

**Highland Tourism Partnership**  
**Minutes - Monday 9 May, 11.00am to 3.00pm**  
**Inverness Leisure, Bught Lane, Inverness**

<p><b>Present*</b></p> <p>(GA) Graeme Ambrose – Visit Inverness Loch Ness (HTP Chair)          (CS) Colin Simpson – Highland Council          (LJ) Leona Joiner – Highland Council          (DG) Douglas Gibson – Visit Wester Ross and North Coast 500          (ES) Esme Saville – Moray Speyside Tourism          (NS) Nicki Stafford – Outdoor Capital of the UK          (IF) Iain Fairweather – VisitNairn          (JM) Jack MacKay – Forestry Commission          (VM) Vicki Miller – VisitScotland          (AR) Anne Roels – VisitScotland</p>	<p>(MT) Mark Tate – Cairngorms Business Partnership          (SM) Sandra Middleton – Cairngorms National Park Authority          (HT) Heather Trench – Cairngorms National Park Authority          (RY) Rosemary Young – Scotland's Best/ Visit Nairn          (JB) Joan Bishop – Dornoch Tourism Group          (JW) Jo Wyke – Venture North          (CM) Cat Macleod – Venture North          (AP) Amy Prior – VisitScotland          (SA) Scott Armstrong – VisitScotland          (SD) Steve Duncan – VisitScotland          (SR) Susan Robertson – VisitScotland</p>
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<p><b>Apologies*</b></p> <p>Cllr Audrey Sinclair – The Highland Council          Cllr Bill Lobban – The Highland Council          David Richardson – FSB          Sandra Hutton – Destination Skye &amp; Lochalsh          Marina Huggett – Tourism Excellency Consultancy</p>	<p>Mairi Mcintosh – Moray Council          Maren Ebeling – Scottish Natural Heritage          Aileen Robertson – Skye Marketing Group          Chris Taylor – Highlands and Islands Enterprise          Robert Muir – Highlands and Islands Enterprise          Lizbeth Collie – Black Isle Tourism Group</p>
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\* Please note. Owing to the unique nature of this HTP meeting – which comprised a Marketing Strategy and Content Sharing Workshop (see item 1, below) – the invitee list was widened to include additional tourism groups in order for more groups to feed into, and benefit from, the collaborative marketing approach and new VisitScotland strategy.

	Description	Action
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>SA welcomed the group and introduced the attendees. He then explained the aims and approach of the meeting as it differed from the usual HTP.</p> <p>VM explained that the focus of the day was a Marketing Strategy and Content Sharing Workshop, comprised of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Area Marketing Strategy – round-table discussion</li> <li>● VisitScotland: A New Era – short presentation by VisitScotland</li> <li>● Content creation and content sharing – brainstorming session</li> <li>● 2016/ 17 marketing activity – round-table discussion</li> </ul>	
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Area Marketing Strategy</b></p> <p>SR summarised the Area Marketing Strategy, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The group then discussed opportunities and amendments. Main topics arising:</p> <p><u>Key messages</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accessibility of all of the Highlands and Moray Speyside</li> <li>● Weather – need to alter perceptions of snowy/ cold</li> <li>● Pet friendly destination</li> </ul> <p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pet friendly offerings agreed to be a key opportunity to focus on - year-round custom</li> <li>● Events to address seasonality, but need to be carefully planned.</li> <li>● More self-catering opportunities in autumn / winter</li> <li>● Golf</li> <li>● Repeat visitors</li> </ul> <p><u>Approach</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Need for carefully segmented approach</li> <li>● Targeting a younger audience - 28-35 year old.</li> <li>● How can we all be more reactive to real time news, and more tactical in our marketing approach – e.g. snow, forecasts, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>VisitScotland (VS)</b> to circulate Pet Friendly Insights paper.</p> <p><b>VS</b> to add in pet friendly as a recommendation to slide 8.</p> <p><b>VS</b> to investigate whether there are repeat visitor stats for the Highlands.</p> <p><b>SR</b> to make changes to strategy following feedback.</p>

<p><b>3 VisitScotland: A New Era</b> AR and VM explained new VisitScotland approach to marketing/ content.</p> <p><u>Key message from session</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VisitScotland's channels are there for everyone to contribute to/ use.</li> <li>• Key to create shareable assets that fit groups' needs, and for use by them.</li> </ul> <p><u>Content Calendar</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VM explained value of the Content Calendar available in the <a href="#">Spirit of Scotland industry eBook</a> (pp.13–17) to help groups plan their content themes across the year in line with research.</li> </ul> <p><u>Website</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-launched visitscotland.com will evolve and will continue to be embellished; ensuring appropriate linkage is in place – working with tourism groups to do this.</li> <li>• Working with new contractor to optimise search facilities across the site.</li> <li>• Crucial to ensure there is great digital content on visitscotland.com and groups' websites.</li> <li>• Need to work together to keep that content fresh and optimise linkages between sites.</li> <li>• Importance of linkages into and out of visitscotland.com – to destinations and offerings/ products.</li> <li>• Opportunity to influence website content in terms of Highlands landing page (<a href="https://www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/highlands/">https://www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/highlands/</a> ) and getting the linkage right</li> </ul> <p><u>New oppportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New <b>VS Trip planning tool</b> – A practical trip planning tool to help visitors to plan their break by creating, saving and sharing their own travel itineraries on visitscotland.com</li> <li>• New <b>VisitScotland Online Community</b> – explanatory video shown. New online community offering a platform to enable everyone in Scotland to get involved and help people experience the Spirit of Scotland. Focus is to assist visitors to understand, navigate and enjoy all that Scotland offers. Open to businesses to contribute, but not a sales platform. As the online community builds, the amount of intelligence we have online will flourish. Beta testing at present – working with influential bloggers to create content/ test site. External launch not until end June 2016.</li> </ul> <p><u>VS Blog:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 1m page views in 12 months</li> <li>• Variety of subjects written by internal teams and external guest bloggers for social and ezine promotion.</li> </ul> <p><u>eBook</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of subjects written by internal teams and external guest bloggers for social and ezine promotion.</li> <li>• eBook for adrenaline junkies planned in – groups can influence content of planned eBooks</li> <li>• Potential for a <b>regional Highlands eBook</b> using a blend of video/images and bite sized copy. This can be made very inspirational and interactive like recent wildlife eBook <a href="http://ebooks.visitscotland.com/scottish-wildlife-series/">http://ebooks.visitscotland.com/scottish-wildlife-series/</a></li> <li>• Also plans for a pet friendly blog</li> </ul> <p><u>Video</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VM explained importance of video content. Optimum duration for social media is &lt;20seconds – get to the point quickly. Whereas broadcast can be longer/ build up.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Groups</b> to feedback on website <b>VS</b> to arrange individual meetings with DMOs to cover website content / linkage <b>Groups</b> to feedback on town and villages on VS website</p> <p><b>Groups</b> to share ideas of local experts/ ambassadors for community. <b>VM</b> to share URL for VS community once it goes live</p> <p><b>Groups</b> to submit names of potential bloggers – local or working with</p> <p><b>Groups</b> to submit ideas for eBooks</p>
<p><b>4 Content creation and content sharing - round-table/ brainstorming</b> Over the course of discussions/ round-table activities, each group was asked (by AR and VM) to share the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Themes they wish to focus on for 2016/17</li> <li>Content already developed</li> <li>Content wish list going forward</li> </ol>	

### **VISIT INVERNESS LOCH NESS (GA)**

- Key themes = landscape/ nature, activities, see & do, food & drink, events
- Some great new events coming up such as the Knitting Festival, International Canals Conference.
- Social Travel Summit in September – hosted by iambassador, supported by VisitBritain and Visit Inverness Loch Ness. Total number of attendees expected to be ~120.
- New 'Nessie Hunting' campaign with VisitBritain.
- International focus working with VB on France, Netherlands and Germany
- Inverness Loch Ness video coming out soon.

Would like to see more on:

- Cycling - all types (road, off-road, family) – especially south side, and Loch Ness Etape in April (need to be promoted early)
- Running (in addition to walking/ biking): huge opportunity and a lot of great events.
- Aim is to extend the season.
- Focus on unique events – something a bit different.
- Hidden gems.

### **MORAY SPEYSIDE TOURISM (ES)**

- Key themes (now & going forward) = Cycling & mountain biking; untouched raw coastline; food & drink.
- Key markets (now & going forward) = younger markets – millennials; short break / adventure seekers
- Three new videos produced, focused on: cycling, food and coast. Will have shorter edits for social media. VM asked to be kept informed – interesting content with themed edits linking to content calendar.
- #MoraySpeyside hashtag well-used
- Content plan in development, and VS content calendar very useful for planning.
- Keen to tap into local knowledge and local stories

### **THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL(CS)**

Would like to see more content on:

- Hidden / forgotten gems – including beaches not typically promoted
- What to do if weather not appropriate for outdoor activities
- Increased linkages to specialist sites/ content – e.g. climbing blogs, etc. so VS not seen only as generalists.

### **LOCHABER OUTDOOR CAPITAL OF THE UK (NS)**

- Highlighting outdoors activities but also iconic sites such as Glenfinnan, Glen Coe, castles, history.
- Launching a new video about 'misconceptions' (akin to California advert)
- Developing content plan – working with VS
- Would like to see more on: marine activities, encouraging breaks in the shoulder season, adventure seekers and 'slow adventure' (not necessarily high adrenaline), targeting younger markets.

### **CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY (SM/ HT)**

- Themes = Dark Skies (Glenlivet). Can we get some dark sky footage?
- Themes = Accessible tourism – would like to see a blog post on this.
- Highlighted importance of *family* cycling market
- Hidden gems – e.g. Ailnack Gorge

### **VENTURE NORTH (JW/ CM)**

- Key themes = Outdoors activitie (in particular surfing), linking with NC500, Caithness/ Sutherland dark skies (have timelapse footage)
- Working on a heritage app (preloadable app to find heritage sites in Caithness without internet)
- Festivals planned – Archaeological festival, end of August; Food festival, end of Oct
- i-discovery marketing campaign since March
- Making use of user-generated content on website (pinboard) – drawn from hashtags
- Films launched early March – including Dark Skies, winter sports and surfing

**VS** to look into ways to harness/ make the most of this opportunity?

**VM** to look into accessing pockets of info/ expertise

**VM** to check if there is content planned for family cycling.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Next film in June (family days) and then in August (food &amp; drink, retail accommodation)</li> <li>● Blog series every 2 weeks – sharing discoveries, etc.</li> <li>● Would like to see more on undiscovered gems (e.g. Sandwood Bay) and local ambassadors.</li> </ul> <p><b>WESTER ROSS (DG)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Keen to focus on younger audience – how do we appeal to the younger generation</li> <li>● Focus on quirkier/ alternative events – e.g. adventure film festival</li> </ul> <p><b>FORESTRY COMMISSION (JM)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Forestry plays a part in a lot of themes/ products and Commission keen to work with tourism groups to help groups and consumers benefit from the resource.</li> <li>● Interest in Dark Skies.</li> </ul> <p><b>VISITNAIRN/ SCOTLAND'S BEST B&amp;BS (IF/ RY)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Happy to supply imagery – lots of photography</li> <li>● Experimenting with QR codes at points of interest, linking to online content.</li> <li>● Scotland's Best B&amp;B produce a range of blogs – including golf, gin, marmalade, wildlife, etc.</li> <li>● Outlander still very popular</li> <li>● Scotland Best B&amp;Bs website working well</li> <li>● Would like to see more promotion of golf, dark skies, hidden gems.</li> </ul> <p><b>CAIRNGORMS BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP (MT)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on first time visitors and adventure seekers</li> <li>● Current campaign with Caledonian Sleeper targeting London and the South East</li> <li>● Currently producing video and content assets</li> <li>● Focus on local stories</li> <li>● Wants to look at how to be more reactive to things and promote them in real time?</li> </ul> <p><b>DORNOCH (JB)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Key themes = music in May, F&amp;D in September, keep fit,</li> <li>● NC500 for trails in Dornoch, one of them is whisky.</li> <li>● Fishing / heritage trail</li> <li>● Have a 2.5 min video last year, and have a shorter one</li> <li>● New distillery / gin tasting in Dornoch and new spa as part of courthouse development</li> <li>● Events = Whisky festival last week of September, Ceilidh hog roast end of October, new sportive in October in Dornoch, Golf Club's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2016/ 17 marketing activity – recap/ summary</b></p> <p><u>Themes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extending the season is priority, but this means different thing to different regions</li> <li>● Focus on younger audience came out strongly across regions</li> <li>● All regions keen to promote 'hidden gems': discovering the undiscovered, and idea of being the first person to find out about something</li> <li>● All regions keen to promote outdoors activities – varying levels of adventure/ adrenaline</li> <li>● All regions keen to promote local stories/ people</li> </ul> <p><u>Channels</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Possibility to do eBooks and blogs highlighting those themes and hidden gems, cycling etc...</li> <li>● Videos key across all regions – with many groups already having strong content assets to promote/ share.</li> <li>● Groups to provide feedback on website, and opportunity to influence landing page, blog, etc.</li> </ul> <p><u>Events</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All regions would like to see more focus/ creation of unusual events, not just the big ones, and marketing to extend attendees' stay/ spend in region.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Groups</b> to send following to AR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Top 5 hidden gems (could be people, experiences, wildlife)</li> <li>● Top 5 myth and legends</li> <li>● Top 5 outdoors activities / adrenaline activities</li> <li>● Top 5 quirky events</li> </ul> <p><b>VS</b> to make draft proposal on 16/ 17 content-led marketing activity.</p>