

An aerial photograph of Helmsley Castle and its Walled Garden. The castle, a large stone structure with two prominent towers, sits atop a hill. Below it, a large, well-manicured green lawn stretches out. In the foreground, the Walled Garden features a central circular fountain, several white benches, and various flower beds and hedges. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

# **North York Moors Accessibility Project: Evaluation**

Helmsley Castle and Walled Garden

# Project background

**#AccessibleNorthYorkMoors**



# History

- The **North York Moors Accessibility Project** (2021-2023) was the latest in a series of major projects led by VisitEngland that have developed and refined an approach to accessible tourism development at a destination level
- **Access For All Project** (2014-2016), 7 destinations: Brighton & Hove, Margate, The Peak District, Northumberland, Lincoln, Nottingham, Birmingham
- **Accessible Itineraries Project** (2012-2014), 4 destinations: Newcastle, Leicestershire, Brighton and Bath



# Objectives

1. To develop and promote a high-quality accessible tourism itinerary for the North York Moors, bookable for people in Germany and/or the Netherlands\* with accessibility requirements
2. To 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
3. To support destination organisations (DOs) in the North York Moors to become local champions of long-term accessible tourism development
4. To act as a test and learn project to inform a potential wider roll-out

\*Only the Netherlands was included in the final marketing campaign, following research

# Project stages

## Phase 1

### Engagement (Sept 2021- Nov 2021)

- Appoint suppliers; engage 10-15 participating businesses, destination managers and local access groups; audience research in Germany and the Netherlands, destination event

## Phase 2

### Product development (Nov 2021 - Summer 2022)

- Support the 12 businesses through an **Access for All Development** process – Audit and Improvement Plan; Staff training; Mystery shop; Information provision; Peer mentoring; Accessibility Guide creation

## Phase 3

### Marketing (Sept 2022 – April 2023)

- Video and photoshoots; B2B/B2C Marketing; influencer and press trips, destination event

# Timeline

**May 2021** Partner engagement began

**Sep 2021** Suppliers appointed by VisitEngland (Professional Accessibility Mentors & Online Training Provider)

**Oct 2021** Business kick-off meeting held

**Nov 2021** First destination-wide event

**Nov 2021 - Aug 2022** Product development

**May 2022** Second destination-wide event

**May – Jul 2022** Asset creation

**Sep 2022** Domestic marketing commenced

**Oct – Nov 2022** FAM trips took place

**Oct 2022** Evaluation of phase 1 & 2 of project began

**Dec 2022** International marketing commenced

**Jan 2023** Business wrap-up meeting held

**May 2023** Evaluation of marketing phase

# Product development

**#AccessibleNorthYorkMoors**



# Product development: in numbers

12 businesses selected...

- 19 accessibility audits completed
- 26 Accessibility Champions trained
- c. 100 customer-facing staff trained in disability awareness
- 22 mystery shops carried out
- 12 mentors from a similar or related sector
- £1,000 grant per business to enable purchase of various aids and adaptations
- 15 Accessibility Guides created
- 2 Destination Management Organisations supported



# Product development: partner meetings



Project partners attending the engagement meeting at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway on 20 October 2021



Project partners attending the wrap-up meeting at the North Yorkshire Moors Railway on 12 January 2023

# Product development: destination events

- 2 destination-wide accessibility events held, with c. 90 attendees across both events
- When asked 'Overall, how would you rate the conference?', 44 out of 47 scored 5/5 and 3 out of 47 scored 4/5 across both events



North York Moors NP @northyorkmoors · May 25

Great to see lots of people at today's North York Moors Accessibility Conference at Sneaton Castle!

This special, one day conference, in partnership with @VisitEnglandBiz, brought together local businesses to share ways of creating more accessible destinations and experiences.



VisitEnglandBiz @VisitEnglandBiz · Nov 24

Today we are attending the @access4alluk destination event in Whitby, focusing on the #AccessibleNorthYorkMoors project.

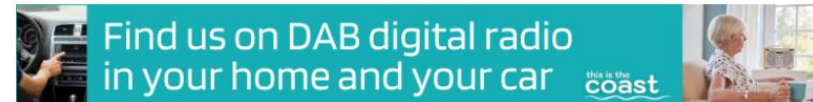
Find out more about the project here: [ow.ly/AmXh50GVnkt](https://ow.ly/AmXh50GVnkt)



Ross Calladine @RossCalladine · Nov 24

Our destination event for the #AccessibleNorthYorkMoors project is well underway in Whitby @access4alluk

## Whitby Conference Aims to Boost Accessible Tourism in North Yorkshire



News Home More from Yorkshire Coast News

Wednesday, November 24th, 2021 7:18am

By Matthew Pells



A conference in Whitby today is aiming to help local tourism businesses make themselves more accessible.

It's part of drive by Visit England and the North York Moors National Park to attract more accessible tourism to the area.

Ross Calladine is from Visit England, he says there is a large accessible tourism market in the UK.



North York Moors  
National Park



# Key findings from the Engagement and Product Development stages\*

- All those involved in the project had moved their accessibility 'offer' along; feeling more confident and much better equipped to welcome people with accessibility needs.
- The project has given tourism businesses a spur to get on and make more informed decisions and changes.
- Participation has provided the businesses and organisations with greater knowledge and awareness and with this a longer list of aspects which they need to consider, look to change and improve.
- The expert advice, the training provided, the small amount of seed money to fund the purchase of some physical products and general momentum from being involved has helped push accessibility along further and quicker than otherwise would have happened
- Taking part is seen as being good value for their time

\*Findings taken from evaluation report produced by QA Research

# Examples of changes made by participating businesses

- Purchased wheelchair-accessible picnic benches
- Refurbished a bedroom using guidance from the improvement plan
- Used the audit report/improvement plan to successfully apply for funding for a Changing Places toilet
- Developed a 'cheat sheet' developed for staff to use during enquiries
- Planning to produce a number of replica objects to provide tactile experiences
- Used wooden blocks to raise the height of a table in their bar area
- Delivered further autism and dementia awareness training
- Lowered reception desk

## Items purchased using project grant:

- Shower chair
- Commode chair
- Handrails
- Improved signage
- Hearing loops
- Large wheelchair
- Sensory equipment
- Bathroom hoists
- 'Easy hold' cutlery

# Feedback on the overall project

“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

“[existing project] was more of a physical journey ... However, this is taking it a complete step further ... opening our eyes to actually the interactions with us and on the website and their visitor journey here” - attraction

“It has definitely made a step change difference, we would have refurbished the room but it wouldn't have been fully accessible because the changes we would have put in would have been very naive. We wouldn't have known about specific guidance, we wouldn't have made the changes that we have done without VisitEngland. So without a doubt the project absolutely has made us do things very differently and things we wouldn't have done without it, so definitely fantastic” – accommodation

# Feedback on specific aspects of the project

**[On Accessibility Champion training]** “It was really good, 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, lots of thought-provoking things” – accommodation

**[On the destination events]** “I think [biggest impact of conferences were] raising awareness, raising awareness of the market, the hard-hitting facts, the fact that it's on an uncatered market, and there's a massive opportunity for businesses” - DMO

**[On the accessibility audit and improvement plan]** “I almost feel like we need to go back to that document every year and just check, have we done it, have we gone through this; some things are easy wins, some things are longer term” - attraction

**[On peer mentoring]** “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? Or how did you communicate this to your senior leadership team, where they found the easiest areas to win, where they saw the challenges, what the results have been, how did you get past this?” – experience provider

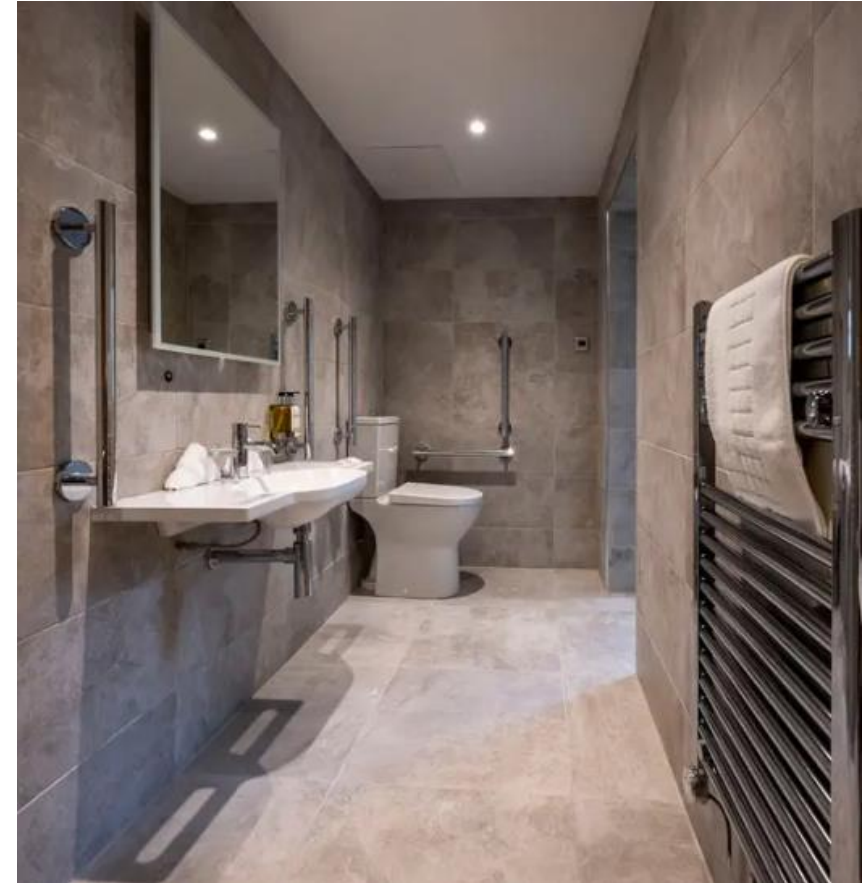
# Domestic marketing

**#AccessibleNorthYorkMoors**



# Asset production

- 2 photoshoots; 1 video shoot
- Over 100 selected images added to VisitBritain/VisitEngland image library
- 5 promotional videos produced (including Dutch captioned and different video lengths)

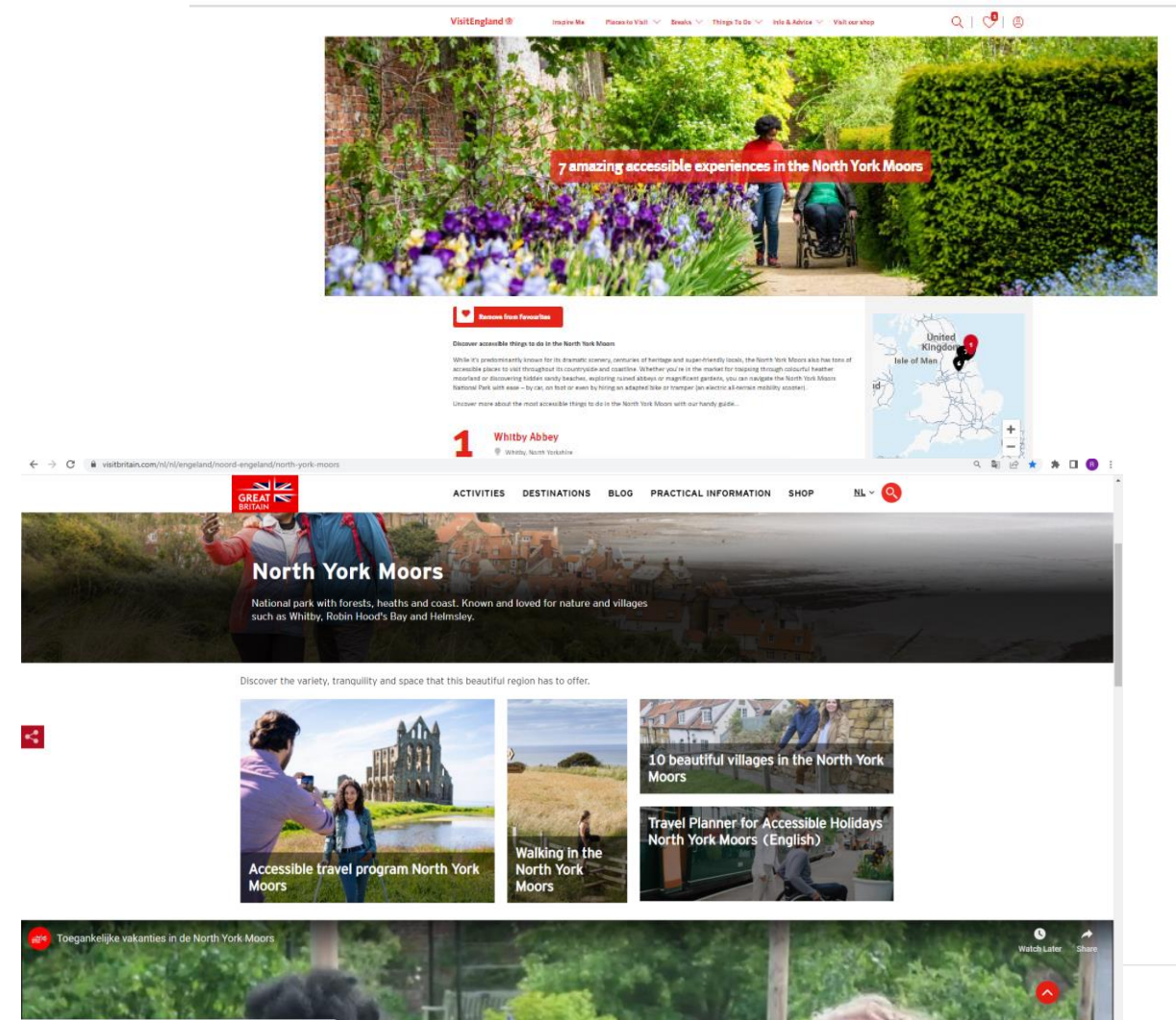


# New digital assets (photos and videos)



# VisitBritain/VisitEngland websites

- '7 amazing accessible experiences in the North York Moors' listicle produced and promoted on VisitEngland.com homepage with 1,667 page views\*: <https://www.visitengland.com/accessible-holidays-accommodation-attractions-north-york-moors>
- VisitBritain digital content with 4,676 views
- Two Accessibility Guides created as a result of the project were in the top three most viewed Accessibility Guides nationwide in September & October 2022 (Grosmont and Goathland stations, North York Moors Railway)



\*up to end Jan 2023

# VisitEngland – social media


- Continuation of domestic marketing on social media, including the promo video:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgeZxcRji-U>
- 2.9k views of promo video on YouTube
- Social media posts on Facebook, Instagram and twitter:
  - Total reach: 36.95k
  - Total likes: 1,064
  - Total engagements (Facebook and twitter only): 114




# Partner content – England's Coast and Discover Yorkshire Coast

England's Coast:

<https://englandscoast.com/en/blog>





## Accessible North York Moors National Park

Predominantly known for its dramatic coastal and moorland scenery and centuries of heritage, the North York Moors also has so many accessible places to visit throughout its countryside and coastline.

[READ MORE](#)

<https://englandscoast.com/blog/top-days-out-for-year-of-the-coast-2023>

Discover Yorkshire Coast (c. 1000 page views up to June 2023): <https://www.discoveryorkshirecoast.com/north-york-moors/accessibility/accessible-north-york-moors>

← → ↺ discoveryorkshirecoast.com/north-york-moors/accessibility/accessible-north-york-moors

Accessible North York Moors


Credit VisitBritain / P Kindersley

You are here: North York Moors > Accessibility > Accessible North York Moors

## Accessible North York Moors

Known for its spectacular scenery and centuries of history the North York Moors also offers accessible coast and moors. Visit ruined abbeys, take a historic train journey and explore magnificent gardens.

Explore by car, on foot, hire an adapted bike or a tramper, and immerse yourself in the diverse



# PR campaign activity: consumer PR

- Jane Dunford, Travel Editor for *The Guardian*, and her travel companion with accessibility requirements went on a press trip to experience the region's accessible products. The coverage from one of the publication's first dedicated accessible travel features was published on theguardian.com in January 2023 (18.4m digital reach)
- Additional consumer PR tactics included incorporating the Accessible North York Moors campaign into VisitEngland's autumn 2022 thematic pitches and news updates
- In October 2022 a press release detailing England's top accessible travel experiences was pitched to mainstream lifestyle press and specialist accessibility media resulting in press coverage and heightened awareness of the campaign

theguardian

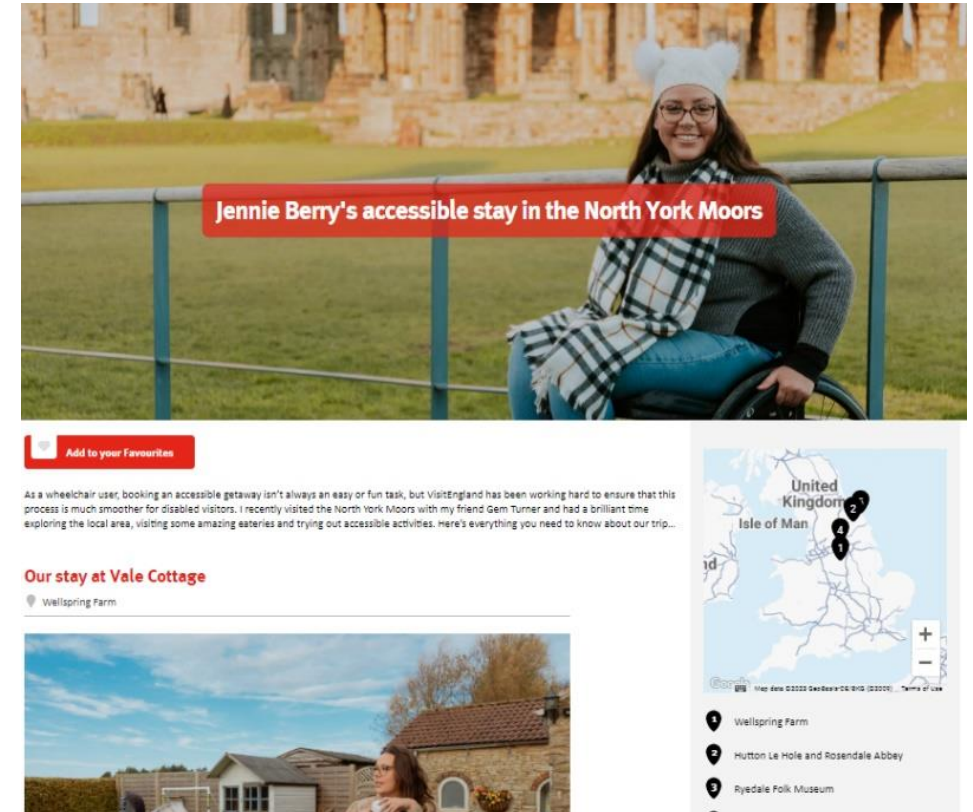
**'I love the sense of freedom': an accessible adventure in North Yorkshire**



■ The author's sister, Lisa, on her battery-assisted handcycle in Dalby Forest. Photograph: Jane Dunford  
We mad-test a new project aiming to make the North York

# PR campaign activity: owned channels

- Working with Purple Goat, VisitEngland coordinated a series of influencer trips and developed a paid social strategy to boost influencer content to the North York Moors
- The selected influencers developed articles for VisitEngland owned web and social media channels, as well as their own channels (448 page views on VE.com)
- Influencer Instagram posts were amplified via VisitEngland's account to an audience of 462k followers



# PR campaign results

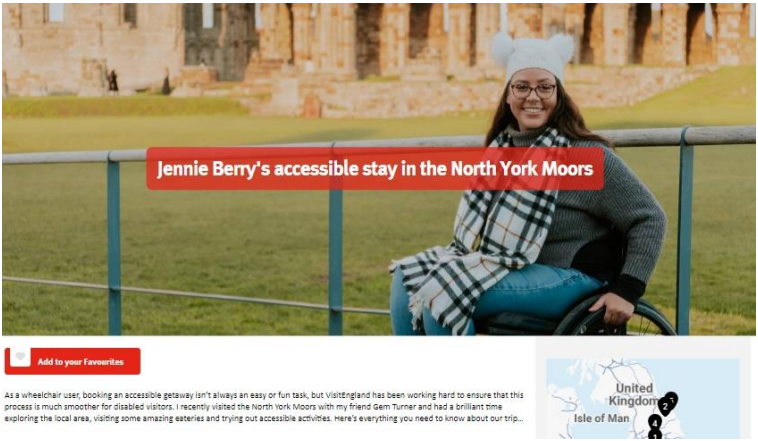
- The influencer content achieved **over 1.6 million organic and paid impressions** – nearly one million more than anticipated – with a reach of over 570,000, an engagement of over 460,000 and an average 5.35% organic engagement rate
- The campaign traffic was a success too, with **over 8k clicks through** to the VisitEngland campaign landing page. **90% of the campaign landing page sessions generated by the influencers were new users**, showing it gained us new audience awareness
- Consumer media coverage was secured in mainstream media outlets including one of The Guardian's first dedicated accessible travel features on theguardian.com (18.4m digital reach) and *Country & Town House*
- In May 2023 VisitEngland won 'Digital PR Campaign of the Year 2023' at the TravMedia Awards, for the Accessible North York Moors campaign



COUNTRY & TOWN  
HOUSE



# Examples of media promotion



## theguardian

### 'I love the sense of freedom': an accessible adventure in North Yorkshire



📷 The author's sister, Lisa, on her battery-assisted handcycle in Dalby Forest. Photograph: Jane Dunford  
We road-test a new project aiming to make the North York



# International marketing

**#AccessibleNorthYorkMoors**



# Paid campaign on YouTube

- Targeted Dutch 'Explorers' audiences aged 55+ with the intention to travel
- Challenge of the brief:
  - GET VisitBritain Explorer segment, with access requirements (potentially a wide range of disability types but with a particular focus on mobility)
  - THAT like travelling and gaining new experiences
  - TO be inspired to discover the North York Moors as an accessible destination to Dutch travellers with access requirements and consider it as their next travel destination.
- Campaign objectives:
  - *Create awareness for the accessibility of North York Moors and boost traffic to the landing page*
- Campaign resulted in **over 9m impressions** (against a target of 6.9m) and **8.2m views** (against a target of 5.5m)





# Legacy

- VisitEngland is developing a new Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Local Visitor Economy Partnerships
- The toolkit will assist LVEPs in England to lead the development of destinations that people with a wide range of accessibility requirements can enjoy
- The toolkit will provide the 'building blocks' for an accessible and inclusive destination and 'Kick-start' and 'Enhanced' accessible destination development programmes
- The North York Moors Accessibility Project has provided a blueprint for the 'Enhanced' programme
- VisitEngland's LVEP programme provides a vehicle to drive the development of accessible tourism at a destination level

