

Tourism and Hospitality Skills Group Chair Communication Piece



Kelly Johnstone



Robert Allan

The Tourism and Hospitality Skills Group is the focal point in Scotland to identify and address skill capability issues faced by the sector.

The group, facilitated by Skills Development Scotland, works with partners and stakeholders to influence solutions that are appropriate to supporting industry growth in respect of the Scotland Outlook – 2030 Strategy [Scotland Outlook 2030 - Scotland's tourism strategy \(scottishtourismalliance.co.uk\)](https://www.scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/scotland-outlook-2030-strategy) . Its membership is made up of representatives from businesses and organisations from across the sector as well as public and third sector bodies.

Robert Allan, HR Director at McQueen's Dairies recently stepped down as Chair of the group after seven years in the role.

Robert reflects on his time in the role: "As Chair of the Tourism and Hospitality Skills group for the last seven years I'm delighted to hand over the baton to Kelly Johnstone, Chief Operations Officer with the Springboard Charity.

"Given the many recruitment and skills challenges faced by the sector, the work of this group has never been more important. The past seven years has seen the group achieve a great deal through strong partnership working between industry groups and the public sector.

"We developed a Skills Investment Plan (SIP) <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/42345/tourism-digital-skills-investment-plan.pdf> for the sector and advocated for publication of regular Tourism Skills Assessments <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49844/ssatourism.pdf> as well as providing important insight for the development and delivery of hospitality and travel services apprenticeships. The group also commissioned important research to help better understand the skills challenges faced by the sector and help inform solutions to these challenges.

"In response to the COVID pandemic the group developed and delivered a range of online training for the sector to around 4,000 employees across Scotland. This included management, climate emergency, customer service, mental health and wellbeing, and inclusion and diversity training.

“The group has also had a key role in highlighting the increasing importance of implementing fair work practices across the sector and led on the development and implementation of programmes to change perceptions of tourism as a career of choice and attract talent into the sector.

“I would like to thank the members of the Tourism and Hospitality Skills Group for their hard work supporting the sector over the past seven years and wish the group well in its future work.”

Kelly Johnstone, Chief Operations Officer with the Springboard Charity, took over the role of Chair of the group in November 2022.

Kelly says, “Having started work in this sector from washing dishes in a café in Troon aged 13, to working all over the world in various roles within tour operations, sitting on local municipal tourism boards, supporting overseas sustainable tourism initiatives, I relocated back to Scotland in 2012. I worked in travel retail for a while then joined Springboard in 2014. My passion and love for this sector is what drives me every day. And my career journey should inspire young people that anything is possible in this sector.

“I was delighted to pick the baton up from Robert. I joined the skills group in 2014 and was part of a group who developed and refreshed the Tourism SIP.

“During the last three challenging years due to the Covid pandemic, I have been part of a smaller group facilitating the responses and support borne from the Tourism Emergency Response Group. It’s been a tough time, where reaction and quick thinking and dealing with the here and now has been the focus.

“As we emerge from the restricted trading and restrictions and face new challenges around labour, costs and the hangover from the pandemic, the skills group will focus on the short, medium and long-term plans for the sector. Supporting Scotland’s Outlook 2030 strategy and the specific ‘passionate people’ priority. We hope the newly refreshed and diverse group made up of employers, industry bodies, stakeholders, third sector bodies, public agencies and providers of education and training can be a driving force in and around the skills and people part of our industry.

“I want to ensure the skills group is action orientated, a safe space to share ideas, best practice and of course challenges. And to be the group facilitating solutions too.

“I’m looking forward to the new challenge as chair and one of our first actions as a new refreshed group is to be more visible in terms of who we are, what we aim to do and what we have achieved, so look out for more updates.

“As always, we’re keen to engage with everyone, so even if you are not part of the skills group, we would love to hear from you.”

To find out more about the work of the Tourism and Hospitality Skills Group please contact:

Kelly Johnstone Kellyj@springboarduk.org.uk or Lawrence Durden
Lawrence.durden@sds.co.uk