

- Britain's fifth largest industry – worth £85 billion – 3.5% of the nation's economy –
- employs 2.1 million people – 7.7% of the workforce – more jobs than construction or transport –
- generates over £16 billion in export earning –
- inbound visitors pay £3.3 billion in tax, the equivalent of the salary of 195,000 nurses –

Embargoed until 00:01 Monday 10 March 2008

LEISURE PARKS, PIERS AND ATTRACTIONS BACK BRITISH TOURISM WEEK

British Tourism Week has received the support of hundreds of leisure parks, piers and attractions from around the country at the Parliamentary Lunch of the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers & Attractions (BALPPA) on 10 March.

At the lunch held in the House of Commons, 60 members of the industry and 30 parliamentarians backed the annual week of events which together aim to galvanise organisations and individuals to take pride in being part of the nation's fifth biggest industry. From 10 to 18 March, British Tourism Week is raising the profile of an £85 billion visitor economy and draw national awareness to its critical importance and the contribution it makes local economies and millions of livelihoods.

BALPPA Chief Executive, Colin Dawson says: "We have today launched an independent study financed by BALPPA which produces a compelling case for a reduction in the rate of VAT charged for admission to visitor attractions and visitor accommodation. The adoption of the proposals contained in the Study will provide a much needed boost to British tourism in the fight to reduce the ever increasing tourism trading deficit which now stands at a staggering £19 billion."

Under the patronage of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, more than 70 different events are already being planned for British Tourism Week and organisers are encouraging every region and destination to organise something to help businesses or raise awareness of tourism experiences among consumers.

Says Tom Wright, chief executive of VisitBritain and co-chairman of British Tourism Week's multi-sector steering committee: "The support of BALPPA's members is invaluable recognition for our ambition to raise the profile of our £85 billion tourism industry. It is yet another positive sign that the private and public sectors are prepared to unite in generating a lasting legacy."

This year British Tourism Week recognises that 80% of industry success comes from domestic visitors and that, with increasing competition from overseas destinations, it can do more to encourage Britons to holiday at home. With Easter arriving soon after British Tourism Week, consumers will be urged to get out and enjoy a wide variety of holiday experiences.

Stephen Dowd, co-chairman of British Tourism Week and chief executive of UKinbound, says: "BALPPA's members represent attractions and destinations that are hugely popular with visitors from home and overseas and support the jobs and livelihoods of millions of people. Every day, more of us are enjoying the appeals of a wide variety of attractions, heritage sites and historic buildings, exploring our stunning countryside and cinematic landscapes or taking a break in contemporary cities. We hope that if nothing else, MPs, the media, opinion-leaders and consumers will take time for a day visit or overnight stay during British Tourism Week."

As last year, the British Travel Trade Fair remains one of the core events of the Week, showcasing excellence in destinations and experiences from around the country. Members of Parliament are being invited to visit tourism businesses in their constituencies, sign a pledge card in support of the week and enjoy a free guided tour of London. Visitors can take advantage of a series of free walking tours in London and around the country and, in the lead up to the Week, visit a stunning exhibition of landscape photography, Britain on View.

Visit www.britishtourismweek.com for more information.

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Elliott Frisby, Corporate PR Manager, VisitBritain on 020 8563 3035 or 07951 996241

Notes to Editors

- British Tourism Week (10-18 March 2008) has been established to demonstrate the critical value of tourism to the economy of the United Kingdom. Through a week of events throughout the UK it will:
 - Increase awareness of the success and importance of the tourism industry
 - Raise quality standards
 - Promote training and professionalism
 - Improve competitiveness of the UK tourism industry
 - Support the preparations for hosting the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- British Tourism Week is organised by VisitBritain and UKinbound with the support of the Tourism Alliance, Tourism Society, ABTA the Travel Association, VisitScotland, Visit Wales, Visit London and Britain's regional tourist boards.