

New partnership aims to provide valuable boost for tourism sector

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Torbay's tourism and hospitality businesses have been given a major boost with the formation of a new partnership.

Visit England has announced that Devon and partners have achieved a new Local Visitor Economy Partnership accreditation for the county.

The status will support a collaboration of local authorities and organisations, including the English Riviera BID Company, to promote and manage the growth of Devon's local visitor economy.

The new LVEP will become part of the national programme managed by Visit England. This portfolio of nationally supported, strategic, and high-performing organisations will provide local leadership in tourism destinations all over the country.

The bid for accreditation was led by Torbay-based Vince Flower, chair of Visit Devon, plus partners from across the county including Destination Plymouth, Visit Devon and the ERBID Company with funding support from the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership.

Tourism and the wider visitor economy is worth £1.6 billion annually to the Devon economy, supporting over 50,000 jobs (nine per cent of employment).

It is estimated that the new structure will enable additional growth in the sector of over £300 million annually going forwards.

The LVEP application, which was submitted in February, was developed through extensive consultation with tourism businesses and local authority partners in the county, facilitated by Tomorrow's Tourism Ltd, led by Richard Dickinson.

The application was approved by a panel of experts at Visit England and visitor economy policymakers at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.



Devon and partners including the ERBID Company led by chief executive Carolyn Custerson, bottom left, and Vince Flower, second right, as they clinch the tourism deal

Devon County Council will take on the formal role of 'Accountable body' for the LVEP while Amanda Lumley, CEO at Destination Plymouth will act as key contact with Visit England.

Andrew Stokes, director at VisitEngland, said: "The Local Visitor Economy Partnerships programme is transforming the visitor economy landscape in England, supporting its growth in a more inclusive, accessible and sustainable way and I am delighted to welcome this new LVEP.

"Working together, the LVEPs are simplifying our tourism landscape, ensuring England continues to be a

compelling destination for both domestic and international visitors. As Devon is established as an LVEP, VisitEngland will provide ongoing support including a dedicated regional lead."

Mr Flower said: "We are excited to announce a significant milestone today, with heartfelt thanks to all who contributed, fostering tremendous support during the application process.

"This application's development benefited from seven months of partnership working, involving input from various organisations, interviews with senior stakeholders,

an industry survey with 250 responses, workshops, and discussions with partners in Devon. This development marks a strategic leap forward for Devon, and we look forward to collaborating with partners across the region to ensure its success.

"Special thanks to Tomorrow's Tourism Ltd for their invaluable assistance. Achieving LVEP status opens doors to national development and marketing opportunities with Visit England, potentially unlocking future funding for initiatives. Crucially, it establishes a trusted lead for the visitor economy,

aligning efforts for sustained regional growth."

Chris Hart, chair of the ER BID Company, said: "We are absolutely delighted that the Devon and Partners LVEP application has been successful and are looking forward very much to continuing to work in partnership to promote the Devon brand worldwide and improve our customer experience.

"Our thanks go to everyone involved to make this milestone happen which will facilitate rebuilding our hugely valuable visitor economy."

"The English Riviera BID Company has very much enjoyed being part of the LVEP development process and will continue to play an active part in the long term as we start a very exciting new era for tourism across Devon."

Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS) results published last September showed that Brits spent a total of £5.3 billion overall on domestic overnight tourism trips in England from January to March 2023, up three per cent compared to the same period last year when they spent £5.2 billion.

Brits took 20.3 million overnight tourism trips in England in the first three months of 2023, down eight per cent on the same period in 2022, when there were 21.9 million overnight tourism trips.

The English Riviera attracts 4.5m visitors a year, generating £435m to the economy, with over 1,000 businesses employing nearly 12,000 people locally.

About 20 per cent of Torbay's population work in the tourism sector.

As a premier resort, the destination has leading and internationally recognised tourism businesses such as the world's number one B&B, voted for two consecutive years in the TripAdvisor Excellence Awards, as well as many businesses winning in regional and national tourism awards.

New-look leisure centre opens at holiday park

Leading holiday home and park company Haulfryn has announced the launch of a new-look £3.4 million leisure facility centre at its Devon Hills Holiday Park in Paignton.

The Hive Leisure Club & Café opened on Saturday, April 13 and features a fully equipped gym suite, a fully licensed café, convenience shop, an 18-metre indoor swimming pool with a sauna and also a steam room.

The site's reception and sales office has been relocated to the same building, making The Hive Leisure Club & Café the focal point at Devon Hills Holiday Park.

Due to a serious fire, the popular site closed its former leisure com-



The Hive Leisure Club & Café opened on Saturday

plex in autumn 2022 and the park has temporarily been without those facilities since.

The new-look gym features a range of free weights, cardio, virtual PT classes, weight machines and yoga and Pilates kit, which should appeal to those with fitness in mind.

Post workout, the fully licensed café will be serving up a range of food and beverage options for breakfast, lunch and dinner, such as pastries, fish and chips, rice boxes, salads, and pizza as well as a takeaway offering.

It's open from 8am through to late, with lunch and dinner served from 12pm.

Chief executive officer of Haulfryn Group Limited, Bobby McGhee,

said: "At Haulfryn, we are all absolutely dedicated to ensuring that all facilities and grounds offer an exceptional experience for our much-valued guests, owners and local community.

"The Hive Leisure Club & Café will not only elevate the overall enjoyment on-site but will also foster a sense of wellbeing and community."

He added: "We are delighted to throw open our doors, and access to these facilities to the local community, and to restart our popular memberships within the new, modern spaces.

"Locals are also most welcome at The Hive Café which is fully licensed so perfect for catch-ups."