

ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN

Vision

To harness the growing, high value accessible tourism market to become internationally recognised as a leading destination for people with access needs. This will contribute to 5% growth, year on year, in the England tourism market by 2020.

Objectives

1. To motivate tourism businesses across all sectors to improve accessibility.
2. To improve and develop tourism products across all sectors to meet the requirements of people with access needs by:
 - a. *Ensuring staff are access aware and have the key skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of people with access needs.*
 - b. *Providing information on the accessibility of facilities and services that is detailed, accurate and readily available to enable people with access needs to make an informed choice.*
 - c. *Improving facilities and making reasonable adjustments as per the Equality Act 2010 for people with access needs.*
3. To increase consumer awareness of accessibility initiatives and the accessibility of tourism products.

What is Accessible Tourism?

This Action Plan defines accessible tourism as tourism experiences that can be enjoyed by people with impairments and others with physical and sensory access needs.

For a tourism business, organisation or destination to be truly accessible three aspects must be addressed:

1. Facilities
2. Customer Service
3. Information

The core market for accessible tourism is disabled people, such as those with hearing impairment, visual impairment and wheelchair users. However, many people have access needs including those who are older and less mobile, learning impaired, have broken limbs and people with pushchairs and suitcases.

Why take action on Accessible Tourism?

The market for accessible tourism is significant. In 2009, over 11 million overnight trips were made in England by UK residents who have a health condition or impairment and their travelling companions (source: United Kingdom Tourism Survey 2009). Almost half a million people with a health condition or impairment visit England from abroad each year (source: International Passenger Survey 2010 – provisional figures). Tourists who have a health condition or impairment, and their travelling companions, spend well over £2 billion each year in England (source: UKTS 2009 and IPS 2010).

An estimated 11 million people in England are disabled (source: Health Survey for England 2001), almost one in five people, many of whom have the desire and means to travel. More than one in ten domestic overnight trips in England in 2009 included someone who had a health condition or impairment. This equated to 11 million trips (source: UKTS 2009).

This relatively untapped market presents a huge growth opportunity. Almost 50% of UK residents with a limiting disability do not take a holiday that lasts at least a week each year (source: Taking Part Survey – Department for Culture, Media and Sport).

Much has been achieved in recent years with England seen by many as a front runner in this field. The opportunity exists for England to build on this reputation and take the lead as an accessible tourism destination.

Challenges and Opportunities

- The market for accessible tourism is already worth over £2bn annually to England, but is set to grow as the UK's population ages. By 2025, more than a third of the UK's population will be over the age of 55 (source: Office of National Statistics). Disability is strongly related to age with 2.1% of 16-19 year olds recorded as disabled; 31% for those between the ages of 50-59 years; and 78% of people aged 85 or over (source: Disability in the United Kingdom).
- Disabled people tend to stay longer than average, 3.6 nights as opposed to 3 overall, and to spend more than average, £173 compared to £168 overall (source: UKTS 2009). Many prefer to travel at off-peak times presenting a means for tourism businesses to reduce seasonality. People with impairments also tend to be accompanied by partners (50%), children (20%) or companions (20-25%) which increases the number of visitors and creates extra revenue.
- A survey of disabled travellers in 2010 (source: DCMS Accessible Tourism Stakeholder Forum, Access to Tourism: disabled people's views survey 2010) found that a high proportion of disabled people are very satisfied with the level of service provided by accommodation providers and attractions and many return to the same accommodation more than once. Availability and usefulness of information on accessibility received the lowest levels of satisfaction, discouraging visits to attractions and overnight stays.
- Many tourism businesses have recognised the business opportunity in Accessible Tourism. Examples include Inter Continental Hotels Group (IHG), which installed ceiling track hoisting facilities in five of its hotels generating an additional £344,755 (total gross revenue) and The Hytte, a self-catering accommodation business, which enhanced its accessibility and saw occupancy levels rising to 97 per cent compared with the Northumberland average of 55 per cent.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), which placed duties on service providers not to discriminate against people in respect of their disabilities and to make 'reasonable adjustments',

has not sufficiently addressed the inertia among providers of goods and services (source: Is London Ready to Welcome Visitors – London Development Agency 2010). The Equality Act 2010, which replaced the DDA, strengthens the disability law but with the ‘policing’ methods remaining the same, it is likely that, on its own, the law will not bring about the desired change and deliver on the growth potential for English tourism.

- An emphasis on legal obligations can deter operators of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from making their business more inclusive of disabled customers. Communication to SMEs should focus on the business opportunities and benefits rather than on obligations and regulations.
- Small businesses often find it difficult to allocate resources to research information which does not directly relate to their day-to-day activities. Therefore, messages concerning accessibility should be proactively promoted to businesses rather than there being a reliance on SMEs to look for information.
- Many misconceptions around accessibility and disability still exist. A recent study by the London Development Agency (LDA) found that the majority of businesses focus on tackling wheelchair access and improving facilities for those with mobility issues. Accessibility needs to be improved for blind and partially sighted people, deaf people and hard of hearing people, people with arthritis, asthma, diabetes, and people with learning disabilities (source: Is London Ready to Welcome Visitors – London Development Agency 2010).
- These common misconceptions lead to the understanding that access relates primarily to alterations to the physical environment, i.e. taking down walls, having lifts installed and widening entrances for wheelchair users. This can cause businesses to assume large costs are involved and dismiss accessibility as cost prohibitive.
- Organisations such as the One and All Foundation and Employers’ Forum on Disability are working hard to improve accessibility for employees. Although this sits outside the remit of this Action Plan, employees and also residents of tourism destinations will benefit from improved accessibility for tourists.
- Insensitive and poorly trained staff, who do not understand disabled people’s needs, can threaten the perfect holiday. A recent survey of tourism businesses revealed that almost two thirds thought it was quite unlikely or very unlikely that they and/or members of their staff would take part in disability awareness training in the next 12 months. When asked ‘What would encourage you to provide disability awareness training’ over one fifth (21%) stated ‘nothing’ (source: DCMS Forum Disability Awareness Training Survey, 2009).
- The LDA study cited above showed that disabled visitors prefer to use mainstream sources of information where they can. However, there are currently major gaps in the information provided by mainstream organisations and websites. Specialist sites such as tourismforall.org.uk continue to play an important role in providing comprehensive information with 38% of businesses citing them as sources of information.
- In the past, guidance on improving accessibility has been targeted primarily at accommodation providers and focused on improvements for people with mobility impairments. However, in recent years much has been done to broaden the guidance to encompass blind and partially sighted visitors, deaf and hard of hearing visitors and others with access needs. For example, publications such as VisitEngland’s ‘At your Service’ have been written to communicate to all sectors of the industry, not just accommodation operators.

The Action Plan

A common desire exists to integrate accessibility into the day-to-day activities of operators and industry professionals. This Action Plan is not looking to address accessibility on a stand-alone basis, rather raise the profile and stimulate actions that will achieve this integration.

The challenge for this Action Plan is to engage key sectors such as restaurants and improve accessibility for people with impairments such as learning difficulties. With a wealth of accommodation case studies, examples of good practice are required from other sectors.

While it is recognised that tourism should meet the needs of every section of society, this Action Plan focuses on developing tourism for visitors with impairments and others with physical and sensory access needs. There are no specific actions concerning race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, however, many of the actions in this plan will mutually benefit these groups, particularly training that promotes treating each customer as an individual.

The Accessible Tourism Stakeholder Forum will play a key role in coordinating stakeholder activity to ensure the objectives of this plan are realised. The Forum was set up by DCMS to drive forward improvements in accessible tourism. The Forum brings together a wide cross section of accessible tourism stakeholders; it has built up a good reputation and continues to be a force to drive change. The Forum, chaired by Tourism for All, supports England's Accessibility Action Plan and its members make up the majority of delivery partners.

Objective 1: To motivate tourism businesses across all sectors to improve accessibility.

ACTION	LEAD PARTNERS (where appropriate)	PARTNER SIGN UP	OUTCOME OR SUCCESS MEASURE
i. Provide a portal for businesses to access information on how to improve accessibility.	VisitEngland	Tourism for All (TfA)	Comprehensive information included on visitengland.org/access and signposting to other sites where businesses can gather relevant information and advice.
ii. Promote the 'At your service' booklet (business case and guide to improving accessibility for customers) across the industry.		DCMS, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)/Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), DCMS Accessible Tourism Stakeholder Forum (DCMS Forum), Business Link, British Hospitality Association (BHA), British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) and other trade associations, VisitEngland, British Destinations (BD), Coach Tourism Council (CTC), Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT)	Number of hits to unique web page. Number of requests for Assistance Dogs Welcome sticker (promoted in booklet).
iii. Research - Rerun the Accessibility question in both UKTS and IPS surveys. - Explore the feasibility of including an accessibility question in the England Day Visits Survey. - Rerun 'Access to tourism' survey to gauge disabled travellers' satisfaction and monitor progress since 2010.	VisitEngland, VisitBritain	VisitScotland, Visit Wales, DCMS Forum	Statistics on volume and value of accessible tourism to allow trend analysis for first time. Inclusion of question in survey or rationale for non-inclusion.
iv. Case Studies - Broaden the range of accessible tourism case studies to cover all sectors of the visitor economy e.g. food & drink, heritage. - Develop case studies for destinations that have carried out destination audits and improved all stages of the visitor journey.		LEPs/DMOs, Welcome To Yorkshire, TfA, BHA, BBPA and other trade associations, BD, CTC, CPT	Case studies available for all sectors.

ACTION	LEAD PARTNERS (where appropriate)	PARTNER SIGN UP	OUTCOME OR SUCCESS MEASURE
v. Conferences - Annual Accessible Tourism B2B conference to promote business case, provide guidance, and encourage data provision and training. - Promote accessible tourism at industry conferences.	TfA	VisitEngland, LEPs/DMOs	Number of conference attendees who supply data, sign up for training and National Accessible Scheme (NAS) etc. Engage previously unengaged businesses through presenting to captive audiences.
vi. Secure high profile accessible tourism ambassadors to mentor tourism businesses.	TfA		A list of high profile ambassadors, industry champions, paralympians and politicians.
vii. Ensure presence at key tourism events e.g. BOBI, BHA Luncheon, 2012 events.	TfA		Presence and promotion of accessible tourism.

Objective 2a: To ensure staff are access aware and have the key skills and knowledge to meet the requirements of people with access needs.

ACTION	LEAD PARTNERS (where appropriate)	PARTNER SIGN UP	OUTCOME OR SUCCESS MEASURE
i. Promote uptake of face-to-face and online training programmes that match the content of the key skills and knowledge templates devised by DCMS Forum e.g. WorldHost Customers with Disabilities, Welcome All, TfA Training.		VisitEngland, DCMS Forum, LEPs/DMOs, People 1 st , TfA	Limited number of excellent courses signposted from VE website and promoted by partners. Number of people signed up to these courses.
ii. Ensure accessibility and disability awareness is embedded within general customer service training programmes.	People1st	Tourism South East	
iii. Explore the potential of developing Profit Through Access into a national business development portal.	VisitEngland	TfA	Information on accessibility is collated, streamlined and better disseminated.
iv. Ensure travel agents understand the requirements of disabled people and are able to provide information on accessible accommodation and attractions in England through promoting the 'Accessible Travel Made	ABTA	TfA, VisitEngland, Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPOs)	Increased satisfaction with travel agents among disabled people. Number of tool users.

ACTION	LEAD PARTNERS (where appropriate)	PARTNER SIGN UP	OUTCOME OR SUCCESS MEASURE
Easy' online programme to travel agents.			
v. Assisted Passenger Reservation System - Introduce a new, fit for purpose, booking and assistance system for disabled rail passengers.	Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC)	Department for Transport, train operating companies	Increased reliability and success of booked journeys.

Objective 2b: To provide information on the accessibility of facilities and services that is detailed, accurate and readily available to enable people with access needs to make an informed choice.

ACTION	LEAD PARTNERS (where appropriate)	PARTNER SIGN UP	OUTCOME OR SUCCESS MEASURE
i. ee.com, vb.com and destination websites - Develop partnerships with third party providers of quality accessibility information, to provide links to accessibility information for accommodation, attractions, events and activities.	VisitEngland	DisabledGo, DirectEnquiries, OpenBritain open platform	Accessibility information provided for greater percentage of products. Significantly increase number and exposure of products showing any type of accessibility information.
ii. Access Statements - Encourage businesses to complete an Access Statement using the VisitEngland Online Tool. - Develop templates on tool for sectors such as nature reserves, pubs and restaurants. - Ensure statements are available on operator websites, agency websites etc. - Determine alternative ways of gathering accessibility information and Access Statements to avoid overreliance on current data steward network.	VisitEngland, QiT, LEPs/DMOs	BHA, Keep Britain Tidy, Premier League, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), TfA, LEPs/DMOs, BBPA, British Holiday and Home Parks Association (BHHPA) and other trade associations, DisabledGo, Direct Enquiries, CTC, CPT	Proportion of operator websites that include an access statement. Increased quality of Access Statements. Number of Access Statements created using the tool. Number of statements on operator and agency websites. Accessibility information and Access Statements continue to be added to product listings on national and destination websites.
iii. Each passenger carrying train operating	Department for	Train Operating Companies	Each franchised operator to have a DPPP

ACTION	LEAD PARTNERS (where appropriate)	PARTNER SIGN UP	OUTCOME OR SUCCESS MEASURE
company to adopt a revised Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP) taking account of new guidance.	Transport		setting out the levels of service and access facilities they provide for disabled passengers.
iv. Produce easy to understand guidance on developing an accessible website.		VisitEngland, TfA, Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)	
v. Continue to work on the development of an Open Source Data platform to make accessibility information more readily available and mainstreamed e.g. through digital applications.	TfA	VisitEngland, DisabledGo, BT	Take up of data by developers, other websites, communities etc.

Objective 2c: To improve facilities and make reasonable adjustments as per the Equality Act 2010 for people with access needs.

ACTION	LEAD PARTNERS (where appropriate)	PARTNER SIGN UP	OUTCOME OR SUCCESS MEASURE
i. Include accessibility good practice in the National Quality Assessment Scheme (NQAS) and investigate adding accessibility criteria into NQAS.	VisitEngland	AA, Visit Wales	Greater awareness of accessibility among NQAS members and adjustments made.
ii. Promote 'Easy does it' guide and send hard copy to all new quality scheme members.	VisitEngland	QiT, LEPs/DMOs, TfA, BHA, BBPA and other trade associations	Number of copies requested and in circulation.
iii. Provide specific advice to attractions and food and drink businesses on how to improve the accessibility of their facilities and services.	VisitEngland, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)	BHA, BBPA, TfA, The Restaurant Association	Increased engagement by these sectors.
iv. Champions to coordinate a destination approach to improve accessibility throughout visitor journey. - Carry out destination accessibility audits to identify areas for improvement.		Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM), Local Government Association, LEPs/DMOs, BD, Tourism Management Institute (TMI)/Tourism Society (TS)	

ACTION	LEAD PARTNERS (where appropriate)	PARTNER SIGN UP	OUTCOME OR SUCCESS MEASURE
v. Access for All Programme (Rail) - To provide an accessible route into selected stations and to and between each platform. - Complete access audits of 300 stations as part of the development of the Games Accessible Transport Network.	Department for Transport, Olympic Delivery Authority	Network Rail, ATOC	Accessible route to be delivered at 148 stations. Successful development of Olympic journey planner

Objective 3: To increase consumer awareness of accessibility initiatives and the accessibility of tourism products

ACTION	LEAD PARTNERS (where appropriate)	PARTNER SIGN UP	OUTCOME OR SUCCESS MEASURE
i. Ensure that enjoyengland.com and destination websites offer ideas, information & signposting for disabled travellers.		VisitEngland, DMOs, TfA	Hits to website pages.
ii. Create accessible tourism itineraries for destinations with accessible venues to promote to people with access needs.	Leicester Shire Promotions, VisitEngland	TfA	Increase in visits to destinations with itineraries by people with access needs.
iii. Increase promotion of: - The availability of access information on consumer facing websites. - Enhanced circulation of OpenBritain channels e.g. guide. - Existing Access awards e.g. EEAE, Cateys.		DCMS Stakeholder Group, DMOs, TfA/Heritage House Group (HHG), DPOs e.g. RNIB, Royal National Institute for Deaf people (RNID), TIC network, Local Access Groups, VisitEngland, Caterer and Hotelkeeper	Carry out further research with consumers to measure awareness levels after promotion and compare to 2007 consumer research. Hits to accessibility tab of product listings. Increased sales of guide. Improved custom for awards winners.
iv. Exhibit at key disability travel exhibitions e.g. Enable.	TfA		Presence and promotion of accessible tourism.