

**News release**

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## **GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO GROWING TOURISM BEYOND LONDON, PEAK CONFERENCE TOLD**

Tourism is one of the UK's most important industries, worth more than £62 billion in 2015 – and the Government is firmly committed to growing the industry outside London, both now and post-Brexit.

That was the key message from Karen Bradley, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to delegates at Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire's 2016 Tourism Conference & Exhibition today (Thursday).

"We all know that attracting tourists – and making them want to come back for more – is harder than it sounds, even for an area as special as this," said the Staffordshire Moorlands MP, who spent her early childhood in Cheddleton, grew up in Buxton and now lives in Leek.

"Thanks to places such as the Peak District and Derbyshire and people like you, 2015 was a record breaking year, with tourism contributing more than £62 billion to the UK economy.

"Domestic overnight expenditure edged towards £20 billion in England, and the UK attracted more overseas visits than ever before, generating more than £22 billion of export earnings.

"The latest post-Brexit figures suggest this trend is set to continue, with the number of overseas visits to the UK in July and August 2016 up two per cent on the same months last year."

However, added Karen, the Government is conscious that more than half of all international visitor spending is concentrated in London – which is why it is investing £40 million in the three-year Discover England Fund, specifically to help grow tourism outside the capital.

"I am delighted that Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire has been successful in round one of the Fund, securing £240,000 between them in a joint bid with teams from Cheshire, Essex, Hertfordshire and Kent," she said.

"The Gardens & Gourmet project will highlight each region's bookable experiences in rural England and show the fundamental role gardens and produce play in the nation's identity."

Karen highlighted a number of Government initiatives to support tourism, including:

- Supporting projects to increase the UK's rail, air and road capacity
- Raising awareness of the UK's visa offer and improve the welcome visitors receive by expanding initiatives like GREAT China Welcome
- Supporting – through £24 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund – the regeneration of Buxton's Grade I listed Crescent
- Funding 17 heritage and community rail projects, including Ecclesbourne Valley Railway
- Setting an eight-point plan for England's National Parks, including the Peak District, to promote them as world-class destinations and develop new apprenticeship standards and opportunities
- Listening to the views of businesses, individuals and agencies across England in the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee Inquiry into Rural Tourism and Growth

“Leaving the European Union affords the UK an opportunity to shape its own decisions about policy objectives that have been shaped by EU funding,” said Karen.

“The whole of Whitehall is committed to working with stakeholders – including tourism, farming and other industries – to review all EU funding schemes and ensure that any new ones for business growth and productivity best serve our national interest.

“Brexit will bring new impetus to some existing initiatives, and the energy to change and develop other new ideas. I believe that the new reality can allow rural, coastal and urban tourism industries alike to flourish.”

Other main speakers at the event were Andrew Stokes, England Director at VisitBritain/VisitEngland and digital marketing expert Susan Hallam, who brought delegates up to speed on eTourism: the latest trends in social media and digital marketing.

There were also updates on Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire's work and marketing campaigns in 2016, the Buxton Crescent Development and the first-ever RHS Chatsworth Flower Show 2017, as well as valuable opportunities to promote individual tourism businesses and attractions and network with key players in the industry.

“We were delighted to welcome the Secretary of State to this year's Conference, and to discover more about the Government's commitment to tourism, both now and post-Brexit,” said Lindsay Rae, Deputy Director and Head of Industry Engagement at Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire.

“It was a great opportunity for delegates to hear about what's happening to support the industry now and in the future, as well as to catch up with the latest developments in major projects such as The Crescent in Buxton and the RHS Chatsworth Flower Show 2017.”

Sponsors for this year's conference were the European Regional Development Fund; High Peak Borough Council; The Pavilion Gardens, Buxton and the University of Derby.

Ends.

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

### **Note to News Editors**

An accompanying digital image is attached. Caption: Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Karen Bradley (seated, centre) at Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire's Tourism Conference & Exhibition 2016, with (left to right): Paul Roden, Chairman, Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire; Anne Western, Leader, Derbyshire County Council; Jo Dilley, Managing Director, Marketing Peak District & Derbyshire and Andrew Stokes, England Director, VisitBritain/VisitEngland.

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.

Funding for the conference is part of an approved business support programme receiving up to £1.49 million of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020. The Department for Communities and Local Government is the Managing Authority for European Regional Development Fund. Established by the European Union, European Regional Development Fund funds help local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>

