

STERG | representing our industry

What is STERG and why is it here?

The Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG) was created to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in March 2020. STERG's immediate priorities are to support tourism businesses to recover from this unprecedented situation. STERG has been working on a single, joined-up, phased plan to respond to current issues but also how the industry could recover once lockdown is eased.

STERG consists of VisitScotland (VS), the Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA), The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Scottish Enterprise (SE), South of Scotland Enterprise (SoSE), Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Scottish Government (SG).

The collaboration has ensured that public money is targeted in the most effective way and that there is no overlap in responding to the impacts of the pandemic. Getting emergency help to the industry, keeping Scotland front of mind for future visits, offering help to those who have lost their jobs and ensuring up to date information is being collected have been just some of the priorities developed through STERG.

For more information on STERG go to visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/advice/coronavirus/sterg

What has STERG delivered | at a glance

- A single coordinated approach to support and provide advice to the tourism and hospitality industry
- Funding to support business survival
- Funding and support to get people back into work and gain the skills to retrain or access apprenticeships
- Significant programme of communication to ensure awareness of help and changing guidelines
- One-to-one business support and advice
- Marketing activity to ensure potential visitors still have Scotland front of mind – with a “dream now, travel later” message
- Conducting research to ensure that we were aware of the ongoing situation for the Scottish tourism industry, the sentiment of our consumers and looking at the future environment
- Development of Strategic plan and input to the Scottish Tourism Recovery Taskforce
- Delivery of funding streams to support businesses across Scotland
- Direct industry representation with Scottish Government officials, Ministers and the Cabinet Secretary

Funding

Activity	Value	Organisation(s)	Outcome / progress
Self-catering fund.	£1.5 million	VisitScotland	150 businesses benefitted from funding for business survival.
Destination/sector support fund.	£500,000	VisitScotland	Reached 79 organisations representing 10,000 businesses Covered potential loss of membership income and enabled destination and sector groups to continue to operate.
Events funds.	£4.9 million	VisitScotland	491 events businesses.
National Transition Training Fund (NTTF) – https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/national-transition-training-fund		Skills Development Scotland	Providing funding support to retrain for individuals who are aged 25 and over who have been made redundant since March or are at risk of being made redundant.
Adopt an Apprentice Programme. https://www.apprenticeships.scot/for-employers/adopt-an-apprentice/	£5,000	Skills Development Scotland	Incentive payment of £5,000 to take on a Modern or Graduate Apprentice who has been made redundant during the pandemic.
Flexible Workforce Development Fund https://www.ourskillsforce.co.uk/develop-your-workforce/flexible-workforce-development-fund/	£5,000 - £15,000	Skills Development Scotland	Funding support for employers to undertake the training of their staff using college and open university programmes and, in some cases, private training providers. Large Apprenticeship Levy paying companies can access up to £15,000, SMEs can access up to £5,000 of funding support.
Events Industry Supply Fund.	£6 million	VisitScotland / Scottish Government	Funding for those in the events supply chain – comprising one-off grants of £10,000 support businesses in the events industry, particularly those in the supply chain that are facing hardship and will be awarded as they are received.

The Pivotal Event Business fund.	£6 million	VisitScotland / Scottish Government	A fund to support those event businesses which are critical to Scotland's events sector, and without which the capacity to deliver major events would be significantly reduced. The Pivotal Event Businesses Fund provides grants from £25,000 up to a maximum of £150,000 to support approximately 50 to 100 event businesses whose primary role as organisers, suppliers, contractors and venues is critical to the survival of the events sector in Scotland, and upon whom the wider events industry and supply chain are most reliant for their own business and operations.
Tourism, marketing and destination development programme.	£2.7 million	SOSE	SOSE has committed just over £2.7 million over five years to support a new tourism, marketing and destination development programme to be delivered by a new industry-led leadership body called South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA).
Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund.	£4.5 million	SOSE	140 awards to businesses through the tourism and hospitality sector.
Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund – in the Highlands and Islands for tourism and hospitality.	£9 million for tourism and hospitality	HIE and partners	In Highlands and Islands tourism and hospitality accounted for 43% of awards, compared with 11% nationally. 373 PERF grant awards for tourism and hospitality.
Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund.	£120 million	SE / SG	A package providing bespoke grants and wrap around business support to viable but vulnerable SMEs who are vital to the local or national economic foundations of Scotland More companies in tourism and hospitality received funding support than any other sector, with around £21.5 million made available to more than 330 companies.
Hotel support programme.	£855,000	SOSE	Seven hotels in the south
Hotel Support Programme in Highlands and Islands.	£3.3 million	HIE and partners	20 hotels in Highlands and Islands - to protect sustainable employment in the medium term within larger hotels in tourism and hospitality to remain viable in the face of continued restrictions.

Hotel Support Programme.	£14 million	SE	<p>Funding and wider business support targeted at larger hotels with the objective of protecting jobs in the short to medium term.</p> <p>Discussions are still live with hotels which have proceeded to the second stage of application with the expectation that all offers of support will have been made by the middle of December.</p>
Creative Tourism Hospitality hardship fund - in the Highlands and Islands.	£4.9 million	HIE and partners	456 grants.
Creative, Tourism & Hospitality Enterprises Hardship Fund.	£30 million	SE	<p>For small and micro creative, tourism and hospitality companies not in receipt of business rates grants. Support of up to £25,000 was provided to eligible companies.</p> <p>Approximately 1,900 companies benefited from financial support through this Hardship Fund.</p>
Destination Management Organisations Recovery.	£3 million	HIE	<p>Recognises the important role played by DMOs, their extensive reach into local businesses and communities and their influencing role in sustainable place-based tourism recovery and responsible visitor management.</p> <p>Projects in development.</p>
Digital Enablement Grant.	£424,000 for tourism clients, of a total £1.8 million	HIE	Support organisations to advance their digital capabilities and processes as part of recovery. 26 tourism related projects to date.
Community Led Capital fund for Tourism Infrastructure.	Circa. £1.5 million Short term to end March 2021	HIE	<p>Support community-led tourism capital infrastructure developments in advance of April 2021 to support communities and places to prepare for visitors and building back better.</p> <p>Projects in development.</p>
Islands Green Recovery.	£500,000 capital investment	HIE	Circa. 12 projects - support green economic recovery projects across the islands, where the coincidence of emissions reductions, development of natural capital and job creation are the strongest.
Community and Third Sector Recovery Programme: Adapt & Thrive and Communities Recovery.			Support charities, community groups, social enterprises & voluntary organisations that are supporting people & communities through the shift from lockdown to recovery.

HIE Discretionary grant funding for tourism businesses (since March 2020).	Circa £1.5 million	HIE	Delivered as part of HIE's Account Management support for businesses and communities.
Bed and Breakfast Hardship Fund.	£1.1 million	Local authorities	639 applications received and 367 grants awarded.
Newly self-employed Hardship Fund.	£11.2 million	Local authorities	8,002 applications received and 5,602 grants awarded. No intelligence on the proportion in tourism, leisure or hospitality.
Rates Based Small Business Grant.	£969,621,851	Local authorities	Rates based small business grant. 105,585 applications received and 86,505 grants awarded. No intelligence on the proportion in tourism, leisure or hospitality but scheme was amended after launch to cover self-catering.

Advice & support

online

Activity	Organisation	Outcome / progress
findbusinesssupport.gov.scot - first point of contact for business support and advice.	SE	<p>Business Enquiry Team – who answer the 0300 303 0660 number – dealt with thousands of support calls in the early stages of lockdown, a high proportion of which were from Tourism businesses, where SE and VisitScotland developed a Tourism specific script and set of information to support our colleagues.</p> <p>Our Business Resilience Team also engaged with a number of Tourism businesses, ranging from hotels, to venues to cultural organisations. The numbers are fairly small as the Team only engage on the most significant of cases in any sector, but they have played an important role.</p>
Communications activity – vs.org, e- news, social.	VisitScotland	<p>VisitScotland.org: 50+ pages of COVID-19 core site content with more than 640,000 views of this content. June alone saw a 550% increase in traffic compared with same period in 2019 with over 275,000 pages viewed – that’s equivalent to six months in 2019.</p> <p>COVID-19 Tourism Insider enews, reaches 13,000 tourism industry - 44% open rate and 22% click-through. LinkedIn: More than 536,000 impressions and an average engagement of 5.69%. 30,000 followers. Shares have doubled.</p> <p>15 closed Facebook groups with over 3,000 members with series of business testimonials for using and sharing across social.</p>
Moment for change webinar programme.	VisitScotland	Four strategic webinars with a combined delegate number of 1,453 and a further 2,200 views on YouTube. As part of our moment for change programme we held 32 webinars reaching 2,224 businesses. (to be updated).
SDS On-Line Free Learning Portal. A library of free on-line learning to enhance skills. https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/learn-and-train/find-free-online-courses	Skills Development Scotland	The portal has been viewed over 200,000 times since its launch in April.
Individual Training Accounts. Up to £200 funding for individuals to undertake training. https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/learn-and-train/sds-individual-training-accounts-ita	Skills Development Scotland	Support provided to individuals to enhance their skills and employability.

Industry Communications providing a source of reliable information to industry.	STA/VisitScotland	<p>All comms providing appropriate signposting to industry guidelines and support, the latest information and intelligence on emerging issues and priorities, industry news and best practice.</p> <p>Active online communications through the STA and VisitScotland email updates, STA website and VisitScotland.org and social media channels sharing the latest reliable information to keep industry informed and connected.</p> <p>Shared information updates onto wider social platforms providing an important role in signposting support.</p>
Hospitality Unite website.	STA	Worked with Hospitality Unite to create a portal which could provide support to tourism and hospitality sector workers who have found themselves displaced as a result of the COVID-19. Now used to support the Government's Kickstart initiative for young people.
"Communities in Tourism" leadership programme.	HIE / SoSE	First cohort delivered, second underway and third scheduled for 2021. Providing individuals from communities with the knowledge and leadership skills to influence, plan and manage sustainable tourism recovery for the benefit of your community.
Tune into Tourism – Road to Recovery.	HIE	More than 1500 listens with 424 businesses registered to receive the podcasts. Our insights and market intelligence programme has provided ten thirty minute "Road to Recovery" podcasts delivered since May 2020.
Let's Grow Adventure.	HIE	50 businesses expected to participate. To specifically support leadership and entrepreneurship within outdoor tourism businesses.
Rural Food Tourism Places.	HIE	Two cohorts underway in Shetland and Uist. Supports agricultural businesses to diversify by developing new products and services with a focus on tourism and food & drink.
Rural Leadership Programme.	HIE/SE	10 places from the Highlands and Islands. Equip rural business owners and managers with the confidence and skills to make bold decisions and to get the best from themselves, their business and their team.
Destination Leaders Programme, Assembles	SE	<p>Online community established in the early days with Edinburgh Napier Uni which brought together around 60-70 participants to share issues, ideas and solutions around what they were facing in their businesses.</p> <p>The group actively met over a number of months, becoming also a platform to engage and communicate on marketing plans and research which had been carried out which could help inform business decisions.</p> <p>60-70 participants.</p>

BG Start-up support.	Business Gateway	YTD 4,306 start-ups supported.
BG Growth support.	Business Gateway	YTD 137 Growth businesses supported. YTD 231 Early stage growth businesses supported.
BG Local Offices and advisers.	Business Gateway	Ongoing business support.
BG Website.	COSLA Business Gateway National Unit	YTD Total transactions 135,598 YTD Page Views 87,262 YTD New Visitors 56,925
BG Webinars.	Business Gateway / COSLA Business Gateway National Unit	YTD Start-up events 424, 3,203 attendees. YTD Growth events 380, 4,283 attendees. YTD Local events 344, 3,793 attendees.
BG DigitalBoost Webinars.	Business Gateway / COSLA Business Gateway National Unit	YTD DigitalBoost events 400, 5,324 attendees.

One to one

Activity	Organisation	Outcome / progress
One to one business support and advice.	VisitScotland	Series of one to one discussion with members of Industry & Destination Development engagement team throughout the pandemic acted as a listening ear and provided support, information and advice to businesses. Reached: 5,500.
Careers Information Advice and Guidance Services including My World of Work Website and Free Helpline https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/	Skills Development Scotland	Support provided to individuals whose education, job or future choices have been affected by COVID-19. Over 1 million individuals supported through the website alone since lockdown began. Reached: 1 million.

Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE). https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/employability-skills/partnership-action-for-continuing-employment-pace/	Skills Development Scotland	Provides free and confidential advice for employers and individuals facing redundancy. Since April PACE has supported 5,167 hospitality tourism employees and 156 hospitality/tourism businesses.
Apprentice Transition Plan.	Skills Development Scotland	Programme currently in development for a launch in early December designed to provide support for Apprentices who have lost their job as a result of the pandemic and cannot find an alternative employer to continue their training.
BG and LA Advisers.	Local authorities / Business Gateway	One to one support for businesses and signposting to funding.
BG DigitalBoost Expert Help.	Business Gateway / COSLA Business Gateway National Unit	Significant support to help businesses shape their digital offering.

Operational

Activity	Organisation	Outcome / progress
Waiving Quality Assurance scheme fees worth £1 million.	VisitScotland	Helpful reduction of business cost for 4,300 businesses.
Coordination of Good to Go scheme.	VisitScotland	Very useful initiative to help businesses reassure customers that they were meeting all the Government protocols on cleaning and social distancing measures. Reached: 7,300 businesses participated.

Marketing and communication

Activity	Organisation	Outcome / progress
<p>Delivery of targeted marketing strategy including:</p> <p>Dream now, Travel Later campaign #hametowntourist #ScotlandLoves Local</p>	VisitScotland	<p>Take5ForTourism: 29 pieces of coverage (25 online) reaching 2.1 million Absence film: 39 pieces of coverage reaching 442,281.</p> <p>#AWindowOnScotland: More than 10,000 shares across social and continues to generate organic social coverage. 163 items of coverage reaching approx 8.7 million.</p> <p>#HameTownTourist: 4,500 shares generating nearly 17 million impressions and reaching 25,000. Corporate activity reached 4.1 million external audience via the media and 297 colleagues.</p>
Visitor management steering group.	VisitScotland	Malcolm as Chair, 4 sub groups and plan to be launched in the spring to encourage responsible visitor behaviour.
Media Relations.	All partners	Reference to the work of the STERG and the Tourism Task Force Recovery Recommendations in media interviews, crucially providing ongoing profile for the industry, their challenges and needs.
Twinned with Tourism' community promise campaign.	SOSE	Supported the new 'South of Scotland – Twinned with Tourism' community promise campaign and material to support reopening to visitors.
B2B Campaigns.	All partners	Ongoing communication and marketing campaigns to signpost funding streams as well give examples of best practice in the industry. All campaigns contain links to funding to help support businesses survival and development.
Social Media	All partners	Continued support through social media pointing to key sources of advice, information and funding.

<p>Love Local campaign launched on 1 December 2020 as a tactical initiative to support businesses around the festive purchasing period. Product areas highlighted were Eat, Drink, Sleep, Shop Local and Out and About with 24 daily complementary content themes including High Street Heroes and Virtual Adventures. Regional Love Local initiatives were promoted across the channel mix of social, e-communications, PR, Press and TV whilst VisitScotland also worked effectively and collaboratively with STP (Scotland's Towns Partnership) on industry and consumer messages with their owned platforms and a media partnership with Newsquest and DC Thomson.</p>	<p>VisitScotland</p>	<p>Nearly 200 industry offers were presented and promoted on bespoke Love Local pages on visitscotland.com securing 8,845 impressions whilst</p> <p>PR activity secured 73 items of coverage with a reach of 1.47 million encouraging consumers to think and buy local. Paid media activity with News Scotland and Bauer radio reached 1.3m and 2.15m respectively.</p> <p>Food and Drink was one of the strongest resonators cross channel –best performing paid social ads included Amazing Scottish F&D Businesses to Order From and Craft Beer Stories.</p>
<p>The only in Scotland UK - Spring/Summer campaign ran from 16 July until the end of October as industry re-opened.</p> <p>Targeting visitors across the customer journey of see, think, plan, do, advocate our restart objectives were to reconnect Scots with Scotland with travel local messaging using inspirational content to mobilise/engage; and regional/product/thematic content to drive bookings; whilst our recovery objectives were about increasing demand for holidays and breaks.</p> <p>VS partnered with STV, Bauer Radio, Expedia, Trip Advisor and Hearst (Publishers of UK lifestyle magazines) – including Good Housekeeping and Red Magazines.</p>	<p>VisitScotland</p>	<p>Results were strong including 40% uplift in traffic to visitscotland.com from UK visitors; 6.3m web sessions and 753k business referrals.</p> <p>TV reached all households in Scotland from the multi-channel partnership with STV.</p> <p>2m reach via Trip Advisor promoting trips/experiences in all regions of Scotland.</p> <p>65k nights booked on Expedia.</p> <p>Average Social Media monthly reach of 40m.</p>
<p>Scotland Reconnect 2020.</p>	<p>VisitScotland</p>	<p>264 buyers from 23 countries connected online with 240 Scottish suppliers for business meetings aimed at booking and creating tour packages for future visitors. 21 of the buyers were new to working with VisitScotland on a travel trade event of this kind.</p> <p>This event facilitated more than 5,000 business meetings and offered live webinars, round table discussions and breakout sessions, online presentation hub and virtual experiences which demonstrated what Scotland can offer buyers' clients.</p> <p>Feedback from our buyers on the event was very positive. The platform was being widely applauded and even being compared better than the system used at other virtual events</p>
<p>B2B work in UK and international markets.</p>	<p>VisitScotland</p>	<p>Ongoing key account management with intermediary, industry and strategic partners. Continued support through sharing of latest travel advice, destination training and product development programme.</p>

Representing the industry

Activity	Organisation	Outcome / progress
Creation of Events industry advisory group.	VS	Opportunity to spotlight the issues affecting the events sector and work with the Scottish Government to gain critical funding.
Community engagement.	VS	Series of meetings held with community bodies around Scotland to talk about how to restart tourism responsibly.
Regular STA Council meetings, STA Forums and sector specific meetings to inform government Bring together industry representatives and Scottish Government officials to address sector specific issues.	STA	<p>Frequent industry engagement has enabled issues and concerns to be raised and fast tracked directly with Scottish Government Ministers and Officials and UK Government Ministers Frequent engagement has helped to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The voice of industry is heard at the highest level • Sectors of the industry have not been forgotten about • All sectors of industry are connected. <p>STA membership reaches c.70% of tourism businesses across Scotland.</p>
Ongoing daily engagement and communication with Government stakeholders.	All partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed the development of sector guidance • Informed business support needs, such as grants • Highlighted critical gaps in support to be addressed • Informed the development of the Strategic framework in partnership with other trade bodies

Insight

Activity	Organisation	Outcome / progress
Industry surveys.	VisitScotland	Crucial baseline data to help decision making and to lobby Government Average 2,300 responses to each one Industry wide Impact of COVID-19 Surveys x 3 waves (March, April, November).
Sentiment tracking.	VisitScotland	UK Consumer Sentiment tracking (May 2020 – January 2021) – UK and Scotland reports Input into Marketing Intelligence Tracker (UK sentiment) International Recovery/Sentiment research (December 2020/ March 2021).
Real-time data gathering with industry and trade bodies.	STA	Provide essential evidence to the Scottish Government to inform decision making.
Highlands and Islands Business Panel – responding to Covid-19.	HIE	Business intelligence from across the Highlands and Islands, explored the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses so far and the measures taken by businesses in response to this new working environment.

Strategy

Activity	Organisations	Outcome / progress
STERG Scenario planning toolkit.	VisitScotland	We have developed five scenarios suggesting how Scottish tourism could potentially evolve over the next 18 to 24 months. A toolkit has been created to help businesses plan during these uncertain times. This was road-tested with sectors before being published on VisitScotland.org and comms activity.
Scottish Tourism Recovery Task Force.	All partners	Workstreams lead on recovery activity, identifying and shaping the urgent measures needed to mitigate business failure, protect the workforce and support recovery. STA specifically worked in partnership with members of the Tourism Skills Group to develop an urgent skills development and emerging talent programme.
STERG Action Plan.	STERG	Coordinated and joined up approach to manage scarce resource most effectively, focus on key industry priorities and avoid duplication of effort.
Scenario Planning.	STA / SE	Key contributor towards the creation of three sets of scenario plans addressing the short, medium and long term – a key tool for informing and testing recovery plans for the sector.
Local response plans.	STERG	Developing response plans with local destination / industry groups. Supporting co-ordination and communication at a destination level, the development of a recovery plan, and early actions.