



Association of Leading
Visitor Attractions

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9

ALVA MEMBERS IN LONDON REPORT DECREASE OF UPTO 21.3% IN VISITOR FIGURES OVER THIS SUMMER

Figures released today (**Monday, October 8, 2012**) by The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) reveal the impact of Britain's wettest summer for 100 years and the disruption caused by the Olympics on Britain's most popular attractions.

These figures are being announced just before the National Conference of Visitor Attractions 2012, which will be held in London on Thursday, October 11.

Bernard Donoghue, Chief Executive of ALVA, explained: "In the first couple of weeks of the Olympics, some of the key central London attractions experienced a huge fall of up to 61% in visitor numbers compared to the same weeks last year. Overseas visitors who stayed away from London during the Olympic period and Londoners who avoided the city led to media headlines of London being described as 'a ghost town'."

Visitor numbers to their members in London saw an average decrease of 15% during May to August 2012 compared to the same months in 2011. The Gardens and Leisure sector saw the largest decrease of 21.3% in London. These included venues such as the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, The Royal Horticultural Society at Wisley and ZSL London Zoo. These venues also saw a 12.5% fall in catering revenue. Among the Heritage and Cathedrals sector, visitor numbers dropped by 20.3% and this affected their retail sales by 20.2%. This sector includes locations such as Tower of London, Kensington Palace, Houses of Parliament, St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

Museums and Galleries in London saw the smallest decline of 13.1% on visitor numbers.

The reduction in visitor figures was not just in London – ALVA members in the rest of England saw an average decline of 4.7%.

In Scotland there was a clear divide between gardens and attractions in rural locations which suffered due to the bad weather as well as transport costs, and the museums and galleries of Edinburgh and Glasgow which performed well.

Bernard Donoghue, continued: “These figures from our 43 members, who manage some nearly 2,000 tourist sites and welcome over 100 million domestic and overseas visitors each year are definitely sobering reading and show that the summer of 2012 has been a difficult time financially for our most popular and best-loved visitor attractions. It is our belief that for gardens and outdoor attractions across the UK, the appalling weather during much of the year has led to one of the worst trading periods since 2001 and Foot and Mouth. For London attractions the Olympic period was one of their worst trading periods in living memory and for visitor attractions the summer is their equivalent of retailers’ Christmas, once lost the business can’t be won back.

“ALVA has always taken the long-term view that the economic benefits for tourism of hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games would be long-term rather than short-term. ALVA is working with the local and national tourist boards and others to turn the millions of Olympic TV viewers who loved how Britain looked into visitors who will come here in the next months and years.”

	Visitor Numbers %	Retail Spend %	Catering Spend %
London			
Gardens & Leisure	-21.3	-9.7	-12.5
Heritage & Cathedrals	-20.3	-20.2	-8.6
Museums & Galleries	-13.1	-5.4	-7.5
Rest of England			
Gardens & Leisure	0.7	-2.0	-0.4
Heritage & Cathedrals	-6.4	-8.5	1.8
Museums & Galleries	-8.6	7.0	3.4
Scotland			
Gardens & Leisure	-11.0	0.0	0.0
Heritage	-10.0	-3.7	-7.0
Museums & Galleries	16.3	30.5	0.0

May – August 2012, compared to May – August 2011

For further information on ALVA, please visit www.alva.org.uk

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

The members of ALVA are the UK's most popular, iconic and important museums, galleries, palaces, castles, cathedrals, zoos, historic houses, heritage sites, gardens and leisure attractions. The 43 members manage some nearly 2,000 tourist sites and welcome over 100 million domestic and overseas visitors each year; some 25% of the visits made annually in the United Kingdom. To qualify for membership, the attractions must host over a million visitors per year at their singly or centrally-managed sites.

Leisure includes zoos, leisure attractions and theme parks; Heritage includes stately homes, historic houses, castles, palaces and historic sites.

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** Source, Front page of the Financial Times, July 31, 2012.*