Introduction

1. Whether visiting from within the UK or from overseas, a holiday in England enriches people’s understanding of our diverse nation, its history and its culture. England is famous for the beauty and heritage of its rural and coastal landscapes. They are important to us, and we are proud to share them with international visitors. In 2015, we welcomed 15.2 million international visits to places outside London, to spectacular landscapes, National Parks, market towns and villages, and coastal communities all over England. This Government is committed to supporting the many parts of the countryside and coastal tourism sector to develop the world-class rural tourism offer that will encourage even more people to visit and explore England.

2. We know that what is good for rural tourism is also often what is good for rural communities. Growing both together is the most effective approach to achieve a flourishing rural tourism industry that is sustainable, both for British communities and the natural landscapes that we and international visitors enjoy. The rural tourism sector makes an important contribution to rural economic growth and prosperity. It is worth more than £30bn each year in business turnover, and 5% of the GVA generated in rural areas comes from tourism.

3. English tourism is remarkably diverse and dominated by small businesses that provide everything from food tourism in Devon, and farmstay in Lincolnshire; to bed and breakfasts in Norfolk, and cycling and horse-riding along the Pennine Bridleway. The industry is resilient, but these hard-working businesses need support, which Government is committed to providing. The UK’s Tourism Action Plan, published on 26 August 2016, reaffirms the Government’s commitment to grow tourism by focusing on five areas:

- **Tourism landscape** - strengthening co-ordination and collaboration
- **Jobs and skills** - boosting apprenticeships and attracting more people to careers in tourism
- **Common sense regulation** - examining the scope for deregulation
- **Transport** - making it easier for visitors to explore by rail, bus and coach
- **A GREAT welcome** - driving continuous improvements in the UK’s visa service

4. Many government departments have a stake in rural and coastal tourism and communities. The future of a prosperous and ambitious industry is predicated on our ability to draw out and co-ordinate rural tourism issues right across Government, and to make every bit of effort count. And in co-ordinating effectively, we are committed to continuing to work
with stakeholders, agencies, and businesses to continue to turn ambition and expertise into growth.

5. This productive dialogue is more important than ever as the UK considers the terms of its exit from the European Union. The boost to tourism in July this year after the Referendum, with 3.8m visits to the UK (an increase of 2% on July 2014) and £2.5bn spent, is an indication of how the industry can take advantage of opportunities for the UK economy and British communities. Although we must take a clear-sighted view of the challenges ahead, tourism is an adaptable industry that has the potential to develop further in the rural sector, and we will make sure that it does.

6. Departments will be contributing to the *Impact of Brexit on Creative Industries, Tourism and Digital Single Market Inquiry*, launched by the Culture, Media & Sport Committee on 16 September 2016.

**Marketing**

**How well do agencies promote rural destinations across England? What more should the Government do to support this work?**

7. Government has delegated the marketing of tourism in England to the British Tourist Authority (BTA), with VisitEngland managing tourism within England, and VisitBritain responsible for the marketing of English tourism overseas. DCMS is the BTA’s sponsor government department. VisitEngland has provided a separate submission to this Inquiry.

8. Marketing has a crucial role in the tourism economy. A technological revolution in the last 20 years and the advent of social media has transformed how people communicate with each other, run their businesses, advertise, and research and book their travel. This has made the global tourism marketplace a crowded one, where the British tourism offer must stand out to succeed. Marketing for English rural tourism is multi-layered and reflects the diversity of the industry landscape and national structures: the marketing of staycations is managed by VisitEngland, whilst the overseas marketing of England is managed by VisitBritain. The decision to bring VisitEngland and VisitBritain closer together supports content-sharing across campaigns, making the promotion of England at home and abroad more cost-effective.

9. The *GREAT Campaign* is an internationally respected campaign that markets the UK national brand overseas across themes, including Countryside is GREAT and Food is GREAT. It works right across departments to co-ordinate the elements of support that only government can give, and uses this to add a national impetus to promoting UK trade, culture and value to the world.
10. But smaller campaigns can also deliver a specific local brand or project, and co-ordinate to also reinforce national branding:

- DCLG, for example, leads on coastal development through 118 Coastal Community Teams and the delivery of the £90m Coastal Communities Fund - and underpinning this is its marketing of The Great British Coast logo to encourage a single identifiable and marketable brand for the UK’s many coastal towns.

- DfT has used the Heritage and Community Railways Innovation Competition - which supports the Tourism Action Plan - to provide £75,000 funding for the National Association of Community Rail Partnerships to produce a new national website and provide significant marketing with international reach and in foreign languages.

- The 8-Point Plan for England’s National Parks sets ambitious targets, including collaboration between the National Park Authorities (NPAs), and VisitBritain and VisitEngland to drive the promotion of National Parks as world-class destinations.

11. There are around 200 destination organisations in England, which also market on behalf of their local area; and many individual businesses separately promote their own businesses domestically and overseas. Developing the skills necessary for marketing and technology is an important priority for these small business-owners, met in part by representative bodies and Local Enterprise Partnerships. Government is also supporting through other schemes such as the Coastal Communities Fund, which has allocated £2m to the National Coastal Tourism Academy in Bournemouth to set up a Coastal Activity Park and train hundreds of coastal businesses across the country in skills to attract tourists.

12. As holiday-makers are usually seeking the best overall holiday experience – as opposed to the best day out within a defined geographical boundary - the £40m Discover England fund incentivises collaborations across a wider area or theme, to develop a compelling offer that can be marketed at home or abroad. Details of the first round of Discover England Fund winners – from Kent to Cheshire – can be found here. In its first year, the Fund is focusing on smaller, quick delivery projects and pilots that meet customer demand and test new products or new ways of joining up existing products. Individual bids in the first tranches were capped at £250,000, and the scheme was heavily oversubscribed, indicating an encouraging number of smaller organisations taking steps to grow their business.

13. We know that visitors to the UK often provide excellent marketing for the UK by returning home after their visit and using social media to report positively to their friends, family and followers about the exceptional experience they had in the UK. VisitBritain’s #OMGB Home of Amazing Moments campaign, which launched in January 2016, and exploits the value that word of mouth and social media has as a stimulus to both repeat and new travel, and with
both domestic and international tourists. Further details of VisitBritain’s campaigns and analysis can be found in the separate VisitEngland submission to this Inquiry.

Access

**What, if any, changes are needed to give people better access to the coast and countryside?**

14. There are many ways and routes to access the coast and countryside, and it is Government’s priority to make them sustainable, and accessible to all. Planes, ferries and Eurotunnel first connect visitors to the UK, whilst national trains, roads and buses move domestic and international visitors from cities to the countryside, with local buses, trains, cycle paths, bridle paths, and walking trails supporting people to travel within an area.

15. England’s network of public rights of way are the primary means by which people access the countryside and engage in outdoor recreation - and are a treasured national resource. In many areas, rights of way help to boost tourism and contribute to rural economies, such as in Dartmoor National Park, which has hundreds of miles of public footpaths and public bridleways. Government’s plans for the public rights of way reforms package, under the provisions in the Deregulation Act 2013, will benefit users of rights of way, landowners, local authorities and developers by creating a simpler system for mapping, changing and administering rights of way.

16. The UK also enjoys the National Trails network: the finest and most popular long-distance walking, cycling and horse-riding routes, providing access to rural areas and businesses for a wide variety of domestic and international users. The 15 National Trails in England and Wales total around 2,600 miles, and between 63 and 140 million visits to the natural environment are taken each year to places passed through by a National Trail. Natural England is working now on the England Coast Path which, when complete, will become Britain’s longest national trail.

17. Improving access to rural areas is a priority for Government, which is investing £61bn of spending on transport in this Parliament – 50% higher than the previous five years. The responsibility for public transport co-ordination and local highways provision in rural areas, and making productive links with the rural tourism industry, resides primarily with local authorities. The Government assists local authorities by funding the provision of local transport, including in remote and rural areas, through a variety of grant funding mechanisms. The focus is on giving local authorities more say over how and where funding should be spent locally.

18. The Department for Transport also funds the national rail and strategic roads networks. Highways England will invest over £11bn in capital spending to enhance and renew the strategic road network over the next five years, and about £1bn per year in revenue spending to run and maintain the network. The strategic road network is important for tourism and tourism providers, including coach companies, goods suppliers, and local communities. It is
also an essential enabler in the Government’s campaign to encourage visitors to travel outside London and other major cities and explore the UK.

19. We continue to modernise transport connections to the countryside, making it easier for visitors to access some of England’s less visited regions. The UK road investment strategy will improve connectivity in some of our leading tourism areas, including the A303 expressway to the South West, which will provide a better driving experience whilst improving the environmental setting of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site, one of the most visited attractions in England.

20. Most domestic tourists travel by car for both day and overnight trips, and this has an environmental impact that that could be mitigated by improvements in an integrated public transport system. Rural public transport policy and practice is also particularly impactful for international visitors, who report their reluctance to drive in the UK and are therefore more reliant on public transport to travel outside London, and for those rural tourism and heritage businesses which rely on employees and apprentices travelling to work or college by bus, train or other public transport.

21. Since January 2014, £40m of the Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG) payments which were previously paid to the bus companies for running services under tender to local authorities are instead going to the local authorities who tender these services. This funding is being ring-fenced until 2016-17 to ensure that it is still used to support bus services, but within that it will be for each authority to decide how to use it. Increased autonomy means greater responsiveness to local needs.

22. In tandem with infrastructure improvements, we understand the importance of promoting to international and domestic audiences that transport systems in England and the UK are integrated, affordable, and tailored to the needs of visitors. DCMS, the Rail Delivery Group, and DfT are working together with VisitBritain to develop a new GREAT Rail offer. This has begun with the pilot promotion by VisitEngland of up to five, easy to book, UK rail itineraries that tackle issues associated with the ‘final mile’, so that visitors have confidence getting from the nearest train station to the entrance of some of England’s best heritage attractions. Further details of rail itineraries, such as the Northern Heritage and Countryside itinerary, are here.

23. To extend the use of a distinctive British attraction and encourage visitors to explore the UK by rail, DfT held a £1m Heritage and Community Rail Innovation competition this year. It will be funding 17 heritage and community rail projects, with individual grants of between £25,000 and £75,000, including the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway in Derbyshire, the Swanage Railway Trust, and the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.
Funding and fiscal policies

How can public funding be best targeted to get new rural tourist business off the ground and keep them going?

24. At Budget 2016, the Government announced the biggest ever cut in business rates in England, which will be worth £6.7bn over the next five years. Small Business Rate Relief will be permanently doubled from 50% to 100%, and we are increasing the thresholds so that more businesses can benefit. In addition, all businesses will benefit in the long term from a change in the indexation of business rates from 2020: a cut of approximately £370m every year. Rural rate relief is also available for businesses in rural communities with a population below 3,000 - an important support for small tourism businesses, including shops, pubs and post offices, all of which can apply for relief of 50% and up to a rateable value of £8,500 for shops and post offices, or £12,500 for pubs.

25. EU funding has played a significant role in the rural tourism and farming sectors, and through the 2014-20 Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), funding has been made available to support new and existing tourism businesses and the sector in general. Through the current programme, we have set aside £67m to support tourism directly, based on local LEP area strategies and LEADER group plans. As at 8 September 2016, 33 tourism projects totalling £1.1m in value had been approved under the RDPE and seven of these were made to support farms to diversify into tourism related activities.

26. The Chancellor has confirmed that all RDPE projects with funding agreements in place before the Autumn 2016 statement will be guaranteed in full, providing reassurance and continuity for businesses (statement here). The Government will make a further announcement about arrangements for projects that might be signed after the Autumn Statement but whilst the UK is still a member of the EU. Leaving the European Union provides an historic opportunity for the UK to take its own decisions about policy objectives previously shaped by EU funding. Government is absolutely committed to working with stakeholders, including farming, tourism, and other industries to review all EU funding schemes in the round, to ensure that any new funding schemes supporting business growth and productivity best serve the UK’s national interest.

27. The tourism industry is dominated by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and we know that only 0.2% of hotel and restaurant enterprises in the tourism industry have 250 employees or more. This characteristic features more strongly in some English regions than others: some coastal towns, for example, have no large corporate hospitality or tourism representation at all. Government recognises and celebrates that in rural locations, small
businesses often showcase the very local specialisms - in food, hospitality, parks, heritage, landscape, waterways, culture, and training - which are so attractive to domestic and international visitors.

28. Small and micro businesses are an important resource for the growth of rural tourism, and we want to support them to succeed and grow. Farm diversification can be an important source of income in the agricultural economy and increases farmers’ resilience.

29. The Tourism Action Plan addresses many issues that have a particular impact on small businesses, such as common sense regulation, training, and jobs and skills. We will be reviewing how else we provide more support - whether through VisitEngland’s Business Advice Hubs or by supporting more small businesses to attend major trade events, like Explore GB, to improve their export capabilities.

30. Developing and marketing thematic tourism is also increasing tourism’s resilience, and food tourism is a growth area, supported by Government. Stratton Park in Central Bedfordshire adopted its Local Development Order (the basis of a Food Enterprise Zone or FEZ) in 2015 and is being developed alongside neighbouring farms across the Ivel Valley for smaller and artisan food and drink sector businesses. Agri-food is one of the key sectors in Central Bedfordshire and the FEZ will enable faster growth for businesses in the sector. This will help forge closer links through the entire food chain, joining up farmers, manufacturers, retailers and researchers, helping businesses to realise the full value of the sector.

31. Through the Great British Food Campaign, Defra is supporting a partner programme to promote Britain’s food culture and ensure that food becomes a core part of the English tourism offer, particularly in rural areas. Defra, DCMS and VisitBritain are already working together to develop a shared strategy that is underpinned by research and uses the Food is GREAT global brand to target our key overseas markets and within the UK to build on our Great British Food campaign activity.

32. Government is also considering ways to help the tourism industry make itself more resilient by supporting businesses to extend the tourist season. This is of particular importance to coastal communities where seasonality can be strongly marked. DCLG’s Coastal Communities Fund is supporting Lincolnshire County Council’s Coastal North Sea Observatories project. With a £1.74m grant, this is delivering two exceptional new visitor and interpretation centres for the North Sea marine and rural coastal environment at the Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve and at Chapel St Leonards. The project will support more than 50 local jobs and both sites will attract visitors all year round.

Planning and regulation

What, if any, changes are needed to planning and other regulations covering rural areas of special character, such as National Parks, to encourage sustainable tourism?
33. Planning allows local communities to maintain and enhance the distinct identity of towns, villages and countryside, while providing the housing, services and infrastructure necessary to support communities. In tourism terms, planning is also part of the architecture for place creation - how local communities refine their identity and attract visitors.

34. It is right that local planning authorities, in consultation with local people, are in charge of planning their areas, and that each new development proposal is considered carefully and individually against the agreed Local Plan. In National Parks, the planning authority is the National Park Authority.

35. DCLG’s National Planning Policy Framework asks local planning authorities to recognise the character and beauty of the countryside; to support and enhance biodiversity; to protect the Green Belt and other designated land; and to take account of the benefits of the best and most versatile farmland. This means that new proposals for building on land in open countryside are considered for the economic benefits they could bring, but also issues such as siting, design, consequences for rural roads, availability of public transport and infrastructures, the impact on wildlife and landscape, and many other factors. The Framework is not regulation, but national policy to which local planning authorities should have regard whenever relevant. However, some especially sensitive wildlife, habitats and heritage do have additional protection in law.

36. England’s protected landscapes cover around a quarter of England and are home to approximately 2.6% of the population. They are an essential resource for the quality of life for British people, and for the quality of visit for international visitors. Each year, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks attract between them 260 million visitors, who spend in excess of £6bn and support thousands of jobs and businesses.

37. The Government’s focus on the promotion of cycling in National Parks has turned concerns on sustainability and sustainable tourism into projects that have brought huge benefits to the local community and visitors, and helped to grow the local tourism economy. In January 2013, Government invited Local Authorities in partnership with National Parks to bid for a share of £17m for cycling in national parks grants. Six National Parks received funding up to 2015 to support improvements in cycling infrastructure to enable more people to cycle in and around National parks. The projects worked across boundaries, sectors and professions: partnership and collaboration between Government, Local Authorities and their neighbouring authorities, cycle NGOs, and local business leaders delivered cycling improvements in National Parks.

38. A number of rural places – from Ironbridge Gorge to the Dorset and East Devon Coast - have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. World Heritage Site Status brings additional responsibilities in terms of planning and development, as well as attracting new
visitors. This year, the Government has nominated the Lake District for inscription, which if successful will be the UK’s 31st World Heritage Site (details of other WHS in the UK and its overseas territories are here). The role of tourism in the stewardship of these rural sites is a powerful mechanism for the preservation of environment, as well as providing a boost to the local economy.

39. Along with National Parks and AONBs, World Heritage Sites have the highest level of protection that planning policy can provide, but the principles of balance are applied throughout England. High quality, distinctive and accessible landscapes, and unique, attractive old towns and villages are the cornerstone of the English rural tourism offer, and planning has to consider the protection of landscape, heritage assets, the natural environment and local residents’ quality of life alongside the needs of tourism, transport and rural business.

40. This successful balance is showcased by the DfT’s support for Community Rail Lines, some of which run through National Parks and facilitate access and tourism. Sensitive integration into the local environment and a continuing balance and focus on sustainable tourism is maintained by the National Parks representation as part of the Community Rail Partnership. Other initiatives seek to attract visitors to rural areas and communities: encouraging rural rail and bike travel means looking again at regulations that constrain the carriage of bikes on train. Research by the Transport Research Laboratory into joint bike/rail journeys is expected to provide new insights in this area.

41. Forest and woodlands, a key part of the rural landscape and an archetypal national inheritance kept in trust for the UK, are both popular destinations as visitor attractions, particularly for domestic tourists. Managed by the Forestry Commission (FC), the Public Forest Estate covers 200,000 ha of woods and forests in England, much of which is in important landscapes or, like the New Forest or Forest of Dean, provides inspiring backdrops to iconic tourism destinations. As well as managing 25 sites as high quality visitor attractions, the Forestry Commission estimates that over 70 million visits are made to its land each year.

Infrastructure and skills

What measures are needed to ensure transport, housing and other infrastructure meets visitor needs? How can the sector ensure there are enough people with the right skills to support customers and businesses?

Skills

42. English tourism grows by utilising the skills and experience of a diverse workforce. We have heard the tourism industry’s concerns since the Referendum about the significance of EU nationals in the tourism workforce, and their role in successful enterprises. We are committed to working with the sector to ensure that those concerns are explored and considered as the EU develops its stance on exit negotiations.
43. In July 2015, the Government set out its commitment to support the tourism industry as it recruits, mentors, and trains the right staff to make businesses work and communities flourish; and reaffirmed this commitment in August with the new Tourism Action Plan. We know that recruitment is not always easy, and that businesses in rural areas are more likely than businesses in urban areas to have to outsource work, withdraw from markets, and experience delays in developing new products and services. Demand for staff in some sectors and regions - such as catering staff in coastal towns - can outstrip supply. We need to know more about the landscape, and projects such as the National Coastal Tourism Academy, funded by DCLG’s Coastal Communities Fund, are developing research on what is needed to improve employment on the coast.

44. One of the opportunities inherent in the UK’s departure from the EU is for UK investment in employment and skills, particularly for young people. The tourism industry is a significant employer of 18-24 year olds and Government is committed to working with it to develop the next generation of tourism professionals. We are driving the growth of youth skills and employment through Apprenticeships, and are committed to three million apprenticeship starts in this Parliament:

- The Government’s Rural Productivity Plan has a commitment to increase apprenticeships in rural areas, including by tripling apprenticeships in food and farming and by helping small tourism businesses to provide more high quality apprenticeships.

- DCLG is addressing the particular requirements of coastal tourism with 6,000 training places in coastal towns, along with the Apprenticeship Training Agency that is operating under Cornwall’s Devolution Deal.

- In National Parks, new Apprenticeship Standards are being created by employer-led Trailblazers, and the National Parks 8 Point Plan, published earlier this year, will develop three new apprenticeship standards in countryside and land management, rural tourism, and built heritage conservation. The Plan also sets an ambition to double the number of apprenticeships in National Park Authorities by 2020.

- The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) is developing an apprenticeship scheme to encourage a new younger generation to support local tourist rail lines.

45. Tourism has particular fluctuations in seasonality, which have made standard 12 month apprenticeship periods difficult, particularly for small businesses in rural areas. To tackle this, DfE and the Skills Funding Agency have been working with the hospitality and tourism sector, including companies such as PGL, TUI, Merlin Entertainments, Monarch Airlines, and Parkdean Holidays, to develop a 12 month apprenticeship which allows a four to six month gap in employment, and is completed over a period of 16-18 months. The pilot started this year with a plan for 500 apprenticeship starts.
46. Perceptions of the tourism industry are also important for those considering it as a career. DCMS is working through the Tourism Industry Council to address a perceptions problem that tourism is not a ‘career’, which hampers young people joining and remaining in the tourism industry. The #mytourismjob communications campaign seeks to encourage more people to consider tourism as a career option, with particular emphasis on professionalisation.

47. The Tourism Industry Council advises Government and includes representatives from attractions, heritage, hospitality, accommodation, aviation and transport, and large and small businesses marketing services for inbound and outbound visitors. Many, such as West Dorset Leisure Holidays, CLA, National Tourism Coastal Academy, Parkdean Holidays, and the National Trust, have a rural or part-rural remit which integrates rural issues into work on jobs and skills and many other cross-cutting issues for the tourism industry. The Council will have an important role in informing the Government’s negotiating position on Brexit, and the development of the UK’s new Industrial Strategy - and considering the rural tourism issues that run through both.

48. DCMS continues to work across Government and industry to enhance links between employers, schools and colleges, but we recognise that there is more to be done. We will be working with the Careers & Enterprise Company, which brokers relationships between employers, schools and colleges, and enterprise activities to give young people a better introduction to work. It has distributed £9.5m of funding - including the initial £5m Government grant - to careers and enterprise programmes across the UK. Our aim is to help the Careers & Enterprise Company to develop contact with the tourism industry, and to add a tourism careers theme to programmes that help young people identify their own skills and career path, with particular focus on the areas of greatest need, which includes coastal communities.

Infrastructure
49. Transport is addressed in the Access section of this submission.

50. The infrastructure that visitors want in order to enjoy a visit to the countryside or coast is surveyed by VisitBritain and identifies many similarities with the demands of local communities and businesses: good roads, integrated public transport, reliable and high speed broadband, plentiful and well regulated accommodation, and good quality and choice.

51. DCLG is providing £80.5m in 2016-17 and £65m in 2017-18 to recognise the particular costs of providing services in sparse rural areas. This additional funding improves the position of rural areas: from 2015-16 to 2019-20, the area spending power per dwelling will increase 0.3% in rural areas compared to a 0.7% reduction for urban areas. The gap between urban and rural councils has reduced by £200 million over the last three years and will continue to reduce over the Spending Review period.
52. Investment in broadband is essential. Reliable, fast broadband and mobile connections assist tourism providers in marketing and managing their businesses, and visitors in planning where to go and what to do, both before and during their visit. This is the platform by which most tourism product is now advertised, sold and reviewed. Standard broadband of at least 2Mbps was made available to everyone by the end of 2015, and Government is investing over £780m to make superfast broadband available to 95% of UK premises by 2017. At Budget 2016, £14.5m in grants were announced to extend ultrafast broadband coverage to the South-West. The Government is also working to introduce a Universal Service Obligation by 2020 which will give everyone the legal right to broadband speeds of at least 10Mbps.

53. Government is also supporting rural tourism by supporting local communities and housing. Tourism enterprises can find it difficult to fill posts or apprenticeships, and shortages are exacerbated when businesses and attractions are in remote areas that can be difficult to reach by public transport, or are in places where housing is expensive. The Government is committed to addressing the national demand for affordable housing, including in rural areas, and over 85,000 affordable homes have been provided in rural local authorities in England between April 2010 and March 2015. The new Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme (SOAHP) prospectus was published on 13 April 2016.

**Local environment and character**

**How can national and local policies get the right balance between growing tourism and enhancing the local environment and character?**

54. The Government does not consider that growing tourism and supporting the enhancement of local environment and character are inherently antithetical: in fact, there is much that is mutually beneficial. Enhancing the local environment is integral to growing tourism. We are proud of our countryside and coast, and deeply aware of the responsibility for its continuing care and protection for future generations. We know that the beauty of our natural landscapes and National Parks is an attraction for international visitors, and that visits support rural tourism economies and innovation in tourism services.

55. Distinctive landscape character which incorporates visual attractiveness and natural and cultural heritage is a valuable asset and a key UK tourism brand, supported and marketed by the Countryside is GREAT campaign. This three-year long campaign was launched at the beginning of 2015 with £3m, and focuses on the Peak District, the Cotswolds, Warwickshire, Yorkshire, Cornwall, Scottish Highlands, North Wales, and Pembrokeshire. It aims to attract more international visitors to the UK’s rural and coastal regions, and to increase visitor spend by up to £70m. Greater prosperity also means job growth, with up to 1,296 new jobs expected throughout the UK as a result of the campaign.
56. There is also an important role for local planning (as described in the Planning and Regulation section of this submission) in balancing the drivers of development with the needs of the countryside. Earlier this year, DCLG and Defra issued a joint Call for Evidence, as part of the Rural Planning Review. This provided an opportunity for respondents to make suggestions on how the planning system could better support businesses in rural areas. The Government is also considering the need for specific changes to the National Planning Policy Framework in order to deliver key commitments to increase housing supply and home ownership. Following consultation in December 2015, Ministers are considering these proposed changes and other housing and planning proposals, and whether changes to the Framework are needed.

57. But underpinning the rural tourism offer is the landscapes themselves, which are looked after by farmers, woodland managers, and land agents. Investment here is essential. Under the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), the Countryside Stewardship agri-environment scheme incentivises the sympathetic management of land in a way that is consistent with, and enhancing of, landscape character. Local landscape priorities are reflected in the ‘statements of priorities’ for each Natural Character Area in England. Countryside stewardship is a competitive scheme, and farmers and land managers are advised that if they include options that address the relevant priorities on their land, they will increase their chances of being offered an agreement.

58. There is still room to improve awareness and perceptions of and broaden markets. VisitBritain notes that in the 2015 GfK Anholt Nation Brand Index, Britain is ranked in third place globally for the strength of its whole national brand, but is in only 18th place for its natural beauty. So there is more to do to tell the world about British landscapes and the tourism offer that allows visitors to enjoy them.

59. We are also working to broaden markets and encourage more international visitors to visit the countryside or coast during their stay. This likelihood of this varies by nationality. In 2015, 33% of New Zealanders and 25% of Australians visited the coast during their stay, whilst only 16% of Chinese visitors and 18% of German visitors did so. We want to encourage more visitors to the UK, and more visitors outside London, so that the local impact - both environmental and economic - is shared across England. It is the co-ordination of policy across government departments which allows us to get the most from our resource and, where appropriate, draw out benefits for both tourism and the local environment.

60. The Government’s £40m Discover England Fund (DEF) is funded with the intention of funding schemes that:

- grow tourism in the regions of England
- increase the competitiveness of England’s tourism offer, domestically and internationally
develop world-class bookable tourism products in line with market trends and in response to consumer demands

61. The DEF aims to spread both tourism and its impact across the UK, by exposing new locations, themes and itineraries for visitors. Bids in the first round came from across England and included themes around gardens, food and drink, coast, culture, business visits and events, transport and regional gateways, canals and rivers, mountain biking and cycling, golf and music festivals. The DEF considers how bids identify and tackle a clear challenge with a high-quality, customer-centric solution: but in the second tranche of bids it will also explicitly ask bidders to work across destination organisations and LEP boundaries to ensure local characteristics are taken into account.

62. As noted in the Planning and Regulation section of this submission, the UK and overseas territories has 30 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including 15 in England. World Heritage Sites are selected on the basis of having cultural, historical, scientific or some other form of significance, and are legally protected by international treaties. UNESCO regards these sites as being important to the collective interests of humanity. The UK sites are therefore the primary illustration of the need to manage tourism in ways that protect the unique environment at each site, whilst allowing visitors to enjoy the UK’s heritage and to support the local economy at those sites. The UK National Commission to UNESCO surveyed 22 of the UK WH sites and estimated that in 2014-15 an estimated £85m was generated from their association with UNESCO.

63. Heritage and museums are also an important part of tourism in rural areas, and the Government is enthusiastic about providing support and funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund for imaginative projects that support both tourism and heritage and have a low impact on local environment and character. DCMS and HLF funding last year helped the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) to launch its Gateway church tourism programme, which has improved the quality of visitor information and facilities in its historic churches in several rural towns, including Sandwich in Kent.

64. The CCT has recently launched church camping (‘champing’) which is marketed as ‘slow tourism’ and is extending the use of rural heritage assets for tourism. Champing helps to preserve and fund the upkeep of rural churches in beautiful locations, but also supports rural businesses including pubs and food providers, and promotes the local countryside. CCT’s Saints and Sinners programme in several rural counties partners with rural pubs to promote church visiting as part of a walk or cycle and pub lunch package. Projects such as these mean that developing tourism provides the means of protecting the integrity of local heritage and landscape - and similar innovative and sensitive approaches are at the heart of policy making and funding.
65. Arts Council England (ACE) recognises the strength of arts and culture in England’s rural communities, and the role it can play in diversifying rural economies, supporting tourism, and creating communities. The 2015/16 Taking Part survey shows that arts engagement and heritage visits were more frequent in rural areas than urban areas. We are interested in getting every bit of value from funding provided in the arts and culture sector to develop this, including the £45m Strategic Touring programme and the £37m Creative People and Places Fund, both of which are opening opportunities for engagement in rural areas.

66. Making policy which balances the growth of tourism with enhancing local environment and character is underpinned by a co-ordination of work in a shared national vision by government departments and the charity and private sectors. The Countryside is GREAT campaign, for example, is run by VisitBritain, alongside National Parks England, Hertz Cars, the Canal and River Trust, national tourist boards, Defra and DCMS. We want to encourage this type of success, and have made it a requirement of the Discover England Fund that bidders demonstrate that their project has the support of a group of public/private partners, destination organisations, and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

**Defra role**

**What more should the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs do to ensure government departments (including Departments for Communities and Local Government; Business Innovation and Skills; Culture, Media & Sport, and HM Treasury) do to support rural tourism?**

67. DCMS is the lead government department for tourism, providing a co-ordination of approach by government departments on tourism and rural tourism work. This provides a clearer understanding of how the range of policies and programmes can complement each other and provide the best solutions and support for the rural tourism sector. Defra also has a major role to play in leading policy for food, farming and rural affairs, which are integral to rural tourism, and the co-ordination of agencies and bodies supporting the stewardship of the coast and countryside.

68. Following Lord Cameron’s review of rural proofing, the Government’s response set out a number of steps to ensure the mainstreaming of rural issues into the work of other government departments. As part of the Government’s response, Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Defra’s Minister for Rural Affairs, has been appointed to the role of Rural Ambassador. The Rural Ambassador will have a key role in working across Government to champion rural issues, including tourism and its role in supporting the rural economy. The role will also involve working with rural stakeholder groups, communities and businesses in order to hear about the issues that really matter to them.
69. Transport, housing, broadband, skills, regulation and sustainability are clearly critical parts of the way that Government supports not only English communities but also local tourism industries. We want to make sure that policy marches in step, and that progress is predicated on a clear-sighted understanding of the whole picture and a sensible approach to prioritisation and allocation of resources. Defra will continue to work with government departments to encourage the mainstreaming of rural issues into policies and programmes, so that the requirements and characteristics of countryside and coast are integrated into everyday policy and decision making.

70. The Government is committed to driving up rural growth and productivity and boosting rural tourism and employment. As with so many aspects of our lives in the UK, rural tourism and rural policy will be affected by the UK’s exit from the European Union, but it also has a role in maintaining international confidence in the UK. Tourism has always been a powerful advocate for the UK and its place in the world, and the role of showcasing our culture, heritage, trade, and our optimism for the future has never been more important.

71. As noted in the introduction to this submission, the latest statistics from the Office of National Statistics for July 2016 highlight the sector’s resilience, and its response to the challenges and opportunities of the Referendum decision. The unexpected weakening of the pound created a stimulus to both domestic and international visitors, and the tourism industry was able to respond quickly and with agility.

72. The Government is now consulting and working with the tourism industry on ways which together lock in that boost of success, and build with confidence on the opportunities that renegotiating our engagement and trade with the world will bring. We will have opportunities that have not been available to other generations, and it is in drawing on the experience and expertise of rural tourism enterprises that Government will shape a successful future for the industry. Leaving the EU will bring new impetus to some existing initiatives, and the energy to change and develop other new ideas. This is a context in which rural, coastal and urban tourism industries can all flourish.

73. We need to work with each other to achieve this, and that is exactly what Government is committed to doing.

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