

North East to lead project to boost tourism economy through big events

The North East is to spearhead a national tourism programme that aims to create jobs and bring major sporting and cultural events to the UK.

The Government is looking to streamline the dozens of destination management organisations that currently promote the UK on the global stage with plans to give accreditation and funding to a small number of DMOs in each part of the country.

A pilot project will see £2.25m given to NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI), Visit Northumberland and Visit County Durham to develop and market the region as a “must-visit” destination, as well as attracting private investment and driving growth in the tourism sector.

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The aim of the project is to extend the tourism season and attract more visitors through big events such as the Commonwealth Games, which were held in Birmingham this summer, or the initial stages of the Tour de France being held in Yorkshire in 2015. It's hoped that tourism boards in the North East will be able to build on existing assets such as the region's Unesco world heritage sites, the Northumberland dark skies forest and the county's beaches and National Park.

Tourism Minister Stuart Andrew said: “From Hadrian's Wall to Durham Cathedral and the bright lights of Newcastle, the North East has much to offer tourists from around the world, but we want to go further and attract even more visitors.



Sycamore Gap near Milecastle 39, between Steel Rigg and Housesteads, on Hadrian's Wall, Northumberland National Park, England

"We are looking at what more we can do to streamline the way the region's tourism bodies work together, improve the region's offer and the way it markets itself.

"With £2.25m in funding, we hope the North East can be a pioneer for other areas in unlocking its potential and putting its best foot forward."

Sarah Green, CEO of the NewcastleGateshead Initiative said: "As the first Destination Development Partnership, we will work with our partners in Visit County Durham and Visit Northumberland to ensure the tourism sector is supported and grows across all seven local authorities in the region. Our region will act as a blueprint for the rest of England.

"From Auckland Castle to Alwick Gardens, from dark skies to sparkly venues, from fish and chips to fine dining – the aim of this partnership is to provide an inclusive welcome for all, attracting more international and domestic visitors with a fantastic regional offer and visitor experience."

Henry Kippin, chief executive of the North of Tyne Combined Authority, said: "This funding will play a critical role in the growth of our regional visitor economy, providing visitors with the best experience and supporting tourism and hospitality businesses to thrive.

"Our region's ability to work collaboratively to deliver a shared vision will ensure our destination remains sustainable, competitive, and responsive to challenges such as skills, accessibility, sustainability, and levelling up. It will strengthen our combined offer as a region and build on our ambitions for an inclusive and dynamic economy, creating jobs, opportunities, and unique visitor experiences for all.

“On behalf of North of Tyne and our local authorities, we look forward to working in partnership to drive inclusive growth across the visitor economy.”

The aims of the project include plans to help businesses create sustainable tourism offerings, reduce their carbon footprint and offer consumers opportunities to enjoy themselves while minimising their impact on the environment.

The North East tourism industry was becoming an increasingly important part of the regional economy before Covid, supporting tens of thousands of jobs and being worth an estimated £5bn in 2019.

The region’s tourism businesses have been recovering from the pandemic over the last year, backed by influential publications like the Rough Guides, which named Newcastle among its top “second cities” in the world, and published a dedicated guide to the region.

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