

Scottish Tourism Alliance
STA Council Meeting Note
13th September 2016, Microsoft, Edinburgh

Attending

- Alasdair Smart, Assoc of Scottish Visitor Attractions
- Andrea Nicholas, Green Tourism (AN)
- Caroline Miller, Go Rural Scotland
- Carron Tobin, Argyll & Isles Tourism
- Elaine Booth, VisitAberdeenshire
- Fiona Campbell, Assoc of Scotland's Self Caterers
- Keith Legge, SYHA
- Mairi Bell, Loch Lomond & Trossachs Natl Park
- Rob McKinnon, Outer Hebrides Tourism
- Robert Kidd, Scottish Destination Management Assoc
- Robin Worsnop, ETAG (RW)
- Sue Gruellich, Scottish Tourist Guides Assoc

Apologies

- Fiona Bowers, The Caravan Club
- Ben Mardall, Wild Scotland
- Jeanette Wilson, British Holiday & Home Parks Assoc
- Daniel Steel, Sail Scotland
- Claire Bruce, VisitAberdeenshire
- Iain Jurgensen, Argyll & Isles Tourism
- Rosanne Mackay, Farm Stay UK
- Willie Macleod, British Hospitality Assoc
- Barry McCulloch, Federation of Small Businesses
- Judy Rae, Business Tourism for Scotland
- Sarah Troughton, Scottish Country Sports Tourism
- Jeremy Tinsley, Confederation of Passenger Transport
- David Smyth, Assoc of Scotland's Self Caterers
- James Stuart, Scottish Sports Assoc
- Mark Tate, Cairngorms Business Partnership
- Colin Wilkinson, Scottish Licensed Traders Assoc
- Laura Cheyne, National Trust for Scotland
- David Weston, Scottish B&B Assoc

In Attendance

- Marc Crothall, Scottish Tourism Alliance (MC) *Chair*
- Caroline Warburton, Scottish Tourism Alliance (CW)
- Cathy Craig, Abellio Scotrail
- Graeme MacFarlan, Calmac (GM)

1. Welcome & Note of Last Meeting

Marc Crothall welcomed everyone to the meeting. There was no note from the previous meeting (which was held as a tourism hustling).

2: Update from Scottish Tourism Alliance

MC updated the meeting on a number of items including:

1. **Scottish Parliament:** MC has had two meetings with the new Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism & External Affairs since her appointment. 'STA and industry leaders' were mentioned in the Scottish Government's recently published 'Programme of Work'. MC has also recently met with Cab Sec Derek Mackay (see below) and shadow tourism spokesperson Jackson Carlaw MSP and Rachael Hamilton MSP.
2. **Scottish Office:** MC was invited to meet with Under-Secretary of State for Scotland Lord Dunlop to discuss TS2020 and impact of EU Referendum on tourism industry.
3. **UK Tourism Industry Council:** MC presented the EU Referendum survey findings at the recent meeting.
4. **Tourism Cross Party Group:** the group is being reconvened after the Parliamentary Elections, with the first meeting on evening of 5th October. MC is encouraging the convener to align future dates with STA Council meetings.
5. **Business Rates Review:** the STA, together with 12 other industry groups, sent a joint letter to Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution Derek Mackay asking for the reversal of the Business Rates Large Business Supplement. A meeting with the Cab Sec has been arranged.
6. **Apprenticeship Levy:** the recent Scottish Government consultation on the introduction of the UK Apprenticeship Levy has closed.
7. **EU Referendum Survey:** over 400 responses were received and there has been great interest in the results. The survey was undertaken relatively soon after the vote. The results were circulated to the industry and have since been presented to Cab Sec for Tourism, UK Tourism Industry Council, CPG for Rural Policy and other meetings and events.
8. **Digital Tourism Scotland:** this major initiative continues to be rolled-out in the majority of regions. CW encouraged sectoral groups to get involved as courses can be adapted to specific topics.
9. **Big 5 Questions:** CW outlined this new campaign which aims to translate the priorities from the recent mid-term review of TS2020 into tangible actions for businesses. The campaign will be hosted on STA's new website and, under the headings of each of the five questions, users will be signposted to the most relevant advice and support available (www.scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/Big5).
10. **STA Autumn Conference & AGM, 5th October, Glasgow:** MC encouraged all Council members to register and encourage their members to attend as well.

11. **Year of History, Heritage & Archaeology (YHHA):** VS are launching YHHA on afternoon of 5th October. The event directly follows the STA Conference in the same venue, although registration is separate.
12. **Scottish Tourism Week 2017:** the dates are set for 15th – 22th March. The main STA conference is on Weds 15th March at the Crowne Plaza, Glasgow, coinciding again with ScotHot exhibition at SECC (15-16 March). The Scottish Thistle Awards will take place on Fri 16th March and the Parliamentary Reception on the 22nd March, both in Edinburgh. The STW Roadshow will also take place and STA is encouraging destinations and industry groups to hold events.

3: Discussion: Transport

Two excellent presentations were given by Graeme Macfarlan, Commercial Director of Calmac and Cathy Craig, Commercial Director of Abellio Scotrail and a discussion followed. Both presentations will be circulated with the note of the meeting. Some of the key issues discussed included:

- **Earlier publication of timetables to enable tourism industry to plan itineraries.** All timetables are signed off by Transport Scotland. STA Council members were encouraged to help support the transport operators in highlighting how the late publication of timetables is potentially limiting trade.
- **The sharing of data with communities,** in particular ferry data with island communities. This would help strengthen the insights available communities. GM mentioned that they had recently created customer 'pen-portraits' which will be shared at the upcoming Calmac Travel & Tourism Conference.
- **Awareness of RET** and the opportunity to see whether it is driving more people to the islands. Is it bringing new visitors or is it the same people using the service more frequently?
- **The challenges of getting more bikes onto train.** CC explained that this is continuously being looked into and highlighted that although there are ways this could be done it would result in reducing the number of seats which would be a decision unpopular with customers.

AP1: CW to circulate presentations with Note of Meeting.

4: Council Members Update & \Events

CW thanked those who had completed the Council Report which was circulated prior to the meeting. Additional information had been received since the deadline and an updated version will be circulated.

AP2: CW to circulate updated Council Report with Note of Meeting.

5: AOB

5.1: Local Infrastructure: RW raised the issue of some sites in Scotland becoming degraded due to the current infrastructure being unable to cope with the growing number of visitors. The Fairy Pools on Skye was cited as an example. Other examples such as Applecross (Wester Ross) and Neist Point (Skye) were also put forward by the group, together with issues such as the reduction in public toilets, litter and parking in passing places.

It was agreed that this was an important issue however whether to tackle it locally or nationally would depend on the scale of the problem. MC asked for examples to be sent to STA who would consider whether this is the topic for the next meeting. If so organisations such as the Scottish Towns Partnership and Keep Scotland Beautiful may be appropriate to join the discussion.

The issue of having adequate data to assess these impacts was also raised, with the option to influence the National Planning Framework if adequate destination level data was available.

AP3: All to provide examples of places which are suffering due to lack of adequate infrastructure.

AP4: MC/CW to consider whether local infrastructure is the discussion topic for the next meeting.

5.2: ASVA: Alistair Smart informed the group that ASVA members had been asked about the key issues raised in the STA Policy Agenda. All supported all the issues, however digital connectivity was by far considered the most important by members.

MC highlighted that this was Alistair's last meeting as representative for ASVA. He thanked him for his contribution to the group and looks forward to welcoming the new representative.

5.3: UN Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development: AN informed the meeting that the UNWTO has announced that 2017 is to be the [Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development](#).

Date of Next Meeting: 22nd November, Edinburgh (2pm – 4.30pm).