

New plan to drive rapid recovery of tourism sector

- Tourism Recovery Plan to help sector build back better from the pandemic
- Plan aims to recover domestic tourism to pre pandemic levels by 2022 and international tourism by 2023 – both at least a year faster than independent forecasts predict
- New initiatives to boost tourism include £10 million National Lottery Days Out scheme to support attractions and a new rail pass to encourage domestic breaks

A new rail pass and vouchers for popular tourist attractions are at the heart of a plan to return domestic tourism to pre-pandemic levels by 2022 and international tourism by 2023.

A £10 million voucher scheme will be launched by The National Lottery this autumn to encourage trips beyond the peak summer season, with players having the chance to claim vouchers to redeem at tourist attractions across the UK between September 2021 and March 2022.

A rail pass for “staycationers” will be launched later this year, helping to make it easier and more sustainable for domestic tourists to get around the country. The new pass will build on the success of the BritRail pass, which is sold through VisitBritain and currently gives international visitors flexible travel across the country, as well as providing discounted entry to tourism attractions.

There will be a new focus on technology and data. The government will explore how tourism data collected at the border can support the sector and we will look to create a tourism data hub to give the sector access to robust, accessible and timely data. The hub could track consumer trends in travel, such as the growth in “active tourism” such as watersports and hiking, and booking of sustainable tourism experiences. The data gathered will help inform policy and marketing whilst working to improve visitor experience.

The government will develop a Sustainable Tourism Plan later this year to put the UK at the forefront of the global discussion on sustainable travel. This will look at further measures to reduce the impact of tourism on our environment whilst balancing the needs of local communities with the economic benefits generated by tourism. The Plan will build on the significant investments in sustainable tourism already underway, such as the completion of the England Coast Path – the longest of its type in the world – and the almost £1 billion investment in electric vehicle charging hubs at service stations.

Pre-pandemic, England looked set to hit 100 million domestic overnight trips in 2020. In 2019, 41 million international visitors came to the UK for business or leisure, spending over £28 billion whilst here and putting the UK in the top 5 countries globally for inbound visitor spending.

However the sector has been hugely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with cities amongst the most impacted areas. £19 million has also been earmarked for marketing campaigns to promote cities and towns across the country, with a £5.5 million domestic campaign already underway.

The Government has acted to protect jobs and businesses in the tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors, which have received over £25 billion in the form of grants, loans and tax breaks, including £5 billion in VAT cuts.

The government will also launch a consultation on the introduction of a Tourist Accommodation Registration Scheme in England. This will consider the benefits of the rise of short term holiday rentals in attracting tourists to destinations across the country and contributing to the English tourism economy, as well as its impact on local economies and communities. The consultation will help us target further government interventions in the future and create an improved national picture of the precise shape of the accommodation landscape which could feed into a wider Data Hub.

The plan also looks ahead to 2022: a massive year for the UK showcasing the nation on the world stage with a triumvirate of major events. Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Festival UK 2022 and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will promote the very best of Britain at home and abroad. An additional bank holiday for the Queen's Jubilee will provide a further boost for tourism and hospitality while a £24 million Business and Tourism Programme will run alongside the Commonwealth Games to promote Birmingham, the West Midlands and the UK.

The government is determined to level-up the country and to ensure that every region is reaching its full potential. A root and branch review of how tourism at a regional and local level is funded and supported is already underway, focusing on the important role played by Destination Management Organisations, and will report in the summer.

Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston MP said:

Our brilliant tourism sector is one of our country's greatest assets, making a huge contribution to our economy and delivering jobs across all communities. This is why we've provided it with £25 billion in support so far during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Tourism Recovery Plan is our blueprint for how the sector can build back better from the pandemic, even faster than forecasts predict. It's been a challenging year for the tourism sector, especially for our cities, but I know they stand ready to welcome visitors back and I encourage everyone to rediscover the UK's fantastic tourism offer.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart MP said:

Wales has so much to offer visitors, and tourism is key to our economy. Throughout the past year the UK Government has provided this vital sector with necessary support to ensure it builds back

even stronger than before the pandemic. Measures announced today that apply in Wales show the UK Government is delivering for one of the sectors that has been hardest hit.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis MP said:

Whether you are visiting the stunning Mourne mountains, the dark hedges, touring filming locations of the Game of Thrones or enjoying the award-winning food and drink, Northern Ireland's culture is rich, with local towns and cities filled with history, literature and digital innovation.

Today's announcement of the Tourism Recovery Plan is fantastic news, by working with and supporting local businesses, we can showcase the best of Northern Ireland on a global scale. Ensuring we build back better across the country, creating jobs, supporting creativity and economic growth following the pandemic.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart MP said:

"Tourism is a cornerstone of Scotland's economy, so it's fantastic that this ambitious UK Government plan is helping the sector recover.

"Scotland has a huge amount to offer tourists, from our vibrant cities to our spectacular scenery. The launch of a new rail pass will encourage people from across the UK to come and explore our beautiful country while giving the tourism and hospitality sectors a much-needed boost."

Additional quotes

VisitBritain/VisitEngland chairman Lord Patrick McLoughlin said:

The UK Government's Tourism Recovery Plan is a welcome and important step on the industry's road to recovery, recognising the economic potential of the sector, setting out a clear policy direction for the future and outlining the ambitions for domestic and international tourism.

Tourism is a critical industry, a powerhouse of innovation, creativity and employment, injecting cash into the economy with a track record for growth and levelling-up, supporting local economies in every part of the UK and strengthening our place on the world stage.

By working together to drive demand and build back visitor spend as quickly as possible we can emerge from the pandemic and also look towards a brighter future building an industry that is more resilient, sustainable, inclusive and innovative.

Our spending review bid this year will seek to support the plan's ambitions and to build on the successful projects we have been running, working with the UK Government and across the industry to cement the recovery and the future of one of this country's greatest industries.

Kate Nicholls, Chief Executive Officer, UK Hospitality, said:

The Tourism Recovery Plan is a hugely positive and welcome recognition of the social, economic and cultural importance of the hospitality and tourism sector. It is not only our third largest export earner but also domestically it delivers jobs, growth and investment at pace and scale in communities across the UK. This strategic plan will not only expedite hospitality's recovery but also the national recovery post COVID. We look forward to working collaboratively across Government departments, to help build resilience and international competitiveness and catalyse cultural and economic renaissance.

Michael Hirst OBE, Chairman, Events Industry Board, said:

Meetings and conferences, exhibitions and trade shows are crucial to the UK's recovery in showcasing innovation, growing international visitors, attracting inward investment and creating jobs. We are delighted to see this recognised within the Recovery Plan which includes expansion of VisitBritain's support programmes to include a UK-wide domestic fund, greater cross Whitehall working and enhanced Ministerial advocacy support plus elements related to sustainability, skills and accessibility. We are committed to working with government to ensure the UK retains and enhances its position as a leading European nation for hosting business events.

Amanda Cupples, General Manager for Northern Europe at Airbnb, said:

Airbnb is preparing for what we believe will be the travel rebound of the century and we want to work with the Government to help everyone benefit. Clear rules to back Britain's hospitality entrepreneurs will accelerate the recovery of tourism and support local families and communities. We have worked with communities across the UK on proposals for a tourism accommodation register and we are delighted to see the Government take this work forward. We will continue to work with everyone to support the recovery of tourism and help the UK to build back better.

Simon Vincent, Hilton President for Europe, Middle East and Africa, said:

The hospitality and tourism sector has faced unique challenges during the pandemic so we welcome this plan which provides much needed focus and support to aid the recovery. Crucially it recognises the critical role our sector will play in creating jobs and helping communities across the UK build back faster and better.

As an industry we look forward to working alongside Government Departments to deliver the Tourism Recovery Plan, creating thousands of jobs, investing in communities, and showcasing the world beating attractions the UK has to offer – while shaping the new era of sustainable travel together.

Notes to editors:

For more information on where to visit this summer see: