

FM meeting with Scottish Tourism Alliance

EICC

24/01/2018

12:50-14:00

Attendees

- Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland
- Stephen Leckie, Chairman of STA; Chief Executive, Crieff Hydro
- Calum Ross, Chairman of BHA Scotland; Proprietor, Loch Melfort Hotel
- James Withers, Chief Executive, Scotland Food & Drink
- Freda Newton, Managing Director of Loch Ness by Jacobite
- John Henderson, Born in the Borders Brewery
- Martin Bennett, Senior Associate, Clyde & Co (Scotland) LLP
- Marshall Dallas, Chief Executive, Edinburgh International Conference Centre
- Scott Inglis, Commercial Director of Fishers Laundry Group
- Rebecca Brooks, Managing Director, Abbey Tours Scotland
- Alison McRae, Senior Director, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce
- David Lonsdale, Director, Scottish Retail Consortium
- Henk Berits, Business Development Director at Triage
- Marc Crothall, CEO, Scottish Tourism Alliance
- Mhairi Clarke, Communications Manager, STA
- Gillian Brymer, Communications Executive, STA

Also attending:

- Bettina Sizeland, Deputy Director, Tourism and Major Events, Scottish Government
- Kevin Brady, Office of the Chief Economic Adviser, Scottish Government
- Lynne Dow, Deputy Private Secretary to the First Minister, Scottish Government

Apologies: Gordon Dewar, Chief Executive, Edinburgh Airport

Discussion

The First Minister opened the discussion by highlighting the importance of the tourism sector to Scotland's economy, and as success story for Scotland. The Scottish Government's role was to work with the sector to support and build on this success.

Areas highlighted by the First Minister included infrastructure to support growth, a supportive business environment, and marketing Scotland positively and vigorously abroad.

During the discussion, the following points were mentioned:

- STA highlighted existing regular engagements with Cabinet Secretaries for Finance and the Constitution, and Culture, Tourism and External Affairs.
- STA set out challenges confronting the sector workforce and skills, including staff recruitment, Brexit, attractiveness of tourism as a career, availability of affordable housing in rural areas, and public transport in rural areas.

- STA requested establishment of cross-departmental working group for the sector, covering these areas.
- FM highlighted good work being done through college sector, but recognised need to further improve recognition of status of vocational routes.
- Shared recognition of the significance of Brexit for Scotland, for Scottish working age population, Scottish economy, and tourism sector workforce. Significant uncertainty from UK Government as to what post-2019 arrangements for migration would be.
- Shared recognition of the importance of tourism for economic sustainability of rural areas.
- Shared recognition of the importance of continued investment in infrastructure to support tourism growth, particularly digital and transport. Recognition of importance of Transport Scotland's involvement in discussions with the sector, and of VisitScotland's marketing activities.
- FM confirmed commitment to reducing Air Passenger Duty (APD). However, progress with delivery is being impeded by on-going discussions with UK Government regarding future arrangements for continuation of exemptions for Highlands and Islands. STA was urged to make its voice heard on this issue.
- STA was encouraged to continue to make the case for the importance of migration for the sector, and to continue to work with the Scottish Government on addressing wider challenges confronting the sector.

Additional points raised, following FM departure

The following additional points were noted from discussions following the First Minister's departure from the meeting.

- STA members raised issue of proposals for redeveloping the Scottish Exhibition Centre, and on what SG's next steps were.
- STA sought further information on Rural Infrastructure Fund; officials advised that more information would become available in coming weeks.
- STA raised issue of Transport Scotland's engagement with the tourism industry, for instance regarding Road Equivalent Tariffs. Officials agreed to facilitate meeting between Transport Scotland and the STA.

Actions Recorded

- Scottish Government officials to investigate practicalities of establishing a cross-portfolio Tourism Industry taskforce, involving education, skills, transport, and housing.
- Scottish Government to consider how the education sector works with the tourism sector regarding communication of tourism as a career option and a valuable career.
- Scottish Government officials to advise the STA of the technical issues impacting on devolution of APD, and to share correspondence between the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution and the UK Government on this if such correspondence is currently in the public domain.
- First Minister content to meet with STA Board on an annual or biannual basis, with proposals to be developed in due course.

- First Minister content to speak at STA Conference on October 1st 2018, subject to diary availability.
- Officials agreed to facilitate meeting between Transport Scotland and the STA.

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