



The Pewsey Vale Tourism Partnership

*c/o Wexcombe End
15 Wexcombe
Near Marlborough
Wiltshire
SN8 3SQ*

24th March 2023

Cllr Richard Clewer
Wiltshire Council
Cabinet Office
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN

Dear Cllr Clewer

The Pewsey Vale Tourism Partnership was set up in 2014 to promote the Pewsey Community Area and support the visitor economy in this very rural part of Wiltshire. The Partnership has been successful – it has many members and works in partnership with GWR, VisitWiltshire, Great West Way, North Wessex Downs, Long Distance Walkers Association, (local group) Ramblers, Walkers are Welcome, amongst others, to promote the area. We have implemented many projects over the years to improve the resources for the visitor economy and to improve local infrastructure.

We are a voluntary, not-for-profit organisation so we can only do so much. Our strategy for accessing the wider UK and overseas markets relies heavily on organisations such as VisitWiltshire and the Great West Way who have the national and international level of market penetration (supported by their work with VisitBritain and VisitEngland) – something that we just don't have the resources to do ourselves.

We are therefore extremely concerned to hear that Wiltshire Council has publicly announced that it will not be supporting VisitWiltshire financially from April 2024. The impact of this decision is enormous and excludes the county of Wiltshire from future VisitBritain and VisitEngland activity. We are concerned that the decision has been made without realising the consequences.



VisitWiltshire is an award-winning destination management organisation which has successfully become mainly independent over the last few years. In this time, it has also launched the Great West Way, an internationally recognised touring route in which Wiltshire features heavily.

As you may be aware, the Government is creating a new national structure for tourism in England. This includes the creation of 35 to 40 accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) which are at least (geographically speaking) at a county level. Accredited LVEPs will be able to access funding via VisitBritain, VisitEngland and the Government through the DCMS; they will be able to work with, engage with and be promoted by VisitBritain and VisitEngland. Any county not having an accredited LVEP will not have access to these essential resources.

Up until the point at which the press announcement was made by Wiltshire Council, VisitWiltshire was probably one of the front runners to achieve accredited LVEP status. As a result of this public announcement from Wiltshire Council, VisitWiltshire no longer meets the eligibility criteria as all LVEPs must have some element of public/private partnerships with public/private funding.

If Wiltshire doesn't have an accredited LVEP, Wiltshire and destinations within Wiltshire, will be excluded from all VisitBritain and VisitEngland and other 3rd party activity. That means that the Pewsey Vale and other destinations across the county, as well as Wiltshire itself, will cease to exist in VisitBritain and VisitEngland domestic and international marketing and promotional activity. Destinations will not be featured on VisitBritain and VisitEngland websites, in VisitBritain and VisitEngland marketing campaigns and promotional activities, and will not be included in VisitBritain and VisitEngland travel trade or travel press activity (for example hosting trade and press visits, attending press and trade events etc). Our local businesses also would not be able to benefit from VisitBritain or VisitEngland attending or supporting Wiltshire business and sector group events.

In addition to this, as part of the new national structure, there is a top tier 'Destination Development Partnership' (DDP) being piloted in the North East. If the 3-year pilot goes well it is expected there will be 15-20 DDPs and these will be strategic bodies that will work collaboratively with VisitBritain/VisitEngland on implementing the Government's National Tourism Recovery Plan and they will also be the vehicle for distribution Government funding. Currently, it is expected that DDPs will be created from a number of accredited LVEPs coming together to form a new partnership body. Any area, such as Wiltshire, not having an accredited LVEP, won't be able to be part of a regional DDP, so will not be able to benefit from DDP budgets and resources or the support of VisitBritain and VisitEngland.

The 35-40 LVEPs will therefore form the backbone of the Destination Management structure in this country and provide the mechanism for distributing future visitor economy funding and resourcing. Unless Wiltshire is one of these, Wiltshire as a destination, including all the towns and destinations such as the Vale of Pewsey, will disappear from all VisitBritain/VisitEngland promotional activity, websites and social media. **The county of Wiltshire would cease to exist as a promoted destination.**

We understand the difficult funding pressures Wiltshire Council is under. We know that Wiltshire Council has stated previously they will find it difficult to continue to support VisitWiltshire after April 2024. However, Wiltshire Council has also stated that it is **vital** that Wiltshire has an accredited LVEP – a view with which we would concur.



Wiltshire is one of VisitEngland's 12 Lead Destinations because of the hard work and effort from the VisitWiltshire team – the organisation needs to be an LVEP.

We understand that VisitEngland will be meeting with you in May to discuss the implications of Wiltshire Council's decision. We would urge you to find a way of resolving this issue.

Yours sincerely

Dawn Wilson

Dawn Wilson
Chair – Pewsey Vale Tourism Partnership
www.visitpewseyvale.co.uk

