
PRESS RELEASE

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Visit East Anglia Discover England Fund Award The Friendly Invasion

VISIT
EAST
ANGLIA



The story of the US Air Army in East Anglia is important and captivating. More than twenty-six thousand men gave their lives here in defense of freedom, including Joe Kennedy Jr., eldest son of the Kennedy family and until fate intervened, possibly destined to be the future President of America.

What's more, from Royal connections to film stars (Jimmy Stewart & Clarke Gable served with the Air Army in East Anglia), war brides to warm beer, quite lanes to city sights, there's something for everyone in this story.

East Anglian tourism organisations will be launching a new product in North America in the New Year to highlight this heritage and encourage more US visitors to the region.

'The Friendly Invasion' commemorates the 75th anniversary of 180,000 American servicemen arriving in the region, and will package a range of East of England experiences, including themed events and tours of the airbases.

Visit East Anglia is leading the initiative, working with organisations including Visit Cambridge and Beyond, Visit Essex, Visit Norfolk, Visit Suffolk and Lincolnshire. Also involved are the Imperial War Museum Duxford, Madingley American Cemetery and Memorial, the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library in Norwich and Eighth in the East.

Monday 20 February 2017 marks the very day the first US General, Ira Eaker, arrived in the UK to take command of the US Army Air Force. To commemorate this occasion, Visit East Anglia, together with the IWM, will be hosting an extra special event. This morning (AM) event will launch the new 'The Friendly Invasion' product and bring together local people who have done so much to keep the memory of the US airmen and ground crew alive these past seventy-five years, alongside tourism and heritage organisations, invited guests and US forces personnel.

Ann Steward, The Friendly Invasion Project Manager, said,

'In every village, town and city in East Anglia there's a story to share about this important time. The social and landscape impact alone is something we have not experienced before, or since. To have the opportunity to take this story out to audiences across the world is a new, essential, and exciting challenge.

What's more, it will give us the opportunity to show people our wonderful history, set alongside the renowned hospitality of the Friendly Invasion itself.

'Seventy-five years ago, the world came to East Anglia. In 2017, we'd like to welcome them back.'

Visit East Anglia Executive Director Pete Waters said, 'We're delighted to receive this funding from the Discover England Fund and to be able to create a new product that will bring more American visitors to this region. 'Visitors from the United States are very interested in the lives and experiences of their compatriots' time in East Anglia and this project will make treading in their footsteps a more simple and appealing proposition.'

East Anglia is one of a number of successful applicants to benefit from the £40m [Discover England Fund](#), a central government funded programme of activity, supported by match funding by partners in the public and private sectors.

Administered by VisitEngland, the Fund will see a programme of activity to ensure England stays competitive in the rapidly growing global tourism industry, by offering world-class English tourism products to the right customers at the right time.

The Discover England Fund has made an award of £237,000 to 'The Friendly Invasion', which will in total amount to a £387,000 project. As well as bookable itineraries for US group travel operators to sell, 'The Friendly Invasion' will also include on-the-ground product development.

www.thefriendlyinvasion.com

For further information contact Ann Steward, The Friendly Invasion Project Manager at Visit East Anglia ann@visteastanglia.net

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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. England has seen record tourism spend in the past year from both domestic and international visitors delivering economic growth and jobs across all the English regions.
- The Fund will support a number of projects and pilots in year one (2016/17) to test and develop product development approaches and a small number of large-scale collaborative projects that create a step-change in bookable English tourism product for international consumers (in years two and three - 2017-19). A smaller funding pot for new one-year projects and pilots, and continuation funding for existing round one projects that can demonstrate early learnings, will also be available.

About VisitBritain/VisitEngland

- VisitBritain/VisitEngland is the national tourism agency – a non-departmental public body funded by the Department for 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 www.visitbritain.org or www.visitbritain.com and www.visitengland.com for consumer information.