Regional and national marketing campaigns

**Question:** If capacity is MUCH reduced and there’s demonstrably pent-up demand, do you need to be using paid budget to encourage day trips? Won’t they do this anyway? Perhaps funds should be held back for harder nuts to crack.

**Answer:** Yes, budget is being prioritised. Although we know Scots are likely to take day trips and return to their favourite places when lockdown eases, we also want to encourage them to further support their local areas and experience things they haven’t before, despite it being on their doorstep. The localised Scots day trip campaign investment is relatively small, with the bulk of the domestic investment going into rest of UK and Ireland activity.

**Question:** Are there any plans to work with local travel bloggers? 1) Sharing their content about the local areas, and 2) working with them to reach local audiences, deliver messaging and/or create relevant content?

**Answer:** Working with Scottish bloggers is a core part of our media and social media strategy, and we’ll look to continue to do this as we move into the recovery stage. Each blogger we select for a campaign is chosen based on relevant variables – usually relating to where their audience lives, how old they are and what type of content they’re interested in. We also assess the blogger’s engagement rates, the quality of their content, the sentiment from their audience and their overall suitability for the campaign.

**Question:** When targeting the Irish market do you plan to partner with any transport providers?

**Answer:** We are in discussions with transport providers (airlines and ferry companies) operating out of Northern Ireland and ROI to Scotland. It makes sense to align activities promoting Scotland to the Irish market where possible.

**Question:** Self-drive seems to be a key element to domestic visitors, will VisitScotland be promoting the specific driving routes and what measures have been put in place to ensure that these communities are open to visitors?

**Answer:** We know that car has always been the most popular mode of travel for the domestic audience (70% of visitors in our recent UK conversion study - 2019 travelled by car - 78% when you include motorhome). This is likely to be strengthened when initial restrictions ease due to the ease of social distancing while travelling by car and flexibility it offers around travel plans.

Regional spread has always been a focus across our campaigns which driving routes encourage.

We look to support the recovery of the industry in a responsible way. It won’t be a one size fits all approach, and we’ll be working with local communities and destination management organisations to ensure move at a pace that’s right for each of Scotland’s communities.
**Question:** Will VisitScotland be doing Autumn and Winter campaign like they used to do? Are there any plans to promote winter travel to prolong the season?

**Answer:** Our marketing campaigns will look to promote visits through autumn and winter to the domestic and the UK market. We’re working closely with Scottish Government throughout this uncertain time, and we’ll be guided by the legislation. These campaigns are currently in planning phase. We’ll also liaise closely with Scottish tourism businesses to ensure we can share information about which areas and attractions remain open for the winter season. Ensuring seasonal and regional spread across our campaigns has always been our focus, and this will be even more important as we look to support the recovery of the industry in a responsible way. It won’t be a one size fits all approach, and we’ll be working with local communities and destination management organisations to ensure move at a pace that’s right for each of Scotland’s communities.

**Question:**

- Will VisitScotland be prioritising the younger audience who may be more likely to travel first?
- Will the campaigns focus solely on the domestic market and who will be your target audience?

**Answer:** Our Insight team continues to monitor ongoing trackers and research, which is shared via our weekly [market intelligence updates on visitscotland.org](https://visitscotland.org). We’ll overlay these insights to our ‘traditional’ visitor profiles to monitor differences and inform the direction of our future campaigns. Currently, we know that visiting friends and relatives, and day trips are going to be early actions once restrictions begin to ease.

On our [Covid-19 Marketing Response](https://visitscotland.org) pages on VisitScotland.org, we’re working towards a clear, phased approach which encourages a return to tourism. During the current Reset phase, we’re communicating a dream now, travel later message. As we move to Restart, we will be encouraging very local day trips. This will be driven by Scottish Government travel restriction guidance (phases) and information about which communities are ready to welcome back visitors. We’ll then move to Scotland wide/North England day trips and then latterly, overnight stays as we move into Domestic Recovery phase. Initial promotion will be our owned channels and digital/social video and posts so we can quickly amend to change messaging should we need to.

**Question:** Will VisitScotland actively hold-back on promoting city breaks?

**Answer:** As part of our recovery strategy, our teams will be working with businesses and organisations across the country, in both rural and urban areas to ensure we support them as much as possible as we look to rebuild. Both urban and rural areas will continue to be an important part of our marketing campaigns going forward, and we’re committed to working with the communities across Scotland to ensure we only market them once they’re ready for visitors to return. We’re communicating with industry about measures they’re putting in place, opening times, capacity for physical distancing etc, which is critical so we can accurately inform and inspire potential visitors.
**Question:** Golf has been highlighted as one of the key activities where physical distancing is possible, will VisitScotland be doing any golf specific activity?

**Answer:** There will be specific marketing activity promoting golf as part of our recovery plans. We’re currently working on the detail of this, but all announcements and updates will be shared on our consumer website, VisitScotland.org.

**Question:**

- How will we know when VisitScotland has commenced campaign activity and where will we find updates on which phase of activity we are in?
- Will industry get to see any campaigns so we can support and piggyback with our own tactical activity?
- Where can I find out more information about the market segments?

**Answer:** We’ll share any news, research and updates to our corporate website VisitScotland.org, including any new marketing campaigns. This will include shareable assets to provide all you need to get involved in campaigns.

You can stay up to date with the progress of all our current marketing activities, and Covid-19 updates, through our dedicated Coronavirus advice page.

The research and insights section of our VisitScotland.org website contains more information about UK visitors to Scotland including our market segments, visitor survey results and the latest travel insights and trends.

**Question:** Should we be using a specific hashtag to be involved in any campaign activity?

**Answer:** When posting or sharing content on social media, make sure you use #VisitScotland or #ScotlandsIsNow hashtags for our social media team to view your post. Thousands of people use these hashtags every week so we can’t guarantee they’ll be able to share your post. However, it does increase the exposure of your post to thousands of others searching for Scotland inspiration through these hashtags. If your post has a tourism industry, media and business focus, when using Twitter be sure to tag@VisitScotNews, our corporate Twitter channel.

**Question:** How can businesses that are open and accepting business get involved?

**Answer:** We will be providing updates on VisitScotland.org Marketing Response page on our plans and how businesses can get involved.
Question: Do you have ‘specific areas’ promotional videos that VisitScotland members can use on their own social media? We are in Dundee and would love to post a short video highlighting the strengths of the city, local businesses & visitor attractions etc?

Answer: Our Digital Media Library is accessible to all and hosts a range of photo, video and creative content of Scotland which you can download and use free of charge (T&C’s apply). We’re looking to create additional regional films that will be available for sharing and these will be ready in the near future. In the meantime, there’s a wealth of collateral already available which we’d be delighted for you to use.

Questions:

- Will you be trying to spread out which regions are promoted to ease pressure on the communities of popular destinations? For example, The Highlands and re-direct to less-visited regions such as Dumfries and Galloway?
- The Outer Hebrides featured prominently in recent VisitScotland campaigns, given the reduced 18% ferry capacity and the strong anti-tourism approach from the Islands MP, will the islands be removed from future campaigns? Will this impact how the Outer Hebrides are promoted to re-attract visitors to our region?

Answer: We’re working closely with communities through our Regional Directors and Partnerships team who have many contacts through Local Councils, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry & Land Scotland etc. They’re working to identify which areas are ready to welcome visitors, and we will then share this information as widely as we can. We are keen that people have a positive visitor experience as we take these first steps to recovery and information sharing is key.

In our initial stages of promotion, our messaging will be highly targeted and relevant to different areas of Scotland, featuring different creative content to promote each region. For example, different unique creative content will be available for promotion of different areas once we know they’re able and willing to welcome back visitors. We’ll continue to extend this as we are able to, working with local communities, tourism businesses and destination management organisations to ensure an area is only promoted at the appropriate time for their local tourism industry.

Preparing for the return of visitors

Question: When are we likely to be allowed to welcome visitors from Europe?

Answer: As we continue to gather market intelligence, travel search intent and learn more about what audiences will travel and what they are looking for in a post Covid market, we are creating a series of regular intel reports to keep you updated on travel news, consumer intent and marketing insight from around the world.

We will use this data to develop our plans to help with the recovery of Scottish tourism. It’s going to be a long road with the return to international travel not being predicted until later in the year.
**Question:** When are VisitScotland info centres likely to open?

**Answer:** In light of government advice, our own staff are now working from home and we’ve taken the difficult decision to close our iCentres to protect both our staff and customers. There’s currently no set date for our iCentres re-opening, and we’re closely following Scottish Government guidelines. We’ll only re-open our premises when advised it’s safe to do so. The safety of both our staff and customers is our priority. When our iCentre’s are open once again, this will be announced on VisitScotland.org.

**Question:** My self-catering property is also my holiday home. I live in the south of England, when will I be allowed to travel to it to prepare for re-opening?

**Answer:** It’s important for visitors and residents continue to follow the appropriate Scottish Government advice relevant to whatever phase we are currently in. Current advice (as of 18 June) are that lockdown restrictions remain in place, with guidance remaining to not travel further than five miles from home for leisure activities.

**Question:** We are fully booked by people coming from overseas we don't know what to do until we are told whether overseas tourists can come to Scotland from 15 July. No information on marketing can be useful until we know whether we need to market! Can you give any updates on this?

**Answer:** Self-isolation and quarantine rules are covered by UK Government, but there are several airlines lobbying against this. We’re hoping for an update on this towards the end of June. In the meantime, we advise getting in touch with your guests to find out their plans (and indeed limitations for them returning home, which may have a bearing) and advise that you hope to still be able to welcome them. We recommend informing them of the measures you’re putting in place to ensure their safety from COVID-19, and what amenities and attractions you expect to be opening in your area.

**Question:** Many attractions are considering winter hibernation for what the quieter months are traditionally. With attitudes for people's intentions showing a winter start for many planning on returning would you advise against hibernation where possible to capture a larger than normal winter audience?

**Answer:** Our planned campaign activity will run into the winter months and will encourage people to take a winter break in Scotland. We will work closely with businesses and communities to understand what we can promote and see whether guidance will be eased to allow smaller winter festivals to go ahead. Indications from our early research show that people may ‘make up for lost time’ by extending the holiday season, and we will continue to share insights into demand through the GB holiday intention tracker, our marketing plans and through our corporate website, VisitScotland.org.
**Question:** Even in June and July what will be the status of car parks and public conveniences: this is essential for community harmony towards visitors?

**Answer:** We’re highly aware that public facilities need to be open to enable visitors to responsibly enjoy a day trip. We’re working closely with community groups, local authorities and national partners, such as Forestry & Land Scotland / National Parks, to share information about what will be open, encourage them to keep their website and social platforms up to date, and only signpost visitors to place we know are ready to welcome them.

**Question:**
- Has promotion of staycations in self-catering properties in your own region (as opposed to travelling from central belt to the Highlands for example) been considered?
- Does the phase three approach not depend on distance travelled as a pre-requisite for booking of activities or overnight stays with accommodation providers, as restrictions are lifted?

**Answer:** Once we’re able to promote overnight stays, in line with Government guidance, we will encourage people to ‘stay local’ and will remind people of the great short break experience they can enjoy on their own doorsteps.

At all times we will be guided by Scottish Government in terms of what we’re allowed to promote. If ‘distance travelled’ guidance is updated, this will be reflected in our messaging and advise us on appropriate imagery to share with different regions.

**Question:** Does phase three include gardens or is that for inside attractions only?

**Answer:** Gardens and outdoor attractions can open in phase two if physical distancing measures can be implemented. However, there will be restrictions on cafes (take away only, with physical distancing measures) and gift shops cannot open.

**Question:**
- How can attractions inform visitors about limited offering and closed exhibits without putting visitors off?
- How can even gardens open without toilet facilities?
- Do you think visitors will still be keen to visit an attraction if we are forced to reduce the experience (say closing rooms that are too small for physical distancing) as long as we reduce the price to reflect this?

**Answer:** It’s important to showcase what you do have and can offer, as well as being transparent and informing visitors about what’s not going to be available or open for them. For example, be clear that toilet facilities are closed, to allow visitors to make their own judgement about whether a day trip is feasible for them.

Use positive language and highlight the things that will make their visitor experience a memorable
one for all the right reasons.

Ensure your website home page, e-communications, and on-site arrival signage all display clear and accurate information for visitors about what to expect at your attraction, as this will help to set their expectations. You and your team will then be able to focus on ways to exceed these expectations once the visitors are on site at your attraction.

If certain parts of your attraction must remain closed, consider how it could be brought to life in other ways. Could tour guides share insight / stories about the closed elements through photography / video? People can then make their own value judgements about whether it’s worthwhile making the trip.

Letting visitors know what to expect prior to the trip is essential: ‘Know before you go’. Every business should be aiming to share information about what facilities are open in their area. For example, which cafes and restaurants are offering take away services; are farm shops able to deliver hampers; what shops and delis are open in the area to be able to buy supplies, etc.

We’ll adjust our messaging and marketing to inform visitors as best we can.

**Question:** Isn’t it making it difficult to plan the "how" tourism will return when the leader of the Scottish Govt at Westminster is tweeting "Scotland is Closed" signs at the border with England?

**Answer:** From our research and insights, we know that there’s strong interest in visiting Scotland from across the UK. It’s important that we continue to position Scotland as a welcoming destination and we’re working with industry partners, business owners and communities to ensure that visitors will be welcomed when tourism reopens.

**Regional communities**

**Questions**

- How is VisitScotland working with local communities?
- How will VisitScotland ensure the product and regions that you are promoting are ready to receive visitors?
- How will I know when my local area is ready and able to accept visitors?

**Answer:** Nationally, Scottish Government will make clear what can and cannot happen as the easing of lockdown is rolled out. There will be different issues and opportunities in different parts of the country. We think the impetus for this should come from local communities, perhaps led by destination organisations in partnership with VisitScotland, local agencies, councils and community groups.

Our local team members have been specifically tasked with gathering information on community concerns to allow us an accurate picture on a Scotland-wide basis. It should be recognised that whilst there are, for obvious health-related reasons, concerns about the potential negative impacts of visitor influxes, there are members of communities that rely on tourism for their livelihood and a balanced view must be taken to reflect local circumstances.
We’re working to make sure that we include Scotland’s communities in our activity, when the time is right to manage things responsibly, as this is not a one-size-fits-all scenario. We’ll be working to ensure that before any promotional activity is launched, that the area is ready to receive visitors into their community. It’s understandable that some communities may be nervous about opening to visitors, however we’ll continue to encourage visitors to follow government guidance, as well as work with local businesses to ensure all health and safety measures are put in place to be able to welcome visitors once again.

**Question:** Are day trips applicable to remote Highland villages? Your slides showed 58% interested in coming to the Highlands but most day visits are within 40 miles.

**Answer:** During the very early stages of day trips, we’ll encourage people to ‘stay local’ but as restrictions ease, and communities indicate they are ready to welcome visitors, we’ll start to promote areas that are a little further afield. Whilst many day trips are within 40 miles, we also have information about day trips of 3+ hours duration. People will make longer trips for certain locations, but it’s key we (all) provide information about what is and isn’t open.

**VisitScotland’s role and influence**

**Question:** How can businesses re-set and what will VisitScotland market when we’re not sure if businesses will be open at all this season?

**Answer:** We know Scotland is high on many people’s lists to visit when we’re able to resume travel, so it’s vital that we all maintain communications with our potential visitors with Dream Now, Travel Later messaging. We will liaise closely with Scottish tourism businesses to ensure we can share information about which areas and attractions are open, and convey the appropriate messaging, whether focussed on local day trips, or overnight stays – as and when the time is right for individual areas.

It won’t be one size fits all however, we need to move at a pace that will be right for each part of Scotland depending on the demographic of each region and how they’ve been affected by the pandemic.

**Question:** How is VisitScotland messaging to take the more environmental route back to sustainability?

**Answer:** Even before the Coronavirus pandemic, our strategy focused on promoting Responsible Tourism in the broadest sense – social, environmental and economic – and this hasn’t changed. Liaising with communities and keeping visitors informed will be central to our roadmap to recovery. Tourism is more than a holiday experience; it sustains communities socially and economically and contributes to the health and wellbeing of the population.

**Safety and physical distancing**

**Question:** What if guests develop COVID-19 while staying in your premises?
Answer: If a guest or staff member becomes symptomatic for COVID-19 while at your premises:
1. Follow the latest [NHS Coronavirus guidance](https://www.nhs.uk), avoid entering the room and communicate over the phone if possible.
2. If a visitor must stay beyond their booking, the host should discuss any additional costs with the visitor and possible impacts on arriving guests.
3. Discuss if the visitor’s travel insurance will be able to cover additional costs.

*The NHS inform website has advice on care support and rights for visitors who become unwell while in Scotland.*

**Question:** I normally get a lot of groups what do I do?

**Answer:** Research suggests that large group travel may take longer to recover. Small groups and the family market (multi-generational groups) may offer more opportunity. It’s also worth considering direct promotion to consumers.

**Question:** How much will safety and hygiene feature as part of marketing messaging in domestic activity?

**Answer:** We know from research, safety and hygiene are key considerations post-Covid for UK consumers. For that reason, it will feature as part of our recovery messaging, alongside inspirational messaging to raise awareness and inspire visits. It’s important for businesses to also convey safety/hygiene message at an individual level to provide reassurance.

*UK Hospitality* has undertaken a large piece of work which focuses on guidance for businesses around physical distancing, including health and hygiene. This paper has gone to the World Health Organisation, key health authorities and officials, and has been put to Scottish Government.

**Emerging Trends**

**Question:** Will the segmentation for Ireland be updated any time soon?

**Answer:** Currently there are no plans to work on an update to the segmentation. We’re looking into running some consumer sentiment research in which we can include this market.

**Question:** The insights seem to suggest that those age 55 and over are not travelling or included? As a cultural, historic house most of our visitors are 55 or above generally. Will they be included?

**Answer:** Visitors over the age of 55 are a key market for Scotland. The [visitor demographic statistics](https://www.scotland.gov.uk) (which is a three-year average from 2017-2019, GBTS) show that “Empty nesters” (those aged over 55 years old with no children in household) travel the most in Scotland of all demographics. This demographic generates 37% of all domestic overnight visits and 38% of all
domestic spend between 2017 and 2019. Averaging 3.6 nights per trip, their length of stay is also the highest across all visitor demographics.

Our weekly consumer sentiment research from June 2020 shows that of Scots intending to visit, the “older independents” (34-64 age range with no children in household) demographic are much more likely to want to visit Scotland from October onwards (34%) than from June – September (25%). Those “Older Empty Nesters” (65+ with no children in household) have a lower % than all demographics for each timeframe at the moment. Full report can be found here.

**Question:** Do you have any market intelligence on whether the UK and Ireland Markets would book directly or via a third party?

**Answer:** Our partnership with VisitBritain on a weekly visitor sentiment tracking initiative has given us some interesting insight into how residents of the UK, with an intention to visit Scotland, currently view travel.

One question compares intentions of visitors looking to book in the short term, until September 2020, and from October 2020 onwards. Over the period of tracking, the majority (between 35-40%) intend to book directly with accommodation providers, and after October this figure increases to between 38% to 47%, which is encouraging for industry.

The figures for online booking indicate that 24-26% of respondents would book online for travel up until September, and again this figure increases to 30-31% for bookings beyond September. This suggests that depending on business size, model and capacity a balanced use of distribution channels would be good practice for attracting future visitors.

[Take a look at the full weekly report on VisitScotland.org](#).

**Question:** Do the Insights look any different specifically for the luxury consumers?

**Answer:** We don’t have specific insights into luxury for the UK audience.

**Question:** How valuable do you think Instagram is compared to Twitter or Facebook?

**Answer:** All social channels provide a valuable way to reach your chosen audience however, depending on your target demographic, different channels will be better suited to your various communications. If it’s feasible for you to manage and keep multiple channels regularly updated with quality content, it’s worth being on all. Otherwise, it may be worthwhile to trial the three platforms to indicate which channels resonate most with your visitor demographic and delivers the strongest engagement.

Out of the three channels, Instagram is the most visual platform. This presents a real opportunity to showcase strong imagery which promoting your business, local area and what’s nearby to you; whereas Twitter tends to be more news focused.
**Question:** Is there any data on weekday visits out with holiday seasons, and do we think domestic audiences will visit Mon-Thu to allow to plan opening times accordingly?

**Answer:** While there’s no specific research on weekday only visits, our weekly COVID-19 consumer sentiment tracker is providing us with insights on visitor intentions for short breaks or holidays in Scotland when it’s feasible.

The sentiment for travel is also dependent on your usual visitor demographic (for example, family market, empty nesters etc) as the latter are more likely to take short breaks during the week as they know it will be less busy and there will be less children during term time. A lot of people will also have unspent annual leave to take during the week which might result in a need for different opening times. We would encourage you to reach out to your normal traveller and ask what they would prefer.

**Question:** Is there any data on specific times people will visit? If our market is local and people are back at work and school, will the weekends be the focus? Will there be any point opening during the week?

**Answer:** We haven’t specifically researched when people will be planning to visit attractions as in ‘during the week’ or ‘weekend’ but we have asked them in a recent study which included measuring of booking intentions. This would be dependent on your previous visitor demographic (for example, families, empty nesters etc) as the latter are more likely to take short breaks during the week as they know it may be less busy.

On our consumer website, VisitScotland.org, we have research into domestic visitor demographics which has information to help you understand the needs of different visitor demographics.

**Miscellaneous**

**Question:** Will you be looking to work with transport partners, or will the focus be on self-drive?

**Answer:** Research is showing that car will be the preference for travel initially due to the ability to implement physical distancing and the flexibility it allows around travel plans. This isn’t a change in visitor behaviour, as the 2019 Conversion Study indicates 70% of English visitors travel to Scotland by car. We’re also still working closely with transport partners (covering rail, air and sea) to ensure that we can reset tourism in a responsible way.

**Question:** How can I update my product listing on VisitScotland.com about my specific opening times which are different to normal?

**Answer:** Your VisitScotland listing can be updated as many times as required so we would urge you to keep this updated with your latest opening times using your online login details. If you’re
experiencing any problems with this, please get in touch with our Customer service team who can assist you.

**Question:** If a significant second wave of the virus breaks out, what is the plan B for VisitScotland?

**Answer:** We will follow Government advice, as we have throughout this pandemic and follow the recommended guidelines in terms of a potential return to restrictions for the tourism industry.

For the latest updates on Coronavirus, please visit our dedicated Coronavirus advice page on VisitScotland.org.

**Question:** The Coig Five routes one great adventure launched earlier this year and applied for growth fund to undertake a major marketing campaign when will this fund reopen

**Answer:** Given the unprecedented nature and impact of COVID-19 on tourism, the Growth Fund programme is currently on hold. We are currently reviewing the funding opportunity to ensure that it is aligned to best support tourism groups in the current situation and an update will be available in the coming weeks. The Fund Manager will continue to be in regular contact with applicant groups to provide the relevant advice regarding next steps.