

## **Midlands Engine APPG – Visitor Economy Subgroup**

Thursday 13 May 2021, 11:00-12:00

### **Attendees:**

Lord Taylor of Holbeach (Conservative) – Subgroup Chair (LTH)  
Pauline Latham MP (Conservative, Mid-Derbyshire) (PL)  
Darren Henry MP (Conservative, Broxtowe) – APPG Co-Chair (DH)  
Lord Ravensdale (Crossbench) – APPG Co-Chair (LR)  
Martin Vickers MP (Conservative, Cleethorpes) (MV)  
Jane Hunt MP (Conservative, Loughborough) (JH)  
Mark Pawsey MP (Conservative, Rugby) (MP)  
Edward Davies, Office of Harriett Baldwin MP  
Victoria Stapleton, Office of Luke Evans MP

### **Guests:**

Nick de Bois, Chair Visit England (NB)  
Lydia Rusling, on behalf of Midlands Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) (LR)

### **Observers:**

#### **Secretariat:**

Gayle Aughton, Midlands Engine (GA)

### **Minutes:**

#### **Introductions**

- LTH opened the meeting, welcomed all to the meeting.
- DH, as Co-Chair of the Midlands Engine APPG, affirmed the purpose of the Midlands Engine APPG, as detailed on the website (<https://midlandsendengine.inparliament.uk>) and noted the upcoming AGM on the 19 May 2021.

#### **LTH invited NB, Chair of Visit England to provide an overview of the work of Visit England, with specific reference to work in the Midlands.**

- o 2021 – forecasting an increase 11.3 million visits, up on 2020 – that’s only 25% of the whole visitor economy.
- o NB highlighted the importance of business visitors to the whole visitor economy landscape.
- o An overview of the review into DMO’s is underway. Expected date of publication is June 2021.
- o NB explained the importance of the visitor economy, whilst this is a fragmented industry it is of huge significance and combined would present in the top 5 industries to the UK economy.
- o Highlighted the importance of the role of visitor economy in building back and the need to stimulate this sector to increase demand especially in the areas of overseas visitors.
- o Recent attitudinal surveys identify an uplift in domestic holidays – however this is centred more around the coastal towns with less confidence in respect of cities.
- o Escape the Everyday is a campaign currently underway. [Escape the Everyday | VisitBritain](#) there is key potential here for our cities.
- o Challenges remain for some SMEs to access support from DMOs.

- Digital landscape – catching up to do particularly in the leisure sector – digital sales channels. Visit England have been supporting this and picture is improving.
- English Tourism week takes place 22 – 31 May, pitched around visitor economy recovery.
- Support has been offered to DMOs from Visit England but more support is needed.
- Discover England is coming to an end after 5 years and has been beneficial in bringing different DMOs / products together.
- Commonwealth Games and Coventry City of Culture – being bought together along with Dept Culture, Media and Sport, Visit England, Visit Britain and West Midlands Growth Company. Plans for legacy planning for future growth. Key markets are proving to be India, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.
- Formal launch of the Coventry City of Culture commences this weekend.
- Businesses have reported concerns around staffing and skills since lockdown.

#### **LTH invited questions from members of the APPG to NB**

- LTH echoed back the concerns around staffing and skills.
- MP asked what support was in place for short stays for the cities and the niche markets such as canals and the concerns around skills. NB mentioned the opportunities in respect of Escape the Everyday which is specifically aimed around the short stay opportunities and <https://trade.visitbritain.com/destination-uk/discover-england-fund/englands-waterways/> whilst the review is underway NB is limited in being able to comment on the recommendation in respect of the skills arena, but agreed the importance of upskilling and improving productivity - providing long term careers opportunities in the sector. The opportunity to increase digitisation and extending the season were also sighted as important factors in supporting the visitor economy.
- MV expressed the importance to coastal towns of the visitor economy in levelling up these areas and how close has Visit England have been in working with LEPs and LAs? NB explained early thoughts demonstrate a mixed picture of appetite from both, recognising the importance this sector having a presence in decision making.
- LR asked about the review that is being undertaken and the themes being considered under this review. NB stated the review (which started in March 2021) will be to follow the evidence and in summary - how do we drive the growth of regional tourism visitor, what roles do DMOs have in this and how should DMOs be structured to deliver this. To date 1:1 meetings have been undertaken with c.50 Local Government , LEPs, DMOs and businesses. There is also a survey to capture where funding comes from and this will provide the first audit of this type. All the information captured will feed into a series of roundtables that will start in June 2021. This will provide the emerging themes – these will be the issues discovered and will be investigated further through the planned roundtables.
- LTH asked for thoughts in respect of skills and lifelong learning. NB mentioned the importance of the learning, training and skills agenda in the Queens speech and its significance for the business visitor sector and the leisure sector. In particular the digital arena. NB also mentioned the lack of data in respect of this sector and the need for this sector to be involved in the policy development for skills.

**LTH thanked NB for his great contribution to the meeting and asked if there were any further reflections from APPG members.**

- DH thanked NB for his contribution and asked if NB would consider participating in future Midlands Engine APPG meetings in respect of the Skills. NB thanked DH for the kind invite and asked to be considered following the conclusion of the review.
- 11.50 – NB left the meeting to attend to a diary commitment.

**LTH asked Members for any further reflections and provided an update on the outputs to date on the Midlands Engine Visitor Economy APPG Subgroup.**

- We have a list of statistics for the Midlands Visitor Economy
- Letter to Nigel Huddleston MP
- Tabling questions with Departments
- LTH speaking opportunity on the role Visitor Economy - raising the profile of the Midlands Visitor Economy.
- LR mentioned the Skills Bill and the opportunity could be present ed to comment on this.
- LTH mentioned the Midlands Engine APPG AGM and opportunity there to speak about the work to date.

**Points of action**

**Letter to Nigel Huddleston MP**

**DH** - to action the letter with co signatories from LR and LTH.

**APPG Secretariat** - to circulate the letter to Nigel Huddleston MP to all those involved in the work of the Visitor Economy Subgroup.

**Closing remarks** - LTH thanked all for their contributions and attendance and closed the meeting at 12.00pm.

*-Ends -*