

# Scottish Democratic Alliance

## Tourism-Executive Summary

Updated 10-06-2009

**Tourism is a key sector of the Scottish economy and employment market**, and the Scottish Democratic Alliance (SDA) is committed to supporting and encouraging this vital industry in order to enable it to flourish within the highly competitive global tourist market. In this interim policy document we share a few of our thoughts and objectives with you.

The **SDA** welcomes the recent initiatives by the Scottish government and fully supports their objectives for **Scotland's Year of Homecoming** - namely, to increase the number of overseas visitors, which will produce an increase in tourism-related tax revenues.

**Scotland has a fantastic tourist product to offer the world.** From our spectacular scenery, our diverse and unique culture, to our music and our friendly people, there is much to enjoy.

**Tourism:** As Scotland's most diverse private wealth generating industry, encompassing a wide range of activities, cultural pursuits and accommodation, there is a need for proactive policies, fiscal incentives and focused integrated support from the government and its agencies across the full range of tourism-related activities.

**Marketing:** The current agencies promoting Scottish tourism, under VISIT SCOTLAND, require to adopt **a more integrated and commercial approach** in promoting and advertising Scotland both at home and across the world. Scotland, with its vast worldwide Diaspora of Scottish connections, has the potential to attract a far greater number of visitors and generate a significant increase in tourism revenues. Current overseas promotion in countries like Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand is insufficiently focused to achieve its full potential coverage. Closer cooperation with local institutions in those and other countries can extend the range of representation.

**Training:** The **SDA** applauds the initiatives of the Scottish government regarding hospitality and tourism **training and qualifications** in a positive effort to make them more relevant and responsive to employer and customer needs. Although the general quality of staff service standards has improved significantly over the past decade there is still some way to go to match the quality of service that is the norm in the majority of our overseas competitors.

**Scottish Staff:** In many parts of Scotland it is becoming increasingly difficult to enjoy the service of Scottish staff – the whole field has been almost entirely outsourced in most parts of the country, to the disappointment of many of our overseas visitors. There needs to be a new approach to the training and projection of career opportunities within the hospitality industry, so that our youngsters appreciate that it is a premium field within which to work. This is a core issue, bearing in mind that Scotland cannot compete on such attractions as sun and sand. Visitors come to Scotland for a Scottish experience, not a cosmopolitan one. It is vital that the personnel with whom they come into contact with are experienced as representatives of Scotland, as individuals who themselves project Scotland's traditions and culture.

**Quality:** In every region in Scotland there are establishments that are **centres of excellence** providing the very best quality goods, food, accommodation and service at a realistic cost. Unfortunately there are many establishments that do not provide a value for money service. Whether for Scots holidaying at home or for overseas visitors, the tourist industry must seek to provide consistent quality service at competitive prices in order to promote return visits.

**Bed and Breakfast:** This vital and often innovative sector of the tourist industry plays an important role in the Scottish economy. The **SDA** will seek additional government fiscal benefits and the simplification of relevant "red tape" in order to encourage the expansion of Bed and Breakfast establishments, particularly in our rural communities. In general, the bed and breakfast providers **give better value for money** than do many of our hotels.

**Hotels:** The **high cost of hotel accommodation** across Scotland is an issue that requires review. The **SDA** advocates government action to lower the overheads incurred by our hotels to enable them to improve their profitability, lower their tariffs and thus the customers' bills. This will encourage overseas visitors to come again and may also persuade many Scots to holiday at home rather than go abroad.

**Local tourist information:** Many local centres in Scotland are often only open during restricted hours. There needs to be a flexible yet comprehensive nationwide system, readily available and user friendly, to provide local information as and when the customer requires information.

**Transport:** With much of Scotland's diverse landscape and cultural heritage available only to those who are prepared to utilise road and boat transportation, fuel costs have a major impact on the tourist industry. The **SDA** advocates that upon resumption of Scotland's sovereign independence the **tax on fuel should be reduced to the order of 30 pence per litre.**

**Cruise Market:** The number of cruise ships visiting Scottish ports is on the increase, bringing a positive economic benefit to the surrounding communities. The **SDA** believes that the deep-water ports like Invergordon, the Clyde, Peterhead, Aberdeen and Leith should be developed to encourage this lucrative addition to our economy. Likewise, the expansion of ferry links with European and Scandinavian countries could generate more visitors and trade.

**Environment:** Scotland's tourist industry rests heavily on the scenic grandeur of our hills and glens, lochs and forests, islands and coastal environments. Research indicates that the landscape is the foremost attraction for visitors to Scotland. The **SDA** insists that **we must not permit the trashing of areas of outstanding beauty** with unsightly power lines and environmentally damaging wind farms when there are technically and financially feasible alternatives available. The urban environment of towns and villages is another factor that can make a strongly positive or negative impression on visitors. There should be a far greater emphasis on conserving traditional Scottish architectural ensembles and other historic environmental features.

The **SDA's detailed Tourism** Policy is under development. Please return later.

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