Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

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<th>Petition Number: PE01644</th>
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<td>Main Petitioner: Katherine Perlo on behalf of Ethical Voice for Animals</td>
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<td>Subject: Country sports tourism funding</td>
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<td>Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to prohibit, in its future directives to VisitScotland, the funding of country sports tourism involving the killing of animals.</td>
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Background

VisitScotland is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) funded directly by the Scottish Government.

Until the Tourist Boards (Scotland) Act 2006 came into force, VisitScotland was known the Scottish Tourist Board, and was initially established under the Development of Tourism Act 1969.

According to Section 19(1) and (2) of the 1969 Act:

1. The relevant Minister may, after consultation with a Tourist Board, give to it directions of a general character as to the exercise of its functions.

2. Subject to the provisions of any scheme under section 3 [. . .] of this Act, the relevant Minister may, with the approval of the Treasury, give to a Tourist Board directions as to—

   [...]  

   (c) the conditions to be imposed in making any grant under the scheme [. . .]; and such directions may distinguish between different classes of case.

To date, VisitScotland has not received direction from the Scottish Government on where it can or cannot award its funds. Its Growth Fund supports collaborative tourism marketing projects which focus on growth in the tourism sector.

The fund is a platform which supports groups in leveraging additional and focused marketing investment, stimulating collaboration within the industry,
closer working with VisitScotland and achieving strategic alignment with the national Tourism 2020 strategy.

Scottish Parliament Action

In December 2016, Andy Wightman MSP asked the following parliamentary question (S5W-05930):

“To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide a breakdown of the recipients of financial contributions from VisitScotland to the strategy, Game for Growth Strategy - Country Sports Tourism in Scotland 2016; what information it has regarding how each recipient will use this; what action it has taken to ensure that no money was provided to the owners or managers of landholdings on which crimes against wildlife have been committed; whether it will publish the strategy on its website, and what aspects of this it is supporting or plans to support with public money”.

Fiona Hyslop MSP replied:

“VisitScotland has approved a grant of £17,925 to the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group to promote Scotland as the destination of choice for all country sports. The Group will use this to develop content and supporting digital activity to attract visitors from across the UK and Scandinavia. As this money is for a specific project, no funding will be provided to individual estates or land owners. There is no intention to publish the strategy on VisitScotland's website and so there will be no funding support for this.”

VisitScotland acknowledges that the issue of country sports is a sensitive matter. However, as a public body, it is required to remain impartial and cannot discriminate against one sector of the tourism industry.

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government see tourism as one of the key sectors in its economic strategy. The Government’s aim is to help the tourism industry to grow further and to attract more visitors to Scotland.

Francesca McGrath
Senior Researcher
7 April 2017

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