

**NEWS RELEASE
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The Beautiful South's sensational seven step closer to national tourism glory

A record number of tourism businesses in South East England have been announced as finalists in the annual Enjoy England Awards for Excellence it has been revealed today.

The Awards, organised by national tourism body VisitEngland, celebrate some of the very best tourism businesses in the UK, recognising businesses that demonstrate commitment to high quality, helping to make England a world-class destination. Seven businesses have been shortlisted in South East England with no other region achieving more finalists, making it the best year ever for the Beautiful South.

The lucky seven were all winners at Tourism South East's Excellence Awards in October and have battled it out with tourism businesses across the UK to make it through to the national stage. The contenders will be judged alongside two other businesses in each category before the Gold winners are announced on St George's Day at a glittering awards ceremony to be held in the Corn Exchange at the Brighton Dome on 23 April.

The South East will be represented in 7 of the 15 award categories. From Kent, Livingstone Lodge Overnight Safari and Coldharbour Cottage will be going for the Best Tourism Experience and Self Catering Holiday of the Year awards respectively. In the hotel sector, South Lodge Hotel in West Sussex has been shortlisted for Large Hotel of the Year and Lainston House Hotel in Hampshire for Small Hotel of the Year. RHS Garden Wisley in Surrey has been put forward for Large Visitor Attraction and Hampshire's Portsmouth Information Service will be vying for the Tourist Information Service Gold. On home turf on the night, Brighton Festival in East Sussex will be hoping to be named Tourism Event of the year.

'We are delighted to be hosting the Enjoy England Awards for Excellence here in the Beautiful South' said Tourism South East Chief Executive Mike Bedingfield, 'the announcement of so many finalists in our region affirms the incredibly high-standard of entrants we had in our regional awards; and the quality of the tourism businesses in the South East. I wish all of our finalists the very best of luck on the big night.'

More information about the Enjoy England Awards for Excellence can be found at www.enjoyengland.com/excellence

More information about Tourism South East can be found at www.tourismsoutheast.com

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For further information contact: Hannah Payne on 023 8062 5471 or email hpayne@tourismse.com

Note to Editors:

Tourism South East is the official tourist board for South East England, covering Surrey, Kent, East and West Sussex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

The South East is the largest region for tourism in Britain outside of London, worth in excess of £12 billion p.a. to the regional economy (7% of regional GVA) supporting over 300,000 jobs.

Nominees:

Hampshire

Small Hotel of the Year - Lainston House Hotel, Winchester

www.lainstonhouse.com

Tourist Information Service - Portsmouth Information Service, Portsmouth

www.visitportsmouth.co.uk

Kent

Self Catering Holiday of the Year - Coldharbour Cottage, Kent

www.coldharbourcottage.co.uk

Best Tourism Experience - Livingstone Lodge Overnight Safari, Hythe

www.totallywild.net

Surrey

Large Visitor Attraction - RHS Garden Wisley, Woking

www.rhs.org.uk/whatson/gardens/wisley

Sussex

Tourism Event - Brighton Festival, Brighton

www.brightonfestival.org

Large Hotel - South Lodge Hotel, Horsham

www.southlodgehotel.co.uk