Destinations for All
A guide to creating accessible destinations

VisitEngland
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Introduction

This guide looks at what a destination manager can practically do to facilitate the development of an accessible destination that meets the needs of older and disabled visitors.

Five reasons to read this guide

1. Grow your visitor numbers and create revenue for your businesses
2. Engage your businesses in improving quality and service standards for all
3. Compete with other destinations that are already embracing the accessible tourism market
4. Contribute to the overall success and sustainability of your destination
5. Improve the quality of life for the local community and residents

This is an excellent, easy to navigate guide. It offers a balance of facts and achievable solutions and will be a highly valuable resource for Destination Organisations, tourism consultants and business owners. It should also ensure a better understanding of accessibility as well as help improve access provision within the tourism sector.

Deborah Matthews, Destination Manager, Consultant for Weston-Super-Mare.

The destination accessibility jigsaw

In recognition of demanding workloads and limited resources this guide focuses on partnership working. It is divided into four main sections which make up the destination ‘accessibility jigsaw’.

Section 1 looks at understanding what the visitor wants and the key issues around accessibility.

Section 2 looks at engaging your businesses - attractions, hotels, restaurants and other venues - in the drive to become accessible.

Section 3 explores the role of partnerships in creating an accessible public realm.

Section 4 looks at how a destination organisation (DO) can most effectively promote its accessibility.

Sections 5 and 6 provide information sources and a worksheet for recording key actions.
Creating an accessible destination: Top 5 myths

Myth 1
There is little demand

There is huge demand for accessible travel. Around £12bn is spent by people with health conditions and impairments, and their travelling companions, on overnight and day trips in England each year. The spending power of this market is known as the 'Purple Pound'.

Your visitor base is likely to be getting older as the UK population ages, and with age comes the increasing chance of impairments. There are now 14.9 million people in the UK aged 60 and above, nearly a quarter of the population. This will rise to nearly 30% of the population in 2035. Research by Barclays Bank shows that the older market spend over a third (36%) more than the average consumer on hospitality and leisure.

Another growing market with access requirements is the extended family group or multi-generational travel – a market which, according to ABTA, doubled in 2014. Step-free access can be a requirement at both ends of the age range, especially for those using prams!

Myth 2
This is a niche market and therefore not a priority

In this country 12 million people have an 'activity limiting' health problem or disability (Department for Work and Pensions). That's one in five of the population. And, contrary to popular belief, only around 6% of travellers are wheelchair users (approximately 8% of all disabled people). Disabled people are more likely to have a long term illness or hearing loss than have a mobility impairment.

When looking at your current visitors, it’s easy to assume that you do not currently serve this market. A significant number of impairments are invisible such as diabetes, asthma, heart conditions, allergies and food intolerances. Very few people who have reduced vision, hearing loss or walk with a stick would describe themselves as disabled but they are likely to have accessibility needs. Many of your existing visitors are likely to be in that group - it’s clear that this market is far from a niche.

Disabled people do not make up a neat segment that can be easily identified or categorised. They feature in every social and cultural group and have diverse interests both at home and when travelling.

‘It’s not just domestic tourism; the inbound market has strong growth potential. One in five people in Europe are over 60. And these seniors make up 65% of the accessible tourism market. Businesses and destinations preparing for this growing market will benefit hugely.

Ivor Ambrose, Director of the European Network on Accessible Tourism.

Breakdown of disabled travellers by type of impairment.
Source: VisitEngland ‘The Purple Pound’ 2015

- Long term illness: 4.9m
- Deaf or partial hearing loss: 2.6m
- Mobility impairment non-wheelchair user: 2.6m
- Blind or partially sighted: 0.9m
- Mobility impairment wheelchair user: 0.6m
- Learning difficulties: 0.6m
Heritage is not necessarily a barrier to access, as the Roman Baths case study shows. The attraction has overcome the physical challenges of the site and has used innovative interpretation to become truly accessible for all.

Creating accessible tourism is often centred around the physical infrastructure. However, it is important to look beyond this, as providing complete physical accessibility is often not feasible. Disabled and older travellers don’t expect a fully accessible world. What they do want is a welcoming culture, alternative ways of access where possible and accurate and timely information.

Myth 3

"We have too many heritage restrictions"

"About a quarter of our visitors have a disability or access requirement and so improving access is a top priority for us. Some of our buildings and landscapes can make this quite challenging! Each property has the freedom to implement bespoke solutions from hearing loops and Braille guides to Virtual Tours of the whole site (including otherwise inaccessible rooms), manual wheelchairs for loan and self-drive and even volunteer-driven powered mobility vehicles at some of our larger gardens and parks."

Heather Smith, Equality Specialist, National Trust.

Roman Baths wins multiple access awards

The Roman Baths works hard to welcome all types of visitors. It provides British Sign Language audio tours, induction loops for hearing-aid users, large print leaflets, tactile signage, braille on exhibits and online information for people with claustrophobia and autism, all supported by highly trained staff. Thanks to an innovative suspended walkway, around 90% of the site is accessible to wheelchair users.

In 2016 the Baths won Gold in the Access for All category at the South West Tourism Awards and Silver at the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence.

‘The Roman Baths are fabulously equipped for wheelchair users and those with limited mobility. Obviously some areas are inaccessible or challenging because of the age of the Baths and the well-worn stone. But the museum has done a fantastic job of making as much of the grounds as accessible as possible with internal lifts and ramps.’

Martin Sibley, Founder, Disability Horizons
This market is no more difficult to reach than any other. Indeed, it can be easier to reach. Disabled people are often members of groups and they can be wide users of social media. They also tend to be loyal as, with so few businesses reaching out to them, they often return to places that meet their needs.

Remember older people typically have more time! This makes them more likely to visit outside of peak season when you need additional revenue.

The key is to understand how much information the visitor needs and the channels of information that they use. These can range from specialist information sources right through to mainstream media.

Impact of disability on holiday taking

**Low impact**

- Partially hearing or visually impaired
- Mobility impaired - no walking aids
- Profoundly deaf or blind
- Mobility impaired - with walking aids

Similar to non-disabled holiday experience

Access information useful

**High impact**

- Adult learning disability/mental health problems, with behavioural problems
- Mobility impaired - wheelchair user

Holiday-taking can be complicated, involving potential loss of dignity for disabled person

Access information critical

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**Myth 4**

It’s difficult to reach this market

Take a look around your destination. How much of the public realm is already accessible? How many community groups are already working with the council and town centre retailers to encourage small improvements to signage, lighting or ramps? How many businesses have good accessibility but are not promoting it because they are unsure how to?

Many destinations are already partly accessible. The challenge for destination managers is to seek out existing good practice and use it as a catalyst to kick-start a process of improvement throughout the destination.

**Myth 5**

It will take too long to become accessible
The visitor journey

People with accessibility requirements go through the same ‘visitor journey’ that any visitor typically goes through: looking for places to go and researching the options, booking accommodation, travelling to the destination and enjoying time there, before returning home and sharing their experiences with friends and relatives. For older and disabled visitors searching for a suitable holiday destination can be more time intensive.

Although each stage of the journey will pose different challenges depending on individual needs, in general there are some common requirements around ease of mobility, signage and wayfinding, public transport, a warm welcome by disability aware staff and the need for accurate and reliable information.

The Access Survey 2015 data from online access review site Euan’s Guide shows what visitors with access requirements value when deciding to travel somewhere. The importance of parking, accessible toilets and friendly staff are clear.

What do I look for when planning to visit somewhere?
Well, perhaps surprisingly, largely the same as most other folk!

But I do need some extra pieces of information to help me as a powerchair user. An idea of the geography of the destination. Has anyone reviewed the venue from a wheelchair user’s perspective? Is there an accessibility guide available? What is the public transport like, as I don’t drive? Is there an accessible loo?

Then on the day I want a warm welcome and to enjoy the visit just like everyone else!

Paul J. Ralph, Euan’s Guide and Founder Disabled Access Day

What factors influence your decision to visit somewhere?

- Knowing you can get into and around the venue 90%
- Knowing there is an accessible toilet 80%
- Knowing that staff are helpful and friendly 70%
- Knowing that you can park nearby 66%
- Knowing that you can get there on public and community transport 27%
- Knowing that information is available in a format you can use 23%

Accessibility or disability?

It helps to think of your destination as becoming ‘accessible’ and ‘inclusive’ rather than ‘disability friendly’. In this way you think about your destination being open to those of all ages who have access needs, rather than only those who recognise themselves as being ‘disabled’.

The lucrative Baby Boomer generation is now retiring and expect adjustments to allow them to fulfill their travel aspirations with no hassle or fuss. This generation will change our perception of disability more than any generation before.

So, how accessible are you? Is your destination easy to navigate for families with toddlers and prams? The group of older visitors arriving by coach? The family with a child using a wheelchair? The older couple spending a weekend in a city centre hotel?

The key to creating an accessible destination is ‘mainstreaming’ these segments into the everyday thinking of you and your team.

Top Tip

One of the quickest ways to get up to speed with accessibility and inclusivity is to go on a disability awareness course and encourage your colleagues to go on one too. A list of training providers is on VisitEngland’s Providing Access for All web page.

Our disability awareness training was incredibly helpful. So much so that I’d be happy to share my experience with other DOs. It helped us understand both practical solutions and how staff welcome is so important. Getting it right will really encourage loyal visitors as well as having a positive impact on the bottom line.

Becky Frall, Policy and Development Manager, Marketing Birmingham
**For info... Accessible Tourism**

Accessible Tourism, or Inclusive Tourism as it’s also known, is the term used to describe tourism that serves the needs of a full range of consumers regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age. In a similar vein Universal Design, sometimes known as Inclusive Design, is the design and composition of an environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. The argument for an inclusive approach is that if an environment (or destination) is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits.

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**Case study**

**Ageing market benefits Cornwall**

‘The ageing market is incredibly important to Cornwall, as over half of our visitors are ‘older independents’ meaning they are over 45 with no children at home. Over the last five years there has been an increased demand for multi-generation holidays as families have seen the cost effectiveness and caring advantages of holidaying together.

So our marketing, and more importantly the tourism product in Cornwall, reflects the aspirations and needs of this audience, inclusive of all abilities and ages. Our recent Fathers and Sons campaign celebrates the delight of grandparents recreating their own childhood holiday experiences in Cornwall with their grandchildren.’

*Malcolm Bell, Chief Executive, VisitCornwall*

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**The value to your destination**

VisitEngland provides useful information in infographic format on the **volume and value** of the accessible tourism market. The Purple Pound presents tourism businesses and destinations with a huge opportunity for economic growth. Overnight accessible tourism alone was worth £9m to Lincoln, £65m to Northumberland and £14m to Brighton and Hove in 2014.

According to a report by the independent Extra Costs Commission, UK businesses miss out on £1.8 billion a month as disabled people ‘walk away’ from poor service. Three out of four people reported they and families moved spending away from businesses including supermarkets, banks, utilities, restaurants and transport companies as a result of poor service and lack of disability awareness.

The business case can help you demonstrate to your colleagues and business partners that travellers with mobility, hearing or visual impairments should be recognised for their economic impact rather than any perceived problems they may present.

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**Top Tip**

Check out your Destination Management Plan (DMP). Does it mention access or the value of this market? Can you include some simple aspirations in the next DMP?
Learning from other DOs

Nine DOs in England have recent experience of developing and promoting their offer for the accessible tourism market through participation in VisitEngland’s Access for All project.

Visit Bath, Leicester Shire Promotions, NewcastleGateshead Initiative and VisitBrighton took part in a pilot project in 2013-14. The initiative was expanded in 2014 following a grant from the European Commission and, in addition to VisitBrighton, included Visit Kent, Marketing Birmingham, Visit Lincoln, Northumberland Tourism, Visit Peak District and Derbyshire and Experience Nottinghamshire.

Each DO selected around eight local businesses to form an accessible itinerary. Each business then completed a development programme to improve their facilities, information and disability awareness amongst employees. The itineraries created formed the basis of a national tourism marketing campaign. The guides from the September 2015 campaign can be found on the VisitEngland website.

Top Tip

Perhaps one of your neighbouring DOs has some experience in accessible tourism already and would be prepared to give you some advice?

Gary Holmes explains how the Galleries of Justice worked with Experience Nottinghamshire in the 2014-15 Access for All project

‘Experience Nottinghamshire is a trusted business partner with a proven track record of promotion of our region, so we were confident that the project would succeed and benefit us. The DO was an invaluable professional friend throughout, providing advice and making sure all the businesses hit their targets for auditing, access improvements, staff training and mystery shopping.

We have listed building status so were worried that the audit would recommend expensive alterations, but it made realistic recommendations. Now we have a medium to long term plan to make our exhibitions and facilities much more engaging for people with access requirements.

Our front line staff really engaged with the project and suggested that we form an accessibility steering group. Although our visitor count has not in the past reported on specific visitor types with impairments (we are now changing this) we are sure that since the Access for All project and the marketing campaign we have seen a marked increase in disabled visitors.’

Gary Holmes, Manager, The Galleries of Justice
Building relations with local disability groups

There are likely to be local groups and individuals already working to develop and promote access to and within your destination. Local disabled persons user led organisations (DPULOs), disability charities or organisations such as Shopmobility exist in one form or another in most destinations and will have experience working with public realm partners.

You may be able to track them down via your council’s Access Officer (if they employ one). Or see Section 5 for a link to a list of the DPULOs in England. Many of these groups will be pleased to offer advice. They will appreciate that improvements for visitors will mean an improvement for the local community. Ask them what their priorities are in improving the destination. Are there overlaps with your tourism agenda? Do any of the group members have experience as trainers, auditors or mystery shoppers?

My Accessible Stratford upon Avon guide 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 proforma 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!

Elizabeth Dixon, Independent Disability Advisor, Stratford upon Avon.

VPDD tapped into local charity Accessible Derbyshire

‘Visit Peak District and Derbyshire is blessed to have both the charity Accessible Derbyshire and a number of businesses that are passionate about providing quality holidays to disabled people and their friends and family.

Accessible Derbyshire – run by Jane Carver and Gillian Scotford (above), two mothers of children with complex needs – has delivered free disability awareness workshops to local tourism businesses on our behalf. This was a really valuable exercise in terms of networking, the sharing of experiences, the opportunity to dispel myths and to hear first-hand about how to deliver a warm welcome for disabled visitors. The workshops also offered both practical advice and useful information about facilities and equipment.

Our partnership with Accessible Derbyshire has encouraged us and our businesses to do even more to become accessible. Accessible Derbyshire are an inspiration – so much so that they are our chosen charity for 2016 (our first ever charity!).’

Lindsay Rae, Deputy Director, Visit Peak District and Derbyshire.
Benchmarking and auditing

It is useful at the outset to benchmark and audit your accessibility so that over time you can record progress.

At its simplest level a benchmarking exercise could assess what disabled visitors think about your destination, what accommodation and attractions they use when visiting and where the major barriers are in public transport provision and in the public realm.

The most comprehensive benchmarking can be achieved by commissioning a full destination audit. This takes a holistic look at a destination, focusing on the experiences of disabled people from arrival through to departure. It looks at how people arrive in the city - train, car, coach - and how they move around, as much as where they stay and what they do while they are here. Older people, families with prams, visitors with luggage and local residents also benefit in equal measure from the outputs of an audit.

*Access All Areas* is a comprehensive, best practice guide for DOs and local authorities in undertaking a destination access audit. It takes you through the different key stages of the process, including planning, procurement, carrying out the audit, producing an audit report, recommendations and evaluation.

**Top Tip**

Can you add a benchmarking question to the next visitor survey that you or the council conduct? Or develop a research project using student volunteers from the local college or university?

**VisitBrighton’s Access Audit**

Brighton & Hove City Council, in partnership with Tourism South East, organised a full Destination Access Audit in Brighton centre and seafront in 2005.

‘Our aim was to maximise tourism industry investment in accessible attractions, rooms and services, and to mainstream access planning into council thinking. We assessed:

- the accessibility of visitor attractions, accommodation, cultural venues, eating places and shops
- how easy it was to move between venues, find suitable parking and toilets
- how easy it was for disabled visitors to experience the full range of visitor facilities, whether day visitors or staying overnight
- opportunities to improve visitor accessibility in the public realm through altering physical features or making alternative service provision
- any policies or practices carried out by tourism providers that may be discriminatory or impede accessibility.

There were no quick fixes for the public realm. But the final report helped the council to integrate access improvements into their development plans and helped many tourism businesses to invest efficiently in accessible facilities. It’s a live document, which is referred to a lot, influencing our approach to certain projects, for example, work at the station done by Southern Railway.

Ten years after the audit, VisitBrighton continues to work with local businesses, mentoring them and encouraging them to improve their accessibility.*

*Suzanne Mantell, Former Visitor Services Manager, VisitBrighton.*

**Top Tip**

‘Involving Disabled People in Access Audits’ is a useful guide to involving the local community in destination and business audits.
Engaging your local businesses

This section provides pointers on helping your businesses become accessible and how you can build momentum to create a solid core of accessible businesses.

Starting out - reassuring your businesses

The term ‘disabled’ puts a lot of business owners off. Some worry that promoting accessible facilities will deter other visitors. Some are worried about using the wrong language and causing offence. But these fears are nearly always unfounded in reality.

Disabled people are just customers with specific accessibility requirements. Most are looking for a warm welcome and accurate information rather than a completely accessible physical environment.

VisitEngland has produced helpful business toolkits tackling what it calls the ‘three pillars’ of accessible tourism: customer service training, information and facilities.

Customer service training

Becoming disability aware through training will give your businesses skills and knowledge, including an understanding of specific visible and hidden disabilities, appropriate language to use and practical advice on providing an accessible service.

Businesses have a choice of disability awareness training courses they can attend or organise. There are two national training programmes: Welcome to Excellence (Welcome All) and World Host (Customers with Disabilities) run by workforce development organisation People 1st.

There are many other providers too including Visits Unlimited, The Accessible Training Company and Access Solutions. There are also online training programmes, including those run by DisabledGo, Tourism for All and Scandic Hotels, a leader in providing accessible accommodation.

Three pillars of accessible tourism

Customer Service

Facilities

Information

For info... The legal bit

All businesses are required by law to take all ‘reasonable steps’ to ensure that disabled people can access their premises and services. These might include simple changes to layout, improved signage and information and staff training. It might be something as simple as being flexible with check out times. Businesses do NOT have to make changes that are impractical or beyond their means. Read an explanation of reasonable adjustments in VisitEngland’s Pink Book Online.

After we delivered our interactive ‘Customers With Disabilities’ programme at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, the attraction found that the number of customer complaints connected to guests with disabilities has been dramatically reduced.

Linda Greenwood, Master Trainer, WorldHost.
Information and promotion

Accurate and up to date information can be crucial to many older and disabled visitors. A survey by Euan's Guide in 2015 found that:

- 54% of disabled travellers avoid going to new places if they can’t find relevant access information and
- 86% of people are likely to return to venues that have good accessibility.

VisitEngland’s Speak Up! is a step by step guide for businesses on marketing their accessibility. It looks at the use of visuals and language, provides advice on website, print and telephone communication and on using PR, social media, forums, agencies and tour operators. It also provides advice on terminology and signage traps to avoid.

Probably the single most important marketing tool for a business is an Accessibility Guide (formerly known as an Access Statement).

Focus groups conducted by VisitEngland in December 2014 showed that disabled people find Accessibility Guides useful and want more businesses to write them.

Case study

Thanet Council commissioned two Welcome All courses

“We tailored the content to local businesses by using information from the VisitEngland Access for All project and included an update on legislation and how to market accessible businesses.

We also provided customer service techniques that will help create loyal ‘brand ambassadors’ among visitors. Visitors with access requirements pay more attention to recommendations from family and friends and excellent customer care can boost word of mouth and create a great reputation.

One attendee said ‘Attending the course has been a real eye opener as it has increased my awareness of the different types of disabilities - not just the physical ones that you can see - and I now feel much more confident in communicating with people who have access needs.’

A one day Welcome All in-house course for up to 16 participants costs around £900.

Sue Gill, Director of Training Services, Tourism South East, and Welcome All National Coordinator.

For info... an Accessibility Guide

An Accessibility Guide is simply a list of all the features in and around a property that will be of importance to people who have an access need.

- It collates in one place all the information that a disabled traveller may need before deciding to book or visit.
- Disabled people look at Accessibility Guides before they book.
- A number of online holiday directories require you to have an Accessibility Guide before they list you on their websites. It is also a minimum requirement for businesses in VisitEngland’s National Quality Assessment Schemes.

Businesses often say that the process of gathering information for their Accessibility Guide helps them understand where there are gaps in provision and engage staff.

Remember that an Accessibility Guide is a summary of what is on offer and is not a judgment on accessibility. The guide should be accurate and factual. For example, a business should never say ‘we are accessible’, as this means different things to different people. It should be a factual description based on an audit of the business.

VisitEngland and VisitScotland are launching a new online Accessibility Guide tool summer 2016. It provides a tailored format within which businesses can detail their accessibility, culminating in a published online guide. Guides are also downloadable in accessible Word and PDF formats. Businesses can save work in progress and go back into it whenever they have a moment.

Suggest to your businesses that they ask a disabled person to do it with them. When they have a link to the published guide on their website, they could then ask guests to comment.
Facilities

Becoming accessible does not automatically mean lots of expensive alterations. After all only 6% of disabled travellers are wheelchair users. VisitEngland’s booklet *Easy Does It* contains lots of simple and low or no cost ideas for improving access for all, such as vibrating alarms, large print text or a sign welcoming assistance dogs.

Encourage businesses undergoing refurbishment or any new-builds to incorporate accessibility into their plans. Section 5 contains useful information sources.

VisitEngland’s National Accessible Scheme booklets, including *One Step Ahead*, have useful checklists for businesses to audit their own premises. Although designed for accommodation, the checklists will be useful to most tourism businesses. For those who would like to commission an external audit, a list of registered access consultants is available from the National Register of Access Consultants.

There are over 10 million people in the UK with some degree of hearing loss. VisitEngland’s *Listen Up!* guide provides advice on the physical and communication barriers that they face and how businesses can remove them. Contact VisitEngland for free printed copies.

Small changes, big difference

Bosworth Battlefield has an ongoing programme of access improvements. Many of them are small and cost nothing. For example, the staff tested out prams and wheelchairs in their restaurant and then turned the tables around to create more space. The number of covers hasn’t been reduced, but their staff and visitors can get around more easily. Staff also offer to carry trays to tables for disabled and older visitors in particular.
Quick wins – building business momentum

Which businesses are ‘accessible’?
It is useful to understand which of your attractions, hotels, self-catering, conference venues, restaurants, entertainment venues and retailers are accessible or demonstrate a commitment to improving access for all. Don’t forget sports venues – the Premier League and the England and Wales Cricket Board have done a lot to improve access to their grounds.

Have they been audited or do they offer any proof of their accessibility? It is helpful to group your businesses into those who have:

- Produced an Accessibility Guide and promote it.
- Become members of a scheme such as the National Accessible Scheme (NAS).
- Received an audit or assessment by an independent group e.g. DisabledGo.
- Won an award from a local disability group or a national award such as VisitEngland’s Inclusive Tourism Award and the Cateys Accessibility Award.
- Been awarded an accessibility charter mark, for example the Sounds Good Charter Mark or signed a code of commitment e.g. Tourism is for Everybody.

Which businesses can act as champions?
Are your leading accessible businesses prepared to become part of a new steering group, providing advice and acting as your business champions? Are they prepared to speak at an open event about their experiences? Would they welcome a fact finding visit from you and your team?

For info...
the National Accessible Scheme

All types of visitor accommodation can join the National Accessible Scheme (NAS). Run by VisitEngland, this classification system rates businesses on their suitability for mobility and/or hearing and/or visually impaired guests.

Many businesses find that the NAS criteria are extremely useful in helping them develop accessible accommodation, that the audit process helps them to improve their facilities and the ratings provide reassurance to guests.

The entry level mobility standard is One Step Ahead, which covers the first stages in making a property or service accessible. It costs just over £200 to join, depending on the size of the business, and the membership and grading lasts for 3 years.

Even if a business has steps to the front door and no ground floor rooms, it can still achieve the entry level standard. If a business is able to provide specific facilities for visually or hearing impaired people or wheelchair users then it can be graded at the next specialist level in the NAS.

Top Tip
Encourage all businesses to write an Accessibility Guide and accommodation to join the National Accessible Scheme as a way of providing reassurance both to you and to your visitors.

Experience Nottinghamshire got us together with other businesses to share how we all approached accessibility for our customers. We learned a lot when we listened to the people who actually need us to be accessible! Knowing the challenges meant that we made quite a few changes to the venue.

Graham Miller, Chief Executive, Cafe Sobar.
Longer term actions – Helping businesses build expertise

Building expertise as well as a core of accessible businesses takes some time. Here are some ideas.

● Develop a ‘How To’ section on your B2B website with access advice on it. This could include pointers to the VisitEngland Providing Access For All page.

● Upload a list of your local DPULO group members who could undertake audits or mystery shopping for businesses

● Encourage businesses to employ disabled people as an excellent way to bring expertise in house. The Business Disability Forum, a not-for-profit organisation whose members employ almost 20% of the UK workforce, provides pragmatic support in doing this.

Case study

Matfen Hall

‘Matfen Hall is an old and complex building but we are determined to make it more accessible for guests. After our National Accessible Scheme audit we started a programme of improvements and we capture everything we do in our Accessibility Guide, along with photos. The latest changes are an upgraded accessible WC and we are also making our spa facilities accessible. The audit also enthused all our team members to look at their departments and see what more they can do.’

Sarah Barber (right), Sales & Marketing Director at Matfen Hall Hotel Golf and Spa.

Top Tip

Ask your businesses to share occupancy data for accessible rooms/units or any evidence that good accessibility has benefited their bottom line. Proving the value of this market will go a long way to persuading other businesses to become accessible.

We started our access drive eight years ago. We now offer work experience placements to disabled people and think this has helped us develop a really strong service culture that sees each guest as an individual regardless of their age, swimming ability, race or disability.

John Child, Sandcastle Waterpark, Blackpool.

Get buy-in from local trade associations or business groups such as Chambers of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), or other channels you think businesses will be getting business advice from.

Can you encourage your businesses to make a public statement of their commitment to serving this market? The charity Tourism for All has launched Tourism is for Everybody, a campaign to help the travel and tourism industry improve the experience for disabled tourists and travellers. Participating businesses show their commitment by displaying a logo and signing a Code of Commitment.
Showcasing your businesses

Building the profile of your leading businesses will encourage others to engage and support your efforts. Here are some techniques used by DOs.

- Include an Inclusive Tourism Award category (previously called Access for All) in your tourism awards and encourage businesses to apply. Most DOs use the standard VisitEngland criteria for entry. This has the added advantage that any outstanding businesses can then seamlessly be put forward to the national awards.

- Pull together a core of accessible businesses around which to build a new ‘Access for All’ business listings page on your consumer website. Keep note of the web traffic - any increase will act as a good incentive to other businesses to join them.

- Use PR to highlight your work to improve accessibility, so that local businesses and residents know what you are doing.

Top Tip

Suggest that businesses build a presence on forums such as Euan’s Guide or TripAdvisor’s Disabled Travellers Forum.

Case study

Station Hotel

Ten years ago the current owner of the Station Hotel in Birstwith, near Harrogate, had an experience he will never forget. He walked through the door of the gents’ toilet to discover a man in a wheelchair trying to use the urinal. Recognising that there could be no dignity in the situation, when he bought the Station Hotel some years later, he built a new toilet block with wheelchair access, made the car park and public areas step free and then added a ground floor accessible bedroom/family room to complement the four rooms on the first floor.

Says Emma Yates ‘We are so aware of a growing market of disabled people and also older people who may not consider themselves to be disabled but who benefit from having ground floor facilities. In 2015 we decided to have a National Accessible Scheme (NAS) assessment at the same time as our Quality Scheme assessment and received a four star rating and NAS Mobility rating for part-time wheelchair users. We hope that our Accessibility Guide when combined with the NAS rating helps to give people a better idea of what to expect before they book. Our ground floor rooms are frequently requested!’

Emma Yates, General Manager, The Station Hotel, Birstwith
Starting out – who delivers the visitor journey?

There is no such place as a totally accessible destination. Unless it has been designed from scratch to Universal Design standards, then creating an accessible destination will always be ‘work in progress’.

Can you get a complete picture of who is doing what within your destination? A good starting point is to identify the key components of your destination’s visitor journey and then determine the responsible delivery bodies. The table opposite outlines 13 of the areas worth investigating. A detailed breakdown of the barriers that can be encountered at each stage is provided in the Appendix.

Those responsible could include local council departments, local community groups, charities, train operating companies, long distance and local bus companies and other commercial operators. Some councils employ Access Officers and there may be a Town Centre Manager already looking at access issues.

Start slowly and talk to us!

I know that destinations can be nervous about their accessibility offer. I talk about ‘starting slowly’. It can often be the small changes that make the largest difference for disabled visitors. The market place that puts up a sign to the accessible loos, the bus company that lowered the height of the timetables, the swimming pool that arranged ‘quiet times’ for families with autistic members, the Tourist Information Centre that installed an induction loop in its reception.

I’d recommend that destinations ask their visitors for feedback. Most disabled people want to help and share the excitement of finding somewhere that works for them... get talking!

Paul J. Ralph, Euan’s Guide and Founder Disabled Access Day

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<tr>
<th>Visitor requirements</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Public transport: Train operating company (interchanges, arrival, ticket purchase)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Public transport: long distance city buses and local bus services. Dropped kerbs; real time information at bus stops; seating at bus shelters; low floor and wheelchair accessible buses</td>
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<td>3 Car parking (on and off-street; multi-storey)</td>
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<td>4 Taxi services (Hackney carriages and minicabs)</td>
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<td>5 Street signage/wayfinding/lighting</td>
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<td>6 Public WCs (including Changing Places toilets)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Pavements, kerbs and street furniture in general (e.g. lamp posts, bollards)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Parks and open spaces, benches</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Tourist Information Centres, tourist maps and help points</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Walks and cycle routes</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Shared space schemes</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Shopmobility services (including other local hire and repair shops for equipment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Beach access</td>
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Brighton and Hove Bus Company believe access can make or break a visitor’s destination experience

“We are passionate about improving access for all. In fact accessibility is embedded in everything we do as a company. We offer:

- a 100% low floor fully accessible fleet of buses and are now adding hearing loops to all new buses being delivered in 2016.
- a Wheelchair Taxi guarantee: if for any reason a wheelchair user is unable to board a bus we pay for a taxi ride in its place.
- a Helping Hand Scheme: a bright yellow card, in order to be very visible, displays a basic instruction to the driver such as “Please lower the ramp”. There are lots of hidden disabilities and communicating a message this way to drivers helps reduce misunderstandings. 3000 passengers have a Helping Hand card.
- travel shops which are also Dementia Safe Havens and 400 staff have been trained as Dementia Friends.

We are proud to have won the UK Bus Awards 2015 and received the top award for Putting Passengers First with our programme ‘Accessible Travel for our City’. We have won praise from user groups locally and nationally and believe we have helped transform travel for many people in the city.’

Martin Harris, Managing Director at Brighton & Hove Bus Company

Quick wins – highlighting the destination’s strengths

The sharing and promoting of accurate information around the visitor journey is a quick win.

Don’t be afraid to start small. The most apparently trivial pieces of information or well-placed web links can make a huge difference to visitors researching your destination. Here are some ideas.

- Develop a dedicated section on your website providing links to all the train, bus and taxi companies and information on their accessibility.
- With your public realm partners, identify selected areas of the destination – for example public parks, special interest trails, Shopmobility retail - that are already barrier free and that could be promoted.
- Can you identify your accessible toilets and Changing Places facilities and promote them? There are over 800 Changing Places toilets in the UK provided by private and public sector organisations such as local councils, attractions and sports grounds. You could link to the Changing Places website.

Top Tip

Are there any local groups or DPULOs offering meet and greet schemes?

VisitBrighton’s Greeter scheme provides a free two hour tour of the city to all visitors and welcomes those with access needs. Birmingham’s Southside Business Improvement District offers a Meet and Greet scheme from a pre-arranged location – for example a bus stop or the train station to a destination hotel - for disabled visitors.
Quick wins – the benefits of tourism

Many of the access improvements in your destination will be targeted at the resident community. There is the opportunity for you to highlight that improving access is win-win for residents and visitors alike. Can you:

- Ask to speak at your key partners’ local meetings or conferences about the value of accessible tourism to the destination and its broader benefits of improving customer service, destination welcome and services for local residents.
- Demonstrate how partnership working on public realm accessibility improvements can spread costs.
- Encourage key partners to incorporate visitor requirements in their access development plans.

The value of Changing Places facilities

Changing Places facilities have more space than a standard accessible toilet, a height adjustable changing bench and a hoist. They are used annually by a quarter of a million people with learning disabilities, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, as well as older people. They are free to use although some may require a key from the National Key Scheme (sometimes known as a RADAR key).

‘We opened our Gold Standard Wet Room (Changing Places facility) in 2012 to provide a service to our disabled guests and visitors to Blackpool. This was a social and corporate responsibility decision, however we saw a 102% increase in the number of disabled guests and an additional £100k in revenue since its installation.’

John Child, Marketing and Business Development Manager, Sandcastle Waterpark, Blackpool.

Street clutter such as street cafe furniture, bollards and advertising boards can be a major problem for visually impaired and blind people.

Hull City Council has been working with local DPULOs groups, the Hull Access Improvement Group and the RNIB to tackle the issue and has become the first council in the UK to launch its ‘street charter’.

‘Who Put That There?’ is a three year plan to put a ‘clear highway’ policy at the heart of local decision making, which also includes tackling temporary road works, overgrown branches and shrubs, bins, cars parked on pavements and ‘shared space’ schemes.
Longer term actions – DO as catalyst for long term planning

The role of the DO, as the ‘owner’ of the visitor experience, can be an important catalyst in establishing an access working group and joint objectives. Can you bring the key players together to establish a partnership that agrees to:

- Plan together – and co-ordinate planning cycles.
- Undertake an audit or at least a SWOT analysis. It’s important to be honest about the gaps and weaknesses in the visitor journey.
- Set common objectives and timetable. Joint Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will enable you to monitor progress over time, even as resources and people come and go.
- Identify priority actions and responsibilities.
- Measure progress and review regularly.

Case study

The South Bank of London

In 2012 the London Boroughs of Southwark and Lambeth and the Greater London Authority (GLA) tackled the 3.9km historic walk along London’s South Bank to improve access to the many attractions.

An accessibility audit, with input from the GLA’s Built Environment Access Panel and local access groups, provided suggestions around improved cobbled surfaces and pavement layouts, better lighting and signage, more seating and improved ramp gradients and better handrails.

Matthew Hill of Southwark Council describes the £4 million project as being ‘at its heart an accessibility project, but it was also about improving the public realm for everybody’.

A local resident and wheelchair user said of the project ‘Finally I am able to independently enjoy a rich and vibrant historic area of London. This project shows that inclusive design can be delivered in historic settings.’

For Info... destination accessibility KPIs

The European Network for Accessible Tourism has devised a number of accessibility Key Performance Indicators for destinations.

This is an adapted version which, depending on the makeup of your working group, you could use for your destination.

1 Shared vision. Does the destination have an accessible tourism strategy/action plan, with agreed monitoring, development control and evaluation arrangements?

2 Resident satisfaction. What percentage of residents with access requirements are satisfied with their involvement in the planning and development of tourism?

3 Visitor awareness. What percentage of visitors are aware of destination accessibility / inclusion efforts?

4 Business engagement. What percentage of businesses in the destination promote any form of accessibility in their marketing?

5 Accommodation accessibility. What percentage of commercial accommodation with accessible rooms has produced Accessibility Guides and/or participate in recognised accessibility assessment schemes?

6 Transport access. What is the visitor and resident satisfaction with the accessibility of public transport?

7 Visitor satisfaction. What percentage of visitors with access requirements are satisfied with the accessibility of the destination?

8 Point of contact. Is there a central point of contact on accessibility issues for the visiting public?
This section tackles the final challenge: moving from promoting a destination with a scatter of accessible offers to promoting a holistic accessible tourism product. This may seem an overly courageous thing to attempt, especially as you will be acutely aware that your destination is not barrier free. The good news is that your visitors are also fully aware that your destination will not be barrier free. What they will expect is an honest and accurate portrayal of your accessibility and accessible venues.

**Information, information and information**

Disabled and older people need more information than most to be able to make a decision to travel. The information needs to be:

- **Easy to find.** Remember, people usually travel on holiday in groups and bookings are often made by friends and family. If they cannot find the information they require, you could be missing out on the expenditure of the entire party.
- **Up to date and reliable.** Check the source and reliability of the information you upload. Get feedback from your visitors to help keep it up to date.
- **Detailed and accurate.** Every person with an impairment has a different need and a different level of expectations. Although only a small percentage of disabled people are wheelchair users, this group has the highest need for detailed information.

VisitEngland’s **Speak Up!** guide is packed full of ideas to help businesses communicate effectively with visitors through a website, in brochures, over the phone and in person. Many of the ideas are directly applicable to DO marketing.

It is particularly important for people with access needs that the information is:

1. **Easy to find**
   - in a specific ‘Access information’ section as well as throughout the website

2. **Accessible**
   - with information in a number of accessible formats

3. **Reliable**
   - with an indication of who or what organisation is providing the information

4. **Accurate**
   - so there are no nasty surprises on arrival

5. **Up to date**
   - with a clear indication which season/year the data refers to and when the information was last updated
Developing your website

Your website is the hub around which all effective promotion can be developed. VisitEngland’s Winning More Visitors guide focuses entirely on how you can do this.

Here are the core ‘must dos’:

Navigation and links

- Ensure your content is accessible and adheres to Universal Design or Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The added benefit of Universal Design is that an accessible site is more visible to search engines, 50% faster to navigate and can offer savings through reduced maintenance.

- Clearly signpost your access information from the home page. Call it ‘Access for All’ or ‘Accessibility’. (Don’t use the terms ‘disabled visitors’, ‘special facilities’ or ‘disability requirements’.)

- Don’t confuse the link to this information with the website accessibility link, which usually appears at the bottom of the home page and outlines the accessibility of the website for its users.

- Link your access pages to family pages or multi-generational travel pages: they often have the same access needs.

- Link your access pages to the access pages of key public realm providers in the destination e.g. transport companies, parking, museums and parks.

Content

- Photography that represents a diversity of visitors does much to raise confidence to visit.

- Highlight testimonials from previous visitors. ‘Word of mouth’ information is particularly valued by disabled travellers. The testimonials can be used in other marketing channels and on your social media too.

- Encourage visitors to ask tourism venues for their Accessibility Guide. There is a suggested form of words in the Winning More Visitors guide.

- Link to your local access groups as a way of complementing your access information and to build traffic.

We have always had an access page but adding a link to the Accessible Derbyshire site has really enhanced our offer. It offers up to date specialist information and makes us feel confident that any visitor with accessibility requirements will find all they need before coming!

Lindsay Rae, Deputy Director, Visit Peak District and Derbyshire.

When I go away I always read the testimonials. It’s nice not feeling like a guinea pig, so if you can read about someone who has had a good experience then it gives you greater peace of mind and you can concentrate on enjoying yourself!

Katy Etherington, from Berkhamsted, is a wheelchair user and travels with her family.
Visit Lincoln overhauled its website to take part in the Access for All project

“We collated access information from the participating businesses and created an ‘Accessible Lincoln’ access landing page that brought it all together. We also added a feature button in the main navigation of the website so visitors can link to it from anywhere across the site. Then we tackled the visitor journey and integrated the business information with advice on how to get to Lincoln and how to get around the city. The Visit Lincoln website is fully integrated within itself so this information can be accessed from multiple points.

Although the website had been designed to be accessible – suitable for screen readers and with text that can be resized – we did not make this explicit, so we added a new ‘website accessibility’ page.

In the 8 months following the website redesign we had more than 2,500 page views on the Accessible Lincoln section of the website – up from 800 in the same period previously when it contained only transport information – a 198% increase.

This has been helped by featuring our accessible offer on social media too, using the #AccessForAll hashtag on Twitter.

Joel Murray, Digital Marketing Coordinator, Visit Lincoln.
Identifying your core offer

By this stage you should know your top accessible businesses. These can form the basis of your access pages on your website. However, before featuring them you should be confident the businesses have removed barriers across all of the three pillars of accessible tourism i.e. customer service, information and facilities.

For accommodation, listing businesses with a National Accessible Scheme rating is a good starting point but you may also wish to feature other businesses where you can confirm they offer an accessible service. It is recommended that all the businesses you feature have an Accessibility Guide or a robust alternative such as a DisabledGo guide available.

If your website includes business listings, you may wish to categorise them based on level of accessibility. If your search facility is powered by New Vision Group (incorporating New Mind) ask about using the OSSATE data set.

There are a number of pitfalls in establishing your own labelling system. However, ability to sort by ground floor rooms or an Accessibility Guide is a good alternative.

Make your definitions of accessibility clear to visitors. Do not use the international symbol of disability (the wheelchair logo) as a general indicator that the business has some level of accessibility; it should only be used if you can confirm the business has accessibility for wheelchair users.

Case study

Bristol attracts new travellers

Bristol City Council and Destination Bristol asked DisabledGo to audit 1,000 venues across Bristol including shops, restaurants, leisure centres, hotels, libraries, parks and cinemas. The audits, which were free of charge to businesses, covered everything from parking to toilets and are relevant to people with mobility and sensory impairments, learning difficulties and people on the autistic spectrum. The resulting Bristol Access Guide is free online.

‘Lack of access information is a substantial barrier to people making travel decisions and we believe this Guide makes Bristol attractive to a huge range of new travellers. Venues are not labelled as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, or ‘accessible’ or ‘inaccessible’. The Guide provides enough information to let the user decide whether the venue is suitable for their own individual access needs.

Local disabled people gave up their time to attend events, be trained as surveyors and gave suggestions on places to be included, making a fantastic contribution. We also now have good Bristol content on the DisabledGo site which is a great resource in itself. And we hope that more businesses will realise this actually makes good business sense and will want to be added to the guide.’

Kathryn Davis.
Head of Tourism, Destination Bristol.

We developed a guide for disabled visitors and their families as part of our regular Stay, Play, Explore series. All the featured businesses had been assessed so disabled visitors and their families could choose the right options for their own particular requirements.

Martin Peters,
Chief Executive of Leicester Shire Promotions
Quick wins – PR and blogging

Is your PR department aware of the key specialist publications: Disability Now; Enable magazine; Pos-Ability and Able magazines; Disability Horizons. Can you get an entry in the Rough Guide to Accessible Britain, published by Motability?

You could invite a journalist on a familiarisation trip or a disabled travel blogger. These include the team from disabilityhorizons.com, The Bimblers and Carrie-Ann Lightley from Tourism for All. Ask what they need from you to make a good visit.

Quick wins – using social media and apps

Disabled people are often major users of social media and a number of positive mentions of your destination can go a long way. Can you harness the members of your local DPULOs to help you? Use any testimonials on your website. (And, as with all social media, the key to success is responding quickly to any negatives.)

There are many review sites and forums with reviews by disabled travellers. The larger forums worth posting on (and keeping an eye on through a Google Alert account) are:

- TripAdvisor Travelling with Disabilities Forum
- Guardian Readers’ Tips: Accessible Holidays
- Euan’s Guide
- Lonely Planet: Travellers with Disabilities Forum

Apps such as AccessNowApp, assist-Mi, Axs Map, Blind Square, Mobility Mojo and Wheel Map are used by disabled people to track down accessible public spaces, accommodation, attractions, restaurants and other venues.

Coventry City Council and Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau have partnered with assist-Mi in a pilot to improve city-wide access. The app is free of charge for users who communicate their requirements before arriving at venues, which can then anticipate the users’ arrival and connect via a two way messaging system.

Top Tip

Use your Facebook and Twitter accounts to flag up access-related activities and what your businesses are up to.

We know that people need accurate information and we use our own trips to collect and share info on destinations, days out, city guides, where to stay and more via our blog. We champion good access because it benefits both disabled travellers and the tourism industry. Our ultimate goal is “Access for All”.

Rob and Bridget.
The Bimblers.

Another PR opportunity is the new, annual Disabled Access Day (DAD). It was launched in 2015 by powerchair user Paul Ralph who had been on a ‘try it out day’ with a local bus company and suddenly saw how having a focus like this could help engage millions of businesses with their local community. DAD 2016 attracted 1067 venues, was covered by Sky News and Channel 4 News and it is estimated that 10,848 people took part.

I travel using a wheelchair and - as part of my work for the charity Tourism for All - write a blog about my adventures. What I need from the DO when I am researching where to go next is

1) detailed accessibility information on the destination website,
2) a list of accessible places to stay,
3) useful contacts for when I’m out and about and
4) how best to travel between sites by bus, train or taxi.

My trips are often coordinated with the Destination Manager and I rely on their local knowledge to make my experience as smooth as possible!

Carrie-Ann Lightley, Travel blogger, Cumbria.
Longer term actions – accessibility mapping

Can you integrate accessibility information into existing destination maps or create specific maps? Check out Brighton’s Accessible City Centre Walking Map, which details locations of dropped kerbs within the city centre area or the Blue Badge Parking Bay Map, which indicates streets in the city that have Blue Badge parking spaces.

Examples from specialist companies like Clear Mapping and PhotoRoute show how you can create maps that are particularly aimed at disabled people, the elderly, parents with pushchairs and visitors with limited English language skills.

Longer term actions – developing itineraries

Disabled and older travellers are grateful for suggested itineraries and highlights as they can take away much of the guesswork.

You may choose to group businesses together in an itinerary and, depending on your budget, highlight them on your website, make them available in pdf downloadable format, or use them to form the basis of a PR or marketing campaign.

Take a look at the Access for All project campaign guides. They include a variety of hotels, attractions, restaurants, cafes and even public transport in the case of Brighton and Hove. They were all supported through an access development programme that included receiving an access audit, a Mystery Shopper visit and staff training, as well as help with writing their Accessibility Guide and providing website accessibility information.

When thinking about your highlights, do:

- Pick businesses that appeal to the broadest market, or step-free if you don’t have enough wheelchair friendly attractions or accommodation.
- Make sure you explain clearly what’s on offer - it’s important you are seen to be making suggestions rather than offering any guarantees.
- Integrate transport companies into the main offer.
- Identify other activities and events to boost the core offer such as step-free trails, an accessible sporting venue or regular festival.
- Encourage participating businesses to take bookings both by telephone and online.

“Since becoming part of the Visit Lincoln Access for All itinerary we notice that family event days (which attract up to 1000 people a day) have seen an increase in visitors with access requirements. We think that with the additional marketing and our new Accessibility Guide, they feel more comfortable attending, knowing exactly what we can and can’t offer them.”

Paul Mason, Site Coordinator, The Collection and Usher Gallery, Lincoln.
Benefits from promoting itineraries – the results from Access For All

Seven DOs participated in VisitEngland’s 2014-15 Access for All project (co-funded by the European Commission), recruiting businesses to form accessible itineraries. The itineraries then formed the basis of a national tourism marketing campaign including advertising, advertorials, banner ads and web promotions with The Express and Sunday Express, three themed pullout and online guides detailing the itineraries and a supporting social media campaign.

What were the marketing campaign results?
- A total incremental visitor spend of over £32m.
- Seven BBC radio interviews and coverage in Guardian and Telegraph newspapers and trade media.
- 15,275 competition entries

Did it help businesses understand access?
49 businesses updated or wrote new Accessibility Guides. 1,645 customer facing staff completed online training and 51 received mystery visits.

All businesses reported that they had learned something about the requirements of the accessible tourism market (72% said they had learned a lot).

How did the DOs benefit?
The DOs were unanimous in response that they had learned a lot about accessibility and the market. They all reported that the topic of accessibility has become more important within their organisation and that the relationships forged with local access groups will be maintained.

Many DOs are planning on further work, such as encouraging all businesses to complete Accessibility Guides. Marketing Birmingham are building accessibility into planned cycle routes across the city. Experience Nottinghamshire is building access awareness into its member engagement. VisitBrighton are working with local businesses to highlight other useful training aids.
1 VisitEngland resources
VisitEngland provides the industry with a range of guidance, tools and resources to assist destinations and businesses to maximise engagement with the valuable accessible tourism market.

Providing Access for All section of the Business Advice Hub includes:
- Purple Pound Infographic that shows the market volume and value
- Listen Up! guide to welcoming customers with hearing loss
- Take the lead guide to welcoming customers with assistance dogs
- Easy does it guide with simple, low-cost changes
- Accessibility Guide tool
- Speak Up! guide to promoting your accessibility
- National Accessible Scheme certification for accommodation
- Communication toolkits on embedding Universal Design in all your communications
- Case Studies and top tips
- An overview of the Access for All Project 2014-2015

Developing Accessible Destinations section of the Destination Advice Hub includes:
- Winning More Visitors guide to providing access information on destination websites
- Accentuate guide to undertaking access audits
- Accentuate guide to involving disabled people in access audits
- Case studies

2 Improving communications
- UNWTO Accessible Information in Tourism. Free eBook on creating accessible information.
- Inclusive Communication. Government guides on how to produce communications that include, accurately portray, and are accessible to disabled people.
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The definitive and internationally accepted guidelines for accessible web communications.
- ShowMeTheAccess. Website resource showing how access can be made easier by using video.

Using video to communicate disabled facilities to visitors:
- Bosworth Battlefield. Presented by wheelchair user Craig Grimes.
- Hoe Grange Holidays. A tour of the Rainster cabin accessible bathroom.
- Sandcastle Waterpark.
- Winford Manor Hotel.
- ZSL London Zoo.

3 Regulations and requirements
- Approved Document M: access to and use of buildings (Building Regulations). Provides practical guidance to assist with compliance when constructing or extending buildings.
4 Auditing and working with access groups

- **Disabled people’s user led organisations** (DPULOs). A list of contacts for DPULOs.
- **Access All Areas**. A comprehensive, best practice guide for DOs and local authorities in undertaking a destination access audit.
- **Involving Disabled People in Access Audits**. Best practice guidance on involving disabled people in your access auditing process.
- **Brighton Accessibility Audit**. This case study shows how a destination access audit helped to improve the accessibility of Brighton for its visitors.
- **Audit expertise and consultancy**. There are a number of companies with tourism experience that will advise you or audit your businesses or destination.
  - **National Register of Access Consultants**
  - **Access New Business**
  - **DisabledGo**
- **Business Disability Forum**. Employers network providing advice, training and networking opportunities for those employing disabled people.
- **Trailblazers**. A network of 600 young disabled people that produces reports on accessibility issues affecting tourism, leisure and public transport.
- **Tourism for All** offers support and advice for destinations and businesses, as well as information to help disabled and older people travel.

5 Developing accessible environments

- **Attitude is Everything**. Working in partnership with audiences, artists and the music industry to improve Deaf and disabled people’s access to live music.
- **Easy Access to Historic Buildings**. A guide providing advice to those who own, manage or occupy historic buildings in England on improving access.
- **Centre for Accessible Environments** worldwide on improving destination access. They have delivered several useful guides:
  - **Training Tools for Accessible Towns** (online training)
  - **Universal Design: Barrier-free Environments**. A knowledge exchange partnership.
- **European Commission Access City Awards** contains case studies on how the winning cities improved their accessibility.
- **European Network for Accessible Tourism** (ENAT) Shares developments and good practice in accessible tourism in the private and public sectors across Europe and the world.
- **Fieldfare Trust**. Promoting access to the countryside for everyone, through standards and best practice.
- **Access for All: The Benefits of Improving Accessibility of Rail Stations** (video presentation)
- **Improving access across the South Bank**. A video case study on making the South Bank and its attractions more accessible through public realm improvements.
- **Organising Accessible Events**. Although this is an older guide written for Northern Ireland, it contains useful guidance to help event organisers and other service providers make events more accessible.
- **UNWTO Manual on Accessible Tourism For All**. A guide on making tourism infrastructures and attractions, including cultural and natural heritage assets, accessible to all.
6 Market value and potential

- An ageing population. Regional reports by Barclays Bank on the value of the 65plus market to hospitality and tourism in the UK.
- European Commission reports on accessible tourism, presented at the conference Mind the Accessibility Gap in 2014, including:
  - Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Tourism in Europe. Includes 10 Case Studies of European Cities.
  - Mapping Skills and Training Requirements for Accessible Tourism. Includes 20 Case Studies on vocational education and training in Europe.

Two reports that outline the size of the market and the revenue lost to businesses who do not engage:

- 2012 legacy for disabled people: inclusive and accessible business. Improving messages to SMEs: The case for the disabled customer.
  The Walk Away Pound

7 Promoting your destination

- VisitEngland Speak Up! guide to promoting your accessibility. Includes lists of specialist magazines, online directories, review sites and bloggers.
- Tourism is for Everybody. A campaign from Tourism for All to encourage businesses to show their commitment to welcoming people of all abilities by displaying a logo and signing a Code of Commitment.

8 Further reading

Two publications containing useful articles on accessibility and international best practice by academics and practitioners:

- Best Practice in Accessible Tourism. Edited and authored by Dimitrios Buhalis, Simon Darcy and Ivor Ambrose. Channel View Publications.

This guide was produced in association with Access New Business
## Your action plan

### My Critical Success Factors

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Starting out</th>
<th>Progress</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Understand the business case and use it as the core rationale for DO involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Include accessible and inclusive tourism in my destination management or marketing plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Get buy in from my DO team – access cuts across everything</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Attend a disability awareness course</td>
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<td>- Establish relationships with local disabled people’s user led organisations (DPULOs)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Working with businesses</th>
<th>Progress</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Develop a section on my B2B website signposting to the VisitEngland advice guides, case studies and useful sources for businesses (see Section 5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Visit a range of existing accessible businesses to help educate myself and my team</td>
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<td>- Use my website to highlight businesses with Accessibility Guides and members of the NAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Make sure businesses are aware of what is expected of them by asking them to sign a Code of Commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>My Critical Success Factors</td>
<td>Progress</td>
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| **Working with public realm partners** | • Collate the information that is already available and set up a one-stop shop on my visitor website  
• Bring key partners together to create a common vision  
• Benchmark or audit my destination and identify gaps |
| **Promoting my accessibility** | • Read Speak Up! for key principles in accessibility marketing  
• With my web manager, work through Winning More Visitors and get my website up to scratch  
• Promote content and links via social media, via specialist websites and apps  
• Develop and promote simple itineraries  
• Measure my web hits and social media traffic so you can encourage more businesses to join |
Appendix

Understanding barriers to the seamless visitor journey in the public realm

1. Public transport: Train operating company (TOC).
   Is it easy to alight from a train at all platforms? Is the TOC planning to install lifts rather than just a footbridge? Are staff disability aware? Is there a hearing loop and a lowered counter / ticket machine? Is the station staffed? If your local station is currently not accessible, does the TOC provide a free taxi service to and from the nearest accessible station?

   Already single decked low floor buses must be wheelchair accessible. From January 2017 all double-decked buses must be low floor vehicles. From 2020 all public transport coaches must be wheelchair accessible. Is there adequate provision at pick-up and drop-off points to permit the use of a magic platform lift (or similar) that are used by National Express and other operators?

   Information on car parking barriers and height restrictions need to be included in any list of parking facilities. Is it clear on your website which spaces are free-of-charge and which must be paid for? Is there a listing of designated on-street parking bays? Are these close to attractions? Where are the best places to park for disabled visitors? Are there nearby designated accessible WCs?

4. Taxi services (Hackney carriages and minicabs):
   Have drivers been on disability awareness and courtesy courses? Ensure accessible taxi and minicab services are promoted on your website.

5. Street signage/wayfinding.
   Does this indicate the location of designated accessible WCs? Is signage in the right places for visitors? Is it legible and understandable? Might you have a meet and greet service using local volunteers?

6. Public WCs (including Changing Places WCs):
   Are the locations included on your website? Do visitors need to bring a RADAR key with them to open the door locks? Where can they obtain a RADAR key from – the Tourist Information Centre/library? Include the location of the nearest Changing Places WCs on your website. Make the case for a Changing Places facility in new developments such as shopping centres.

7. Pavements, kerbs and street furniture in general (e.g. lamp posts, bollards):
   Is your street clutter really necessary? Are ‘A’-boards properly licensed and might they create difficulty for pavement users at busy times? Are there dropped kerbs / blister paving at key crossing points? Do crossing points have timed signals to permit slow walkers to cross? Are there any proposed public realm works where these aspects could be improved?

8. Parks and open spaces, benches (with armrests and without).
   What are the surfaces like of any pathways? Are there routes that avoid the use of traditional stiles on country walks? Can visitors hire 4WD scooters or wheelchairs to use in certain areas? Are there designated accessible WCs?

9. Tourist Information Centres and tourist maps (library services and help points).
   Are these accessible in the fullest sense? Automatic doors? Level or ramped routes clearly marked? Induction loop systems in place? Lowered counters? Lowered touch screen points?

10. Walks and cycle routes.
    Are there any without barriers? Are there shared cycle and pedestrian routes? (Those with sight loss may find the prospect of shared pedestrian and cycle routes daunting.) Is there a dog toilet area for assistance dogs in the vicinity? Is there a designated accessible WC? Is there designated accessible parking nearby? Accessible public transport? Are there adapted cycles for hire?

11. Shared space schemes.
    These can vary considerably in scale and are worrying for some people, particularly those with assistance dogs, or those who find mingling with traffic problematic. What reassurance can you offer visitors?

12. Shopmobility services, including other local hire and repair shops for equipment.
    Where are they located? What services do they offer visitors? Do Shopmobility offer volunteers to help with shopping? Have their members already undertaken a review of local shops and facilities for disabled and older visitors? Generally speaking, users of Shopmobility are able to stand and walk short distances. Those who need a wheelchair most of the time are likely to bring their own.

13. Beach access.
    Are there ramped routes to the beach with handrails? Is there a dog toilet area for assistance dogs in the vicinity? If you have a beach ensure assistance dogs are permitted even if pet animals are not and ensure signage reflects this.