

Scottish Tourism Alliance  
**STA Council Meeting Note**

17<sup>th</sup> January 2018, Hilton Edinburgh Carlton, Edinburgh

**Attending**

- Paul Nixon, Assoc of Scottish Visitor Attractions
- Fiona Bewers, Caravan & Motorhome Club
- David Smyth, Assoc of Scotland's Self Caterers
- Robert Kidd, Scot Destination Management Assoc
- Willie Macleod, British Hospitality Assoc
- Ben Mardall, Wild Scotland
- Caroline Millar, Go Rural Scotland
- Margo Paterson, SYHA
- Jeanette Wilson, Brit Holiday & Home Parks Assoc
- Laura Cheyne, National Trust for Scotland
- Robin Worsnop, ETAG (RW)
- Rosanne Mackay, Farm Stay UK
- Sheila Gilmore, VisitArran

**In Attendance**

- Marc Crothall, Scottish Tourism Alliance (MC) (chair)
- Caroline Warburton, Scottish Tourism Alliance (CW)
- Stephen Leckie, Scottish Tourism Alliance
- Calum Ross, Scottish Tourism Alliance
- Paul McCafferty, Scottish Enterprise
- Kevin Brady, Scottish Government
- Fiona Cook, Scottish Government
- Kelly Johnstone, Springboard
- Steve Ridgway, VisitBritain (part)
- John Thurso, VisitScotland (part)
- Lawrence Durden, Skills Development Scotland (part)
- Peter Duthie, SEC (part)

**Apologies**

- Iain Jurgensen, Argyll & Isles Tourism
- Carron Tobin, Argyll & Isles Tourism
- Fiona Campbell, Assoc of Scotland's Self Caterers
- Joseph Cullis, BACTA
- Mark Tate, Cairngorms Business Partnership
- Jeremy Tinsley, Confederation of Passenger Transport
- Paula Bushell, Discover Scottish Gardens
- Barry McCulloch, Federation of Small Businesses
- Andrea Nicholas, Green Tourism
- Laurie Piper, Moray Speyside Tourism
- Cameron Taylor, Orkney Tourism Group
- Ian Fordham, Outer Hebrides Tourism
- Rob McKinnon, Outer Hebrides Tourism
- Paul Togneri, Scottish Beer & Pub Assoc.
- Sarah Troughton, Scottish Country Sports Tourism
- Marshall Bain, Scottish Licensed Trade Assoc
- Claire Bruce, VisitAberdeenshire

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**1. Welcome & Note of Last Meeting**

Marc Crothall (MC) welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular those joining the meeting for the Sector Deal discussion. The note of the last meeting was approved. There was a brief discussion about the Scottish Lobbying Register and difficulties in registering.

**2: Scottish Tourism Alliance Update**

- **STA Council Members:** as raised at last meeting, MC reminded the group of the planned changes to Council membership. The aim being to review and reduce the number of organisations on the Council. This will free up some of the current Council members' time from meetings, but aims to maintain their contributions by extending invitations to key strategic meetings, such as the Hustings etc, to all Alliance (i.e. industry group) members.
- MC also reminded Council members that in addition to attending meetings, they are expected to ensure that STA Communications (The Talker, TS2020 Update, event comms etc) are forwarded to their members and encourage their groups to engage with STA events and discussions.
- **Political Engagement:** this month the First Minister will be meeting with the STA Board for the first time.
- **Scottish Tourism Month, March 2018:** [STA Signature Conference](#) (1<sup>st</sup> March) is open for registration. [Business Advisory Workshops](#) taking place the day before (28<sup>th</sup> Feb), with a [Civic Reception](#) at the new Clydeside Distillery in the evening. Scotrail are offering a 30% discount on rail travel to Glasgow. Other events in the calendar are listed here: <http://scottishtourismmonth.scot/page/stm-event-calendar/>.

**AP1: ALL to promote the [STA Signature Conference](#) on 1<sup>st</sup> March and regional events to members and support as many events as possible.**

### **3: Round Table Updates & Issues**

- **Assoc of Scottish Self-Caterers:** Collaborative Economy report to be launched in next few weeks, will reignite short-term letting debate. ASSC working with VS on updating the self-catering QA scheme.
- **British Hospitality Association:** continued engagement with ministers on tourism tax.
- **Caravan & Motorhome Club:** the UK Tourism Alliance is also providing views on tourism and Brexit to the European Parliament (Transport and Tourism Committee).
- **Wild Scotland:** recently had a productive meeting with HIE about support for the sector.

### **4: UK Industrial Strategy – Tourism Industry Sector Deal: Discussion with Steve Ridgway, Chair of VisitBritain and Tourism Sector Deal Lead**

MC welcomed Steve Ridgway (SR) and John Thurso to the meeting, before introducing the Scottish Tourism Alliance and the role of the STA Council. MC highlighted that tourism enjoys greater support and recognition in Scotland than in England and Wales, partly due to it being a devolved issue. It has a high profile both in a political and economic sense. In general the industry has a positive view of the Sector Deal, however is keen to ensure that the deal takes full account of devolved issues, regulations, legislations, recognising the significant collaboration and strategic activities already underway.

SR provided an introduction to the Tourism Sector Deal, explaining that it provides an opportunity to demonstrate the significant contribution of tourism to the UK economy (10% of GDP and £30bn exports) by bringing the sector together under one Deal. Understanding of tourism by the UK Government has been poor, and although Government now recognises the value of international tourism as an export, there is still work to be done to persuade Government of the importance of domestic tourism to communities, jobs, supporting exports as well as strengthening the well-being of the nation.

The Sector Deals are about enabling change and removing barriers, they are not necessarily about funding. The Tourism Sector Deal has four priorities:

1. Productivity, in particular tackling seasonality
2. Connectivity, in particular digital and transport
3. Skills, in particular the long-term challenge of tourism becoming an attractive career
4. Tourism Zones, with a focus on hotspots.

Questions were taken from the floor on the following issues:

**Tourism Zones:** RW asked how these zones will be determined? Are they areas which are already popular or ones which need support? A preferential zoning approach could be very divisive in Scotland where every region has a tourism region. Could the whole of Scotland be a tourism zone? SR replied that there are no criteria for deciding on region, however the intention is that they will bring together Local Economic Partnerships (not used in Scotland) to consider planning, business rates, product development, digital plans, transport etc.

#### **Taxation**

**Tourism VAT:** WM no mention of a reduction in VAT in the document. If Deal is seeking to remove barriers then this would be one way Government could support industry by bringing UK on a competitive level with other countries. SR replied that the UK Government was unlikely to entertain the Deal if a cut in Tourism VAT was part of it, therefore felt better to exclude it at this stage. Changing the VAT threshold was also raised by RW. SR thought that this may be considered, as well as APD/ADT.

**How Deal with Align with Existing Strategic Activities in Scotland?** CM asked for reassurance that the sector deal will add value, rather supersede or contradict what is already happening in Scotland where collaborative efforts are significant. SR acknowledged that the tourism sector in Scotland is far more cohesive than in England and as a result has much stronger relationship with Scottish Government. The Deal does not seek to override any activities and hopes to help to move tourism up the Government's list of top UK industries. Although Ministers responsible for tourism seem to change frequently, the civil servants remain so there is some continuity.

**Tourism Skills Development in Scotland:** there was support from all for the Deal's focus on tourism skills and careers, however an ask that recognition be given to the strategic approach taken in Scotland, particularly the Tourism Skills

Investment Plan and the Tourism Skills Group, recognising that both tourism and education are devolved. Particular emphasis was put on the importance of ensuring that any new initiatives do not cut across, but directly align with Scottish tourism skills priorities and activities.

**When will Announcements be made?** PMc asked when an announcement will be made on the Sector Deal by Government. SR confirmed that the Deal has been submitted to UK Government and the next stage will hopefully be to negotiate terms in the spring. Some of the activities, such as connectivity are beyond the remit of Dept of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) so other departments will need to be involved. The challenge of Brexit may also cause some delay, however the Deal does have the potential to provide the Government with a sector blueprint post-Brexit so he was optimistic that the deal will be received positively.

In his closing remarks, MC ask for assurance that there will be acknowledgement of the industry-led Tourism Scotland 2020 strategy and that the Scottish tourism industry's voice via the Scottish Tourism Alliance is included in future discussions and engagement on the Sector Deal. This is to make sure that Scotland's industry voice is heard and that their views are clearly understood by all involved, especially the UK Government officials and newly appointed tourism ministers. SR gave his full acknowledgement and support of this.

SR thanked the Council for their thoughts and comments which he welcomed, and encouraged the Council continue to feed into the discussion and show their support for the Deal. MC thanked SR and JT and closed the meeting.

**AP2: CW to include Tourism Sector Deal presentation with Note of Meeting – DONE.**

**5: AOB**