as part of your KPIs.
* Create a support network bringing Accessibility Champions together to share experiences. You could ask:
	+ What has worked to help colleagues get on board and take ownership?
	+ What has been a challenge?
	+ What improvements have their businesses made?
	+ What difference have these made to the business?
	+ What difference have these made to their customers?

“[On Accessibility Champion training] we felt very motivated. We felt like we could go back, as you should do as a champion, and explain to others what they should be doing, or how we could maybe change what we are doing as a group to make it better for somebody. Lots of ideas [and] thought-provoking things” – accommodation provider.

“That was very, very useful because without that expertise you don't know whether you're actually trying to think of the right things, and then that has given us the confidence - and it's focused my mind on one or two activities that would be really suitable to roll out and to make it more obvious on the website” – experience provider.

#### Offer customer service training for front-line staff

Front-line staff are central to providing a warm and inclusive welcome and creating a positive first impression. Sometimes, these key team members may lack confidence in welcoming visitors with accessibility requirements. This may because they are unsure about the best way to help or are worried they may accidentally cause offence by ‘saying the wrong thing’. It is therefore important to provide training which gives them the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to create the warmest of welcomes for everyone.

You may opt for this training to be delivered online or in person. There are advantages and challenges with both delivery options, depending on factors such as your budget, the size and types of the businesses involved and your timescales for delivery. Whichever method you choose, you need to ensure that training materials are suitably engaging, interactive and impactful.

**Action Tip: Offer customer service training for front-line staff**

The main outcomes of the training should be:

* A greater understanding of the potential barriers disabled tourists face;
* A greater understanding of the size of the accessible tourism market;
* Improved skills and knowledge to provide excellent service and a warm welcome to people with accessibility requirements.

The Online Training Provider Brief in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit provides:

* An example role description for the online training provider;
* Suggested KPIs for an online training provider within this process;
* Guidance to support recruitment and selection

“The online training gave staff more confidence in interacting with visitors with accessibility needs; the common positive impact being that it conveyed to staff that to be welcoming and helpful they can just ask what they can do to help and to treat people with accessibility needs as they would other visitors”
– quote from Evaluation report, North York Moors Accessibility Project, 2022

“(The training) definitely made them (staff) aware and less afraid to just dive on in and ask, ‘how can I help you’? rather than being frightened of upsetting somebody that comes in in a wheelchair” – accommodation provider

#### Provide business accessibility audits

An accessibility audit, carried out by the PAMs, gives each business a ‘snapshot’ of their existing provision from an access and inclusion perspective across the whole visitor journey and highlights areas for improvement. An audit report also provides useful evidence to support funding bids to support the implementation of the recommendations made.

Some businesses may have concerns about accessibility audits. This may be due to uncertainty about the audit process itself and what is involved, anxiety about what an audit might highlight or concern that recommended improvements will be costly and therefore difficult to implement. Providing information and reassurance about the process at an early stage is therefore important.

**Action Tip: provide business accessibility audits**

Facilitate an accessibility audit for each business which:

* Evaluates the information, facilities and services provided for visitors who:
* Are D/deaf or have hearing loss;
* Are blind or partially sighted;
* Have mobility impairment or are wheelchair users;
* Are autistic;
* Have learning disabilities;
* Are living with dementia;
* Have other accessibility requirements such as special dietary requirements.
* Considers the whole visitor journey, including
* Website accessibility information;
* Arrival and parking;
* Entrance;
* The visitor experience including signage, wayfinding and interpretation;
* Departure.
* Includes a detailed report covering the above elements
* Provides an improvement plan with short, medium and longer-term recommendations.

To manage this process effectively, it may be helpful to:

* Give businesses an overview of the audit process to provide reassurance;
* Manage expectations about the likely timescale between the audit and the production of the report. This can take time, given the many areas to be evaluated;
* Suggest that business owners are included in the audit process, for example by:
	+ Walking round with the auditor for part of the site visit;
	+ Taking part in a short ‘wash up’ meeting at the end of the day, during which the auditor shares the key things which are likely to appear in the report. This gives businesses an early ‘heads up’ about what to expect.

“[On the accessibility audit] Somebody coming in with a different set of knowledge and expectations about your place is absolutely invaluable if it's done right and if it's done in partnership with the place that it's happening” – attraction.

“[On the improvement plan] What we did is we broke it down into the quick wins, the easy things that we can just make happen either overnight or over a course of weeks or months, and what's on our wish list” – experience provider.

#### Offer seed funding to support improvements

The provision of a small amount of funding for businesses offers an added incentive for them to take part in the programme. It also helps to speed up the pace of change by facilitating small improvements which make a big difference.

**Action Tip: Offer seed funding to support improvements**

Provide a programme of seed fundingto support business improvements. This may require working with another stakeholder, such as a local authority, who may be able to access funding for this purpose.

It will be helpful to:

* Consider how much funding to allocate e.g. £1,000 per business;
* Determine whether any funding should be match-funded;
* Think about what does and does not qualify for funding. For example, it could cover the purchase of equipment, or the cost of a web developer to update the accessibility information on a website;
* Provide a list of ‘fundable’ items(see the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit) for inspiration;
* Make the process of applying for the funding simple;
* Consider whether funding should be conditional. For example, stipulating that funding is provided upon the successful completion of the other elements within the process;
* Determine how long businesses have to apply and spend the funding;
* Consider what evidence you require to demonstrate the need for the item (for example, does it need to have been specified in an accessibility audit?);
* Determine the evidence you need to demonstrate that the funding has been spent as intended, such as an invoice or receipt.

“A little bit of cash that's not dealt with too bureaucratically, to just go and buy some things to make some immediate improvements, I think is a really good thing: just that little bit of seed money to get started to do a few things” – attraction

“I think what this project has provided is impetus to do some stuff. So it's a good kick-start from that point of view, and somebody giving us £1,000 has meant we've just gone and done those things. I think we would have done them eventually but probably not as quickly. It's just pushed us on which is a good thing” - attraction.

#### Facilitate a mystery shopper programme

Having access to, and acting on, feedback is an important means for any organisation to learn, develop and improve. When that feedback comes directly from customers it can have extra impact and be an added catalyst for improvement.

A mystery shop is different to a business accessibility audit. An audit is a professional, objective and complete report that considers the needs of all disabled user groups, whereas a mystery shop is an individual’s personal view formed from an actual visit.

**Action Tip: Facilitate a mystery shopper programme**

Provide a mystery shopping programme for participating businesses.

When recruiting mystery shoppers it will be helpful to:

* Reach out to community stakeholders who may be able to support recruitment;
* Provide a clear brief about the role and what is required;
* Select people with a range of accessibility requirements to ensure they are representative of the target market;
* ‘Over-recruit’ to allow for illness or a change in circumstances;
* Remember that some of your mystery shoppers will need the support of an essential companion;
* Aim for each participating business to have at least two ‘mystery shopper’ visits from people with different accessibility requirements.

You will also need to:

* Decide who should facilitate the process. This may be your Project Manager, your PAM or a member of your LVEP team;
* Ensure that mystery shopper feedback forms provide a balanced view, incorporating what is being done well, along with areas for improvement;
* Determine whether businesses are seeking feedback from visitors with particular access requirements and match up mystery shoppers with businesses accordingly;
* Budget for a payment for each mystery shopper. Consider paying a flat fee, for example £50 to cover time and expenses;
* Facilitate this payment for each mystery shop, for example on receipt of completed feedback forms;
* Ask businesses who charge an entry fee to provide complimentary tickets;
* Ask accommodation providers to provide complimentary dinner, bed and breakfast;
* Consider the best time for the mystery shops to be undertaken, for example towards the end of the programme to generate feedback on any improvements which have been implemented as a result of an accessibility audit;
* Facilitate feedback to participating businesses, making sure feedback forms have been made anonymous;
* Consider the accessibility requirements of each mystery shopper and ascertain whether any adjustments are required to enable them to fulfil their role e.g.:
	+ The provision of a printed, rather than a digital feedback form;
	+ The provision of a feedback form in large print;
	+ The ability to provide feedback in alternative formats.

The Mystery Shopper Brief in the [downloads section](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/accessible-and-inclusive-tourism-toolkit-local-visitor-economy#toolkit-downloads) of the toolkit provides:

* An example role description for mystery shoppers;
* Guidance to support recruitment and selection;
* A sample mystery shopper feedback form for use in the process.

“I think it's an important part trying to test out people's experiences so it should be part of the plan, it shouldn't be just an afterthought” – Mystery Shopper

“We got really nice feedback. And it was really helpful that the things that we're planning are the right things. Also the things that we have already done are being done by the team because they were mentioned by the Mystery Shoppers. It was a nice midway review to show we clearly have made progress” – attraction

#### Create Detailed Access Guides for businesses

Encouraging businesses across your destination to provide accessibility information is part of the [Kick-Start programme](https://www.visitbritain.org/resources-destination-partners/kick-start-programme-low-cost-high-impact-approach-accessible/kick-0).

Within the Enhanced programme, Detailed Access Guides are created for participating businesses by [AccessAble](https://www.accessable.co.uk/), who then host these on their website, which is viewed by over 6 million people a year. Whilst this increases the cost of the programme, it ensures that the Accessibility Guides are produced, the standard of information provided is consistent and high-quality and that accessibility information is searchable on a consumer platform.

Smaller venues often rely on third party providers to update their website information and this process can be expensive. They may therefore be unable to add a link to their new Detailed Access Guide to their website straight away, as they may choose to wait until a number of other elements require updating to maximise the value in paying for a web developer.

**Action Tip: Create Detailed Access Guides for businesses**

Create a Detailed Accessibility Guide for each business through AccessAble.

You can answer questions on each business on the Your Accessibility Guide portal to receive a bespoke quotation for either a Guided or OnSite Assessment from a professional surveyor, who will use the information collected to create a Detailed Access Guide.

It is important to note that AccessAble provide a 10% discount for LVEPs who can co-ordinate 25 or more businesses together to have Detailed Access Guides produced; contact them directly for a bespoke quotation.

“It (the Accessibility Guide) is certainly not something I thought about beforehand. It's certainly not something that I thought we really need, but it has proven really popular. Through Google Analytics, we can see since we've launched the Accessibility Guide it's become one of our top 10 most clicked on things on our website” – experience provider.

##

### Step 5: Host a celebration and networking event

#### Host a second destination-wide event

Having completed the business support and development process, a second event provides an opportunity to communicate what has been achieved and keep the momentum going.

Aim to involve key stakeholders who have been involved in the project and encourage them to share their experiences.

This event also provides an opportunity to reach businesses who were not involved in the programme. Hearing from peers will help them to understand the value of developing accessible and inclusive tourism and potentially motivate them to make changes within their own business.

Networking in this way will help to strengthen your destination’s accessible tourism offering by supporting and developing business relationships and partnerships across the value chain.

**Action Tip: Host a second destination-wide event**

Hold a second destination-wide event to:

* Review progress and what has been achieved;
* Hear from some of the people who have taken part;
* Remind people about the accessibility information you provide on your website for visitors, and invite businesses to add their information to it;
* Celebrate success;
* Plan next steps, including further networking opportunities for businesses.

*“There's a networking opportunity now for us going forward. So next year at some point we could have a local get together, a local networking session led by the National Park, that would be really good. You need to keep that contact going.” – experience provider*

### Step 6: Launch a B2C marketing campaign

The next step in the process is to promote the enhanced accessible tourism offering your destination has, both by updating and refreshing the accessibility information on your LVEP website, and by launching a B2C marketing campaign which links to the objectives within your Destination Management Plan.

Central to this is the development of a bank of relevant content including relatable imagery, videography and written material. Ensuring that you reflect the diversity of your potential visitors will help everyone to feel welcome. Remember to factor in lead time which allows for relevant content creation, to help to ensure that you are able to undertake a photo or video shoot at the right time of year.

#### Commission inclusive photography and videography

Commissioning a photo or video shoot will provide you with assets that you can utilise to market your accessible tourism offer. With the necessary permissions they can be used across owned, earned and paid marketing channels.

**Action Tip: Commission inclusive photography**

When commissioning a photo or video shoot for your website or any campaigns, the following guidance may be helpful:

* Ensure that imagery reflects the broad range of impairments and accessibility requirements: although a wheelchair is the international symbol of disability, only around 7% of disabled people use a wheelchair. However, some images featuring wheelchair users are required, so consider utilising an ‘original take’;
* Include auxiliary aids in photographs. Around 80% of impairments are hidden, which can make it hard to represent in imagery: auxiliary aids provide a ‘visual cue’ for some impairments e.g. hearing aid, assistance dog, walking stick/frame, cane;
* Ensure that representation is authentic – never cast a non-disabled person in the role of a disabled person;
* Reach out to disabled talent agencies such as VisAble and Zebedee;
* Use realistic models – don’t just use what you believe to be ‘picture perfect’ models: they won’t be relatable to the average disabled person;
* Show ‘integration’: disabled people interacting with non-disabled people in a non-disabled-specific context;
* Limit hero and celebrity images - constant depictions of disabled high achievers have the capacity to further ‘disable’ the disabled community;
* Think twice about showing disabled people on their own or isolated: this could imply a separation of disabled people from the rest of society;
* Choose locations/backdrops that challenge any expectations of low capability e.g. a disabled person on a zip-wire or abseiling;
* Reflect everyday situations where you would expect to find a family or group of friends, including a disabled person, enjoying a meal or drink together
* Don’t forget to obtain relevant signed model release forms confirming that you can use the images commercially.

Once these assets are created, you can utilise them to market your accessible tourism offer.

#### Plan your campaign

Consider whether you will run a dedicated standalone marketing campaign, or incorporate your accessible products within a wider destination campaign, taking into account the objectives of your Enhanced programme.

**Action Tip: Plan your campaign**

* Determine what you are trying to achieve, such as raising awareness of accessibility in your destination and/or driving bookings.
* Allocate an appropriate budget for marketing within your project plan. This will depend upon:
	+ Your target market;
	+ The channels you intend to use;
	+ How effective your owned and earned channels already are at reaching your target audience.
* Consider the fact that disabled travellers may take longer to book their trip. They may therefore need a longer lead-in time at the decision stage e.g. in order to check information and seek necessary reassurances.

#### Determine your target market

Focus on the domestic market to grow your accessible tourism offer as a first step. Broaden your campaign once your businesses are accessible and international-ready.

#### Select your marketing channels

Depending on your budget, you may be focusing your campaign on your owned/earned channels, paid advertising or a combination of both.

**Action Tip: Select your marketing channels**

**Owned channels**

* Maximise use of your owned channels - destination websites and are heavily relied on as a source of key information regarding barrier-free travel and for booking.
* Ensure that all owned channels include relatable content as a universal principle.
* Ensure that your LVEP website has easily visible access information.
* Create destination guides that feature accessibility alongside non-disabled destination guides.

**Earned channels**

* Get to know media titles, journalists and influencers working in the accessibility space.
* Create press releases and press trips to pique their interest, as well as attracting mainstream media.
* Consider a campaign with a disabled influencer to connect more directly with a community following disabled travel content online. This may also help to overcome any lack of relatable images, as they will create their own content, including own images and videos.

**Paid Channels**

Consider paid marketing activity and whether you need to involve a media buying agency to include your content in paid media advertising, from specialist print magazines to mainstream social media channels. You could also appoint a specialist marketing agency like [Purple Goat](https://www.purplegoatagency.com/), which engaged influencers to support the North York Moors Accessibility project.

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#### Create relevant content

You may wish to consider curating and using accessible itineraries as the focus of your campaign. This could also help to extend your campaign reach, for example, an itinerary focused on food and drink could reach a more general audience interested in these experiences.

**Action Tip: Create relevant content**

* Lead with what is inspiring about your destination: motivations are generally consistent regardless of accessibility requirements.
* Ensure a strong focus on accessible images and venues. This will help to give both emotional and practical reassurance to potential visitors.
* Aim to reach out to people with a range of accessibility requirements e.g. mobility / sensory / cognitive in your communications.
* Check out feedback from previous visitors on Euan’s Guide and TripAdvisor for reviews (and encourage more listings locally too).
* Consider how you can weave in positive messages that will tackle issues highlighted by any negative reviews about your destination.
* If you are creating a website landing page specifically for your campaign, include direct links to businesses, Detailed Access Guides and other practical information about the destination (e.g. accessible toilets, car parking etc).

Here are a few examples demonstrating some of the points above:

* Campaign landing page on destination website (with bookability) – [Discover Yorkshire Coast – Accessible North York Moors](https://www.discoveryorkshirecoast.com/north-york-moors/accessibility/accessible-north-york-moors)
* VisitEngland [Destination Guides](https://www.visitengland.com/access-all)
* VisitBritain’s [Accessible Britain](https://www.visitbritain.com/en/plan-your-trip/accessible-britain) content .You can flag accessible businesses for consideration in this resource, which is aimed at international visitors, by emailing vbcontent@visitbritain.org
* [Days Out Guides](https://www.visitpeakdistrict.com/blog/accessible-places-to-visit-in-the-peak-district-and-derbyshire)
* Sample listicle – [7 Amazing accessible experiences in the North York Moors](https://www.visitengland.com/accessible-holidays-accommodation-attractions-north-york-moors)
* Including accessibility into a wider campaign such as #EscapeTheEveryDay - [Rosie Jones Mission Accessible series for Channel 4](https://www.visitbritain.org/channel-4s-mission-accessible-back-series-2)

#### Launch a B2C marketing campaign

When you have suitable assets developed and have updated the ‘Accessibility’ section on your website, you are able to run a targeted marketing campaign.

**Action Tip: Launch a B2C marketing campaign**

Launch a B2C marketing campaign to promote your accessible tourism offer, using the following guidance to support you:

“My overarching message is: when planning marketing activities ask all the usual questions to design, plan, buy media and implement a campaign, but do so through a lens of customers’ accessibility requirements and considerations”. - Project Manager, VisitEngland North York Moors Accessibility Project and VisitEngland Regional Development Lead

### Step 7: Review

#### Review and evaluate the programme

Reviewing and evaluating the process is an important step. It will help you to assess what has been achieved, the impact the process has had and gather learning points for the future.

**Action Tip: Review and evaluate the programme**

Evaluate your progress against the objectives and KPIs you set at the beginning of the Enhanced programme. You may also want to commission a professional evaluator to provide a comprehensive, structured and objective overview of your programme.

The following quotes are from the North York Moors project evaluation:

“I think what it has made us do is realise how far behind we are with some basic accessibility issues that could be easily rectified, without it costing a fortune. And I think it's woken us up to some much bigger issues that we've got to start thinking about addressing in the next 5 to 10 years” – attraction.

 “I'm dedicating probably an hour or two each week to accessibility. It's been a kick change for us to go this is not just something we need to do but there's an opportunity here to bring new audiences in. I think that there's been a change in mentality” – experience provider.

“Over the next five years, if it doesn't double the amount of income that we have generated specifically from our accessibility features, then I'll be really surprised. Hopefully, it does even more than that but that's just putting a monetary value on it, in terms of having the confidence to deal with guests with accessibility needs that impact you can't put a figure on it but will have benefits way, way, way into the future” – accommodation provider.

It is also important to take time to consider what you have learned as an LVEP team as a result of the process:

 “It's certainly made us all think more about accessibility in more detail. Rather than think about accessibility in general, think in more detail about actually what a consumer is looking for and what the information should be that we're providing, and how that sits as well on the website and to make sure it's in a prominent position” – destination organisation.

#### Continuously improve

Whilst it is important to recognise what has been achieved through your programme, it is also vital that you remember that this is not ‘the end’ of the journey. Going forward, it is important to build on this programme and integrate accessibility into the mainstream offering of your LVEP.

**Action Tip: Continuously improve**

You can continue to improve the accessibility of your destination by:

* Maintaining the initiatives and networks you have started;
* Incorporating accessible tourism in your day-to-day activities;
* Including accessible tourism on agendas at partner events;
* Continuing to signpost to the business toolkit;
* Encouraging businesses to regularly review and update their accessibility information to reflect any changes to provision ;
* Sharing best practice within the destination and further afield, on a continual basis;
* Ensuring that your website is continually updated with accessible tourism products;
* Providing opportunities for new businesses to be part of your accessible tourism portfolio;
* Seeking to influence new developments and refurbishment schemes in your region to build accessibility into their plans;
* Sharing what you have learned by offering to mentor another LVEP just starting out;
* Continuing to include accessible products within your marketing campaigns;
* Providing recognition through awards.

Sharing the things you have learned with other LVEPs will help not only to share good practice, but to make accessible tourism an integral part of the tourism landscape across England, benefitting businesses, visitors, the regional and national economy and the people who call our destinations home.