VisitWiltshire secures fund to grow tourism along the Great West Way

VisitWiltshire, the official Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for Wiltshire, has secured investment through the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) £3.38 million Connected Destinations Fund, delivered by VisitEngland.

Following a rigorous application process, the successful initiative, led by VisitWiltshire working with five other LVEPs - Berkshire, Cotswolds Plus, Hampshire, Somerset and Visit West. - will see funds allocated towards developing the next generation of **Great West Way** experiences and visitor journeys.

Building on the established Great West Way 500-mile touring route between London and Bristol, the initiative will target new and existing international markets to win additional market share, developing new experiences, themed itineraries and bookable journeys across the South of England.

Focused around three themes in-line with the Connected Destinations framework, each will combine well-known reasons to visit with local discoveries that encourage visitors to add another place, experience and overnight stay. These include:

England's stories then and now - Connecting royal, prehistoric, Roman, literary, screen and engineering heritage with living culture.

Everyday England - Introducing visitors to pubs, local food and drink, markets, makers, independent businesses, neighbourhoods, villages and events.

The journey is part of the experience - Building rail, waterways, walking and cycling into the experience itself, alongside gardens, countryside and active discovery.

New and enhanced itineraries will offer two-, three-, five- and seven-day options, plus shorter themed modules. They will support independent travellers and organised groups, combining accommodation, attractions, food and drink, activities and transport into practical journeys. Audience research will guide the combinations of experiences, pace and duration.

The VisitWiltshire-led initiative is one of five cross-regional tourism projects to secure funding in the latest announcement by VisitEngland.

Welcoming the news, David Andrews, Chief Executive of VisitWiltshire said:

“Our aim is to give people more reasons to explore, stay longer and spend with businesses across the route, while making those journeys easier to plan and book. The successful bid majored on building on what partners have already achieved; connecting local knowledge, business expertise and established travel-trade relationships to create new opportunities across destination boundaries.

“We will look to spread the benefit of activity along and around the Great West Way, connecting recognised attractions and gateways with less-discovered places, independent businesses and local communities. It’s important that the programme is developed in partnership with VisitEngland, supporting LVEPs and tourism businesses, and we want to hear from experiences and products that are a good fit.”

Tourism Minister Stephanie Peacock said:

“Working across regional boundaries is the ideal way to unlock the opportunities for jobs and growth that our tourism industry brings to every postcode. Each of these projects makes a compelling case for visitors to explore more of the country – and to stay for longer.”

VisitEngland Chief Executive Patricia Yates said:

"England has an outstanding tourism offer, with world-class destinations, experiences and stories found across our cities, coast and countryside. These five projects demonstrate the power of partnership, bringing together destinations, mayoral areas, local authorities and industry to develop bookable products and itineraries that showcase the breadth of England's visitor offer. By encouraging visitors to stay longer and travel further, they will help drive regional growth, support local businesses and spread the economic benefits of tourism more widely."

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Editors Notes:

VisitWiltshire is the official Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Wiltshire, representing four hundred investing Wiltshire destinations and businesses. It is part of the Great West Way and established as a public/private sector partnership organisation. VisitWiltshire's role includes growing the county's Visitor Economy by raising awareness of the destination and generating additional tourism visits and spend. For more information see www.visitwiltshire.co.uk

Since its launch in 2018, England's **Great West Way** has brought together 500 miles of routes between London and Bristol, explored by road, rail, bicycle, on foot and on the water. Its promise of England Concentrated combines world-famous heritage with historic towns, countryside, waterways, contemporary culture and everyday local life. For more information see www.GreatWestWay.co.uk

The **Connected Destinations Fund** is a £3.38 million programme funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and delivered by VisitEngland. The fund supports Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) working with Mayoral Strategic Authorities, local authorities and industry partners. Projects focus on developing bookable visitor experiences, regional itineraries and tourism products that encourage visitors to explore more of England and support sustainable tourism growth. The programme aims to increase visitor spend, extend length of stay and strengthen visitor economies across England.

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