

**CULTURE, TOURISM, EUROPE AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**  
**EXTERNAL AFFAIRS INQUIRY**  
**SUBMISSION FROM VISIT SCOTLAND**

**Engaging with the European Union**

- *What principles should inform the focus of the Scottish Government's external affairs policy with regard to the European Union?*

Scotland is a committed and well regarded contributor to the EU. The Scottish Government has made it clear that it intends to continue to operate on this basis, regardless of EU Exit.

VisitScotland continues to work with tourism partners in the EU and, these well established relationships will continue as we build on progress in sharing insight on trends in, and approaches to, tourism.

Through its work with Scotland Europa VisitScotland has developed a strong relationship with key stakeholders including the European Commission and the European Parliament as well as with leading representative organisations such as NECSTouR, the Network for European Regions for Sustainable and Competitive Tourism, and the European Travel Commission (ETC).

Through this engagement we raise the profile of Scotland's approach to delivering for the visitor economy, build on Scotland's reputation on the European stage and enhance our own approach to delivering for Scotland by learning and exchange with key stakeholders.

While the future relationship with the European Union remains uncertain, VisitScotland will continue to engage with partners in Europe to identify opportunities for mutual knowledge exchange and opportunities to enhance Scotland's reputation as a leader in the development of the visitor economy.

- *Are there examples of best practice for ways in which nations / regions from non-EU Member States engage with and influence the EU?*

It's hard to comment on this, but VisitScotland has good relationships with the national tourism organisations of Iceland and Norway. Both of these countries have substantial engagement with the EU and members of the EU. They take a proactive and collaborative approach to seeking out potential partners.

- *What should be the focus of the business plans for the Scottish Government Innovation and Investment Hub offices in Berlin, Brussels, Dublin, London and Paris?*

Each hub completed a business plan ahead of the new financial year focusing on delivering the following:

Reputation - Scotland's international reputation is improved

The network endeavours to maintain and improve Scotland's reputation beyond its own borders. To sustain a positive reputation, the network needs to nurture an understanding of the distinctive nature of Scotland's assets.

Investment - Investment to Scotland has increased

The network seeks to increase investment into Scotland, particularly from the locations and through the institutions where the network's Houses are located. Investment includes trade, investment, mobility, expenditure and fees.

International Trade - Scottish businesses are trading internationally more effectively

Scotland Houses support Scottish businesses to trade more effectively and to reach and develop new markets for Scottish goods and products.

Research and Innovation - Scottish research and innovation capability is promoted and further partnerships and funding secured

An explicit focus of the network hubs is to promote Scottish research and innovation capability, and to secure partnerships and funding for Scotland's institutions.

Scotland's Interests - Scotland's interests in the EU and beyond are protected and enhanced

VisitScotland, as a partner in the initiative and given the international importance of London, is most active with Scotland House London. Scotland House London supports VisitScotland's ambition to encourage the further internationalisation of the tourism sector by providing a springboard for Scottish tourism businesses to connect with international operators.

Through Scotland House VisitScotland engages with international travel trade and media partners to update these key stakeholders on Scotland's tourism product development. Through the creation and delivery of inspirational events VisitScotland showcases and celebrate tourism at Scotland House. All of this activity promotes Scotland as a leading destination for leisure tourism, major events and business events.

*• How can the Scottish Government Innovation and Investment Hub offices best support the Scottish Government's external affairs policy?*

In each of the network locations, there will be a range of specific Scottish interests to be protected and enhanced. Again the business plans will demonstrate how each hub will operate to align activity to support and deliver Scottish Government policy.

*• How can the Scottish Government's Innovation and Investment Hub offices be evaluated effectively?*

The most effective way to do this will be to assess performance against the stated aims in the annual business plans.

*• How should the Innovation and Investment Hub offices most effectively engage with other Scottish organisations such as Scottish Development International and VisitScotland?*

VisitScotland has established good working relationships with each of the leads in Berlin, Paris and Dublin. These will continue to develop over time, strengthen support for tourism and extending the reach of Scotland is Now.

Scotland House London is a unique collaboration between the Scottish Government, Scottish Enterprise (including Scottish Development International), VisitScotland and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. As partners we work very closely.

### **Engagement with the rest of the world**

- *What principles should inform the Scottish Government's international engagement? For example, should economic priorities be the key priority or cultural / 'soft power' priorities?*

There is a very strong link to soft power and economics, with Scotland's tourism and cultural offer key opportunities to engage international audience about our country and our products.

The Trading Nation Strategy published in May this year sets out the Scottish Government's approach to grow Scottish exports from 20% to 25% in the next decade creating 17,500 more jobs. The strategy sets out a list of key countries to grow exports in.

- *How should the Scottish Government prioritise its international engagement – for example, should the locations prioritised be based on a geography or policy focus?*

It's likely this will be decided on a case by case basis.

- *What should be the key aims of the Scottish Government's international offices in Beijing, Ottawa, Toronto and Washington DC?*

To promote Scotland's reputation and interests – including tourism - help to secure investment and international trade opportunities and help to identify collaboration and funding opportunities for research and innovation.

- *Currently, the Scottish Government has international engagement strategies with Canada, China, India, Pakistan and the USA. Do these strategies and their geographic focus remain appropriate post-Brexit?*

They do although the Scottish Government may consider an engagement strategy with the EU as a useful addition after EU Exit.

- *How can the Scottish Government's international engagement be evaluated effectively?*

Assessed against the stated aims and objectives in each strategy.

- *How should the Scottish Government's international offices most effectively engage with other Scottish organisations such as Scottish Development International and VisitScotland?*

Good relationships are already in place with close working around VisitScotland in country priorities including Business Development Missions, Scotland Week in North America and around Ministerial Visits. The shared campaign platform of Scotland is Now is a real strength making it easier to share messaging and imagery across a range of channels.

There is also an External Networks Board, established by the Scottish Government with a membership that includes SE / SDI and VisitScotland. The purpose of the Board is to look at how each agency collaborates in market and this includes working with the international offices.

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**VisitScotland**