

Appendix 4: Letter of Support Visit County Durham

Nick Malyan
The Miners' Hall
Flass Street
Redhill
Durham
DH1 4BE

Dear Nick

On behalf of Visit County Durham, I am writing to offer full support for your bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to conserve, sustain and provide access to the cultural heritage of Redhills (Durham Miners Hall) in Durham City for future generations.

Your plans are well known to us and you are engaged with the county's process (Durham Tourism Management Plan 2016-20) to ensuring that developments in the visitor economy make a contribution to the county's objectives for growing the value of tourism and that developments fit with the priorities of the tourism management plan.

The idea of developing the visitor offer and conferencing facilities at Redhills would contribute to several of the Durham Tourism Management Plan priorities for the growth of the visitor economy including; developing new products, lengthening the amount of time that visitors spend in the county, attracting new staying visitors, addressing seasonality, improving quality, and enhancing local distinctiveness. In particular, from an initial review, the proposals could fill some of the gaps in Durham's current offer which are clearly identified in the plan:-

A cluster of visitor attractions in Durham City:

Premier historic cities such as York, Bath, Oxford and Chester have more than one nationally recognised attraction, while York has three very high profile attractions and fourteen within walking distance of the city centre. Durham lacks this critical mass and, as a result, struggles to keep people in the city for longer than half a day

Conference venues:

Durham currently lacks a dedicated conference facility. Conferencing takes place across a range of the county's larger hotels and it is mainly corporate in nature.

Demand for facilities has been demonstrated through research and an enhanced conference offer could help address the county's seasonality challenges. However, the cost of creating a facility is currently prohibitive. Plans to develop a hotel at the Emirates Riverside Cricket Ground and the prospect of development at the Milburngate site in Durham City may change the county's conference offer.

In addition to the local strategic fit of the planned developments, at a national level Business Events is a priority for Government and VisitBritain. Recognised as an important growth sector for the UK in 2016 Business visits accounted for 24% of all international visits and contributed £5.5 billion in spend.

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Durham is recognised by VisitBritain as a Tier 2 business events destination and a key destination for development. Visit County Durham, with support from VisitBritain, is currently reviewing the county's conferencing offer with a view to identifying an approach and proposition to attract the associations market to Durham, delegate numbers for this market are between 50 to 400 per event, and we need dedicated facilities with a strong partnership of venues in order to fulfil market requirements.

For the reasons outlined in this letter I can confirm that we are committed to being a partner for this project; during the development phase and once the building is re-opened Visit County Durham can provide significant additionality and in-kind support to ensure the project

is a success.

Please be assured of Visit County Durham's continuing support as you enter this exciting phase and we hope that you are successful in your bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

With best wishes

Michelle Gorman

Managing Director