Key Notes & Actions

1. Introduction & Update
Marc Crothall chaired the meeting in the absence of Riddell Graham.

Marc raised the following points:
• The impact of the recent decisions taken in response to growing COVID case numbers in Glasgow and Moray (remaining in L3) is now being felt. The STA have emphasised that it is not just the businesses in Glasgow and Moray who are affected but areas across the country due to travel restrictions in and out of L3 areas.
• The need for a drive around employment for example a campaign to respond to the chef shortage and employee shortages across the sector
• Confirmation that the Edinburgh Tattoo would not take place this year was announced yesterday
• Ahead of the STERG meeting on Thursday, the Task Force meeting on Friday and the STA’s meeting with the FM on Friday it is important to gather up to date evidence on the immediate needs of the sector. This is particularly important as new Ministers are being appointed, it’s going to be essential that the asks being elevated, accurately reflect the industry’s needs.
• A Task Force meeting will be held on Friday to provide an update on the 10 Phase 1 recovery projects which are currently underway and for Toposophy to share progress on Phase 2 which has focused on developing a framework for a five year recovery plan. A Scottish Government update will be provided.
• Redeploying any underspends from previous funds will be a priority discussion with the new minister.

An update on the following issues were provided:
• Small ship / cruise sector – The latest information suggests that this will be presented this week with the view to announcing a decision imminently
• Social Distancing – A review of Social Distancing is to be conducted. This issue has the biggest impact on all sectors from a trading and viability perspective. It was noted that the outcome of this review may not deliver what the sector wants.

2. Sector Issues Raised
M.Crothall invited comments and issues from the group to feed into the STERG meeting.
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It was noted that if there are any additional issues that do not get captured during the meeting then they should be fed through to Karen Christie by close of play 19th.

- **Sail Scotland, Alan Rankin**
  - There is ongoing frustration that a response has not yet been received to the submissions that have been made to Scottish Government, one of which was submitted in early April. Operators do not know what they can do as they have no guidelines to follow.
  - A firm ‘no’ response was received to the Test and Sail protocols that were submitted. This response is not good enough without an explanation.

- **Association of Scottish Self-Caterers, Fiona Campbell**
  - Ongoing issues to be considered by STERG, the Taskforce and the First Minister.
    1. The ongoing lack of viability of larger properties, impacted by household restrictions
    2. Financial support required for businesses who cannot trade
    3. The impact of localised restrictions on businesses throughout Scotland
    4. STL Licensing SSI due to be laid before Parliament in June, this is one of the first things that will need to be discussed with the new Minister

  It was noted for information that a recent FOI to Food Standards has confirmed that it is a legal requirement for anyone who serves food in a tourism business in Scotland to be registered. It was noted there are 2,900 registered food businesses in Scotland.

  Supporting documents were supplied as evidence to the STA post meeting:
  - ASSC Sectoral Survey on Impact of Single Household Restrictions May 2021
  - ASSC Sectoral Survey Impact of COVID Restrictions Due to Moray and Glasgow May 2021
  - STERG Report 19th May 2021
  - Letter to Andrew Mott 17 May 2021

  - ASSC, ASVA, Wild Scotland and Sail Scotland are collaborating on a cross-sectoral industry survey to look at future occupancy. The survey is due to go live at the end of the week and will close on 31st May.

  - Spread booking phenomenon is becoming a real issue across all accommodation providers. This is a disaster in particular for the self-catering sector who rely on advance bookings, the sector has relaxed their cancellation policies to encourage bookings and now the sector is experiencing last minute cancellations. There is currently no solution to this, but it does need to be addressed.

- **Historic Houses, Andrew Hopetoun**
  - Very weak demand is being experienced across the sector. If the weather is bad it is c. 1/6 to 1/8 of the money which would usually be taken at this time of year, if the weather is good then c.1/3 to ¼ of revenue. There is concern if demand continues in this way there will be no real season.

  - Operators of venues who are able to host weddings and events have noted that potential customers are now realising that the capacity numbers advised in the wedding guidance, e.g. 200 in Level 0, is actually very difficult to achieve due to social distancing constraints. The ballroom at Hopetoun for example can only hold 120 max. Expectations need to be managed.

- **Independent Hostels, Gregor Barclay**
  - The main barrier which is stopping the hostel sector from trading in a financially viable way is the single household rule. It was noted that this is closely tied to the social distancing review and if that is not positive then it is difficult to see how hostels will operate profitably this summer.

  It was highlighted that in England different households are allowed to share a bedroom so long as social distancing is applied. The government has not and does not intend to issue any further guidance on this.
It was noted that the restrictions around sharing a twin-bedded room are being reviewed this week by Outbreak Management. If these restrictions do not change then there will need to be a strong case to justify why not.

- The impact of Glasgow and Moray remaining in level 3 is already being felt by the hostels sector with many cancellations received for this weekend.

- **Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions, Gordon Morrison**
  - There is a distinct lack of demand being experienced in the visitor attractions sector. Feedback from ASVA members suggests that weekend trading is ok with some attractions trading at near capacity levels (reduced capacity due to social distancing), however trading during the week is very poor. It was noted that the Indian variant will not be helping drive demand and the media is not helping to encourage demand.
  - Social distancing restrictions continue to be the key barrier. Recent research shared with the SGov from the University of Southern Florida would suggest that if social distancing is not removed completely then it should be at least reduced to 1m.

- **Scottish Tourist Guides Association, Kenneth Bramham**
  - Tour guides are still not receiving any bookings. This situation has not improved.
  - STGA continue to wait for clarity on whether a tour guide can receive a grant from the VS Tour Guide fund and a grant from a Local Authority discretionary fund. An inconsistent approach to this has be taken across Local Authorities.

- **Wild Scotland, Victoria Brooks**
  - Social distancing continues to be the key issue for the sector
  - Lack of demand is a concern, (are people worried about the Indian variant or are people not booking as they are holding off for international travel?)
  - Operators who welcome families have been really busy
  - The majority of the sector are nowhere near where they thought they would be.
  - The sector is reliant on mixed households and reliance on using vehicle
  - Day boat sector is desperate, bookings are way down and they can only operate at 50% capacity at the very most.

- **Scottish Agritourism, Caroline Millar**
  - There continues to be anger from Scottish Agritourism members about the withdrawal of the £1m Agritourism support fund. This fund was intended for those businesses who have received nothing. A letter to the new minister will be written imminently to follow this up.
  - There is concern that HIE and SoSE are providing grants to specific areas to help agritourism and yet businesses within the SE remit are receiving nothing.

- **UKHospitality (Scotland), Leon Thompson**
  - Further clarity on ongoing financial support is needed for businesses forced to close or restrict their operations. It was highlighted that it’s not just Glasgow and Moray businesses that are impacted it is also the businesses out with the affected areas who are impacted as people are once again unable to travel.
  - There is concern about the SGov’s approach to announcing that Glasgow and Moray would remain in level 3 – we still don’t have this right.
  - Understanding the SGov’s approach to the Strategic Framework – how will they prevent local authority areas moving in and out of levels, there needs to be a more managed approach to moving through the levels.
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3. Other Issues Raised
- Crisis funding is still needed for businesses, the sector is still in rescue mode, a situation which is being compounded by low customer confidence.

   It was noted that this continues to be a priority and will be reflected on the Task Force agenda on Friday.

4. Phase 1 – 10 Priority Recovery Projects
Vicki Miller provided an update on the key demand driving projects being led by VS.
- Destination and Sector Marketing Fund - Subject to approval by the new Minister, the fund will launch on 1st June. This will be the first initiative to launch.
- Days Out Incentive Scheme – Consultation with industry would suggest that September would be the best time of year for this initiative. Work is ongoing to find the easiest mechanic to deliver this initiative.

   V.Miller requested feedback from G.Morrison, V.Brooks and A.Rankin after the meeting.

   G.Morrison advised that following discussions with ASVA members the optimal timing would be September however this is dependent on a successful summer. Further discussions will take place with the ASVA board to get their views.

- International Demand Building – Creative development, media planning and market prioritisation work is ongoing at the moment. International activity is planned to launch late summer, it is intended to be a two pronged approach, brand awareness and building intent as well as direct response (driving bookings), the balance will need to reviewed to ensure there are the right conditions for driving bookings.
- Targeted activity is currently running domestically through digital channels, this will be ramped up in June to do a higher profile campaign across the UK (similar to March activity).
- The remaining projects continue to progress. An update on all projects can be found on VS.org.
  https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/advice/coronavirus/sterg/tourism-recovery-programme

5. AOB
- No AOB was noted.

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Next Meeting

Wednesday 2nd June, 9.00am-9.30am.