



**The Somerset**

## **VISITOR ECONOMY SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

Introducing the Visitor Economy Support Programme (VESP)

**Visit Exmoor, Visit Somerset and Tomorrow's Tourism along with the five Councils in Somerset** - working together to deliver FREE business support for Somerset Visitor Economy Businesses.

The Visitor Economy Support Programme (VESP) is a programme funded by an allocation of £500,000 from the Somerset Business Rates Retention Pilot programme (BRRP). This is funding to deliver economic growth and prosperity and is managed by all local authorities in Somerset via the Somerset Growth Board (which provides strategic oversight of joint economic development priorities).

The VESP scheme will fund FREE support services to visitor businesses, this will focus on the impact of Covid, business resilience and growth. This includes support with marketing communications including digital advice, and as part of this programme, the VESP scheme will be compiling sector specific research across visitor markets, that will provide valuable insight for Somerset businesses, assisting with forward planning and growth.

VESP aims to provide guidance and support to SME's (0-249 employees) in the sectors of accommodation, retail, high street, food & drink, creative industries, heritage, visitor attractions, activity providers and outside visitor spaces.

Carl Benneyworth VESP Commissioning Manager, said: *"Tourism plays a significant role in Somerset's economy, and I am excited to see The Visitor Economy Support Programme launched today. The free support available for Somerset's visitor businesses will make a real difference as they seek to recover quickly and safely."*

**To sign up to receive this business support please register on the Visit Exmoor/Visit Somerset link here:**

[www.visit-exmoor.co.uk/trade/vesp-somerset-business-support](http://www.visit-exmoor.co.uk/trade/vesp-somerset-business-support)

Max Lawrence, of Visit Exmoor, commented, *"We are really pleased to be part of this important initiative. The Covid pandemic has had an enormous impact on our Exmoor tourism businesses, we are really keen to reach out to as many businesses as possible to ensure they benefit from this valuable free support."*

Under the VESP scheme, Tomorrow's Tourism, working with Avenue 6 and Live Tourism, are fielding a team of industry experts, with a range of specialist skill sets, that will be matched with businesses and help to identifying business goals, opportunities and challenges. A dedicated advisor will work with each business to create a bespoke package of support to help mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and build resilience for the future.

Richard Dickinson, of Tomorrow's Tourism, said: *"We are delighted to be working with our Somerset partners in an area of the UK that has so much to offer to visitors. For this important initiative we, with our sister companies Avenue 6 and Live Tourism, have assembled a team of advisors that are not only leaders in their fields but have extensive experience of supporting visitor economy businesses large and small. We look forward to playing our part in helping Somerset businesses recover from the pandemic and build for future success."*

Further proposals are being developed to create new added-value services, such as a focus on green tourism, for the Somerset visitor market. More information to follow.

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