Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG)

STERG Sector Update Session
Wednesday 14th July 2021

Present:

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<tr>
<td>Association of Scottish Self-Caterers</td>
<td>Fiona Campbell</td>
<td>Scottish Tourism Alliance</td>
<td>Karen Christie</td>
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<td>Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions</td>
<td>Gordon Morrison</td>
<td>Scottish Tourist Guides Association</td>
<td>Kenneth Bramham</td>
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<td>British Amusement Catering Trade Association</td>
<td>John White</td>
<td>UKHospitality (Scotland)</td>
<td>Leon Thompson</td>
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<td>Independent Hostels</td>
<td>Gregor Barclay</td>
<td>VisitScotland</td>
<td>Riddell Graham</td>
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<td>Sail Scotland</td>
<td>Alan Rankin</td>
<td>WildScotland</td>
<td>Victoria Brooks</td>
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<td>Scottish Agritourism</td>
<td>Caroline Millar</td>
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Apologies:

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<td>British Holiday &amp; Home Parks Association</td>
<td>Jeanette Wilson</td>
<td>Night Time Industries Association</td>
<td>Donald Macleod</td>
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<td>Discover Scotland’s Gardens</td>
<td>Dougal Philip</td>
<td>Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group</td>
<td>Rory Kennedy</td>
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<td>Historic Houses</td>
<td>Andrew Hopetoun</td>
<td>Scottish Guest House and B&amp;B Alliance</td>
<td>Sinclair Williamson</td>
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<td>Hostelling Scotland</td>
<td>Margo Paterson</td>
<td>Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group</td>
<td>Stuart French</td>
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Key Notes & Actions

1. Tourism Recovery Planning Update

Phase 1 Immediate Recovery Projects
- All 10 projects continue to progress.
- The Destination & Sector marketing Fund was opened for applications on 1st June.
  - 7 Tier applications have been assessed.
  - Tier 2 closed on 13th July. Number of applications TBC.
  - Tier 3 will close on 23rd July.
- The latest project update can be found on VS.org https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/advice/coronavirus/sterg/tourism-recovery-programme
- The next update will be published w/c 12th July.

Phase 2 Development of the Two Year Recovery Plan
- Consultants Toposophy have been working closely with STERG to develop the recovery plan.
  Toposophy’s final report includes insights from international best practice, findings from a review of a substantial evidence base, outputs from the stakeholder consultation sessions and a set of recommendations highlighting the key areas of focus for tourism recovery in Scotland.
- STERG have scoped a number of project proposals which address short term recovery needs, and which form the basis of the Two Year Recovery Plan, these will be shared with the Tourism Task Force on 27th July.
- All project proposals will be shared with the leads of the Sector Groups thereafter.

2. Sector Issues
All issues raised by the Sector leads and sent to R.Graham during w/c 28th June, were consolidated into one document and submitted at the STERG meeting on 1st July. These comments were formally recorded as part of the meeting minute.

Following the FM’s statement on 13th July the following issues were raised:
Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG)

Association of Scottish Self-Caterers, Fiona Campbell
- Large self-catering properties still remain closed. No financial support is forthcoming and there is no explanation from SGov as to why.
- ASSC recently met with Ivan McKee to discuss key issues for the sector. A briefing paper was prepared for the meeting and has been forwarded to STERG.
- ASSC is working with Public Health Scotland and the chief epidemiologist to review the cleaning protocols currently in place. Once this is complete this can be shared with all accommodation sectors.

UKHospitality (Scotland), Leon Thompson
- The 12pm curfew for hospitality was unexpected as there was no consultation with industry or advance notice given.
- There is concern that all measures will not be lifted on 9th August as planned due to the cautious approach being taken by Scottish Government and the recent modifications to Level 0.
- UK Hospitality (Scotland) and others in the Hospitality sector have submitted their recommendation on baseline measures beyond Level 0. L.Thompson will share the paper with R.Graham.
- Test & Protect continues to be a major problem. Alternatives, like Test & Release, is needed for the Hospitality sector. The sector is already short staffed, to also have staff self-isolating is impacting the operations of many businesses and is even forcing some to close.
- No international travel, no timeline for inbound travel, no business travel and a delay on the return to office working, are all additional issues which continue to impact the sector.
- There are still a large number of businesses who are not operating and are unable to capitalise on the staycation market and this needs to be recognised.

WildScotland, Victoria Brooks
- One of the biggest concerns is the huge confusion that visitors will experience due to different rules being applied across the 4 nations.
- Physical distancing outdoors was due to be dropped from 19th July, this is now not going to be the case, (groups of 15 with 1m distancing between groups), this will impact the sector.
- Indoor restrictions on accommodation, boats, vehicles is still having a significant impact on the sector.
- The majority of the outdoor sector are seasonal businesses. The end of the season is now approaching, and businesses are in the same position as they were last year but this time with no financial compensation, there is areal concern for the winter months where there will be no cash.

Scottish Tourist Guides Association, Kenneth Bramham
- Is there guidance available for coach travel (day tours / extended tours)?

Action: R.Graham to check with CPT and revert back to K.Bramham

Independent Hostels, Gregor Barclay
- The uncertainty of being able to move beyond Level 0 (removal of most restrictions) on 9th August is causing real concern in the hostelling sector. The removal of physical distancing and the limits on household mixing, is significant for the hostelling sector and businesses are currently planning for this. If this changes at the last minute, it will have a major impact.
- The proposed amend to Test & Protect, (i.e. to remove the blanket requirement for close contacts to self-isolate, as long as they are double vaccinated - with at least two weeks having passed since the second dose - and take a PCR test that comes back negative), is welcomed however, not all staff will be double vaccinated and in more rural locations a quick PCR test can be difficult and therefore businesses may still have to close.
- Feedback from the hostel sector suggests that the move to Level 0 has not stimulated any additional demand.
• The difference between rules in Scotland and England is a major concern. This will cause confusion for visitors and potential friction between staff and visitors.

Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions, Gordon Morrison
• ASVA submitted a direct response to SGov on proposed baseline measures beyond Level 0.
• Many ASVA members are looking at what the SGov are mandating and what visitors want. A recent ALVA survey showed that 75% of the attraction visiting public still want to see mitigations in place even if they are not mandated by the government.
• ASVA have fed back to SGov that mandatory face coverings would be preferred rather than optional in order to avoid conflict with visitors.
• Physical distancing is the key one for visitor attractions beyond 9th August, if this is not removed as per the proposed plan this will cause a significant impact, (ASVA visitor stats for May show that the sector is - 74% vs 2019 – this is anticipated to be the same in June and for every month that restrictions are still in place).
• ASVA is meeting with members today to discuss what attractions themselves are going to do beyond Level 0 regardless of what the SGov mandates.

Sail Scotland, Alan Rankin
• Lack of international traffic continues to impact the sector.
• Political differences appear to be driving decisions rather than medical data driven decisions
• As previously raised, is there an opportunity for SGov to meet with seasonal sector representatives? It was great to see the emergency response to the hospitality recruitment crisis, it would also be good to see a response to the seasonal crisis which is looming for small rural businesses – this would indicate recognition of this crisis, up until now this has not been the case.

British Amusement Catering Trade Association, John White
• Concern that the 9th August is too late in the season for the removal of all restrictions particularly for seasonal businesses. This is likely to lead to a second summer of pain – the absence of business support is critical.
• The confusion which will be caused by different rules in Scotland and England will be huge.
• Disappointing that we need to wait until 9th August for the removal of Physical Distancing. In addition, there is concern as to whether this will happen on 9th August as planned.
• There is no evidence to support curfews – why is this in place?

Scottish Agritourism, Caroline Millar
• Self-isolation, if identified as a close contact, is having a real impact on businesses in the sector.
• For some it is quieter than expected, probably due to the lack of international visitors, there is not the same level of domestic visitors to replace them.
• Large self-catering properties are still an issue. Although they may still be renting the properties, the income is greatly reduced.

Scottish Guest House and B&B Alliance, Sinclair Williamson
In advance of the call today, the following points were raised:
• We have still not had a proper response to our request from Mr McKee for a meeting.
• The issues around ongoing debt repayment are hitting home for our members at the moment and whilst some parts of the country are exceptionally busy with UK visitors, there are many B&B businesses in some areas that are still experiencing low occupancy levels due to the lack of overseas visitors.
• The other matter that we wish to raise is our concerns around the changes to STL legislation proposals. It looked like the new proposals include Guest Houses in the STL proposals, but it is not that clear. In any case we do not believe that B&Bs or Guest Houses should be included in the legislation at all for a raft of
reasons and B&Bs have never been properly represented in the consultation process. We would like a place at the table to discuss this with the government.

3. Meeting Close
R. Graham thanked everyone for joining the call and noted the following points:

- Phase 2 of the Outdoor fund is ready to go. Green light required from the Minister.
- Wales is experiencing the same issues with STL legislation as Scotland. A commitment has been made to keep Wales informed of developments in Scotland.
- A push will be made at STERG to convene a meeting of seasonally impacted businesses with Ivan McKee.
- The Scottish Government Tourism Team is being restructured to reflect the move into the Economy portfolio. This will take effect from the beginning of August.
  - Jonathan Pryce Director, Culture, Tourism & Major Events and Bettina Sizeland, Deputy Director, Tourism & Major Events will no longer be responsible for Tourism as they will not move to the economy portfolio.
  - The Tourism Team will become the Tourism and Hospitality Team.
  - Judith Young will continue in the position of Head of Tourism and Hospitality Strategy and Delivery, it is not clear at this point who she will report into.
  - An organogram for the full team will be shared once this has been confirmed.
- Rob Dickson will join VisitScotland on 11th August. Rob will succeed Riddell as Director of industry and destination development. Rob and Riddell will work together for c. six weeks. As part of the induction programme Rob will be introduced to the Sector Group at the end of August / beginning of September. One to one meetings with Sector leads will also be set up.

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Next Meeting
Wednesday 28th July, 9.00am-9.30am.