

## Visit Worcestershire Experiential Tourism Programme

### The Experiential Tourism Programme – Guidance Pack

The Experiential Tourism Programme is being delivered by Visit Worcestershire in partnership with Unmissable England. Unmissable England is a national tourism company specialising in experiential and tourism product development. They provide practical and accessible professional development opportunities for the tourism industry.

The Programme has been developed to help create new products to market, products which support the Worcestershire message and enhance our offering with national and international visitors. Products which are rooted in a sense of place and that tell the story of the County.

### What is Experiential Tourism?

Also known as ‘**immersive travel**’, experiential tourism is a form of travel in which **the focus is on the experience**. Therefore, experiential travellers want to experience a country, city or particular place by **actively and meaningfully engaging** with its history, people, culture, food and environment.

Visit Worcestershire want to create a diverse range of experiences that match the visitor’s interests and link to the County’s rich history and unique stories – activities should be distinctive and provide visitors with a sense of personal accomplishment, thereby creating their own unique memories of the County and their time with us.

### Priority Themes:

The proposed Experience must contribute to the successful delivery of the new Visit Worcestershire Destination Management Plan, which outlines a number of key focuses for the next 5 years.

Below we explore these themes and give a list of possible experiences that we would be supportive of, this is not an exhaustive list but should act as inspiration:

- **Heritage** - a deep history which dates back over 2000 years, from Bad King John, the Magna Carta, to the Civil War, Stately Homes and Industrial heritage. There are plenty of opportunities to get hands on with history across Worcestershire but there is space for more immersive tours or experiences.
- **Green spaces** – from the iconic rolling Malvern Hills to the UKs largest ancient woodland in the UK, Worcestershire offers beautiful countryside in which to walk, cycle, or horse ride but there are limited experiences which help you explore. Guided walks, floristry, yoga & wellbeing, experiences including animals such as alpaca walking, bird watching, star gazing would all make great Worcestershire experiences.

- **Waterways** - the meandering rivers Severn, Teme and Avon run through several of the county's towns and, along with the extensive canal network, offer plenty of opportunities for visitors to enjoy activities on or by the water but we would love to take this one further, experiences such a 'Lock keeper for the day' or paddle board wildlife tours?
- **Food & drink** – not only does Worcestershire have great places to eat and drink but the majority of the UK's soft fruits, apples and pears are grown within the county. With its internationally recognised asparagus, award-winning vineyards, it's safe to say Worcestershire's food scene is more than just the sauce! But can we celebrate that more? Brewery Tours, or a design your own beer experience, field to fork, foraging, bake your own bread/scones/cake/brownies/etc., be a pub chef for the day. The list is endless...

In addition to our four main thematic areas, we would also encourage experiences which involve, **arts, crafts & culture**. This could be 'be an artist for the day', pottery making, make your own jewellery or glass blowing.

### Visit Worcestershire Signature Experiences – Examples

These four products are examples of potential new visitor experiences in Worcestershire. They have been created to give you an idea of the types of experiences that could be developed and what visitors are looking for. Don't be put off by the terms 'local guide' or a 'local expert' - as a local business you are the local or the expert!

Each experience has been written to engage and persuade the visitor to book, without giving away all of the information to enable the visitor to do the experience alone. The best experiences are the ones visitors simply cannot do by themselves.

#### The Secret Severn

**Key theme:** Waterways

The River Severn flows through the heart of Worcestershire and is the longest river in Great Britain. It might be the longest and one of the most well-known rivers in Britain, but it's full of secrets and stories that only the locals really know. Your local guide will take you by small boat as you paddle your way through history hearing the stories of how this river was formed millions of years ago and how it played its part in the Industrial Revolution. You'll get up close to the wildlife that use the riverbank as their home and take part in monitoring the wildlife as you explore. Step back on to dry land and enjoy a local ploughman's lunch with some of the best local cheeses, hams and pickles and not to mention a glass of something refreshing from the nearby brewery!

People: Local guide, boat hire business, pub

Place: Close to the River Severn

Participation: Paddle a boat, take part in a local wildlife monitoring survey, have lunch in a local pub

Key Markets: Domestic, North America, Northern Europe

Segments: Couples, Families, Solo, Groups

### **Cathedral, Castle, Canal & Cake**

**Key theme:** Heritage

Your local guide takes you on a fascinating walking history tour of the city of Worcester. Without your guide you might have walked past many of the sights without knowing the stories and the importance, as you discover the city through the eyes of a local historian. Step inside wonderful Worcester Cathedral, a stunning architectural gem which is the final resting place of King John, two saints, a prince, a duke and a prime minister. Walk along the famous Worcester to Birmingham Canal and see the beautiful Tudor black and white building nestled alongside the canal which is most famous for their role in the English Civil War. After a walk up Fort Royal Hill where the old Worcester Castle once sat, enjoy a pot of tea and a slice of homemade cake in the Commandery gardens.

People: Local guide, museum, cafe, cathedral

Place: Worcester

Participation: Walking tour, tea and cake in cafe gardens Key Markets: Domestic, North America, Northern Europe Segments: Couples, Solo, Groups

### **Saucy Worcestershire**

**Key theme:** Food & Drink

Worcestershire is world famous for its fermented condiment invented in the early 19th Century by the pharmacists John Wheeley Lea and William Henry Perrins in the city of Worcester. The sauce soon became a firm favourite in many households. Follow in the footsteps of Lea and Perrins on this food and drink tour of the beautiful historic city of Worcester. Your local foodie guide will take you to some of the best restaurants, bars and cafes in the city as you taste some of the best food and drink all served with the famous Worcestershire Sauce! You'll be eating hot tasty Worcestershire Hob Cheese on toast, deviled eggs and a Bloody Mary cocktail. Along the way your guide will share the story of Lea and Perrins success and bring to life the history of the city. And you'll not only leave with a full stomach, but full of fascinating stories and of course a bottle of the sauce!

People: Local guide, food & drink businesses

Place: Worcester

Participation: Walking tour, 2 course lunch served with a cocktail

Key Markets: North America, Northern Europe

Segments: Couples, Solo, Groups

### **Sounds of Silence**

**Key theme:** Green Spaces

The beautiful Wyre Forest is the UK's largest ancient woodland dating back to the year 900. This enchanting forest is home to a vast array of wildlife including protected mammals, reptiles and birds. Your local nature guide will take you through the diverse landscape of

trees, old orchards and open grassland meadows. You'll soon feel the sense of calm surrounded by nature as you pause and begin to listen to the sounds of silence. As you take in the sights and sounds, you'll enjoy a cup of herbal tea. You'll learn about the protections of this important place for wildlife and geology, and how it became a National Nature Reserve. As you walk, you'll discover how the forest plays a vital role in tackling climate change and biodiversity loss as well as providing a source of sustainable, home-grown timber and carbon capture. Your guide has special permission to forage so you'll get to taste some of the edible seasonal treats of the forest in a lunch specially prepared for you.

People: Local guide, Wildlife Trust

Place: Wyre Forest National Nature Reserve

Participation: Woodland walk, herbal tree and foraged lunch Key Markets: Domestic, North America, Northern Europe Segments: Couples, Solo, Groups

## **What does the Programme entail?**

The programme will take place during Autumn/Winter of 2023, and will be available to a maximum of 25 businesses, support includes:

- 2 x 3-hour initial workshops led by Chris Brant from Unmissable England. The workshops will provide useful insights into experiential tourism including (but not limited to):
  - Introduction to visitor experiences
  - Developing a 'bookable' visitor experience
  - Identifying stories for new experiential tourism products
  - How to structure an experience
  - Introduction businesses to VW approach to 'bookability' with Beyonk and other routes to market
  - Workshops provide an introduction to Experiential Tourism and the programme and therefore not exclusive to just the 25 businesses enlisted. Up to 40 businesses will be able to attend each workshop (but may only attend one)
- 1 x 30-minute 1:1 Quick-Pitch video call with Chris to further discuss initial ideas and concepts.
- Up to 3 hours of bespoke individual support from Unmissable England to develop emerging/new products and bring these concepts to market.
- 1 x bespoke support session with Beyonk to understand the platform and how to bring your product to market online.
- Onboarding support with Beyonk to make the experiential tourism product bookable online.
- If the above programme is successfully completed, a grant of £1,500 from Visit Worcestershire will be made available to support the development of the experiential tourism product.

## **What would the Grant support?**

The Experiential Tourism Grant is designed to act as ‘seed funding’ to help get your new product off the ground. No match funding is required, but you do need to successfully complete the Programme before you are eligible. There is a more detailed Grant Information pack, but as a quick summary – grants can be used for:

- New machinery and/or equipment necessary to delivering your experience.
- Further consultancy support or advice if needed.
- Marketing & website development.
- External market research

All costs must be related to your proposal and grants will be paid after purchases have been made and evidenced.

### What is the Eligibility Criteria?

To be eligible for the Experiential Tourism Programme, your business must meet the following criteria:

- Your business must be based within Worcestershire.
- Your business must meet SME Status (please refer to [this page](#) of the Government website for the definition of an SME and how they are defined.)
- Businesses from all sectors are eligible to receive this support – it is not solely restricted to the Tourism and Hospitality sectors. However, they must have a rough idea of the Experiential Tourism product they want to create and be committed to bringing it to market and working with Visit Worcestershire.
- The business must have been trading for a minimum of 3 months before the start date of the programme.
- You must be able to participate in the whole Experiential Programme, including workshops & 121 sessions.
- Experiential Tourism products must meet the definition of Experiential Tourism to qualify & link to one of our core priority themes outlined on page 1.
  - *“An ‘experience’ actively involves visitors to partake, where they will create lasting memories and have the opportunity to engage with local stories, culture and to connect with the essence of a place and its people. They should be visible, bookable, available, guided and practical.”*

To be eligible to receive a grant from Visit Worcestershire to help set up the Experiential Tourism product, the additional criteria must be met:

- The product must be complete and available to book online no later than **6 months** from the end date of the Programme. If you are accepted for the grant support and it becomes apparent the product will not be ready by the deadline for reasons within

your control, Visit Worcestershire reserve the right to cancel the agreement and not reimburse the business for any spent expenditure.

- All sections of the Experiential Tourism Programme must have been completed. Missing one or more sections will make your business ineligible to receive the grant support funding.
- The business must be prepared to onboard with recommended provider Beyonk to bring their Experiential Tourism product to market and make it bookable online.
- The grant will be provided as Minimum Financial Assistance (MFA) under Section 36(1) of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. The UK's new Subsidy Control regime is described in the [BEIS Technical Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/technical-guidance) here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/subsidy-control-regime>.

## How will VW decide who to support?

Visit Worcestershire only has funding to support 25 businesses with this pilot programme.

The Project Team and Unmissable England will assess Expressions of Interests and review them against our Priority Themes, eligibility criteria and the market research undertaken by Unmissable England.

If you are not successful at this stage, the team will advise of other support, and signpost where relevant to partners or alternative VW support.

## How do I apply?

If you are interested in the programme, please fill out the Expression of Interest form in Appendix A and send to:

- Dominique Bray, Business Growth Manager/Programme Project Manager – [dbray@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:dbray@worcestershire.gov.uk) / 01905 846158.
- Georgina Walklett, Project Support Officer – [gwalklett@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:gwalklett@worcestershire.gov.uk) / 01905 846299

If you have any questions about anything at all, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Visit Worcestershire Experiential Tourism Programme project team on the numbers above.

## Appendix One: Expression of Interest Form

Named Contact at Business:	
Contact Number:	
Contact Email Address:	
Business Name:	
Business Address:	
Business Sector & Current Main Trading Focus:	
Brief description of the experiential tourism product/idea you would like to bring to market:	
How does this link to the VW Priority areas?	
What, if any online ticketing platform do you currently use?	

***By submitting this Expression of Interest Form, you agree that:***

- You have read and understood the eligibility criteria.
- A place on the Experiential Tourism Programme is not guaranteed. The programme is available to only 25 businesses and eligibility will be assessed by VW & Unmissable England based on strategic fit.
- You must complete the full Experiential Tourism Programme to be eligible for a grant. Not completing one or more parts of the programme will make you ineligible to receive the grant.

**I confirm that I wish to express my interest in the Experiential Tourism Programme, I have read and understood the Eligibility Criteria and wish to be considered for support.**

**Signed.....**

**Dated.....**