Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG)

STERG Sector Update Session
Wednesday 7th April 2021

Present:

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<tr>
<td>Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions</td>
<td>Gordon Morrison</td>
<td>Scottish Agritourism</td>
<td>Caroline Millar</td>
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<td>Historic Houses</td>
<td>Andrew Hopetoun</td>
<td>Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group</td>
<td>Rory Kennedy</td>
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<td>Hostelling Scotland</td>
<td>Margo Paterson</td>
<td>Scottish Tourism Alliance</td>
<td>Karen Christie</td>
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<td>Independent Hostels</td>
<td>Gregor Barclay</td>
<td>Scottish Tourist Guides Association</td>
<td>Kenneth Bramham</td>
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<td>Sail Scotland</td>
<td>Alan Rankin</td>
<td>VisitScotland</td>
<td>Riddell Graham</td>
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Apologies:

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<td>Association of Scottish Self-Caterers</td>
<td>Fiona Campbell</td>
<td>Night Time Industries Association</td>
<td>Donald Macleod</td>
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<td>British Amusement Catering Trade Association</td>
<td>John White</td>
<td>Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group</td>
<td>Stuart French</td>
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<td>British Holiday &amp; Home Parks Association</td>
<td>Jeanette Wilson</td>
<td>UKHospitality (Scotland)</td>
<td>Willie Macleod</td>
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<td>Discover Scotland's Gardens</td>
<td>Dougal Philip</td>
<td>WildScotland</td>
<td>Victoria Brooks</td>
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Key Notes & Actions

1. £25m Secured to Support 10 Priority Recovery proposals
   - Details of the 10 Recovery Proposals were circulated with the minutes of the last meeting.
   - VisitScotland are leading on 6:
     - International Demand Building
     - Destination & Sector Marketing Fund
     - Holiday Voucher Scheme
     - Day’s Out Incentive Scheme
     - Strategic Infrastructure Plans
     - Scottish Tourism Observatory
   - Skills Development Scotland is leading on 1:
     - Tourism & Hospitality Talent Development Programme 2021/2022
   - Enterprise Agencies are leading on 3:
     - Leadership Development to Boost Product Innovation
     - A Net Zero Pathway for Scotland’s Tourism Industry
     - Investment Models to Support Scottish Tourism Recovery
   - As soon as more details become available for any of the projects, they will be shared with the group.
   - It was noted that these 10 proposals represent Phase 1 only of the Recovery Planning process. Phase 2 is now underway and aims to secure further funding support for short term (up to 2 years) and medium term (up to 5 years) actions.

2. Destination & Sector Marketing Fund (Priority Recovery Proposal)
   - A lot of work has been done to develop this fund however Purdah is preventing the launch. It is expected to launch as soon as possible after the election.
   - £3m fund with 3 tiers:
     - Tier 1 = Cities (awards from £50k-£100k)
     - Tier 2 = Pan Scotland Sector groups and large regional Destination groups (awards from £40k-£80k)
     - Tier 3 = Small DMOs and marketing groups (awards from £10k-£20k)
   - No match funding required.
   - Draft criteria is almost complete. The aim of the fund is to encourage cooperative marketing, domestic marketing and joint initiatives. The fund will look to support, for example, content creation and
enhancements of websites (not the creation of new websites), 15% of total cost can be for project management.

3. Outstanding Issues Requiring Clarity from Scottish Government
   • There are a number of issues that STERG are still seeking clarity on:
     - Cross border travel between England and Scotland
     - Island travel – which is a major concern
     - Larger self-catering and hostels (beyond two households)
     - 2m social distancing, particularly for Visitor Attractions
   • Tourism & Hospitality Guidelines are currently being refreshed and simplified. It is expected that the updated guidance will not be available until c. w/c 12th April at the earliest. It was noted that much of the guidance will remain the same.
   • Agreement was given at a previous STERG meeting to convene a meeting between the clinicians and relevant sector leads in order that both parties get the opportunity to understand each other’s position. This will be progressed at the STERG meeting tomorrow.

4. Issues raised
   • V.Brooks raised a number of issues via email in advance of the meeting. It was noted that these issues have been forwarded to the SGov Tourism team.

   “The issues remain the same for us and I have highlighted them below:
   1. Day Boat Operators
   2. Wildlife and Adventure Tour Operators who rely on transport for their guests
   3. Overnight Boat Operators
   4. UK and islands

   Both day boat operators and wildlife/adventure/activity operators who rely on transport currently follow guidance for transport operators which clearly states 1 metre physical distancing is required. Although this was very welcome when this change came into effect August 2020 these businesses are still unable to operate at anywhere near full capacity.

   Day boat trips remain unviable for the season ahead - even with the agreed 1 metre distancing they will be significantly affected. Wild Scotland and Sail Scotland as you know have been liaising with Government officials in relation to this matter and for the overnight boats which face significant challenges and potentially another year of zero operation. We are waiting to hear back from Jonathan Ferrier on this matter and will continue to push hard. Potentially on the 17th May, we will see restrictions ease considerably e.g. - outdoor contact sport will be able to resume, indoor sport, small events etc. We would like to see a level playing field for the marine sector.

   Adventure/Wildlife operators who use transport - will be significantly affected and again unable to trade viably for the year ahead if the 1 metre distancing remains. This is being discussed with government officials but if physical distancing restrictions remain the same for the season, the outcome will be devastating for some of our larger tour operators. I have also been in touch with Robin (Rabbies) who is facing the same desperate challenges which relate to physical distancing on transport.

   For viable operations, much of the sector is reliant on travel from the UK and to the islands - as we all are, they are desperate for news on when travel can resume across the UK and to the islands to avoid losing more bookings.

   We continue to raise the issue of funding at that restart grants are based on SFBF which the majority of
the sector is not eligible for and will miss out.”

- K.Bramham expressed thanks for the Tour Guide Fund and commented that he had received a lot of positive feedback from guides who had been successful. It was requested that thanks be passed to the VisitScotland team who were involved with administering the fund.

It was noted that 4 weeks ago the Chair of STGA wrote to R.Graham about the possibility of easing restrictions around the STGA training programme which is due to take place in April.

R.Graham advised that the issue was raised at STERG and the letter was forwarded directly to SGov Tourism team however no response has been received.

**Action: R.Graham to raise with STERG once again. It was noted that purdah should not impact on decisions like these.**

- G.Morrison highlighted that a meeting with the Clinicians is vital and commented that he and A.Rankin have been pursuing this for some time but to no avail. There is growing frustration among ASVA members that they will be opening at 2m social distancing whereas hospitality will open at 1m.

As an example, the key question is, within a visitor attraction, how can it be deemed safe to sit 1m apart in the café, with considerable dwell time, but it is not safe to be standing 1m apart as they walk through the attraction?

So far no progress is being made on this and it is looking like the guidance is not going to change. This is going to have a huge economic impact on the sector, it is looking like another year of not being able to trade at a viable level, (we know that c. 10% of the sector will not open with 2m social distancing remaining). An urgent response is needed.

**Action: The urgent need for a meeting with the Clinicians will be captured in the meeting notes. R.Graham to also pursue the meeting with the Clinicians through STERG as well as directly with SGov.**

- A.Hopetoun advised that he had recently received an email from one of their smaller members who is interested in starting a wedding & events business. The business is looking for advice on where it can go for start-up support.

R.Graham recommended that A.Hopetoun sends the details directly to Riddell in order to direct them to the right place for advice, for example it could be the IRMs or could be the business events team.

- A. Rankin advised that the potential of international cruise ships coming into Scottish waters, (when Scottish operators are unable to trade viably), has been the catalyst for significant discussions over the last few days. Clinicians are meeting the SGov Tourism team today to discuss hospitality shaped guidelines that would allow overnight stays in the charter and small ship cruise sector. An active conversation is now running about the alignment to hospitality guidelines to suit the different ship sizes, there is also a test and sail option for consideration by SGov. A.Rankin highlighted that if no progress is made on either of these options to provide viable trading then SGov must issue a forced closure order on the sector and fund it.

It was requested that A.Rankin keep R.Graham updated on progress.

**Action: R.Graham to include this is the email to SGov after the meeting.**
Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG)

- C.Millar advised that travel between England and Scotland, travel between the islands and the mainland and social distancing restrictions for visitor attractions continue to be issues of concern for members.

  It was highlighted that c. 25 Agritourism businesses were interested in trying camping for the first time this year. A request was made to Fergus Ewing at a recent meeting, to permit camping on farms for 2 months instead of 1 month without planning permission. This request is currently sitting with the chief Planner, no response has been received so far. It was requested that this is raised at STERG as businesses need to know ASAP so they can prepare in sufficient time.

  **Action**: R.Graham noted that he will raise this directly with the chief Planner.

- G.Barclay highlighted that the main handicap for the hostel sector is the 1 household rule as usually a hostel has multiple household occupancy. It was noted that hostel organisations in England are advising that from 17th May hostels can have more than 1 household per bedroom if the beds are 2m apart – this has not been officially announced. If true, this is likely to be applied to the whole of the accommodation sector and will create disparity between Scotland and England.

  R.Graham noted that in Scotland from 17th May 2 households will be permitted to stay in large self-catering accommodation (in line with household mixing rules).

  **Action**: R.Graham to raise the mixed household rule in England from 17th May and confirm whether this is correct.

- M.Paterson advised that from 17th May school groups (of up to 30 young people) will be welcomed back to hostels in England. Guidelines for schools in Scotland are not clear. Clarification is sought.

  **Action**: R.Graham to request clarity on the guidance for schools returning to hostel accommodation in Scotland.

- G.Morrison raised a couple of ongoing issues which have not yet received a response:
  - Hospitality top up grants from the beginning of the year have still not been received by some ASVA members despite being eligible. There has been no consistent approach by local authorities to this grant with some local authorities paying out and others not.

  **Action**: R.Graham to raise directly with Jamie Fowler and Hugh Lightbody. G.Morrison to identify specific anomalies as evidence.

  - Clarity is still required on whether gin or whisky distilleries can offer a tasting as part of the visitor experience. James Johnston has been emailed directly but no response has been received to date.

  **Action**: R.Graham to raise with STERG and SGov Tourism team.

- R.Graham advised that all points will be picked up individually. R.Graham also highlighted that any additional points to be raised at the STERG meeting tomorrow should be emailed by close of play today.

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**Next Meeting**

Wednesday 21st April, 9.00am-9.30am.