Connecting Scotland - How the Scottish Government and its agencies engage internationally

VisitScotland

The Importance of the Visitor Economy

A strong visitor economy helps to position Scotland on the world stage whilst the economic impact of the visitor spend spreads out from the traditional component parts of the tourism industry into other sectors such as arts and crafts, food and drink, cultural activities, sports events and activities, retail, and finally into the Scottish Government’s core priority industries which are central to the economic growth strategy.

The total annual direct and indirect contribution of the visitor economy is £11.6 billion and it supports more than 292,000 jobs.

VisitScotland’s Role in Developing the Visitor Economy.

VisitScotland supports the continued growth of the visitor economy through our principal activities.

These involve: the marketing of Scotland to all parts of the world (including Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom) to attract visitors; providing information and inspiration to visitors and potential visitors so that they derive the best experience from a visit to Scotland; providing quality assurance to visitors and quality advice to industry; working with partners to assist the tourism industry in not only meeting but exceeding visitors’ expectations; and the development of a portfolio of events that deliver impact and an international profile for Scotland by establishing Scotland as the perfect stage for events.

VisitScotland is a marketing specialist and a key economic development agency, driving growth in the visitor economy alongside Scottish Development International, Highland and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise.

The organisation is the lead body for the visitor economy, a position underscored last year, when VisitScotland was a key player in maximising the benefits from the Commonwealth Games, and the lead public agency in the highly successful delivery of The 2014 Ryder Cup and the development, design and delivery of Homecoming Scotland 2014.

In fulfilling this role in economic development the organisation pushes beyond its previous boundaries and takes a proactive role in areas such as air connectivity, skills, national and local planning, including the National Tourism Development Framework for Scotland, and is the holder of the vision for the Scottish Visitor Economy.

VisitScotland’s International Marketing Activity

VisitScotland markets Scotland to the world through international campaigns, directed by a strategy designed to maximise the economic impact on Scotland’s
economy. Our campaigns showcase the country around the world, principally through our Meet the Scots consumer-facing campaign, showcasing ambassadors drawn from across the tourism industry and a range of activities.

Through campaigns VisitScotland targets a number of overseas markets. The core international markets are the USA, Canada, Germany, France, Spain, Netherlands, Italy and Sweden. These are countries which offer good prospects to maintain and grow Scotland’s share of their outbound holiday taking.

In addition to multi-touch campaigns, VisitScotland works with the international travel trade to provide knowledge and opportunities to promote Scotland. For example there are almost 10,000 SCOTS agents enrolled in the programme run by VisitScotland, assisting these tourism operators to provide knowledge and expertise to potential visitors in their country of origin.

VisitScotland expo, held in Scotland in April each year, also provides important opportunities for engagement with international trade representatives. A record number of appointment sessions were scheduled at the 2014 expo by 490 international buyers from 30 nations. Now 35 years on, expo is the UK’s longest-established travel trade fair, showcasing the best of Scottish tourism to the world.

Emerging markets, which although currently provide a smaller share of Scotland’s visitors, show considerable potential for growth. These include China, India and Russia. VisitScotland activity comprises work with partners in the industry, supported by PR and tactical opportunities.

Recent examples of activity include:

China, where at the end of October 2014, VisitScotland representatives met with London based destination marketing companies that work with the Chinese travel trade to update them on Scotland’s offer in the coming year.

This is a lucrative market with VisitBritain’s statistics for Chinese visits to Scotland (to June 2014) showing £20 million spend from 9,000 visitors.

India, where VisitScotland delivered a trade mission at the end of January 2015, with an itinerary that included a VIP dinner for the presidents of the main trade associations in India, VisitBritain, and the British Council.

There was also a series of trade meetings at the South Asia Travel and Tourism Exchange which is being held in India this year. A Scotland networking event provided a platform for SATTE stand partners and Indian based trade. Activity also included a Bollywood Scotland launch event – a Bollywood themed event to launch the Bollywood Scotland map in Mumbai. The map highlights locations in Scotland that have been used in Bollywood films.

This activity built on from last year’s mission (October 2013) when VisitScotland delivered 150 trade engagements to promote travel to Scotland.
VisitScotland works with VisitBritain to ensure that imagery and messaging about Scotland feature prominently within the UK National Tourism Organisation’s campaigns, like GREAT.

By targeting our campaigns at the best prospects we are able to encourage visitors from across the globe to enjoy a visit to Scotland. Evidence of Scotland’s place as a leading destination was highlighted recently with the publication of International Passenger Statistics showing that visits to Scotland from North American tourists rose by 32 per cent in the year to the end of September 2014, which led to a 35 per cent growth in expenditure.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that overall, overseas tourist visits increased from 2.4 million in the year to the end of September 2013 to 2.7 million in the year to the end of September 2014.

Spending by tourists from overseas was also up, rising from £1.6 billion in the year to the end of September 2013 to £1.8 billion in the year to the end of September 2014.

VisitScotland’s international activity is aligned with the Scottish Government’s current International Strategy and the individual country plans which include measure tourism activity. VisitScotland is activity involved in the Scottish Government’s current review of the strategy and contributing learning and views from the industry in Scotland and our international partners.

**Increased Connectivity**

Direct transport links are key to growing Scotland’s tourism industry.

Recent successes in securing new routes to Scotland, including routes from Chicago, JFK, Toronto, Halifax, Doha and Istanbul, demonstrates the confidence Scotland is generating among our transport partners, while also ensuring that there will be the capacity to meet heightened demand for Scotland.

VisitScotland is using these opportunities to enhance marketing campaigns with strong messages of affordability and accessibility. The ongoing improvement of the Scottish air route network is not only important for growing inbound leisure tourism, but also supports business tourism and provides vital connectivity for exporters across all sectors.

VisitScotland pursues opportunities both on point-to-point routes and, critically, with those carriers who can deliver onward connectivity via major international hubs and airline alliances.

Working together as Team Scotland (VisitScotland, Transport Scotland, Scottish Government, SE, SDI and HIE) with airports and other partners we are further developing international air connectivity which will assist in the prioritisation and the support of those new and extended services delivering the greatest economic benefits for Scotland.

**International Recognition**

VisitScotland is regarded as a world leader in what it does – an expert agency from which others wish to learn.
Over the past 10 years VisitScotland has been working with partners across Europe and further afield, sharing knowledge and expertise primarily, although not exclusively, in relation to our quality assurance schemes.

VisitScotland has taken a strategic approach to engaging with other national tourism organisations, focusing not only the sharing of best practice but on the bringing back of expertise, with a view to the continual enhancing of our own activities and impact, as well as the building of our reputation on the global stage.

From this engagement, it is clear that VisitScotland’s experience and expertise in developing a sustainable tourism economy is valued across the globe. As a national tourism organisation, we hold considerable international credibility and reputation as an organisation of excellence.

It is also a positive message for our own tourism industry that Scotland is held in such high regard by so many other countries, ranging from Norway and Sweden to Queensland, Australia.

At a European level, working with a number of individual member states has enhanced Scotland’s reputation within the European Union and is helping to increase Scotland’s sphere of influence across the tourism debate.

Through the work of events directorate EventScotland, VisitScotland’s expertise in securing and delivering major events is also recognised, with MOUs in place with some of the world’s other leading events destinations - New Zealand and Victoria in Australia.

This pre-eminent position was further highlighted during the Commonwealth Games with government representatives from Alberta, Canada and the Gold Coast, Australia seeking meetings with senior VisitScotland personnel.

EventScotland has already secured a strong event legacy for Scotland following the Commonwealth Games and The 2014 Ryder Cup, with five World and European level sporting events and a string of cultural events, including The Turner Prize.

Importantly this story of international recognition and success will be continued with the forthcoming refresh of Scotland The Perfect Stage, A Strategy for the Events Industry in Scotland.

**Business Tourism / Conference Bid Fund**

In support of Scotland’s growth sectors and business tourism industry (meetings, conferences, conventions and associated support services) VisitScotland and the Scottish Government established the Conference Bid Fund to provide qualified match-funding to support conferences and conventions which align to Scotland’s priority industries and sectors.

These are major, international reputation boosting conferences for up to 5,000 delegates at a time, which support Scotland’s positioning and credentials on the global stage in areas including Pharmaceuticals, Finance, Tourism, Energy and
Food and Drink, in addition to generating economic benefit to both rural and urban parts of Scotland.

The fund has been instrumental in confirming £107.5 million of delegate expenditure into the country between 2013 and 2020.

A key element in the year round work to market Scotland as destination for conferences, meetings and incentives, in year 13/14 VisitScotland’s Business Tourism team also took part in three major international Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing and Exhibitions trade shows - IMEX Europe, IMEX America & EIBTM Barcelona.

IMEX America enabled circa 12,000 meeting planners to network and engage with selected Scottish partners, including, Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre, Edinburgh International Conference Centre, Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, Historic Scotland, Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, Apex Hotels, Cashel Travel, St Andrews Old Course Hotel & Spa, SPECTRA DMC, The Balmoral Hotel, The Dome, The Gleneagles Hotel, Macdonald Hotels and the Sheraton, showcasing the many world class suppliers and hotels that we have in Scotland, the culmination of which generated in excess of £11 million of specific leads for Scotland.

Business tourism enquiries for the full year 2013/14 reached £134 million, up on the previous year’s figure of £116 million.

VisitScotland.com / Digital Connectivity

VisitScotland provides a ‘best in class’ website to both Scottish tourism businesses and consumers across the globe through VisitScotland.com. This includes providing consumers with a single digital gateway enabling them to discover the very best Scotland has to offer.

We have introduced a service which will refer consumer bookings for accommodation to a web-based booking system of the providers’ choice, therefore removing VisitScotland from this type of activity. The number of referrals to the industry for 2012-13 was 5.2 million.

VisitScotland.com offers industry a platform from which to reach a global audience of some 14 million users and underscores the importance of Scotland digital connectivity to internal markets.

VisitScotland also plays a full role in the Scottish Government’s Digitisation of Public Services project, drawing on our experience of delivering and managing major digital projects, with the Chief Executive a member of the Advisory Board.

Conclusion - Increased Internationalisation

Scotland’s position as leading international visitor destination has been enhanced through the major events of 2014. It has also been enhanced as a place in which to visit, study or do business.
VisitScotland will continue to work with Team Scotland partners to showcase Scotland on the global stage and as a place to visit and invest in. This will be achieved through the continuation of captivating marketing campaigns delivered through a range of media which is increasingly delivered digitally.

Continued engagement with the Global Scots network can yield further results and opportunities to promote Scotland. In addition we will work with Scotland’s universities and their alumni, who as a new diaspora, can be developed to be ambassadors for Scotland.

Airline partnerships will continue to be an essential part of how VisitScotland markets to key audiences, demonstrating the ease of flying direct to Scotland. Again, with partners in Team Scotland we will work to retain and develop direct routes.

We will also continue to develop Scotland’s reputation as a world leading events destination, and through the work of our events directorate, new major sporting and cultural events will continue to be added to the country’s rich portfolio. In 2015 Scotland will stage five World and European level sporting events and host The Turner Prize for the first time.

Following the successes of 2014 for tourism and Scotland’s international profile, VisitScotland will work to maximise the opportunities by taking Scotland to the world this year and in the years ahead.

30 January 2015