



The Great West Way Project Summary

1. Background

Our vision for the Great West Way is *“To create one of the world’s premier long-distance touring routes between London and Bristol”*.

The Great West Way project is focused on creating a world class tourism experience, winning new business and market share for Britain, growing the visitor economy and transforming the visitor experience along and around the route. The Great West Way will join up many of England’s iconic destinations and attractions along a corridor west of London, giving a clear compelling proposition to draw visitors out of London.

The touring route is multi-modal, creating a route for car, coach, rail, cycling, walking, canal boating visitors to rival any of the great touring routes in the world.

The route includes many of England’s most iconic attractions - London, Windsor, the Stonehenge & Avebury World Heritage Site, Castle Combe, Lacock, Bath, Bristol, the Cotswolds. As well as 4 World Heritage Sites, 4 AONBs, major air, rail, canal, river and road routes.

The Great West Way will promote a range of product themes reflecting the route’s tourism assets, including heritage, food and drink, countryside, film tourism, GREAT moments.

The Great West Way embraces the development of slow tourism, encouraging visitors to explore trails and itineraries along and around the route, linger longer, and explore the route in depth. Although the whole London to Bristol route is only approx 125 miles, this approach means highlighted routes will be over 500 miles.

Discover England Fund

VisitWiltshire’s £250k round 1 bid into VisitEngland’s Discover England Fund was approved on 30 September and a Grant Offer Letter signed on 14 October. The match funding requirement is £70k. Funding is for concept testing and initial product development, and all Round 1 activity must be completed by end March 2017 and consists of:

- Impact study
- Case study research
- Proposition and brand positioning
- Concept testing
- Programme of engagement and consultation
- Creation of pilot itineraries as part of the concept testing in Germany & USA.

VisitWiltshire have submitted an Expression of Interest for Round 2 funding for the Great West Way, for +£1m (40% match funding required). Full applications are due 20 January 2017, and successful applicants notified end April 2017.

Programme Objectives

- Generate short- medium- and long-term additional tourism visits and spend, increase dwell time and achieve high satisfaction along, and around, all parts of the route.
- Win significant new business and market share for England.
- Create a new way of working for destinations in England, joining-up destinations along the route.
- Give a clear compelling proposition to draw international visitors along and around the London-Bristol route, while also appealing to domestic visitors.
- Be a major catalyst for change, eg influencing inward investment, creating branded travel passes, impact on broader place related agendas.
- Improve linkages between a range of attractions and activities
- Develop an innovative signage and wayfinding solution, including using a smart destination technology, visual identify and Discovery Points.
- Improve private and public transport and other visitor-related infrastructure along and around the route, including developing branded passes.
- Direct visitors to less-visited areas by creating branded itineraries and experiences along and around the route.
- Increase growth, productivity and partnership working.
- Increase and improve the quality and range of product, for example attracting new accommodation in areas where supply is low.
- Work with the trade to ensure bookable product is available in target domestic and international markets.
- Create something new and exciting to add to England's existing offer.

Other considerations:

- The focus is not about any single form or transport or the A4 road. It's about drawing visitors west along the Great West Way corridor and encouraging them to tour and explore out from the route.
- The route should include provision for a wide range of transport options – coach, car, rail, bicycle, walking, canal. Including completing long-distance branded routes, eg walking and cycling.
- Good sustainability fit.
- The importance of this project as a catalyst for wider Product Development (ie not just about developing itineraries).
- Having good quality inspirational content about experiences is critical, this would include developing day and multi-day itineraries on and around the route.
- Supports a number of other agendas including supporting urban and rural areas, seasonality.
- Potential for linking with other sectors, eg LEP strategies, Arts Council, Creative England and themes.
- Maximise potential for aligning destinations and product along the Great West Way with VisitBritain's GREAT campaign.

- Potential to bring smaller initiatives along the route under a single umbrella.
- Great connectivity: air, rail, sea, road.

Target Markets

The Great West Way is expected to attract domestic as well as international visitors and will give a hook with which to capitalise on the growth in international tourism.

Feedback from VisitBritain, VisitEngland, and partners along the route suggest that primary target markets should be USA & Canada, German speaking markets, Netherlands & Belgium, Australia & New Zealand and the UK. Positive feedback from VisitBritain offices in western Europe, Russia, China, GCC and India indicates there is also significant potential in attracting new business from a number of secondary markets.

Stakeholder / Industry Support

The following have confirmed their support verbally or in writing for the Great West Way via contributing cash or in-kind support. Feedback from the trade indicates there is a real appetite to promote and package the Great West Way.

- **Destination Organisations** - VisitWiltshire, VisitDevon, Bath Tourism Plus, Destination Bristol, Visit Cornwall, Visit Somerset, Cotswolds Tourism, Windsor & Maidenhead, Tourism South East, Experience Oxfordshire
- **Other Areas** - North Wessex Downs AONB, Cotswolds AONB, Salisbury & Avebury World Heritage Site (other WHSs expected to support); 4 x Local Action Groups; Town councils, BIDs and parish councils including Hungerford, Corsham, Calne, Marlborough, Chippenham (others expected to support).
- **National & Regional associations / bodies** - Sustrans, K&A Canal, Canal & River Trust, English Heritage, National Trust, Churches Conservation Trust, UKInbound, ETOA, Wilts & Berks Canal, National Express.
- **Industry Partners** - Includes: Bristol Airport, GWR, Flybe, Heathrow Airport, DFDS Seaways, Eurotunnel, National Express; SMEs including attractions, accommodation, tour companies, guiding companies, retail, farm stay consortia, food and drink en-route; major tourist attractions up to 50 miles from the route; individual tour operators, specialist operators and guiding companies, eg House of Britain, Treasure Trails, Pedal England, tripadvisor.
- **6 Local Enterprise Partnerships** – letters of support received from Swindon & Wiltshire LEP, West of England LEP, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP, Oxfordshire LEP, Berkshire Thames Valley LEP. Plus support in writing by email from the Gloucestershire LEP.

Structure & Governance

VisitWiltshire are the accountable body. A Steering Group has been set-up to help guide development of the Great West Way, and had its first meeting on 1 November 2016. It is hoped that a series of industry interest groups will be established over the coming months.