

# Napier and Scottish Enterprise concentrate on helping tourism to bounce back

Edinburgh Napier University and Scottish Enterprise have held four workshops looking at the challenges to Scottish tourism in the past three months.

All participants were presented with certificates today to make their involvement and hard work.

With a massive 85% of those employed in tourism placed on furlough this has been a difficult time for businesses.

The university runs an innovative course called the Destination Leaders Programme (DLP) with Scottish Enterprise. so they were well placed to consult those who had studied on the course. DLP tries to identify emerging tourism leaders and give them the skills and knowledge to become effective destination leaders.

The expertise and experience of those who had completed the course was used to discover a pathway out of the business slump. This is now written up in the form of a report titled [Scotland Outlook 2030](#) with recommendations for business on the VisitScotland website.



Dr Jane Ali Knight of Edinburgh Napier University at The Hub in Edinburgh, the location of the Edinburgh Festival HQ.

“When we launched, the aim was to provide identified actions,

outputs and outcomes to help recovery,” explains Professor Jane Ali-Knight of the Edinburgh Napier Business School. “Involvement was designed to ensure participation came under the acceptable category of professional training for ‘furloughed’ professionals, and we used the DLP alumni network to form the project groups to ensure a good mix of experience and expertise. We also matched the workgroups with mentors and professional support to guide participants on their themes and tasks.”

DLP alumni used their connections to bring together the network of professionals who considered each theme – guided by weekly discussions with mentors drawn from DLP alumni and Edinburgh Napier. Mentors helped focus each group’s actions around the Scottish tourism strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030, and provided regular updates on government funding and initiatives.

Aileen Lamb from Scottish Enterprise adds: “We wanted the programme to encourage innovative thinking across a range of themes, but most importantly we wanted to help maintain and extend participants’ professional skills, expertise and experience, and their networking during furlough.

“This project was built upon the alumni network of the Destination Leaders Programme. It is an excellent example of successful collaboration across academia, the public sector and the tourism industry. What Covid-19 has shown us, despite empty hotels, attractions and airports, is the passion, innovation and resilience of the people who work in this critical industry.”

Kenneth Wardrop, a fellow DLP founder, adds: “Using the DLP alumni we were able to act quickly and ensure we coordinated with groups such as Edinburgh Tourism Action Group and the Scottish Tourism Emergency Response Group. Everyone involved is to be commended for the quality, professionalism and practical solutions identified. They will

all be vital in adjusting business operations to post Covid-19 challenges, and the longer-term strategic planning for the recovery of the sector.”

The practical recommendations of each workgroup were presented in individual online sessions in June. An undoubted highlight has been an interactive toolkit for visitor attractions and experiences, which is now hosted on the VisitScotland [website](#). The Toolkit includes case studies from across the world and suggests technological solutions to suit different budgets, as well as short, medium and long-term ideas.



Thayanne Scardini

“It covers everything from online ticketing and social distancing, to moving content online and creating your own podcast,” explains Thayanne Scardini, who volunteered to work on the Toolkit workgroup with fellow tourism professionals Karin Gidlund and Jemma Reid.

“We believe the Toolkit will be a great starting point for attractions and experiences who are looking into diversifying through technology, helping to prepare them for a safe reopening for both visitors and staff, whilst meeting visitors’ expectations and improving customer experience. It has many recommendations for applying technology that can also be helpful for other sectors as well.”

For Antony Carter, and his fellow participants on the Business Events workgroup, they quickly realised that – whether global chain or local venue – the priority going forward is to find ways to reassure clients that operations are safe.

“In the past, operational staff at events were meant to blend into the background; going forward clients and attendees will want to see the operational team front and centre – whether they are cleaning or managing movement around a venue. Our report recommends ways that venues can demonstrate how they

have alleviated risk effectively, and that includes collaboration throughout the supply chain.”

For Colin Corson and the Whisky workgroup, ‘collaboration’ also became their watchword. “Whether you are a self-catering provider who wants to welcome guests with a fridge full of local produce, (and a local malt of course), or two attractions selling combined tickets online to avoid the need for queuing, collaboration is vital to future success. It can minimise congestion in local shops; help improve the experience for guests and local businesses; and help local communities – as well as visitors – feel safer as they move forward.”

From conception to conclusion, collaboration is the theme that sums up the ‘Pathway to Recovery’ project. Jane Ali-Knight adds: “The University is incredibly proud to have worked with Scottish Enterprise to lead and drive this project forward. We applaud the hard work of all the workgroup participants, against the backdrop of the many challenges of lockdown, and the professional uncertainty, anxiety and disruption. That hard work was marked by the presentation of Certificates of Participation to all group members on Friday 10th July.”