

IN BRIEF

■ **TTG RENEWS GIMME 5 AND FLY**
TTG has announced it is media partner for Barbados Tourism Authority's Gimme 5 and Fly fam trip 2014. Agents qualify by making five Barbados bookings on British Airways between January 1 and May 30. Sixty agents will be selected to attend the four-night trip, departing on either June 12 or 13, and will stay at either Sea Breeze, Mango Bay or Almond Beach Resort. See ttgdigital.com/competitions for more information.

■ **BRITS FLOCK TO PORTUGAL**
Portugal saw tourist numbers from the UK jump 8.6% in 2013 when they accounted for seven million overnight stays. Actual guest numbers rose more than 7% to 1.4 million, with revenue around €1.5 billion, up 4.2%. Britain remains Portugal's number one inbound market. The increase followed more flights from scheduled and charter airlines to all four Portuguese airports.

■ **EC TO PROBE FIVE AIRLINES**
Virgin Atlantic is one of five carriers subject to a European Commission probe into "illegal influence" from their minority investors. Virgin is 49% owned by Delta. Air Berlin, in which Etihad owns a 29% stake, is also under scrutiny. Virgin said it awaited contact from the Commission and would cooperate.

■ **TOBAGO LOSES VIRGIN LINK**
Tobago has lost its Virgin Atlantic flight connection following the decision to axe the Gatwick route via St Lucia. The island believes it will not suffer a drop in visitors as British Airways is adding a second weekly flight this winter and Monarch a second weekly charter. Both new services are from Gatwick. BA's will operate via Antigua.

■ **FORWARD SALES UP FOR JET2**
Jet2's owner says the budget airline has sold more than half its seats for the current summer. The Dart Group added that Jet2holidays had been successfully expanded with "continued profit growth" expected for the 2014-15 period.

'All agents can promote sustainable holidays'

Pippa Jacks

TRAVEL AGENTS should encourage their customers to choose sustainable holidays, said VisitEngland chief executive James Berresford.

"Agents are there at the point of decision, and can make sure responsibility and sustainability is part of the customer decision process," he said.

"VisitEngland, destinations and agents all have a vested interest in protecting the future," he continued.

Berresford was speaking to *TTG* at Responsible Tourism in Destinations, which incorporated a day dedicated to the domestic market as part of VisitEngland Week.

He admitted "tourism still finds it difficult to get a foothold in policymakers' minds".

"Tourism accounts for 2.6 million jobs in the UK and is growing at 5% year-on-year, and we want government to take it seriously," he insisted.

But he said VisitEngland Week



Berresford (second right) at the launch of the Peak District's Summer of Cycling campaign

2014 had been the most successful yet in terms of engaging MPs.

"Investing in tourism is investing in the future. Sometimes we overlook the message that if we invest in sustaining pubs and bus services and local facilities, they are great not just for tourists but for local residents too," he added.

"If we can convince MPs that tourism is worth X amount in their local economy and employs Y number of people in their backyard, that makes sense to them."

Lack of funding remains a major challenge, he said. "Five years ago the Regional Development Agencies

had £60 million to invest in tourism and that's gone. The public sector and local authorities have found it difficult to keep supporting destination management organisations," he said. "We've got to make the best use of resources, and be clear about priorities."

Berresford said efforts to encourage international visitors to visit more of England than simply London have had only limited success.

"London is still dominating the international growth," he admitted. "First time visitors to England start in London, but there is an opportunity with second and third time visitors to come in at points of entry other than Gatwick and Heathrow".

He said VisitEngland was working with regional airports such as Birmingham and Bristol to help attract repeat visitors to alternative gateways.

■ **RTDS conference report, pages 8-9**

30 MILES FOR JUST A DROP:

TTG's Tomorrow's Travel Leaders walked 30 miles along the Thames Path to raise money for water charity Just a Drop. Pictured are TTG's 30 Under 30 along with TTG's managing director Daniel Pearce and editor Pippa Jacks, and Just a Drop founder Fiona Jeffery. The group set off after breakfast at Clarion Collection Hotel Richmond Gate and finished with dinner at Clarion Collection Harte & Garter Hotel in Windsor. Donations are already nearing £6,000; you can donate by visiting Justgiving.com/teams/30under30, and see photos at facebook.com/traveltradegazette

