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Newsletter of east midlands tourism

Awards Acknowledge Excellence



Tourism businesses around the region gathered for a glitzy ceremony at Athena in Leicester to celebrate the second East Midlands Enjoy England Excellence Awards.

Presented by Rob Pittam of BBC TV's Working Lunch, with solo Atlantic rower Debra Searle providing a keynote speech, the ceremony saw 45 businesses recognised with sixteen securing gold awards for delivering exceptional visitor experiences.

Among the winners were Lincolnshire's Willow Farm which received the Tourism Experience award for its provision of special riding holidays for unaccompanied children aged between eight and 18. The Outstanding Customer Service title went to Sam Hill of Holiday Inn Leicester who was nominated by her manager for an "unparalleled level of customer care" during 10 years at the hotel, whilst the Peak District & Derbyshire's Bateman's Mill Country Hotel & Restaurant took the coveted Outstanding Quality award. The importance of investing in talent and promoting service excellence was recognised by the Training and Innovation award presented to Northamptonshire's Whittlebury Hall Hotel & Spa.

Nottingham's purpose-built East Midlands Conference Centre scooped the Business Tourism award, an honour marketing manager Kirstie Danzey said the venue was

"absolutely delighted" to receive, commenting: "Being officially recognised for our services to Business Tourism in a competition so crucial to the region is something that the whole team at the EMCC are very proud of."

Richard Dickinson, chief executive of awards organiser, east midlands tourism, said the event was important for rewarding business achievements, commenting: "The winners are thoroughly deserving of their success and are beacons of excellence from which we can all learn in our quest to deliver the very finest visitor experiences."

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bainland Country Park
- Caravan Holiday Park • Bateman's Mill Country Hotel & Restaurant
- Outstanding Quality • Blakelow Farm Holiday Cottages
- Self Catering Holiday • Conkers
- Large Visitor Attraction • Derby TIC
- Tourist Information Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derby Cathedral Centre Coffee Shop
- Taste of England • East Midlands Conference Centre
- Business Tourism • Hawthorn Cottage, Matlock
- Bed & Breakfast • Hidden England
- Marketing Excellence • Sam Hill, Holiday Inn Leicester City
- Outstanding Customer Service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kilworth House Hotel,
- Small Hotel/Townhouse • Lincolnshire Tourism
- Tourism Website • Marriott Breadsall Priory Hotel & Country Club
- Large Hotel/Townhouse • Rockingham Castle
- Small Visitor Attraction • Whittlebury Hall Hotel & Spa
- Training and Innovation • Willow Farm,
- Tourism Experience |
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quality

Quality Alive initiative launched to improve the quality and consistency of the region's tourism product.



marketing

New Pride & Prejudice based packages could generate millions for local economy.

business

Overseas exchange of ideas helps self-catering group attract more visitors.



east midlands tourism
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The awards also demonstrate that as well as having plenty to offer in terms of the excellence and diversity of our attractions, we are also fully committed to pursuing ever higher quality goals as a region."

A number of the regional winners now have the chance to go forward to the national final which takes place in London next April. Last year two winners from the East Midlands – Shardaroba Caravan Park and Chesterfield TIC – won gold awards at this ceremony.

Winners' Roll Call

Regional round-up

Outdoor Show

The region's five destination management partnerships will join forces next March to promote outdoor activity breaks, including walking, cycling and canal boating, at the 2006 Outdoor Show. Last year the event, which takes place over three days at the NEC in Birmingham, attracted over 50,000 people.

Da Vinci Code

Lincolnshire's appeal as a film destination looks set to continue next year with the release of the Da Vinci Code. Lincolnshire Tourism is planning activity to attract visitors to the Cathedral, which doubles as Westminster Cathedral and Burghley House used for some of the scenes involving the papal plotline. Visitors will have the opportunity to stay where the stars stayed and to see props used in the making of the film.

Barrel of laughs

The Leicester Comedy festival takes place from February 10th to 19th. Since its launch in 1994 the event has attracted some of the leading names in the world of comedy including Jo Brand, Jack Dee and Phil Kay. Acts perform at venues throughout Leicester and the main programme is supported by a series of workshops covering everything from comedy writing to caricatures.

New brand to attract tourists

Explore Northamptonshire is leading activity to launch a new brand identity for Northamptonshire to promote the county to business investors and visitors. Supported by a number of partners including Invest Northamptonshire the brand is due to be launched in February 2006.

Increasing tourism revenue

Experience Nottinghamshire plans to generate £200 million of additional conference and short break business in the five year period to 2010. The organisation has set itself a number of targets, including achieving a 20% growth in the annual value of conferences and short breaks business and a 75% quality accredited score for Notts tourism accommodation. Currently this sits at 29%.

Best foot forward

The second Peak District Walking Festival takes place from April 22nd to May 7th 2006. Set among the moorland peaks and gently rolling dales of the Peak District, this two week festival offers a huge and varied programme of guided walks to suit all abilities. There are classic hikes across open countryside, easily accessible family trails and themed walks.

Quality drive comes alive

As part of its three year quality programme, east midlands tourism has launched a Quality Alive initiative.

The project will engage with businesses, residents, the community and tourists through a series of roadshows and a drive to promote the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service (VAQAS) to the region's attractions.

The first in a series of four Quality Alive roadshows, addressing topics such as accommodation grading, was hosted in October in Northamptonshire. This was followed by another event last month in Lincolnshire with a further event planned in Derbyshire next February. There are also plans for a further programme of quality roadshows to promote the importance of excellence in tourism delivery next year.

Trade workshops have also been hosted around the region to promote awareness of VAQAS, the accreditation for attractions,



which focuses on the total visitor experience. They are not graded but assessed through an annual visit on their own merits using industry standard quality benchmarks. Attractions benefit from a one-to-one debrief, feedback based on best practice and successful applicants receive accreditation as a 'Quality Assured Visitor Attraction' and are able to use the VAQAS marque in their marketing. Other benefits include provision of a best practice guide, a self-assessment toolkit and advice on issues such as the Disability Discrimination Act.

For information on this initiative contact Emma Salisbury, quality manager, east midlands tourism on 0115 988 8319 or email emmasalisbury@emd.org.uk

Pilot informs accommodation providers

A research tool adopted by east midlands tourism (EMT) is helping accommodation providers to predict and manage peaks and troughs in leisure and business tourism.

Experience Nottinghamshire and Leicester Shire Promotions, have been running an EMT funded pilot since June 2005 - Forecaster©. Each month around 40 hoteliers provide their occupancy and revenue figures from which average room rates, revenue yield and occupancy are calculated. Participating establishments and the Destination Management Partnerships can use the anonymous data to inform marketing campaigns to ensure greater occupancy levels.

"This tool allows hoteliers to see the major peaks and all forward bookings into Leicester and Nottingham and provides insight to track

growth," explained William Smart EMT's performance & evaluation manager. "Once the data has been analysed it is fed back to allow the information to be acted on."

The project is now being extended to encompass self-catering properties in the Peak District and EMT is intending to roll the scheme out to the region's other destinations over the coming months.



Research assists hoteliers and DMPs

Universities support far from academic

A new project initiated by east midlands tourism, the Tourism Research Intelligence Partnership (TRIP), is set to give the tourism industry access to invaluable tourism research conducted by the region's universities. The project will be run in conjunction with Regeneration East Midlands and Intelligence East Midlands.

The initiative will harness the research capabilities of the universities of Derby, Lincoln, Nottingham and Nottingham Trent - who have worked with a wide range of local, national and international tourism bodies - to assist in raising the profile of

tourism in the region and supporting industry development.

"The project is still in its infancy but we envisage TRIP East Midlands becoming an increasingly pro-active provider of information on the region's tourism industry to a broad set of private and public sector stakeholders," commented Isobel O'Neil who has been recruited as the project's research co-ordinator. "The region's universities harbour a tremendous amount of tourism-related expertise which, by co-ordinating research initiatives and providing forums for research dissemination, can now be harnessed for industry gain."

Pride & Prejudice profits region

Millions of pounds could be pumped into the region's economy following the launch of an EMT funded initiative to maximise revenue generated by the release of Hollywood blockbuster, **Pride & Prejudice**.

Much of the film was shot on location in Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and the Peak District. Chatsworth House was transformed into the Darcy family home Pemberley, Haddon Hall into the Inn at Lambton and Burghley House into Rosings. Georgian Stamford also became Meryton, village home to the heroine, Lizzie Bennet, whilst Peak District landscapes and villages provided picturesque backdrops.

Peak District & Derbyshire DMP and Lincolnshire Tourism are set to capitalise on the film's success by promoting 'Pride & Prejudice Country' through themed short breaks which allow visitors to follow in the footsteps of the movie's characters.

A website – visitprideandprejudice.com – is publicising the region's links and features short break ideas based around the three stately homes and surrounding attractions.

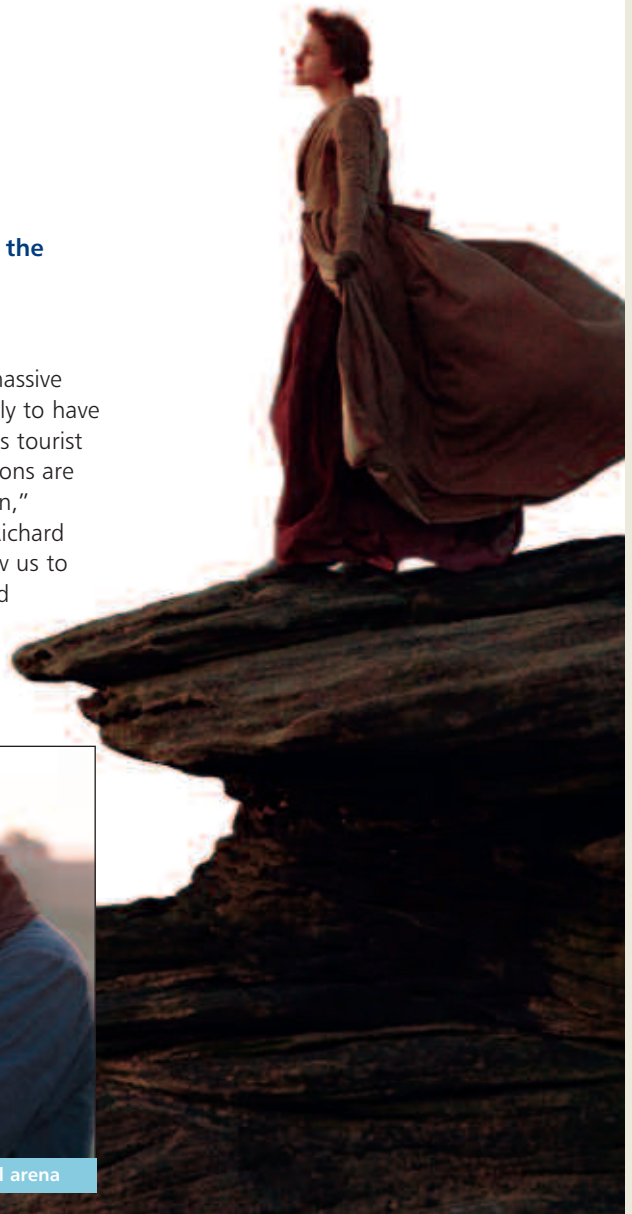
The campaign is supported by PR and promotional activity in both Europe and North America.

Over 100 million people are expected to see *Pride & Prejudice* and based on similar blockbusters this could lead to a thirty

percent uplift in visitors. "With a massive worldwide audience, this film is likely to have an enormous impact on the region's tourist economy as so many of our attractions are showcased in such a positive fashion," commented EMT's chief executive Richard Dickinson. "This campaign will allow us to exploit the trend for 'set-jetting' and satisfy people's desire to visit attractions which have been immortalised on screen."



Region promoted on the international arena



It's all gone high tech down on the farm

A series of exchange trips with Scandinavia is helping forward-thinking farming families who provide accommodation in the Peak District to broaden their appeal to visitors.

The Peak District Farm Holidays Group (PDFHG), a non-profit making group of farming families, has embraced new technologies and tactics to attract visitors to its converted farm properties. However, its core proposition is about promoting the distinctive, traditional, rural charm of the national park. "We want visitors to better understand our environment and we are working hard to create an excellent visitor experience. We're achieving this in part by allowing people to see where their food comes from and its direct link to the fabulous Peak District countryside," explains Sue Fowler who has just completed her stint as PDFHG chair. This echoes the aims of the Business and Environment Small Scale Tourism (BESST) initiative in which the Peak District National Park Authority is the lead partner. BESST seeks



to use innovative tourism strategies to regenerate rural areas which have suffered the loss of traditional industries, with projects running in, and ideas swapped between, Sweden, Norway and the UK.

"We went over to Norway and Sweden and they came here and stayed in our lovely Peak District accommodation", explains Sue. "These

two countries are very environmentally friendly too and lots of ideas came out of the visits such as 'Meet The Benchenhill Bees' where beekeeper Mark Dennison shows visitors how a beehive works and wild honey is made.

"It's a constant two-way thing. We're not complacent, we're interested in new ideas that will make the group even stronger,"

Meeting the bees is just one of a range of themed activities dreamt up by the PDFHG to help maintain occupancy levels, particularly in low season. These are promoted via the organisation's award-winning website – www.peakdistrictfarmhols.co.uk – which now accounts for up to 75 per cent of bookings. Asking visitors about what they wanted from the site was just one of a series of pro-active PDFHG initiatives. "Our objective is to get every farm filled every week of the year," says Sue.

New appointments strengthen team

The team at EMT has been strengthened in recent months with a number of new appointments that will enable it to drive targets for developing tourism in the region.

Una Mullan has joined as team manager responsible for campaigns & delivery and Ashley Hopwell has taken on the role of marketing executive. Una, working closely with the Destination Management Partnerships, will be looking at opportunities to raise awareness of the region's destinations and themed activity to raise regional profile. She brings a wealth of commercial experience to the role, having previously worked for Powergen, Thomas Cook and Boots. Emma

Salisbury has taken on the role of quality manager with responsibility for driving the region's quality improvement plan.

There have also been a number of new additions to EMT's board, strengthening partnerships with the private, voluntary and public sector. Rebecca Speight, regional director of the National Trust; Chas Bishop, chief executive of the National Space Centre; Joe Dickinson, chief executive of Rockingham Motor Speedway; Ross Wilmot, emda's culture and tourism representative and councillor Geoff Carlile, Sub Regional Strategic Partnership representative have all joined to help drive the region's tourism agenda.



The EMT team

Organisations rise to challenge fund

EMT's new public realm and marketing challenge funds, which were launched earlier in the year, have proved hugely popular with the region's tourism businesses, so much so that they have been massively oversubscribed.

A total of eighteen bids made it through to the shortlist with a final decision due by the end of the month. The fund is designed to add value rather than replace existing funding and applicants are required to match fund.

The Public Realm applicants – whose bids saw the fund six times oversubscribed – were required to demonstrate they would deliver best practice initiatives which would enhance visitor attractions and public spaces through, for example, improved visitor orientation. Marketing fund bidders faced similarly stringent criteria, being required to show they would deliver more staying visitors to the region in accordance with EMT's corporate plan – most notably domestic and overseas visitors from outside the region who spend three times as much as day-visitors.

"The challenge fund certainly seems to have caught the imagination with some exceptionally high calibre applicants who

have embraced the spirit of this initiative by ensuring bids aim to add value through additional activity rather than trying to fund existing plans", said EMT board member, Sukhy Johal, who is overseeing both funds. "We're really looking for a good return on our investment, to see an increase in both visitors and incremental visitor spend."

Once successful bidders have been notified, campaigns will begin breaking almost immediately as EMT harnesses the expertise and experience of its partners to strengthen routes to market and further improve the visitor experience.

Educational promotes region overseas

The region welcomed representatives from VisitBritain's overseas markets for an educational visit hosted by east midlands tourism and the regions five destination management partnerships.

Designed to raise the region's profile with those charged with promoting UK tourism to overseas visitors, the trip showcased the history, heritage, outdoors and gastronomic delights of the six counties. Attractions visited on the diverse four day itinerary included Chatsworth House, Burghley House, Stamford, Rockingham Castle and Rutland Water. Guests also sampled Leicestershire's rich gastronomic portfolio with a visit to Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe and lunch at the award winning Red Lion pub at Strathern. Other highlights included a walking tour in the Peak District National Park and a tour of Newstead Abbey.

Helen Hughes, regional campaigns manager at VisitBritains's New York office said: "We had a fantastic time on the PKE to the East Midlands. Having never been to this region before I was particularly impressed by the beauty and variety of activities in this area - favourites of my own being Burghley House and Chatsworth. Seeing both at a special screening of Pride & Prejudice made it even



Visitors explore the Peak District

more special. I am sure there will be significant interest from the US, once this movie releases, to explore such a beautiful part of the country. The quality of the food, traditional pubs and friendliness of the people only added to the experience. I look forward to coming back to this region to explore and spend more time in the locations we visited."

Richard Dickinson said such a response showed the exercise had been invaluable, adding: "Hosting this trip fulfilled many objectives in promoting the region to overseas visitors, targeting key markets such as the Netherlands, Germany and the US. It has helped us improve our understanding of these key markets which will be vital for harnessing future growth opportunities."

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