



Department  
for Culture,  
Media & Sport

## VISITOR ECONOMY ADVISORY COUNCIL

14:00 - 14:45, Wednesday 3 December 2025

### Attendees

Name	Organisation
Stephanie Peacock MP, Minister for Sports, Tourism, Civil Society and Youth	Department for Culture, Media and Sports (co-Chair)
Karin Sheppard	IHG Hotels and Resorts (co-Chair)
Alison McGovern MP, Minister for Local Government and Homelessness	Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Daniel Tomlinson MP, Exchequer Secretary	HM Treasury
Joss Croft OBE	UKInbound
Fiona Eastwood	Merlin Entertainments
Paul Flaum OBE	Bourne Leisure
Dr Sarah Green OBE	NewcastleGateshead Initiative
Andy Harmer OBE	Cruise Lines International Association
Andrew Leveson	Royal Shakespeare Company
Eddy Leviten	Tourism Alliance
Fiona MacConnacher	Booking.com
Kate Nicholls OBE	UKHospitality
Mayor Richard Parker	West Midlands Combined Authority
Neil Rami	West Midlands Growth Company
Jeremy Rees	ExCel London
Kate Shane MBE	Blackpool Tourism Limited
Shaon Talukder	Geotourist
Pete Wade	Trainline
Patricia Yates	VisitBritain/VisitEngland

## Observers

Name	Organisation
Genevieve Bach	IHG Hotels & Resorts
Alice Blanchard	HM Treasury
Marco Dryburgh	HM Treasury (Private Office)
Sam Hanford	DCMS (Private Office)
Nicola Hewer	DCMS
Maisie McNamara	DCMS (Council Secretariat)
Robyn Munro	HM Treasury
Lata Mistry	DCMS
Harriet Somers	DCMS
Matt Stevenson	MHCLG
Duncan Parish	DCMS
Lou Rich	DCMS

## Apologies

Name	Organisation
Sean Doyle	British Airways
Sir Loyd Grossman	The Royal Parks
Dame Irene Hays	Hays Travel
Julia Simpson	World Travel and Tourism Council

### Item 1: Opening Remarks from the Visitor Economy Advisory Council co-Chairs

- Karin Sheppard welcomed members to the meeting, acknowledging it had been a challenging week for the sector, including announced changes to business rates and the launch of an overnight visitor levy consultation.
- Minister Peacock noted that she had heard concerns from businesses across the country and wanted to use the meeting to come together with other ministers to hear feedback directly from the sector.
- Minister Peacock handed over to Daniel Tomlinson, Exchequer Secretary, to speak about the Autumn Budget.

## **Item 2: Autumn Budget**

- The Exchequer Secretary thanked members for inviting him and expressed his interest in hearing directly from the sector what they had to say about the impact of measures announced at the Autumn Budget.
- He emphasised that two key points for the visitor economy were the revaluation of business rates which the Government introduced a support package to protect against ratepayers seeing large overnight increases in bills, and the consultation on a visitor levy. He noted that the Government is launching a consultation on giving regional leaders the choice on whether to implement a visitor levy, allowing mayors to make decisions that impact their communities locally.
- Council members noted the cumulative impacts of this and previous Budgets: policy measures such as business rates changes, increases in National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and the National Living Wage, as well as the discussion around a potential visitor levy. Members noted that the sector is a major export and investment area, with high growth potential.
- The Exchequer Secretary invited council members to share their views and sector reaction to the recent Budget. The following points were noted:
  - The sector, a major export and investment area, is facing cumulative Budget impacts. More support is needed to increase investment and enable the industry to grow.
  - The sector has huge growth potential, which aligns with national objectives to grow the economy everywhere and increase employment. Yet, the sector faces a range of headwinds. These factors are currently presenting challenges to business profitability and the potential for rapid, nationwide growth.
  - The sector will likely need to raise prices to offset the impact of some of the measures recently announced, which will contribute to higher inflation.

## **Item 3: Visitor Levy**

- It was noted that domestic trip intention is at its lowest level while outbound is up on previous reports. Comments included that the UK is losing competitiveness, with visa costs, APD, 20% VAT and now tourism taxes making every stage of the process more expensive; the UK ranks 113th globally for price competitiveness.
- Internationally Oxford Economics is predicting that the UK will be on par with 2019 figures in 2026, whereas Western Europe will be up by 9%.
- It was noted that implementation of a visitor levy would take time. Any such decision will be made in careful consultation with businesses in the local visitor economy. Further work is needed to assess the impact of overnight rate variations and the potential use of tax revenue.
- Some areas have seen an increase in visitor numbers off the back of years of

investment and hard work, particularly on events and business events. A UK-wide events strategy should be implemented to help capitalise on this.

- Some council members emphasised that while they do not support tourist taxes in principle, they welcome consultation with the sector and are keen to work with government on the way any visitor levy would be implemented, collected and how the funding will be used afterwards.
- The Exchequer Secretary noted that the government wants to back businesses and wants to continue to engage with the sector. He noted that businesses should benefit from the government managing public finances well and public sector investment.

### **Item 3: Closing Remarks**

- Minister McGovern thanked members for sharing, noting that they will take on board the points raised on the visitor levy as part of the consultation and continue to work closely with the sector moving forwards.
- Karin also thanked members for their time and closed the meeting.