Cleaning and social distancing

Questions:

- Will there be guidance on distancing provided to transport providers e.g. coach tours, private hire operators, chauffeur services?
- How can Bed & Breakfasts go about offering guests a cooked breakfast and still adhere to social distancing?
- Will there be guidelines with regards to hygiene, cleaning routines, and gaps between bookings for hotels, restaurants, cafes and accommodation services?
- Responsible tourism or social distancing. What’s not factored in is that most if not all existing tourism businesses are not set up to operate at -50% to -75% of business plan volume capacity. How do operators square that circle?
- How does C&C work with communal showering and toilet facilities?
- How important are face coverings/masks of any kind worn around businesses? It’s a very different “look” for both visitors and providers.
- Is there going to be guidance issued on protecting staff? Particularly for housekeeping in hotels, i.e. recommendations on types of suitable protective clothing?
- What measures should we be putting in place for self-catering accommodation?

Answer:

There is no formal guidance available at this stage on hygiene and social distancing measures for when businesses re-open.

We know that there’s a lot of interest in how to restart as a business with the new rules in place for social distancing and hygiene. Just to reassure you that this is an area the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG) is looking at – working with key sector groups many of whom have or are developing very detailed criteria and guidelines – and we hope to get something out to the industry in the near future. Timescales will be published soon. The hope is we will be able to have a UK wide solution approved by the various health authorities and endorsed by the UK and Scottish Governments.

We recommend keeping up to date with Scottish Government advice, and we will be communicating the Government advice clearly to industry as and when more information is available. Keep referring to our advice page for the latest updates.

Question:

I’ve heard that some of what VisitScotland is planning to give potential visitors confidence to return to Scotland - this is managing the perceived risk. We as B&B owners need to understand the real risk on
re-opening. Will VisitScotland encourage the Government to release scientific information on real risk? For example, information such as how long does the virus live on soft furnishings and is there any cleaning of these surfaces that works.

**Answer:**

We are in regular communication with the relevant teams within the Scottish Government and will work with them in communicating any advice that will be required to reopen our tourism industry and encourage visitors. The health of individuals is paramount, and this will be at the forefront of any communications. There are already guidelines in place on the [Scottish Government’s coronavirus pages](https://www.gov.scot) which will be enhanced and made more specific to tourism in due course.

**Communities**

**Questions:**

- How are communities being or planning to be engaged with to make sure that we take them with us when we invite people back into our areas?
- Has STERG discussed who will co-ordinate, lead and facilitate discourse with communities and messaging to them?
- The right message to encourage anxious communities to welcome visitors will need careful management. Who is co-ordinating this?
- What is the best way to engage with local communities? Is there the resource in place for this activity at DMOs? Could local councils be an alternative?
- Will someone coordinate with councils to ensure public toilets are open and cleaned adequately for visitors as soon as we reopen?
- What role do you see the Local Authorities (democratically elected and accountable body for their citizens) playing in community engagement and reassurance?
- Can VisitScotland help with the message to get local communities onboard both locally and nationally?

**Answer:**

This issue has both a national and local dimension. Nationally, Scottish Government will make clear what can and cannot happen when any easing of lockdown is agreed. There will be different challenges in different parts of the country. It will require a collaborative effort amongst all agencies involved. That is why it is a key concern under discussion with members of STERG.

We think the impetus for this should come from local communities, perhaps led by Destination Organisations in partnership with VisitScotland, local agencies, councils and community groups. There will be different issues and opportunities in each community.
Our local team members, notably those normally based in our iCentre network but currently working from home, have been specifically tasked with gathering information on community concerns to allow us to have a much more accurate picture on a Scotland-wide basis.

It should be recognised that whilst there are, for obvious health related reasons, concerns about the potential negative impacts of visitor influxes, there are members of communities that rely on tourism for their livelihood and a balanced view must be taken to reflect local circumstances.

At VisitScotland we are currently conducting an audit of places people will be able to visit easily post-COVID-19 and others that will require careful management. Our marketing and communications will reflect that in our initial domestic campaigns – which will be about ensuring that some areas aren’t overwhelmed, and others get a bigger taste of tourism success.

We have also asked our expert insight team to gather intelligence and look at when visitors might travel again – and what needs to be in place to give them confidence to travel in a new, more responsible world.

STERG has published the action plan for the first two phases toward recovery from the crisis, and the plan for the next two phases will be published soon. The plan for future phases will include how we respond to the vitally important community tourism agenda.

The recently launched Tourism Destination and Sector Support Fund will provide financial help to tourism destination and sector organisations across Scotland who have lost income from membership subscriptions from tourism businesses because of the coronavirus lockdown. Awardees will be required to work with VisitScotland as we look to help rebuild the tourism industry and a key focus of this is working with local communities to ensure this is done to the benefit of all.

**Question:**

Living in a rural community, there is already an issue with city day trippers, fly tipping and general disregard. How do we stop the abuse of our natural spaces and destruction of the destinations people will want to visit?

**Answer:**

Unfortunately, issues such as fly-tippers come from all parts of the countryside, towns and cities – and should be dealt with by the police. Our natural resources are hugely important to communities and visitors alike and should be protected. However, it’s important we don’t demonise potential visitors and remain open and welcoming – as long as the science and rules on social distancing allow it.

We feel that responsible tourism is going to be even more important for Scotland in the future and this will be a core part of our recovery plan. Our Chief Executive, Malcolm Roughead, discussed this in
his blog ‘The new normal’. He also talks about how things will be different going forward in today’s blog ‘Coronavirus has been a catalyst for change’ (14 May 2020).

You can read our full approach to ensuring visitors are aware of their responsibilities. And Keep Scotland Beautiful has resources available on its website and a team of people you can contact.

For more advice about specific concerns in your area, your local authority will also be working on resolving issues.

**Question:**

There’s an opportunity to encourage our local communities to visit local tourism attractions and businesses. There are places I haven’t been to locally which are within a 20-mile radius. Perhaps there should be a micro local campaign(s)?

**Answer:**

You can read our marketing response to COVID-19. This involves planning for future campaigns, which will initially focus on the daytrip market and domestic visitors. That local focus will be at the heart of what we do so that we don’t put pressure on fragile communities – whilst acknowledging that tourism is part of those communities and we need to get businesses up and running again.

During lockdown, we have been encouraging Scots to share the view from their homes with our #AWindowOnScotland campaign on social media to keep Scotland front of mind for when they can visit again and also to showcase views from across the country.

**Question:**

How do you feel the difference might play out between urban and rural tourism?

**Answer:**

Every corner of tourism has been affected by COVID-19 and the repercussions of the country going into lockdown just before many businesses were due to open at Easter. As part of our recovery strategy, the teams within VisitScotland will be working with businesses and organisations across the country, both rurally and in more urban areas to ensure we support them as much as possible as we look to rebuild this vital part of Scotland’s economy.

**Quality Assurance (QA)**

**Question:**

What is the QA support offered – are fees being waived and is that for new businesses too?
Answer:

In March 2020, we announced our decision to not charge for our QA Scheme membership this year. Should you have already paid, please complete this form so that we can reimburse you as soon as possible. This is currently for existing members of the QA Scheme but this will be reviewed going forward as part of our recovery strategy.

Question:

Are there any plans for a ‘Kitemark’ for COVID-19 best practice so that our customers have confidence and trust in our Scottish tourism product?

Answer:

Currently there is no agreed plan in place, however we are in regular contact with the Scottish Government and tourist boards across the UK. These organisations are all actively looking to develop a UK wide scheme that is science based, has the support of health officials and is endorsed by politicians. In practical terms whatever is agreed must be easy to follow and implement by businesses and reflect the unique needs of different industry sectors. If this is something that will be put into practice, we will advise the industry at the earliest opportunity.

VisitScotland’s role and influence

Question:

How can local councils help and work with VisitScotland?

Answer:

A local response to this crisis will be critical to ensure that the tourism industry can start to open again. We are relying on local authorities to work with us to ensure that local facilities are safely available when the lockdown ends – from car parking to toilets. Local authorities are key partners of VisitScotland, and each region has a Regional Director who can be a useful first contact between VisitScotland and local authorities.

The umbrella body representing all local authorities in Scotland, COSLA, are key members of STERG.

Question:

What steps have VisitScotland taken to adjust its organisation to the current reduction in the industry that it supports?

Answer:
The entire effort of all staff working for VisitScotland has been refocussed on dealing with the current crisis and its impact on individual businesses, destinations and sectors. This has taken the form of reactive and proactive engagement with individual companies and organisations as well as research and scenario planning, input to various forums and developing future marketing plans to cover the post-lockdown period. We have already repurposed part of our budget to provide a refund of all QA fees in the current year and last week launched a new support fund for Destinations and Sector organisations.

We’re putting all our efforts into responding to the unprecedented challenges facing our industry. The industry still requires a huge amount of support and we’re delivering this across our teams. There’s more information about what we’re working on during this time including marketing research, funding updates and industry support on VisitScotland.org.

Question:
What steps will be taken by VisitScotland to ensure that we build visitor confidence to return when they are allowed to do so?

Answer:
We are constantly monitoring sentiment towards Scotland and sending out messages about dream now and visit later to our databases and followers on social media. We have had a fantastic response from potential visitors who are anxious to support Scotland’s tourism industry and love Scotland as you can see from this film we put together recently.

STERG has published the action plan for the first two phases toward recovery from the crisis, and the plan for the next two phases will be published soon.

Building consumer and visitor confidence as we look to the future is key. We are publishing weekly marketing intelligence reports to share updates on what our future visitors may be thinking about travel plans and priorities.

We are also keeping in close contact with key tour operators and travel trade contacts who bring business directly to Scotland to ensure they are fully aware of our plans and what products will be available for them to sell once lockdown is removed.

Questions:

- Some rural areas have a very short season and virtually no winter season and making it through to 2021 may be challenging for many. Will STERG and VS take this into account and give additional support, marketing, funding, work with etc to these areas?
• Can VisitScotland look to increase marketing across the winter to promote dark skies and other winter interests?

Answer:

Our marketing response to COVID-19 is available for you to read. Marketing we undertake has and will always promote a seasonal and regional spread and this will be even more important as we look to support the recovery of the industry in a responsible way.

The recently launched Tourism Destination and Sector Support Fund will provide financial help to tourism destination and sector organisations across Scotland. Awardees will be required to work with VisitScotland as we look to help rebuild the tourism industry and a key focus of this is working with the local communities to ensure this is done to the benefit of all.

Question:

What support will VisitScotland teams be providing to small businesses/sole traders?

Answer:

Our team is committed to doing whatever we can to support businesses at this critical time. Our Business Advice team, consisting of our experienced Industry Relationship Managers and Quality & Tourism Advisors, supported by our Customer Services team, can be reached at business.advice@visitscotland.com to help with any questions you have about business operations or marketing.

You can access personalised advice via your Industry Relationship Manager for your region. They can talk through what support is available at this difficult time.

There is information on the financial support currently available and a range of other resources on our coronavirus advice pages on VisitScotland.org.

Question:

Can VisitScotland help with encouraging online sales from site shops to support suppliers?

Answer:

We are happy to support virtual and online businesses as companies have had to adapt to a different way of working. Please contact your Industry Relationship Manager for your region to let them know more about it.

Question:
Is VisitScotland working with caravan and camping club or such like for campsites?

**Answer:**

VisitScotland is working directly with all the main camping and caravan organisations to ensure their concerns and views are heard and fed into Scottish Government. Representation is also being made via the Scottish Tourism Alliance who are key members of STERG.

**Question:**

We’re currently developing a new virtual product. Is there any VisitScotland marketing support which we can access for this?

**Answer:**

Yes, we’d be delighted to hear more about this once it’s ready. You can let your Industry Relationship Manager know about it as he/she works closely with our marketing and communications teams across VisitScotland who can help promote your product across our channels.

**Question:**

I’m listening in from Wales, are you engaging with Visit Wales and Welsh Tourism Alliance?

**Answer:**

Yes, we’re working with our colleagues within VisitBritain and the other home nations to ensure consistency across our strategy for going forward as well as sharing resource and advice where appropriate.

**Question:**

With the prospects of a depressed economy and labour market there are going to be many school leavers and graduates facing bleak prospects of getting in to work. Is STERG looking at employability schemes to identify training programmes?

**Answer:**

STERG represents a number of bodies and organisations (including Skills Development Scotland) across the tourism sector in Scotland who are all working together to build a future for the tourism industry. Looking at employment and training for younger people will be included within this as well as training for those currently on furlough. There is a new [free-to-use jobs portal](#) to help workers from...
the tourism and hospitality sectors who have found themselves displaced as a result of the COVID-19 situation.

**Question:**

All sectors need a timeline. I’m now looking at cancelling all of June but hoping to hang on to July. Are VisitScotland putting pressure on Scottish Government to give us a date to work towards?

**Answer:**

There’s currently no date announced from Scottish Government for the re-opening of hospitality industry as part of the COVID-19 recovery. Along with Scottish Government we’re part of STERG so we’re working closely with them, and other tourism industry bodies across Scotland, to raise and respond in a co-ordinated manner to the problems which result from the COVID-19 pandemic. Like everyone we need to listen to the science and medical expertise before taking any chances with the health of Scottish people.

**Government advice**

**Question:**

Will the Scottish Government also require that foreign visitors isolate themselves when they come to Scotland?

**Answer:**

Keep checking the [VisitScotland.org pages](https://www.visitscotland.org) for the latest developments as government guidelines change and update, as and when restrictions begin to lift. The [Scottish Government](https://www.gov.scot) website has information as the situation develops, while rules and restrictions for regulating UK borders are available on the [UK Government](https://www.gov.uk) website.

**Question:**

What is the stance on short-term lets, using holiday lets, for people moving house and/or moving up to Scotland from England, for example?

**Answer:**

See the [Scottish Government’s advice](https://www.gov.scot) on the usage of hotels/self-catering properties as an interim abode.
Questions:

- Do you believe that Government support will extend past June if the tourism sector opening is delayed longer than other sectors?
- If there’s a phased re-opening and accommodation providers, restaurants etc are not able to open in July; will there be pressure put on the Scottish Government to extend the job retention scheme to ensure that we can keep our employees safe?
- Does Riddell know if the government are planning on extending the JRS for the sector?

Answer:

The Chancellor announced the [extension of the furlough scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-furlough-scheme-life-march-to-june) on 12 May. If there are any changes to the furlough scheme which relate specifically to the tourism sector, this will be communicated on our [coronavirus support pages](https://www.visitscotland.org) on VisitScotland.org.

Question:

Has Government been approached to discuss Business Events/Conferences not being included in the term 'Mass Gatherings'?

Answer:

Yes, our Business Events team has been communicating with the Scottish Government on this matter.

Question:

It was reported at the weekend that pressure is being placed on the Government to reduce VAT and APD to increase competitiveness. Is there an update on this announcement?

Answer:

We think that a review of tax burdens could help the tourism industry recover more quickly and stimulate growth even if in the short term – and could form part of a number of financial measures to get the industry thriving again. We recommend keeping up to date with Scottish and UK Government updates, and we will be communicating the Government advice clearly to industry as and when more information is available. Keep referring to our [advice page](https://www.visitscotland.org) for the latest updates.

Question:

Is pressure being put on the government to ensure furlough payments come through? Some staff have yet to receive any money since March?

Answer
Representatives of the Scottish Government tourism team are members of STERG and issues such as this are fed directly to them for passing on to Ministers. In addition, the Scottish Tourism Alliance has regular meetings with Ministers and Cabinet Secretaries to ensure issue like this are effectively communicated.

**Re-opening properties**

**Question:**

Do you think there is a chance that self-catering properties may be able to re-open in July?

**Answer:**

This will depend on the Scottish Government’s plan for easing lockdown, which at this point does not have timelines attached. We recommend you contact the Association of Scotland’s Self Caterers as a source of advice as well as keeping up to date with Scottish Government updates. VisitScotland will be communicating the Government advice clearly to industry as and when more information is available. Keep referring to our advice page for the latest updates.

**Question:**

Any advice to hostels and dormitory accommodation, when will we be able to re-open if at all?

**Answer:**

There’s currently no specific advice or dates for the re-opening of the hospitality industry from Scottish Government. We work closely with them, and all updates relevant for the tourism industry are shared on our regularly updated advice page on VisitScotland.org.

**Question:**

Once businesses open up under guidelines, who would monitor this to ensure confidence for tour companies that they get the same quality of service from hotels, restaurant and attractions within guidelines across the country, and is it possible restriction will vary from islands to mainland?

**Answer:**

There are schemes in development to ensure that businesses meet the required standards. There is however a challenge to police these effectively and steps are being investigated to provide the necessary reassurance needed by all visitors.
At this stage, no Government advice has been given on the re-opening of the industry or what form that will take. We work closely with them, and all updates relevant for the tourism industry are shared on our regularly updated advice page on VisitScotland.org.

**Miscellaneous**

**Question:**

Is there any access to the paper on the smart village model?

**Answer:**

Access the paper on the Smart Village Model on their website.

**Question:**

Any word from Historic Environment Scotland about their plans for reopening attractions? National Trust for Scotland seem to be planning to mothball many smaller sites, does HES plan the same?

**Answer:**

There’s been no announcement from Historic Environment Scotland on their plans to re-open attractions. To keep up to date with their latest advice, please visit their coronavirus advice page.

**Question:**

Might we be facing zonal controls across Scotland and how can that be policed?

**Answer:**

As things stand, there is no confirmation on if there will be zonal controls across Scotland. We recommend keeping up to date with Scottish Government advice, and we will be communicating the Government advice clearly to industry as and when more information is available. Keep referring to our advice page for the latest updates.

**Question:**

I have a large event booked at P&J Live in Aberdeen in 2022 which is expecting over 1,000 direct visitors from the USA and the transport of approximately 400 horses from all over the world – is there anyone that can help us with the challenges that we may face?

**Answer:**
We have more information on business events including conventions, and contact details for our business events team on our Business Events website. We would also recommend liaising with P&J Live directly about your event.

**Question:**

What is the sub organisation which deals with tour companies?

**Answer:**

The SDMA is the officially recognised and constituted association for Scottish-based tour operators and destination management companies. If you are a tour company based in Scotland, you can also contact our travel trade team.

**Question:**

With many other countries now putting dates in their re-opening, there is evidence to suggest this is prompting a surge in bookings. This is encouraging but clearly with no plans being discussed in Scotland, however, tentative, would you agree we risk losing out. Is there a risk that just as we plan to re-open, demand is reduced - we have missed the curve?

**Answer:**

We have to be guided by the science to ensure that the safety of communities and visitors is the top priority. We don’t think that when we open, businesses will lose out as we know that people will want to take holidays close to home. There is no indication as yet as to when the lockdown in Scotland will end, however the first stage of the tourism industry in Scotland will very much be focused on day trips and the domestic tourism market as travel restrictions will likely be in place for some time. Unfortunately, it's unlikely we will be able to welcome international visitors until next year and our marketing team are already working on a strategy to attract these visitors when the time is right.

**Question:**

I'd love to be part of virtual visiting. Who do I contact?

**Answer:**

You can let your Industry Relationship Manager know about it as he/she works closely with our marketing and communications teams across VisitScotland who can help promote your product across our channels.

You can find examples of the type of things businesses are doing virtually on our inspirational news page.
**Question:**

Do you think the only hope for a full recovery is a vaccine, a cure or elimination of the virus.

**Answer:**

It is the only way certainly to get tourism back to normality – but in the interim we will need to work with the “new normal” which puts safety first.

**Question:**

When do VisitScotland think weddings being allowed again in the small bubbles of the legal 5, for the tourism and hospitality industries?

**Answer:**

We believe that events will be difficult to manage with the social distancing and safety regulations we expect to be imposed. As yet, the Scottish Government has not put in place a timeline for the post-lockdown period and when large or smaller scale events such as weddings can take place.

**Question:**

I love the idea of the Safe Tourism Charter. Could this be a national initiative?

**Answer:**

Within the planning for recovery we will be looking at a wide range of initiatives – as consumer and community safety will be paramount.

**Question:**

Is there an opportunity to work with local c/training providers for training opportunities and could funding be made available to businesses to upskill staff?

**Answer:**

Skills Development Scotland is looking at how the industry can be helped through this crisis as part of the STERG recovery plan. While we’re staying safe at home during the COVID-19 crisis, the way we communicate with one another has changed. We’ve seen many more virtual events and training taking place for businesses. Our calendar of industry events is a great way to keep ahead of the curve. Have a browse through the listings to find what’s on and, if you’re hosting a virtual event/training, you can add it to our calendar.
**Question:**

Who will be driving the experiential food & drink tourism plan on the ground as a key driver of the recovery?

**Answer:**

That will be the Scotland Food and Drink Tourism Group. VisitScotland is on the board alongside the Scottish Tourism Alliance, Scottish Government and other Industry groups including food tourism, retail and wholesale sectors.

**Miscellaneous – advice for accommodation providers**

**Question:**

Are there any associations for B&Bs to join? any recommendations?

**Answer:**

Find out more about [Scotland’s B&B Association](#).

**Question:**

What date should we be cancelling bookings to self-catering?

**Answer:**

There is no clarity yet about reopening of businesses but any updates will be communicated on our [advice page](#) on VisitScotland.org. You could also contact the [ASSC](#) as they have some great advice in the first instance.

**Question:**

What advice can you give small B&Bs?

**Answer:**

Keep watching any changes in advice but follow the science and keep safety at the heart of all you’re planning. Preparing for the end of lockdown by putting cleanliness at the heart of what you do, look at how physical distancing could work, keep in touch with your visitors with inspirational content and messaging - these things will all help when you come out of lockdown.
Additional Useful resources

- For self-catering matters, ASSC has been very active and has answers and advice on cleaning regimes.
- For B&Bs, take a look at the B&B Association and Scotland’s Best B&Bs websites.
- Have a look at Wild Scotland’s Best Practice Guidelines. These are currently under review with support from Scottish Natural Heritage and wider sector.
- Smart Village Scotland Paper – Smart Villages connect people in rural areas, supporting new and existing enterprises and creating a network of digital champions – all working together to build a vibrant, creative and sustainable rural economy in Scotland.
- Support and advice on online selling, and a range of other digital topics:
  - Business Gateway
  - Business Gateway podcast on ecommerce selling
  - Digital Boost
- Find out about virtual activity taking place across Scotland on VisitScotland.org.
- Ullapool is bringing together community residents and businesses to develop a Safe Tourism Charter to welcome visitors whilst guarding the wellbeing of our community.
- For any businesses in Glasgow take a look at the Glasgow Tourism and Visitor Plan website. You can also join other industry colleagues on Twitter @GlasgowTourism and on the VS Glasgow City Region Facebook Group.