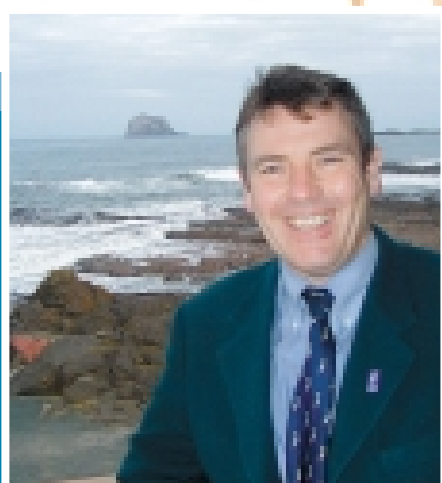


Positive IMPACT

Helping the Scottish tourism industry put its No. 1 asset first



Tom Brock
Tourism and Environment Forum Chairman

Tourism and Environment Forum welcomes new Chairman

The Tourism and Environment Forum (TEF) is delighted to welcome its new Chairman, Tom Brock, Director of the highly acclaimed Scottish Seabird Centre in North Berwick. Tom takes over the role from Roger Wheeler whose support of the Forum over the last few years has been extremely valuable in raising the importance of a sustainable approach to Scottish tourism:

I was delighted and honoured to be asked to take on the role of chairman of the Tourism and Environment Forum. Roger Wheeler will be an extremely hard act to follow.

I am committed to ensuring that the Forum plays a key role in the development of sustainable tourism throughout Scotland. The potential is huge and it is crucial that with our partners, we realise this potential in the best

possible way. I know that the Forum is fortunate in having enthusiastic staff who are committed to making this happen. There will be many challenges and opportunities and I look forward to exciting times ahead.

If you think that winter was hibernation time for those involved in Scottish nature-based tourism then think again. There's been a lot going on in the last few months. So much, in fact, that we thought it would be a good idea to use this issue of Positive Impact to bring you up-to-date on the latest developments and projects. So here's a taster:

Let's work together

VisitScotland are producing a new 'Wildlife Scotland' brochure to showcase Scotland's wildlife and natural environment. The Tourism and Environment Forum has been speaking to tourism businesses around Scotland with an interest in nature and wildlife. One thing is clear from these discussions: Scotland's wildlife and nature tourism operators (and this includes a number of traditional 'activity holiday' businesses) want to work together. TEF will help

them achieve this and encourage them to work with other tourism businesses in their area.

We need to know more about what we've got to offer visitors and what they think of what is already available. Important studies by Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage are giving us an essential insight into these issues - insight that will help guide future development and promotion of our key nature and wildlife tourism sites.

Sharing the knowledge

SNH and Tourist Board Training have developed a training course that gives tourism staff the basics when it comes to natural knowledge. Feedback from participants has been very positive so if the training course comes to your area, make sure you sign up fast, places are sure to be in demand.

In Argyll, the well-established Nadair initiative is supporting 30 projects across the Argyll Isles from the 'Tiree Pilgrimage Trail', to the Wildlife Information Centre at Port Charlotte on Islay.

In the parts of Scotland hit hardest by foot and mouth, the Making Tracks initiative is supporting sustainable nature-based projects that bring together farming and tourism businesses.

There's a lot going on and the Tourism and Environment Forum wants to make sure that everyone who is involved in Scottish tourism knows what's happening. If you know of a nature-based tourism project that you'd like others to hear about, please get in touch. You can find our contact details at the end of this newsletter.

Please pass this newsletter on to anyone you think might be interested.

Tom Brock

Tom Brock, Chairman
Tourism and Environment Forum

Hard rock to butterflies - a nature-based tourism initiative

The main reason visitors come to the Highlands and Islands is the quality of the scenery and, increasingly, people are looking for more interaction with nature as part of their holiday. The percentage of visitors taking part in wildlife-watching is now at an all-time high (around 35%).

Recognising this enthusiasm, the first step for a recent project was to examine the existing nature-based tourism product in the Highlands and Islands. Basic information was needed on the number, location, and type of places where visitors could experience nature-based tourism.

Over 170 sites across the Highlands and Islands were identified, and funding allowed for approximately half of these to be part of an initial audit of the types of provision available to visitors.

Birds, ants, butterflies

The results show a wide range of natural heritage features are accessible throughout the area, from geology to seabird

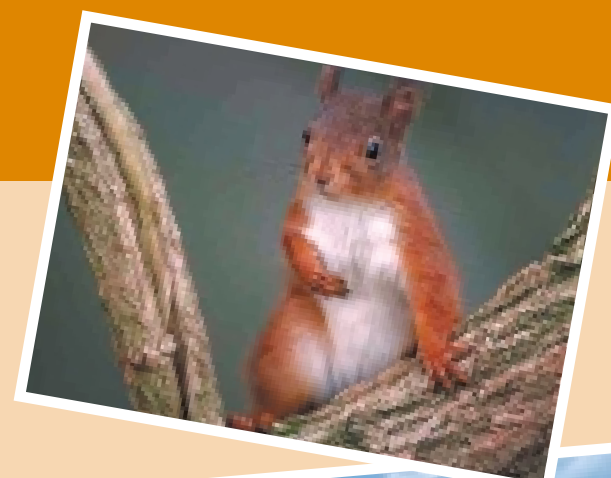
colonies and wood ants to butterflies. All of the sites offer unique viewing opportunities of a habitat or species and most provide some form of interpretation.

A database of these sites has been developed which has been combined with data from the Highland Interpretative Strategy. A set of Management Guidelines is currently being developed which allows site managers to assess their sites against the types of provision that visitors expect.

Site managers who were involved in the initial audit will soon receive information on their site, and we'd be happy to discuss how we can help you to move your site or business forward.

Positive Action:

Want to get involved, or simply find out more? Contact Jenny Anderson on jenny.anderson@snh.gov.uk



Making Tracks across the south

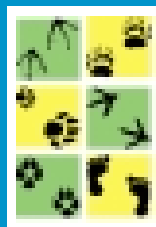
A new project linked to nature-based tourism in the south of Scotland began last August. 'Making Tracks' is funded by VisitScotland and run by the tourism boards and councils for Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, together with Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Enterprise and the National Farmers Union Scotland.

Making Tracks aims to encourage groups of farmers and land-based businesses to work collaboratively with mainstream tourism businesses and attractions. Such partnerships can then enhance existing sustainable visitor attractions, develop new ones or establish other new businesses to provide nature-based tourism facilities and services.

Help for such ventures is being offered through the project's grant scheme. This has been developed to assist businesses with capital and start-up costs. Some collaborative schemes have already been developed and approved, including two in Dumfries and Galloway. One of these will give support for new visitor facilities and joint marketing at the Mull of Galloway.

The second is a new visitor trail linked to the RSPB's red kite release programme around Loch Ken. Launched in March, this is part of a project to restore breeding red kites to Dumfries and Galloway after an absence of more than a century.

Making Tracks has also been given a funding boost from the European Commission's 'Leader +' Programme. The project is inviting people to register interest or submit outline proposals. Suitable local projects could benefit from grant assistance of up to 50 per cent, with a maximum cash value of £62,500.



Positive Action:

Contact Iain Wilson for further details on 01387 245267 or iain.Wilson@scotnet.co.uk Visit the Making Tracks website www.greentourism.org.uk/MakingTracks

Sustaining the experience

The importance of Scotland's countryside to our tourism sector has never been more apparent. So how can we be confident that our countryside assets are being used and managed sustainably? Bill Taylor of Scottish Natural Heritage reports:

SNH is working on a system to help site managers to manage and monitor visitors' use of countryside sites to ensure that a quality experience is provided and maintained. The system addresses most of the issues that have resulted in previous approaches failing to achieve widespread adoption.

Long-standing concern

Managing visitors to the countryside has been a concern since the late 19th Century. Recently, ideas about sustainability have influenced countryside management thinking. These have highlighted the need to link economic, social and environmental factors, and have placed an emphasis on identifying measurable indicators and agreed standards or thresholds.

The need to develop a fresh approach to the management of sites was identified by

SNH, NTS, FC, SWT and Fife Council. This approach should be more dynamic, can actively help site management and marketing, and be part of a regular cycle of reappraisal and adjustment. It is critical that the method is simple, widely applicable and can be recognised as a useful tool by site managers.

A new approach to planning for visitors at countryside sites has now been drawn up. This was put to a large, participatory workshop, where 50 site managers and management staff from across Scotland gave their views on the suggested methodology. This is now being tested on a wide range of countryside sites throughout Scotland including Mar Lodge, Lochore Meadows Country Park, St Abbs and Glentworth Forest.



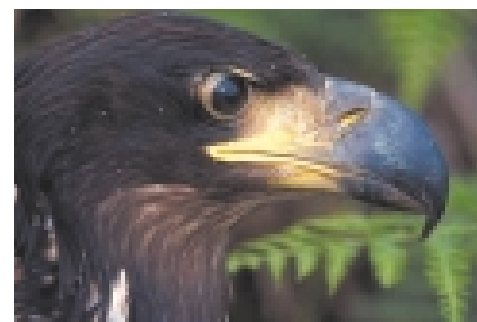
Positive Action:

For more information contact: Bill Taylor, Scottish Natural Heritage Tel 01463 712221 email bill.taylor@snh.gov.uk The initial report is available on www.greentourism.org.uk

Wildlife Scotland

This spring sees the launch of VisitScotland's 'Wildlife Scotland' brochure highlighting the wonders of Scotland's wildlife and natural environment. Working in partnership with Argyll, the Isles, Loch Lomond, Stirling and Trossachs Tourist Board, the brochure forms the first piece of promotional activity as part of the wildlife brand marketing strategy.

The new wildlife publication will contain information on land mammals, birds, marine life, as well as Scotland's many varied and diverse habitats and unique environments. Listings of a selection of sites and attractions from Scottish Natural Heritage, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Forest Enterprise, Scottish Wildlife Trust, National Trust for Scotland and Wildfowl & Wetland Trust will be featured, detailing locations at which sustainable wildlife-watching can be enjoyed.



Seeking natural balance

At the forefront of all VisitScotland promotional activity is the appreciation that there is a delicate balance to be struck between promoting the wildlife tourism product and maintaining sustainable development. With this in mind a comprehensive 'responsible watching' code will be detailed within the publication. Consumers will be encouraged to contact their local Tourist Information Centre for further information and recommendations on

how to watch wildlife in a sustainable and responsible manner. Following the success of 2002's pilot project, wildlife tourism training is being made available this year to all relevant TIC staff throughout Scotland.

Print run quantities of 'Wildlife Scotland' will amount to 100,000 copies in the first phase with distribution mechanisms via the VisitScotland early season campaign, all major TICs, VisitScotland's London Office, National Booking and Information line and online promotions.

Positive Action:

To find out more contact Gwen Raez on gwen.raez@visitscotland.com

TLC for Tourist Information Centre Staff

Tourist Board Training Ltd, in conjunction with SNH and HIE, have successfully bid for European funding (ESF) to deliver a second phase of training in wildlife tourism awareness for tourism staff. This will deliver a course in each of the Highlands and Islands LEC areas over the next 2 years beginning Spring 2003.

The courses will be designed for staff from the 'front line' of giving information to

visitors. They would have the following broad aims:

- To develop knowledge of and enthusiasm for wildlife as an important part of Scotland's tourism product.
- To give participants confidence in answering enquiries about wildlife and wildlife-watching in their area.
- To develop awareness of good practice in wildlife-watching that can give visitors a better experience while contributing to conservation.

A very successful pilot scheme with similar aims was run during Spring 2002 in Shetland, Western Isles, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and Dumfries and Galloway. Ninety-three participants took part and the courses were very well received in all areas. It is the intention of the partnership to ensure that this type of awareness-raising will improve the ability of all 'front-line' staff to help the growing number of visitors interested in enjoying Scotland's spectacular wildlife.



Positive Action:

Contact Liz Buchanan, Tourist Board Training Ltd Tel 01294 313006 tbt@tbt.ossian.net

Prime sites pinpointed

Want to experience some new birdwatching sites in the Highlands, but don't know where to look for up-to-date information? Never fear, the RSPB Scotland Highland Members' Group can come to the rescue.

A couple of years ago, the group produced a 'Birdwatching Sites in the Highlands' booklet. This has sold well, raising over £2,000 last year for local RSPB projects. A new edition has just been published.

Also researched and edited by members of the group, the new booklet has been expanded to include a number of new walks. This brings the total coverage to 50 sites, ranging from the Ness Islands walk in Inverness to the Caithness and Sutherland peatlands and a range of other places between Findhorn Bay and Handa Island.

One aspect of Highland birdlife the guide highlights is the low population levels of Slavonian grebe, black grouse and capercaillie. With this in mind, it makes a plea for birdwatchers to follow the code of conduct for black grouse and capercaillie



and the 'Grebe Cross Code' for grebe watching. Both of these are available from the RSPB's North Regional Office, Etive House, Beechwood Park, Inverness, IV2 3BW. Tel: 01463 715000.

Positive Action:
Birdwatching Sites in the Highlands costs £3.00 from Maureen Ringrose, who can also provide further information about the group's activities.
Tel: 01349 861804
www.rspb-highland.co.uk

Older and Wilder



Wildlife and the outdoors: it's a quality of life thing.

So perhaps it's not too surprising that plenty of older people, with time and money to spare, should home-in on the Highlands and Islands for a little of what they fancy.

That hunch can now be backed-up by solid facts, thanks to a recent survey funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Fifteen sites, chosen to represent different types of wildlife tourism experience across the Highlands and Islands, were included in the survey. The headline figures make interesting reading.

They suggest that wildlife site users tend to be older and in a higher social grouping than the Highland norm. One-third of them are on repeat visits. The majority of these wild-at-hearts are from England. Among the smaller number from

overseas, the Netherlands and Germany are leading home countries. Foreign visitors also seem to prefer the wilder sites.

Beginners, dabblers, studiers

Four categories of visitor were recognised, based on level of interest in wildlife. Almost 80 per cent of visitors have an active interest and could be called 'beginners, dabblers or studiers'. The remainder are 'gazers', mainly interested in the scenery.

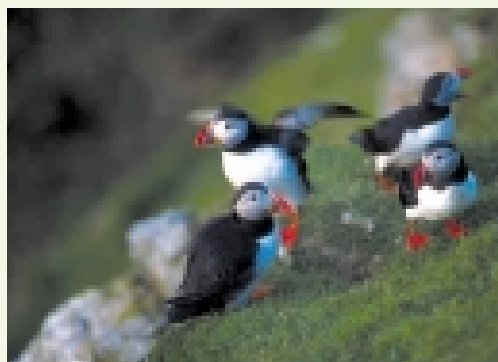
Current wildlife site visitors aren't making much use of the Internet to get information about wildlife sites. Most rely on a recommendation, and tend to have stayed in local accommodation, often as part of a 1-2 week trip.

When given three choices to describe their main reason for visiting the site, the majority (56%) said that it was to see wildlife. Thirty-one per cent said it was to visit a nice place and 14 per cent indicated that some other activity, such as walking or cycling, had brought them there. The interesting point is that for almost half of those surveyed, seeing wildlife was not the main reason for visiting. This has clear implications for the way wildlife tourism is marketed.

The personnel touch

Another finding is that sites need to cater for times when wildlife is less observable and that some help in improving watching skills would be widely welcomed. Where staff members are available, they are much appreciated, but many visitors do not expect to come across staff at sites.

So sites that do have staff could gain by more promotion of this valued asset. Spread the news, and those older, wilder and well-heeled visitors keen to get some expert assistance could be making a beeline for your facility.



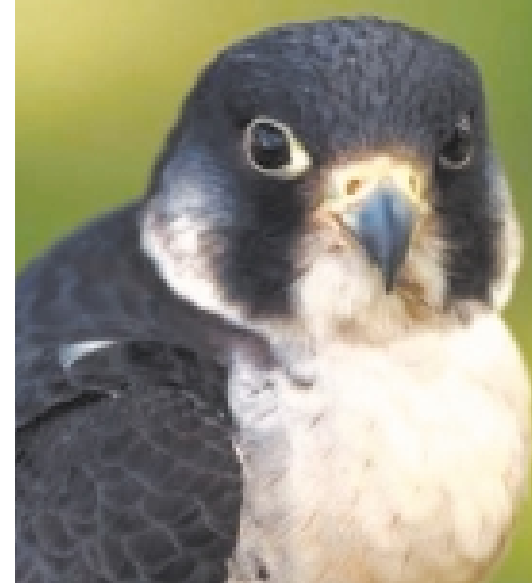
Positive Action:
The report is now available at www.greentourism.org.uk and on the tourism industry website: www.scotexchange.net

En-raptured

Watching birds of prey from well-advertised visitor facilities is arguably one of the oldest forms of wildlife-related tourism in Scotland. Just think of the Strathspey ospreys, re-established back in the 1950s and their lineage still going strong.

The network of places that offer up-close live viewing of some seriously impressive birds is continuing to grow. Latest in line is a pair of nesting peregrine falcons near Huntly in Aberdeenshire.

Staff from the Forestry Commission's Buchan Forest District have focussed cameras on the peregrine eyrie. Pictures are relayed to the new seasonal visitor centre beside the A96, two miles west of Huntly. Entry to the visitor centre is free.



For a £2 charge (with concessions for families and other groups) visitors can also walk to a hide and view the birds for themselves. There are special arrangements to enable disabled visitors to access the bird hide from the visitor centre, which watch organisers plan to keep open between April and August.

"It is hoped that by seeing these wild and beautiful birds in their natural environment," said one of the watch organisers, "the wider public will be alerted to the problems and the difficulties these birds have from poisoning and egg collecting."

The part peregrines and other birds of prey play in the ecosystem will be explained at the new centre, which will also show how their presence and well-being is a useful indicator of environmental health and local biodiversity.

Positive Action:
For further information please contact Forest Enterprise, Buchan Forest District Office 01466 794161

Networking for Nature and Business



Highland Adventure Safaris

At the end of last year, the Tourism and Environment Forum (TEF) held two meetings for wildlife and nature tourism businesses. Continuing TEF's current focus on wildlife tourism, the aim of the meetings was to provide businesses with the opportunity to meet and discuss key issues affecting their work and the environment on which they rely.

Over seventy businesses attended the

meetings in Glasgow and Inverness. Both events were positive and constructive and generated a raft of ideas. The main issues were marketing, quality assurance, conservation and the value of a charter or code. When asked how these issues could be tackled, closer co-operation, not just amongst themselves but with the public sector and NGOs as well, came through loud and clear.

Discussions and feedback
Responding to this, a small working group met to consider the possibility of a network or association that could build on the ideas that had been generated. Assisted by the Tourism and Environment Forum, the group discussed what role a network or association might take

and the activities it would undertake. This discussion was fed back to businesses at a meeting in Perth.

"With over 250 businesses involved in wildlife and nature tourism across Scotland, there are naturally many common issues which these businesses share", said Caroline Warburton, Tourism and Environment Forum. "The meetings have shown that there is no shortage of good ideas and perhaps by working together, businesses can bring mutual benefits to each other whilst encouraging a responsible and sustainable approach to nature-based tourism in Scotland."



Ecocruz

Positive Action:

For more information contact Caroline Warburton at the Tourism and Environment Forum 01463 723059 or enquiries@greentourism.org.uk or visit www.greentourism.org.uk.

Scottish Enterprise takes a look at Nature-based Tourism

The Scottish Enterprise Network (SEN) is looking at how best to develop the potential of nature-based tourism. To do this, it has completed an audit of businesses that come under the nature-based tourism 'umbrella'. SEN has also held a series of workshops around the country, both to share

findings of the report and gather feedback from the sector.

Elaine Booth, Senior Executive, Competitive Business says "One of the first actions is to take industry views on board in terms of the barriers they face and to consider the

support required as they seek to develop. In a more strategic context," she adds, "it is becoming clear that the development of commercial products

through collaboration is a priority area and that SEN may have a role to play in facilitating this."

Positive Action:

The report will be available shortly on www.greentourism.org.uk



Forum member organisations:-

Council for Scottish Archaeology, Edinburgh and Lothians Tourist Board, Forestry Commission, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Historic Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful, National Trust for Scotland, RSPB, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Environment Link, Scottish Executive, Scottish Hotel School (Strathclyde University), Scottish Landowners Federation, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Tourism Forum, SEPA, sportScotland, VisitScotland

The Forum's goal is 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'.

The Tourism and Environment Forum
Thistle House, Beechwood Park North,
Inverness IV2 3ED
Tel: 01463 723059 Fax: 01463 723055
Email: enquiries@greentourism.org.uk
Website: www.greentourism.org.uk

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Nadair and Nature

The Nadair Trust is a forward-looking partnership of community groups, charities and public bodies. Its aim is to protect the rich natural and cultural heritage of the isles while promoting sustainable development. Nature-based tourism forms an important part of its work.

"The three-year programme is well on track," says Dugie Bannatyne, Nadair Project Manager, "and will contribute to the economic development of island communities."

Two years into the programme, the 30 Nadair schemes begun so far include a range of projects that will help to boost nature-based tourism on the Isles. "The Heritage Tourism Training Project offers general heritage and tourism courses on six of the islands," says Nadair's Craig Whyte,



"with more specialised events, such as tour guide training and a 'learning journey' currently under development." "Other projects have produced attractive heritage brochures", says Craig, "encouraging visitors to 'discover' the isles of Islay and Jura, Colonsay and Oronsay, Coll and Tiree. Some of the initiatives include the development of walks and trails such as the 'Wildlife and Heritage Trail' on Mull, the 'Tiree Pilgrimage Trail', short historical trails on the Ross of Mull, and a series of 'Community Access' routes on Islay."

The Wildlife Information Centre at Port Charlotte on Islay and An Iodhlann Archive on Tiree are among the community-based centres that are currently receiving support through Nadair.

Positive Action:

For more information about the Nadair Trust and its projects, visit www.nadairtrust.freeserve.co.uk