



Thursday 10th May 2018

PRESS RELEASE

New Chief Executive Officer of Visit Herts announced

Deirdre Wells OBE has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of Visit Herts, it was announced this week.

The CEO of UKinbound and former Head of Tourism for the Government and Chair of the Tourism Alliance, has been appointed the new CEO of leading Destination Management Organisation Visit Herts.

She will also lead Visit Herts' trading company Go to Places, which offers services to other UK destinations including Visit Kent and runs a number of government and UK funded programmes. Deirdre will join the company in September and succeeds Sandra Matthews-Marsh MBE who leaves after 14 years at the helm of Visit Kent and Go To Places.

Bill Ferris OBE, Chairman of Go To Places, said "We are delighted to have attracted such a talented and high-profile figure in the tourism industry to lead the business. Deirdre's knowledge and experience will support the company's ongoing growth and ambition to continue to be the market leader in destination management and marketing.

"She has held a number of very senior positions in both government and the private sector and she has a strong reputation as a dynamic and effective leader. We look forward to welcoming Deirdre to the business when Sandra steps down in the late summer."

Deirdre said: "I am delighted to be joining Visit Herts and Go to Places. I hope to bring a wide network of contacts and a strong understanding of the visitor economy to the role. I have witnessed the success of Hertfordshire, Kent and the many partnership programmes in the company's portfolio over the years and feel honoured and delighted to have been selected to lead the company onto even greater things.

"I look forward to getting to know the businesses and partners and following in Sandra's footsteps to continue to build reputation, brand and success for our destinations."

Sandra Matthews-Marsh MBE added: "Deirdre is an impressive leader and passionate advocate of the sector. I simply can't think of a better qualified person to take the business forward. She will be working with a fine team, partnership network and incredibly strong board. So, with Deirdre's passion and flair, the business is in very safe hands."

ENDS

INTERVIEWS

Members of the press are invited to contact Sinead Hanna, Head of Content and Communications, to discuss news interviews and feature opportunities with Deirdre Wells OBE or Sandra Matthews-Marsh MBE. (Sinead.hanna@visitherts.co.uk or call 01227 812910). News requests will be conducted according to deadlines, and feature interviews will be scheduled during May and June.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About Deirdre Wells

Deirdre Wells OBE was appointed Chief Executive of UKinbound in March 2014, following 20 years in Government at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport working on a variety of high-profile projects including the Millennium Dome, Liverpool Capital of Culture 2008 and the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Deirdre was awarded an OBE in 2007 in recognition of her work in leading the team behind the national memorial services for the UK victims of the 9/11 attacks, the Bali bombings, the 2004 Asian Tsunami and the London 7/7 attacks. Appointed the Government's Head of Tourism in 2010, Deirdre was instrumental in the delivery of the GREAT campaign – an ambitious and far-reaching marketing campaign aimed to help the world discover why Britain is such a great place to visit, study, work, invest, and do business.

Through her role as Chief Executive of UKinbound, Deirdre represents the interests of the Association's diverse membership of inbound tourism businesses, helping members to grow and develop their businesses and lobbying Government on their behalf on key industry issues including visas, taxation, and Brexit. A passionate advocate for inbound tourism, Deirdre is also a member of the Tourism Industry Council, Chair of the Tourism Alliance, and sits on the Board of the Tourism Society.

Deirdre lives in Kent with her husband and two sons and is a keen singer, shopper, and movie-goer.

About Visit Herts

Visit Herts is the destination management organisation for the county of Hertfordshire, welcoming 25million visitors a year, and championing the county's £2.1billion tourism industry which supports more than 38,000 jobs. Visit Herts works with a range of public and private sector businesses and organisations to raise the county's profile as a leading destination, to improve quality and skills within the industry, and grow investment in tourism. Visit Herts is a public/private sector partnership supported by Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, and is delivered by destination management specialists Go to Places (www.gotoplaces.co.uk).

For further information visit www.visitherts.co.uk or follow us on social media (@visithertsuk)

About Go To Places

Go To Places delivers innovative, effective and sustainable destination management services in the UK. Committed to improving quality and skills within the tourism industry, Go To Places has developed a unique destination management organisation (DMO) model, based on developing great locations through innovative marketing, public and private sector partnerships, and positively influencing the tourism industry. This includes offering expertise on funding bids, helping tourism and leisure businesses to better understand their market and audience, and sharing proven, effective marketing campaigns.

The Go To Places' destination management model has been developed through its experience as Kent's DMO, Visit Kent (created in 2002). This model is now being delivered through its other

portfolio destinations, such as Visit Herts, and thematic campaigns such as Big Weekend and Gardens & Gourmet.

Go To Places is the only officially recognised organisation delivering destination management services across multiple counties and thematic campaigns. For further information visit www.gotoplaces.co.uk or tweet @GTP_Sandra