



SCOTTISH
TOURISM
ALLIANCE

Your voice in tourism matters



SCOTLAND

CHAMPION – CONNECT – INVEST

THE SCOTTISH TOURISM ALLIANCE

HOLYROOD ELECTION MANIFESTO 2026

INTRODUCTION

Scottish Parliament Elections 2026:

- Most significant change to the Scottish Parliament in almost 20 years
- Large intake of new MSPs to engage with – a third of MSPs standing down
- New emerging parties, such as Reform and Alba
- Possibility of a minority government and the need for more cross-party working
- No more important time to ensure the tourism and hospitality sector is front and centre

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

During August and September, The STA Manifesto was informed by:

- The STA Policy Working Group
- The STA Board
- The STA Council members
- The STA Destination Forum



MANIFESTO ASKS CHAMPION – CONNECT – INVEST

The STA calls on the next Scottish Government and all MSPs to support the tourism and hospitality sector by delivering on the following key manifesto asks:

CHAMPION SCOTLAND

- Recognise the sector's crucial role in supporting the nation and local communities
- Deliver government and sector priorities together

CONNECT SCOTLAND

- Invest in transport and digital connectivity

INVEST IN JOBS & GROWTH FOR SCOTLAND

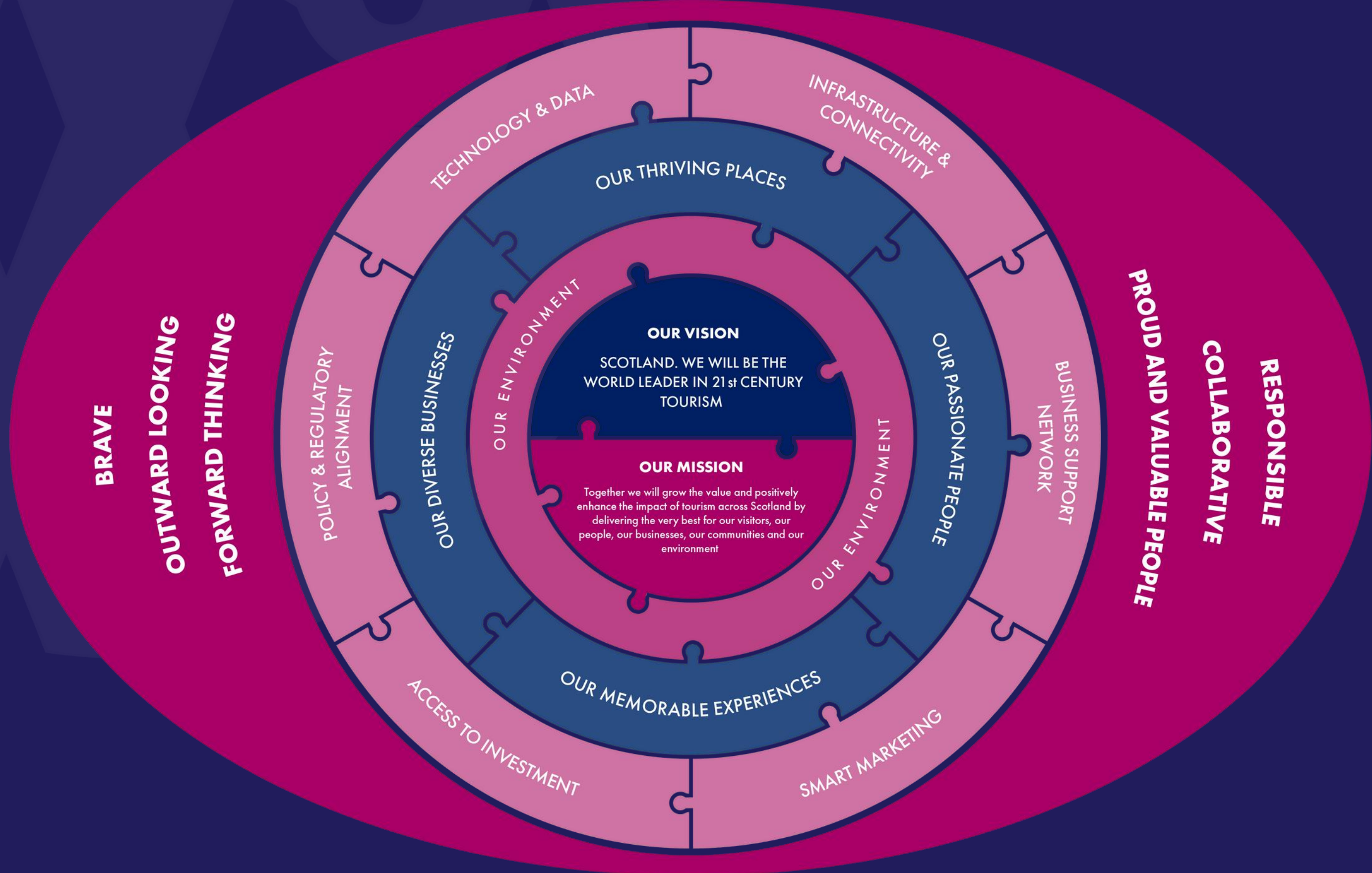
- Empower the sector to be an economic driver
- Safeguard and unlock future growth

MANIFESTO ASKS CHAMPION (1 of 2)

Recognise the sector's crucial role in supporting the nation and local communities

- Create a dedicated, named Cabinet Secretary or Minister role – and shadow positions – to champion the sector and better support cross-portfolio working, promoting the importance of the sector at the heart of communities and as a major national economic driver.
- Provide ring-fenced funding to deliver on Scotland Outlook 2030 and the strategic missions identified by the Tourism and Hospitality Leadership Group.
- Empower and invest long-term in VisitScotland, EventScotland and Destination Management Organisations.

NATIONAL TOURISM STRATEGY: SCOTLAND OUTLOOK 2030



MANIFESTO ASKS CHAMPION (2 of 2)

Deliver government and sector priorities together

- Work in partnership to grow the sector sustainably through better regulation and supportive policy, including prioritising accelerating planning and business rates reform.
- Lessen the regulatory burden on businesses and avoid giving more revenue generating powers to councils that negatively impact on the sector. Instead, proactively partner with the sector to identify and shape a new set of ambitious policies.
- Introduce a tax roadmap for Scotland linked with the priorities set out in the National Strategy for Economic Transformation for economic growth and investment.
- Champion the needs of the sector with UK Government counterparts on industry priorities, while taking a joined up and harmonised cross-nation approach that avoids causing competitive disadvantage and burden for business.

TOURISM & HOSPITALITY AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITIES

The tourism and hospitality sector is the beating heart of our local communities, acting as a greater force for good and benefiting residents and visitors alike



MANIFESTO ASKS CONNECT

Invest in transport and digital connectivity

- Align new transport and digital infrastructure projects and funding with national and regional growth priorities.
- More investment and better legacy planning to support transport and digital connectivity across Scotland to meet the aspirations of Scotland Outlook 2030 and keep pace with other international destinations.
- Support growth in the aviation industry through more flight route development and investment in decarbonisation and sustainable fuels, including exploring the use of Grangemouth as a production facility.
- Continue to invest in and incentivise active travel to deliver on the country's net zero ambitions, making it safer and easier for people to walk, wheel and cycle in our visitor destinations.
- Deliver a joined-up travel experience across Scotland, including smart ticketing across the network and better coordination to manage disruption.

TRAVEL & DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity sets the tone of a visitor's experience from the very beginning of their trip and influences their decision-making about where and how much time and money they spend in our destinations.

For local residents, businesses and their workers, connectivity impacts on their day-to-day lives, especially in our rural and island communities.

MANIFESTO ASKS INVEST (1 of 2)

Empower the sector to be an economic driver

- Partner with industry to create a Scottish Tourism & Hospitality Growth Plan and enable Scottish National Investment Bank support for major tourism and hospitality infrastructure projects to maximise competitive edge and enhance the sector's role as a key export industry.
- Host a national debate on economic policy in Scotland to help shape policy for transformational growth.
- Provide more targeted support for tourism and hospitality businesses through grants, match-funding opportunities and interest-free loans to become more environmentally sustainable.
- Regenerate and enrich local communities by prioritising investment in supporting and developing the sector's future workforce and more affordable housing, positioning the sector one of the key growth industries under the UK Growth and Skills Levy scheme and supporting more sector reskilling opportunities for those who are economically inactive.

CURRENT ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF SCOTTISH TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

**£11.4
BILLION**

Total tourism visitor
spend in 2024

**£9
BILLION**

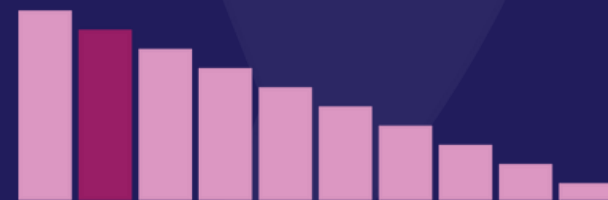
Contributed by Scottish
hospitality industry annually

**£4
BILLION**

Total international visitor
spend in 2024

**4.4
MILLION**

International yearly visitors



2nd **LARGEST
GROWTH
SECTOR**

Accounting for 32% of total
growth sector employment

**10.6
MILLION**

Overnight domestic
trips in 2024

**76.8
MILLION**

Total day visits to
Scotland by GB
residents in 2024



**1 in 11
JOBS & BUSINESSES**

Tourism-related industries are now the single biggest
source of employment in Scotland –

2nd
Most visited
city in the UK

**GLASGOW
ABERDEEN
INVERNESS**

In the
UK Top 20
for overnight
visits by
inbound
visitors

Scotland continues to outperform the rest of

SCOTLAND'S DIVERSE TOURISM ECONOMY



£367
MILLION

COUNTRY SPORTS TOURISM

Generates 910,000 visitor nights, while supporting 4,400 FT equivalent jobs



£1
BILLION

SELF-CATERING

Annual contribution to Scotland's economy



£5.5
BILLION

EVENTS

Generated by events in Scotland during 2024



£1.36
BILLION

GOLF TOURISM

The total economic benefit of hosting The Open in Scotland between 2005 and 2024



£633
MILLION

MARINE TOURISM

Supporting 31,110 jobs and making up 44% of marine economy employment in 2022



£581
MILLION

LIVE MUSIC

Attracted over 1.5 million tourists into local areas in 2022. The economic contribution of Murrayfield's Oasis concerts is estimated at £137 million



£130
MILLION

CRUISE TOURISM

Contributed to Scotland's economy in 2024, bringing 1.1 million passengers to Scottish ports



£85
MILLION

WHISKY TOURISM

Spent in total at sites across Scotland's five whisky regions in 2022



£170
MILLION

AGRITOURISM

The value of Scottish agritourism and farm retail in 2021



MANIFESTO ASKS INVEST (2 of 2)

Safeguard and unlock future growth

- Recognise and position the tourism and hospitality sector in each year's Scottish Budget and Programme for Government as a future industry
- Develop new training and skills development courses and funded opportunities for the sector's businesses and their workforce to keep pace with emerging developments in AI and other technologies, and invest in improved national data collection.
- Foster better joint working opportunities with the sector, universities and tech companies to take a 21st century digital approach to policy making and implementation that embraces new and emerging developments in AI and other technologies.
- In partnership with Interface, create a Tourism & Hospitality Future Innovation Fund.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

Due to the interconnected nature of the tourism and hospitality industry, the opening or closure of one type of business has a cumulative impact across the sector and wider in a local community.



NEXT STAGE: AMPLIFYING OUR VOICE

- **Political Roundtables and Leader Hustings Event**
Engaging political parties with our manifesto asks
- **Share Your Stories**
What outcomes will be delivered by adopting our manifesto asks
- **Lobbying Resources**
Letter templates, regional VisitScotland data and social media posts to lobby political candidates
- **Business Survey**
Working with 56 Degree Insight to capture the situation on the ground for sector businesses



SCOTTISH TOURISM ALLIANCE
HOLYROOD MANIFESTO 2026

“Less regulation and fairer business rates will finally give us the breathing space to improve our guest bedrooms and invest in heat pumps to help reduce our carbon footprint.”

A Business Owner
Owner of xxx Hotel