

Scottish Tourism Forum

Press Release - Scottish Tourism Forum statements for Growth

For Immediate Use – 14th March 2007

As the third Scottish Tourism Week 2008 draws to a close, the Scottish Tourism Forum, who initiated the week to raise awareness of the importance of tourism to the Scottish economy and to enhance the link between the private sector and the elected and public sectors, have highlighted an important issue that emerged.

The Industry ambition of 50% growth by 2015, has come under considerable debate on how and if this target can be achieved, Scottish Tourism Forum (STF) believe that having a strong ambition has provided an excellent vehicle to get tourism growth taken seriously but we as an industry should not get driven by concerns about the actual percentage. This was clear from industry polls, taken during the Scotland United Conference on Wednesday 5th March, in which 71% of industry delegates (excludes public sector attendees) voted that they felt confident that Scotland can increase the economic benefit from tourism. STF is focused on unlocking the potential barriers for industry and the foremost challenge is planning.

To achieve sustainable growth we must work hard to attract investment and provide a professional, proactive, easily accessed engagement to nurture opportunities and remove as many of the barriers to this investment as possible. Investors have the world tapping on their door and we need to be seen as the place to do business.

Iain Herbert, Chief Executive, STF: “we are on the ladder to success but our Government must radically review the planning regime in Scotland. Investors can face a wait of 9 weeks in some areas and 9 months in others and this is simply not acceptable – service level agreements must be set up to provide all areas with equally opportunities to encourage investment. This does not mean compromise our planning guidelines but a clear time framework for investors to work within. We must proactively encourage suitable investment to secure strength for our economy against the fierce international competition.”

Gavin Ellis, Chair of the Tourism Framework For Change group, comments, “Our competitors are moving a lot more creatively and faster than us, they are open for business, open to ideas and open to change. Dubai plans to grow by 400% by 2015, a lot of building and a lot of infrastructure a big vision, and commitment by all departments of government and private enterprise Tourism is a fantastic industry, a challenging profession and a dynamic environment that is open for everyone and creates an industry proud of what is offered. As a country we have to grow and it is right that industry and government sets a clear ambition.’

Iain Herbert added, “We must have a legislative landscape that will promote and nurture profit. Tourism is everyone’s business and we must work hard now to unlock the true potential within Scottish tourism to retain and grow our share of the world tourism market for the future”.

The full report from the week is expected in the coming weeks however other key challenges are;

- licensing legislation and its impact – particularly prevalent in the rural areas
- sustainability and opportunities
- skills and employment in sector
- vital transport improvements and further integration between public services

- quality drive within industry (virtuous circle – Offer- Quality- Recommendation- Return)
- coordinated approach to the development of destination management organisation from grass routes level
- impact of new visa legislation
- and other issues to be highlighted

Ends.

Notes to editors:

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The Scottish Tourism Forum (STF) is a membership body that represents the interests of Scottish tourism businesses. It has members across all sectors of the industry, both small and large operators, associations and area business groups. STF seeks to be the voice of the industry and is involved in industry advisory panels and grants awards panels and lobbies on behalf of the tourism and hospitality sector.

Further details and activities of STF can be found at www.stforum.co.uk
[<http://www.stforum.co.uk/>](http://www.stforum.co.uk)

Tourism in Scotland contributes over £4.2bn to the economy and employs over 210,000 people on over 20,000 businesses. World tourism is set to grow by 4% per annum and Scotland has a growth ambition of 50% over the coming ten years. The ambition for growth is detailed in the Tourism Framework for Change which was jointly launched by the Scottish Executive and STF in March of 2006.