

News release

3 November 2016

(JS/2016/08)

VILLAGER JIM BECOMES PEAK TOURISM AMBASSADOR

Award-winning photographer Villager Jim has pledged his support for the continuing quest to promote the Peak District and Derbyshire to a global audience.

Jim – who has been dubbed ‘the Banksy of the photographic world’ - has agreed to become an ambassador for Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire, as part of the official tourist board’s bid to put the area on the regional, national and international tourism map.

Famous for his stunning wildlife images, idyllic country lane scenes and laid-back labrador shots, Sheffield born Jim says he is very excited about being asked to take on the new role to help raise awareness of the Peak District and Derbyshire and the tourist board’s marketing campaigns.

“I feel very honoured that Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire has asked me to become an ambassador, because it enables me to play an even more active part in letting as many people as possible know about this beautiful area where we are so privileged to live and work,” said Jim, who prefers to keep a low profile, but made a rare exception when he appeared on BBC TV’s popular Countryfile in 2014.

“It’s a true pleasure to share my photographic diary of daily life here with 1.3 million visitors to my website and hundreds of thousands of followers on social media, and by working together, the tourist board and I aim to bring in even more staying visitors to enjoy its breathtaking wildlife, landscapes and attractions – from everyday farm life to beautiful birds of prey, and everything in between.”

Jim now has around 140,000 followers on Facebook, gaining around 1300 new ones each week, plus almost 5,000 followers on Twitter and 6,500 followers on Instagram. He will play a leading role in the tourist board’s upcoming VisitEngland funded Gardens & Gourmet campaign, which will showcase England’s outstanding gardens and first-class culinary offer, in partnership with four other destination teams in Kent, Cheshire, Essex and Hertfordshire.

Along with other ambassadors, Jim will appear in innovative digital guides targeting overseas markets in Germany, The Netherlands and the USA, aimed at bringing

imaginative Gardens & Gourmet experiences to life and giving visitors the virtual opportunity to meet a local to share 'insider' tips and the area's best kept secrets.

"We are delighted that Villager Jim has decided to take on this new challenge, as much of his work already complements our marketing activity to raise the overall profile of the Peak District and Derbyshire, encouraging more people to come, stay and enjoy the area's many assets for the benefit of local businesses and the local and regional economy," said Jo Dilley, Managing Director of Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire.

"By working in partnership, we can spread the word as widely as possible about the huge variety of things to see, do and experience in this unique and special part of the world."

Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire will be enlisting the help of other, specially-selected local ambassadors to take part in the Gardens & Gourmet campaign over the next few months. The tourist board is one of five leading destinations to successfully bid for £240,000 from a first-year pot of £6.5 million in VisitEngland's Discover England Fund to develop the Gardens & Gourmet campaign.

With VisitKent as lead destination, the main aim will be to create bookable packages for international tourists offering a compelling and high-quality experience of the English countryside. As well as being included in national itineraries, Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire will develop its own cluster of gardens and gourmet experiences, building on existing partnerships to involve leading attractions, places to stay and eat and personal recommendations and fresh perspectives from local experts.

Research will be carried out from now until the end of March 2017 with a view to launching the packages next spring, in the run-up to the first RHS Chatsworth Flower Show, scheduled for 7 to 11 June 2017.

Ends.

For further details, please contact Janette Sykes, PR Manager, Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire, on 07792 924839 or at janette.sykes@marketingpdd.com.

Note to Editors

An accompanying high resolution image is attached. Caption: Villager Jim's famous labrador Barnaby with Jo Dilley, Managing Director of Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire.

For more information about Villager Jim, visit www.villagerjim.com, and to follow his daily adventures, like his front page at www.facebook.com/VillagerJim.

For more information about the DEF, worth £40 million over three years, visit: <https://visitbritain.org/first-winners-40-million-discover-england-fund-announced>.

For further details about plans for the RHS Chatsworth Flower Show 2017, visit <https://www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/rhs-chatsworth-flower-show>.

Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire's mission is to develop and grow a successful and sustainable tourism economy, working closely with a wide range of partners to make the Peak District and Derbyshire the destination of choice – regionally, nationally and globally.