

23 November 2018



## **TOURISM MINISTER LEADS THE (GREAT WEST) WAY**

**Michael Ellis MP leads where 1.5 million anticipated new visitors will follow with a journey along England's new touring route, the Great West Way**

Tourism Minister, Michael Ellis MP, trodden the path of the Great West Way, a new touring route from London to Bristol, which aims to attract 1.5 million new visitors to the region over 10 years.

As part of his tour yesterday, 22 November, the Tourism Minister visited some of the iconic locations along the route, including: Highclere Castle (AKA Downton Abbey); Avebury, Europe's largest stone circle; Lacock, the National Trust village that is one of the most filmed in the country; and the Roman Baths, home to the UK's only natural hot springs.

Michael Ellis MP also visited Bristol Airport, a key gateway to the route, to unveil new imagery of the Great West Way, depicting four ways that the multi-modal route can be explored – on foot, bike, train and canal boat – and bearing the message: "Curious Travellers Start Here".

The airport already serves more than eight million passengers a year and expects its inbound traffic to increase following the launch of the route, which is being marketed internationally and has secured £1m funding from UK Government's Discover England Fund, designed to boost inbound tourism.

**James Gore, Head of Government and Stakeholder Relations at Bristol Airport said:**

"We look forward to welcoming international visitors as they set off to explore the Great West Way, and by providing a friendly and efficient welcome we can make sure the experience starts as soon as they touch down in the UK."

The Minister then spoke at an official networking launch event at The Roman Baths, where 52 suppliers (including attractions, hotels and tour providers) will meet 42 international travel trade buyers (tour operators and wholesalers) to create bookable packages and itineraries. These will be marketed in the primary target markets of the US, Germany and Netherlands and will aim to encourage international visitors to travel to the region, to stay longer and to delve deeper.

**Great West Way Director, David Andrews, said:**

"The Great West Way is an innovation in product development and will greatly enhance England's tourism offer to boost international and domestic visitor growth and spread the economic benefits of tourism across the region. We're delighted to have the full support of the Tourism Minister and that he will be able to see the collaboration between destinations and trade in person."

**Michael Ellis, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:**

"I am thrilled to be treading the path of the Great West Way - the UK's first touring route of its kind.

"We know that this region has so much to offer visitors. Now we want the world to know. This move will deliver personalised visitor experiences that take in the Great West Way's destinations, accommodation, attractions and transport options. We want to make the most out of this opportunity to deliver a significant boost to domestic and inbound tourism and the local economies along the way."

**Ends**

**For further information, imagery or to arrange a press visit please contact Rebecca Lowe, Head of PR, [rebeccalowe@GreatWestWay.co.uk](mailto:rebeccalowe@GreatWestWay.co.uk) Tel: 07444 601421**

**Note to editors:**

### **About the Great West Way**

The Great West Way is one of a number of successful projects to receive funding from the UK Government's £40 million Discover England Fund, administered by VisitEngland. VisitWiltshire are the Destination Organisation leading the project. For further information go to [discoverenglandfund.org](http://discoverenglandfund.org) Further information and link to The Story of the Great West Way booklet, a guide for businesses and destinations, is available at [visitwiltshire.co.uk/GreatWestWay](http://visitwiltshire.co.uk/GreatWestWay)

The Great West Way Ambassador Network gives access to a wide range of additional Great West Way consumer, travel trade and media marketing activity; connecting businesses and destinations along the route

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For further information on or to join the Great West Way Ambassador Network please contact Claire Margetts, Head of Ambassador Network, [ClaireMargetts@GreatWestWay.co.uk](mailto:ClaireMargetts@GreatWestWay.co.uk) Tel: 07850 080679

For further information or to find out more about becoming an Official Tour Operator please contact Florence Wallace, Head of Travel Trade, [FloWallace@GreatWestWay.co.uk](mailto:FloWallace@GreatWestWay.co.uk) Tel: 01722 341309 or 07436 588860

### **About Bristol Airport**

Serving more than eight million passengers a year, Bristol is the ninth busiest airport in the UK and England's third largest airport outside London. Direct flights operate to 126 destinations in 34 countries.

In June, Bristol Airport was named 'Best Airport in Europe' in the 5-10 million passengers' category at the annual awards dinner held by European airports association, ACI Europe.

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### **About the Discover England Fund**

In November 2015, the Government announced a £40 million Discover England Fund; an unprecedented opportunity for English tourism. The Fund aims to deliver world-class bookable tourism products joined

up across geographies and/or themes; including integrated transport solutions to provide an end-to-end customer experience.

The Fund supports the growth of one of England's most successful export industries, inbound tourism. Tourism is an industry that delivers jobs and economic growth across the English regions – contributing some £106bn each year to the economy and supporting 2.6 million jobs.

The Fund supported a number of pilot projects in year one (2016/17) that tested product development approaches. In years two and three, 2017-19, the fund will support:

- A number of large-scale collaborative projects to be delivered over the two year period 2017-2019 that will create a step-change in bookable English tourism product for international consumers,
- A smaller funding pot for new one-year pilot projects (in year two), and
- Continuation funding for existing year one projects that demonstrated early learnings (in year two).

### **About VisitBritain/VisitEngland**

VisitBritain/VisitEngland is the national tourism agency – a non-departmental public body funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS).

Working with a wide range of partners in both the UK and overseas, our mission is to grow the volume and value of inbound tourism across the nations and regions of Britain and to develop world-class English tourism product to support our growth aspirations. For further information and to access the latest in-depth market intelligence and statistics visit [visitbritain.org](http://visitbritain.org) or [visitbritain.com](http://visitbritain.com) and [visitengland.com](http://visitengland.com) for consumer information