



SCOTTISH
TOURISM
ALLIANCE

Your voice in tourism matters

Open letter:

Kate Forbes, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy
Ivan McKee, Minister for Business Trade Tourism and Enterprise
Michael Mathieson, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport

Cc:

Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland
Liz Ditchburn – Director General Economy, Scottish Government
Colin Cook, Director Economic Development, Scottish Government

20 September 2021

Dear Ministers,

The Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA) has enjoyed an open and constructive dialogue with the Scottish Government over the course of the Covid crisis which we have appreciated; we are grateful for the financial and other policy supports which have been delivered but throughout, we have carried a serious and growing concern that the Scottish Government's decisions around economic matters have not had the balance of consideration as those around public health.

The latest policy decision by the Scottish Government to extend Day 2 PCR testing requirements on fully vaccinated international travellers, while other parts of the UK will not, leave us questioning whether there is any voice in Cabinet or the Government in a position to make and win the case for our economy, business and jobs.

This decision has already driven demand from Scottish airports to others in the rest of the UK and Ireland; this was recently highlighted as a serious risk at the recent meeting held between the STA, representatives of our inbound operator sector and the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government's decision to step out of alignment with Europe and England in relation to the easing of international travel restrictions not only adds a further significant adverse impact on the recovery of Scotland's tourism industry, but also to its whole supply chain.

The long-term impact and costs are and will be significant; our 2022 season is now at serious risk. Visitors are making plans and decisions around travel now; Scotland has now become one of the most uncompetitive destinations globally.

The only potential mitigant on this policy for the economy is if travellers come to Scotland via airports from the rest of the UK; this is of course another barrier to travel and at odds with

Scotland's reputation as a destination in relation to price, competitiveness and our welcome. It compounds the level of economic self-harm being inflicted by a policy from which the details of the health benefits are still to be understood.

The business community across Scotland, and indeed beyond the immediate travel and tourism sectors, calls on the Scottish Government to reconsider this decision and to pursue consistency with the other UK administrations.

We recognise the need for a number of competing harms to be tackled but have growing concern that the immediate risk to jobs, well-being and the economy is not receiving the crisis attention or understanding of detail required.

The need for all aspects of Scotland to remain competitive is key to driving recovery; as a nation we are out of alignment with Europe and England; in fact, the Scottish Government's decision on Friday will benefit England's tourism and wider economy hugely while putting Scotland's economy at great risk of long-term decline. International travel is key for Scotland's recovery; the domestic market alone is not a powerful enough economic stimulant to support a sustainable tourism product or indeed long term covid recovery.

We seek an urgent meeting with Ministers and senior officials to discuss what can be done to redress this imbalance in the government and the immediate risk to key sectors and businesses in the Scottish economy.

The co-signatories below from 40+ organisations representing thousands of businesses right across the country fully support the views and asks that I have set out above.

Yours sincerely

Marc Crothall
Chief Executive - Scottish Tourism Alliance

UKHospitality

Scottish Chambers of Commerce

Glasgow Chamber of Commerce

Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce

Abbey UK

Edinburgh Airport

Scottish Wedding Industry Association

National Outdoor Events Association

DF Concerts

Confederation of Passenger Transport

EICC

P&J Live

Edinburgh Tourism Action Group

FSB Scotland

SEC

Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions

Scottish Passenger Agents' Association

McKinlay Kidd

Loch Ness by Jacobite

Scottish Destination Management Association

Cairngorms Business Partnership

Visit Aberdeenshire

Sail Scotland

Association of Scotland's Self Caterers

VisitArran

Green Tourism

Scottish Independent Golf Tour Operators Association

UK Inbound

Scottish Independent Tour Operators Association

Wilderness Scotland

Scottish B & B Association

Wild Scotland

South of Scotland Destination Alliance

British Holiday & Home Parks Association

Association of Leading Visitor Attractions

Scottish Agritourism

British Amusement Catering Trade Association

Scottish Licensed Trade Association

Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group

Outer Hebrides Tourism

Scottish Tour Guides Association

Scottish Beer and Pub Association

Dundee and Angus Visitor Accommodation Association

Hostelling Scotland