

The Tourism and Environment Forum

Formed in 1994, chaired by Tom Brock the Chief Executive of the Scottish Seabird Centre and funded by VisitScotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Enterprise and Highland and Islands Enterprise the Tourism and Environment Forum is a multi organisational partnership set up to:

'bring long-term business and environmental benefits to the Scottish tourism industry through encouraging sustainable use of our world-class natural and built heritage'.

Ten years ago, the Forum introduced sustainability onto the Scottish tourism agenda. The Forum uniquely brought development, heritage and marketing organisations together and embarked on pioneering projects including Tourism Management Programmes, the Green Tourism Business Scheme, nature based tourism studies, interpretive planning and the promotion of good practice through the Positive Impact newsletter and Forum's web site www.greentourism.org.uk.

The Forum continues to add value and leadership in sustainable tourism by "joining up" the activities of other tourism organisations and bringing a degree of synergy and common priority by co-ordinating the overlapping responsibilities of other partners. This statement is a further demonstration of the Forum's work. It comes at a time, ten years on, when sustainable development is becoming a mainstream theme throughout Scottish Executive policy. And at a time when sustainable development issues that have implications for tourism, are regularly headline news.

The members of the Tourism and Environment Forum are:

Council for Scottish Archaeology	Scottish Executive
Forestry Commission Scotland	Scottish Hotel School (Strathclyde University)
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	Scottish Landowners Federation
Historic Scotland	Scottish Local Authority Economic Development Group
Keep Scotland Beautiful	Scottish Natural Heritage
National Trust for Scotland	Scottish Tourism Forum
Perthshire Tourist Board	Scottish Youth Hostels Association
RSPB Scotland	sportScotland
Scottish Enterprise	VisitScotland
Scottish Environment Link	



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Scotland ... towards sustainable tourism



A statement by the Tourism and Environment Forum:

"The vital link between the environment and the whole spectrum of tourism in Scotland is essential to the success – even the very survival – of both. I believe that sustainable tourism is a central way forward for Scottish tourism."

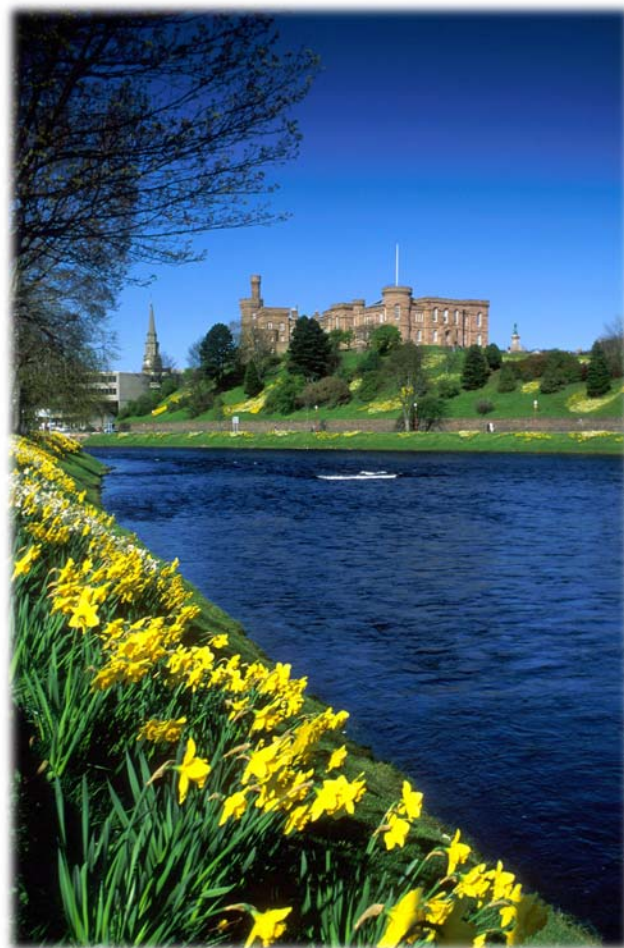
Frank McAveety, MSP Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Scotland United, November 17th 2003.

This is the Tourism and Environment Forum's Statement on Sustainable Tourism. The purpose of this statement is to reflect the Forum's thinking on priorities for making Scottish tourism more sustainable – economically, environmentally and socially. Other organisations involved in Scottish tourism are urged to adopt the sustainable principles laid out here and to work towards the aims highlighted at the end of the document.

The Tourism Framework for Action¹ and related public policies and provide the context for TEF's recommended sustainable tourism objectives and accompanying guidance from the Forum. To help with delivery of these objectives, the Forum also recommends that greater prominence be given to sustainability and the links with food and agriculture, as part of the Framework for Action review process.

The Tourism and Environment

Tourism is big business for Scotland. The Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001 clearly demonstrated the importance of tourism to the wider Scottish economy, and the countryside in particular. The Tourism and Environment Forum (TEF) strongly believes, sustainability – economic, social and environmental² – is the only realistic way forward for tourism to generate even greater benefits for the Scottish people and their economy.



TEF works closely with tourism business partners and its twenty member bodies. Over the last 10 years, it has supported and promoted projects and initiatives that have developed and tested new ways of achieving more sustainable tourism. In addition, the Forum seeks to ensure the many different policies and funding streams being deployed by public agencies to further tourism are “joined up” to the extent they contribute positively towards sustainability.³

Setting the scene for sustainable tourism

Tourism is a key driver of economic activity across Scotland, generating £4.5 billion each year for the Scottish economy and supporting 215,800 jobs. But tourism also has a wide range of other impacts – both environmental and social. Visitor surveys have repeatedly indicated that the quality of landscape and environment is the primary motivator for visitors selecting Scotland as a holiday destination⁴. And visitors also mention the friendly local people as an appealing aspect of a holiday here.

At one level, sustainable tourism can help secure a future for the local food producer, pub or post office or the bus network in a fragile rural or island community. At another, it can help drive regeneration and deepen visitors' understanding of their destination and their place within it. Tourism businesses that sell local produce not only support other local businesses but also help to maintain the very environment that our visitors come for. Clearly, tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to a comprehensive, cross - sectoral approach to sustainable development in Scotland.

Small is beautiful

Of the 20,000 businesses that make up Scottish tourism, the vast majority are small. They all experience the financial challenges of running a small business in today's market place. In such a disparate industry, achieving

wholesale adoption of policies is very difficult. But, in terms of sustainable tourism, this small-scale diversity is a strength, for change when it does happen, is grass roots change. Pragmatic businesses will change their own attitudes towards sustainable tourism, if given sound reasons that show their ‘bottom line’ and marketplace credibility will improve and the asset on which their business is based will be protected for the future.

What is sustainable tourism?

There are many definitions and terms associated with sustainable tourism. TEF works with the definition adopted by the World Tourism Organisation.

“Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems.”⁵

Using this definition and having consulted with a wide range of organisations with links to both sustainable development and tourism in Scotland TEF believes the following aims must be pursued for greater sustainability in Scottish tourism to be achieved.

Seven KEY AIMS for sustainable tourism in Scotland

- a more even spread of visitors throughout the year
- more tourism businesses actively enhancing and protecting the environment, for example by joining the Green Tourism Business Scheme
- greater investment in tourism people and skills
- a better integrated quality tourism product that meets visitors' demands and expectations and encourages them to stay longer and spend more
- a clearer understanding of tourism's impacts
- greater involvement of communities in tourism planning, development and marketing
- greater use by visitors of Scotland's public transport system.

¹ Tourism Framework for Action: www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/tourism/tfar-00.asp

² For the purposes of this document 'environment' includes both natural and built heritage, as well as access to and quiet enjoyment of these resources

³ www.greentourism.org.uk

⁴ STAS: www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/tourism/tfar-00.asp

⁵ World Tourism Organisation www.world-tourism.org