**Note of climate change and tourism partner panel meeting, 9 December 2019**

**Attendees:**

* • Colin Seditas, Head of Business and Public Sector Engagement, **Scottish Government**
* • Ewan Hyslop, Head of Technical Research & Science, **HeS**
* • Ian Clunie- Program Manager Food and Drink, **Zero Waste Scotland**
* • James Fowlie, Director of Integration and development, **COSLA**
* • Marissa Lippiat- Head of Resource Efficiency, **Zero Waste Scotland**
* • Martin Valenti, Head of Climate Enterprise, **Scottish Enterprise**
* • Simon Brooks, Strategic Planning Manager, **SNH**
* *• Helen Todd, Campaigns & Policy manager at Ramblers Scotland representing* ***LINK***
* • Stuart Greig, Assistant Director, Low Carbon Economy, **Transport Scotland (Did not come)**
* • Riddell Graham, Director of Industry and Destination Development, VisitScotland
* • Janie Neumann, Industry Development Manager (Sustainability/Food and Drink), VisitScotland
* • Barbara Clark, Head of Corporate Communications, VisitScotland
* • Susan Dickie, Head of Insight, VisitScotland

**Introduction**

Riddell Graham: this event was prompted by their letter of strategic guidance from ScotGov and the recognition that VS has a role to play in tackling climate change along with other government departments and agencies. Their chair is personally very invested in this agenda and as a first step they are seeing where they can add value and support existing initiatives. Their National Tourism Strategy 2020-2030 is in development and will be launched in March but an internal document setting out the challenge will be shared with partners in due course. They were considering whether ‘sustainable’ or ‘responsible’ tourism is the right message.

Janie Neumann gave a brief presentation on the Scottish tourism context. As a sector it creates £12 billion of economic activity, £8.7 billion GVA, 196,000 employees, £5.5 billion expenditure. 15.5 million overnight trips with 77% of tourists from the UK. Most popular reason for visiting is 50% cite scenery and landscape. In terms of global emissions for tourism, the sector is responsible for 8% of all carbon emissions, predicted to rise by 25% by 2030.

**Organisation presentations**

**Scottish Govt** – Colin Seditas talked about his role in government supporting a just transition for businesses and the government’s Green New Deal.

**Zero Waste Scotland** – Marisssa and Iain introduced their new [corporate plan](https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/about-us/corporate-plan). They are supporting businesses to reduce waste, be more energy efficient, etc, plus focus on a circular economy including deposit return scheme. Food waste reduction is a specific priority and they are targeting the catering and hospitality sector.

**Historic Environment Scotland** – Ewan had just returned from COP25 in Madrid and gave feedback on the global tourism discussion. HES is very proactive in gathering data and research, with a new climate change action plan being launched in 2020. They have produced a guide to [climate change impacts](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/news/new-guide-to-help-manage-climate-change-risk-to-historic-sites/) on historic sites and a climate risk assessment looking at climate vulnerability on Orkney. Lots of work ongoing internally to gather data.

**Scottish Enterprise** – Martin Valenti said the government was very committed to the climate change issue and he was focussed on what Scotland can do in the run up to COP26 in Glasgow. It was no good to announce at COP the things we were going to do, but the FM had to be able to showcase initiatives we had already got underway to bring transformational change and with the necessary investment. Keen to package the discussion into one about hope not fear and suggested there should be an overarching plan that we can all feed into/contribute to. Green Investment and Green New Deal in Programme for Government show that Scotland has ambitions but not plans, so need to collaborate like never before to achieve a just transition. Rather than having “sustainability” as one objective of economic, tourism, etc strategies, they need to be turned around, ie, The economy delivers wellbeing, inclusivity, just transition, etc NOT growth. He had several ideas to put forward:

* Potential for an equivalent to Norway’s Sovereign Wealth Fund to be a National Carbon Reserve for Scotland. Ie, national carbon offsetting fund for those industries which can’t transition fast enough but need to take action, such as tourism – ie, pay extra for air travel but the money is spent on peat restoration, or a new ‘young person’s forest’ in Glasgow using vacant & derelict land.
* NPF4 needs to be a way of mobilising a mindset shift and an enabler for transition [*big opportunity for LINK bodies here!]*
* Scottish Enterprise is commissioning 20 murals on big walls around Scotland showcasing the positive story for transition
* Looking at the COP26 declaration being a ‘Young People’s Agreement’.

**SNH** – Simon Brooks on videolink. He outlined that climate change and biodiversity go hand in hand and there are opportunities to tackle both in terms of solutions. While their focus is not specifically on tourism they do manage natural assets including NNRs and produce promotional literature on enjoying the outdoors so this is all up for review to ensure the messaging reflects the new context, ie, not assuming people are travelling by car and promote destinations reached by public transport instead. Promote long distance routes, responsible code for campervans in development. They disburse the natural and cultural heritage fund and work with activity providers through Wild Scotland. They recognise that at a local level they need to work closely with destination management organisations to help with sustainability concerns and look at local issues/promotions. Simon called for VisitScotland to take a leadership/champion role in this area, it wasn’t possible to just tweak business as usual.

**COSLA** – James Fowlie said there was a link to the National Performance Framework and the Scottish leaders’ forum had just set up a sub group on climate change, but it was difficult to work with 32 local authorities who are not leading on climate change. COSLA is looking at its own corporate priorities. They met climate strike young people last week and recognised it was now time for action, not words. They will be attending COP26 and plan to work with those authorities who want to make a change first.

**LINK** – Helen Todd’s notes below

***INTRODUCTION***

*Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies. We all work towards the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society. Our work is prioritized in several policy areas and while we don’t have a specific tourism-focused group, obviously we contribute to the wider climate change/biodiversity/behavior change narrative through various work streams, for example: circular economy, land use (agriculture, forestry, deer), marine, wildlife, planning, and also our main campaign Fight for Scotland’s Nature based around environmental governance post-Brexit.*

*Of course individual LINK members do have tourism interest, such as the landowning NGOs – National Trust for Scotland, RSPB, Scottish Wildlife Trust, John Muir Trust, Trees for Life and Woodland Trust, plus Ramblers Scotland and Scottish Countryside Rangers Association (SCRA), among others, are involved in the promotion of recreation.*

***On 12 December at our annual strategic planning meeting I can invite interest in coming together to work on issues relating to tourism, which may involve smaller alliances of LINK members rather than a specific LINK work group being established. For example, drawing together case studies of activities and initiatives which are already happening through our member bodies. I will circulate a note of this meeting to members, and if VisitScotland would find it useful to have a meeting with environmental NGOs, LINK would be happy to set this up.***

***KEY PROJECTS***

*I issued a call for information of projects before this meeting but didn’t get much response. However:*

*John Muir Trust – conducted a survey of rural communities on visitor impacts in September 2019; cares for 7 mountain and coastal properties including on Skye and 2 close to NC500. Investing in path repairs, car parks, composting toilets, etc, and also provide ranger services.*

*APRS – led campaign for a deposit return scheme in Scotland for bottles and cans.*

*SCRA – support countryside rangers, who play a key role in managing visitors and looking after nature.*

*Ramblers – National Access Forum members, contribute to guidance on responsibilities for visitors and tourists both as NAF and as Ramblers Scotland, eg, on informal camping, fires and responsible access more generally. This education work is promoted via social media, eg, last year the government funded RS to produce series of videos on being healthy in the outdoors, including* [*avoiding lyme disease*](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1879898012311269)*, but RS is planning to be more proactive this year on Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC)-related responsible access messaging. They also run the* [*Out There Award*](https://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/out-there/out-there-award.aspx) *for young people aged 18-24 which includes giving them outdoors skills and experience as well as taking part in environmental volunteering. Our* [*Mapping Scotland’s Paths*](https://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/out-there/out-there-getting-paths-on-maps/mapping-scotland-paths.aspx) *project is aiming to get more paths on maps, in partnership with local authorities, national parks and other bodies. They are very keen to promote walking (and outdoor recreation more generally) for visitors including active travel, rather than yet more NC500-type driving initiatives.*

***HOW CAN VISITSCOTLAND/INDUSTRY SUPPORT YOUR PROJECTS?***

*It’s clear that sustainable tourism needs investment to ensure the visitor experience is high quality. Scotland’s amazing scenery and wildlife provide a fantastic setting for outdoor recreation but in many areas this needs a measure of visitor management, whether by improving car parking facilities or toilets, or repairing paths, or education on SOAC relating to, eg, camping issues. Ranger services are being cut and yet are a crucial bridge between people and nature, leading on education and public engagement on the ground, plus contributing to ecological work.*

*All these things need support, financial and moral, and if VisitScotland can add their voice that would be appreciated. The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund is welcomed but needs to continue and increase.*

*Collaboration with VisitScotland would also be much welcomed in communications projects which promote SOAC messages on responsibilities, highlight Scotland’s natural and cultural heritage or non-motorised tourist activities.*

***DATA*** *relating to climate change and tourism is not held by LINK bodies as far as I know, but could be gathered if there is funding for this.*

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*Given that transport is such a key area for tourism to tackle, I also mentioned that many LINK bodies are also members of* [*Transform Scotland*](http://transformscotland.org.uk/)*, along with public transport operators like Calmac, Scotrail, and Stagecoach and Sustrans, Cycling Scotland, etc.*

*Relevant research areas are:*

* *Value of cycle tourism report* [*http://transformscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research/the-value-of-cycle-tourism/*](http://transformscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research/the-value-of-cycle-tourism/) *and report on developing the cycle tourism sector* [*http://transformscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research/routes-to-growth/*](http://transformscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research/routes-to-growth/)
* *Car-free tourism website developed as a pilot for project, currently in abeyance until funding is secured* [*http://transformscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research/car-free-tourism/*](http://transformscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research/car-free-tourism/)*.*
* *Research report on Transient Visitor Levy* [*http://transformscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research/the-tourist-duty-investing-tvl-revenue-for-the-public-benefit/*](http://transformscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research/the-tourist-duty-investing-tvl-revenue-for-the-public-benefit/)

**VisitScotland reflections**

Staff reflected that this was a steep learning curve for them but they felt that they had always promoted value not volume tourism, and so responsible tourism was not an entirely new concept. They need to build the evidence base and then disseminate this via thought-pieces and case studies. There is a need for a common language. A collective strategy/message/plan would have more impact.

There was a suggestion that a stepping-stone event on the way to COP26 could be a “transitioning of tourism” conference showing how this issue is already being tackled and using COP26 to frame the debate.

It was pointed out that this is now a mainstream message “Nicola Sturgeon territory”, not just Roseanna Cunningham, and all the cabinet is involved. The forthcoming tourism strategy must be transformative, not just a green tint to business as usual. There’s an opportunity for Scotland to show itself as a leader.

[I pointed out that while LINK welcomed this commitment from government and agencies, developments like Coul Links and Flamingo Land which depend on huge numbers of people travelling by car/plane should be a thing of the past, so it would be good if the government turned these down – admittedly Flamingo Land has been withdrawn for now but it was a Scottish Enterprise backed scheme. Also said the environment NGOs would be happy to support and help any way we could].

**Conclusions**

* Communications very important to inspire the change – it can’t be incremental change now but must be transformative.
* Responsible not sustainable tourism
* Opportunity around COP26 to work backwards so we can showcase action and results
* Data and evidence is key
* Challenge around festivals, especially Edinburgh Festival.