Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG)

STERG Sector Update Session
Wednesday 10th February 2021

Present:

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<th>Organisation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Association of Scottish Self-Caterers</td>
<td>Fiona Campbell</td>
<td>Sail Scotland</td>
<td>Alan Rankin</td>
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<td>Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions</td>
<td>Gordon Morrison</td>
<td>Scottish Agritourism</td>
<td>Caroline Millar</td>
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<td>British Amusement Catering Trade Association</td>
<td>John White</td>
<td>Scottish Tourism Alliance</td>
<td>Karen Christie</td>
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<td>Historic Houses</td>
<td>Andrew Hopetoun</td>
<td>Scottish Tourist Guides Association</td>
<td>Kenneth Bramham</td>
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<td>Independent Hostels</td>
<td>Gregor Barclay</td>
<td>UKHospitality (Scotland)</td>
<td>Willie Macleod</td>
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<td>Hostelling Scotland</td>
<td>Margo Paterson</td>
<td>VisitScotland</td>
<td>Riddell Graham</td>
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<td>Night Time Industries Association</td>
<td>Donald Macleod</td>
<td>WildScotland</td>
<td>Victoria Brooks</td>
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Apologies:

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<td>British Holiday &amp; Home Parks Association</td>
<td>Jeanette Wilson</td>
<td>Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group</td>
<td>Rory Kennedy</td>
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<td>Discover Scotland’s Gardens</td>
<td>Dougal Philip</td>
<td>Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group</td>
<td>Stuart French</td>
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Key Notes & Actions

1. Funding Update

- Sector and Destination Operational and Market Readiness Fund
  - Funding panel met yesterday (9th February)
  - Award letters will start to be issued this week / next week
  - Submissions to the fund represented a good cross section of the industry

- Other funds administered by VS
  - VS now delivering 13 funds for SGov
  - Funds are being developed for Country Sports, Day Tour Operators, Tour Guides and Motorhomes

Kenneth Bramham, STGA, noted his thanks to VisitScotland for the opportunity to engage in the development of the Tour Guides fund.

- A list of individuals / businesses / sectors who are falling through the funding gaps has been compiled and submitted to the Scottish Government for clarity. This includes the issue of diversified businesses not meeting eligibility criteria as raised at the last meeting, also included are a number of other Agritourism anomalies highlighted by Caroline Millar.

  **Action:** Riddell Graham will request an update on the ‘Falling Through The Gaps’ list from the Scottish Government Tourism team at the STERG meeting tomorrow (11th).

It was noted that the Visitor Attractions Fund will open tomorrow. It is expected that over the next few days it will be possible to get a view of those who are falling through the gaps. A list will be compiled and sent to Riddell Graham to be included in the main ‘Falling Through The Gaps’ list.

  **Action:** Gordon Morrison to ensure a list of those businesses who are falling through the gaps of the Visitor Attraction Fund are forwarded to Riddell Graham.

Victoria Brooks, Wild Scotland, highlighted the importance of recognising differences within or across different parts of the sector when looking at future funding, for example those who don’t have any premises / do not pay NDR.
Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG)

- B&B, Self-Catering, Exclusive Use Fund
  - Fund expected to be announced shortly and will be delivered through the Local Authorities
  - Further clarity is expected on this fund at the STERG meeting tomorrow
  - It was highlighted by Fiona Campbell that that this fund may not be as well received as expected

Action: An update on the B&B, Self-Catering, Exclusive Use Fund will be required from COSLA and the Scottish Government Tourism team at the STERG meeting tomorrow (11th).

Action: Riddell Graham to highlight to STERG that there may be issues arising from this fund.

2. Issues Raised At STERG

- Tourism Recovery Plan
  - To deliver some of the Task Force recovery recommendations in the coming year, it will be necessary to secure additional financial support from the Scottish Government. To that end, STERG has been tasked with submitting a set of proposals, based on the Task Force recommendations, which outline priority funding requirements for the next 6-24 months. These proposals will be submitted to Ministers in early March and will be in addition to any ask for ongoing business support.

The early March submission date is being driven by the fact that the Scottish Parliament elections are due to take place on 6th May and prior to that there will be a c. 6 week period of purdah whereby STERG will be unable to engage with Scottish Government. The next opportunity to submit any further proposals will be mid-May after the elections.

STERG will share a draft set of proposals with the Scottish Tourism Task Force tomorrow (11th February) for discussion and feedback.

- Willie Macleod, UKH(Scotland), highlighted that many businesses won’t survive until after the election on 6th May. A recent survey by UKH has shown that many businesses will run out of cash at the end of February or end of March. In addition there is no guarantee when businesses can reopen or on what basis they will be able reopen and how restrictions will constrain viability. It was noted that although this is not a VisitScotland or STERG issue, the recovery plan cannot wait until after the election, SGov needs to accelerate its proposals for recovery.

It was noted that the work which STERG are doing now is identifying priority financial asks which will be submitted in early March prior to purdah.

It was highlighted that the SGov’s ability to finance anything will be dependent on the UK Budget on 3rd March. A number of sector representatives met with Nigel Huddleston and Fergus Ewing last week to reinforce Scotland’s priorities and the need for the UK Gov to be supporting SGov. It was noted that the industry requests for support and action south of the border are not materially different from north of the border.

- Alan Rankin, Sail Scotland, highlighted that currently there are no conversations in SGov around the principles of Test and Go/ Vaccination Passport to allow people to move. There are many businesses trying to work out suitable protocols but there is no national coherent approach to this. This is unacceptable. There is a need to urgently know the direction of travel.

Action: Riddell Graham to raise at the STERG meeting tomorrow (11th).

- STERG have consistently asked for a roadmap which indicates what the levels will look like and an indication of a timeline - what we can expect and when. The aim of STERG is to get as much notice as
possible from Scottish Government to allow industry sufficient time to plan before changes are implemented.

- John White, BACTA, emphasised the need to support the supply chain who have not had access to any funding. In a recent meeting with Business Support, SGov, a proposal was presented to secure a fund of c.£1.5m to support c. 25 businesses within the supply chain who provide pool tables, juke boxes and fruit machines to the public house sector. The proposal was rejected as it was deemed to be too late, (funds need to be spent by end of March), too complex and there was no delivery partner. This is not acceptable.

Riddell advised that if the funding proposal could be sent to him then it can be escalated to the SGov Tourism Team.

**Action:** John White to send the funding proposal to Riddell Graham to share with the SGov Tourism Team.

- Gordon Morrison, ASVA, pointed out that if we are to move back into the level system then there was no support for visitor attractions because they were told they could be open and therefore not eligible for the Business Restrictions grant, however we are all aware that most visitor attractions in level 3 did not open as they could only attract the local market. Definition of what a business restriction is needs to be changed, it’s not just reduced hours it’s also about the fact that visitors can’t get to you because they can’t travel. Although this has already been raised it should be raised again with STERG.

This point was supported by Caroline Millar, Gregor Barclay, Fiona Campbell and Victoria Brooks.

**Action:** Riddell Graham to raise at the STERG meeting tomorrow (11th)

- Caroline Millar, Scottish Agritourism highlighted that a number of businesses haven't had a response from the Digital Boost Fund. It’s 10th February and the money has to be spent by 28th February. In addition, for those who have been advised they have had an award, some of this is for website production. Most websites our members have procured are taking at least 4 months, so our businesses are having to plan to invoice a website company for a website that won't even be started, pay them in full so can meet the grant deadline. We are worried that website companies won't all get their finger out and deliver something of quality or on time. It was noted that STERG should be made aware of this.

**Action:** Riddell Graham to raise at the STERG meeting tomorrow (11th)

### 3. STERG Industry Survey

- An industry webinar took place on 27th January to share the findings of the survey. This can now be found on VS.org. There is work ongoing to break the data down by sector if the data is robust.


- Plans to issue a follow up survey at the end of March are currently being discussed.

### 4. Short Term Lets

- The Short Terms let issue was raised at STERG to ensure that it was on the STERG agenda.
- It was noted that the STL legislation will go through Parliament today.
5. Visitor Management

- Visitor Management issues of over tourism, campervans, the increase in Scots holidaying Scotland and irresponsible behaviour are being addressed through the Visitor Management Forum. A draft plan from CEO Malcolm Roughead has been submitted to Fergus Ewing for consideration. The Plan been developed collaboratively with Transport Scotland, National Parks, Nature Scot, the Police, RTIF. Within the plan there is an ask for financial support, particularly for Ranger services.

Caroline Millar acknowledged that the impact on agriculture has been fed into the Visitor Management team. There are currently very specific issues around dogs on leads. 35 sheep were killed on one farm in the Pentlands last weekend. On average there are two dog attacks per week in the Pentlands. This is going to continue to be a huge issue. There is also concern about the farmers, many who will not be involved in agritourism but are facing abuse from the public or indeed the farmers are threatening the public.

It was noted that in Ireland they have just banned all dog walking on farms.

Gregor Barclay, Independent Hostels, highlighted that in the Highlands the countryside ranger service is responsible for managing the Great Glen Way and it is the Local Authority who provides the service. There is concern that the local authority couldn’t manage this pre-COVID due to budget cuts, resource issues etc so how will they be able to manage this summer without an increase in budget.

It was noted that Local Authorities have been engaged with the Visitor management group and there has been an ask for money for ranger service which would cover the Local Authority and National Parks.

Action: Riddell Graham to raise the Local Authority funding issue with VS CEO, Malcolm Roughead

6. Sentiment Tracker

- The updated sentiment tracker is now available on VS.org. This provides really useful insight into what visitors are thinking about where they may go on holiday and what they might do on holiday.

https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/coronavirus-insights/uk-market#tracker

7. Meeting Close

- Riddell Graham thanked everyone for their input and confirmed that he would raise the issues highlighted today with STERG and ensure that a reply is given.

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Next Meeting
Wednesday 24th February, 9.00am-9.30am