

**Highland Tourism Partnership – Development session**  
**Minutes – Friday 4 November May, 11.00am to 2.00pm**  
**HIE building: An Lòchran, 10 Inverness Campus**

<b>Attendees</b> (GA) Graeme Ambrose – Visit Inverness Loch Ness – <u>Chair</u> (CW) Caroline Warburton – Scottish Tourism Alliance (CP) Caris Pittendreich – The Highland Council (ME) Maren Ebeling – Scottish Natural History (CO) Chris O’Brien – Outdoor Capital of the UK (GD) Gaelle Delagrave – NC500 (HT) Heather Trench – Cairngorms National Park Authority	(CS) Colin Simpson – The Highland Council (CT) Chris Taylor – HIE (JM) Jack MacKay – Forestry Commission (JF) Jodie Fraser – Outdoor Capital of the UK (RG) Rachel Glennie – Moray Speyside Tourism (RW) Rob Ware – Destination Skye & Lochalsh (AP) Amy Prior – VisitScotland (SA) Scott Armstrong – VisitScotland
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<b>Apologies</b> Douglas Gibson – Visit Wester Ross Iain Fairweather – VisitNairn Rosemary Young – VisitNairn Cllr Audrey Sinclair – Highland Council Cllr Bill Lobban – Highland Council	David Richardson – FSB Marina Huggett – Tourism Excellency Laurie Piper – Moray Speyside Tourism Mark Tate – Cairngorms Business Partnership Tom Campbell – NC500
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	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Actions</b>
1	<b>Welcome</b> SA and GA welcomed the group and introduced the attendees.	
2	<p><b>National Strategy – Mid Term Review 2016 (CW)</b>            CW emphasised that the National Strategy is not the STA’s strategy, they are simply guardians. It is a strategy for Scotland to help ensure we’re speaking the same language across national, regional and destination strategies.</p> <p><u>Review findings – full findings online</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategy still valid/ sound/ appropriate</li> <li>● BUT, we need to prioritise at national level – developed four priorities:</li> </ul> <p><b>1. Influence Investment</b> – Are we in a position to identify need and gaps for investment? No, but getting closer. Digital and roads are key.</p> <p><b>2. Leadership</b> – From industry groups (sectors and destinations) and skills perspective</p> <p><b>3. Digital</b> – Only came up three times in original strategy. Now a huge issue. Key elements of this: up-skilling in the sector and digitising customer experience</p> <p><b>4. Quality of Visitor Experience</b> – Beyond infrastructure: inspiring and engaging Also includes refreshed skills priorities across the sector, and raising attractiveness.</p> <p><u><b>STA Big Five Questions</b></u>            STA asking tourism industry to answer five big questions which if everyone delivers then we will be well on our way to being ready for 2020. Themes: your customer, your digital, your costs, your people, your voice.            STA have pulled together all advice and support behind each of these.</p> <p><u><b>Scottish Tourism Week 2017</b></u>            Looking at a destination-oriented sessions for launch event            STW2017 Roadshow in planning</p>	<p>CO to send OCUK strategy to CW</p> <p>All to look at Big 5 Questions and feed back to CW</p> <p>All to feedback to CW on ideas/ demands.</p>

3	<p><b>Highland Tourism Action Plan 2020 (CS)</b>  Introduced the <a href="#">Highland Tourism Action Plan 2020</a> – put in place 2013 and dovetails with national strategy and destination strategies.</p> <p>Presented on progress to date – updated from May 2015 progress check.  Colin’s progress update is what he is aware of. Need all to report, discuss and update.</p>	<p>AP to circulate  All to feedback to AP/ CS.</p>
4	<p><b>HIE Tourism Strategy (CT)</b>  Strong season – increasing investment coming forward and businesses advising that are planning for future/ strategizing.</p> <p>Headlines from year = £5 million invested last year, 100 clients supported on 1-2-1 basis, 2000 supported with ‘lighter touch’. Also community/ project work.</p> <p>Have been increasing surveys to investigate capabilities. Estimated 3000 businesses directly involved in tourism in the Highlands.</p> <p>Projects going forward – lots of resource available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● More specifics around digital activity/ support.</li> <li>● Increase analytics of business websites – responsiveness, online booking, etc.</li> <li>● Big push around internationalisation – dedicated team of advisors.</li> <li>● Webinar programme</li> <li>● City Deal near sign-off – will have strong tourism focus</li> <li>● Digital Tourism Scotland Programme</li> </ul> <p>CO mentioned need for digital education – highlighting to businesses that there can be implications to everything they put online/ social media.</p>	<p>All – keep CT informed of requests/ issues coming up from industry to inform programme.</p>
5	<p><b>Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Strategy (HT)</b>  Cairngorms National Park Authority has new 5-year Sustainable Tourism Strategy (2017 – 2022), tied to National Park Plan. Currently in draft form.</p> <p>New strategy designed to be smaller and easier to understand, measure and deliver.</p> <p>Five headline themes and three main indicators: increase visitor spend and duration more than national average, improve spread of visitors across the year and park, increase visitor experience scores.</p> <p>Key themes: leadership, skills, enhancing assets, engaging and inspiring, internationalisation.</p> <p>Also discussed: total quality destination approach, and maximising National Park status.</p>	
6	<p><b>Discussion – Chaired by SA</b>  <u>Why have HTAP? Do we need it?</u>  All acknowledged strong tier above HTAP (T2020/ STA) and below (destination group strategies).</p> <p>Nevertheless, all agreed continued value in HTAP to capture position regionally, cover areas without destination strategy, and provide regional steer.</p> <p>HTAP provides guiding principles for wider activity/ funding bodies. Still required and political/ funding risks if removed.</p> <p>All agreed need to make HTAP more active/ driving activity forward, not simply recording. What can the strategy do going forward?</p>	<p>CS to pull together ‘here’s where we are now’ table.</p> <p>CS &amp; CW to meet and pull together new HTAP framework and circulate.</p> <p>This includes: prioritising</p>

<p><u>Future of the Highland Tourism Action Plan (HTAP)</u>  All agreed HTAP was a 'creature of its time' and needs updating.  Agreed that requires more than just update – requires reviewing and changing.  Agreed for this process to be led by CS and CW.</p> <p>HTAP should follow National Mid Term Review priorities, but with acknowledgement/ edits of specific Highland challenges.</p> <p>Discussed other issues to potentially be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seasonality</li> <li>● Geographical spread  N.B. is really pinch points. A lot of the area could accommodate more visitors.</li> <li>● Capacity issues – infrastructure, but also pinch points and industry frustration</li> <li>● Customer experience</li> <li>● Lack of housing  N.B. not only about affordable housing, but also housing at desirable tier/ value, and renting opportunities. (CO &amp; HT raise as particular issues)</li> <li>● Tourism as a career (National Living Wage increasing competition with other sectors)</li> </ul> <p>General agreement that marketing going very well and more joined up than ever been. Going forward, HTAP not about 'more marketing'. More about capacity- building, industry support, infrastructure, etc.  HT – that said, cannot ignore marketing. It's not just 'more, more, more' – we need to look at who? How? How we educate? How we use it to spread visitors over time and geographically.</p> <p>CS &amp; GA – community involvement needed. We engaged those directly involved in tourism, but what about wider community? Need to increase dialogue.</p> <p><u>Infrastructure</u>  Key is influencing investment – need clarity around <i>why</i> making this investment. How do we do this?  Public sector can't do everything... needs industry and community investment and running too.  Markets will sort some issues with supply and demand. Lots of issues longer term in both planning and delivery (roads, housing, etc)  Care required around knock-on effect of infrastructure developments – can harm destination reputation. Need education of industry, communities, etc.</p> <p><u>Closing remarks</u>  Don't lose sight that many issues that require addressing are caused by <i>success</i>.  We – public sector and the industry – must not talk ourselves into a situation where it is negative.</p> <p><u>AOB</u>  Membership – discussion around widening membership to ensure geographical coverage of groups. Decision made that Venture North and Black Isle Tourism Team to be invited to join group.</p> <p><u>Next meeting</u>                                  Spring – marketing themed</p>	<p>discussions – need to clearly articulate priorities, rationale and planning.</p> <p>Also requires joined-up thinking and planning –need to be clear and consistent.</p> <p>CS &amp; GA to look at potential for a 'tourism manifesto' – brief document to highlight issues as well as HTAP strategy.</p> <p>AP, CS &amp; GA – to look at potential for some positive PR around this.</p> <p>GA and AP to invite to join in new year.</p> <p>AP to organise.</p>
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