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Coventry and Warwickshire is utilising its variety and unique charms to appeal to planners across the country

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hat changes a place from bricks and mortar, hills and fields or arenas and venues, to a region that sticks with you long after

you've left it?

For us in Coventry and Warwickshire, it's the history and heritage combined with the diversity and quality of our event supply chain. This variety is also represented in our landscape, having the duality of both our industrial heart in Coventry and the natural beauty of the surrounding Warwickshire countryside.

What this means for conference planners and goers, is that our region can offer the foundational

necessities to put on an event, but also the uniqueness and incentives that will take that conference to the next level.

Enclosed in these pages, we'll cover our key sectors and standout venues, as well as what makes Coventry and Warwickshire utterly unique in the UK events landscape. We'll also hear from key figures and businesses in our region about our offerings, in addition to a renewed focus on sustainability.

3 Introduction

I hope that reading this will give you some insight into what makes us unique and why Coventry and Warwickshire might be the region to make your next event a memorable one. **CN**



Paul Jones Managing director Destination Coventry

REASONS FOR BEING

Choice is the word of the day for Coventry and Warwickshire, find out what makes the region a choice for event planners

ith event planners looking ever-more laterally when considering location, a region needs to have more than just the essentials to compete on the UK scene.

Coventry and Warwickshire (C&W) is a region that offers a lot to event organisers, from its accessible supply chain and regional charms to its diversity of venues and appeal to key industries, it has many things going for it.

Central location

Situated one hour from London, Coventry and Warwickshire is accessible for many delegate bases in the south of England. Being in a central location, it also has great transport links to the north of the country, priming it for a pan-regional conference with visitors from across the UK.

By road, the area has five

"Being the UK **City of Culture** in 2021/22 showed off **Coventry's** cultural chops to the nation, it now looks to build upon this with a thriving music scene, vibrant nightlife and memorable culinary offerings."

motorway connections, bested by its rail links for delegates – with access to trains to and from central London every 20 minutes. Warwick, Stratford upon Avon and Leamington Spa can be reached in less than two hours on a direct train from London Marylebone.

Being so close to Birmingham means that C&W can take advantage of the 12m passengers flying through Birmingham Airport each year. Also, being 90 minutes from Heathrow means that the region can easily take advantage of an international delegate base.

The region also strikes a balance, between the city nature of Coventry and the countryside of Warwickshire, allowing it to cater for a variety of delegate archetypes through location and landscape.

Accessible supply chain

One selling point for the region is the fact that many of its venues,



local suppliers and amenities, can be accessed regardless of budget. With venues of diverse sizes and affordability ranges on offer throughout the region, planners living with the constraints of tight profit margins should consider C&W for its quality options.

What this means for organisations across the country is that Coventry and Warwickshire can be utilised for events of both varying budgets and sizes. With the locality of many of the suppliers also being a plus for businesses looking to invest in community support under corporate social responsibility.

Being outside of London helps with delegate costs for food and beverage – but beyond this is a supply chain that's locality provides



a wealth of benefits to organisers, while contributing to the community angle of sustainability.

With events operating on finer and finer margins, event planners must take advantage of the competitive price points that make up much of the events fare in the region.

Heritage, history and sport

Coventry has a lot to offer when it comes to heritage. The Cathedral Quarter in particular (which houses the famous three spires of Holy Trinity Church, Christ Church and St Michael's) is a call-back to the city's Medieval history that makes for great incentives to pair alongside the traditional conference fare.

The area is also a hub for sport,

with football, netball, ice hockey and rugby all being represented by their respective teams. This not only provides incentive travel options for those wanting to watch sporting events, but also gives a great foundation for events looking to take advantage of the sector strengths within C&W.

Being the UK City of Culture in 2021/22 showed off Coventry's cultural chops to the nation, it now looks to build upon this with a thriving music scene, vibrant nightlife and memorable culinary offerings. These aspects all tie into one thing for the conferences market: experience. The thing that happens outside of the conference hall that makes a delegate walk away happy.

Diversity of venues

The places to be within Coventry and Warwickshire are also putting the region on the map, with modern conference venues like Coventry Building Society Arena being paired with historic sites like St Mary's Guildhall.

This combination of old and new epitomises some of the area's charms, with planners given a wide breadth of choice when selecting where to host conferences. But more than just the standard metrics of size and facilities, it's the connection to the region that many of the venues offer that makes C&W an attractive proposition for organisers, especially those looking to improve the community engagement side of its social responsibility obligation. CN

TITAN OF INDUSTRY

Coventry and Warwickshire lends itself to several key sectors linking into its locality and history

oventry and Warwickshire is more than the sum of its supply chain. Whilst it does have a great variety of venues, suppliers, organisers and eventprofs, it also is home to wider industries that make it an appealing option for events entrenched in these sectors.

Four key areas that Coventry and Warwickshire thrives in are: automotive, green technology, advanced engineering and creative industries.

Automotive

Coventry and Warwickshire plays host to a slice of automotive history, with Jaguar Land Rover and the National Automotive Centre being in the region, as well as Coventry Transport Museum having the largest publicly-owned collection of British-made vehicles in the world.

The incentives offered in the region are often closely linked to this automotive history, with tours of Jaguar's shop floor on offer to petrol heads, as well as test drives of high-performance vehicles being available to those delegates with a need for speed. Combining this experience with a tour of the Coventry Transport Museum is a key incentive for professionals in the automotive sector.

This closeness to the automotive industry also allows Coventry and Warwickshire to appeal to the autonomous vehicle market, meaning that tech conferences as well as automotive events should be able to find a home in the region.

The region also boasts centres for the next generation of vehicles, with the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre (UKBIC) opening to develop and manufacture the next generation of batteries and numerous other projects beginning to grow the local economy.

Green technology

Below: The Manufacturing

Technology Centre

Coventry and Warwickshire exemplifies its modern push by being a centre for the practice use of green technologies in a push to be kinder to the planet and highlight its natural side.

There are many a scheme that encourage small businesses to utilise sustainable reconstruction of buildings through expert workshops, grants to install more sustainable energy outlets and support for the commercialisation of low carbon and sustainable technologies.

This support from local government has caused a boom in green tech, with several manufacturers changing working processes to accommodate this emerging trend.

The region also benefits from programmes within Coventry University to upskill the workforces of local businesses, with the intent to give more digital skills and an awareness for green technologies. This increasing nativity and



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familiarity with all things green gives many local businesses a sustainable foot first mentality, making the supply chain for events more capable of delivering sustainably.

Advanced engineering

The area's history in manufacturing has meant that many key players in advanced engineering have flocked to Coventry and Warwickshire.

Coventry University is one of the homes of advanced engineering, having been presented with numerous awards for its engineering courses. It's this institution and its partnerships with business that entrenches expertise in robotics, automation and engineering in the cultural identity of Coventry and Warwickshire.

Coventry also plays host to two of the UK's seven advanced manufacturing catapult centres, located at the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) and WMG at the University of Warwick. These centres work in tandem with universities to conduct research and support companies in changing manufacturing processes.

Key technologies being researched at MTC and WMG include robotics, virtual reality, energy storage and digital manufacturing. This spread of research topics means that corporate events in relevant sectors will be able to find a home in Coventry and Warwickshire, not least at the excellent conferencing facilities what exist on both the MTC and WMG campuses.

Creative industries

It's not all engineering and manufacturing in Coventry and Warwickshire however, the region has a thriving creative sector, with "This support from local government has caused a boom in green tech, with several manufacturers changing working processes to accommodate this emerging trend."

the video gaming industry in particular being a powerhouse in the area.

The area known as 'Silicon Spa' in Warwick, Leamington Spa and Southam, is a standout for the gaming industry. The area has over 40 studios and makes up for 15% of the UK games industry, playing host to micro developers to industry leaders like Ubisoft, the cluster is a standout for creativity.

Aside from video games, the region also plays host to numerous studios for film and TV, as well as research centres dedicated to sustainable materials for creative industries. Places like the Centre for Sustainable Production combine Coventry and Warwickshire's background in research, investment in creativity, and sustainability chops into one site aiming to change the way production companies work. CN

GREEN DREAMS

Coventry and Warwickshire is going green in an effort to attract event organisers, **Louisa Daley** finds out more

ustainability is ever more becoming a requirement for event planners, it's no longer a nice-to-have, for many, it's now a must when considering destinations. As Coventry and Warwickshire is a combination of natural beauty and industrial heritage, sustainability is on the minds of local businesses, the event supply chain and government in the region.

From transport to community engagement, Coventry and Warwickshire is working to improve its sustainable credentials and attract conference organisers with a conscience to the destination.

To find out more I spoke to: Andy Williams, director of business, investment and culture, Coventry City Council; Brett Willers, head of sustainability and climate change, Coventry City Council; and Andrew Taylor, head of conference centres, Warwick Conferences

For Coventry and Warwickshire, sustainability isn't about one narrow objective. "Sustainability is about people, places, and business," says Williams.

Therefore, it's not just the council that plays a huge role in driving sustainability for the region, "both the private sector and public communities need to work together to drive behavioral change. Together, we must address the climate issues which impact health, mental wellbeing, and the economy.

"The challenge with this, however, lies in the behavioral change. It needs to be driven at an individual level, a taxpayer level and a young people level, if we want to really drive the agenda," adds Willers.

Despite this, Coventry City Council is passionate about leading sustainable change and is working hard behind the scenes to do so. "Our Climate Change Strategy focuses on reducing waste and carbon and improving things like biodiversity in the region. We've tried to create a resilience plan together, where environmental agencies chair the group and get the right people around the table to do that. We hope to get this finalized by the end of the year.

"We are also launching a person-centered group, which is very focused on the community level and will address things like food poverty," reveals Williams.

By doing so, the council hopes to reach the places and people that aren't usually reached inside of its communities and businesses, and therefore as Brett puts it, "gain the much-needed feedback and understanding to make a real difference."

This green investment is epitomised in Coventry's Very Light Rail (VLR) project, which looks to add connectivity in the city by using lightweight materials and battery powered electric vehicles to provide a green transport solution for the city.



Below: VLR will connect Coventry sustainably



Business support and business investment

But what about the practical, on the ground, immediate action, which can help businesses become more sustainable?

"We've got teams working to support businesses become greener by evaluating their efficiency and equipment in terms of lighting or energy. We've got experts going out advising businesses, and then helping businesses to get some funding to support their investment," explains Williams.

"For businesses being sustainable is a must now. They are trying to find ways to reduce cost and most of those costs relate to waste streams and use of energy," adds Willers.

Another way the council is helping businesses become more sustainable through its Businesses Sustain initiative, which is about "going into businesses and helping them with their green standards and credentials," reveals Williams, "this also helps them become more competitive."

"This then positively impacts the wider region, as it attracts more investors, sponsors and partners," he adds. Willers echoes William's view, and says "We are a city of choice. People now want to come to a sustainable city and do business."

Warwick Conferences

Warwick Conferences is a key example of how this sustainable investment from the council has positively impacted the venue and the business it wins.

"At Warwick Conferences, sustainability has become part of every decision that we make. To name a few of our measures: in the winter months, we look at the thermostats and adjust when the heating comes on or off; we make sure we have no single use plastic; we donate our food waste when we can; we reuse building "Sustainability is about people, places, and business," – Andy Williams materials during our refurbishments," says Taylor.

Sustainability is also a requirement when talking to its customers. "We've got customers that have the target of being carbon neutral by 2030. So, they are asking us about our credentials, our waste streams, our energy usage. We win conferences because our values align with theirs," says Taylor.

This client engagement with sustainability has also seen a real involvement throughout the event planning process.

"We're not competing with other venues," says Taylor. "We are working with other venues to make ourselves known as a region that takes sustainability seriously. There is a real movement at the moment where venues and hotels are sharing best practice.

"Moving in this direction will help grow the region's green reputation and ultimately support businesses as a whole." **CN**

HAND IN HAND

Guy Bigwood, chief changemaker and CEO of GDS Movement, details how sustainability is becoming a must

e have reached a milestone moment in sustainable tourism, and we are now at a point where nearly everyone – be they venues, suppliers, destinations or participants – knows that we need to take action now.

Climate change is, and will continue to be, a presence in our personal and professional lives. The business case for sustainability – often debated over the years – is now clear. To become a successful company, organisation, or destination, you must have a sustainability strategy and effective operational plan.

Conversations have now moved on for tourism decision-makers in cities, towns and regions across the UK, to the practicalities of how to make sustainable tourism work and how do we speed-up and scale-up the transition to a more sustainable visitor economy?

In the UK, we have destinations that have, in a very short time, made great progress and shown that it is possible to shift an entire city's tourism industry to a new and "Partnership across destinations can then produce a collaborative advantage, which I have seen delivers a far greater positive impact to the businesses and residents of a destination."



Guy Bigwood

more sustainable path.

Working with these destinations and other cities, we have learned that to promote better environmental and social practices, we need to make sustainability simpler and more collaborative.

Sustainability doesn't work on its own. Many organisations have focused on using sustainability as a competitive edge. That may be a great way to kick start an organisation's journey, but ultimately if we are going to achieve net zero carbon emissions and waste, to generate social impact, we have got to work together as an industry to get there.

This partnership across destinations can then produce a collaborative advantage, which I have seen delivers a far greater positive impact to the businesses and residents of a destination.

Coventry and Warwickshire is one of the destinations that is serious about sustainability, and is working to create a collaborative partnership to establish the best approach for working on a sustainable tourism strategy for the region.

GDS is working on a collaboration project with Destination Coventry, Shakespeare's England and West Midlands Growth Company to drive this strategy.

While this work is in the early stages, discussions are already ongoing around infrastructure, travel, food waste, recycling and a range of other key areas to help strengthen the region's sustainability credentials.

This is a case of everyone pulling in the same direction, working as a destination cluster, and not trying to gain a competitive advantage over their neighbours.

There is a clear ambition from the partnership to go beyond net zero and to add something back, repairing the damage cause by unsustainable practice over the last 100 years.

DMOs have the potential to catalyse dynamic change across the tourism and events industry, and we are very excited by the prospect of what we could achieve in Coventry and Warwickshire through this collaborative partnership. CN

11 Column

FACES OF PLACES

Sharon Lawrence, senior account manager for new business and external events, Amadeus, talks about how the business is providing memorable food experiences to match unique venues

or several years we have worked in partnership with a small number of venues in Coventry and Warwickshire, providing award-winning catering solutions to venues and event organisers.

Our business is always looking to grow and innovate, as such we have identified a wealth of opportunities in the region and started to expand our presence.

Amadeus is based just down the road from Coventry and is part of the NEC Group, where we cater for around four million visitors per year.

Our talented events team is dedicated to working with venues outside of the NEC Group, be that for one-off events, or as an onsite catering provider, and we are very excited about the potential Coventry and Warwickshire has as a business visitor destination.





"Coventry's venue offer is a great draw, the wider region also benefits from having rolling countryside on its doorstep and some of the most beautiful towns in the UK."



Events such as UK City of Culture and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games have seen millions of people learn more about the region, and there are some incredible venues that have the potential to capitalise on this spotlight.

We are proud at Amadeus to work alongside Coventry Cathedral on the delivery of many of their events, and there aren't many more iconic backdrops for an event in the UK.

Whether in the medieval ruins or the new Cathedral, which is a 1960s architectural masterpiece, the venues provide memorable experiences, from small meetings to large gala dinners.

The great thing about Coventry City Centre is you are only ever a stone's throw from another brilliant venue, just across the courtyard from the Cathedral you'll find the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum – a venue we are also partnered with at Amadeus.

The Herbert is set to welcome Dippy, the nation's favourite dinosaur, for an extended stay from February 2023. This is another string to the bow of the venue, which already hosts world-class exhibitions and is the perfect place to delve into Coventry's history and engage with art and culture.

Coventry and Warwickshire also benefits from being a centre of automotive industry and is an ideal location for conferences and events related to the sector. We're proud to be extending our partnership with Coventry Transport Museum too, which provides conferencing opportunities with the backdrop of the world's largest publicly owned collection of British vehicles.

While the city of Coventry's venue offer is a great draw, the wider region also benefits from having rolling countryside on its doorstep and some of the most beautiful towns in the UK, which are home to venues that allow delegates to escape the hustle and bustle of modern life, such as Stratford Racecourse, which Amadeus has worked with for several years.

At Amadeus, it's exciting to have all these wonderful venues to work in and provide visitors to those venues with unique and memorable food experiences. **CN**

IN THE SPOTLIGHT...

Explore what venues Coventry and Warwickshire have to offer

oventry and Warwickshire are home to some of the most diverse venues. From exhibition and conference spaces, to sporting arenas, as well as heritage sites and cultural museums – the region is capable of hosting both small and large scale events in the heart of Coventry, or in the stunning Warwickshire countryside.

Not sure where to find these venues? Look no further because we've rounded up some of the very best below:

Coventry Building Society Arena

Coventry Building Society Arena is the city's largest business, sporting and entertainment venue, boasting 20,000sqm of event space.

It's central and accessible location, just 20 minutes by car from Birmingham Airport and Coventry being 55 minutes from London by train, has helped the arena attract more than 1.5m visitors per year. It's also home to the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, which has 121 rooms and direct access into the venue.

Starting with Coventry Building Society Arena's Exhibition Halls, its 6,000sqm of flexible space can host up to 10,000 delegates. It can also be divided into two separate exhibition rooms (4,000sqm and 2,00sqm). The Exhibition Halls, however, are not only used for business events. They can be transformed into a dedicated music/entertainment venue. With a standing capacity of 12,000, the Indoor Arena has previously hosted events such as the MOBO Awards and Britain's Got Talent.

The arena also offers a wide range of conference facilities, from The Coventry Lounge to The Boardroom and Chairman's Lounge – event planners are able to host training events, intimate dinners and meetings.

Over the years, Coventry Building Society Arena has undergone significant investment. For example, prior to the Commonwealth Games 2022, the West Midlands invested £6.3m into the Commonwealth Convention Centre, adding an extra 1,500sqm of space to the arena's main hall and modernizing its AV capabilities.

Sporting events therefore play a large role in the arena's success. It's Stadium Bowl (capacity 40,500) has hosted the Olympics, Commonwealth Games and Rugby League World Cup. "Coventry Building Society Arena is the city's largest business, sporting and entertainment venue"

Below: Coombe Abbey Hotel



Coombe Abbey Hotel

Located just six miles from Coventry City Centre, over the border into Warwickshire, is Coombe Abbey Hotel. Set within 500 acres of parkland, Coombe Abbey Hotel comprises of 119 hotel rooms. Like St Mary's Guildhall, the hotel is rich in history and has welcomed many regal guests over the years, including Queen Elizabeth I.

Coombe Abbey Hotel also has a total of 11 meeting rooms. For example, The Centre Court, a restored tennis clubhouse that dates back to 1817, can be used for conferences, exhibitions and launches. The Centre Court has its own separate bar and lounge and can host a maximum of 180 delegates.

Moving onto its outdoor spaces, Coombe Abbey Park has an 80-acre lake (which can be viewed from its Lake View bedchamber). The park is considered as a conservation area and has been named as a Site of Special Scientific Interest by English Nature due to its diverse biodiversity.

The hotel isn't just suited for corporate events or weddings, it is also made for 'bleisure' activities. From Go Ape and axe throwing, to Murder Mystery Evenings – employees can participate in teambuilding and business planning, all at one site.

British Motor Museum

The British Motor Museum is a purpose-built conference centre and events venue, located in Warwickshire, just five minutes from Junction 12 of the M40. The venue is also home to the largest collection of historic British cars due to its partnership with the British Motor Heritage Trust. As a registered charity, all of its conferencing profits are donated back to the Trust.

It's obvious that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is important to the venue. In addition to being a





charity, the British Motor Museum is serious about sustainability shown by its zero waste to landfill commitments and industry accreditations from Greengage and the Meetings Industry Association.

The venue has a mixture of spaces, suitable for any event. Its Sky Suite (capacity 200) offers "a room with a view", particularly one that overlooks the Warwickshire countryside. This room also comes with a private reception bar and a roof terrace – ideal for hosting corporate dining and awards.

The British Motor Museum also has a dedicated conference and exhibition suite (capacity 600) which can be divided into two conference rooms (each 250 capacity), perfect for events that demand flexibility.

For more smaller events, event planners can utilise its South Wing (capacity 56), Boardroom (capacity 22) or meeting rooms (capacity five – 18). The museum also has plenty of outside space, which stretches across 65 acres.

St Mary's Guildhall

St Mary's Guildhall is one of Coventry's historical venues, described as a "hidden gem" located in the city's Cathedral Quarter (within Coventry City Centre). The venue is most admired for the famous 14th century "St Mary's Guildhall is one of Coventry's historical venues, described as a hidden gem" Coventry tapestry, which is showcased and preserved in a purpose-built case in the Great Hall.

Despite the Grade I Listed building being damaged in World War II; the history of St Mary's Guildhall been restored. Through the Cultural Capital Investment Programme, over £6m has been invested into the venue, transforming it into a "must see" visitor attraction.

Whether visitors want to immerse themselves in a digital tour, enjoy an afternoon tea in the Undercroft, or view the artwork and stain glassed windows, the venue offers a range of experiences.

Having recently launched a new conference package for event planners, St Mary's Guildhall also has corporate capabilities. Event organisers can host meetings, product launches, trade shows or conferences in: Guildhall's Great Hall, a space that can welcome 70 – 150 guests, Drapers Room (20 – 40 guests), Medieval Kitchen (60 guests), Tanners Room (12 guests), Fullers Room (14 guests) or Dame Ellen Terry Room (20 – 40 guests). **CN**

CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE

Claire England, senior destination manager, Conference Coventry and Warwickshire, says events must incorporate culture and social impact

Pringing a conference, exhibition or event to a new city or region can be a challenge, particularly at a time where delegates are seeking added value to a traditional conference experience.

It's essential to have a strong knowledge of the area you are bringing your event to provide a rich experience for delegates.

Conference Coventry and Warwickshire acts a one-stop-shop for free-of-charge, impartial advice and unrivalled local knowledge for organisations seeking to bring their event to our destination.

We know that by providing a memorable experience for delegates visiting the region, we will see a positive knock-on effect on our wider visitor economy, ultimately creating jobs for local people and a positive social impact.

Coventry and Warwickshire: a one stop shop

It's not just about conferences, hotels and gala dinners – for any event, large or small, we can put together a fantastic social programme to add value for delegates.

As a destination, we are very lucky to have a proud heritage offer, strong cultural credentials and also benefit from being a hotbed of UK industry. This enables our convention bureau to generate bespoke programmes to help delegates make the most of their time here.

We're excited by the potential of 'Bleisure' travel too – a growing trend that is creating a new type of traveller - a traveller seeking to tag a break onto the end of their work trip.

Ultimately, we want to be inspiring delegates to be



"As a destination, we are very lucky to have a proud heritage offer, strong cultural credentials and also benefit from being a hotbed of UK industry" interested in staying in our region and as such putting on memorable experiences is even more important.

We had a great recent example with international visitors from The British Council, who arrived in our region for a three-day education-led seminar. We curated a cultural programme, built a sense of place for the visitors and ensured they went away with a lasting positive impression of Coventry.

Through our extensive network of contacts, we put together an afternoon walking tour and tapped into our local expertise to source informative local guides to further enhance that sense of place and belonging.

Our convention bureau takes the time to best understand the needs of every enquiry that comes in and make organisers fully aware of everything the city has to offer.

With a free venue finding service, free accommodation booking service and even a dedicated member of our team to support event organisers free-of-charge, the whole process is immediately less resource intensive on the booker.

We know that many organisers are seeking quality conference experiences outside of London, which are more cost-effective than the capital and provide a better wellbeing experience than the hustle and bustle of the city.

This presents a really exciting opportunity for destinations such as Coventry and Warwickshire, with our accessible location and wide-ranging offer. **CN**



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Conference Coventry and Warwickshire

Conference, Meeting, Incentive and Events

Coventry and Warwickshire is an established conference, business and event destination, we are internationally recognised as global leaders in innovation, technology enterprise and learning.

Why Coventry and Warwickshire

Whether you want to plan a team-building day or a longer event, we are here to help you find the perfect location in one of the most accessible destinations in the UK.

Whatever your needs, our region's diverse array of hotels and conference facilities has all the necessary preparations in place to allow you to deliver a highly successful event with confidence.

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Less than 1 hour from London by train, and 10 minutes from an international Airport (BHX)



Situated at the heart of England with convenient links to major transport networks.



More than 2600 hotel rooms in Coventry and Warwickshire



Can host a meeting in any one day for up to 35,000 delegates. The largest arena can sit 7,000



Ranked the highest UK mid-size city for business friendliness



Coventry is one of five UK cities ranked among world best for climate change

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