



VisitEngland™

The VisitEngland Action Plan

2016

Introduction

Tourism is an industry that delivers jobs and economic growth across the English regions - generating £106 billion a year and employing over 2 million people, with a strong domestic market. England has seen record tourism spend in the past year from both domestic and international visitors. The number of domestic overnight trips taken in England grew by 11% in 2015, while inbound visits have shown strong regional growth in the first nine months of 2015 – plus 23% to North East, plus 12% to the North West and plus 6% to the South West for example.

To continue to achieve such growth is not without its challenges as the way customers choose and book their holidays is changing. More and more destinations recognise the strong growth potential of inbound tourism so that our customers from traditional markets see new places to explore, while the strongest growth comes from markets that do not know much about England and may have different expectations.

As the national tourism agency – a non-departmental public body funded by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), BTA¹ plays a unique role in building England's tourism product, raising Britain's profile worldwide, increasing the volume and value of tourism exports and developing England and Britain's visitor economy.

The Government's [Five Point Plan](#) 'Backing the Tourism Sector' highlighted the need to expand and develop the England offer to visitors. This was followed by the good funding settlement for VisitEngland and VisitBritain in the comprehensive spending review, with core budgets unchanged - £6.9m ring-fenced for England - and a new £40m [Discover England Fund](#). The Government also asked to bring the two organisations, VisitEngland and VisitBritain, more closely together.

The over-arching priorities continue to be:

- Market the nations and regions of Britain overseas to drive growth in international leisure and business tourism
- Maintain distinct activities to develop and market England's tourism

In addition, the following priorities for England have been set out by Government for the three year period commencing 2016/17:

1. Developing the English tourism product through the delivery of the £40m Discover England Fund
2. Supporting Business Visits and Events in England
3. Providing additional business facing and supporting activities, including statutory research

The plan sets out core activities to be undertaken for England and sets the context for annual business planning where more detailed activities, budgets, milestones and measures can be found.

The priorities and activities outlined will be supported through a combination of dedicated England staff led by the England Director and combined BTA corporate resources from core Grant in Aid. These include staffing, business services, communications, PR, engagement and tourism affairs. Further details and budgets are included in the BTA Business Plan.

The VisitEngland Action Plan will be updated annually and its delivery monitored by the VisitEngland Advisory Board (VEAB) on behalf of the BTA Board. The VEAB will feedback comments and provide advice to the BTA Board and CEO at BTA Board meetings.

¹ VisitBritain and VisitEngland are legally constituted as the British Tourist Authority (BTA) under the Development of Tourism Act 1969.

VisitEngland Priorities 2016-2020

Over the first three years VisitEngland will focus on:

i. Developing the English tourism product through the £40m Discover England Fund

VisitEngland will deliver the new £40m Discover England Fund on behalf of Government. The Fund will enable and facilitate growth in international tourism and support the domestic market through delivering world class, stand-out, bookable tourism products in response to market opportunities and consumer needs. The funding will be available for three years from 2016/17 for large-scale collaborative and innovative bids that join-up the product offering across geographies and themes, including innovative transport solutions such as through ticket and pricing that improve ease of access for visitors – a priority in the Government’s Five Point Plan.

In early 2016 VisitEngland held a series of regional engagement events to consult on Fund development with the tourism industry. There will be two opportunities to bid to the Fund:

- **Round One:** Year 1 small scale projects and pilots (launched in May) to be delivered by the end of March 2017
- **Round Two:** A series of world-class itineraries that deliver a step change in the tourism product in England and demonstrate collaborative working across large geographies and/or themes (launched July). These will be limited in number (3-4) and delivered in years 2/3

Guidance on each round will be published on www.discoverenglandfund.org and communicated widely across the tourism industry. Year 1 delivery headlines are outlined below. For further details on the Fund see the appendix for the attached delivery plan.

YEAR 1		
Activity	Deliverable	Timeline
Discover England Fund	- Fund development and engagement	Feb – Jul 2016
	- Year 1 projects and pilots bidding process	May 2016 – Sep 2016
	- Year 2/3 large-scale projects bidding process	July 2016 – Feb 2017
	- Announcement of Year 1 successful bids	Jun - Sep 2016
	- Announcement of Year 2/3 Expressions Of Interest going to full bid stage	Nov 2017
	- Announcement of successful Year 2/3 bids	Feb 2017
	- Delivery (Year 1 bids)	Jun – Mar 2017
	- Delivery (Year 2/3 bids)	Apr 2017 – Mar 2019
	- Evaluation	Sep 2016 – Dec 2019
TOTAL YEAR 1 ACTIVITY BUDGET: Year 1 £6.5m (Year 2 £11.5m; Year 3 £22m)		

ii. Attracting, developing and supporting international business visits and events (BVE)

There is a clear case for national funding and support to ensure England can attract, develop and grow international business visits and events and add value to local investment and activity. VisitEngland, alongside VisitBritain, will be represented on the cross-Governmental Business Visits and Events Board and will work to ensure activities are aligned with, and contribute to, the Government’s UK Business Visits and Events strategy and the Five Point Plan. VisitEngland will focus activity in six key areas:

1. Product/event development and bid support
2. Supporting English destinations to reach international event planners through national sales and marketing platforms
3. Direct national government support
4. Advocacy for business events
5. Research & insights
6. Understanding and sharing global best practice

YEAR 1		
Activity	Deliverable	Timeline
Promotion of England as a leading destination for business visits and events	– Define BVE strategy for England which might include:	Apr – Jun 2016
	– A coordinated England presence at IMEX Frankfurt, IMEX America, IBTM World	Apr – Nov 2016
	– 1-2 England buyer 'roadshows' in USA/ Europe	Apr – Jun 2016
	– Fam trips for leading international event buyers	Apr – Jun 2016
	– Membership of PCMA and ICCA congress, marketing and sales activity	Apr – Jun 2016
	– Develop digital content and collateral	Jul – Sept 2016
	– Develop regional incentive travel product packaging through attendance at leading incentive travel buyer events	Oct 2016 – Mar 2017
TOTAL YEAR 1 ACTIVITY BUDGET: £350k		

iii. Additional business facing and supporting activities, including statutory research

In addition to VisitEngland’s core priorities set out by Government, there are a set of business facing and supporting activities that need to be undertaken to enable future delivery:

a) Brand, marketing and promotion of England

Brand, marketing and promotional activity for VisitEngland will be delivered by a combined BTA marketing department with dedicated England staff. There will be as strong emphasis on content creation and digital development that responds to the needs of international and UK markets. UK and international marketing strategies will be developed that focus on the new VisitEngland remit of creating world class bookable tourism product. Marketing activities will not only provide channels for partners for content creation and curation but also platforms for new viable product.

YEAR 1		
Activity	Deliverable	Timeline
Content and Digital	Review of platforms	Apr - Sept 2016
	Content creation and curation, digital activity (social), PR e.g. Year of the Garden	Apr 2016 – Apr 2017
Product Development & Marketing	Short term and long term product development, marketing and promotion to support Discover England Fund outputs	Jun 2016-2019
GREAT UK Campaign	Define domestic UK wide Holidays at Home are GREAT campaign activity (subject to GREAT funding)	Apr/May 2016
TOTAL YEAR 1 ACTIVITY BUDGET: £3m (subject to final plans being agreed); additional product marketing costs tbc and subject to year 1 bids (included in allocated £6.5m)		

b) SME engagement & support

VisitEngland, over a number of years, has established relationships with independent tourism businesses through on and offline advisory services; a suite of quality assessment schemes and initiatives and programmes designed to educate and assist in business development. Work is also being undertaken by Government to improve access to business support across a wide range of sectors, including hospitality, and this is a particular focus for the Tourism Council set up by DCMS.

The Government in its Five Point Plan states the need to “support the businesses driving this growth, many of which are SMEs”. VisitEngland’s role and the activities it delivers in support of SMEs and micro businesses will be reviewed in response to Government priorities and this will include: considering the balance between sign-posting and delivery of support; the provision of market intelligence and trends tailored to the needs of businesses and communicated effectively to drive action and response; and that skills are developed to respond to new markets and consumer demands such as digital and technology.

VisitEngland Awards for Excellence

VE and its predecessor organisations have highlighted best practice and excellence in experience delivery through an annual awards programme. The contract for the current programme expired following the March 2016 Awards. The 2017 Awards will take place in April and will have greater in-house delivery and management.

Business Advice Hub

VisitEngland’s Business Advice Hub brings information on business support together in one place for micro and small tourism businesses. It manages and delivers a suite of tailored resources and is rich in information, practical tips and case studies that address business needs and highlight market opportunities. Research is currently in the field to evaluate its effectiveness.

Other SME support

VisitEngland leads on a programme of activity to support and encourage the industry to harness the opportunity offered, for example, by a growing accessible tourism market. Activity currently includes Quality Edge magazine for accommodation and attraction businesses, the Pink Booklet legislation guide for the accommodation sector and destination workshops to upskill businesses.

YEAR 1		
Activity	Deliverable	Timeline
Business Advice Hub	- Define VE Advice role and future activities/delivery	Apr – Jun 2016
	- Linked to above, consider user research in any future site design	Apr – Jun 2016
	- Develop and deliver a targeted communications plan (linked to above)	Jul – Sept 2016
Excellence Awards	- Engage with “feeder” destinations regarding future of the programme	Apr – Jun 2016
	- Options discussed by VisitEngland Advisory Board and recommendations made to BTA Board	Sept 2016
Other SME Support	- Review and define VE role and (dependent on outcomes) future activity	Jul – Sept 2016
TOTAL YEAR 1 ACTIVITY BUDGET: <i>Business facing activity/costs are set out in the BTA Business Plan; further external costs dependent on development of detailed plan and review outcomes</i>		

c) Quality Assessment and Assurance Schemes

The VisitEngland National Quality Assessment Schemes for accommodation is delivered under licence by Quality in Tourism (a sub division of G4S). VE manages a franchise scheme for four large self-catering groups and a range of experience assessment schemes (Attractions; horse race-courses; motorway service stations and pubs). The operating environment has changed significantly and a report commissioned by the National Tourist Boards and the AA (the Common Standards Partners) concluded that although the schemes develop the visitor experience, a fresh approach is required. The licence agreement with QiT expires in March 2017 and therefore a final consideration of the options and a decision on potential future delivery will be made.

YEAR 1		
Activity	Deliverable	Timeline
Quality Assessment and Assurance Schemes Options	- Recommend future delivery model to BTA Board	Jun 2016
	- Depending on recommendations, define future delivery and next steps	Jul – Sept 2016
	- Engage with the industry on future model/delivery	Oct – Dec 2016
TOTAL YEAR 1 ACTIVITY BUDGET: <i>Business facing activity and costs are set out in the BTA Business Plan; further external costs dependent on detailed plan and review outcomes</i>		

d) Research and Insights

VisitEngland delivers a robust programme of market measurement and business performance monitoring. This includes delivery and publication of statutory surveys such as volume and value of domestic overnight tourism, accommodation occupancy, and official statistics measuring tourism day visits and visits to visitor attractions. A robust evidence base will also be required to support the effective delivery of the Discover England Fund. Future activities are likely to include:

- establish the scope and range of research required for the new VE remit
- identification of efficiencies through consideration of new delivery models
- an analysis of current market gaps and opportunities for travel trade and consumers
- identifying best practice and innovations in the UK and beyond
- understanding trends in inbound and domestic market volume, value and visitor characteristics
- understanding macro trends affecting global tourism, building on the “Domestic Leisure Tourism Trends for the Next Decade” work previously carried out by VisitEngland
- understanding motivations, barriers, needs and expectations among target audiences

YEAR 1		
Activity	Deliverable	Timeline
England research and insights programme	– Statutory surveys: GBTS, Day Visits, Occupancy, plus review requirements and delivery models for cost efficiencies	Ongoing
Ad hoc and quantitative research	– E.g. Brand tracker, visitor satisfaction – other areas to be determined	Ongoing – to be determined
Discover England Fund research	– Research plan published including identified gaps – Analysis of VB/VE data to inform fund and bid development and additional research commissioned – Research to support specific bids	May 2016 May - Jul 2016 Jun 2016 – Mar 2017
TOTAL YEAR 1 ACTIVITY BUDGET: £500k (subject to detailed plans being developed); Discover England Fund research costs tbc and included in the allocated £6.5m for Year 1 – it is recognised additional research to support bids could be carried out in Years 2/3		

e) Other Fund related activity

In 2015/16 VisitEngland also delivered a range of other Government funding programmes including the Northern and South West Tourism Growth Funds, UK GREAT Challenge Fund and Hadrian’s Wall Connect. These will be evaluated and lessons shared for the benefit of the industry and future programmes. VisitEngland will also deliver the £500,000 Government funded Mayflower 2020.

YEAR 1		
Activity	Deliverable	Timeline
South West and Northern Tourism Growth Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme closure/exit strategy - Evaluation – including lessons for future programmes 	Apr – Dec 2016 Apr – Dec 2016
UK GREAT Challenge Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme closure/exit strategy - Evaluation – including lessons for future programmes 	Apr – Dec 2016 Apr – Dec 2016
Other Funds – Newcastle Scandinavia; Hadrian’s Wall Connect; Yorkshire Rural domestic marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme closure/exit strategy - Evaluation – including lessons for future programmes 	Apr – Dec 2016 Apr – Dec 2016
Mayflower 2020 Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scope Fund, detailing activities and outcomes - Explore opportunities to align with Discover England Fund 	Apr – Jun 2016 Apr – Sept 2016
TOTAL YEAR 1 ACTIVITY BUDGET: £240k (Mayflower Year 1); costs accrued from 2015/16 for other activities; associated staff, corporate and project management costs included in BTA Business Plan		

Delivering sustainable, long-term impact

Budgets, funds and activities will be managed effectively and efficiently and reviewed quarterly to ensure value for money for the tax payer. New models of delivery will be explored to ensure less dependency on public sector funding and a strong focus on commercial partnerships and opportunities. A sustainable approach to delivery will be fostered to ensure joined-up, collaborative activities at the national and local levels. Working in partnership is fundamental to future success and strong strategic relationships will continue to be cultivated nationally and across the regions.

The VisitEngland Advisory Board will monitor the impacts of the Discover England Fund as well as ongoing England activity delivered by the BTA. Evaluation frameworks will be developed during 2016-17, together with a series of KPIs to enable ongoing monitoring of progress. At a high level, outputs, outcomes and impacts are expected to include:

Outputs

- DEF projects awarded in line with criteria
- New product / itineraries launched in market
- Consumer campaigns and digital content delivered
- BV&E bid support provided and content delivered
- Business support provided to SMEs
- Quality Scheme options appraised and decisions implemented
- Research programme delivered
- Strategic partnerships maintained and developed

Outcomes

- *Market outcomes*: additional visits from domestic and international leisure markets (national / relating to Fund projects); new product uptake by trade; additional events confirmed
- *Perception outcomes*: improved perceptions of England among leisure and business target groups, improved understanding of tourism among strategic partners
- *Competitiveness outcomes*: business supported to improve performance and implementing changes; revised QA scheme meeting new objectives in driving business performance
- *Partnership and Capacity outcomes*: effective co-ordination of Fund and wider tourism partnerships; partnerships active beyond the fund activity; replicability of fund projects; DMO capacity enhanced as a result of activities (e.g. BV&E, research)

Impacts

- Increasing incremental tourism spending in England overall and across the regions
- Additional GVA in tourism sector
- Additional employment in tourism sector
- Legacy impacts (e.g. fund projects stimulate new product development initiatives in other areas of England)

Further information

Appendix

See Discover England Fund Delivery Plan.