

Request for Quotations:

North East England Heritage & Culture Visitor Experience Development

Reference: ENEE-9DECC9

Issue date: Friday 9th October

Submission deadline: Friday 30th October by 17:00

Indicative budget: Up to £25,000 excluding VAT

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Introduction and Context	3
Introduction	3
About Experience North East England	4
Background & Strategic Context	5
Purpose of the Commission	7
Objectives	8
Programme Design Principles	10
What Success Looks Like	12
Expected Delivery Approach	13
Stakeholder and Partnership Working	15
Key Dependencies, Risks, and Assumptions	16
Scope of Work	18
Deliverables / Outputs	23
Project Management	25
Governance and Reporting.....	25
Timeline	26

Budget	26
Evaluation Criteria	27
Supplier Requirements & Instructions	28
Proposal Requirements	28
Supplier Requirements.....	30
Submission Instructions	30
Clarification Process	31
Important Submission Information	31
Appendices.....	32
Definition of an Experience	32
Geographic Scope	33
Priority Audiences and Markets	33
Illustrative Heritage & Culture Experience Opportunities	34
Relevant Workstreams, Evidence, and Background Information.....	36
Scope Boundaries	37

Introduction and Context

Introduction

Experience North East England (ENEE) is seeking proposals from suitably experienced consultants, organisations or consortia to design and deliver a Heritage & Culture Visitor Experience Development Programme across North East England.

The programme will support individual businesses and business collaborations to develop, enhance, test and bring to market distinctive heritage & culture visitor experiences that reflect the people, place, identities, history, heritage and culture of North East England.

We are looking for a practical, hands-on programme that helps participating businesses move from ideas and existing assets to high-quality visitor experiences with clear target audiences, viable commercial models and appropriate routes to market. Wherever suitable, experiences should be capable of being booked online and promoted through regional destination channels, the travel trade and relevant third-party platforms.

The commission should not be limited to businesses already operating within tourism. We are also interested in supporting museums, heritage attractions, historic properties, cultural venues, creative practitioners, artists and makers, community and faith organisations, archives and other organisations with the potential to develop or diversify into visitor experiences. This could include individual organisations, partnerships and collaborations capable of creating stronger visitor experiences together.

Potential opportunities could include, but are not limited to, immersive Roman and Hadrian's Wall experiences; castle stays, exclusive access and castle-to-castle itineraries; guided pilgrimage and sacred landscape experiences; former miner, shipbuilder or railway worker-led experiences; industrial heritage, maritime and engineering experiences; curator-led and behind-the-scenes access; archaeology and object-handling activities; literary, music and storytelling experiences; creative workshops with artists and makers; and experiences that connect heritage and culture with food and drink, outdoor activity, wellbeing, landscapes and local communities.

Experience North East England is particularly interested in opportunities that strengthen connections across the region and with other connected destinations in neighbouring regions. This could include experiences linking cities, towns, coast and countryside, collaborations between businesses in different locations, and regional or cross-boundary experiences that encourage visitors to explore more of North East

England, stay longer and spend more. For example, this could include distinctive experiences exploring cross-border culture and heritage narratives, a castle-based visitor journey connecting sites and experiences across the region, experiences connecting heritage to coast, landscapes, rivers through dark skies, or an industrial heritage proposition connecting the region's mining, railway, engineering, shipbuilding and maritime stories. The supplier should consider the practical visitor journey, collaboration model and route to market required to turn connected assets into a coherent visitor proposition.

We welcome bidders' recommendations on the most effective delivery model. This could include an accelerator, incubator, intensive mentoring programme, collaborative development model, or a combination of approaches. The focus should be on achieving tangible outcomes for participating businesses and strengthening the quality and visibility of North East England's heritage and culture tourism offer.

About Experience North East England

Experience North East England is the destination marketing agency for North East England, promoting the region as a sustainable world-class destination to visit, meet and invest.

The organisation works with partners across industry, local government and the wider public and private sectors to attract more visitors, investment, innovation and opportunity to the region. Experience North East England builds on the legacy of NewcastleGateshead Initiative and marks a new phase of regional destination development, with a broader remit to support visitor economy growth across North East England.

Experience North East England works closely with the region's Local Visitor Economy Partnerships and partners, including Visit Northumberland, Visit County Durham, Visit NewcastleGateshead, all seven local authorities, the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority, Newcastle International Airport and visitor economy businesses across the region.

The organisation's work spans destination marketing, experience and product development, travel trade, business events, research and intelligence, accessibility, sustainability and strategic partnerships.

A central ambition is to support the long-term growth of the North East visitor economy by attracting more domestic and international visitors, increasing visitor spend, encouraging longer stays and strengthening the region's reputation as a distinctive and compelling destination.

Experience development is an important part of this ambition. The organisation is seeking to grow the pipeline of authentic, high-quality and commercially sustainable experiences that give visitors more reasons to choose North East England, explore across the region and return in future.

Background & Strategic Context

The Heritage and Culture Opportunity

North East England has an ambition to double the value of its visitor economy by 2035. Developing a stronger pipeline of high-quality visitor experiences will be important to achieving that ambition, with heritage and culture representing a significant opportunity.

Audience research reinforces this potential. History, heritage and culture are among the characteristics most strongly associated with England across VisitEngland's domestic segments, while history and heritage is the leading reason given by North East residents for visiting different parts of their own region. Cultural and historic discovery also has strong appeal among international audiences, particularly visitors from the USA, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain.

At the same time, awareness of the depth of North East England's visitor offer remains relatively limited. This creates an opportunity to turn strong underlying assets and stories into more visible and compelling reasons to visit.

From Regional Assets to Visitor Experiences

North East England has some of the UK's most significant heritage assets, including two UNESCO World Heritage Sites (important sections of Hadrian's Wall and Durham Castle and Cathedral), the North Pennines UNESCO Global Geopark, Northumberland International Dark Sky Park, a significant concentration of castles and historic and cultural landscapes, and internationally important Roman, medieval, religious and industrial heritage.

The region's distinctive stories also encompass coal mining, railways, engineering, shipbuilding, maritime communities, working-class culture, literature, music, visual arts, craft and contemporary creativity.

The opportunity is not simply to promote these assets individually. It is to translate them into distinctive, participatory and commercially sustainable visitor experiences, and to connect them through stronger routes, itineraries and visitor journeys. This should include opportunities that connect the region's cities, towns, rural communities and coastline, including collaborative and flagship propositions crossing

local authority and LVEP or region boundaries such as Hadrian's Wall, the Northern Saints Trails, St Cuthbert's Way and River Tweed Trail.

Building on Previous Learning

This commission will build on learning from the product development programmes delivered through the Destination Development Partnership during 2025/26. These demonstrated strong appetite for experience development and the value of practical, tailored support, while identifying recurring barriers around business capacity, marketing content, online bookability, distribution and collaboration.

Experience North East England is also developing destination marketing activity and a new regional consumer-facing website. These will connect destination storytelling more closely with visitor planning, structured experience listings, itineraries and appropriate booking or referral routes.

Experiences developed through this programme should therefore be created with future marketing, digital conversion and travel trade opportunities in mind. This includes strong visitor-facing information, imagery, pricing, availability and an appropriate booking or enquiry route. Participation in the programme will not, however, guarantee inclusion within any particular marketing campaign, digital platform or distribution channel.

Alignment with Regional Activity

This commission is being developed alongside the Experience Audit, Gap Analysis and Opportunity Assessment, the emerging Visitor Economy Spatial Strategy and experience development activity across other themes. These workstreams are intended to complement one another. The appointed supplier should make use of relevant emerging evidence and identify opportunities for collaborative, cross-sector or cross-boundary visitor experiences without duplicating research or activity being delivered elsewhere.

VisitEngland's Connected Destinations Fund may also support LVEP-led projects focused on bookable experiences, regional propositions and connected visitor journeys. Relevant applications or funded activity may emerge during this commission. The appointed supplier will be expected to work flexibly with ENEE and relevant LVEP partners to identify appropriate synergies, align activity where beneficial and avoid duplication. Any coordination will be subject to funding decisions, appropriate permissions and relevant confidentiality requirements.

The programme will also operate within a wider heritage, culture, creative industries and business support ecosystem. Its specific focus is the development and commercialisation of visitor-facing heritage and culture experiences, including the

visitor proposition, target audience, customer journey, interpretation and sense of place, testing, pricing, bookability and routes to market. Where participants have wider needs that can be better met through existing provision, the supplier should make appropriate connections or referrals and focus this commission's resources on areas where it can provide clear additional value.

Purpose of the Commission

The purpose of this commission is to design and deliver a practical Heritage and Culture Visitor Experience Development Programme that supports businesses and collaborations across North East England to develop, enhance, test and bring to market distinctive visitor experiences.

The programme should help participants move from an initial idea, existing asset or early-stage experience towards a stronger, commercially viable visitor product with a clearly defined audience, compelling sense of place and appropriate route to market.

The commission should support the development of experiences that make more of North East England's heritage and cultural strengths, engaging a broad range of businesses, organisations, practitioners, venues and collaborations. These may include museums, heritage sites, cultural venues, creative businesses, artists and makers, community-led organisations and place-based partnerships. Particular consideration should be given to opportunities that connect places and sectors, increase visitor spend and dwell time, support geographic dispersal and strengthen the region's year-round visitor offer.

Experience North East England is interested in hearing bidders' recommendations on the most effective delivery model. This could include an accelerator, incubator, intensive mentoring, collaborative product development, or a hybrid approach. The proposed model should respond to different levels of business readiness and provide practical support that enables participants to make tangible progress.

The programme should support businesses across the full experience development journey where appropriate, including:

- Identifying and refining viable experience concepts;
- Understanding target audiences and visitor needs;
- Experience design, storytelling and sense of place;
- Collaboration, packaging and cross-boundary opportunities;
- Testing and refining experiences before launch;
- Pricing, capacity and commercial viability;

- Accessibility and sustainability considerations;
- Marketing, content and launch readiness;
- Online bookability and appropriate distribution routes;
- Readiness for regional destination platforms, relevant OTAs, affiliates and travel trade opportunities where appropriate.

By the conclusion of the programme, Experience North East England expects to have a stronger pipeline of distinctive heritage and culture experiences that are either live and available to visitors or have made evidenced and significant progress towards launch for the appropriate 2027 season.

The programme should also generate practical learning about business needs, barriers, opportunities and effective support models that can inform Experience North East England's wider Experience Development Programme.

In a sentence, this commission is intended to turn the region's heritage and culture assets, ideas and collaborations into distinctive, commercially sustainable visitor experiences that give people more reasons to visit, explore, and spend more across North East England.

Objectives

The appointed supplier will be required to:

1. Design and deliver a practical Heritage and Culture Visitor Experience Development Programme that supports businesses and collaborations across North East England to develop, enhance, test and bring to market high-quality visitor experiences.
2. Recruit and support a strong cohort of businesses and prospective experience providers from across the region, including existing visitor economy businesses, businesses seeking to diversify into tourism, collaborations and credible early-stage or pre-start concepts.
3. Assess the individual needs and readiness of participating businesses and provide tailored support that reflects their starting point, ambitions, capacity and development needs.
4. Support the creation and enhancement of distinctive, place-based heritage and culture experiences that make effective use of North East England's assets, people, stories, landscapes, heritage, communities and culture.
5. Strengthen the commercial viability of participating experiences, including consideration of target audiences, pricing, capacity, operating models, seasonality, partnerships and opportunities to increase visitor spend and dwell time.

6. Support businesses to test and refine experiences before or during launch, using practical feedback to strengthen the visitor proposition, customer journey and operational delivery.
7. Improve the market-readiness, visibility and bookability of supported experiences, ensuring that each has an appropriate route to enquiry or booking and, where commercially suitable, can connect with relevant online distribution platforms, travel trade partners and regional destination channels.
8. Encourage collaboration between businesses, sectors and destinations, including opportunities to develop multi-business, cross-boundary or regional experiences and itineraries that encourage visitors to explore more of North East England.
9. Identify and actively facilitate opportunities to create collaborative visitor experiences, routes and itineraries that connect multiple organisations, places or stories across North East England. This should include consideration of at least one or two potential flagship or cross-regional propositions, including where appropriate landscape-based, walking or accommodation-linked multi-day journeys, capable of increasing dwell time, geographic dispersal and overnight stays.
10. Ensure the programme takes a genuinely regional approach, recognising the different opportunities presented by the region's cities, towns, rural areas and coastline and seeking appropriate geographic reach across the seven local authority areas.
11. Build the confidence and capability of participating businesses so that they are better equipped to develop, improve, market and commercialise visitor experiences beyond the lifetime of the programme.
12. Generate measurable outputs, outcomes and learning that demonstrate the progress made by participating businesses and contribute to Experience North East England's wider Experience Development Programme.
13. Ensure delivery connects appropriately with ENEE's wider activity and the wider regional business support ecosystem, including destination marketing, digital and the new regional consumer website, travel trade, business events, the Experience Audit, Visitor Economy Spatial Strategy, other thematic experience development programmes and relevant existing support available to heritage and culture businesses. Where appropriate, businesses should be connected to complementary provision rather than duplicating support already available elsewhere.

The appointed supplier should draw on relevant findings from the Experience Audit, Gap Analysis and Opportunity Assessment as these become available.

This may include evidence on the current supply and bookability of heritage and cultural experiences, gaps around major visitor assets and stories, audience and market opportunities, connections with accommodation and other visitor economy businesses, and opportunities to develop collaborative or cross-theme products. The supplier will not be expected to repeat the regional audit but may contribute to, and translate relevant findings into practical programme activity.

Programme Design Principles

Experience North East England does not wish to prescribe a single delivery model. Bidders are encouraged to propose the approach they believe will achieve the strongest outcomes within the available budget and timescales.

However, learning from previous experience development and bookability programmes has identified several principles that should inform the design of this commission. Previous programmes demonstrated the importance of tailored mentoring, diagnostics, flexibility, testing and practical commercial support. They also highlighted challenges around business capacity, marketing, digital readiness and the gap between developing an experience and successfully bringing it to market.

The proposed programme should therefore reflect the following principles:

Diagnostic-led and tailored support – Businesses are likely to enter the programme at very different stages of development. Support should begin with an appropriate assessment of each participant's current offer, ambitions, barriers and development needs, rather than assuming a standard starting point.

Flexible and proportionate delivery – Many heritage and cultural organisations, creative practitioners and visitor economy businesses have limited capacity and may depend on small staff teams, freelancers, trustees or volunteers. The programme should therefore be designed in a way that enables meaningful participation alongside normal operations, seasonal programming and existing organisational commitments.

Commercial thinking from the outset – Target audiences, pricing, capacity, seasonality, operational requirements, routes to market and commercial viability should be considered as part of experience development rather than being addressed only at the point of launch.

Test, learn and refine – Where appropriate, businesses should be encouraged to prototype and test experiences with potential customers or other relevant audiences, using feedback to improve the proposition before wider launch.

Bookability and distribution as part of product development – The programme should consider how an experience will ultimately be found, enquired about and booked. The appropriate solution will differ between businesses and may include direct online booking, third-party distribution, affiliates, travel trade or other routes. The programme should not assume that an OTA is appropriate for every participant.

Visibility matters alongside bookability – Previous programmes demonstrated that an experience becoming bookable does not automatically generate demand. Consideration should therefore be given to the content, imagery, marketing capability and product information required to successfully take experiences to market.

Additionality and connection with existing support – The programme should operate as part of the wider regional business support ecosystem rather than duplicate activity already available to businesses. The appointed supplier should focus ENEE-funded support on the visitor experience development needs where this commission can add greatest value. Where a participant requires support that can appropriately be met through existing provision, the supplier should seek to make an appropriate referral or connection while maintaining a coherent experience development journey for the business.

Collaboration should be actively explored – Some of the strongest opportunities may involve more than one business, destination or sector. The programme should create opportunities for businesses to connect, develop complementary products and explore collaborative experiences, trails, packages and visitor journeys.

Responsible development and interpretation – Experience development should respect the significance, authenticity and carrying capacity of heritage places and communities. Where relevant, the programme should consider conservation requirements, collections care, permissions, safeguarding, community consent, cultural sensitivity, contested histories and the risk of placing additional pressure on sensitive locations.

Quality and impact over volume – Experience North East England is more interested in supporting distinctive, commercially credible experiences with genuine visitor appeal than maximising the number of businesses or products supported. Bidders should propose an ambitious but realistic scale of delivery and explain how they will balance reach with depth and quality of support.

These principles are intended to provide direction rather than prescribe a fixed programme model. Experience North East England welcomes innovative proposals that build on previous learning and demonstrate how the available budget can generate the strongest visitor and business outcomes.

What Success Looks Like

The successful delivery of this commission will result in a stronger pipeline of distinctive, commercially viable and market-ready heritage and culture visitor experiences across North East England.

By the conclusion of the programme, Experience North East England would expect to see:

- A cohort of businesses and collaborations that have received meaningful, tailored support and can demonstrate clear progress from their starting position.
- New and enhanced heritage and culture visitor experiences that reflect North East England's distinctive people, stories, landscapes, communities, heritage and sense of place.
- Supported experiences that have clear target audiences, defined visitor propositions, appropriate pricing and viable delivery models.
- Experiences that have been tested or otherwise validated where appropriate, with learning used to improve the final visitor offer.
- A stronger pipeline of experiences that are live and taking bookings, or have reached an advanced stage of development with a clear and evidenced route to launch for the relevant 2027 visitor season.
- Appropriate online booking, enquiry and distribution routes established or planned for supported experiences, based on the needs and commercial model of the individual business.
- Businesses better prepared to provide the product information, imagery, pricing, availability and other content required for regional destination platforms and marketing activity. The forthcoming regional website is being designed to connect structured experience listings, storytelling, itineraries and booking or referral routes.
- New collaborations or partnerships between businesses, including opportunities that connect places, sectors or experiences across local authority and LVEP boundaries.
- A small number of credible collaborative or cross-regional propositions with an identified lead, clear visitor proposition, participating partners and realistic route towards development or market testing.

- Evidence that supported experiences have the potential to contribute to priorities such as increased visitor spend, longer stays, regional dispersal and year-round visitation.
- Increased confidence and capability amongst participating businesses to continue developing and commercialising visitor experiences after the programme concludes.
- Clear evidence of support provided, progress achieved, outcomes and future development opportunities that can be used by Experience North East England for monitoring, evaluation and future programme design.

Not every participating business will necessarily reach the same stage within the programme period. Experience development can require testing, partnerships, permissions and operational planning, and previous programmes have demonstrated that some strong concepts continue to progress after formal support concludes.

Experience North East England is interested in quality and meaningful progression as well as the number of experiences launched. Bidders should propose realistic output and outcome targets within their submission and explain how progress will be assessed and evidenced.

In summary, success will be measured by the quality and commercial potential of the experiences developed, the measurable progression of participating businesses and the contribution the programme makes to strengthening North East England's overall visitor offer.

Expected Delivery Approach

Rather than prescribing a fixed programme model, Experience North East England welcomes proposals that demonstrate a practical, innovative and commercially focused approach capable of delivering the objectives of this commission within the available budget and timescales.

Potential approaches could include an accelerator, incubator, intensive mentoring programme, challenge model, collaborative product development programme, or a hybrid of different approaches.

Bidders should explain why their proposed model is appropriate for the businesses and opportunities targeted and how it builds on the learning from previous visitor experience development activity.

As part of their proposal, suppliers should clearly describe:

- Their proposed programme model and rationale.

- How businesses and potential participants will be identified, recruited, assessed and selected.
- The anticipated number and profile of businesses that can be meaningfully supported within the available budget.
- How individual business readiness and support needs will be diagnosed.
- The balance between one-to-one mentoring, group activity, peer learning and other forms of support.
- How specialist expertise will be incorporated where required, including any proposed subcontractors or delivery partners.
- How the programme will access appropriate heritage and cultural expertise where required, including experience of interpretation, collections and archives, community engagement, creative practice, cultural programming, heritage conservation or visitor access to historic environments.
- How businesses will be supported through experience ideation, design, commercialisation, testing and launch.
- How the supplier will identify, convene and facilitate collaboration between businesses, organisations, practitioners and destinations, including the development of potential multi-partner, cross-boundary or regional propositions..
- How online bookability, distribution, marketing and routes to market will be addressed.
- How accessibility, sustainability and inclusive experience design will be considered proportionately within the programme.
- How businesses will be connected, where appropriate, with ENEE marketing, digital, travel trade and wider regional business support.
- How progress, outputs and outcomes will be monitored and evidenced.
- How the programme will maintain momentum where businesses are progressing at different speeds.
- What ongoing or follow-up activity they recommend after the core delivery period.

Suppliers may propose additional specialist interventions such as photography, videography, content creation, market testing, booking system support, accessibility advice or travel trade support where they believe these would materially improve programme outcomes.

Experience North East England is interested in the outcomes achieved rather than adherence to a predetermined programme format and welcomes bidders' professional recommendations on how the available budget can be used most effectively.

Stakeholder and Partnership Working

The programme will operate within a wider regional business support ecosystem. The appointed supplier will therefore be expected to work constructively with Experience North East England and relevant regional and local partners throughout delivery, ensuring that the programme adds value to existing activity and avoids unnecessary duplication.

Relevant partners may include Visit County Durham, Visit Northumberland, NewcastleGateshead, the seven local authorities, relevant sector and business support organisations, and partners working on the Experience Audit, Visitor Economy Spatial Strategy and other experience development activity.

Partners may support the programme through promotion, business referrals, local and sector knowledge, introductions and identification of potential opportunities. Equally, the programme should be capable of referring businesses into relevant existing support where needs identified through diagnostics fall outside the core visitor experience development focus of this commission.

The appointed supplier will be expected to:

- Work with Experience North East England to agree the recruitment and selection approach.
- Draw on the knowledge and networks of LVEPs and relevant sector partners to help identify and reach suitable businesses.
- Liaise, through Experience North East England, with relevant LVEP partners and any related Connected Destinations Fund projects where appropriate, ensuring that participant engagement, product development activity and programme outputs are complementary.
- Recommend a final participant cohort, with final selection agreed jointly with Experience North East England.
- Develop proportionate referral and coordination arrangements with relevant existing business support provision, helping businesses access complementary support where appropriate while avoiding duplication of interventions.
- Identify opportunities where collaboration with other businesses, destinations or programmes could strengthen the resulting visitor experience.
- Share relevant progress and emerging opportunities with Experience North East England throughout delivery.
- Engage with relevant ENEE teams at appropriate points so that product development considers future marketing, digital, travel trade and business events opportunities from an early stage.

- Consider connections with other thematic experience development programmes where these could generate stronger cross-sector or regional experiences.

Experience North East England will advise the appointed supplier of any relevant funding decisions, project relationships and coordination requirements as these become known. The supplier should not assume that any Connected Destinations Fund application will be successful or make delivery of the core commission dependent upon another project proceeding.

Experience North East England will support the appointed supplier with relevant introductions, existing research and connections to regional partners and business networks.

Key Dependencies, Risks, and Assumptions

Experience North East England recognises that the successful development and launch of visitor experiences can be affected by factors beyond the direct control of the appointed supplier.

Previous programme delivery has highlighted differences in business readiness, limited capacity, digital and marketing capability gaps and the time required to move some concepts from initial idea to commercial launch.

Bidders should therefore identify the principal risks and dependencies associated with their proposed delivery model and explain how these will be managed.

In particular, suppliers should consider:

- **Business capacity and engagement.** Participants may have limited time available alongside day-to-day trading, particularly during peak periods.
- **Different levels of readiness.** Some businesses may begin with an existing experience requiring refinement, while others may be developing a new visitor proposition from an early-stage concept.
- **Product development timescales.** Not every experience will necessarily be fully launched within the core programme delivery period. Where this is the case, progress should be clearly evidenced alongside an achievable route and timetable to market.
- **External dependencies.** Some experiences may depend on venues, permissions, infrastructure, suppliers, collaboration partners or other third parties.
- **Commercial viability.** Not every initial idea will prove suitable for development. The programme should be capable of challenging, adapting or

stopping concepts where evidence suggests that they are unlikely to provide a viable visitor experience.

- **Bookability and distribution.** Different businesses will require different booking and distribution solutions. OTA participation or a particular booking system should not be assumed to be appropriate for every experience.
- **Marketing and content.** Businesses may require additional support or assets before an experience can be effectively promoted, even where the underlying product is strong.
- **Evolving regional workstreams.** The Experience Audit, Visitor Economy Spatial Strategy, new regional consumer website and other thematic experience development programmes will be progressing alongside this commission. Relevant emerging findings or requirements may need to be reflected in delivery where practical.
- **Parallel funding and product development activity.** Relevant LVEP-led applications or projects, including activity supported through VisitEngland's Connected Destinations Fund, may be developed or confirmed during the commission. The supplier should be prepared to respond flexibly to emerging opportunities while maintaining clear scope boundaries, avoiding duplication and continuing to deliver the core requirements of this programme.
- **Evolving business support provision.** The regional business support landscape is expected to continue to develop during the programme period. The appointed supplier should work with ENEE to maintain an appropriate understanding of relevant provision and adapt referral arrangements where necessary.
- **Seasonality.** The appropriate launch point will differ between experiences. While many products may be developed for the main 2027 visitor season, others may be specifically intended to strengthen shoulder-season or off-season demand.
- **Geographic reach.** A genuinely regional programme should seek appropriate representation and opportunity across urban, rural and coastal areas, while recognising that the strongest cohort should ultimately be determined by the quality and potential of applicants rather than a rigid geographic quota.

Suppliers should clearly identify any assumptions underpinning their proposed approach and explain what they believe is realistically achievable within the available budget and programme period.

Scope of Work

Experience North East England is seeking an appointed supplier to design and deliver an end-to-end programme that supports businesses from initial recruitment and diagnosis through to experience development, testing, commercialisation and launch readiness.

The scope below sets out the principal areas of activity expected through the commission. Experience North East England does not intend to prescribe a rigid delivery model and bidders are encouraged to recommend how these activities can best be structured to achieve the strongest outcomes within the available budget and timeframe.

Phase 1 - Inception & Programme Design

Following appointment, the supplier will work with Experience North East England to refine and agree the programme approach, delivery timetable, recruitment process and expected outcomes.

The supplier should review relevant evidence and programme learning provided by ENEE, including regional audience and perceptions research, previous experience development activity, online bookability and distribution learning, relevant destination plans, relevant existing heritage, culture and business support provision, and emerging findings from the Experience Audit and Visitor Economy Spatial Strategy where available. This should also include consideration of any relevant Connected Destinations Fund activity that has been confirmed by the point of inception.

This phase should include agreement of:

- The final delivery model and timetable;
- Participant recruitment and selection criteria;
- The anticipated scale and profile of the cohort;
- How the programme will complement existing business support provision, including appropriate referral and coordination arrangements;
- The approach to business diagnostics and individual development planning;
- The balance of one-to-one, group, peer and specialist support;
- Monitoring and evidence requirements;
- Relevant partner involvement;
- The relationship with any relevant Connected Destinations Fund or other LVEP-led product development activity, including agreed scope boundaries,

referral arrangements, information sharing and measures to avoid duplication;

- Key risks, dependencies and programme milestones.

| Deliverable 1 – Agreed Programme Delivery Plan.

Phase 2 – Recruitment, Selection, and Diagnostics

The appointed supplier will design and manage an appropriate recruitment and selection process to identify businesses and collaborations with the potential to develop strong heritage and culture visitor experiences.

Eligible participants may include existing tourism and visitor economy businesses; museums, heritage attractions and cultural venues; historic properties and landscapes; creative practitioners, artists and makers; community, voluntary and faith organisations; organisations seeking to diversify or expand into visitor experiences; collaborations between organisations or businesses; and credible early-stage or pre-start concepts. Applicants must demonstrate a clear visitor-facing opportunity and sufficient commitment and capacity to participate.

Experience North East England, LVEPs and relevant sector and destination partners will support promotion of the programme and identification of potential applicants.

The supplier will be expected to:

- Promote and recruit to the programme across North East England (please refer to the geographic scope in the Appendices section);
- Ensure businesses in urban, rural and coastal areas have a fair opportunity to participate;
- Assess applications against agreed criteria including visitor appeal, distinctiveness, strategic fit, commercial potential, commitment and deliverability;
- Consider alignment with relevant audiences, markets and destination priorities;
- Identify opportunities for collaboration between applicants where this could strengthen the visitor proposition;
- Undertake an appropriate baseline diagnostic with selected participants;
- Identify each participant's starting point, development opportunity, barriers and priority support needs;
- Identify relevant business support already received, currently being accessed or planned by the participant, where this is relevant to the proposed visitor experience;

- Distinguish between visitor experience development needs to be addressed through this programme and wider business needs that may be better supported through appropriate existing provision.

The supplier will recommend the final cohort, with participant selection agreed jointly with Experience North East England.

The appointed supplier will be required to obtain and retain appropriate evidence of participation from each supported business or organisation. This should include a signed or otherwise formally recorded confirmation of participation and any other information required by ENEE for programme monitoring, audit and funding purposes. The final evidence requirements and templates will be agreed with ENEE during the inception phase.

ENEE is interested in quality and potential rather than maximising participant numbers. Bidders should recommend the scale of cohort they believe can receive meaningful support within the available budget and explain the rationale for their proposed approach.

Deliverable 2 - Agreed Participant Cohort and Baseline Diagnostics.

Phase 3 - Experience Development and Commercialisation

This phase should form the core of the programme, providing practical and tailored support to help participating businesses move from their starting position towards a distinctive, commercially viable visitor experience.

Support should respond to the needs and maturity of individual participants and may include:

- Experience concept development and refinement;
- Target audiences and visitor motivations;
- Experience design and customer journey;
- Storytelling, provenance and sense of place;
- Pricing and commercial viability;
- Capacity and operational planning;
- Seasonality;
- Marketing and positioning;
- Collaboration and partnership development;
- Bookability, distribution and routes to market.

The supplier should actively identify, convene and facilitate opportunities for participants and other relevant partners to work together. This should include multi-

organisation experiences, trails, routes, itineraries and experiences connecting heritage and culture with food and drink, outdoor activity, wellbeing, accommodation, transport or other visitor interests.

The supplier should not rely solely on collaborations emerging independently from the participant cohort. Where evidence indicates a strong regional opportunity, the supplier should bring together relevant partners and support them to define the shared visitor proposition, target audience, roles and responsibilities, delivery model, pricing or packaging approach and appropriate route to market.

Particular consideration should be given to opportunities that cross local authority or LVEP boundaries where this creates a stronger visitor proposition, encourages visitors to explore more of North East England and has the potential to increase dwell time or overnight stays.

Deliverable 3 - Experience Development Programme and Emerging Experience Pipeline.

Phase 4 – Testing, Market Readiness, and Routes to Market

Where appropriate, participating businesses should be supported to test, refine and prepare their experiences for market.

This may include prototype activity, trial delivery, soft launches, customer or industry feedback and other appropriate methods of testing. The purpose should be to strengthen the experience, customer journey, operational model and commercial proposition before wider launch.

Each supported experience should also have an appropriate route to enquiry or booking. Where commercially and operationally suitable, businesses should be supported towards online bookability and relevant distribution opportunities.

The appropriate route will vary between businesses and could include direct online booking, booking systems, destination platforms, affiliates, OTAs, travel trade relationships or other appropriate channels. Participation in a particular OTA or booking platform should not be treated as a requirement.

The supplier should also work with participating businesses to consider the information and assets required to effectively take their experience to market. This could include pricing, availability, visitor-facing copy, imagery, practical visitor information, accessibility information and booking or enquiry links.

Experiences should, where appropriate, be prepared for future inclusion within Experience North East England's regional consumer-facing digital and marketing activity.

Bidders may propose additional specialist interventions, including photography, videography, content development, market testing, digital support or booking-system configuration, where they believe these would materially improve programme outcomes. This should be itemised and considered within the budget available.

Deliverable 4 – Market-Ready and Advanced Development Experiences.

Phase 5 – Evaluation, Handover, and Future Pipeline

The final phase should capture the progress achieved through the programme and provide both participating businesses and Experience North East England with a clear understanding of next steps.

For each participant, the supplier should record the starting position, support provided, experience developed, stage reached, key commercial and market-readiness decisions, booking or distribution arrangements and any outstanding actions.

Where an experience has not reached full launch within the programme period, the supplier should clearly identify the progress achieved, remaining barriers and a realistic route and timetable to market.

The supplier should also identify wider learning and opportunities emerging from the programme, including:

- Successful approaches and recurring barriers;
- Emerging collaborations;
- Potential flagship or cross-boundary experiences;
- Opportunities requiring further development or investment;
- Connections with other thematic experience development activity;
- Future support needs that could inform ENEE's longer-term Experience Development Programme.

The final outputs should provide ENEE with a practical pipeline of experiences that can inform future product development, marketing, digital and travel trade activity.

Deliverable 5 – Final Programme Report (including case studies) and Experience Pipeline.

Optional Enhancements

Experience North East England welcomes additional recommendations from suppliers regarding outputs that could enhance the value of the commission. However, suppliers should clearly distinguish between the core deliverables included within their quotation and any optional enhancements.

Deliverables / Outputs

A summary checklist of the deliverables set out in the Scope of Work above, for ease of reference. Full specifications for each deliverable are set out under the corresponding phase.

#	Deliverable	Summary	Suggested Format
1	Programme Delivery Plan	Agreed delivery model, timetable, recruitment approach, milestones, monitoring framework and key risks.	Word Report
2	Participant Cohort & Baseline Diagnostics	Agreed cohort of participating businesses and collaborations, with formal evidence of participation and a baseline assessment identifying each participant's starting position, experience development opportunity, key barriers, relevant business support already accessed or being received, priority support needs and, where appropriate, referrals or connections to complementary provision.	Excel / Word
3	Experience Development Programme & Emerging Experience Pipeline	Delivery of tailored experience development support, with a clear record of participant progression and the new or significantly enhanced heritage and culture visitor experiences being developed through the programme. The pipeline should also identify collaborative, cross-boundary and flagship propositions, including the proposed partners, visitor proposition, development status and next steps.	Word / Excel
4	Market-Ready & Advanced Development Experiences	Portfolio of supported experiences that are live, market-ready or at an advanced stage of development, with clear evidence of commercial readiness, testing where appropriate, booking or enquiry arrangements, routes to market and launch timetable.	Excel

5	Final Programme Report & Experience Pipeline	Concise summary of programme delivery, outputs, outcomes, participant progression, case studies, key learning and recommendations, including relevant referrals or connections made to complementary support. This should be accompanied by a final editable experience pipeline showing the status, responsible organisation, outstanding actions, intended launch date and next steps for each supported experience, together with recommendations for the further development of collaborative or flagship propositions	Word
---	--	--	------

Outputs and Outcome Evidence

Throughout delivery, the appointed supplier should maintain sufficient evidence to demonstrate the activity undertaken and progression achieved. This should enable Experience North East England to report on areas including businesses supported, geographic reach, support delivered, experiences developed or enhanced, experiences brought to market, improvements to bookability and distribution, collaborations created and wider programme outcomes.

The supplier will also be required to obtain and retain appropriate evidence of participation from each supported business or organisation, including signed or otherwise formally recorded confirmation of participation and evidence of support received.

Relevant records may include participant agreements or declarations, attendance records, diagnostic assessments, mentoring or intervention records, action plans and other appropriate evidence agreed with ENEE.

This information may be used for programme evaluation, audit, funding, reporting and PR / communications purposes, subject to appropriate data protection and consent requirements.

Final monitoring, evidence and reporting requirements will be agreed with the appointed supplier during the inception phase.

Project Management

Governance and Reporting

The successful supplier will work closely with Experience North East England throughout the duration of the commission.

The programme will be managed by Experience North East England's Senior Manager for Visitor Economy Development, who will act as the primary client contact and be responsible for day-to-day contract and project management.

The appointed supplier will be expected to work collaboratively with Experience North East England and relevant regional partners throughout delivery. This is likely to include Visit Northumberland, Visit County Durham, NewcastleGateshead LVEP, relevant local authority and sector partners.

Partner involvement should be proportionate to the needs of the programme. ENEE will support the appointed supplier with relevant introductions, promotion through regional networks and connections to existing evidence and workstreams.

The supplier will be expected to maintain clear and regular communication with the ENEE project manager throughout the commission. As a minimum, the appointed supplier should allow for:

- An inception meeting to agree the final delivery plan, timetable, recruitment approach, outputs, monitoring arrangements and key risks;
- Regular project update meetings, anticipated monthly, with additional contact at key points such as recruitment and cohort selection where required;
- Concise written progress updates covering activity delivered, participant engagement, progress against milestones, emerging risks and actions;
- Review and agreement of the proposed participant cohort;
- Milestone reviews at appropriate stages of programme delivery;
- Early escalation of any issues that could affect programme outputs, budget or timetable;
- A final programme review and handover meeting with Experience North East England.

The supplier should maintain an up-to-date record of participating businesses and experience progression throughout delivery so that ENEE has sufficient visibility of programme performance and emerging outcomes.

Experience North East England welcomes bidders' recommendations on a project management and reporting approach that is proportionate to the scale of the

commission while providing appropriate accountability, communication and quality assurance.

Timeline

The below should be used as a guide only and subject to change:

Item	Date
RFQ issued	Friday 9 th October 2026
Clarification deadline	Friday 16 th October 2026 by 17:00
Response to clarification	Thursday 22 nd October 2026 by 17:00
Submission deadline	Friday 30 th October 2026 by 17:00
Evaluation and shortlisting	W/C 2 nd November 2026
Supplier interviews / presentations	W/C 9 th November 2026
Preferred supplier identified	W/C 9 th November 2026
Inception and programme design	W/C 16 th November 2026
Recruitment, Selection, and Diagnostics	November to December 2026
Experience Development and Commercialisation	December 2026 to March 2027
Test, Market Readiness and Routes to Market	December 2026 to March 2027
Evaluation, Handover and Future Pipeline - Final reporting phase	By 31 March 2027, subject to funding requirements
Experience launches	2027 visitor season / appropriate shoulder or off-season period

Experience North East England reserves the right to amend the timeline where necessary.

Budget

Experience North East England has allocated an indicative budget of up to £25,000 (excluding VAT) for this commission.

The available budget should include all costs associated with the design and delivery of the programme, including consultancy and mentoring fees, project management, recruitment activity, meetings, travel and accommodation, programme delivery, specialist or subcontracted support, monitoring, reporting and any other costs required to deliver the core commission.

Participation in the programme must be free of charge to participating businesses.

Bidders should provide a fixed project cost and a clear breakdown of expenditure by programme phase, work package or activity. Where subcontractors or specialist

delivery partners are proposed, their role and associated costs should be clearly identified.

Experience North East England is seeking the solution that provides the strongest overall value and programme outcomes rather than simply the lowest cost. Bidders are therefore encouraged to explain how they propose to use the available budget to achieve an appropriate balance between the number of businesses supported, depth of intervention, specialist expertise and resulting visitor experiences.

Bidders may propose additional or enhanced interventions, such as specialist photography, videography, content development, testing, accessibility advice, digital or booking support, where they believe these would materially improve programme outcomes. These should either be clearly included within the core fixed price or identified and costed separately as optional enhancements.

Payment schedules will be agreed at the inception meeting. As a rule, payments are linked to project milestones.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated against the following weighted criteria. Weights may be adjusted by Experience North East England if required and are given as a guide.

Criteria	Weighting
Understanding of the Brief, Heritage & Culture Tourism Opportunity & Regional Context	20%
Quality and Suitability of Proposed Programme Model & Delivery Approach	30%
Team, Specialist Capability & Relevant Experience	20%
Value for Money	15%
Ability to Deliver at Pace & Achieve Measurable Outcomes	15%

Particular consideration will be given to the extent to which proposals demonstrate a practical and commercially focused approach to visitor experience development, an understanding of the needs and capacity of businesses and the wider heritage and culture business support landscape, appropriate regional reach, strong experience development expertise, a credible approach to additionality and referral, and a clear route from business recruitment through to market readiness.

Experience North East England will also consider the credibility of bidders' proposed outputs and outcomes, including the number and profile of businesses that can be

meaningfully supported within the available budget and the expected progression of resulting visitor experiences.

The appointment will be based on the proposal deemed to offer the most advantageous combination of quality, strategic fit, capability, deliverability and value. Experience North East England is not obliged to accept the lowest-cost proposal or any proposal received.

Evaluation will be undertaken by an appropriate panel which may include representatives from Experience North East England and relevant regional partners.

Following evaluation of written submissions, shortlisted bidders will be invited to an interview / presentation with the evaluation panel. This will provide an opportunity to explore the proposed delivery model, team capability, capacity, approach to working with businesses and any areas requiring clarification before a final appointment is made.

Details of the interview format and assessment criteria will be provided to shortlisted bidders.

Supplier Requirements & Instructions

Proposal Requirements

At a minimum, proposals should include the following:

Overview of your organisation – including the nature of your business and the services you provide.

Relevant experience / case studies of previous and relevant work carried out in the last 5 years – this should demonstrate relevant experience in visitor experience or tourism product development, business support, commercialisation or other closely related activity. Experience within heritage and culture tourism would be advantageous.

Details of the project team – including personnel and key roles and responsibilities. Details of any consortium members, delivery partners or subcontractors proposed as part of the programme should be included, as should their role and relevant expertise.

Your understanding of the brief, regional context and opportunity – including the principal opportunities and challenges you believe should inform delivery of the programme.

Your proposed programme model and delivery approach – explaining how you will address the phases and requirements set out within the Scope of Work. This should include your approach to recruitment, selection, diagnostics, referrals & connections to existing business support ecosystem, experience development, testing, commercialisation, collaboration, bookability and routes to market where relevant.

The scale of programme you propose to deliver – including the anticipated number of businesses or collaborations receiving meaningful support and realistic targets for the number and progression of new or significantly enhanced visitor experiences.

Your approach to collaborative and regional propositions – including how you would identify, convene and support opportunities involving multiple organisations, destinations or sectors, and how you would move these from an initial concept towards a viable visitor proposition.

How your approach will achieve appropriate regional reach – including how businesses and opportunities across urban, rural and coastal areas will be identified and supported.

Your approach to partnership working – including how you would work with Experience North East England, LVEPs and other relevant destination and sector partners while maintaining pace of delivery. This should include how you would coordinate with relevant parallel programmes or funded projects, such as activity supported through VisitEngland's Connected Destinations Fund, to maximise complementarity, support appropriate referrals and avoid duplication.

Your approach to monitoring, evaluation and evidence collection – including how participant starting points, interventions, progress and programme outcomes will be recorded.

Project timeline and Gantt chart – proposals must include a clear Gantt chart showing the proposed programme phases, key milestones, client review points, deliverables and dependencies. The Gantt chart should demonstrate how the supplier will mobilise and complete the programme within the required timeframe and should be provided on no more than one A4 or A3 page.

Project management and communication arrangements.

Detailed pricing and breakdown of costs – including any subcontracted or specialist support and any assumptions underpinning the proposed budget.

Details of any optional or additional activity – clearly separated from the core programme requirements and price.

Key risks, dependencies and mitigation measures – including any assumptions made in developing the proposed delivery approach.

Two references from comparable clients – Experience North East England should have permission to contact these references.

Proposal Length – The main proposal should not exceed 20 A4 pages. This limit excludes the front cover, contents page, team CVs, insurance certificates, references and the required one-page project timetable / Gantt chart. CVs should be limited to a maximum of two pages per proposed team member. Any information submitted beyond the stated page limit may not be considered as part of the evaluation.

Supplier Requirements

Suppliers should provide the following with their quotation:

- Full legal and trading name, legal status, registered address, company registration number and VAT number, where applicable.
- Details of any consortium members or subcontractors involved in delivery.
- Current insurance certificates confirming a minimum of £5 million Employers' Liability, where legally required, £2 million Public Liability and £1 million Professional Indemnity cover.
- Details of any actual or potential conflicts of interest relevant to this commission and how these would be managed.

Experience North East England reserves the right to undertake further proportionate due diligence before awarding the contract, including where appropriate or necessary, requesting the supplier's latest available evidence of financial standing.

Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically via our Opportunities Portal.

The link below will redirect you to a Superhuman.com address, which is where our opportunities portal is hosted.

Opportunities Portal →

<https://enee.org.uk/opportunities-portal-form>

- You will need to provide a downloadable link to your submission documents. We require full permission to view and download any files. We recommend using a cloud service like Dropbox, Google Drive, SharePoint/OneDrive or a transfer service such as WeTransfer. If your submission consists of more than one file, please link to a folder containing all relevant material.

- There is space for you to provide any access instructions for your submission link, for example, if the link is password protected.
- If you are unable to use the form, please contact opportunities@experiencenee.co.uk for assistance.
- If you are unable to provide a download link to your submission documents, there is a file upload option which is limited to a maximum of 10MB per file. Please contact us first before using this option.

We aim to acknowledge receipt of submissions within 2 business days.

Clarification Process

Clarifications and questions should be submitted to opportunities@experiencenee.co.uk by Friday 16th October 2026, by 17:00.

Responses will be shared to all bidders by COP Thursday 22nd October 2026.

Please do not contact or approach individual Experience North East England team members, partner organisations or members of the evaluation panel regarding this procurement, even if you have a prior relationship with them.

Experience North East England may seek clarification of any aspect of a submission during the evaluation process but reserves the right to evaluate proposals based solely on the information provided.

Important Submission Information

- Submissions can only be accepted electronically via the portal. In exceptional circumstances, we may accept submissions via email; however, this will only be agreed on a case-by-case basis.
- We will not accept any submission material via post; this includes any additional portfolio examples, brochures or promotional material.
- Submissions sent to any other email address or Experience North East England team member will not be accepted.

Retention of Data and Submissions

- Submissions will be stored securely and will be treated as confidential in line with our [privacy policy](#).
- Submitted proposals will be retained for audit, governance and record-keeping purposes in accordance with applicable procurement and data protection requirements. Personal data contained within submissions will be processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation, including the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
- Submissions will only be accessed by those involved in the procurement, evaluation and contract award process.

Submission Costs

- All costs associated with the preparation and submission of a proposal are the responsibility of the bidder. Experience North East England will not be liable for any costs incurred in connection with this procurement process.

Intellectual Property

- Intellectual property rights in submitted proposals shall remain with the bidder. However, by submitting a proposal, bidders grant Experience North East England the right to use, copy and evaluate submission materials solely for the purposes of this procurement process. Once the bidder is appointed and contracted all IP will be owned and retained by Experience North East England.

Right Not to Appoint

- Experience North East England reserves the right not to appoint any bidder, to amend the procurement process, or to withdraw this opportunity at any time without liability.
- Late submissions will not be considered.

Appendices

Definition of an Experience

For the purposes of this commission, a visitor experience is a structured visitor-facing activity that offers some form of interaction, participation, guided access, learning, storytelling, immersion or distinctive connection with North East England.

A heritage site, museum, historic property, cultural venue, exhibition, performance programme or landscape would not in itself be considered a visitor experience for the purposes of this programme. However, a structured visitor-facing activity associated with it could be. This might include a curator-led or behind-the-scenes tour, guided heritage walk, creative workshop, object-handling or archaeology experience, open rehearsal, artist-led activity, living history experience, community storytelling walk, multi-site trail, pilgrimage journey, digital or immersive experience, or another participatory activity that provides a distinctive connection with North East England.

Experiences may be:

- Completely new.
- At an early stage of development.
- Existing experiences requiring significant enhancement or repositioning.

- Existing experiences requiring further commercialisation, testing, bookability or routes to market.

The strongest experiences are expected to combine visitor appeal with a clear sense of place, appropriate quality and a viable commercial model. They should also have an appropriate route through which visitors can enquire or book.

Geographic Scope

The programme should cover the North East England region, working across the seven local authority areas and with relevant LVEPs and partners, including Visit Northumberland and Visit County Durham. The seven local authority areas include:

- Northumberland.
- North Tyneside.
- Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Gateshead.
- County Durham.
- South Tyneside.
- Sunderland.

The appointed supplier should consider how experiences link across boundaries and how they support visitor journeys, clusters, routes and itineraries rather than treating each area in isolation.

This may include opportunities that connect cities, towns, coast and countryside or bring together businesses based in different local authority or LVEP areas.

Final participant selection should be based primarily on the quality, potential, strategic relevance and deliverability of the opportunity, rather than rigid geographic quotas.

Priority Audiences and Markets

Domestic:

Priority markets, based on 2026 perceptions research (awareness, recall and stated likelihood to visit) are as follows:

- Primary: Northern England, Scotland, London – highest natural affinity and strongest stated likelihood to visit (mean 3.2–3.34/4), with Scotland and Northern England also showing the highest recent recall of the region.
- Secondary: Midlands, Southern England – worth reaching but with lower natural affinity; likely to need more persuasive work to convert.

Given Northern England, Scotland and London are the priority markets, activity will prioritise our strongest rail routes to market, as the most direct route to converting our highest-affinity audiences, before broadening spend into secondary markets.

International

Agreed priority international markets, are Germany, the Netherlands and the USA. Ireland, Spain, France, the Nordics and others are considered emerging markets, requiring further evidence, market intelligence and/or improved connectivity before being prioritised.

International visitor research conducted in Spring 2026 with 2,031 respondents across France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the USA provides relevant early evidence for heritage and culture product development:

- Heritage, historical sites, cities and towns are important motivators for potential visitors from France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. These themes also appeal to the USA market, although research indicates that US visitors are often seeking a broader and more fully developed visitor experience. US respondents showed particularly strong interest in messages relating to the region's industrial past, historic sites and castles.
- Across the international markets tested, messages linked to the region's UNESCO World Heritage Sites and castles generated particularly strong interest.

The appointed supplier should treat the above as directional starting evidence rather than a substitute for their own audience thinking specific to heritage and culture experience development, and should be aware that the Experience Audit and Visitor Economy Spatial Strategy are progressing in parallel and may refine regional priorities further.

Illustrative Heritage & Culture Experience Opportunities

Experience North East England does not wish to prescribe the specific experiences that should be developed through this programme.

The appointed supplier should work with participating businesses/organisations to identify opportunities based on visitor demand, business strengths, sense of place, commercial potential and deliverability.

Potential areas of opportunity could include:

- **Castles, kingdoms and borderlands**, including castle-to-castle routes, exclusive access, curator-led experiences, medieval storytelling, historic food and craft experiences, and premium guided itineraries.

- **Romans and the Northern Frontier**, including multi-site Roman itineraries, guided walks, archaeology and object-handling activities, family experiences, re-enactment and digital interpretation.
- **Coal, steam, shipbuilding and innovation**, including former worker-led experiences, mining communities, railway heritage, engineering, invention, shipbuilding, maritime heritage and the skilled trades that shaped the region.
- **Saints, pilgrims and sacred landscapes**, including the established Northern Saints Trails, guided pilgrimage journeys and experiences connecting faith, history, landscape, walking and wellbeing. Opportunities could include bookable activities, short breaks and multi-day itineraries built around existing routes, accommodation, local food and drink, heritage attractions and community stories.
- **Coast, ports and maritime communities**, including fishing and harbour heritage, river and coastal journeys, lighthouse stories, boat-based experiences and connections between maritime heritage and local food.
- **Arts, music, literature and performance**, including backstage visits, open rehearsals, artist talks, curator-led gallery experiences, literary walks, music heritage and creative activity inspired by regional people and places.
- **Making and creative practice**, including pottery, glass, metalwork, textiles, printmaking and other artist or maker-led workshops connected with the region's industrial and cultural heritage.
- **Community and intangible heritage**, including resident-led tours, oral history, dialect, folklore, neighbourhood stories, migration, working-class culture and the responsible interpretation of overlooked or contested histories.
- **Screen and storytelling connections**, where heritage places, landscapes and stories can be connected with film and television in a way that complements other regional screen tourism activity.
- **Cross-theme experiences**, connecting heritage and culture with food and drink, outdoor activity, wellbeing, accommodation, events or other visitor interests.
- **Premium, bespoke and travel trade-ready experiences**, capable of attracting high-value domestic or international visitors and supporting longer stays.

These examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive or prescriptive.

The appointed supplier should be prepared to identify and pursue stronger opportunities that emerge through recruitment, diagnostics, collaboration and engagement with businesses.

Particular consideration should be given to opportunities that communicate a distinctive North East England story and connect visitors with the people, stories,

landscapes, communities and traditions behind the region's heritage and culture. Attention should be given to exploring opportunities to develop flagship regional propositions, multi-day journeys and accommodation-linked itineraries that drive longer stays, particularly around connected routes such as the Northern Saints Trails, St Cuthbert's Way and the River Tweed Trail.

The supplier should actively explore opportunities capable of connecting multiple organisations, businesses and destinations into stronger regional or cross-boundary visitor propositions. This should include consideration of how the concept would operate in practice, the role of participating partners, the end-to-end visitor journey, appropriate pricing or packaging, how it would be booked or accessed and who would lead its continued development after the programme.

Relevant Workstreams, Evidence, and Background Information

The appointed supplier is encouraged to make full use of the existing LVEP evidence and research to avoid duplication and to build on significant work already undertaken across the region.

This commission should build on existing research, strategy and programme learning rather than duplicate work that has already been undertaken or commissioned.

Experience North East England will share relevant background information with the appointed supplier where possible and appropriate. This may include:

Workstream/Evidence	Relevance to the Commission
North East England Perceptions and Audience Research	Provides evidence on visitor perceptions, motivations, destination appeal and potential audiences and markets
ENEE Consumer Strategy / Audience Priorities	Provides the latest agreed priorities for domestic and international audiences and markets.
Experience Audit, Gap Analysis & Opportunity Assessment	Will provide a wider regional evidence base on existing experiences, gaps, maturity and future experience development opportunities.
Visitor Economy Spatial Strategy	Will provide evidence on visitor economy clusters, geographic opportunities, connectivity, infrastructure and potential areas for future development.
Other ENEE Experience Development Programmes	Provides opportunities to identify cross-theme products, collaborations and shared learning across food and drink, sport, outdoors, screen tourism and other thematic experience development activity.
VisitEngland Connected Destinations Fund	A national programme supporting LVEP-led partnerships to develop bookable experiences, connected visitor journeys and collaborative propositions across destination

	boundaries. Relevant applications or funded projects may emerge during the commission. The appointed supplier should work with ENEE and relevant LVEP partners to identify appropriate synergies, coordinate activity and avoid duplication where required
Learnings from Previous Programs	Experience North East England's previous product development work has generated a growing evidence base around what businesses need to successfully move from an idea to a commercially viable visitor experience, including the importance of diagnostics, tailored support, testing, marketing and routes to market
Local heritage and culture initiatives	Existing initiatives supporting the visibility of heritage and culture including the Northern Saint's Trail, the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal (a 10-year investment programme to transform the visitor offer along Hadrian's Wall), North Shields Cultural Quarter and Creative Zone Programme aiming to support and attract environment for creatives and cultural businesses to locate, start-up and grow. These initiatives provide useful local intelligence, business networks and potential referral routes. The appointed supplier should complement and build on existing destination activity rather than create competing local schemes, brands or accreditation.

The appointed supplier will be expected to make effective use of this evidence and should not undertake significant additional research unless a specific gap directly relevant to programme delivery is identified and agreed with ENEE.

The Experience Audit, Visitor Economy Spatial Strategy and other thematic experience development programmes will be progressing alongside this commission. ENEE will seek to ensure that relevant insights, opportunities and learning are shared between these workstreams where practical.

The new regional consumer website should also be considered as part of the wider route to market for developed experiences. Its specification includes structured experience listings, location and accessibility information, booking links, itineraries and multiple booking or referral models.

Scope Boundaries

For the avoidance of doubt, 'product / experience development' within this commission refers to the development and commercialisation of visitor-facing experiences.

The following are outside the core scope of the commission unless specifically proposed by the bidder and agreed with Experience North East England:

- General heritage and culture sector development activity without a clear visitor economy purpose;
- Large-scale new consumer or market research where appropriate existing evidence is already available;
- Major capital works, infrastructure or equipment purchases;
- Development of substantial new websites, booking platforms or digital systems on behalf of individual businesses;
- Ongoing delivery of marketing campaigns or management of social media on behalf of participating businesses;
- Ongoing management or operation of experiences on behalf of participating businesses following the programme;

Specialist interventions such as photography, videography, content development, accessibility advice, booking-system support or market testing may be included within the programme where the bidder can demonstrate that they are proportionate and will materially support the development or successful launch of an experience.

The programme should complement, rather than duplicate, existing business support available across the region. Where appropriate existing provision can meet a participant's wider business support needs, the appointed supplier should seek to make an appropriate connection or referral and focus ENEE-funded activity on the visitor experience development interventions where this commission can provide clear additional value.

This should not prevent businesses already receiving other forms of support from participating where there is a distinct and additional visitor experience development opportunity.

Participation in this programme does not guarantee inclusion within Experience North East England marketing campaigns, the regional consumer website, travel trade activity, familiarisation visits or third-party booking and distribution channels.

Instead, the programme should support businesses to develop the quality, commercial readiness, information, assets and appropriate routes to market needed to be considered for relevant future opportunities.