Cross-Party Group on Tourism and Hospitality

Monday 28 September 2026, 11.30am – 12.30pm (online)

Initial Meeting Minute

Present

MSPs

Murdo Fraser MSP (Convenor)
Andrew Baxter MSP (Deputy Convenor)
Neil Bibby MSP
Rachael Hamilton MSP (attended part of meeting)
Paul McLennan MSP
Office of Murdo Fraser MSP (Sam Bracken)
Office of Paul McLennan MSP (Lyn Jardine)

Invited guests

N/A

Non-MSP Group Members

Cathy Craig, Argyll and Isles Tourism Co-operative
Fiona Campbell, Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers
Adam Newman, Cruise Lines International Association
Sarah Allanson, Holiday and Residential Parks Association
Kat Brogan, Mercat Tours
Christopher Greenwood, Moffat Centre
Carron Tobin, RuralDimensions
Ellie Carrington, Scotch Whisky Association
Alasdair Smart, Scotrail
David Weston, Scottish Bed and Breakfast Association
Simon Ovenden, Scottish Land & Estates
Colin Wilkinson, Scottish Licensed Trade Association
Marc Crothall, Scottish Tourism Alliance
Rebecca Brooks, Scottish Tourism Alliance
Elaine Wilson, Scottish Tourism Alliance (newly appointed Secretariat)
Gillian Barrett, Scottish Tourist Guides Association
David Hope-Jones, South of Scotland Destination Alliance
Orchid Liu, UK Chinese Times

Leon Thompson, UKHospitality Scotland
Derek Bryce, University of Strathclyde Business School
Chris Foy, VisitAberdeenshire
Sheila Gilmore, VisitArran
Gavin Mowat, VisitScotland
Beth Thoms, VisitScotland (previous Secretariat)
Jess Briers, Walking Scotland
Julie Christie, Wild Scotland
Rosie Willmot, Women in Tourism

Apologies

MSPs:
Dawn Black MSP
Alexander Burnett MSP
Yi-pei Chou Turvey MSP
Katy Clark MSP
Joe Fagan MSP
Craig Hoy MSP
Rachael Hamilton MSP
Daniel Johnson MSP
Calum Kerr MSP
David Kirkwood MSP
Stuart McMillan MSP
Laura Mitchell MSP
Kim Schmulian MSP
Graham Simpson MSP

Non-MSP Group Members:
Kirk Norbury, Country Sport Scotland
Kyle Macintyre, Diageo
Charlie Reith, Expedia
Calum Ross, Loch Melfort Hotel Ltd
Clare Winskill, North Coast 500 Ltd
Charandeep Singh, Scottish Chambers of Commerce
Andrew McKean, Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development (SLAED) Tourism Group
Kelly Johnstone, Springboard UK
Catriona Melville, The National Lottery Heritage Fund – Scotland
Joss Croft, UKInbound

Agenda item 1: Welcome and Name of CPG

- Murdo Fraser MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting. As the previous Deputy Convenor of the CPG on Tourism, he commented that it had been one of the better CPGs he'd been involved in terms of activities, attendance and wider industry participation.
- He stated his gratitude to VisitScotland for previously providing the secretariat for the CPG on Tourism.

- Murdo explained that there had been an issue towards the end of the last parliament session concerning the timing of a return, which meant that the CPG on Tourism cannot automatically re-register. As a result, the group will need to register again as a CPG.
- He suggested that it was a straightforward process to register with the Parliament's Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee and the Convenor of the newly formed CPG may need to give evidence to the Committee on why the group is needed.
- Murdo pointed out that being a newly registering the CPG meant there was an opportunity to revisit both its name and the purpose. He set out that there has been a proposal to rename the group the 'CPG on Tourism and Hospitality' to better reflect the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Hospitality & Tourism in Westminster.
- As well as giving supporting synergy between the CPG and APPG and the potential to host joint sessions, it was highlighted by non-MSP attendees that this would also complement the Tourism and Hospitality Industry Leadership Group (THILG) and would give gravitas and consistency for the group.
- MSP and non-MSP attendees agreed to register as the CPG on Tourism and Hospitality.

Agenda item 2: Election of Office Bearers

- Murdo Fraser MSP was elected as Convenor of the CPG.
- Andrew Baxter MSP and Calum Kerr MSP were elected as Deputy Convenors.
- The Scottish Tourism Alliance was appointed as the Secretariat, taking over the role from VisitScotland.

Agenda item 3: Open discussion on purpose of the group and potential topics for upcoming meetings

CPG purpose:

- The Convenor opened the discussion on the purpose of the CPG on Tourism and Hospitality by inviting The Scottish Tourism Alliance to share text drafted. This was: "To work together to support and promote the objectives of the national tourism strategy and missions of the Tourism and Hospitality Industry Leadership Group to sustainably grow the sector's economic value and positively enhance the benefits of tourism and hospitality – delivering the very best for our visitors, businesses, people, communities, and environment."
- The purpose was supported by attendees, while it was noted that wider parts of the tourism sector not represented on the THILG should still be considered when appropriate in the work of the CPG.

- It was also mentioned that the purpose deliberately doesn't mention Scotland Outlook 2030, so it captures work on the next national tourism strategy too.

Working arrangements of CPG:

- The Convenor highlighted that there are pros and cons to hosting CPG meetings online and in-person, noting that online meetings are more accessible for attendees joining from different parts of the country.
- It was noted that a Monday late morning tended to work well for attendees.
- The Convenor suggested holding at least one in-person CPG meeting in the Edinburgh area, tied into a visit to a tourism and hospitality business.
- The CPG plans to meet between 4-6 times over the year, with the next meeting planned for towards the end of November 2026 – dependent on registration timings of the CPG.

Topics for future CPG meetings:

- Potential topics for future CPG meetings raised by attendees included:
    - The implementation of the visitor levy (urban vs rural experience of levy, such as Edinburgh and Highland comparison; introduction in other parts of the UK; impact on industry balanced with benefits of levy spending; using data collection to inform levy spending decisions)
    - Tourism-related infrastructure projects implemented by public bodies and community groups, which are enhancing the tourism offer and at the same time helping address pressures on local communities. This should include barriers from central and local government to these projects (e.g. planning)
    - Growing golf tourism and wider benefits to local economy, e.g. East Lothian area
    - Rates re-evaluation impact on sector
    - Visitor dispersal and understanding what the visitor economy looks like from a regional perspective, spreading the benefits of tourism (e.g. cruise tourism), and extending visitor season – including unique challenges and opportunities in areas like South of Scotland
    - Accumulative burden on sector from multiple policy interventions at Scottish and UK levels
    - Sector data collection, including analysis of visitor spend and how this benefits communities
    - Growing Scotland's competitiveness as a visitor destination
    - Profitability of sector businesses, where cost of doing business is so high that the price point has risen but quality isn't matching this
    - UK and Scottish Budgets

AoB and Date of Next meeting

- After this initial meeting, the Convenor set out that the CPG cannot meet again formally until it has completed the registration process and been recognised by the Standards Committee, so a date for the next meeting cannot yet be set.
- The Scottish Tourism Alliance as Secretariat will be in touch with everyone about the next meeting.
- Marc Crothall MBE, CEO of the Scottish Tourism Alliance, added that there is an opportunity for the CPG to also build on the positives happening in the sector and how there is a lot to celebrate going on in the industry. It was noted that it is a platform where some of that can be showcased as well.