
VISIT ENGLAND: DISCOVER ENGLAND FUND – Two Year Project (Expression of Interest)

Working title: Make great memories in England's National Parks and Countryside

Product theme / geographical coverage: From the north east to the south west of England our National Parks already host a fifth of all rural tourism spend in England. All ten National Parks aim to simplify the ability for international visitors to research, book and immerse themselves in inspiring and authentic countryside experiences.

Summary:

National Parks are the most iconic, awe-inspiring landscapes of the English countryside. Internationally unique, people have lived in these landscapes for centuries creating distinct cultures, traditions and food, rich archaeology, nature and space to experience the tranquillity and wildness of England's countryside. Unlike many National Parks across the world, our parks are free to enter and are relatively accessible from town and city destinations. Our project will showcase the authentic local welcome to England's countryside by delivering:

- An online portal for bookable experiences in England's National Parks and their influence areas; integrating guided experiences with high quality accommodation, locally distinctive food & drink and transport.
- Identify and enhance existing guided experiences in the Parks delivered by the private sector, ensuring it is easily bookable online by independents and through the travel trade.
- Create new bookable guided experiences in each park led by National Park Rangers and volunteers, maximising the value of international Ranger brand and utilising the people who keep the Parks special as authentic ambassadors for our places.
- Local ambassador training to improve the welcome for international visitors in our communities. Sense of place marketing toolkits which focus on international audiences and improve provision of multi-lingual resources for visitors.
- Awareness-raising activity in international markets. Working with VisitBritain and DMOs to engage with the travel trade and a global technology partner to create a virtual experience which generates wider global awareness.

Project rationale:

Creating focus

We aim to make it easier for Outdoor Enthusiasts, Cultural Adventurers and Mature Experience Seekers to soak up the culture, local heritage and landscape of our National Parks. The project primarily falls into the categories of 'Scenery and Rural Life' and 'Outdoor Leisure'; we also expect to generate some additional interest in 'Action & Challenge'. The market opportunity guidance shows a high level of interest and spend from these segments and activities, we have mapped this in **Annex 1**.

Research from the Cool Project (which involved the Broads and Exmoor National Parks), discussions with commercial partners and our identified segments in the market opportunity guidance have shown us that visitors from Germany and Benelux countries seek such authentic experiences, such as: walking, cycling, immersing themselves and learning about the heritage and countryside as free independent travellers. We anticipate this will be our primary audience.

Maximising impact

We will respond to low visitor awareness and tackle the fragmented nature of the offer of these experiences to join up across our Parks. Among the English National Park family, international awareness varies, we will use familiarity with our most popular locations (e.g. the Lake District National Park) to cross-promote other parks and encourage multi-park itineraries.

Visitors will be able to take virtual journeys through our Parks, be signposted to the best bookable activities, creating new experiences with our guides and local experts. We will simplify the booking process and link this with quality local accommodation, food and drink and transport to get to and around the Parks.

We will make it easier for visitors to purchase experiences within National Parks. Our National Parks are well served for self-guided activities (online and paper guides/maps for walks, bike rides, local heritage), but our guided-experience offer is weaker than our international competitors. Local guides can be found in our National Parks, but they are generally micro-businesses with limited availability and can be challenging to book with online. We will work with existing providers to enhance their product offering and boost capacity.

Simplification



We will create a portal on the [National Park UK website](#), with links to DMO and National Park websites, that allows visitors to go on a 'journey' that

- *inspires them with images and video of the stunning and varied landscapes that offer real and personal experiences
- *enables a virtual exploration of the National Parks to get an understanding of the quality of the landscape, the experiences on offer and to showcase their unique selling points, compared to European National Parks, as living landscapes
- *enables people to book coherent and developed experiences in advance

Experience Enhancement



*Working with the DMOs, local providers and people to develop a wide range of 'unique local' experiences. These will include enriching activities such as using specialist staff and volunteers for Ranger-led activities, local wildlife walks, farm walks, local cookery courses and camping experiences, alongside our more established walking/cycling and outdoor activity experiences. We will also amplify the profile of more unique and surprising experiences international visitors may not expect to find in England, for example, whale-watching near North York Moors, dark sky experiences in Northumberland, Via Ferrata in the Lake District and vineyard tours in the South Downs.

*The value and appeal will be that visitors are meeting people who care deeply for the places they live and work in and experience aspects of rural life in the English countryside

not otherwise experienced.

*Providers and those associated with ensuring a positive and warm welcome will undergo Ambassador training, equipping them to help bring the landscapes of our National Parks to life with informal but relevant and stimulating information.

Achievement/Connection



*The target markets identified will leave with the positive associations of a special welcome and a unique and memorable experience which leaves them feeling more engaged in the destination (feeling like a local!) and positive about England and its varied and unique experiences. This will be enhanced through further marketing of English National Parks sense of place and their distinctiveness.

*These they will then share through easy-to-book repeat visits, wanting to visit other English National Parks on their next trip and sharing their experiences via social media or directly with family and friends.

Creating scale

As hero products for England's countryside, National Parks showcase our best countryside and stimulate innovation in rural regeneration. Sharing how we develop distinctive and exceptional visitor experiences with our host communities will inspire other destinations to develop their own opportunities and attract increased rates of return visits to the English countryside. We will explore the opportunity to develop complimentary marketing to the long-haul market with Marketing Peak District and Derbyshire as they develop their Great Walking Trails of England project.

New visitors attracted will experience the breadth and diversity of the English countryside and we would aim to capitalise on this through repeat visits to other rural destinations such as AONBs.

Key National Park partners:

- All ten of England's National Park Authorities: Northumberland, Lake District, Peak District, Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors, The Broads, New Forest, South Downs, Dartmoor, Exmoor.
- National Parks UK – Communications organisation for the UK National Parks brand and guardians of the nationalparks.gov.uk website and social media channels.
- National Parks England – Representative body for the ten National Parks in England, providing an effective voice for all ten of England's National Parks to Government.
- National Parks Partnerships LLP – company owned by all 15 of the UKs National Parks to develop successful partnerships with the private sector.

Commercial Partners:

The National Park family has recently created a new organisation called [National Park Partnerships](#), to help us develop successful commercial partnerships with the private sector. NPP will support the development of high-value partnerships for the project if we are successful in the EOI. By way of example, NPP is close to a partnership with a global partner, who could provide significant international promotion activity for the English National Park family. In addition, the Wyndham Group (owners of Hoseasons and Cottages.com) support this project. The Wyndham group has a

significant amount of quality-assessed self-catering accommodation product within all ten of the National Parks. Hoseasons and sister brand Landal Green Parks (establishing on the edge of two of England's National Parks in 2017) have strong appeal to our target audiences in the Benelux countries and Germany. We appreciate any distribution partner is likely to be subject to procurement.

We would like to work with a high-profile global technology provider to develop virtual experiences of England's National Parks to inspire and attract. The US National Park Service benefitted from significant global exposure by Google in 2016, through [The Hidden Worlds of the National Parks](#). The English National Park family has established contacts within Google from the development of [Google Trekker routes across some National Parks and will look to](#) develop this further.

The National Park family [works closely with Ordnance Survey](#) (OS); as Britain's national mapping agency, they produce quintessentially English mapping of the England's Countryside and have recently developed premium National Park features within their app, [OS Maps](#). OS support our project which will meet with their aims to make England's countryside more enjoyable, accessible and safe. If successful we will work with OS to make England's countryside easier to navigate by international visitors (with use of their digital API), by integrating their digital navigation products into the booking system and making their products more user-friendly for international visitors to England.

Destination Management Organisations:

Initial support has been secured from most of our DMOs within the time available. We see DMOs as providing a vital link to tourism businesses, and we hope to develop opportunities to integrate existing DMO product databases into any new booking systems to connect the National Park experience to high quality accommodation, and the distinctive local food & drink offer. We have secured initial support from DMOs below highlighted in bold. Approaches to remaining DMOs will be undertaken in stage two.

Northumberland	Northumberland Tourism Ltd
Lake District	<i>Cumbria Tourism</i>
Peak District	Visit Peak District and Derbyshire
Yorkshire Dales	Welcome to Yorkshire, Cumbria Tourism
North York Moors	<i>Visit York, Welcome to Yorkshire</i>
The Broads	Broads Tourism
New Forest	New Forest Destination Partnership, Tourism South East, Visit Hampshire
South Downs	Tourism South East, Visit Chichester, Visit Sussex, Visit Hampshire, Visit Winchester, Sussex-by-Sea, Visit Worthing, Visit Brighton, Visit Eastbourne
Dartmoor	Visit Dartmoor (ATP)
Exmoor	Exmoor Tourism, Visit Somerset, North Devon Marketing Board

LEPs:

We will work with Local Enterprise Partnerships so our our Stage Two bid complements their Strategic Economic Plans and complements other investments they are making in the visitor economy. Engagement to date with LEPs around this project has been limited; however, all ten National Park Authorities have strong relationships with their LEPs and we are confident that we can engage with all relevant LEPs in Stage Two. For example D2N2 is a good advocate of promoting the visitor economy.

Northumberland	<i>North East LEP</i>
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Lake District	<i>Cumbria LEP</i>
Peak District	<i>D2N2 LEP, Sheffield City Region LEP and StokesStaffs LEP plus others</i>
Yorkshire Dales	<i>York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP, Cumbria LEP, Leeds City Region LEP</i>
North York Moors	<i>York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Enterprise Partnership</i>
The Broads	<i>New Anglia LEP</i>
New Forest	<i>Enterprise M3 LEP</i>
South Downs	<i>Enterprise M3, Coast to Capital, South East LEP</i>
Dartmoor	<i>Heart of the South West LEP</i>
Exmoor	<i>Heart of the South West LEP</i>

Delivery Structure:

- One National Park Authority will be the lead organisation for the programme, this will be agreed if the EOI be successful but is likely to be the Peak District National Park Authority, and will recruit and employ the staff, which will be hosted in regional hubs.

Proposed governance:

- Programme Board (comprising two representatives from the three Regional Boards and VisitEngland/VisitBritain)
- Three Regional Boards (comprising England's National Park Authorities, DMOs, Local Wildlife Trusts, Local Tourism associations) i.e.
 - Northern Regional Board: Northumberland, North York Moors, Lake District, Yorkshire Dales, Peak District
 - South East Regional Board: Broads Authority, South Downs, New Forest
 - South West Regional Board: Dartmoor, Exmoor

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Annex 1 – Our target segments

