



South West England

March 26th 2026

Fresh Air for Fresh Thinking!



Welcome - why we're here

- To introduce 'Meet Exeter'
- The importance of business meetings and events to the city
- The opportunities for Exeter
- How you can become involved with its success
- Why it matters
- Collaborative approach
- Creating a unified voice
- Economic growth
- Overcoming challenges





Who we are and what we offer

- **Meet Exeter is a sub-brand of Meet Devon South West England offering a free and impartial venue-finding service dedicated to growing business tourism across the city and surrounding area.**
- **Working in partnership with Visit Exeter, we act as the first point of contact for meeting planners for meetings, conferences, incentives, golf groups, team-build events, special interest programmes, exclusive weddings and company celebrations.**
- **Our role is to provide professional, unbiased guidance supported by strong regional knowledge, helping planners find the right venues and experiences across Exeter and the wider South West.**
- **By working with Meet Exeter, local businesses can access new opportunities, raise their profile and play an active role in attracting high-value business events to the city**



What we do

Why business events matter and the development of a long-term strategy

- **Working closely with our industry partners, Visit England (Meet England) and the MIA (Meetings Industry Association), as well as the individual businesses and other tourism and hospitality organisations**
- **Target regional/national/international association, corporate meetings and incentives**
- **Compliment leisure tourism; mid-week and off season**
- **Development of wider leisure opportunities with social programs linked to business events and converting to leisure**
- **LSA with Visit Devon who are the LVEP lead**





Who are our partners?

- We have 133 Meet Devon partners listed on our website of which 27 are in or around Exeter. *
- Consist of hotels, conference venues and team build companies

Who are our industry Partners?

- Sally is on the Meet England working group
- Nicky is on the Meetings Industry Board (MIA)
- Meet Devon works closely with The Association Network

Who are Meet Exeter's main competitors?

- Plymouth
- Bristol
- Oxford
- Cambridge
- York
- Liverpool
- Manchester
- Leeds

Plans for 2026/2027

To continue to raise the profile of Devon as a serious and key business destination

How?

- Continue to source *funding/sponsorship* opportunities when available
- Create a new website when we can
- Offering representation at *key trade shows* in 2026/27

These include:

- Meet England US Sales Mission /SMU International (March 2026) ** completed
- The Meeting Show – ExCel London (June 2026) *MIA
- CHS – Manchester (Sept 2026)
- IMEX America (October 2026) *Meet England
- IBTM Barcelona (November 2026) * Meet England
- Meet England European sales missions - 2027
- Networking Opportunities – MIA, Meet England

Continue working with individual business to help develop their business offering

Sponsorship/funding is crucial for us to partake and be seen at these key trade events in turn enabling us to move our destination forward

The slide features a map of the United Kingdom with travel times from various cities to Exeter, Devon. The text on the slide is as follows:

Devon England
Where Business 'Meets the Unexpected'

From 'Moor to Sea' - host your event somewhere they'll never expect... and never forget.
Corporate Meetings | Association Congresses | Incentive Travel | Signature Events

Think different. Think Devon.

| City | Travel Time | Mode |
|------------|--------------|---------|
| Edinburgh | 1 HR 35 MINS | BY AIR |
| Newcastle | 1 HR 20 MINS | BY RAIL |
| Manchester | 1 HR 5 MINS | BY RAIL |
| Birmingham | 2 HR 50 MINS | BY RAIL |
| Norwich | 1 HR 10 MINS | BY AIR |
| London | 2 HR | BY AIR |
| Bristol | 1 HR | BY AIR |
| Exeter | - | - |
| Penzance | 3 HR | BY AIR |
| Dublin | 1 HR 10 MINS | BY AIR |
| Belfast | 1 HR 20 MINS | BY AIR |

Meet Devon

Our Achievements

Successful with our bid for UKSPF funding in the English Riviera - enabled us to increase activity and development of business visits and events to the English Riviera. Also, we were able to exhibit at key trade events. This funding was just for one year, but proved what could be done with just a little funding

We were shortlisted for a **National Award** 'Destination Team of the Year' by the Meetings Industry Association (MIA) October 2023 and 2024.

Chosen by **Meet England** for being one of only 4 partners to attend the **US trade mission** and **SMU International** *London, Liverpool & Manchester for 2025 and 2026

What we could achieve - if we all collaborate

- We will continuously work to **raise the profile** of **Meet Exeter** nationally and internationally – but we need partners support to enable us to participate in activity and trade shows - business visits and events don't happen overnight
- **Development** of our meetings and event offering is much enhanced with , but we need to match that with modern sustainable conference facilities to makes us a desirable destination and be above our competitors
- We need to create an **Ambassador Program** by working with the incredible businesses we have across Exeter to bring their own International events to the area

Visibility – Visit Britain / Meet England

The screenshot shows the Visit Britain website interface. At the top, there are navigation menus for 'Discover Britain', 'Business & Destination support', 'Research & Insights', 'Training & Events', and 'News & Media'. Below the navigation, there are sections for 'North of England', 'Central England', and 'South of England'. The 'South of England' section features a video player with a play button, a thumbnail image of a coastal town, and a thumbnail image of a lighthouse. The 'Meet Devon' section includes a video player with a play button and a thumbnail image of a vineyard. The 'Visit Brighton' section includes a video player with a play button and a thumbnail image of a lighthouse.

The screenshot shows the Meet England website for IBTM 2024. The main heading is 'MeetEngland at IBTM 2024' with the sub-heading 'VisitEnglandBiz'. Below this, it says 'MeetEngland' and 'ibtm WORLD BARCELONA, SPAIN 19-21 Nov 2024'. There are two video player thumbnails: one showing a spa room and another showing a vineyard. The navigation menu at the bottom includes 'Discover Britain', 'Business & Destination support', 'Research & Insights', 'Training & Events', 'News & media', and 'About us'.

A photograph of a woman, Sally Everton Heap, smiling at an event. She is wearing a red lanyard with the Meet England logo. In the background, there is a red wall with the Meet England logo and a video player with a play button. The text 'Meet England' is visible on the wall.

MeetEngland at IBTM World Barcelona 2024

We hosted over 550 1:1 appointments on stand, alongside our England partners, delivered 6 destination presentations and showcased England's wealth of world-class venues, diverse destinations and unique business events offerings. Watch our recap video here!



Sally Everton Heap
Director/Visitor Economy Manager

Meet England - data

Understanding Business Visits to Great Britain

February 2026

VisitBritain Research



Meet England - data

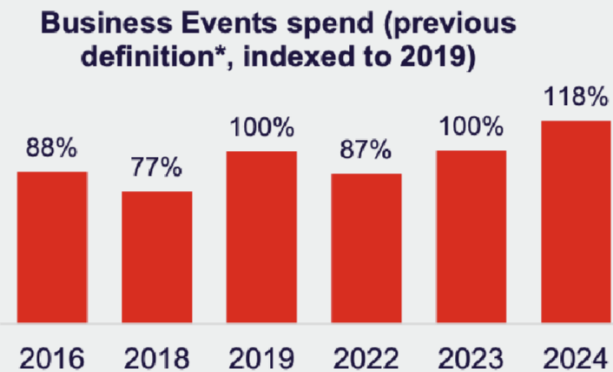
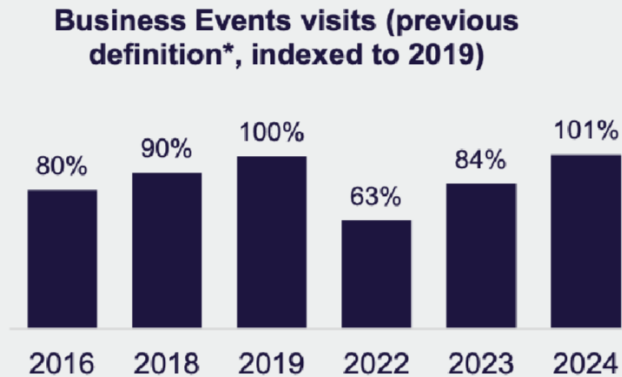
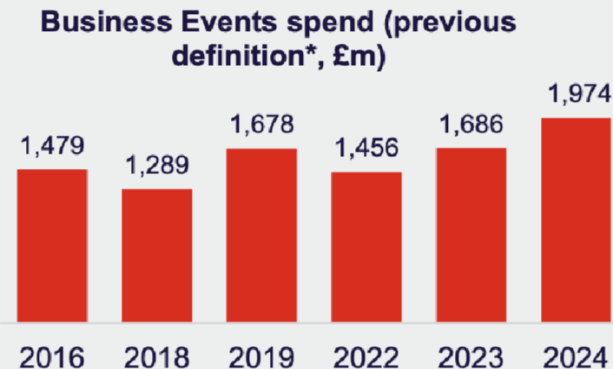
Key Value Drivers for England: *

- **Business events** are a massive driver of the English and UK economy, with the sector estimated to be worth **£68.7 billion** in 2025. These events generate roughly **£19.3 billion in direct expenditure** through conferences and exhibitions, supporting hundreds of thousands of jobs and fueling tourism, investment, and innovation.
- **Massive Economic Impact:** Business events (conferences, exhibitions, trade shows) alone account for over £33 billion of the total economic impact.
- **High-Spending Visitors:** International business delegates spend up to four times more than domestic attendees, with those from outside Europe spending an average of £1,824 per trip.
- **Employment:** The events industry supports approximately 126,000 jobs directly in venues, organizing, and supplying.
- **Industry Growth:** Business event spending is rising faster than inflation, with rising demand for exhibitions
- **Regional Growth and Infrastructure:** Events act as a catalyst for investment in infrastructure and support regional economic growth, with over £1 billion in new investment stimulated by the sector.
- **Global Reputation:** The UK is positioned as a safe, stable hub for international association meetings and trade shows, ranking strongly in global league tables

*Source: [VisitBritain](#)

Meet England - data

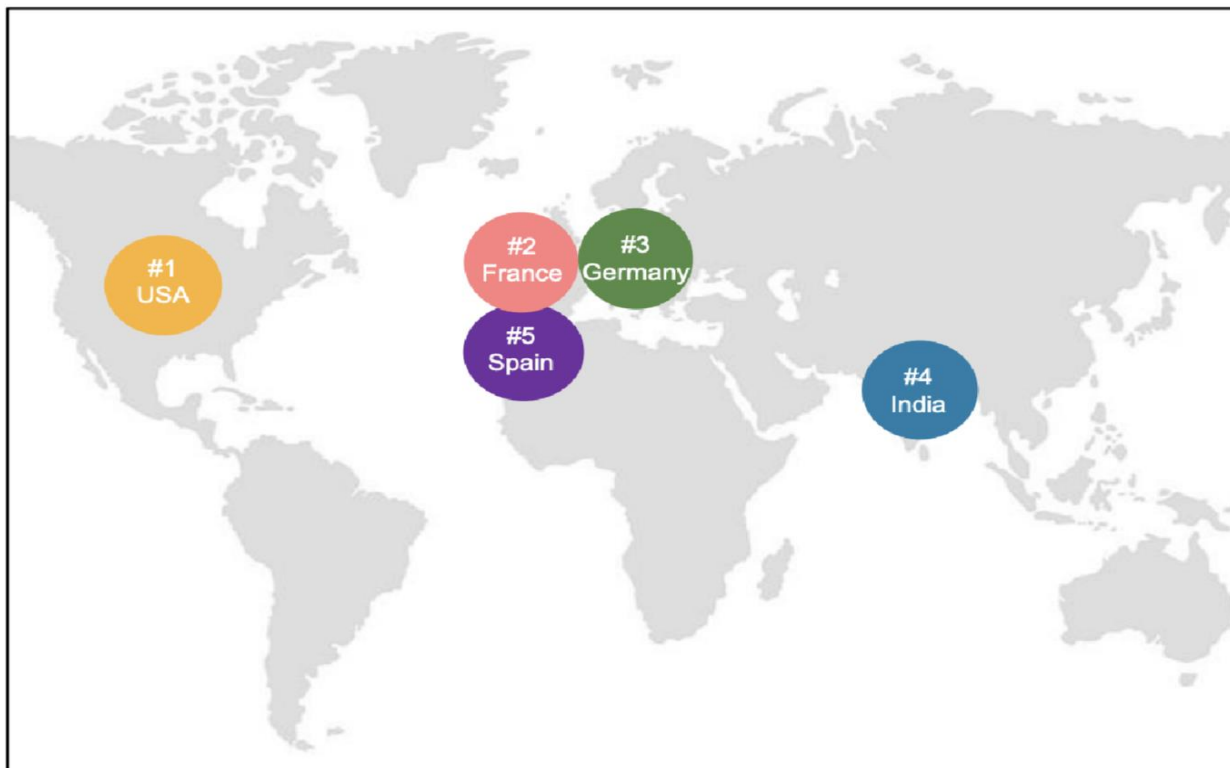
Trends in Business Events visitation over time



- In the years that VisitBritain has included an added question on the IPS to identify types of Business visit, the volume of Business Events visits and the spend associated with them has fluctuated. However, both reached their peak in 2024 with 1.8m visits (using previous definition*), and £2.0bn spent.
- Business Events visits to Great Britain grew by 20% year on year, but was only 1% above the previous peak in 2019. Spend grew year on year by 17% (14% in real terms). This rate of growth is much faster compared to the Business purpose as a whole (5% growth for visits and 9% growth for spend in real terms), and for inbound visits from all journey purposes (6% growth for visits and 2% growth for spend in real terms; VB modelled estimates for all inbound visits, 2024).

Meet England - data

Top source markets for Business spend



| Business Rank | All Purposes Rank* | Market | Spend in 2024 | Business rank excl. lorry drivers** |
|---------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 | USA | £1,365m | USA |
| 2 | 3 | France | £367m | France |
| 3 | 2 | Germany | £361m | Germany |
| 4 | 10 | India | £290m | India |
| 5 | 5 | Spain | £271m | Spain |
| 6 | 8 | Irish Republic | £215m | Netherlands |
| 7 | 7 | Italy | £168m | Irish Republic |
| 8 | 13 | Switzerland | £151m | Italy |
| 9 | 4 | Australia | £148m | Switzerland |
| 10 | 12 | China | £133m | Australia |

Patterns in ranking differ once again when looking at inbound spend, with India gaining 6 ranks among Business visits compared to overall inbound visits in 2024. The Irish Republic, Switzerland, and China are also ranked higher for Business spend vs. overall spend.

Source: International Passenger Survey 2024. *Market ranking among all inbound visits in 2024. All values and percentage changes in spend are in nominal terms unless otherwise specified. **Data excluding lorry drivers has been included as this group often exhibits different behaviour vs. other types of business visit. 2024 data points are official statistics in development: please refer to slide 7 for more details.

Meet England - data

Key Challenges:

- **Rising Costs:** Increased operational costs are affecting the sector
- **Talent Shortages:** The sector is facing challenges with staffing
- **Visa and Trade Issues:** International, particularly non-European, participation faces hurdles from complex visa regulation
- **Geopolitical Instability:** Global conflicts are causing logistical issues, higher insurance costs, and increased security requirements for international participants
- **The Iranian War** – travel restrictions and nervousness to travel
- *Despite these challenges, the UK is increasingly seen as a "safe harbour" for events, with strong demand for professional, high-standard venues such as ours and ideal for regional development*

Meet Exeter – Stronger together

Questions and discussion points

