



Local Visitor
Economy
Partnership

Recognised by



VisitEngland

EXPERIENCE OXFORDSHIRE IMPACT

2024/25



**WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO GROW
A PRODUCTIVE, SUSTAINABLE
VISITOR ECONOMY**

experienceoxfordshire.org/partner

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CHAIRMAN'S FORWARD

Two years ago, at the Experience Oxfordshire Ambassador Dinner, Nick de Bois CBE, Chair of the British Tourist Authority, shared the outcome of his independent review of the English tourism management landscape.

His report called for the creation of Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEP): entities which would be the national tourism agencies' go-to partner for local insight; a conduit for communication regarding strategic development; and to work with VisitBritain/VisitEngland to promote their destination at home and overseas.

Experience Oxfordshire was recognised in The de Bois Review as a high performing destination management organisation (DMO) and was one of the first partnerships to receive LVEP accreditation. Since then, the county has benefitted from having a seat at the national tourism table.

Experience Oxfordshire's role as an LVEP unlocks business resources and marketing opportunities which would not otherwise be available to Oxfordshire and gives the county a voice and influence in the development of national decisions which impact locally.

This position is only possible with the ongoing support of visitor economy businesses and influencers through our collaborative partnership.

Our Ambassador partners bring valuable insight and investment to the organisation's work and collectively, with the two hundred partner businesses representing all sectors within the Oxfordshire economy, provide the level of confidence in Experience Oxfordshire that the national tourism agency, VisitBritain/VisitEngland expects from its strategic delivery partners.

By supporting Experience Oxfordshire, a not-for-profit organisation and the delivery arm of the Experience Oxfordshire Charitable Trust, our partnership is investing in Oxfordshire's future as a thriving visitor destination. At this year's Ambassador Dinner, guest speaker and industry expert, Bernard Donoghue OBE, spoke of the benefits of investing in local tourism as a generator of wealth, supporting the development of local business and community. He commended the Experience Oxfordshire partnership for the cohesion it provides to the county's visitor economy.

This 2024/25 review illustrates Experience Oxfordshire's impact and wide-ranging programme of activity: promoting the county to potential visitors, engaging with the travel trade to ensure Oxfordshire features in itineraries sold at home and overseas, growing the value of the business events market, developing profitable relationships amongst local visitor economy operators and advocating for the sector's future at the highest levels.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Trustees I thank the executive team for this impressive body of work and I hope that, if you have not already done so, you will join the Experience Oxfordshire partnership and make your commitment to the development of the sector's successful, sustainable future.

STUART CROOK
Experience Oxfordshire Chair



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Our work throughout 2024/25 has focussed on keeping Oxfordshire top of mind amongst potential leisure and business visitors, brokering valuable partnerships to strengthen the visitor experience offered, and ensuring the views of Oxfordshire operators are heard by those whose decisions impact on our sector.

In delivering this agenda, the Experience Oxfordshire team has undertaken domestic and international travel trade missions to meet the tour operators and buyers influencing our most valuable markets. Face to face meetings have been held with hundreds of national and international bookers on behalf of our venue partners to sell the benefits of holding meetings and conferences in the county. Articles packed with reasons why readers should visit Oxfordshire have been published around the globe, following media visits organised by our marketing team, whilst a regular stream of communications is distributed to our ever growing Experience Oxfordshire community of visitors, media, trade, influencers and businesses. Partnership meetings and networking events have been welcomed and well attended, offering opportunities to share experiences and knowledge amongst operators in the county's visitor economy.

The county has benefitted from our position as a VisitEngland accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). We successfully bid to its LVEP Asset Grant Fund to capture 500 new images of locations across the county including iconic images for use by VisitBritain in its work promoting the UK internationally. As part of its library, these inspirational new images are available for use by the wider tourism industry at home and overseas.

Providing inspiration was top of the agenda when we welcomed travel trade and media from Canada to the county for a four-day educational visit, involving 33 of our partners, as part of VisitBritain's, Showcase Britain 2025. Our LVEP status has allowed us to offer Oxfordshire's operators access to the national tourism agency's training platforms to expand their skills in selling to international audiences, to visitors with access needs and to build awareness of the latest sustainable operating practices.

We have partnered with VisitBritain, supporting the baseline delivery of their international marketing activity and amplifying their key messages.

Timed to reflect the launch of VisitBritain's blockbuster "Starring Great Britain" global marketing campaign, Experience Oxfordshire Charitable Trust's annual Cultural Platform, focussed on Screen Tourism. Our guest speaker, Supervising Location Manager, Tony Hood, then working on Season 4 of Bridgerton for Netflix, shared his experiences of working with Oxfordshire operators to create high-grossing film and TV which in turn build destination awareness and desire to visit amongst viewers. The theme was also incorporated into our walking tours programme with Oxford Official Walking Tours offering Oxford On Screen, an exciting new tour looking at the city through the lens of iconic film and TV shows.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT



Protecting the interests of our sector is paramount to all we do and engaging with our local decision influencers through English Tourism Week 2025 and our pre-budget Autumn Cross Parliamentary MP Round Table discussions gave partners an active voice in the national growth debate.

Our annual business survey shows that although many operators flourished in 2024 with the rise in the number of international travellers visiting the county, others saw numbers drop and with margins tight, the operating environment for 2025 is causing concern.

Oxfordshire is better placed than many destinations to nurture a thriving visitor economy and Experience Oxfordshire's purpose is to work in partnership to encourage its sustainable development and productive growth.

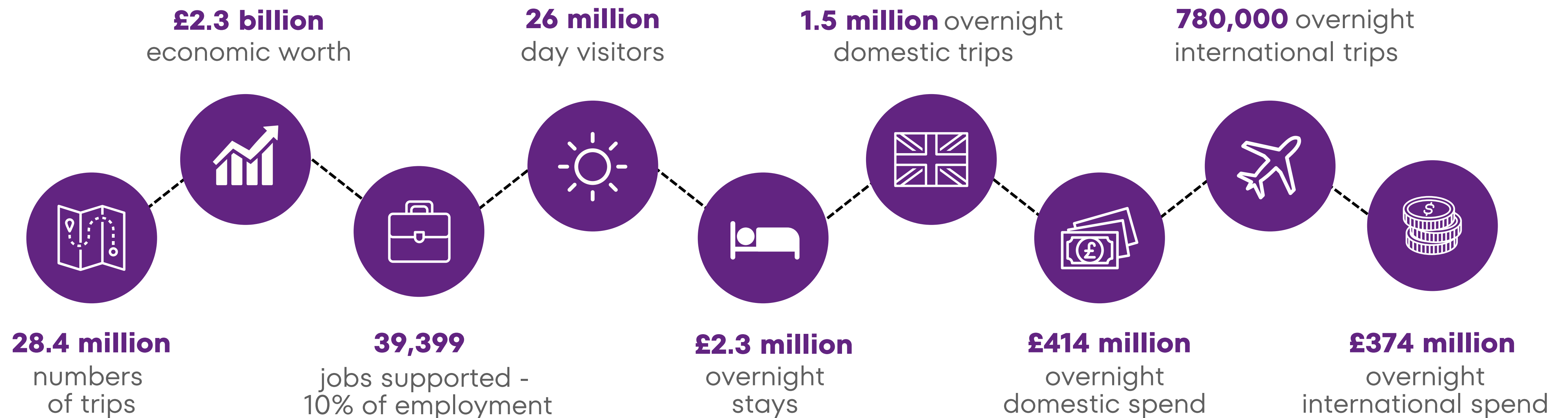
The government's stated ambition is to welcome 50 million international visitors to the UK by 2030. With this front of mind Experience Oxfordshire is seizing every opportunity to ensure the county benefits from the projected growth. The team here is adept at responding to challenges and I am proud to lead a team which always responds with a much appreciated positive and pro-active approach. The Board of Directors and Trustees continues to provide strategic advice and our partnership remains strong and supportive. The team and I are grateful for this confidence in our work and I hope that this publication, highlighting our outputs and impact, demonstrates our commitment in delivering against our sector's and our partners' expectations of us.

HAYLEY BEER-GAMAGE
Experience Oxfordshire CEO



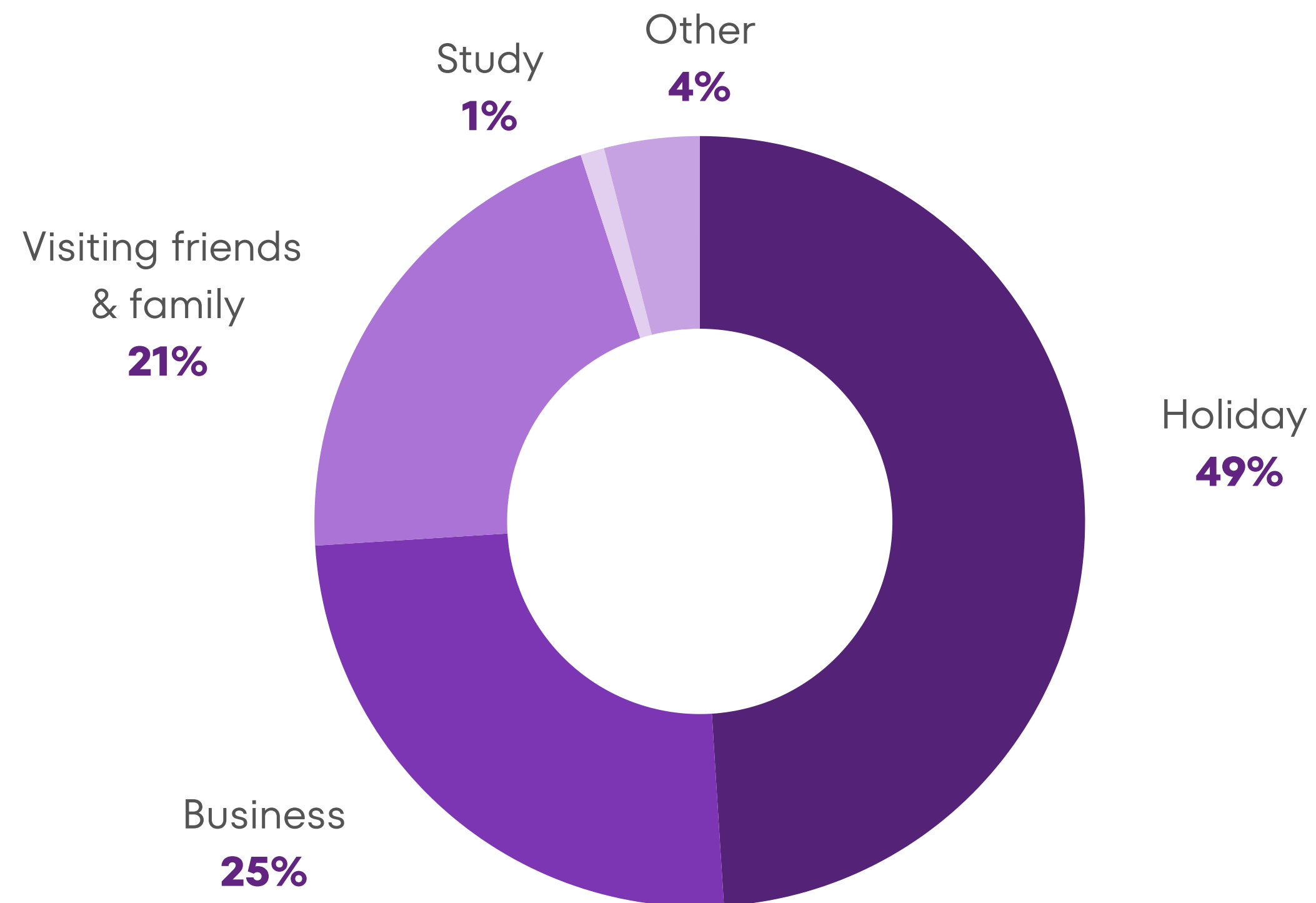
THE VALUE OF OXFORDSHIRE'S VISITOR ECONOMY

Tourism and the visitor economy are a core part of the Oxfordshire ecosystem. Revenues raised from visitor spend and the related business investment contributes to the local economy, supports services and experiences enjoyed by the local residents, creates jobs and offers opportunities for skills development and career advancement.

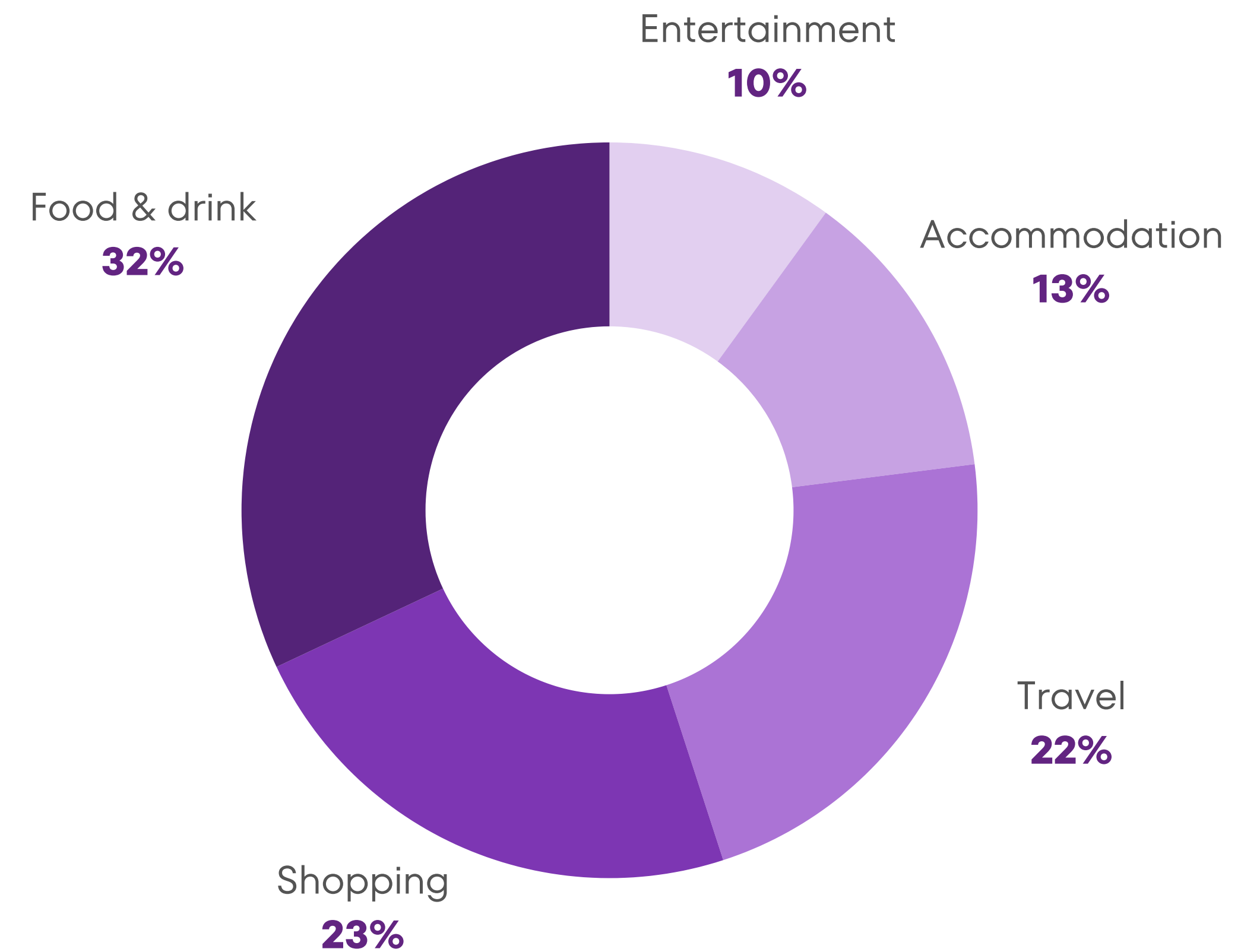


THE VALUE OF OXFORDSHIRE'S VISITOR ECONOMY

Purpose of trip



Breakdown of expenditure



(Source: Experience Oxfordshire Economic Impact Survey 2023)

ABOUT EXPERIENCE OXFORDSHIRE

Experience Oxfordshire is the trading arm of the parent charity, the Experience Oxfordshire Charitable Trust, we are a not-for-profit organisation, committed to the promotion, management and development of Oxfordshire as a great destination to live, work, visit and do business. We raise our income through the provision of partnership services and through engagement with visitors via Oxford Official Walking Tours.



As a member of the LVEP group of high performing locally supported organisations, we advocate for the sector, enjoying a clear line of communication to the key national bodies, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and other government departments influencing tourism.



We work with a growing partnership network of some 200 businesses spanning all sectors linked to the visitor economy. Partners access a range of benefits and business development support to deliver a joint ambition of making tourism work for everyone and to drive sustainable growth across the visitor economy by increasing the value of visitor expenditure.



As the LVEP for Oxfordshire we are the national tourism agencies' principal local delivery partner ensuring the county's visitor economy features in VisitBritain's global marketing and trade engagement activities and local businesses have access to bespoke training packages and distribution channels.



We were one of the first English destination management organisations to gain Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status when, in 2023, VisitEngland began the application of a new strategic structure to the English tourism delivery landscape.



Experience Oxfordshire is a corporate member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Events, a cross-party group made up of members from both Houses of Parliament. The group champions the UK events industry by increasing its profile among Members of Parliament, Government Ministers, and senior officials across Whitehall.



A PROFESSIONAL APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIP



Advocacy

The official Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for the county, speaking on behalf of Oxfordshire's visitor economy at local, regional and national level



Website

All partners have a dedicated page on experienceoxfordshire.org, which had over a million page views in 2024/25



Venue finding service

Promoting partners' meeting, conference or events venues through our dedicated buyer website experienceoxfordshire.org/venues and on territory representation. This activity generated requests for proposals worth over £1.2 million in 2024/25



Social media

Promoting partner businesses through an extensive social media programme to our 45k+ followers



Discounted marketing

Partners receive discounts on marketing campaigns including the annual Oxfordshire Visitor Guide



Media relations

Hundreds of press enquiries are serviced each year from local, national and international journalists, content creators and social media influencers. Estimated reach for leisure tourism stories in 2024/25 was 170 million individuals



Business support

Offering practical advice and expert guidance; signposting funding sources and grant streams; identifying productive leads and brokering introductions. As the county's LVEP we provide access to VisitBritain/VisitEngland's training platforms and opportunities



Partner discounts

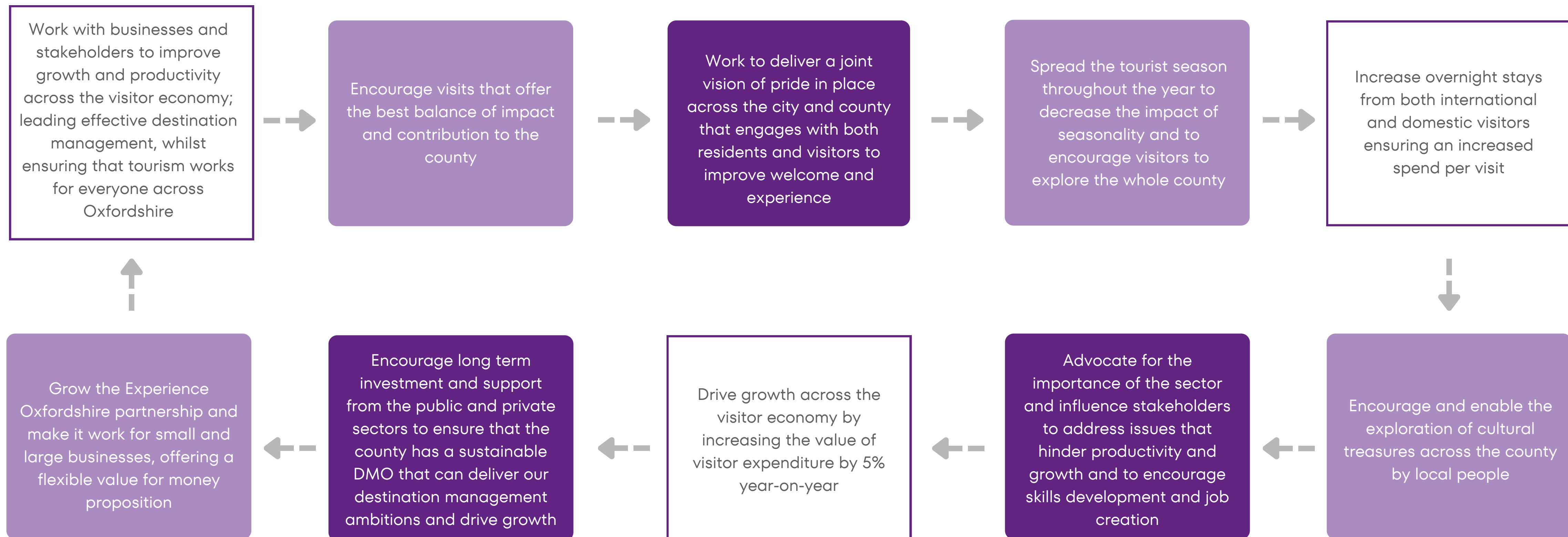
Our Perks for Partners programme offers exclusive partner only discounts on things to see and do in Oxfordshire – a great benefit to offer team members and drive visits to your business



Networking and events

Exclusive access to our year-round programme of partner meetings, seminars and networking events. 700 participants attended the 16 events we held in 2024/25

OUR AMBITION STATEMENT



ADVOCACY FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY

Experience Oxfordshire uses its unique position as the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for the county to speak on the sector's behalf and to engage with key decision makers and influencers at local and national level.

Cross-party discussion of the visitor economy

Prior to the new government's autumn budget Experience Oxfordshire hosted a cross-party discussion of the visitor economy with three of the newly elected Oxfordshire MPs. Businesses and key influencers from across all related sectors of the visitor economy heard Sean Woodcock, Labour MP for Banbury, Olly Glover, Liberal Democrat MP for Didcot and Wantage, and Charlie Maynard, Liberal Democrat MP for Witney speak about the infrastructure, employment and economic issues affecting the sector in Oxfordshire but also of its excellent reputation and strengths and the opportunities it could harness.



All Party Parliamentary Group for Events

The Business Visits and Events (BVE) market is a highly valuable component of Oxfordshire's visitor economy, spreading benefits across the county. Experience Oxfordshire has a strong programme of work in place to encourage the growth of this sector. Our work has been publicly recognised with the appointment of CEO Hayley Beer-Gamage to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Events. The APPG will help shape Government's Parliamentary Plan of Work to agreed priorities for this sector over the course of the next Parliament.



Providing a voice for the visitor economy



As well as engaging with politicians our CEO, Hayley Beer-Gamage, frequently appears in the media to highlight current issues facing Oxfordshire businesses and to promote the potential of the local visitor economy. Recent opportunities covered business growth through collaboration on Get Radio's Business Brunch and the impact on recruitment of the sector's image on BBC Radio Oxford.



LVEP Parliamentary Showcase

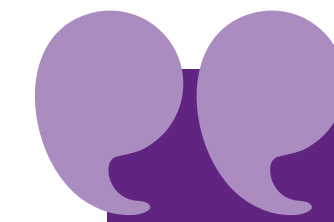
In the spring, Experience Oxfordshire was in Parliament participating in VisitEngland's LVEP Showcase which offered local MPs the opportunity to drop in and engage on subjects ranging from marketing strategy through to the regenerative opportunities a thriving visitor economy can create.

ADVOCACY FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY

English Tourism Week

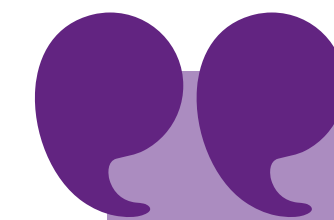
The importance of the sector was top of mind during English Tourism Week 2025 when Experience Oxfordshire delivered an extensive programme of activity highlighting the contribution tourism and the broader visitor economy make to the county.

The Rt Hon Anneliese Dodds MP for Oxford East, Freddie van Mierlo MP for Henley and Thame, and Sean Woodcock MP for Banbury met with **Oxford River Cruises** and **The Folly Restaurant**, the **River & Rowing Museum**, and **Hook Norton Brewery** respectively to discuss their businesses and the opportunities available to the broader visitor economy as well as the challenges it faces.



We congratulate Experience Oxfordshire, the county's Local Visitor Economy Partnership, for delivering a valuable programme of engagement throughout this flagship week and beyond, working with key influencers, stakeholders and businesses to showcase Oxfordshire's outstanding visitor offer."

Andrew Stokes, VisitEngland Director



English Tourism Week gives us a great opportunity to highlight what tourism provides for our city - economically, socially, and culturally too."

The Rt Hon Anneliese Dodds, MP for Oxford East



We are proud to be part of the county's thriving visitor economy. From the river we offer visitors and residents the opportunity to discover Oxford from a unique perspective. Along with our fellow Experience Oxfordshire partners we're looking forward to a busy summer season and it's been a pleasure to discuss our operations with Anneliese Dodds today."

Giles Dobson, owner of The Folly Restaurant and Oxford River Cruises



MARKETING

Through our website, regular communications and digital guides Experience Oxfordshire maintains an ongoing conversation with potential visitors, residents and friends of Oxfordshire around the world, sharing inspirational ideas to encourage visits.

We extend our reach by delivering high performing marketing campaigns on behalf of our partners and the county. We work on marketing initiatives in partnership with VisitBritain/VisitEngland and we have strong relationships with local and national media.

Experience Oxfordshire promotional reach



547,000
newsletters issued



1,021,000
pageviews



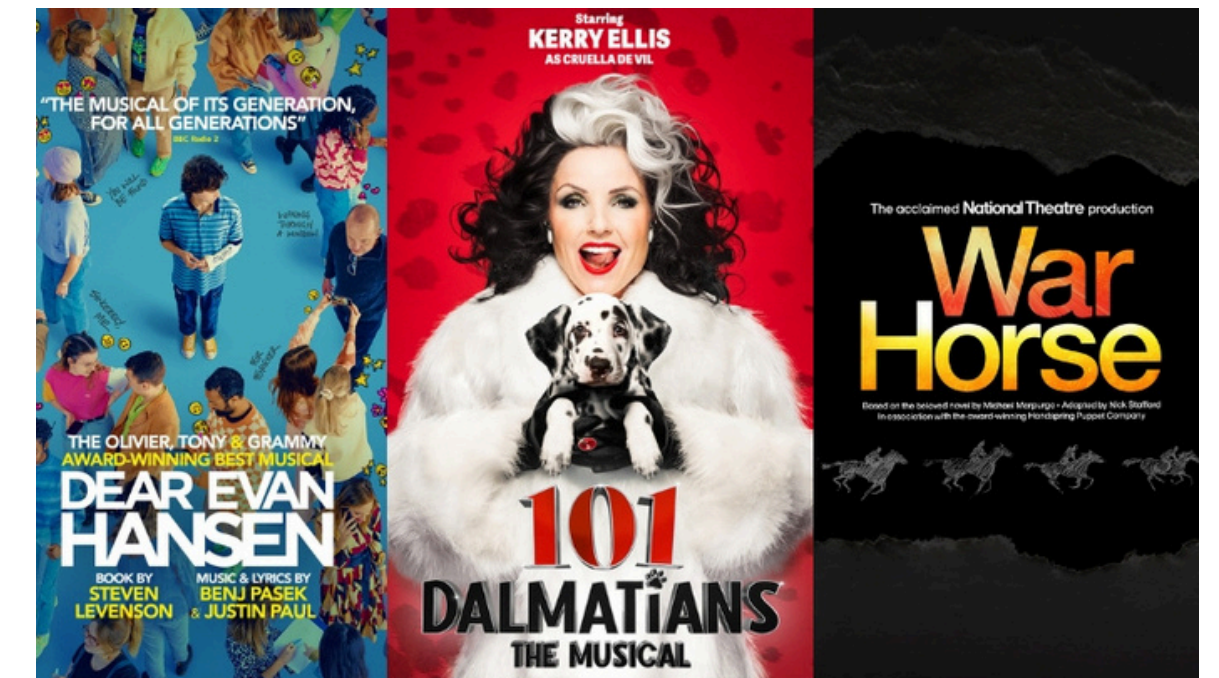
45,000
social media followers

Marketing partnerships

During the year, we worked with our Ambassador partner **The Store, Oxford** and our partner **New Theatre Oxford** on two highly-successful competitions. We received 10,000 entries, offering a great opportunity to extend our reach and connect 5,000+ new subscribers to Experience Oxfordshire's communications.



Win a spectacular stay at The Store plus a private walking tour of Oxford



Win a pair of tickets to an upcoming New Theatre Oxford show

Bauer Radio / Greatest Hits Radio

We enjoy a highly productive relationship with Ambassador partner **Bauer Radio** and this winter we ran two festive adverts which aired over the Christmas period and offered listeners a host of great ways to make the most of Oxfordshire during the holiday.

Visitor Economy Renaissance Programme

Having successfully bid to Enterprise Oxfordshire for funding to deliver a series of high-profile, strategic marketing campaigns between 2022 and 2024 as part of the Visitor Economy Renaissance Programme (VERP), we were delighted to secure further funding this year to extend our **Only in Oxfordshire** campaign to raise awareness of Oxfordshire as a destination for off-peak leisure breaks.

Digital campaign activity focussed on driving potential visitors to the Arts & Culture Hub, to discover the breadth of remarkable events and festivals on offer in Oxfordshire.



	34,000,000 individuals engaged with campaign
	741,000 video views
	333,000 visits to campaign pages
	11,000 opted in email addresses
	1,200+ businesses/events promoted

The Oxfordshire Welcome

The Only in Oxfordshire campaigns and related activity delivered record results and created a legacy in the form of photography and video assets, evergreen media and influencer content, extended our communication’s reach and produced two innovative new products in the **Arts & Culture Hub** and **The Oxfordshire Welcome**.

The Oxfordshire Welcome invites businesses to align with 14 pledge-points confirming their commitment to delivering great customer service. It’s a self-assessment process, free to join, and was designed to build pride within the sector whilst giving confidence in Oxfordshire to potential visitors. There are currently 220 businesses supporting the scheme.



This is a sector embracing many different types of business and Experience Oxfordshire has done great work in ensuring visibility for all within their activity.

As well as the excellent campaign engagement results, we were particularly delighted to see that legacy played such a central role in the activity planning. Initiatives such as The Oxfordshire Welcome and online developments to enable improved Arts and Culture event information provision are areas which continue to have longevity and impact.”

Helen Ryan-Wallis, Head of Strategic Development & Programmes, Enterprise Oxfordshire

MEDIA RELATIONS

During the year the team responded to 122 media enquiries from ten markets around the globe reaching an audience of approximately 170 million with opportunities offered to 150 Experience Oxfordshire partners.

Many enquiries have been pre-screened by VisitBritain’s press office and the team works closely with the national agencies to build coverage from media outlets and influencers at home and internationally.

We respond to their regular “content call-outs” providing ideas and inspiration which they feature in their rounds-ups to the world’s travel media. We attend VisitEngland’s annual Meet the Media event where we update press and content creators on the latest product developments in the county.

In a global tourism marketplace, where Britain is a familiar destination to many, we need to ensure Oxfordshire remains fresh and aspirational, top of mind for potential visitors. We are grateful for all the partners who have supported us in delivering such an exciting set of press trips this year.

We were delighted to welcome media from Australia, Brazil, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Italy, United Kingdom and the United States of America.



122
media enquiries



170,000,000
estimated reach



150
opportunities offered to
Experience Oxfordshire
partners

MEDIA RELATIONS



@teganphilippa & @itsnedkelly
255 thousand followers



Folha de S Paulo
29 million readers



The Hindustan Times
1.1 million readers



@declanhan
170 thousand followers



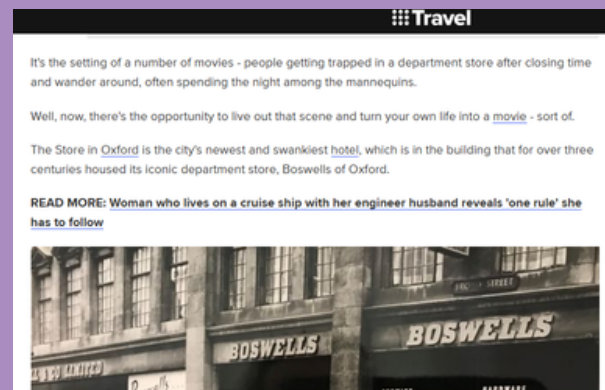
Northern Ireland Travel News
22 thousand circulation



The West Australian
1 million readers



@clairehao
20 thousand followers



9Travel
10 million readers



Motor Magazine
400 thousand readers



@mariaandoliviatravel
960 thousand pageviews



Viaggi - La Stampa
1.4 million readers



@theawayist
46.6 thousand followers



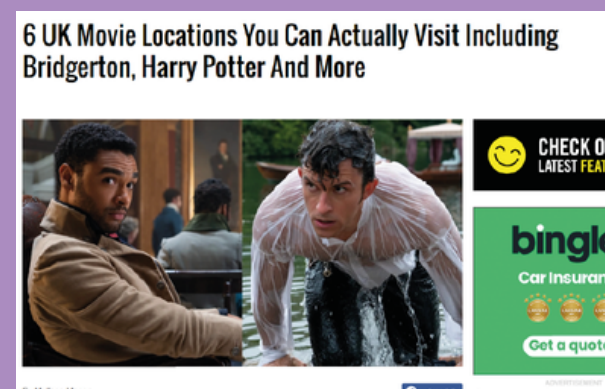
@kenapeay
580 thousand followers



The Howorths
20 thousand readers



Télé 7 Jours
11 million readers



Pedestrian TV
1.3 million readers



@filmtourismus
1 million followers



Travel + Leisure
4.8 million readers



The Mirror
33 million readers

WORKING WITH THE TRAVEL TRADE

The travel trade including tour operators, travel agents, buyers and bookers remains a highly efficient route to market Oxfordshire and our partner businesses. Building and maintaining strong relationships with the travel trade can facilitate access to new audiences through increased visibility and extended reach within an existing or new territory. Over the course of the year we met with 500+ travel trade representatives.

Excursions Group Travel Show 2025, Wembley, London



Excursions is the longest-running domestic group travel show and provides the perfect opportunity to showcase the county's group product to qualified group travel organisers, coach and tour operators. Following on from our success at the event last year we were joined on a large-scale branded Experience Oxfordshire stand by partners **Didcot Railway Centre, Heythrop Park Hotel, Keble College, Oxford Official Walking Tours, Silverstone Museum** and **Waddesdon Manor**.

VisitBritain Australia Travel Trade Mission



For the first time since 2016 Experience Oxfordshire was in Australia as a headline sponsor attending VisitBritain's 2024 Travel Trade Mission, led by VisitBritain Chair, Nick de Bois CBE. As Oxfordshire's fifth most important inbound market for overall spend, we presented to and met with Australian product managers, tour operators, travel agents and travel trade media in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane to sell in Oxfordshire as a must-include destination in itineraries to the UK.

Britain & Ireland Market Place (BIM)



The VisitBritain supported ETOA/UKInbound Britain & Ireland Marketplace, held in London, provided the team with 32 face-to-face meetings with global buyers. The event sits within Showcase Britain, VisitBritain's international business-to-business (B2B) hosted buyer programme, providing UK tourism suppliers and destinations opportunities to connect with over 100+ hosted international travel buyers and enabling these buyers to experience new product and itinerary ideas first-hand with a view to generating new business sales through a series of educational visits.

Facilitation and representation



As well as representing partners at travel trade events we facilitate introductions, matching overseas buyers to appropriate Oxfordshire operators. We were happy to support buyer visits from High Point Holidays (UK DMC) and French travel company Evaneos and a group of 15 travel agents working with Expedia TAAP.



As one of only eight Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEP) we presented an online destination and product overview to leading Chinese online travel company Ctrip's group tour, private & FIT tour, customised tour and destination marketing department teams.

WORKING WITH THE TRAVEL TRADE



Showcase Britain 2025

Experience Oxfordshire hosted a 4-day educational trip and a "Supplier Marketplace" networking event for nine buyers and a representative of the Canadian travel trade press along with key VisitBritain staff including Deputy Director of the Americas, Australia & New Zealand.

Highlighting Experience Oxfordshire partners with a focus on film and TV, in support of VisitBritain's high profile "Starring GREAT Britain" campaign, the delegation spent four days experiencing excellent visitor experiences across the city and county.

The educational visit, involving 33 Experience Oxfordshire partners, ensured the buyers were brought up to date with the latest developments in Oxfordshire's tourism scene and the locations which have featured in favourite TV and film productions.

As well as receiving extremely positive feedback from the buyers attending the trip, it generated coverage in Canada's Travel Industry Today and Travel Press publications reaching further product buyers and frontline sellers in this key inbound market.



North America Sales Mission

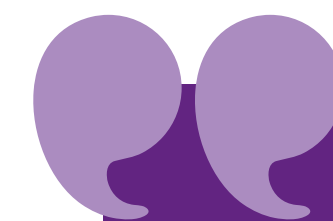


Over 100 new business connections were made during a successful sales mission to Toronto and New York. Organised in partnership with made tourism and VisitBritain the programme involved in-house presentations, 1-2-1 meetings, networking and in office, onsite, training opportunities.

VisitBritain France Workshop



VisitBritain's France Workshop at the British Ambassador's Residence in Paris offered the opportunity for 1-2-1 meetings and networking with the travel trade resulting in fifty new contacts from this important French inbound market.



Our job is made easier when working with a destination organisation such as Experience Oxfordshire due to their excellent reach across the county and their relationship with supportive partners who represent the best of our sector. I know our Canadian buyers have returned home inspired by their educational visit to Oxfordshire and its outstanding visitor offer."

Paul Gauger, Executive Vice President, The Americas, Australia & New Zealand for VisitBritain

GROWING THE BVE/MICE MARKET

In 2023, business visitors in Oxfordshire stayed on average three nights, accounted for 25% of all visits and 24% of spend. Despite the highly competitive nature of the Business Visits and Events (BVE) / Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) industry globally, Oxfordshire is a destination which currently continues to attract great interest from buyers.

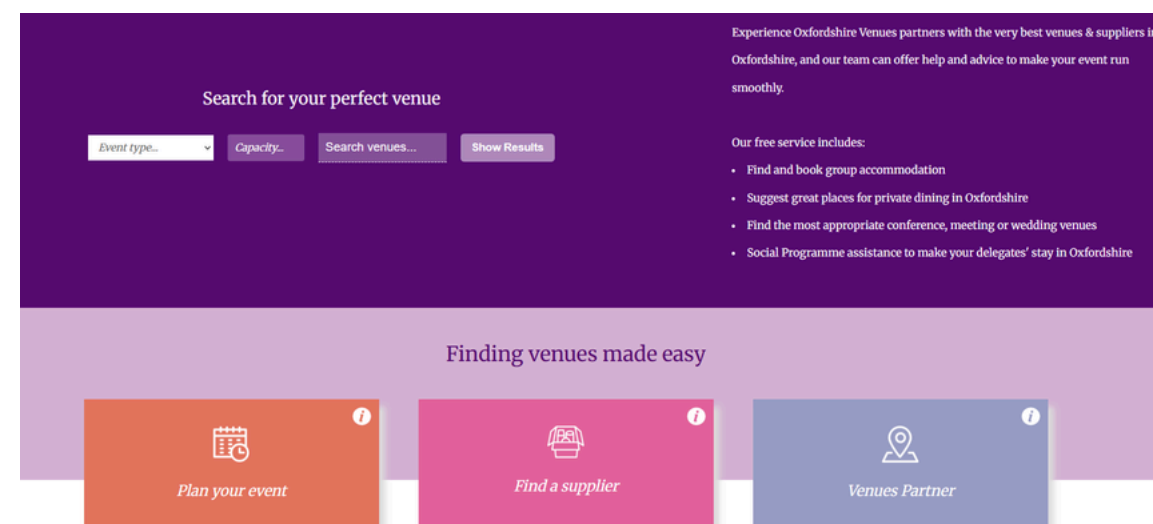
Experience Oxfordshire operates Experience Oxfordshire Venues, a free-to-the-user venue finding service. As part of our work on behalf of the county and our Venues partners we attend carefully selected exhibitions and events to showcase Oxfordshire's enviable collection of venues and meeting spaces.

In the past 12-months we met with 200+ buyers and the team's work has generated requests for proposals worth over £1.2 million in potential incremental income for venues in the county and a 25% growth in conversions to bookings against the previous year.

Our biannual venues partner meetings showcase the venues we work with and bring experts from the BVE/MICE space together to share knowledge with our partners. Events held at **Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons**, a **Belmond Hotel** featured an insight into the hotel's sustainable ethos and a presentation from experts in transportation, **INTX**, and at **Keble College**, MeetEngland and The Delegate Wranglers presented latest insights and opportunities.

As a corporate member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Events, Experience Oxfordshire represents the views of the county and the venues sector on a cross-party group made up of members from both Houses of Parliament. The group champions the UK events industry by increasing its profile among Members of Parliament, Government Ministers, and senior officials across Whitehall.

Find your perfect venue on our website
experienceoxfordshire.org/venues



Download our free
Oxfordshire Venues Guide



Watch our
**Experience Oxfordshire
Venues video**



GROWING THE BVE/MICE MARKET

CHS | Leeds



CHS Leeds is a one-day show for business visits and event organisers and is one of the largest MICE exhibitions outside London.

Joining forces with The Delegate Wranglers as a stand partner, a mix of pre-scheduled appointments and walk ups on the day delivered over £30,000 worth of requests for proposals from our Venues partners and twenty new, valuable contacts.

ibtm[®] WORLD
BARCELONA, SPAIN
19-21 Nov 2024



IBTM World, Barcelona is the leading global event for the meetings, incentives, conferences and events industry.

Our attendance as part of the MeetEngland stand enabled us in generating a total value of over £350,000 in requests for proposals and in building relationships with fifty new contacts.

International
confex
WHERE THE EVENTS INDUSTRY MEETS



The largest audience of UK and European event buyers, from corporate event teams to agencies and associations, congregate at **International Confex** in London's Excel each year and Experience Oxfordshire Venues held productive conversations and made connections with event organisers for conferences, meetings and incentives across the county in 2025 and beyond.



With its heritage properties, state of the art venues, cultural assets and links to academic excellence and innovative industries, Oxfordshire provides a combination of attractive product and intellectual leadership to draw all genres of business event. In this very competitive market, it's essential to communicate with buyers on the opportunities available across Oxfordshire. MeetEngland (part of VisitEngland) is delighted for the Experience Oxfordshire Venues team to join us this year at our international trade shows, which will provide excellent opportunities to engage with important influencers and potential bookers. It is always a pleasure working in partnership with the team to promote England to global buyer audiences."

Paul Black, Head of Business Events at VisitBritain/VisitEngland



BUSINESS SUPPORT AND EVENTS PROGRAMME

Our programme of events held throughout the year brought together nearly 700 partners and supporters to share knowledge, experiences and insight. The partner venues hosting the event, the owners and operators, had the opportunity to showcase new products and developments to colleagues and potential clients within the sector.

Business advice

Courtyard by Marriott Oxford South hosted partners for a **business advice session** facilitated by **Ambassador partner, Hedges Law**. Delivered by an experienced solicitor and mediator the session was designed to respond to the increase in late payments and to help business owners recover debt from customers. Attendees benefited from an engaging and thought-provoking session delving into real life cases and legislation plus practical guidance on how best to protect cash flow and when to reach out for help.

Activate Learning collaboration

Responding to the ongoing issue of the shortage in suitably qualified staff, Experience Oxfordshire partnered with **Ambassador partner, Activate Learning**, twice during the year to offer hospitality businesses the opportunity to enjoy lunch at the learning provider's state-of-the-art hospitality school in Oxford and connect hospitality talent to potential employers. Representatives from Oxfordshire's top hotels and hospitality businesses sat down to a three-course lunch fully curated, hosted, prepared and delivered, in terms of chefs and staffing, by individuals developing their customer service and culinary skills as part of Activate Learning's training towards a career in the sector. The event proved a great opportunity to showcase their skills.

We are grateful to our partners for supporting us in staging the events and to the excellent speakers who provide their time and share their experience for the greater benefit of our sector.



We know how difficult it has been in recent years to attract and retain staff within the hospitality sector nationally.

As an Oxfordshire employer I'm delighted to be here today to witness the enthusiasm demonstrated by the learners and the potential they are exhibiting and I commend Experience Oxfordshire and Activate Learning on coming together with this initiative."

Georgia Ireson, Cluster HR Manager at voco Oxford Spires and voco Oxford Thames hotels

BUSINESS SUPPORT AND EVENTS PROGRAMME

Help to Grow Management Programme

We continue to collaborate with **Oxford Brookes University** with the Help to Grow Management Programme, a fully-funded management course, in order to support recruitment, retention and investment in the sector.

Combining a practical curriculum with one-to-one learning sessions, peer-to-peer activity and mentor support the twelve-week course, valued at £7,500, is open to businesses operating for more than a year and with 5-249 employees. To date thirty managers from Experience Oxfordshire partners are now graduates of the scheme, including two members of our own senior team.

VisitBritain/VisitEngland support resources

As VisitBritain/VisitEngland's accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), Experience Oxfordshire has access to the national tourism agencies' business support resources.

Leonardo Royal Hotel Oxford provided the venue for a **VisitEngland led training day: Taking England to the World**. This full day's course is designed to upskill all operators working within the visitor economy. Covering topics ranging from product development, pricing, and distribution to marketing and content creation it provides essential advice on how to market most effectively to domestic and international audiences.

Partners were also encouraged to attend **VisitEngland's free online International Market live webinars** to learn, in one-hour sessions, the latest data, key trends and insights on product demand from research and market specialists.



OXFORD BROOKES BUSINESS SCHOOL
OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

HM Government

HELP TO GROW. MANAGEMENT COURSE

IT COULD BE YOUR BEST BUSINESS DECISION!

AMAZING VALUE
Valued at over £7,500 but there is currently **no charge payable** (90% subsidised by the government & remaining 10% funded by Oxford Brookes University)

LEARN FROM PEERS
Overcome any feelings of isolation by benefiting from the **support and experience of fellow business leaders**



TAKING ENGLAND TO THE WORLD

Experience OXFORDSHIRE

LEONARDO ROYAL HOTEL

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BUSINESS SUPPORT AND EVENTS PROGRAMME

The Cultural Platform

Businesses and industry leaders from across Oxfordshire's visitor economy attended **Blenheim Palace** for Experience Oxfordshire's Cultural Platform, an entertaining and insightful "in-conversation" event with Supervising Location Manager, Tony Hood, interviewed by former Experience Oxfordshire board member, Richard Venables, Head of the Oxford office for CBRE.

Focussing on his experience of working on a string of successful TV and film productions, the audience were keen to understand how Oxfordshire capitalises on the rise in "set-jetting" and film tourism. In an hour of discussion on subjects ranging from the criteria employed in identifying potential film locations, through to the use of CGI, Tony Hood shared insights and views on working with Oxfordshire's venues and attractions and offered advice for creating win-win relationships with his sector.

The Cultural Platform was delivered on behalf of the Experience Oxfordshire Charitable Trust as part of the organisation's ongoing commitment to supporting culture across the county. Events such as the Cultural Platform rely on local support and the headline sponsors of this year's sell-out event were Blenheim Palace and long-standing cultural supporter **Richardsons Chartered Accountants**.



In my experience, Oxfordshire as a location with its period venues, beautiful countryside, quintessential English villages and warm hospitality, as well as excellent access routes into and around the county, has much to offer potential film makers.

Being here at Blenheim is a great example of how a venue works well and has been successful in securing screen opportunities. It has been a pleasure to be part of the Cultural Platform and support Experience Oxfordshire."

Tony Hood, Supervising Location Manager

BUSINESS SUPPORT AND EVENTS PROGRAMME



Partner meetings and networking events

Partner meetings were held at **Rhodes House** in Oxford with guest speakers Activate Learning, Oxford United Football Club, Sobell House Hospice Charity, in advance of the Oxtrail initiative, and Stephen Spencer + Associates; the **Mercure Oxford Hawkwell House Hotel** in Iffley Village, where partners heard from guest speakers Puy du Fou, Westgate Oxford and Virgin Experience Days and the **voco Oxford Spires Hotel** with informative presentations from VisitEngland and Chiltern Railways.

New business connections were forged during the year at networking events held in inspirational venues. An exclusive gathering for partners took place following the opening of **Ambassador partner, The Store, Oxford**. After an evening enjoying views out over the dreaming spires of Oxford on the hotel's rooftop terrace, partners viewed the building's impressive transformation from Boswells department store to a luxury hotel complete with Treadwell restaurant, spa, meeting space and roof terrace.



The Relais Henley provided the perfect riverside location for summer networking, and in the autumn **Ambassador partner, The Feathers Hotel Woodstock**, welcomed partners to experience first-hand the Grade II-listed hotel's amazing transformation following its extensive refurbishment. Partners enjoyed fizz, a festive afternoon tea buffet and winter networking at **Ambassador partner, Heythrop Park Hotel** in late November at what was a great opportunity to make new business connections and to find out more about this fabulous destination hotel. Following its November launch in **Ambassador partner, Westgate Oxford**, Experience Oxfordshire's first event of 2025 was an evening of networking at **Flight Club Oxford**. This fun and informal evening was the perfect opportunity for partners to connect, enjoy this fantastic new addition to the city and to see each other's competitive spirit in action!



Cultural Platform at Blenheim Palace



Summer Networking at The Store, Oxford



Venues Partner Meeting at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, a Belmond Hotel



Winter Networking at Heythrop Park Hotel



Spring Partner Meeting at voco Oxford Spires



Networking at Flight Club Oxford



Hedges Law seminar at Courtyard by Marriott Oxford South



Autumn Networking at The Feathers



Autumn Partner Meeting at Mercure Oxford Hawkeell House

OUR AMBASSADOR PARTNERS



Support from business and key decision makers within Oxfordshire for the Experience Oxfordshire Ambassador programme is essential for the destination management company to be acknowledged by VisitBritain/VisitEngland as the Local Visitor Economy Partnership for the county. Support for Experience Oxfordshire ensures the county has representation in the management structure of the UK's tourism, and has access to associated benefits. Investment in Experience Oxfordshire is therefore an investment in the Oxfordshire visitor economy's successful, sustainable future.

In 2024/25 we welcomed as new Ambassador partners



"We are very excited to be joining Experience Oxfordshire as an Ambassador partner as we prepare to re-open The Feathers Hotel to the public in our historic Woodstock location. With the UNESCO World Heritage site, Blenheim Palace, on our doorstep, our hotel is a local landmark and we are cognoscente of its important role, both within the fabric of local life and as part of the tourism infrastructure of the area. We are passionate about maintaining the integrity of The Feathers whilst creating a welcoming, desirable 21st century experience. In doing so we look forward to working with the Experience Oxfordshire team and fellow partners to grow the value of the visitor economy within Oxfordshire for the benefit of us all."

Daniel Ede, Managing Director at Ede Homes Group
The Feathers



"Heythrop has welcomed visitors, offering hospitality and entertainment, since it was an 18th century family home. And our purpose today remains the same, a place that's great for Grown Up Fun and to create moments of joy. Our guests today are delighted to not only be staying in our beautiful hotel, but also in such a fascinating and charming part of the world. We understand that exploring the local area is just as important to our guests as the experience we offer within the hotel, and to have such beautiful locations and attractions on our doorstep is such a wonderful opportunity. We partnered with Experience Oxfordshire early on and are impressed with what they deliver. We are now looking forward to working more closely with them and other Ambassador partners to build on current successes and ensure that together the county delivers the best experiences we can."

Anna McKenzie, Head of Guest Experience
Heythrop Park Hotel



"We've been delighted with the response The Store has received both prior to and in the months since we opened from guests, locals and Oxfordshire businesses. Our intention was to bring a new dimension to Oxford's hospitality offering and we're grateful for Experience Oxfordshire's support in communicating this to the local community, associated audiences and potential visitors. We look forward to building on these relationships as an Ambassador partner, investing in Experience Oxfordshire to help them deliver their remit and to collaborating with colleagues across the visitor economy to grow its value and influence."

Simon Drake, General Manager
The Store, Oxford

OUR AMBASSADOR PARTNERS

The Ambassador Dinner

The Store, Oxford, provided the perfect location when Board members and Trustees were joined by Ambassador partners and Experience Oxfordshire supporters for the annual Ambassador Dinner. Over dinner guests heard an address from visitor economy figurehead, Bernard Donoghue OBE, Chief Executive of ALVA, the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions.

Bernard spoke of the longer term impacts the global pandemic, inflation and cost of living crisis have inflicted on the visitor economy and the importance of continued investment by local authorities in culture, heritage and tourism development.

He commended the Experience Oxfordshire Ambassador partnership for its strong and balanced representation of the county's visitor economy.





Investment in the destination, its arts and culture, reaches way beyond the financial outlay; it creates pride of place and a sense of worth and belonging amongst the local population which in turn is attractive to visitors. Tourism is about creating joy. People spending precious time together, in special places which in turn supports local businesses who can offer aspirational job opportunities and career tracks. The Experience Oxfordshire Ambassador partnership with its strong representation of commercial interests, local authorities and academia is well placed to respond to the current operational environment and capitalise on future opportunities for the county."

Bernard Donoghue OBE, Director and Chief Executive at ALVA



Thank you to all Experience Oxfordshire Ambassador partners for their continued investment and support

PARTNERS' PERSPECTIVES



"With a visitor economy worth £2.3 billion to the county, and which supports jobs for 10% of our workforce, it's critical that in changing times Oxfordshire has a strong relationship with the national tourism agencies and a clear line of communication and influence. Experience Oxfordshire has the support of the sector, and as the county's official Local Visitor Economy Partnership is able to speak on its behalf with confidence."

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council



"We are proud to have been a founding Ambassador of Experience Oxfordshire. We believe passionately in working with partners to deliver high quality bus and coach services for our county, and Experience Oxfordshire helps us to connect with new partners, to promote the services we offer to both domestic and overseas tourist markets and to help make tourism in our county more environmentally sustainable."

As a major attraction operator in our own right - through our City Sightseeing Oxford tours - Experience Oxfordshire is always there to provide advice and useful trends and tourism statistics for us to ensure that we stay up to date with what appeals to both domestic and international markets, so we can tailor our products accordingly."

Luke Marion, Managing Director, Oxford Bus Company, Thames Travel, Carousel Buses and City Sightseeing Oxford



"As a company whose clients span the breadth of businesses operating in Oxfordshire we are delighted to again support Experience Oxfordshire and sponsor the Cultural Platform which showed the positive impact the film production sector, with its blend of traditional expertise and modern technology, has on the visitor economy. It has been a really interesting, thought-provoking event, with plenty of opportunities to meet and network with local businesses."

Jemima King, Partner of Richardsons Chartered Accountants

PARTNERS' PERSPECTIVES



"Oxfordshire is an exciting destination for culture and shopping enthusiasts alike. Bicester Village is proud to work closely with our partners at Experience Oxfordshire to develop luxury products and itineraries, and, together, to show Oxfordshire to be the world-class destination it is. The role of Experience Oxfordshire in facilitating connections, as well as in cementing Oxfordshire's reputation within the global tourism industry, is invaluable."

Clive Doble, Partnerships and International Markets Director, Bicester Village



"We were very happy to welcome fellow Experience Oxfordshire partners and friends to this summer networking event. It was great to have the opportunity to discuss together the current issues affecting our sector and at the same time showcase our hotel to professionals from across Oxfordshire's visitor economy."

Andrew Oxley, Hotel Manager, The Relais Henley



"Hook Norton can be seen as a barometer of the county's visitor economy, given that we run a shop, tours, supply hospitality businesses across the county and retail beyond. It was therefore a pleasure to welcome our MP, Sean Woodcock, on site today and discuss with him the issues impacting business within the context of English Tourism Week. The meeting was organised by Experience Oxfordshire and we appreciate being part of their network and the opportunities this brings to both create productive relationships and share the Hook Norton story with new audiences."

James Clarke, Managing Director of Hook Norton Brewery

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experienceoxfordshire.org

About working in partnership with us
experienceoxfordshire.org/partner

About partner benefits
experienceoxfordshire.org/partner/partner-benefits/partnerpackages/

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About Oxford as part of an organised tour
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