RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SOUTH OF SCOTLAND ENTERPRISE BILL

SUBMISSION FROM VISIT SCOTLAND

VisitScotland supports the establishing of the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency and is actively engaged in its creation, with Malcolm Roughead, Chief Executive a member of the SOSEP Board.

The creation of the Agency is a key moment for the tourism industry in the South of Scotland and in establishing the region as a leading, all year-round, total quality visitor destination.

VisitScotland already delivers for the South of Scotland, investing £500,000 in a new two year marketing campaign for the region and working directly with over 500 local businesses in Quality Assurance schemes.

VisitScotland envisages working with the Agency to build economic success through the following activities:

- The development of an integrated tourism strategy and supporting action plan for the South of Scotland.
- The creation of an integrated marketing plan for South of Scotland based on a clear identity and unique proposition.
- The development and implementation of a new model for industry collaboration based on a co-operative approach.
- The creation of a tourism innovation and skills investment plan.
- The creation of a digital economy strategy and supporting action plan for tourism.

Developing the Visitor Economy

As well as building on the excellent tourism product in the South of Scotland, the Agency should support sectors that complement and support the visitor economy. This includes the creative industries, food and drink, farming, forestry and fisheries; all of which add to the South of Scotland experience for visitors. The Agency must also help ensure that the unique character, history and traditions of the many towns and villages continue.

From a tourism perspective it will be essential for the Agency to seek input and advice from industry partners, who are well placed to communicate how the agencies work can contribute to positive social and environmental outcomes. VisitScotland will add to this, bringing learning from other areas of Scotland and from its work and relationships with other national tourism organisations, destination marketing organisations and agencies.
Education and learning opportunities are vital for young people and peoples changing career. It is essential that local provision continues to include courses in tourism and hospitality and are seen as centres of excellence.

**Addressing economic challenges**

The Agency must tackle low levels of investment, help to create more and better paid jobs and work with partners to ensure young people stay in the South of Scotland with excellent education opportunities that lead into rewarding careers.

The importance of SMEs in the South of Scotland should be considered a key economic asset. With the commitment these businesses have to the region they should be regarded as the bedrock of economic development in the South Scotland and supported appropriately.

The location and transport connections need to be exploited to their maximum effect, with new developments adding to a strengthened network of road, rail and ports.

Building on from the Year of Young People, the Agency should ensure that there is a forum (or fora) where young people can provide their views and contribute their experiences to help shape the planning and delivery of activity and services provided by the Agency.

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**VisitScotland**

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