SUBMISSION FROM SLAED

Introduction

The SLAED group welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the work of the Committee in examining VisitScotland’s “Winning Years” Strategy.

SLAED has five general group meetings a year, but also run various “Thematic Groups” on topics relevant to Economic Development in Scotland. There is a Tourism Group, and the lead of the group, Ann Camus, Fife Council, devised a short survey to canvas the group on their thoughts of the strategy.

The questions were as follows:

1. Does your local authority align its tourism activities with VisitScotland’s ‘Winning Years’ campaigns? e.g. focus years so far; Homecoming 2009, Year of Active 2011, Year of Creative 2012

2. If you answered yes to question 1, please comment on these activities?

3. If you answered no to question 1, please explain why?

4. Please comment on all the activities that you are involved in, either with your local authority or with VisitScotland or joint activities.

5. Do you find the ‘Winning Years’ campaigns useful?

6. Do you feel the ‘Winning Years’ strategy is working for your local area? Please give comments with your answer.

7. Do you feel the ‘Winning Years’ strategy is working for Scotland? Please give comments with your answer.

Question 1: Does your local authority align its tourism activities with VisitScotland’s ‘Winning Years’ campaigns? e.g. focus years so far; Homecoming 2009, Year of Active 2011, Year of Creative 2012

- **84.6%** of the respondents replied that **YES** their local authority did align its tourism activities with VisitScotland’s “Winning Years” campaigns.
- **15.4%** of the respondents therefore replied **NO** their local authority did not align its tourism activities with VisitScotland’s “Winning Years” campaigns.

Question 2: If you answered yes to question 1, please comment on these activities?

As noted in question 1, the majority of respondents did answer positively. Comments ranged from **having a Regional Tourism Marketing Group which was led by VisitScotland and included their Destination DMO and other key partners such as SNH to regional groups drawing up plans for Homecoming 2014 and the Commonwealth Games 2014.**
Other local authorities were supported by LEADER (Links Between Activities Developing the Rural Economy) – with Food & Drink 2010 in Midlothian shown as a key example of collaboration/alignment.

The general feeling was that most local authorities fund some regional VisitScotland marketing activity, and use these to reflect the theme years. Where appropriate, local authorities have integrated their own services to align with VisitScotland strategy.

A substantial amount of positive respondents have also indicated that local authority and partners intend to apply for Creative Places funding and also that they intend to apply for 2014 Homecoming Scotland funding. One respondent has said they have already secured funding for arts and cultural events from Creative Scotland for both 2012 and 2013.

Question 3. If you answered no to question 1, please explain why?

Only a minority said no – with the reason being that these local authorities had their own tourism strategy/action plan which they implemented and worked towards. Even then, those that answered no did mention that they try to shape events to complement theme years as and when appropriate.

Question 4. Please comment on all the activities that you are involved in, either with your local authority or with VisitScotland or joint activities.

There was a variety of answers for the activities, which included:

- Regional brochures
- Web updates
- TV adverts
- Radio campaigns
- ERDF Creative Clusters
- Training Workshops
- Familiarisation Trips
- Visitor research
- Networking events organized and developed with VisitScotland
- Local authorities work with local industry/business to develop key area – ie. those with growth potential in tourism

Specific events mentioned:

- World Adventure tourism summit in Year of Active Scotland
- Mike Cantlay being invited to present at Winning Years strategy event
- Local MSP planning a photo call in relation to the launch of the film “Brave”.
Question 5. **Do you find the 'Winning Years' campaigns useful?**

Unsurprisingly, it was the same percentages as in Question 1.

- **84.6%** said **YES** the campaigns were useful
- **15.4%** said **NO** the campaigns were not useful

Question 6. **Do you feel the 'Winning Years' strategy is working for your local area? Please give comments with your answer.**

- **61.5%** responded with **YES**
- **38.5%** responded with **NO**

**YES**

- Felt strategy suited strengths of local areas – and a focus is definitely needed in a challenging economy. Having a specific strategy for tourism campaigns is a sensible approach to increase visit numbers and spend – from both the UK and internationally.
- Provides additional focus, direction and support to new and existing tourism based events.
- Having a particular theme each year is extremely useful to use as a marketing hook and to base marketing materials.
- Great that VisitScotland are putting forward good ideas – especially those that do not exclude local authorities that cannot afford to directly invest in activities.
- VisitScotland is doing a good job of highlighting the sector as a crucial part of Scotland’s wider economy

**NO**

- Requires more collaboration with local authorities to create an all-embracing push for Scottish tourism.
- Perceived that some local areas are reluctant to fit in with national agenda thinking it is too vague for their location.
- Local area is a former industrial area and it has found it difficult to develop tourism products without significant funding
- Thought “Winning Years” was a bit of a cringe-worthy name
- Lead time to receive details of wider activity and what local authority can collaborate on as well as funding for campaigns are currently too short to ensure adequate planning and maximising opportunities available

Question 7. **Do you feel the 'Winning Years' strategy is working for Scotland? Please give comments with your answer.**

- **84.6** responded with **YES**
• **15.4%** responded with **NO**

**YES**

- Was deemed a success but not as useful as Year of Creative Scotland which tied in with existing tourism strategies more succinctly.
- Local tourism statistics and increase in figures would suggest strategy was indeed working.
- Need a national agency to keep strategies in focus and public eye – and it is good that there is momentum heading into Homecoming Scotland, Ryder Cup and the Commonwealth Games.
- Scotland as a tourism destination is known worldwide – but Winning Years strategy helps differentiate Scotland from other countries/competitors.
- Understand that organizing a nationwide push is difficult but to do so would be of huge benefit to local communities and the Scottish economy.
- The strategy encourages a common message from across Scotland which should have a cumulative effect of better positioning Scotland as a tourist destination.
- Effective at buoying the mood of the sector during difficult trading environment.
- Clear focus for efforts – which reinforces that Scotland has a range of rich and diverse products to suit all needs and expectations.

**NO**

- As previously mentioned in Question 6, it was felt lead times and funding were not always adequate.
- Unsure about some of the strategies/campaigns, but 2009 and Homecoming was a success and there is optimism that 2014 will be a great year for tourism in Scotland.
- In an ideal world yes, but believe that Scottish tourism is made up of micro-businesses trying to stay afloat let alone devoting time/resource/energy to deliver events aligned with national strategy.
- Process for applying for additional funding etc has been poor – tight deadlines, shortage of funding.

**SUMMARY**

- Nearly all of the respondents have stated that they try to align their tourism strategy with VisitScotland themes
- The majority of respondents feel the “Winning Years” strategy was a success at both a local and national level
- Majority feel having themes and themed years brings an additional focus to local authority strategy and raises profile of tourism in Scotland as a vital part of the Scottish economy
- There is extensive optimism that the momentum leading to 2014 will be help tourism in Scotland immensely and that the flagship events in 2014 will have a major impact on the sector.

Only major and recurring criticism seems to be with funding and organisation.