

June 2009

Two New Members appointed to the VisitEngland Board

Barbara Follett, the Minister for Tourism, has appointed Nick Varney and Denis Wormwell to the board of VisitEngland for the four years beginning 22 June 2009.

Nick Varney

Nick Varney is the Chief Executive of Merlin Entertainments Group, the company he and his team founded in 1999 from the management buy-out of Vardon Attractions, where he had been Managing Director from 1995 to 1998. He had previously led marketing operations at Alton Towers and the Tussauds Group between 1990 and 1995. Merlin is now the second largest visitor attraction company in the world after Disney, receiving more than 35 million guests on three continents every year.

Denis Wormwell

Denis Wormwell is the Chief Executive of Shearings Group Ltd, a leading holiday provider and hotel operator. He was previously Chief Executive at National Express (Coach) from 2002-2006, and then Chief Executive of the Bus division from 2006-2007. This followed Director roles in Sales and Operations at Thomas Cook from 1998-2001.

Background

VisitEngland was first established as The England Marketing Advisory Board (EMAB) by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport during the merger of the British Tourist Authority with the English Tourism Council on 1 April 2003. Its main objective was to ensure that a marketing strategy for England engaged all of England's stakeholders, national and regional, in both private and public sectors. In 2007 EMAB was re-launched as VisitEngland: a new stakeholder Board for the development and marketing of England's visitor economy. VisitEngland is now evolving to become a more stand-alone, strategic leadership body which for the first time will truly represent the public and private sector stakeholders of English tourism. In legal terms, VisitEngland will remain an unfunded advisory Non-Departmental Public Body. The England operational activity will be funded by, and remain a part of, VisitBritain for which the Chair, Board and Chief Executive of VisitBritain will ultimately retain accountability.

Mr Varney and Mr Wormwell will join the following board members:

Penelope, Viscountess Cobham (Chairman)
Sir Brian Briscoe KB
Nick Cust
Rob Rees MBE
Christopher Webster

Appointments to the Board of VisitEngland are made by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and follow the OCPA Code of Practice. All public appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for political activity (if any declared) to be made public. Mr Varney and Mr Wormwell have both declared that they have undertaken no political activity in the UK in the last five years.