



SCOTTISH
TOURISM
ALLIANCE

Your voice in tourism matters

National Event Strategy review and refresh – Scottish Tourism Alliance Submission

Question 1: To what extent do you support, or oppose the proposed Ambition?

- strongly oppose
- oppose
- neutral
- support
- strongly support **x**
- don't know

The Scottish Tourism Alliance welcomes that the proposed Ambition in the refreshed National Event Strategy closely aligns with the National Tourism Strategy, [Scotland Outlook 2030](#). Becoming globally recognised as a world leader in events supports our own vision to become the “world leader in 21st century tourism.”

The National Event Strategy’s commitment to host “a relevant, diverse and inclusive portfolio of world-class event experiences that deliver positive economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits to Scotland” further supports the strategic ambitions of Scotland Outlook 2030 – helping us to ensure that both tourism and events are a force for good for our visitors, our communities, our businesses, and our environment.

We further welcome that the Ambition sets out a commitment to delivering Fair Work. Ensuring that those who work in both the events, tourism and hospitality sectors are fairly rewarded, their talent is recognised, and quality jobs are created with good pay and conditions is integral in the success of both our sectors and in achieving our ambitions at a global level. It is key that we can attract, develop and retain a skilled, committed, diverse and valued workforce to support the successful delivery of our tourism and event offer in Scotland.

Question 2: How important do you think each of these strategic priorities are for events over the next ten years? Give a score of one to five for each, where one is not important at all and five is very important, or "don't know":

- Boosting the economy – **5 (very important)**
- Enhancing well-being and community engagement – **5 (very important)**
- Contributing to the drive towards net zero and environmental sustainability – **5 (very important)**

- Making the event sector a better place to work – **5 (very important)**
- Showcasing and promoting Scotland's assets – **5 (very important)**

Question 3: What other strategic priorities, (if any), do you think should be included in a refreshed strategy?

The Scottish Tourism Alliance recommends that “and act as a driver for tourism” be added to either the strategic priority on ‘Boosting the economy’ or ‘Showcasing and promoting Scotland’s assets’. Weaving ‘tourism’ into the strategic priorities will help to ensure that there is a recognition about the role of events in continuing to benefit the tourism and hospitality sector.

Question 4: People attend events for a range of different reasons. Can you identify what is important for you in creating an excellent event experience?

Creating an excellent event experience is integral in how we represent destinations and attract more visitors, as it enhances the overall visitor experience, boosts visitor spending and likelihood of repeat visits, and the promotion of visitor destinations. Hosting events of this high standard benefits the local visitor economy and wider tourism, supporting our ambition to become “world leader in 21st century tourism.”

Question 5: To what extent do you agree, or disagree that events in Scotland are:

- Accessible – **agree**
- Affordable – **neither agree or disagree**
- Inclusive – **agree**
- Welcoming – **agree**

Question 6: We are also interested in knowing about why people might not be able to attend events. Can you identify any reasons for not attending the events you would like to?

Unfortunately, price can be a prohibitive factor in attending events, which is being exacerbated by the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. The recently introduced Visitor Levy (Scotland Bill) proposes giving local authorities the power to charge a visitor levy on accommodation and could potentially impact on people’s decision to book overnights stays to attend events, as this would add more to their overall costs

In addition, ongoing public transport disruption (e.g. rail strikes, ferry cancellations) and timetabling (e.g. last bus or train available) are making it harder for people travelling to attend events.

Question 7: To what extent do you agree, or not, that event organisers involve communities in planning the events they hold?

- Neither agree or disagree

Question 8: To what extent do you agree, or not, that event organisers communicate about how the events taking place will affect local people?

- Neither agree or disagree

Question 9: How could the benefits of events be increased for local communities?

In response to questions 7 and 8, there appears to be a mixed picture in how much some event organisers involve communities in planning events they hold and how they will affect local people, with events funded by EventScotland more likely to have set criteria to meet to demonstrate involving communities in planning and other impacts (e.g. 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships). The involvement of community liaison groups by event organisers has a valuable role to play in planning of events.

In Scotland Outlook 2030, we set out a commitment that: “We will ensure that tourism leads to improved community wellbeing and nurtures thriving places across Scotland.” There is the potential for a similar commitment to be included in the events strategy, and we welcome that the refresh document includes a mention of fully harnessing the many benefits associated with events for island communities.

The tourism strategy also makes the commitment that: “We will actively engage local communities as valued stakeholders in tourism development and delivery”. It is crucial that there is also stakeholder engagement with local communities about the holding of events in their area, including identifying opportunities for local people to gain valuable experience from the events industry (e.g. musician engagement with local young people, or work experience opportunities for unemployed people).

Scotland Outlook 2030 highlights that “our visitors enjoy enriched experiences delivered by proud and passionate people who live and work in Scotland’s destinations”, and exactly the same can be said for involving local people in hosting events.

It is also important to consider how event organisers ensure that they minimise the potential negative impacts of what ‘success in numbers’ looks like for local communities.

Question 10: How important is the diversity of events in Scotland in terms of each of the following? Give a score of one to five for each, where one is not important at all and five is very important, or "don't know":

- Range of size – 5 (very important)
- Spread of location – 5 (very important)
- Variety of type – 5 (very important)

Question 11: What barriers, if any, are there to holding a diversity of events in Scotland?

We welcome that the strategy refresh acknowledges the important role of islands in providing “a unique events destination building on their world-renowned landscapes, history and traditions.”

As the strategy document identifies, there are significant challenges facing islands in fully harnessing the benefits associated with events, especially concerning ongoing ferry issues and the detrimental impact that the Short Term Lets Licensing Scheme is having on self-catering businesses which are vital in providing accommodation to event attendees. There is currently a serious threat to the capacity of islands to hold events and welcome visitors because of these dual challenges.

For smaller Scottish communities, events are integral to the local tourism infrastructure, attracting visitors to their area at key times of the year that will greatly benefit accommodation providers, retailers, hospitality, visitor attractions and other tourism businesses. Their success or failure has much wider economic knock-on impacts.

Question 12: Do you think the event sector is an attractive place to work?

- Yes

Question 13: Please tell us why you selected yes, no or don't know here.

Working in the events sector offers a diversity of employment opportunities, which includes flexibility, valuable work and life experience, skills development, meeting new people and working as a team, and the chance to feel like being part of delivering something together. In both urban and rural areas, it gives people the chance to work in an environment that they may never have worked in before and where there might be few employment opportunities.

Question 14: If you work in the event sector, what are your experiences of Fair Work practices in the sector?

n/a

Question 15: If you work in the event sector, is there anything you would like to see change in relation to Fair Work practices?

n/a

Question 16: Do you think there are sufficient opportunities to do each of the following?

Give an answer of yes, no, or don't know for each:

- learn about what it is like to work in the sector – **YES**
- gain the skills and experiences you need to work in the sector – **YES**
- further a career in the sector – **YES**
- learn from the lessons and good practice of others in the sector – **YES**

Question 17: How do you think access to these opportunities could be improved?

There have been a number of initiatives in recent years to encourage more people to work in the tourism and hospitality sector that can be used as a model for the event sector.

The UK-wide [Hospitality Rising](#) marketing campaign has been aimed at changing negative perceptions of working in the sector and is focused on attracting new talent. Targeted at under-30s, its digital campaign focuses on the tagline 'Rise Fast, Work Young' and has backing from celebrity chefs including Raymond Blanc, Tom Kerridge and Angela Hartnett. In February 2023, the campaign reported that it had generated 55,000 applications to fill hospitality industry vacancies.

[The HIT Scotland Scholarship Scheme](#) has also been a valuable way of encouraging young people to join the workforce and nurturing talent, with personal development objectives tailored for each applicant and their scholarship.

Both schemes offer valuable models that could be adopted by the events industry to encourage new people to join the workforce. The Scottish Tourism Alliance would be happy to share our recent learning in this area with the events sector.

As previously mentioned, there is also the opportunity to engage local communities in learning more about the events industry and accessing opportunities through work experience, internships and community initiatives linked to the hosting of events.

Question 18: What do you think would enable events to become more environmentally sustainable?

Favourable fiscal conditions for businesses and supporting contractors, alongside more government incentives and funds to support businesses, will support events to become more environmentally sustainable.

Question 19: What sources of income do you think events should be developing to be financially sustainable?

The events strategy should include that 'financial sustainability' is not only about developing different and sustainable income streams, but also building sustainable and resilient

business practices. This includes supporting businesses to become more entrepreneurial, agile and resilient.

Events must also have continued access to sponsorship opportunities from alcohol brands, which is key to the financial sustainability of events. By removing alcohol sponsorship, a key source of funding is taken away from events – jeopardising their ability to host events of an international scale that attract people to visit from across the world and also risking damaging Scotland’s reputation as a major event host. The rich and diverse event offer in many rural and island communities would also be significantly put at risk if alcohol sponsorship were to be prohibited.

The Scottish Tourism Alliance urges the Scottish Government to ensure that the tourism, hospitality and events sectors are involved in informing the revised set of proposals on restricting alcohol advertising before they reach the public consultation stage. We believe the previous plans would have had a lasting detrimental impact on the positioning of Scotland as a globally attractive visitor destination – taking vital funding away from events and having serious knock-on impacts on local communities, especially for Scotland’s islands.

Question 20: What would support the event sector to measure the importance of events?

In addition to gathering data on local economic impact, visitor spend and overnight stays, etc, it is important to also measure the importance of events through local visitor sentiment and investment by businesses because of events being hosted.

Question 21: We would welcome evidence on the measurable impacts of events, particularly those held in Scotland. This could include, but is not limited to impacts on:

- Local business
- Job opportunities
- Opportunities for participants to develop skills
- Environment
- Health and wellbeing of individuals or groups
- Community connections and cohesion
- Promoting diversity
- Profile and promotion of your area

n/a

Question 22: In what way do you think events can promote Scotland internationally?

Major events play a pivotal role in attracting visitors to Scotland and enhancing the country's international profile. Investing time and money to bid and host major global events helps to raise the country’s profile on an international stage, drawing visitors to the country and encouraging future tourists.

In addition, some of Scotland's smaller scale events, particularly in island communities, offer an opportunity to promote Scotland as a unique visitor location to international visitors. A continued joined-up approach that promotes 'Brand Scotland' and the uniqueness of its visitor offer is an important part of promoting the country internationally. Events are an integral part of that brand.

Question 23: What specific aims would you prioritise for mega events?

In Section 6.3 'Mega events', the Scottish Government framework being trialled to help understand how well a mega event might align to strategic aims in Scotland and inform decision-making misses the important contribution of tourism, business growth and new business development. We propose that these be added to the framework as part of assessing event potential.

Question 24: To what extent do you agree or disagree that event organisers make connections between events and their ability to deliver broader positive impacts for society?

- neither agree nor disagree

Question 25: We would welcome evidence on how event organisers are working together with local and/or national bodies to deliver outcomes. This could include, but is not limited to:

- Delivering events that have a positive impact on wellbeing
- Meeting the needs of local people
- Being more environmentally sustainable
- Supporting local business
- Attracting people to work in events
- Developing the event workforce

n/a

Question 26: If there is anything else that you think we should be considering as part of impact assessments, please give details here.

The Scottish Tourism Alliance welcomes that the events strategy refresh mentions Scotland Outlook 2030 and our commitment to ensure that Scotland is an inclusive and accessible destination, alongside wider partner activity to boost equality through tourism and events. As we previously mentioned, linking both of our strategies is central to delivering our shared ambitions.

Question 27: If there are any other changes to the current National Events Strategy you wish to see, please give details here.

The national tourism strategy was identified as a key area of collaboration in the last national events strategy, but there are few mentions about tourism and the local visitor economy in the consultation document. The Scottish Tourism Alliance seeks assurance that tourism remains a clearly outlined priority in an updated Perfect Stage strategy, as set out in the current version of the strategy. The successful delivery of the national events and tourism strategies are both integral to achieving our shared ambitions.

‘Section 7.3 Policy alignment’ also makes no mention of tourism. We welcome that the section mentions strengthening events’ role in delivering shared outcomes and associated funding and would request that tourism be added to the list, given the opportunity to link the strategic aims of the events and tourism sectors.

The national event strategy refresh proposals align with Scotland Outlook 2030 on several areas (e.g. importance of communities; Fair Work; skills and making events a more attractive career; environmental, social and economic sustainability), but there is currently less of a focus in the refresh document about financial sustainability and the wellbeing of industry, including the supply chain.

In Scotland Outlook 2030, ‘Our Diverse Businesses’ is one of our main priorities and the events strategy refresh may want to consider including supporting business to become more entrepreneurial, agile and resilient, which is especially relevant given the challenges business has faced over recent years and ongoing the financial situation.

In ‘Annex A, 9.1 The return of events’, the list should include the recently introduced Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill due to the implications concerning additional costs faced by both domestic and international visitors who stay overnight to attend events, costs to hospitality businesses of collecting a levy, and potential investment opportunities in tourism from net revenue raised by a visitor levy.