

## **Principles for Regional Tourism Structures**

### **Introduction**

It is understood that current Conservative thinking is that the RDAs will not exist in their current form under a Conservative Government – although there was a case for similar co-operative entities in one or two regions where there was a strong local desire and there were few local authorities (ie., where a grouping of local authorities would simply recreate the existing RDA).

It is also understood that there is a possibility that the existing funding that RDAs allocate to tourism could be ringfenced and redistributed through another mechanism. Therefore, as there was the possibility that existing funds would remain targeted toward the development and promotion of tourism at the local level, based on suitable partnerships, it was important for the Tourism Alliance to develop a position on how this should be done or to identify the principles involved.

While has been agreed that the Alliance should not, at the moment, propose a structure for the future allocation of public funding for tourism, it has been agreed that a set of overarching principles be developed by which future proposals on structures can be tested.

The Tourism Alliance has therefore agreed the following set of Principles which will guide its discussions with Government on this issue.

- TA discussions will differentiate between the allocation of public funding for political reasons, and the use of public funds to achieve best value public benefit allocated according to the need and potential of tourism. The meeting and emerging conclusions address the tourism-specific aspect only.
- There remains a need for sub-national, i.e. “regional”, entities to link, co-ordinate and provide some administrative linkages for activity at a sub-regional level.
- Any new regional arrangements must ensure that there are no “gaps”. That is, if local authorities are to form groupings, there must be a mechanism to ensure there are no “orphans”.
- Any new groupings for tourism development and market should relate to recognizable area brand footprints – with Local Authorities and the private sector working through tourism partnerships which would include existing and new DMOs. Brand-based and area-based partnerships may emerge as appropriate to differing locations. There must be clarity over arrangements if footprints overlap, or cross any retained administrative boundaries.
- It should be ascertained if Government will continuing its Regional administrative structure (with Govt Regional Offices etc.) – it is assumed that this is likely to be required - in which case there needs to be a relationship, and

probably alignment, between the Government office regions and the evolving tourism partnerships.

- The England Tourism Strategy currently being developed must form the basis for allocating public funding.
- The status of recipient entities must be defined to ensure they fulfill the requirements for state funding and avoid state aid rules, etc. It is felt that a "draft constitution" should be developed to cover the essential elements, for compliance by all recipients. This will facilitate administration, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes on all programmes.
- It is important that the cost of any new administrative arrangements should be minimized and ease the flow of funding rather than be a drain upon it.
- Two main purposes for public funding were identified – funding for national industry-wide programmes such as quality, accessibility, i t. platform and sustainability schemes, and funding for prioritized programme-related initiatives
- Tourism funding for national programmes should be allocated and controlled centrally through VisitEngland
- Funding from other Government Departments (other than the Tourism-sponsoring Department) that is applied to tourism-related matters should wherever possible be used to help achieve the priorities of the National Tourism Strategy.
- Funding should be allocated on the basis of need and potential, and on the basis of encouraging public and private entities to come together and add value.
- ROI must remain a core criteria for investment
- Consideration should be given to a reserve fund to assist disaster recovery

(note; that the term "regional" (where used) means below the level of national and above the level of local – it does not necessarily mean conforming to existing RDA boundaries)