



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP  
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport  
Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport  
100 Parliament Street  
London  
SW1A 2BQ

25 November 2020

Our Ref: TE16531

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you to draw your attention to the crisis facing coastal tourism economies on the English coast and the need for urgent action to deliver a programme of recovery.

You will be aware that coastal towns and resorts have been particularly under threat from Covid-19. [The National Coastal Tourism Academy](#) (NCTA) forecasts that the economic impact on this sector will be £10.35bn for 2020, a loss of around 191,000 jobs.

The NCTA's latest Business Survey in October indicates that 30% of businesses are unsure if they can survive until March 2021, 62% say it will take more than a year to return to profit and 68% believe they will only survive with on-going government grant support. Seven percent of coastal tourism businesses are now permanently closed. Although Summer 2020 saw good numbers of day visitors, there was a 58% reduction in tourism spend.

However, the NCTA believe that coastal tourism economies can recover by 2023 if they're supported now. There is significant consumer interest in visiting the coast, in wellness, sustainable travel and in the new England Coast Path but to capitalise on this and kick-start a blue recovery, a nationally co-ordinated strategy is needed. I recently met a group of coastal MPs and the NCTA to support a three-year recovery programme.

In its first year, 2021, working with over 35 coastal Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), more than 2,000 coastal tourism businesses and in partnership with VisitEngland/VisitBritain this programme would deliver:

- **Business Support:** a series of recovery webinars focused on extending the coastal tourism season, new product development, toolkits to boost off-peak opportunities, online training
- **Marketing, PR & Digital campaigns:** domestic and international activity targeted at identified audiences to generate bookings throughout 2021 to rebuild the sector
- New product development for the travel trade, on sale through domestic and international tour operators, promotion of the whole of England's Coast at trade events

*All correspondence should be addressed to the House of Commons*

- Creation of new inspirational content focusing on sustainable and off-peak travel to the coast, translated for European markets and shared across VisitBritain and partner channels
- **Resilience Building:** maintaining and developing successful DMO networks and business and stakeholder bodies to share best practice and Covid-19 lessons learnt, creation of user-friendly toolkits and case studies – these networks have proved vital to the safe reopening of our coast
- **Build Back Better:** Collaboration with DMOs, stakeholders, government departments (including Natural England/DEFRA's England Coast Path) towards the launch of 2023 - The Year of the Coast to create new trails, events and sustainable travel packages

**Cost and Return on Investment:** £517,000 per annum minimum would be required to deliver the programme. Commercial partners would provide cash match of £50-100k plus in-kind support. Minimum ROI 5:1.

The NCTA have informed me of their proven track record in delivering change; its VisitEngland-funded Discover England Fund project [England's Coast](#) for example created £22m media value for £1m investment received from 2017 to 2019.

The NCTA believe this investment will retain expertise and capabilities of the NCTA that will otherwise be lost and supports a safe and agile bounce-back of the sector.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal and how our coastal towns can be recovered.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David T. P.". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'T'.