Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG)

STERG Sector Update Session
Wednesday 11th August 2021

Present:

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<tr>
<td>Association of Scottish Self-Caterers</td>
<td>Fiona Campbell</td>
<td>Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group</td>
<td>Chloe Forbes</td>
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<td>Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions</td>
<td>Gordon Morrison</td>
<td>Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group</td>
<td>Stuart French (part)</td>
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<td>Historic Houses</td>
<td>Andrew Hopetoun</td>
<td>Scottish Tourism Alliance</td>
<td>Karen Christie</td>
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<td>Hostelling Scotland</td>
<td>Margo Paterson</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>Leon Thompson</td>
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<td>Scottish Agritourism</td>
<td>Caroline Millar</td>
<td>Visitscotland</td>
<td>Riddell Graham</td>
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<td>British Amusement Catering Trade Association</td>
<td>John White</td>
<td>Sail Scotland</td>
<td>Alan Rankin</td>
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<td>British Holiday &amp; Home Parks Association</td>
<td>Jeanette Wilson</td>
<td>Scottish Guest House and B&amp;B Alliance</td>
<td>Sinclair Williamson</td>
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<td>Discover Scotland’s Gardens</td>
<td>Dougal Philip</td>
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<td>Victoria Brooks</td>
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<td>Night Time Industries Association</td>
<td>Donald Macleod</td>
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Key Notes & Actions

1. Introduction and Notes From Previous Meeting
   - R.Graham welcomed Chloe Forbes to the group. Chloe is the new representative for the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group.

   - At the last STERG meeting, (29th July), R.Graham highlighted the fact that Sector leads were calling into question the purpose of the fortnightly Sector calls and indeed STERG, if no action was being taken or answers provided to the issues that are repeatedly being raised.

     In response STERG agreed that action should be taken to resolve this and a review of how STERG should operate going forward was recommended.

     It was noted that there have been changes to the structure of the SGov Tourism & Major Events team. Tourism will split from Major Events and will form an independent Tourism & Hospitality unit within the Economic Development Directorate. Major Events and Culture will remain with Jonathan Pryce and Bettina Sizeland. Judith Young will head up the Tourism & Hospitality team. These changes came into effect on 9th August.

     R.Graham assured the group that he has consistently flagged all concerns with STERG and would continue to do so.

2. Tourism Recovery Planning

Phase 1 Recovery Projects
   - Updates on the 10 Phase 1 recovery projects can be found on vs.org.
     https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/advice/coronavirus/sterg/tourism-recovery-programme

   - ScotSpirit Holiday Voucher Scheme
     The ScotSpirit holiday voucher scheme was launched to businesses on 10th August. This is a new voucher scheme to help low income families, unpaid carers and disadvantaged young people who have been adversely affected by the pandemic enjoy a subsidised break in Scotland.
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To find out how businesses can sign up and be part of the scheme please follow this link: 

- Destination & Sector Marketing Fund – Update @ 10th August
  Applications received:
  Tier 1 - 7 Applications, 2 of which Deferred
  Tier 2 - 40 Applications, 16 of which Deferred
  Tier 3 - 61 Applications (currently going through assessment)

Final Tier 1 & 2 Panel will be held on 11th August. Tier 1 & 2 groups that were not deferred will be informed after that session as the budget for the whole tier and what the individual awards are will be known. Groups that were not deferred were cleared by finance on Monday 9th for notification (26 Groups), the plan is to send comms after Wednesday's panel.

Those Tier 1 & 2 Applications that were deferred, if they are successful at the panel on the 11th will then need to go through finance checks it is anticipated they will be informed early next week. The overall aim is to have all Tier 1 & 2 awarded in August.

Tier 3 - this tier is hugely oversubscribed and unfortunately many may require deferment. These applications will not be awarded until September.

Due to the huge demand on the fund, the highest award level in each tier has been reduced and no group will receive the full award they have applied for just to manage expectations. Panel were keen to support more eligible applications rather than focusing on a limited number with the full amount.

Phase 2 Two Year Recovery Plan
- A draft Two Year Recovery Plan outlining recommended areas of strategic focus was shared with the Tourism Task Force on 27th July. Feedback from the Task Force has now been received and forwarded to STERG and the STERG working group who are continuing to develop the Plan. The STERG working group are currently revisiting the 13 recommendations to reflect the feedback received.
- The Two Year Recovery Plan will be submitted to SGov w/c 23rd August.
- It should be noted that there is currently no funding available to support the delivery of the Phase 2 recommendations. Phase 3 of the recovery planning process will look to identify sources of funding – the Programme for Government is one potential funding route.

3. Sector Issues To Be Raised At STERG

Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions, Gordon Morrison
- The recovery plans overall look good however it is critical to make sure that there will be product there to lead the recovery.
- ASVA has just received their latest visitor stats for June, (full report to be published next week). It was noted that June was a significant month as that was the first month when the majority of sites fully reopened again. Visitor attractions across the sector -65.3% vs June 2019, (-80.8% for the year), indoor attractions showing no signs of recovery up to end of June, Historic Houses -73%, Museums & Galleries -78%, Distilleries -82%. Outdoor sites faring better, Gardens -29%, Outdoor Adventure Attractions -36%, Wildlife & Animal attractions +8% driven by Edinburgh Zoo (+55%).

Every area of the country is still struggling. V&A Dundee -79%, Scotch Whisky Experience -73%, Urquhart Castle -85%, Kelvingrove -85%, Inveraray Castle -86%.
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It is acknowledged that 2m physical distancing was still in place in June, with that now gone this should make a difference to July and August, but it should be recognised that the season is short.

Historic Houses, Andrew Hopetoun
- Dunvegan -85%. Scone and Hopetoun running at c. 25%.
- July like June wasn’t great; however, August is feeling better perhaps due to the English schools now being on holiday.

Association of Scottish Self-Caterers, Fiona Campbell
- STL licensing is the key issue facing the sector.
- A STL briefing paper, prepared by the ASSC, was circulated to the Sector leads and to STERG for information.
- Sector leads are encouraged to respond to the consultation which closes on Friday 13th August.

Scottish Agritourism, Caroline Millar
- The first meeting of the Agritourism growth strategy work with the SGov took place last week. The final output of this work will be announced at the Agritourism conference on 9th & 10th November. Although the timescales are short, much of the work has been done, action needs to be taken to integrate government policy (agriculture and tourism) with the data that has been collated.

Data from 10 European countries is currently being gathered to demonstrate why their Agritourism sector is worth 1bn Euro per annum, this can be attributed to the adoption of radical policies on permitted development, planning, VAT rates at 5% for Agritourism etc.

It was highlighted that Italian, Austrian and Canadian Agritourism experts have been part of the group.

UKHospitality (Scotland), Leon Thompson
- Sector resilience over autumn and winter is a concern. Recent discussions about the potential for localised lockdowns highlights that we might not be as clear of this pandemic as we may hope.
- UKGov have asked UKH to survey members on ventilation. The survey which will go out will ask businesses about the type of ventilation systems that they have e.g., is it doors and windows or mechanical ventilation. There is a move to improve air flow in businesses as it could make the difference between businesses staying open or closed. This is a point which STERG could raise with SGov.
- STR hotel occupancy data should not allow for complacency, although Edinburgh in August is looking OK, occupancy drops significantly after that.
- Can SGov provide an update on what is happening with COP 26? What are the plans? How will Scotland capitalise on the opportunity that COP 26 presents over and above the climate emergency positioning. The issue for hospitality is whether or not we will be able to look after the tens of thousands of delegates and guests due to staffing issues, it may mean that they will not receive the experience that we (Glasgow) would want to deliver.

R.Graham advised that a tourism recovery dashboard is being developed for STERG, this is a series of indicators which will give a feel for whether the sector is coming out of the pandemic or not.

Regarding COP 26, VisitScotland have various teams across the organisation who are involved. VS have been asked to staff areas of the blue zone and the green zone. VS are also pitching for events at the SG event hub. VS are pursuing answers to the issue of accommodation and getting people in and out of the city. It was noted that given the players involved, Glasgow City Council, SGov, UKGov and the UN, the bureaucracy involved can be challenging. As soon as any updates become available R.Graham will update the group.
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Independent Hostels, Gregor Barclay
- Both G.Barclay and M.Paterson are trying to establish the impact of beyond Level 0 on occupancy rates. Anecdotally the hostel sector saw cancellations and not bookings following the FM’s announcement on 3rd August, this could be related to uncertainty over the reopening of international travel or the spread booking phenomenon. What was looking like a reasonably healthy August now does not look good.

Hostelling Scotland, Margo Paterson
- Data for July, August and September will be made available, this will provide a fuller picture. Earlier data from May / June shows the sector running at c.40% of 2019 occupancy and revenue. Once data for the full summer is available it will be shared with the group.

Scottish Tourist Guides Association, Kenneth Bramham
- Some guides are picking up some bookings but nothing major to report.

Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group, Chloe Forbes
- This is the first week in the role with SCSTG.
- International travel reopening is positive for this sector which should improve the outlook for this season.

R.Graham suggested an off-line discussion to introduce Chloe to the wider VisitScotland network.

Sail Scotland, Alan Rankin
In advance of the meeting, the following written comments were received.
- Charter and Small ships cruise sector delighted to see end to social distancing. Cancellations still coming through as no international customers being serviced. Revised sector guidance across face coverings, track and trace and event (gathering) size being published this week after development with SG.
- Very keen to hear news on Marketing funding. Appreciative that applications must represent a massive amount of work for panel. Summer filming time is being lost and keen to know outcome of applications are so as to make plans or otherwise.
- Marine and Outdoor Restart Fund Phase 2 approved with SS and WS developing guidance with VS fund management team.

Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group, Stuart French
Post meeting, the following written comments were received.
- SGTGDG had a zoom call with the tourism minister last week. Mr McKee listened to our woes - we tried to explain the domestic market will be short term, but the international market is not going to happen this year leaving many businesses on the brink unless funding is forthcoming. Mr McKee has asked SGTGDG to send a brief explaining why international travellers are not coming to Scotland.

4. Meeting Close
R.Graham thanked everyone for joining the call.

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Next Meeting
Wednesday 25th August, 9.00am-9.30am.