

**BRITISH TOURISM WEEK 12-20 MARCH 2011**

Britain's fifth largest industry – worth £115 billion, 8.9% of Britain's GDP

Supports 2.6 million jobs and over 200,000 SMEs – more jobs than construction or transport

Overseas visitors contribute round £3 billion a year to the Treasury

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**BRITISH TOURISM WEEK ANNOUNCES PLANS TO CELEBRATE BRITAIN'S FIFTH LARGEST INDUSTRY**

British Tourism Week, which runs from 12-20 March next year, will tomorrow (Wednesday) announce a campaign to rally round the nation's most precious seaside attractions – and highlight the jobs and growth generated by tourism.

At a pre-launch event following the tragic destruction of the historic 138-year-old Hastings Pier by fire, organisers of the annual British Tourism Week will unveil proposals of how they plan to stage simultaneous parties next March on dozens of the country's much-loved seaside piers.

As we stand, 29 of the iconic structures standing proudly over water have signalled great enthusiasm for taking part in one of the biggest linked parties ever held at different locations in Britain.

Hosted on the R.S. Hispaniola on the Victoria Embankment, the pre-launch event is intended to raise the profile of the week – and the parties - amongst politicians and the tourism industry. Over the coming weeks and months it is hoped that thousands of industry professionals will sign up to take part in the British Tourism Week events which are designed to deepen understanding of the power tourism has to generate jobs and growth for the UK economy.

Pier parties are planned across the country - from Weston-Super-Mare in the constituency of Tourism Minister John Penrose right through to Blackpool - on the afternoon of Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March. That week will also see a host of other activities on a tourism theme.

The great British pier has been an institution at our seaside for two centuries or more. Aside from promenades, buckets and spades, pop festivals and gastro pubs, few things can symbolise British seaside holidays as much as piers.

Developed in the early 1900's, more than 100 of them once stretched out to sea around the country at the beginning of the last century. But today, just 55 survive.

Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport said: "British Tourism Week offers all of us a fantastic opportunity to raise the profile of the tourism industry and to highlight what a hugely important sector it is to the UK economy. It also gives us a chance to celebrate the great work done by so many to give tourists from both this country and abroad a wonderful visitor experience and I would encourage all of you to take part."

Sandie Dawe, Chief Executive, VisitBritain said: "What better way to increase industry awareness with both tourism businesses and government than by hosting celebrations of British tourism on dozens of the country's much loved seaside piers.

"This year heralds the first of a pre-launch for BTW and we hope this will encourage greater appreciation of the sector, improve quality standards and promote training and professionalism at a much earlier stage."

## **ENDS**

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Visit [www.britishtourismweek.com](http://www.britishtourismweek.com) for more information on the week of events being organised around the country.

### **Notes to Editors:**

- British Tourism Week (12-20 March 2011) aims to demonstrate the critical value of tourism to the economy of the United Kingdom. [www.britishtourismweek.com](http://www.britishtourismweek.com)
- British Tourism Week culminates with the Best of Britain and Ireland travel trade forum at Birmingham's NEC from 16-17 March. [www.britainandirelandevent.co.uk](http://www.britainandirelandevent.co.uk)
- His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales is the Patron of British Tourism Week.
- British Tourism Week is organised by VisitBritain with the support of The Tourism Society, and an Executive Committee with representation from the following organisations: The Tourism Alliance; Wales Tourism Alliance; Scottish Tourism Forum; VisitEngland; VisitScotland; Visit Wales; Visit London; the English Regions; British Hospitality Association; UKinbound; Local Government Association; Association of Leading Visitor Attractions; Holiday Cottages Group; British Beer & Pub Association; Coach Tourism Council; and Best of Britain & Ireland Events.

