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**NEWS RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

**SCOTTISH HOLIDAY HOMES TO EMBRACE THE “HOUND POUND”**

**ASSC Gives Holidaymakers Paws for Thought as VisitScotland Makes First Award from New-Look Growth Fund**

A digital marketing campaign targeting the “Hound Pound” – the money spent by pet-owners who take their four-legged friends on holiday – has been awarded £20,000 by VisitScotland.

With the first award from its new-look Growth Fund, the national tourism organisation has match-funded the £40,000 *Paws for a Break* campaign lead by the Association of Scotland’s Self-Caterers’ ([ASSC](http://www.assc.co.uk/)) [Embrace Scotland](http://www.embracescotland.co.uk/) website,

Embrace Scotland features more than 7,000 self-catering properties throughout the country, all owned or managed by the ASSC’s 600 members. More than half of these members currently accept pets but the ASSC is keen to encourage more of them to promote their animal-friendly credentials.

VisitScotland research shows almost a third (30 per cent) of holiday-makers base their holiday around how suitable a destination is for their pet, and 72 per cent of dog owners say they would take more holidays in the UK if there were a better attitude towards their canine companions.

Further research showed that holidays with pets had an average extra spend of £126 compared to holidays without pets.

The ASSC, via its Embrace Scotland consumer-facing website, aims to show that taking a self-catering property is “the easiest and most flexible way of holidaying with a pet”, while also highlighting the fact that dogs aren’t the only pets people can take on holiday – with some self-catering properties equipped with stables.

Members will be encouraged to share their ‘pet guest’ stories on Facebook and Twitter and guests will be invited to post photos of their pets on holiday. Alongside the digital activity, the ASSC will also undertake its first consumer show with a stand at the Family Pet Show in Manchester. This will be supported by radio advertising in North West England and a competition in conjunction with the show organisers and sponsors, The Co-operative Group, with a prize break in a pet-friendly self-catering property in Scotland.

**Linda Battison, Executive Committee Member at the ASSC, said:** *“Many members already provide a warm welcome to pet owners but we want to encourage them to go that extra mile and ensure potential customers know what they offer. Our Paws for a Break self-catering awards will be open for nominations via our Embrace Scotland website (*[*www.embracescotland.co.uk*](http://www.embracescotland.co.uk)*) and our members site* [*www.assc.co.uk*](http://www.assc.co.uk) *and we’ll be encouraging members to sign up to our new Pets Welcome charter.”*

**Malcolm Roughead, Chief Executive of VisitScotland, said:** *“VisitScotland’s Growth Fund supports collaborative tourism marketing projects that focus on growth in the tourism sector and ensure that visitors experience the true Spirit of Scotland.*

*“Pet tourism could be worth millions of pounds to Scotland’s visitor economy so we are delighted to help the ASSC as they attempt to unlock this potentially lucrative market through the VisitScotland Growth Fund. The group’s Paws for a Break campaign is an exciting and innovative way to appeal to those looking to enjoy a holiday with their four-legged friends.”*

Growth Fund applicants are required to align their marketing with VisitScotland’s strategies and campaigns, including the global Spirit of Scotland campaign. They are also encouraged to think about how they can take advantage of Scotland’s Themed Years. The Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design (2016), will be followed by the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology in 2017 and the Year of Young People in 2018.

To find out more about the VisitScotland Growth Fund and for details of how to apply, go to www.visitscotland.org

For more information about Embrace Scotland and the Association of Scottish Self-Caterers, go to [www.embracescotland.co.uk](http://www.embracescotland.co.uk) and [www.assc.co.uk](http://www.assc.co.uk)

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors**

* Follow us on twitter: [@visitscotnews](https://twitter.com/#!/VisitScotNews)
* VisitScotland is Scotland’s national tourism organisation. Its core purpose is to maximise the economic benefit of tourism to Scotland.
* The organisation’s core objective is to contribute to the Tourism 2020 Strategy ambition of growing tourism revenues by £1 billion by 2020.
* This will be supported by seven overarching strategies:
  1. Marketing: we will market Scotland and its outstanding assets to visitors from all parts of the world, including the promotion of Scotland to people living in Scotland to visit different parts of the country
  2. Events: we will support the national events strategy and its delivery, and sustain, develop and promote Scotland’s international profile as one of the world’s foremost events destinations
  3. Internationalisation and International Engagement: we will utilise all our platforms to enable Scottish-based tourism businesses to better understand international opportunities and market to a global audience and we will work within One Scotland Partnerships to optimise the potential of Scotland’s Diaspora and our strategic partners at regional, European and global levels
  4. Customer Experience: we will provide information and inspiration to visitors both locally and globally via their preferred medium of choice
  5. Quality and Sustainability: we will provide support and advice to businesses, with the goal of improving the quality and sustainability of the tourism sector in Scotland. We will provide quality assurance to visitors through our Quality Schemes
  6. Inclusive Tourism: we will strive to make tourism in Scotland inclusive and available to all
  7. Working in Partnership: we will listen to and work with the industry, partners and communities to shape our offering and support
* VisitScotland works together with tourism businesses to make tourism a success for everyone and ensure the industry continues to grow.
* The organisation employs 700 people and has offices and VisitScotland Information Centres across Scotland.
* Spending by tourists in Scotland generates around £12 billion of economic activity in the wider Scottish supply chain and contributes around £6 billion to Scottish GDP (in basic prices). This represents about 5% of total Scottish GDP
* The Scottish Government is the Managing Authority for the European Structural Funds 2014-20 Programme. For further information visit www.gov.scot or follow @scotgovESIF
* For VisitScotland’s press releases go to <http://www.visitscotland.org/media_centre.aspx>, tourism statistics and frequently asked questions go to [http://www.visitscotland.org/](http://www.visitscotland.org/media_centre.htm)
* Where possible, a Gaelic speaker will be made available for broadcast interviews on request (Far an tèid iarraidh, agus far am bheil sin nar comas, bruidhinnidh neach le Gàidhlig aig agallamh)
* For holiday information on Scotland go to [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com/)
* For information about business tourism in Scotland go to [www.conventionscotland.com](http://www.conventionscotland.com/)

**Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design 2016**

* 2016 shines a spotlight on Scotland’s achievements in innovation, architecture and design through a wide-ranging, variety of new and existing activity.
* The Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design began on 1 January 2016 and ends on 31 December 2016
* Through a series of exciting events and activity, the year will showcase Scotland’s position as an “innovation nation”, its outstanding built heritage, and its thriving, internationally acclaimed creative industries sector.
* The Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design is a Scottish Government initiative being led by VisitScotland, and supported by a variety of partners including Scottish Government, Creative Scotland, Architecture + Design Scotland, Scottish Tourism Alliance, Scottish Enterprise, The National Trust for Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS).
* The Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design events fund is managed by EventScotland, part of VisitScotland’s Events Directorate.
* Join the conversation at **#IAD2016**
* Events can join the 2016 Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design Partner Programme throughout the year by visiting <http://www.eventscotland.org/YIAD_partner_programme>