

Press release: Government signals intention to secure tourism sector deal

Speaking to the Tourism Industry Council, made up of leading members of the tourism industry and government, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Jeremy Wright confirmed the Government will begin negotiations with the sector on an ambitious Industrial Strategy sector deal that will benefit the whole country.

As part of this process, he has called upon the industry to respond with a renewed commitment to promote its offer throughout the year, not just in the peak summer months, and increase clear career paths.

The sector has been asked to look at the key themes of:

- Making tourism and hospitality a career for life
- Making the UK the most accessible tourism industry in the world
- Sharing industry data to identify growth opportunities in new and emerging markets
- Increasing accommodation capacity

The announcement follows an initial proposal submitted by tourism industry leaders, led by Steve Ridgway, Chair of the British Tourist Authority. It also comes as the Government marks one year since the launch of its modern Industrial Strategy, which aims to boost productivity by backing businesses to create good jobs and increase the earning power of people throughout the UK with investment in skills, industries and infrastructure.

Jeremy Wright, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

The tourism industry is one of the UK's most successful exports. Every time a leisure or business traveller chooses to visit, it brings investment in our economy and supports jobs across the country. But we are in a competitive global market and we need to be ambitious to maintain the fantastic growth we have seen in recent years.

I want to make sure that we continue to attract visitors to all parts of the UK throughout the year, who are welcomed by a highly-trained and highly-motivated workforce.

A Sector Deal is a way to deliver this, and the industry have put forward some strong ideas to Government. We are ready to formally negotiate on a deal which can boost productivity in this crucial sector.

I want to achieve the best deal possible for tourism and know that the industry will respond with renewed energy to achieve this.

UK tourism is now worth over £66 billion a year to the economy. The sector employs 1.6 million people, covering beaches and activity parks, to hundreds of thousands of heritage sites.

Annual statistics released in July revealed that a record-breaking 39.2 million visits were made by overseas tourists to the UK in 2017, with the latest domestic tourism figures showing that residents across Great Britain took a total of 120.7 million overnight visits to destinations in England, Scotland and Wales in 2017.

There are more than 11 million disabled people in the UK with a combined spending power of their households, 'the purple pound', standing at around £250 billion. There are a number of business benefits for ensuring that disabled people's needs are catered for – from improved training on disability awareness for staff to adaptations to ensure facilities are accessible.

A potential tourism sector deal is an opportunity for driving change, through workforce development and consequent productivity gains, resulting in perception changes of hospitality and tourism as a career for life.

British Tourist Authority Chair Steve Ridgway CBE, former Chief Executive of Virgin Atlantic Airways, who is leading the UK tourism industry's bid for a sector deal under the UK Government's Industrial Strategy said:

Tourism is an economic powerhouse, a growing industry with huge potential to scale-up productivity, so it is very welcome news that an official negotiation for a sector deal has today been confirmed by the UK Government.

Securing this deal will be a game-changer for the industry, spelling a step-change in how we underpin the success of tourism for a generation, fixing issues from skills and productivity to extending the season year-round and building stronger tourism destinations up and down the country. And it will be a game-changer for the economy with a sector deal growing the value of the industry and increasing employment in tourism.

One of the UK's most valuable export industries, tourism needs no trade deals to attract overseas investment. It is also a fiercely competitive global industry and a sector deal moves tourism right up the UK Government's agenda as a priority for future economic planning, ensuring we continue to compete as a world-class destination for all visitors.

The Secretary of State also challenged the tourism industry to use the sector deal negotiations as an opportunity to deliver more collaborative data

sharing with VisitBritain, around visitor figures, behaviours and audience analysis. This is to help take a more strategic approach to promotional activity and a more united approach to environmental protection.

Notes to Editor:

Negotiations will take place between Government and the Sector, following the meeting of the Tourism Industry Council today.

In 2017, EU member states accounted for 75% of the 72 million visits abroad by UK residents and 65% of the UK's 39 million inbound visits were from EU residents.

Six sector deals between Government and industry have been published over the past year – from construction and automotive, to nuclear and the creative industries, including £1.9 billion of investment in life sciences and £1 billion for artificial intelligence. Sector deals are designed to attract investment and growth, and ensure we have the skilled, diverse workforce we need for the future.

Sources of latest tourism figures:

[ONS Travel Trends 2017](#)

[Visit Britain GB Tourist Annual Report 2017](#)