

A scenic landscape of rolling green hills, a blue body of water, and a paved road leading towards a farmstead under a clear blue sky. The foreground is dominated by a paved road that curves through lush green fields. In the middle ground, there is a farmstead with several buildings. The background features a large green hill with a lighthouse on top, overlooking a blue bay. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

**Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group
COVID-19 National Action Plan - 22 May 2020**

Rebuilding Scotland's tourism industry together

Scottish tourism is facing up to its biggest challenge ever with Coronavirus impacting the entire industry. It is expected that the recovery will take some time and many businesses will require significant support to restart their operations.

The recovery of this crucial £11bn industry requires a multi-agency approach, working with the tourism industry to help those affected today, tomorrow and in the future.

The Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group (STERG) is working hard to help tourism businesses to recover from this unprecedented situation, working collaboratively to make the best use of budgets and their own employee's time. They have one goal – to help the tourism industry return to being the economic and social powerhouse it once was.

The group, which consists of the Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA); VisitScotland (VS); COSLA; the three Enterprise Agencies - Scottish Enterprise (SE), South of Scotland Enterprise (SoSE), Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE); Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

and the Scottish Government (SG), has been working on a single, joined-up, phased plan to not just combat the current issues but also look at how the industry could effectively recover once the lockdown is eased. This has been a real team effort, giving the agencies an opportunity to refocus plans and redirect budget, as well as working alongside the tourism industry to work through daily issues.

To respond most effectively a STERG National action Plan is in development. Scotland Outlook 2030, the new national tourism strategy is also being reviewed and further developed in the light of the pandemic to ensure the assumptions and commitments in the initial document are still valid. Steps will be taken to ensure the appropriate alignment and integration of the two strategic documents in the future.

STERG's immediate priorities are to support businesses by providing information and reassurance; safeguarding employment; and helping them access financial assistance to maintain cash flow and secure a viable future.

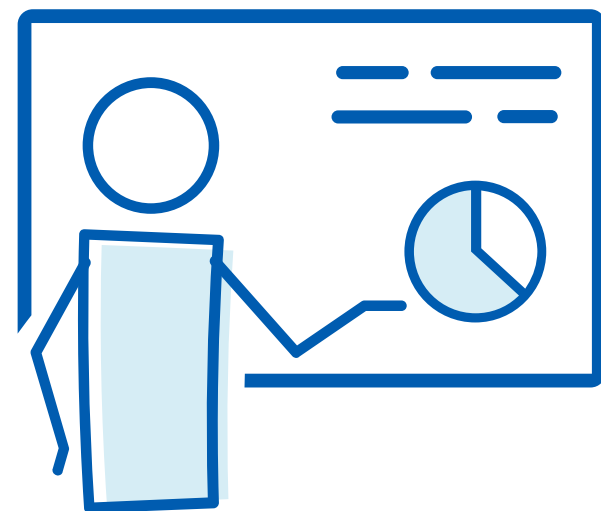
The four key areas within the plan are:



Respond

Focused on delivering a package of measures to support the tourism sector who are unable to operate due to stay home and social distancing rules.

- Gathering intelligence and data
- Continuing dialogue between Government and industry
- Providing immediate Covid-19 crisis support for businesses and communities
- Providing immediate workforce support
- Establishing communications



Reset

Sectoral guidance to encourage workplace plans for the re-start. It will be essential for businesses to operate in a way that is compliant with social distancing and enable them to be more resilient to re-start safely within the new tourism landscape and new economic environment.

- Developing new/repurposing existing support
- Undertaking research & global travel market intelligence
- Delivering consumer facing communications
- Preparing for reopening



Restart

Kick-starting the Tourism sector safely is essential. We will need to consider the impact of supply chains and measures that need to be in place to enable businesses to come back on-stream in a safe and orderly way.

- Implementing guidance for safe industry reopening
- Establishing new and adapted support programmes and interventions
- Developing marketing and events recovery plans



Recovery

Sector recovery is likely to take longer than originally anticipated. What emerges is likely to be a different landscape characterised by new business models, products, markets and behaviours.

- Establishing a new oversight group to deliver a tourism economic recovery plan

This plan takes a phased approach and will continue to evolve in line with the scientific evidence and government advice on the reopening of the tourism industry. Responsible tourism will be core to this - working with local communities and destination organisations is crucial as we look to rebuild a successful tourism industry which allows locals and visitors to coexist and ensure the Scottish welcome is at the heart of the visitor experience.

RESPOND: IMMEDIATE PROVISION OF INFORMATION AND SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES (MARCH 2020 - MAY 2020)				
1	Intelligence and Data Gathering			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
1.1	Data gathering from industry and trade bodies to capture real time impacts and immediate support required.	Provides a timely understanding of the challenges and concerns being faced by industry which enables a rapid and coordinated response to be delivered. Builds an evidence base to inform the Scottish Government and UK Government on the wider impact on industry.	STA	Ongoing.
1.2	National Helpline data gathering, agency front line staff, client engagement, partner enquiries and networks used to capture feedback and data.	Informs partner response and STERG Action Plan, based on collation of intelligence, feedback and evidence.	Enterprise Agencies, BG, VS	Ongoing. HIE Business Panel survey completed. Ongoing engagement in destination forum/industry response groups.
1.3	VisitScotland.org industry impact survey. Wave 2 completed 30 March. Requirement of any future surveys to be confirmed.	Coordinated and joined up intelligence to inform strategic planning.	VS	Wave 2 findings collated & shared. Decision on the need for a further survey to be taken in early June to avoid industry survey overload.
1.4	Skills impact assessment by sector and occupations.	Identification of at-risk sectors and regions to generate a simple forecast, and a picture of emerging sectoral job opportunities.	SDS	Work ongoing, reports should be available soon.
1.5	Holding 25+ industry forums representative of the entire events, festivals and business events sector.	Evidence based information which can be used to inform and influence recovery policy.	VS Events	21 Industry forums completed with 120+ senior industry reps. Findings to be shared on vs.org by end May.

1.6	Understand the immediate and short term issues and the impact of the crisis on destination organisations and sector groups.	Initial support in place for early stage destination and sector driven recovery.	VS	Survey undertaken. Fund launched on 14th May. Demand for available funds significant. Fund closed 22 May. Events work stream is to be established to map out the challenges for the supply chain to the event sector.
2	Continued Dialogue Between Government and Industry			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
2.1	Regular STA Council meetings to inform government on key industry issues and highlight changing priorities.	One consolidated source of industry issues from the STA where progress is tracked. Ensures common representation of issues which the Scottish Government and UK Government can respond to in a timely and effective way.	STA	Weekly STA Council meetings with Scottish Government officials and Cabinet Secretary.
2.2	Frequent communication with Scottish Government; Cabinet Secretary; Ministers and Officials.	Ensure that industry needs are represented and understood, enabling a rapid response to be delivered.	STA lead, plus All	Ongoing.
3	Immediate Covid-19 Crisis Support for Businesses and Communities			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
3.1	Provide transparency of what is actually happening to get funding and support to the businesses now, i.e. from Scottish Government to local government. Ensure updates to guidance on existing support schemes are visible and accessible.	The grant support provided by the Scottish Government and channelled through Local Government commenced in late March 2020. As anticipated there are significant volumes of applications, in the tens of thousands, which Local Authorities are working through at pace.	SG	Details of grants issued to date can be accessed on the Scottish Government website.

3.2	All relevant delivery partners to facilitate rapid and effective access to new Covid-19 financial support packages including cash grants, Job Retention Scheme and self-employed assistance.	Delivery of Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund; Creative, Tourism and Hospitality Hardship Fund; Self Employed support, Local Authority cash grants.	Enterprise Agencies, BG	Ongoing.
3.3	Provide clear guidelines on the eligibility criteria for the recently announced (15th April) additional business support from the Scottish Government (£220m).	Industry are clear on eligibility and can quickly access the support.	SG	Both funds closed to applications on 18 May.
3.4	£90m Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund developed and delivered to provide grants to SMEs which are vital to Scotland's local or national economy but have been made vulnerable by this crisis. £20m Tourism, Hospitality and Creative Hardship fund to support small and micro creative, tourism and hospitality companies.	Package of funding to reach businesses in need and at pace, ensuring additional financial support responds to demands from the industry and maximises reach across all parts of the economy and business base.	Enterprise Agencies	PERF and Hardship fund closed on 18 May. Significant volume of applications being processed.
3.5	£40m Supporting Communities Fund, administered across Scotland for eligible community organisations that play an active role in providing vital local services.	Financial support to assist the network of community organisations, social enterprises and development trusts to ensure the support goes to help those who need. Initial £10 million investment and a further allocation of £10 million has been approved to support the second phase of the fund.	HIE and SCVO	HIE has approved 129 grants worth £2.68 million to community anchor organisations.
3.6	Contact all funded and supported events to provide advice and guidance on implications of COVID-19, including continuation of funding for all contracted and planned events.	Reassurance to events sector, and continuity of contracted financial support.	VS Events	160 events directly contacted and provided with relevant support. Discussions ongoing.
4	Workforce Support			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
4.1	Working with partners, local authorities and stakeholders to ensure employees are supported by industry employers to access support package including employee retention, self-employment, universal credit, and redundancy and well-being support.	Ensuring employees are given the best possible support from the various funding sources and information and guidance support open to them.	All	Ongoing.

4.2	Free-to-use jobs portal established to help workers from the tourism and hospitality sectors who have found themselves displaced as a result of the COVID-19. Harri.com/hospitalityunite	Provision of alternative employment opportunities in other sectors of the economy for tourism and hospitality employees who have been made redundant / who are looking for work.	STA	Ongoing. Site hosts in contact with Scottish Government to encourage a flow of vacancies.
4.3	SDS Job Board now live on the MWOW Website. Employers can up-load vacancies through the Our Skillsforce website.	On-line portal to allow displaced workers to apply for sectors with job opportunities.	SDS	Ongoing.
4.4	Signposting workforce to wellbeing support, redundancy support and careers information, advice and guidance.	Redundancy support service for individuals focusing on financial support, wellbeing support and careers and employability provision. Expanded Careers information Advice and Guidance service launched by SDS along with and expanded PACE redundancy service for individuals. TV Adverts commenced to promote these services. On-line free learning portal established by SDS on the MWOW website to support furloughed workers and others to up-skill.	SDS STA VS	Ongoing.
5	Establishing Communications			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
5.1	All STERG partners to provide appropriate signposting, information and intelligence on emerging issues and priorities based on data and ongoing assessment of need.	Informing the tourism industry with up to date information and signposting to other resources available. Signposting to Findbusinesssupport.gov.uk . as the key consistent and up-to-date source of business support information for COVID-19.	All	Ongoing.
5.2	Business to business networks, facilitation and engagement in clusters and intelligence sharing.	Creation of sustainable support network, shared solutions and coordinated approach. To ensure information is flowing, consistent guidance and insights gathered and fed back.	All	Ongoing.

5.3	Establish Events Industry Advisory Group.	Provide clear communication leadership and communication across the events industry.	VS Events	Events Directorate work stream established to lead development of the Advisory Group. Aim to establish Advisory Group by early June.
5.4	Develop and implement a STERG communication plan.	Establish regular communication ensuring Industry is informed of the STERG priorities and specifically the actions being undertaken and progress being made.	VS/STA	In development.

RESET: SUPPORT, PLANNING AND PREPARATION TO ENCOURAGE RESTART (JUNE 2020 - SEPTEMBER 2020)

6	Develop New/Repurpose Existing Support			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
6.1	Organisation wide review of all allocated budgets to divert to COVID-19 response.	Create new or amended business support opportunities to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.	Enterprise Agencies / SDS / VS / BG	Ongoing.
6.2	Extending community engagement resource through re-skilling of Information Team members to enable effective monitoring of local concerns linked to reopening of tourism.	Enhanced awareness of community concerns around reopening to ensure local plans take account of potential local pressure points.	VS	Commenced mid- May and ongoing as plans for phased lockdown are announced by SG.
6.3	SDS teams refocused to support COVID-19 response.	PACE for individuals (redundancy support) service developed and launched to support displaced individuals along with partnership PACE initiative to support companies making staff redundant. On-line Careers Information and Guidance service launched and promoted across Scotland.	SDS	Ongoing.

6.4	Review of existing events funding programmes in line with emerging priorities, focussing on smaller domestic and regional events which will likely restart first.	Provide tailored and scale-able events support, consistently through to the end of 2021.	VS Events	ES work stream established to develop interim funding programme, work ongoing.
6.5	Determine the scale of the support that is going to be needed for a much longer term to see businesses not just through the immediate short term 3 months but far beyond that.	Additional support secured to protect and sustain our businesses for 2021.	STA Lead	Ongoing.
6.6	Provide an initial Covid-19 support scheme for membership based organisations.	Protect and sustain our Places and Experiences for 2021.	Enterprise Agencies, BG, VS, STA	Destination/Sector support fund launched on 14th May. Demand for available funds significant. Fund closed 22 May.
7	Research & Global Travel Market Intelligence			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
7.1	Collating market intelligence from the marketplace. Gathered from global intermediaries, OTAs, market specialists, media specialists, social listening data and other NTOs/international tourism bodies.	Awareness of the wider context; what's happening in tourism globally. Sharing of best practice examples.	VS/SDI	Weekly intel paper published on vs.org.
7.2	Collaboration with OTAs and similar to spot points of traction on destination search and booking activity – to identify return phase.	Provide guidance for timing and nature of activity.	VS	Regular insights being received from TA, BC, Expedia, Google.
7.3	Ongoing economic analysis to understand the impact of the COVID-19 crisis across the geography of Scotland and across the sub sectors of the tourism industry.	Identify types of support required and the prioritisation of support, resources and funding to inform recovery.	SG Lead with others	In progress.

7.4	Scenario Planning to allow for a flexible range of recovery plans to be developed.	To have in place a sound evidence base to inform recovery.	SG Lead with others	In progress.
8	Consumer Facing Communications			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
8.1	Dream now, travel later messaging and activity. Positive messaging to ensure Scotland's reputation as a welcoming destination is protected. Positive good news stories of communities and destinations working together.	Keeping Scotland top of mind with visitors in key markets. Sharing memories of previous visits etc.	VS Destinations and individual businesses	Ongoing promotion of virtual content. Film being produced to celebrate business innovation.
8.2	Scottish consumer and industry facing campaign to reiterate the #StayHome message with #AWindowonScotland which is running across VisitScotland's corporate and consumer channels and worked in collaboration with many industry groups and tourism businesses across the country.	Since its launch on 15 April, there have been more than 3700 uses of the hashtag on social media, and 132 pieces of media coverage (national, regional and trade) with a total reach of more than 8 million. Organisations that have engaged with the campaign include VisitAberdeenshire, Hostelling Scotland, Discover Inverclyde, Historic Environment Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, and Big Houses in the Scottish Borders.	VS	Ongoing.
9	Preparing For Reopening			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
9.1	Establish, with the approval of appropriate health bodies a set of clear sectoral guidance for the tourism industry including sector specific guidance: hospitality, accommodation, attractions, outdoor access, transport, events and festivals, adventure etc. Once agreed have these endorsed by Ministers prior to roll out.	Clear guidance on social distancing, hygiene requirements, business operation and delivery of activity and events. Strong industry desire for a UK wide solution. Once in place opportunity for clear and consistent messaging to both industry and visitors.	VS in collaboration with STA and sector bodies, UKH, ASSC, ASVA, Wild Scotland.	SG leading on developing a framework for decision making and protocols to ensure any guidance fits with wider Scottish Government approach. Industry leading (UKH, ASSC, ASVA, Wild Scotland) on developing comprehensive guidance for tourism and its various sectors. STERG coordinating.

RESTART: SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE TO BEGIN SAFE RE-OPENING (JUNE 2020 - FEBRUARY 2021)				
10	Implementing Guidance For Safe Industry Reopening			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
10.1	Coordinated implementation of industry standards and protocols.	Sector has all the necessary measures in place to reopen safely.	VS / STA and Industry partners	Work in progress.
10.2	Ensure support of industry and communities through provision of information and safety advice to visitors in local areas.	Through iKnow Partner Programme share relevant insights, information and safety advice with industry and communities. Phased re-opening of iCentres in line with best practice, based on visitor insights of intended travel patterns. iCentres to assist with dissemination of information to industry and communities.	VS	Work in progress.
10.3	Identify approved Covid training programmes/modules for staff returning to work to conform to sectoral specific guidance.	Industry recognised online training modules to ensure consistency of training across the sector.	SDS	In development.
10.4	Communication plan targeting communities and consumers to provide reassurance that Scotland is a safe and welcoming place to visit.	Key communication messages support communities and tourism businesses to reopen and welcome visitors safely. Consumers are confident to visit our destinations and feel welcomed.	VS Lead with SG	In development.

11 New and Adapted Support Programmes and Interventions				
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
11.1	Business and community support, interventions and funding opportunities continue in order to support recovery.	VisitScotland activity (events, marketing campaigns) are ready to go when demand reappears, and product is open and available). Enterprise Agencies continue to provide account management support with access to advice, programme activity and finance. Non-account managed activity including one-to-many programme support is maintained and repositioned to ensure fit-for-purpose.	All	Ongoing.
11.2	VisitScotland industry education and business development programme continues to develop in line with insights derived through Covid-19 engagement. Particular focus on distribution channel and product development education modules, market immersions including domestic daytrip, VFR and staycation markets as well as internationalisation support.	Programme provides tourism businesses with the latest insights and opportunities, informed both by change resulting from the impact of Covid-19, as well as the ambition for a responsible tourism future. Businesses receive guidance on how to engage with best prospect returning audiences as well as how to reach the most appropriate intermediaries for programme development post-Covid.	VS	Ongoing.
11.3	Audit of products that will be available at the early phases of opening, may require longer to reopen and those that will no longer be available due to closure.	Clarity on the capacity of the industry to open on a phased basis to support recovery plan.	VS/ Enterprise Agencies	Work has commenced via VS regionally based and industry facing teams supported by icentre staff.
12 Marketing and Events Recovery				
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
12.1	Establish UK market sentiment and propensity holiday tracker.	Will track sentiment and propensity over time to provide audience targeting information.	VS	Agency appointed.

12.2	Establish International sentiment and propensity holiday tracker.	As above.	VS	Exploring opportunity with VB.
12.3	Develop a new market prioritisation model .	Guide prioritisation of international markets to include relevant factors influenced by Covid – economic, societal, transport, consumer travel propensity etc.	VS	In development.
12.4	Develop a creative proposition & messaging framework for re-start & recovery marketing activity.	Consistency of message; messages aligned to visitor motivations for greatest impact/recall.	VS	In development.
12.5	Informed by data and insights develop a recovery marketing and communications plan that supports each phase: Re-start – Scotland/close to home Recovery – domestic movement Recovery – international movement	Keep Scotland top of mind in all key markets in all phases – awareness & inspiration. Targeted activity to drive intent/bookings aligned to scale of opportunity for each phase ensuring supply/demand balanced and regional/sectoral needs supported. Search, media, content and channel strategies .	VS	In development.
12.6	Renewed digital offering to provide real time visitor information: • Feasibility of web chat / social service offering to provide enhanced visitor service & promote responsible & safe travel service. • Events Directorate work stream established to gather and promote the rich digital content coming from the events sector.	Enhanced digital experience.	VS	Options being reviewed.

12.7	Develop a digital market place platform to connect tourism businesses with International Tour Operators & Travel agencies. Provide Industry with Trade Ready programmes and connect with relevant buyers.	Drive 2021 international bookings.	VS	In development.
12.8	Joint working with destinations to develop new content/stories to promote immersive regional experiences for VS channels; align supply side information & messaging with promotional activity. Support destinations to be discoverable online.	Regional variations, potentially phased returns including urban v rural differences and sector differences. Critical that we monitor. VS Regional Recovery plan templates developed and issues – will remain live documents to provide regular supply side intelligence & identify support requirements.	VS	In development.
12.9	On arrival support to visitors by reopened iCentres to give out information and safety advice as appropriate guidance.	Giving visitors and communities a sense of security while maximising local benefit. Timing aligned to Government advice & visitor demand.	VS	Options being reviewed.
12.10	Themed Year opportunities reviewed and reshaped to support recovery and maximise engagement potential.	Ensure the strong partnership work and investment is not lost and plays its part in recovery. Facilitation of effective platform for collaboration across events and tourism sectors.	VS/ES/ SG	SG and partner support is in place to roll YCW2020 into 2021. Feasibility and reshaped planning now underway.

RECOVER: DIRECTION AND SUPPORT FOR OPERATING IN A NEW POST COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT (JUNE 2020 - DECEMBER 2022)

13	Sector Recovery Plans			
	Action	Anticipated Outcome	Action Owner	Status
13.1	Urgent consideration will be given by the Scottish Government to a new oversight group to deliver a tourism economic recovery plan.	Through an appointed group of industry figure heads and agency representatives the new oversight group will develop and lead an economic recovery action plan informed by recommendations and input from STERG and other bodies.	Scottish Government	