

Challenges to tourism remain but the sector is resilient

VisitScotland Regional Director, Neil Christison, reflects on tourism in the Edinburgh and the Lothians this year and how partnership working can help ensure tourism remains sustainable in 2023 and beyond.

He said: “We know that Scotland’s tourism industry is facing fresh challenges, and this comes having already experienced considerable difficulty during the Covid-19 pandemic. The rise in the cost of doing business is having a significant impact on the industry, as well as ongoing issues with staff recruitment and retention.

“At VisitScotland, we continue to work with partners in our tourism and events industry on promoting activity that extends the season and ensures that Scotland and Edinburgh & Lothians remains front of mind for potential visitors.

“It has been fantastic to see the return of domestic and international visitors over the summer months to enjoy the return of Edinburgh’s Festivals amongst other sights and attractions in the region. The most recent UK consumer sentiment survey has indicated that there is growing consumer confidence for visiting cities, with Edinburgh most likely to benefit from those taking a domestic overnight trip this winter.

“We want to see this continue and at VisitScotland we’re prioritising activities that will stimulate demand and new bookings for the industry to support its long-term recovery.”

Neil continued: “Through our activity, we are developing exciting relationships in order to reach a wider audience. For example, this year we have undertaken marketing partnerships to encourage sustainable travel to Scotland with Scotrail, LNER and the Caledonian Sleeper. We’ve also worked with Hostelling Scotland, National Museums of Scotland and Diageo to jointly push their offering to potential visitors, and continue to work with our regional tourism partners on bespoke campaigns.

“In October, we launched our Great Days Out campaign with the Association of Scotland’s Visitor Attractions (ASVA) and Historic Environment Scotland to encourage people to take advantage of the discounted rates and experience a day out at one of the many fantastic attractions and experiences on offer across the country. This includes A Wee Pedal Cycle Tours, Edinburgh Castle, Go Quest Adventures, The Real Mary King’s Close, Johnnie Walker Princes Street, Silent Adventures Walking Tours, Craigmillar Castle, Forth Boat Tours, Dirleton Castle and Glenkinchie Distillery and Visitor Centre.

“Scotland’s award-winning [UNESCO Trail](#) has been promoted as part of a dedicated VisitScotland marketing campaign. Aimed at potential visitors from the UK & Ireland, Germany and France, the campaign encourages people to discover more about the country’s 13 place-based designations, including the creative city of Edinburgh and its World Heritage sites.



Forth Bridges Trail South Queensferry PHOTO

Stephen Sweeney Photography

“We also recently launched a new-look guide to film locations in Scotland which includes details of the many places in our capital city and surrounding area that have featured on the big screen.”

Neil added: “Despite the ongoing challenges, there is much to celebrate in the region. The region continues to attract investment with many current and future hotel developments in the city including Virgin Hotels’ first European location in Edinburgh, and exciting developments such as the creation of a surf and leisure destination at Ratho in West Lothian further down the line.

“We are here at VisitScotland to help support our tourism industry navigate the challenges ahead of them. Our industry website is a vital source of up-to-date advice and information on a range of topics from marketing, sustainability and digital skills to research, as well as a section dedicated to offering advice on the cost of doing business.

“It was fantastic to meet with local tourism businesses at our networking event in East Lothian earlier this month to discuss these challenges and the opportunities to work together.

“By working together, we can ensure the sustainable and long-term recovery of one of Scotland’s most valuable industries.”



VisitScotland Neil Christison Picture by Graeme Hart.