



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport

# Tourism Action Plan - One Year On

October 2017



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# 1. Foreword

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Last year Her Majesty's Government published a Tourism Action Plan setting out our plans to further strengthen UK tourism.

This plan focused on:

- i. **The tourism landscape:** strengthening coordination and collaboration.
- ii. **Skills:** boosting apprenticeships and attracting more people to careers in tourism.
- iii. **Common sense regulation:** examining the scope for deregulation.
- iv. **Transport:** making it easier for visitors to explore by rail, bus and coach.
- v. **A GREAT Welcome:** driving continuous improvements in our visa service.

Since the Tourism Action Plan was published, the industry has continued to perform excellently. From January to July 2017, there were 23.1 million visits to the UK by overseas residents, an increase of 8% compared to January to July 2016. Spending over the same period increased by 9%, from £12.2 billion to £13.3 billion.

We in Government must do our bit to help maintain that growth. This update sets out progress we have made against the Tourism Action Plan over the last twelve months, and areas where we will seek to deliver further change over the months to come.

As someone who grew up near Bath, and boasts Salisbury Cathedral and Stonehenge in his parliamentary constituency, I know first-hand the impact this industry has on jobs, growth and prosperity across our country. I will work hard to ensure that we continue to deliver against the plans as set out last year, and look for innovative solutions to allow the sector to grow and thrive in the future.

Minister for Tourism  
John Glen



## 2. Tourism Landscape

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### **EU exit**

Exiting the European Union will present opportunities for the tourism industry as well as challenges. Tourism will only grow in importance in the years ahead and will continue to be a major economic driver for the whole of the UK. The Government is confident in the resilience of the industry and its ability to adapt and react in order to capitalise on these opportunities.

Over the last year, DCMS has held several roundtables with companies and sector representation bodies to develop a full understanding of the potential challenges, inform the negotiations and seek to make the most of the opportunities. DCMS also continue to work closely with the Devolved Administrations, both at official and ministerial level. The tourism industry is encouraged to contribute to the [Migration Advisory Committee consultation](#) (which closes on 27 October 2017) to gather evidence on the economic and social impacts of the UK's exit from the European Union and also on how the UK's immigration system should be aligned with a modern industrial strategy.

### **Tourism Industry Council**

The Tourism Industry Council has met three times in the last 12 months and discussed a variety of issues including skills, Brexit and the Industrial Strategy. Steve Ridgway, Chair of VisitBritain is leading and coordinating the development of an industry proposal for closer working with the Government to ensure the continued growth of the sector. The Tourism Industry Council has played - and will continue to play - a leading role in the dialogue between the sector and Government.

### **VisitBritain and VisitEngland**

VisitBritain and VisitEngland have taken a leading role on many of the points covered in the Tourism Action Plan including the Discover England Fund, business visits and events and rail travel. All of these activities encourage visitors to explore our regions and nations. VisitBritain now has agreed Memorandum of Understanding with VisitScotland and VisitWales, leading to a more coordinated approach to inbound tourism to Britain. They have also recently agreed a specific work programme with Northern Ireland.

Under its new chairman, Steve Ridgway, VisitBritain is co-ordinating an industry proposal for a potential tourism sector deal. VisitEngland's new chairman, Denis Wormwell, is ensuring the effective delivery of improved English tourism product, mainly through the Discover England Fund.

### **Discover England Fund**

When the Government launched the three-year £40 million Discover England fund, it was to ensure that England stayed competitive in the rapidly growing global tourism industry. It aims to achieve this by offering world-class English tourism products to the right customers at the right time.

The first year of the fund has supported 20 projects that reflect the diversity of the tourism offer in England, from the South West Coastal Path which introduces our dramatic coastline to Dutch and German travellers, uniting the golf offer across England, or allowing heritage cities to reach a new generation of tourists using virtual reality.

The next wave of projects have been announced and these include the Great West Way which seeks to create one of the world's premier long distance touring routes between London and Bristol and England's Coast, which will promote the coastline using interactive

video technology allowing holidaymakers to create their own itineraries . These larger projects will be real game changers and will have a lasting influence on the tourism landscape.

### **Business Visits Events**

We continue to work hard to bring major events to the UK. The Events Industry Board has now met on six occasions and discussions have been supplemented by two roundtables with industry representatives and ministers, to discuss ways in which Government can help support the industry.

VisitBritain continue to administer the Event Support Programme which has seen a number of events given financial and advocacy support, including the European College of Sport Science 2021 in Glasgow and Real Estate India 2018. These will provide a combined economic impact of £15 million from an investment of £42,500. Government are now looking at ways it can further support attempts to bring larger events into the UK.

### **City of Culture**

Hull is capitalising on its status as UK City of Culture not only to increase access to the arts but to boost tourism now and in the long term. Although there is no monetary support or prize attached to City of Culture status, Hull has successfully secured £15 million in Government funding. Recently published research show that in the first three months of 2017 there were around 1.4 million visits to more than 450 events and activities in Hull. This shows the power of culture to drive local tourism. In July it was announced that Coventry, Paisley, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland and Swansea have been shortlisted to host UK City of Culture 2021.

### **Coastal Community Fund**

Following the establishment of a further 28 Coastal Community Teams in January 2017, there are now 146 Teams across the English coastline providing a better focus locally on the regeneration requirements necessary to encourage and grow tourism, and bring visitors back to coastal towns. Each Team has a membership of the local authority, local community groups and the business sector, who produce an Economic Plan setting out the agreed priorities for the town. Tourism is a key area for the majority of the teams and they are pursuing the priorities outlined in their Plans to deliver the improvements that will increase tourism and grow the economy locally.

To help deliver these improvements, a further 33 Coastal Communities Fund projects in England worth £40 million were announced in April 2017. Most of these projects will support tourism and the visitor economy including funding for piers, promenade and harbour regeneration, museums and creative arts centres, coastal paths, cycleways and nature tourism. The projects are forecast to create over 4,000 jobs and attract a further £62 million in public and private sector co-funding. For the first time all projects were either submitted or supported by a Coastal Community Team and will be linked to the priorities outlined in their Economic Plans.

## 3. Jobs and Skills

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During English Tourism Week in March 2017, DCMS ran a successful digital campaign showcasing the breadth and variety of jobs in the tourism sector. The campaign, #MyTourismJob, used case studies from the industry, including those working in aviation, heritage, attractions, museums, zoos, and even falconry to promote working in the sector. Education and Skills Funding Agency has been running a pilot apprenticeship scheme for tourism, testing out the possibility of seasonal apprenticeships. The pilot will be completed in 2018, and Government will carry out a thorough analysis of the successes and failures of the scheme, to inform future policy and help provide the workforce of the future.

VisitEngland have conducted research into how to make improvements to their Business Advice Hub. They are now working on a detailed proposal to take these recommendations forward.

DCMS launched the Digital Strategy in March 2017, including a specific focus on digital skills and supporting small business. As part of the strategy, Google are running a series of pop up training days across coastal towns to help develop IT skills in coastal tourism businesses.

## 4. Transport

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### Aviation

Last October the Government selected a new North-west runway at London Heathrow as its preferred scheme for delivering necessary new runway capacity in the South East. In February this year the Government set out its decision in a draft Airports National Policy Statement, and sought views from the public on the planning policy framework with which the applicant for a north-west runway at Heathrow Airport would have to comply.

However, it is also clear that airports across the UK have an increasingly important role as ports of entry for international visitors, as well as providing choice and travel opportunities for people across the country. Last year the number of passengers using UK regional airports increased by 9 per cent. The Government's Regional Air Connectivity Fund is also supporting the development of new air routes including services from Norwich to Exeter, Southampton to Lyon and Leeds-Bradford to Newquay. The Fund is also supporting public service obligation services between London airports and Dundee, Newquay and Londonderry.

The Government has published a call for evidence document to mark the start of developing our new strategy for UK aviation. This is a long term strategy to 2050 and beyond which aims to achieve a safe, secure and sustainable aviation sector that meets the needs of consumers and of a global, outward-looking Britain. It looks at ways in which the Government can support future growth in an industry which directly supports 240,000 jobs and contributes at least £22 billion to the UK economy each year.

The Aviation Strategy will champion the success of UK aviation. It will also put the consumer back at the heart of our thinking and ensure that the sector is delivering for consumers and the country as a whole.

Each year the Air Travel Organisers' Licence (ATOL) scheme protects over 20 million UK consumers when they book a package holiday involving a flight. The Government is taking steps to modernise the scheme through the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Bill. This will enable a wider body of consumers to be protected, and allow UK businesses to sell holidays more easily to consumers in Europe with ATOL protection.

### Rail

In conjunction with the Tourism Action Plan a number of rail itineraries were published on the VisitBritain consumer site to encourage visitors to explore the UK by train. Since then another nine itineraries for consumers and 14 for trade have been developed and are now live on VisitBritain trade website.

In addition, VisitBritain have published best practice guidelines to make it easier for tourists to travel the 'final mile', between major transport hubs and attractions or accommodation. These guidelines showcase a number of different solutions across the country and will be distributed to train operating companies and destination management organisations as well as attractions across the country.

The Rail Delivery Group were also a successful recipient of a round one Discover England Fund bid, which has enabled them to develop the M –Pass (mobile) for their England only pass. This allows visitors to purchase their ticket right up until the day they travel to the UK.

The Department for Transport has opened up the data set used for journey planning websites and apps, and has published this as the National Public Transport Access Nodes (NaPTAN) data set on [data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk). In addition, the Department for Transport has been working with key industry players to develop a Joint Rail Data Action Plan to help improve the quality and openness of rail data. The Action Plan will be announced within the next few months.



## 5. Common-sense Regulation

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Work is progressing on the common-sense regulation outlined in the Tourism Action Plan. Following a successful consultation on the new EU money laundering directive, new regulations came into force on 26 June 2017, raising the threshold for occasional or limited financial activity from £64,000 to £100,000. This will make it easier for businesses like hotels to conduct small currency exchange transactions for their guests' benefit.

HMRC is on track with plans to see the VAT retail export scheme fully digitised by 2020. This will simplify and improve the experience for foreign visitors reclaiming tax on purchases made in the UK, and cut down on the administrative burden for participating retail outlets. Government are also making progress on regulations to allow owners of hotels and attractions to collect visitors from stations without having to apply for a specific licence.

We continue to work closely with the tourism sector, to help identify and address regulatory issues that are burdensome for business, and make life more difficult for visitors. Ultimately, we want to see a common-sense and safe regulatory environment, which enables UK businesses to offer the best tourism product to visitors from home and abroad.

## 6. GREAT Welcome

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This Government has committed to continually improve the visa offer for key tourism markets, recognising the importance of the contribution of visitors to Britain's economic growth and prosperity. We now have over 300 visa application centres around the world, including multiple centres in key markets such as China and India which provide a welcoming GREAT branded offer to customers. Within this network we offer a range of services aimed at speed, including a priority front of queue service in nearly 200 countries; a 24 hour visa service in a range of locations including China, the US, and the Middle East; and a same day service in India. Applicants across select Gulf countries continue to benefit from our Electronic Visa Waiver which allows an online application up to 48 hours before travel.

This year we have launched a user-friendly new online application service – Access UK – for visit visa customers in over 200 countries. We also offer a range of additional services aimed at convenience for the applicant including extended opening hours in over 50 locations; and a bespoke mobile biometric service which provides the option of completing the application process at a location of the applicant's choosing.

UKVI continues to work closely with cross-Government GREAT and industry partners to raise awareness of the UK tourism offer and ensure customers are provided with the right information to support them with their application. This is achieved through the development and delivery of collaborative global and regional visitor visa campaigns in key markets.

## 7. Table of Progress

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| Commitment  | Progress to date   |
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| Improving the GREAT rail offer by developing five rail itineraries.   | <p>Itineraries have been tested and published, they will be uploaded onto the trade website later this year. An additional nine itineraries have also been created, making 14 in total.</p> <p>Further final mile work has taken place with four roundtables held across the UK. Following the roundtables VisitBritain have recently published their Best Practice Guidelines.</p>  |
| The Rail Delivery Group which own the Britrail pass are launching a series of product improvement.                                      | <p>Option to book 11 months in advance has been rolled out.</p> <p>The Rail Delivery Group were also a successful recipient of a round one Discover England Fund bid, which has enabled them to develop M – Ticket (mobile) for their England only pass. This allows visitors to buy the tickets from anywhere at anytime. Although take up cannot be judged until after the summer season around 35% of England only passes sold since 1 April have been M-tickets.</p>                               |
| Department for Transport will be releasing the open data that it owns and publishing a joint Government Industry Rail Data Action Plan. | <p>The Department for Transport has opened up the data set used for journey planning websites and apps, and has published this as the National Public Transport Access Nodes (NaPTAN) data set on <a href="https://data.gov.uk">data.gov.uk</a>. In addition, the Department for Transport has been working with key industry players to develop a Joint Rail Data Action Plan to help improve the quality and openness of rail data. The Action Plan will be announced within the next few months</p> |

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| <p>The Government is clear that all airlines operating in the UK should be complying with consumer protection legislation, and that their refund policy, including APD, should be clear at the point of booking. We will be reviewing this issue to make sure that consumers get a fair deal.</p> | <p>The Government is further bolstering the strong consumer protections already in place for travellers through the Air Travel Organisers Licence Bill which is currently progressing through Parliament.</p> <p>BEIS have completed a consultation on the implementation of the new Package Travel Directive. When implemented in 2018, this will close loopholes and see consumers protected when they book holidays online and through linked, “click-through” arrangements.</p> |
| <p>Working on industrial strategy</p>   | <p>The sector has agreed to develop a proposal for a tourism sector deal. They are currently working on a draft, which will be led by Steve Ridgway and presented to Government.</p>  |
| <p>We will hold regular meetings with Tourism Ministers in Wales and Scotland and, where appropriate, Northern Ireland.</p>   | <p>A meeting took place at the end of 2016, with the next meeting scheduled for October 2017.</p>   |
| <p>Tourism Industry Council will inform the UK Government's position on Brexit and the development of the industrial strategy.</p>  | <p>The Tourism Industry Council have discussed papers on Brexit. They are currently involved in the development of a proposal for a sector deal which will be presented to Government.</p>  |
| <p>Coordinating action on events</p>  | <p>Developed stronger relationship between DIT/DCMS and VB and GREAT funding for events continues. The Event Support Programme forms part of our commitment to support and build the business events sector, in line with the UK Government's business visits and events strategy.</p>  |
| <p>We will be working closely with the devolved administrations to strengthen collaboration between tourism bodies</p>  | <p>New high level marketing plans almost agreed with Scotland and Wales and a separate agreement with Northern Ireland.</p>   |
| <p>Discover England Fund</p>  | <p>Year One of the Discover England Fund supported 20 different projects across England. The next wave of two year larger projects have been announced.</p>   |
| <p>Apprenticeship pilot</p>   | <p>Apprenticeship pilot was started on 1st April 2016 and is due to be completed in 2018, when we will evaluate the success and uptake of the scheme.</p>   |

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| <p>Coastal Communities Fund is forecast to deliver over 6,000 training places and apprentices in coastal and seaside towns by March 2017.</p>  | <p>Figures on the number of training and apprenticeship places should be available when we evaluate the success of the Coastal Communities Fund over its first five years in 2018.</p>   |
| <p>Working with the Careers &amp; Enterprise Company for schools to develop a tourism dimension.</p>   | <p>The Careers and Enterprise Company presented at a previous Tourism Industry Council, and will continue to engage with us.</p>   |
| <p>Tourism Industry Council will undertake a programme of work to promote the tourism sector as a great place to build a career.</p>   | <p>The second tranche of the #mytourismjob campaign was paused for general election. We are re-evaluating the strategy for the campaign to ensure it is reaching its target audience, with hopes to re-launch in the coming months.</p>  |
| <p>Support SMEs to grow through VisitEngland's Business Advice Hub or by supporting more small businesses to attend major trade events, like Explore GB.</p>   | <p>VisitEngland are currently carrying out a review of their Business Advice Hub and are due to develop a strategy in the next few months.</p>   |
| <p>Working to ensure that barriers to digital inclusion are removed, as well as raise the overall digital skills level of the population.</p>  | <p>Digital Strategy was published by DCMS in 2017, which focuses on this issue. As part of this digital strategy Google are running a number of training sessions for coastal Tourism businesses in 2017.</p>  |
| <p>Improve the availability of visitor information through the UKVI website and in visa application centres.</p>   | <p>UKVI are working with DCMS on a joint HO/DCMS chaired Visas Tourism Forum to provide a cross-organisation mechanism for key partners representing the Tourism industry to engage with UKVI on a regular basis. The aims include identifying ways of better communicating the existing visa offer/ new initiatives; promoting tourism sector awareness of UKVI systems and services; and working to resolve any delivery challenges or put mitigations in place.</p> |
| <p>Work with partners to raise awareness of our visa offer and improve the welcome that visitors receive on arrival to the UK.</p>   | <p>VB are working with UKVI on smoothing the visa process for large events, while organisers are working with Border Force/Airports to improve welcome for delegates.</p>  |
| <p>De-regulate an element of Private Hire Vehicle Licences. This will allow owners of hotels / attractions to collect visitors from train stations / ports of entry, without having to apply for PHV licences.</p> | <p>DfT is planning to examine its current guidance on what is, and what is not, a private hire vehicle. Changes will be taken forward following this work.</p>   |

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| <p>Introduce new, light touch, licensing notice which will allow small quantities of alcohol to be sold by small accommodation without requiring a full license.</p> | <p>The Government is considering the House of Lords Select Committee report and will respond in due course.</p>  |
| <p>Look at how we can modernise and digitise the retail export scheme to make it easier for tourists to claim back VAT on eligible purchases.</p>                    | <p>The Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement that HMRC would go ahead with its proposals to digitise the VAT Retail Export Scheme.</p> <p>HMRC has a project team in place to take this forward and it expects the new system will be adopted by users between 2018 and 2020.</p> |
| <p>Seek views on raising the threshold for occasional or limited financial activity under the money laundering regulations.</p>                                      | <p>New regulations came into force on 26 June 2017, raising the threshold from £64,000 to £100,000, which will make it easier for hotels to conduct small currency exchange transactions for the benefit of their guests.</p>  |
| <p>Local Authority Regulation and Enforcement Review</p>   | <p>The Local Authority Enforcement and Regulation review took place in the Spring/Summer 2016. The results of the review include no issues related to tourism.</p>   |



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