

Press release

Tourism South East launches campaign to become one of most accessible regions for 2012 Paralympics

Eastleigh, 12th January 2010 – Tourism South East has launched a campaign to become one of the most accessible regions in the UK in preparation for the 2012 Paralympic Games. The objectives of the campaign will include the improvement of facilities, levels of service and welcome for the disabled and their families.

The South East – birthplace of paralympic sport & 2012 venue

The region of South East England is home to the birthplace of disability sport as Stoke Mandeville in Buckinghamshire hosted the first wheelchair sports competition in 1948 to coincide with the last London Olympic Games. Today, Stoke Mandeville boasts the National Centre for Disability Sport and hosts the annual National Wheelchair Championships. For these reasons, its stadium has been chosen as an official training venue for athletes preparing for the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games.

Eton Dorney, near Windsor Castle is also being used as a training venue and for the paralympic rowing competition of the 2012 Games.

Gearing up to the 2012 Paralympics & accessibility for all

As part of Tourism South East's project, the regional tourist board has developed a special programme of 'Destination Access Audits' and has subsidised 'Welcome All' training in key 2012 destinations.

For the **Access Audits**, Tourism South East has worked very closely with independent assessors to ensure that facilities and services are updated in key destinations. This process is vital to making life easier, not just for people who are wheelchair users or those with hearing and sight impairments, but also the elderly, those with learning difficulties and people with small children in buggies and prams.

Furthermore, Tourism South East has launched an **Accentuate programme**, which seeks to challenge perceptions and offer opportunities to showcase the talents of disabled people. Funded by Legacy Trust UK, SEEDA and the regional cultural agencies, Accentuate combines 15 major projects, inspired by the South East's heritage as the birthplace of the Paralympic Games.

Brighton as an accessibility leader

Brighton was the first city to participate in the Access Audit scheme and has since been used as a model for other destinations in the region, such as the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Winchester and key locations in Buckinghamshire.

South East boasts an ever-increasing choice of accessible accommodation and attractions, in order to welcome visitors with impaired mobility, hearing or eyesight or with special needs. The choice of accessible guest accommodation, B&Bs, hotels, self catering properties, hostels and camping and caravanning sites is forever expanding, as providers strive to meet the needs of all visitors. Similarly, from historic sites and castles to theme parks and museums, there are an increasing number of accessible attractions to choose from.

From the supply of ramps, disabled parking, induction loops, or large print menus, to the provision of disability awareness training for staff, the South East is increasingly striving to meet the needs of all visitors.

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Background information:

Tourism South East (TSE) is a not-for-profit company which is the official tourist board for the region, covering Kent, East and West Sussex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. Tourism South East receives core funding from SEEDA, and is active in a range of programmes to support the tourism sector in the South East region, which is worth in excess of £12bn p.a. to the regional economy (7% of regional GVA), and supports over 300,000 jobs.

SEEDA, the South East England Development Agency, is the Government-funded agency responsible for the sustainable economic development of the South East of England – the driving force of the UK's economy. Through supporting businesses, encouraging innovation, developing skills and engaging with public and private partners, we aim to create a successful, sustainable future for the region. SEEDA is the strategic lead for the South East Partnership for the 2012 Games, a group of regional agencies working together to create and promote new market opportunities in tourism, environmental technologies, digital technologies and cultural, creative and sporting industries, as well as the significant procurement opportunities in the run up to the Games through the online tendering system CompeteFor.

Legacy Trust UK is an independent charity whose mission is to support a wide range of innovative cultural and sporting activities which celebrate the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and which will leave a lasting legacy in communities throughout the United Kingdom. Legacy Trust UK is funded by a £40 million endowment from the Big Lottery Fund (£29m), Department for Culture Media and Sport (£6m) and Arts Council England (£5m).

For further media & PR information:

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