

**NEWS RELEASE
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Top county tourism businesses to speak at major Hampshire conference

Tourism South East, in partnership with the Hampshire Tourism Partnership is organising a free conference and networking event for Hampshire-based tourism and hospitality businesses.

The event, which will take place on the morning of Thursday 15 April 2010, is being hosted by the highly successful Hampshire theme park Paultons Park near Romsey which welcomes over 500,000 visitors each year.

The conference will feature innovative and leading Hampshire tourism representatives who will share best practice and define how their businesses contribute to Hampshire's tourism industry, worth over £2.6 billion to the county's economy, employing over 56,000 people.

Steve Lorton Commercial Director at Paultons Park will kick off the event speaking about how Hampshire's leading theme park recently undertook its successful rebranding exercise and Alison Evans, General Manager at Mottisfont Abbey, will give insight on how the National Trust is looking to engage more effectively at the local level. Charlotte Barnaville from Winchester Cathedral will tell how the Cathedral is creating a new interpretation featuring Jane Austen in order to raise awareness of the significance of the county in the writer's life and create a hook to attract more visitors to the county.

In the current 'staycationing' climate the season ahead for holiday parks looks positive and Tim Howell, Managing Director of the Sandy Balls Holiday Centre, finalists in the 2009 Tourism ExSEllence Awards, will speak about how they plan to stay ahead of the game. James Cretney Chief Executive at Marwell Wildlife will speak about how Hampshire's leading wildlife park manages its charitable objectives alongside being a leading tourist attraction.

Editor of the Southern Daily Echo, Ian Murray will conclude the conference by facilitating a lively panel discussion.

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For further information about the event contact: Dan Holmes on 023 8062 5544 or email dholmes@tourismse.com

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

Note to Editors:

Photo shows Paultons Park.

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

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.