VisitEngland Announces Home of Sport Shortlist

Wednesday 16 September, 2015

After three months and 2,000 public nominations, VisitEngland's Home of Sport shortlist is revealed

Six top English sporting destinations open to public vote today

The search to establish England's ultimate sporting capital began in June, when VisitEngland asked the public to nominate their top sporting experiences and venues across the country. Over the following weeks, more than 2,000 submissions flooded in from across the country, and spanned everything from favourite running routes and personal fitness challenges to stadia holding tens of thousands of fans and even choice pubs for watching the action.

Establishing a shortlist was no mean feat – a VisitEngland panel worked through the thousands of claims to select the leading destinations according to their offering of sporting venues and attractions, the breadth of their sporting experiences, diverse and beautiful backdrops, and sporting trivia or claims to fame.

James Berresford, VisitEngland's Chief Executive says: "shortlisting six destinations from a pool of 2,000 nominations was a tough job. Between them, these destinations showcase England's diversity as a sporting country – its unrivalled sporting heritage, our expertise in hosting world class events, and the winning combination of iconic modern venues and natural wonders. We are excited to see which of our worthy shortlist the public crowns the country's ultimate Home of Sport".

The shortlist of England's top sporting destinations, announced today, is:

- **The people's choice (most nominations) – Nottingham**

Historic cricket ground Trent Bridge was recently the site of our glorious Ashes win, while the Aegon Open returned to the city this summer for the first time since 2008. Robin Hood fans can try their hand at archery in Sherwood Forest or take the ultimate fitness test in the Outlaw Triathlon, a gruelling Ironman-distance course. Nottingham's other assets include the historic Notts County FC and Nottingham Forest, which famously took the European Cup under Brian Clough. The number and diversity of nominations received for Nottingham made it our People's Choice.

- **Sporting playground – Yorkshire**

The rolling hills, expansive moors and untouched coastline makes Yorkshire a veritable sporting playground. Last year's Tour de France, which took the peloton through beautiful Yorkshire scenery and the iconic towns of Leeds, Harrogate, York and Sheffield, paved the way for this year's inaugural Tour de Yorkshire, and this vast county is now globally recognised for its cycling offering. With its network of caves, towering peaks and beautiful coastline, the countryside is awash with space for cavers, climbers and kayakers.

- **Biggest claim to fame – Rugby**

It was on the playing field at Rugby School that, nearly 200 years ago, the game of rugby was born. Here in 1823 William Webb Ellis picked up the ball during a football match and ran with it, changing the game forever. Rugby School is also accredited with many of the words associated with the sport – from 'try' to 'goal line' – as well as giving the England team its defining white shirt and with inventing 'caps', originally given to the school boys deemed good enough to play for the main teams. Rugby became the winter sport of the British Empire, spreading to France, Argentina, Japan and the rest of the world, and today international teams still battle for the 'Webb Ellis' trophy in the World Cup. All thanks to this Warwickshire market town.

- **Best sporting attractions – Manchester**

Manchester's cityscape is full of iconic and ambitious sporting venues. The city is home to the National Cycling Centre, the world's busiest velodrome and BMX track which is open to the public. The National Squash Centre and Manchester Aquatics Centre were both specifically built for the 2002 Commonwealth Games hosted by the city. Manchester is renowned of course for its football, and Old Trafford and Etihad Stadium are two of the most iconic venues for our national sport. There's also the National Football

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Museum, and now Hotel Football, so fans can really make a break of it.

- **Quirkiest sports – Gloucestershire**

Home to several of our nation's quirkiest sports and pastimes, Gloucestershire earned its place in VisitEngland's Home of Sport shortlist with such nominations as River Football in Bourton-on-the-Water, an annual match played in the trickling River Windrush, and the Cotswolds Olympicks, an unusual spectacular now over 400 years old. Tetbury's Wacky Races sees competitors building their own vehicles for the annual Soapbox Derby, while visitors to the River Severn can try their hand at river surfing in spring and autumn and the fearless can hurl themselves down Cooper's Hill in pursuit of cheese in the county's annual cheese-rolling competition.

- **Iconic venues and events – London**

London's skyline is peppered with iconic sporting venues. The enduring legacy of hosting the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has included such splendid structures as Lee Valley Velopark, Lee Valley White Water Centre, and the Aquatics Centre. South West London's Twickenham Stadium and Wimbledon All England Tennis Club are recognisable worldwide; while the history of venues such as Lords, the Oval and Royal Blackheath Golf Club make them a must-see. Take a tour of one of many leading football club stadiums including Tottenham,, Chelsea and Arsenal, or hone your sporting trivia with a visit to the national museum for tennis (Wimbledon), rugby (Twickenham) or cricket (Lords).

Visit www.englandhomeofsport.com to view the shortlisted destinations and vote for your favourite.

Voting will close on 19 October, and England's Home of Sport will be announced on 23October 2015.

Ends

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Notes to Editors:

About VisitEngland

- VisitEngland is the country's national tourist board, sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport. We work in partnership with Government and the industry to develop the visitor experience across England, plan national tourism strategy, grow the value of tourism in England and provide advocacy for the industry and our visitors. Our work is underpinned by robust research and customer insights.
- England is a unique destination and a real powerhouse in global tourism. It represents 84 per cent of the total UK visitor economy, is worth £106 billion, and supports 2.6 million jobs.
- For further information and to access the latest in-depth market intelligence and statisticsvisit www.visitengland.com/biz or www.visitengland.com for consumer information.

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