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for Culture
Media & Sport

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Dear Anne Marie

You will be fully aware that the recent floods across large parts of the country, including in your constituency, have had a huge impact both at a human and economic level. This has been a particularly difficult time for the tourism and hospitality sector, with a perception generated that large parts of the country are 'closed' for business. As well as the immediate effect on visits to the affected areas, this has also had an impact on bookings for the Easter, and in some cases, the main summer season.

We have been working hard across Government to help those most affected, and you are now seeing that support finally making a difference. You already know that on 17 February, the Prime Minister announced a new £10 million business support scheme to help flood affected businesses get back on their feet, including a Government Business Support Helpline.

At the same time, James Berresford and his team at VisitEngland have been working hard to get the message over that in spite of recent problems, affected areas are very much up and running, and continuing to offer outstanding visitor deals at value for money. VisitEngland have also published on their website a practical guide for tourism businesses responding to the extreme weather, and offering advice to help businesses affected return to trading as soon as possible. <http://www.visitengland.org/flood-response/index.aspx>

You may have already picked up that Maria Miller announced, on Saturday (1 March), a £2 million support fund for tourism businesses. If not, I would like to tell you that this investment will now put experts on the ground in flood hit areas to provide tourism businesses with practical advice on areas for example on how to communicate effectively with customers online and via social media. Advice sessions will be hosted by VisitEngland and run throughout March.



As part of the package, a dedicated £1 million marketing campaign will be launched in March to help promote affected areas to domestic tourists in the run-up to Easter and beyond. A promotional push abroad to reassure overseas tourists that Britain is open for business is also being planned by Visit Britain for later in the year.

It is vital that local industry and businesses are supported and tourists will be encouraged to spend their hard earned money in areas that will benefit from extra investment after the floods.

I hope this comes as good news, and that we ensure that tourism businesses affected get practical help to get back on their feet, and we get the clear message out there that the country is 'open for business' to tourists both home and abroad.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Grant', written in a cursive style.

Helen Grant MP
Minister for Sport, Tourism and Equalities