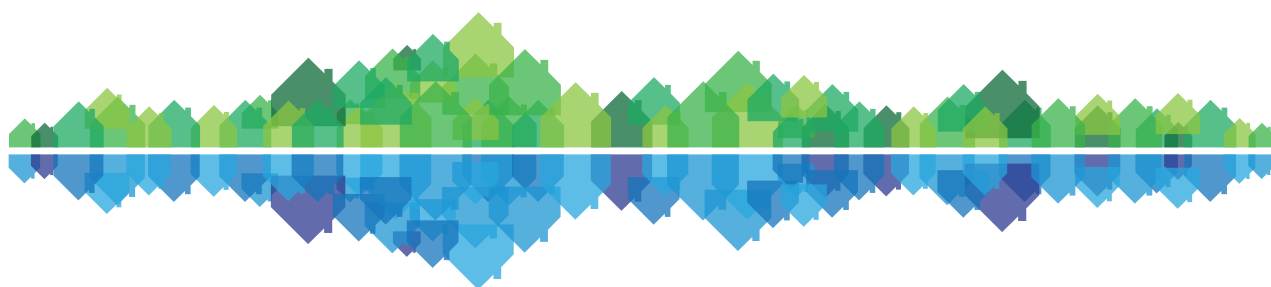


Chief Executive's Report 2020



Association of
Scotland's Self-Caterers

Supporting self-catering in Scotland

Chief Executive's Report 2020

Back in January I had an optimistic and romantic notion that 2020 would be a little calmer. With the proposals for short-term let legislation and tourism tax on the horizon, the ASSC had its ducks in a row and were ready for the fight. The ASSC published two policy papers in February and March 2020 and was actively engaged with Scottish Government's Short-Term Let Delivery Group.

And then Covid-19 arrived.

Covid-19 Survival and Recovery

Communication was critical during the pandemic. The ASSC team of 3 worked tirelessly to ensure that the self-catering sector (both members and non-members) could access the most up to date information concisely in one place via the ASSC. We let businesses know about any financial support available, new regulations and advice on re-opening. We continue to distribute updates almost daily covering new rules, restrictions, levels and lockdowns.

Between 11th March and 11th October, we published over **240 news pieces** and many hundreds of newsletters.

We have fielded thousands and thousands of emails, phone calls, Facebook messages, WhatsApp notifications...at all times of the day and night, from people seeking support.

We have worked side by side with industry colleagues and been part of numerous industry groups to navigate through the crisis and towards economic recovery.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the ASSC has been at the top table with key leadership groups and the Scottish Government to address the crisis as it unfolded.

We have liaised with Regional DMOs and tourism industry bodies to ensure self-catering is aligned with other businesses. We have held conversations around progress, restart and recovery activity and we have also had meetings with local authority representatives, COSLA and regional bodies such as South of Scotland Enterprise to understand how we can work with them to support economic recovery.

We have worked closely with the Scottish Government Tourism Directorate, engaged with Cabinet Ministers and their officials, as well as cross party MSPs throughout the pandemic. We have met (virtually, of course) with the Chief Covid Analyst for the Scottish Government and the National Clinical Director, Jason Leitch. On 11th November, I met with the First Minister.

Moving into recovery stage, we worked with the STERG sub group developing sectoral cleaning guidelines and re-opening.

As an association, we **developed the cleaning protocols for the self-catering sector**, alongside the Professional Association of Self-Caterers (PASC UK), Premier Cottages, and Wales Tourism Alliance, that were endorsed by the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments. We then commissioned on-line training to sit alongside the protocols and frequently updated FAQs. Furthermore, the ASSC managed to persuade the Scottish Government to allow selfcatering businesses to open ahead of schedule on 3rd July. This took a great deal of lobbying, but with empirical data and reasoned arguments, we managed to evidence that if the self-catering sector opened on 3rd rather than 15th, it represented an additional £20m to the Scottish economy.

Following continued lobbying by the ASSC, an additional one-million-pound fund to boost Scotland's self-catering sector as it recovers from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic was announced in August. This enabled us to support a further 100 businesses who had not received any financial support. VisitScotland then generously topped this fund up, so that we were able to support a further 35 businesses who met the eligibility criteria.

The ASSC also sat on an industry led wider group looking at economic recovery going forward.

New opportunities have been welcomed with **cross-sectoral collaborations** with Scottish Agri Tourism, WildScotland, Sail Scotland, the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions, Federation of Small Business, Scottish Land and Estates and VisitScotland. We have also worked incredibly closely with PASC UK and the Wales Tourism Alliance, to ensure a unified voice across the UK. As ever, we continue to support and be supported by the Scottish Tourism Alliance. Long lasting friendships have been secured as we have, together, navigated through the crisis on behalf of the tourism sector. I will look back on this as one of the huge positives that has resulted from the crisis.

Eligibility Criteria for Access to the Grant Funding Scheme for Self-Caterers

Having been excluded from grant support on 23d March, the ASSC engaged in active discussions with the Scottish Government over the eligibility criteria for access to the Grant Funding Scheme for self-caterers.

The ASSC received a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance Kate Forbes MSP on 27th March. In it, Ms Forbes outlined that: *"the ratepayers for self-catering accommodation and caravans will be eligible for both the one-off £10,000 grant for small businesses and the one-off £25,000 grant for businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors announced on 18 March by the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture. The grants will be available on the condition that this property is each ratepayer's primary source of earnings and that the property is let for 140 days or more in the financial year 2019-20. Applicants will be required to provide evidence of this and grants will be restricted to one per ratepayer."*

We responded setting out our topline concerns. We will continue to press the Scottish Government to ensure that there was parity of support for Scottish self-caterers compared to others in the UK and that our industry was not treated any differently from others in the small business community.

Our two principal concerns at what the Scottish Government proposed:

- **The lack of parity of support with other self-caterers in the rest of the UK.** This penalised a key component part of Scotland's tourism offering compared to others in the UK and is something our membership would never support.
- **Self-catering was designated as requiring additional eligibility compared to other small businesses in Scotland.** Many other small businesses in Scotland are increasingly reliant on multiple sources of income.

Soon after, we were delighted that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance Kate Forbes MSP relaxed the eligibility criteria to "a significant" rather than "the primary" source of earnings. However, this fell far short of what was required.

We continued to highlight how self-catering businesses were falling through the Gaps in Scottish and UK Government Support.¹

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Support Scheme for Self-Catering Businesses

Following continued lobbying by the ASSC, a one-million-pound fund was unveiled to boost Scotland's self-catering sector as it recovers from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fund was delivered through a partnership between the Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (ASSC) and VisitScotland to those businesses which had been unable to benefit from any financial support during the Covid-19 crisis.

Successful applicants were eligible to receive a one-off grant of £10,000.

Throughout the pandemic, the ASSC worked tirelessly to ensure that Scotland's hardworking operators were not left behind in terms of accessing business support grants. Alongside work to remove inequities in the system, this new fund for self-caterers is the culmination of those assiduous efforts.

ASSC Chief Executive, Fiona Campbell, said:

"The ASSC has doggedly and persistently fought the corner of our members on business support grants. We are therefore delighted to see this fund being launched and welcome everything that it will do to help Scotland's £723m self-catering sector."

"Scotland's self-caterers have sacrificed so much to help the country suppress the virus and we will continue to do our bit to keep everyone safe now that the tourism sector has reopened to visitors."

"The ASSC is also thrilled to be working with our trusted, valued, and cherished partners at VisitScotland and we can't wait to get started to get the funds to deserving, professional self-catering businesses."

The new £1m Coronavirus Support Scheme for self-catering businesses opened on 3rd August. It elicited 750 downloads of the application guidance document and 250 applications.

¹ <https://www.assc.co.uk/scottish-and-uk-government-support-businesses-falling-through-the-gaps/>

UK Government Support for Furnished Holiday Lets

Unfortunately, the UK Treasury refused to regard income from Furnished Holiday Lets as self-employed income, due to technicalities of how HMRC obtains the financial detail. **The Self-Employed Income Support Scheme was designed to take the information from the trading pages of self-assessment tax returns and not the FHL boxes on the property pages, so FHL income was not covered by SEISS.**

ASSC worked with the Federation of National Self-Catering Associations, the Welsh Association of Self-Catering Operators, the Professional Association of Self-Caterers, the Holiday Home Association as well as the Scottish Tourism Alliance and the Tourism Alliance to lobby the UK Treasury on this subject, and wrote a joint letter to the Chancellor on 25th April.²

Business Support Surveys

The ASSC undertook a series of surveys of both members and non-members over the course of the Covid-19 crisis, in order to gauge the ability for the self-catering sector to access financial support.³ These were publicised via ASSC newsletters, as well as on the ASSC's social media pages on Twitter and Facebook. 7 surveys elicited a total of 4913 responses.

On 24th June, the ASSC conducted a further one question survey to gauge just how many self-catering operators had benefited from business grant support in Scotland. **This demonstrated that over one-third (34%) of the respondents had not received any financial support from the Scottish Government.** The fact that such a large proportion of self-catering operators have not benefitted from Scottish Government support, months after it was first announced and when self-catering units were instructed to close, is a major concern given the importance of tourism to the Scottish economy.

Prior to the aforesaid survey from 24th June 2020, the ASSC conducted a number of sectoral surveys to assess the level of take-up and access to business support in Scotland. While there was some welcome movement in terms of business grant applications being approved from our first survey, self-caterers from across Scotland are still experiencing difficulties in accessing business support grants from the Scottish Government that are being administered by local authorities.

As evidenced by our surveys, access to business support grants from local authorities has caused multiple problems for self-catering operators in Scotland. This has included but was not limited to:

- An inconsistency of approach between local authorities and evidencing 140 days occupancy (which particularly impacted those in rural areas)
- Difficulties evidencing the criteria in relation to primary source of income
- The inability to evidence 2019/20 incomes
- The lack of an appeals process in some local authorities
- The lack of clear guidance from the Scottish Government to local authorities
- The cumbersome and bureaucratic nature of the application process itself
- Even when applications have been approved, many self-caterers have endured lengthy waits of more than two weeks or more to receive funds.

Cleaning Protocols

In order to assist with preparations to re-open, the ASSC were delighted to have published Cleaning Protocols for Self-Catering Properties in the Context of Covid-19. These protocols are now widely accepted as the benchmark that the self-catering industry needs to achieve to be able to ensure safety for staff and guests alike. **The cleaning protocols were endorsed by the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government.**

The AA, Airbnb, Sykes, the B&B Association, Scotland's Best B&B's and Sail Scotland and others have also adopted them as a basis for their own protocols. They also form the basis of the AA's Covid Confident and VisitBritain's Good to Go scheme. **Downloads of the protocols had surpassed 100,000 from the PASC website alone by October.**

The guidance is updated as and when new regulations are developed and implemented.

Landlords Little Helpers Cleaning Protocols Course: ASSC commissioned a step-by-step run through of the recently published cleaning protocols in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. Free to ASSC Members, this is a no-nonsense, easy-to-follow course created for property owners, managers and their cleaners looking to ensure their properties operate safely when they open. The training is delivered by Jenny Burton of Landlords Little Helper.

² <https://www.assc.co.uk/uk-government-support-furnished-holiday-lets/>

³ <https://www.assc.co.uk/policy/covid-19-assc-business-support-surveys/>

565 ASSC coupons used, 2131 sign ups (at 20th August).

Cleaning Protocol Webinars: I took part in numerous webinars to almost 1,000 people from: SuperControl, Scottish, Agritourism, Visit Inverness Loch Ness, Cairngorm Business Partnership, VisitAberdeen, Scottish Land and Estates, SkyeConnect, Scottish Crofters Federation and others.

Sectoral Re-opening

The Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers welcomed the announcement of an indicative date for the reopening of tourism businesses on 15th July 2020. However, we asked the Scottish Government that consideration be granted to a minor change to the provisional date to allow self-catering operators to open on either Saturday 4th July or Saturday 11th July 2020.

The ASSC provided empirical data which showed that:

- The potential lost revenue opportunity in Scotland for the professional self-catering sector by opening on 15th July compared to 4th July is **£20,155,422**.
- If the sector were allowed to open on 11th July, the potential lost revenue opportunity would be **£16,772,904**.
- It was noted that these: (a) were conservative estimates; and (b) represent lost opportunity in rental terms. The ancillary spend in local economies, in terms of employment and supply chain, has not been estimated.

We wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Tourism, Fergus Ewing, MSP to that effect.⁴

We were delighted, therefore, when it was announced that we could open on the 3rd July, rather than 15th July.

Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers Chief Executive, Fiona Campbell, said:

"We are delighted that self-catering can welcome guests again from 3 July, this news is fantastic and nothing short of a lifeline for our £723million sector and for the many individuals and families who rely on it to support themselves. Scotland's self-caterers were among the first to close our businesses as we entered lockdown, at great personal and financial cost, and now we're poised to be among the first to help the Scottish tourist economy stand back up on its own two feet."

"Our association has been working closely with the Scottish Government throughout this process and we are delighted that Ministers have listened to us."

"With our stringent, robust, and comprehensive cleaning protocols in place, which are backed by the Scottish Government, we can safely and securely open our properties and go back to providing our guests with first class breaks".

ASSC Sectoral Survey: The Impact Of Rule Of One Household Restrictions to Self-Catering In Scotland

Background

- On 22 September, the ASSC received assurance from the Scottish Government that the ban on visiting other households did not include self-catering units. This message was shared widely with the press, the public, and tourism stakeholders.
- On 23 September, National Clinical Director, Professor Jason Leitch, appeared on BBC Radio Scotland's Mornings with Jackie Brambles programme and said, "...you can't have two households in self-catering so that would be like allowing them in your own home."
- Also on 23 September, following an urgent request for clarification, the Scottish Government told the ASSC first that, contrary to the comments made by Professor Leitch, their advice remained the same and that it was not the intention of the restrictions to include self-catering.
- However, a few hours later, the Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Fergus Ewing, said that the one household restriction would, in fact, apply to self-catering from Friday 25 September.
- The ASSC undertook a survey to establish the impact of the One Household Rule. The online survey elicited 1136 responses from both ASSC members and non-ASSC members alike.⁵

⁴ <https://www.assc.co.uk/sectoral-re-opening/>

⁵ <https://www.assc.co.uk/assc-sectoral-surveythe-impact-of-coronavirus-restrictions-rule-of-one-householdto-self-catering-in-scotland/>

Key Findings:

- Almost three-quarters have been negatively impacted financially by the new restrictions.
- Nearly 60% of self-caterers have already experienced cancellations.
- 42% expect financial losses of between £1,000-£10,000 up until the end of the year, 17% expect losses of between £10,000 and £20,000, while 13% expect more than £20,000.
- Three quarters of self-caterers are somewhat or very pessimistic about their business over the next 3 to 6 months.
- The impact is not purely financial as 55% of self-caterers have experienced mental health issues or some mild anxiety associated with the Covid-19 restrictions.
- Nearly 60% would like to see the introduction of financial support from the Scottish Government to help mitigate the impact of the new changes
- Three-quarters want clear communications from the Scottish Government on changes to restrictions.

Covid-19 Business Impact Survey For the UK Self-Catering Sector

The Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (ASSC) and the Professional Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (PASC UK) commissioned a report into the impact of Covid-19 on the self-catering sector throughout the UK. It was undertaken by The South West Research Company Ltd. during August and September 2020.

The total impact on the economy during the January to July 2020 period as a result of self-catering related tourism business turnover lost and subsequent supply chain spend associated with this lost turnover was approximately £2.3 billion. Approximately £645 million of this turnover was lost in the self catering accommodation sector, approximately £1 billion visitor spend in other sectors from those that would have been staying in self catering accommodation and approximately £589 supply chain spend on the purchase of local goods and services which would have been associated with this amount of turnover.⁶

Key findings:

- 39% of businesses had received cancellations from their customers as a result of the new Rule of 6. A further 43% of businesses had received cancellations and deferrals.
- The approximate average value per business of bookings cancelled as a result of the new Rule of 6 was £15,000 and £10,000 per business for deferred bookings.
- 47% of businesses said they had not accessed any of the UK business support schemes. 19% had accessed the VAT reduction of 5%, 18% had taken out a Bounce Back Loan and 14% had accessed the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) – Furlough scheme. 12% of businesses in each case had taken a loan holiday and/or accessed Self
- Employed Income Support. 14% of businesses had accessed other business support including a Small Business Rates grant.
- 73% of businesses had accessed the Visit England 'We're Good to Go' scheme in preparation for Covid-secure reopening, 18% had accessed the AA 'Covid Confidence' and 6% the Quality in Tourism 'Safe, Clean and Legal' schemes.
- Businesses were asked how they managed their guests' bookings during lockdown. 45% of guests were refunded whilst 42% had deferred their bookings.
- The total estimated cost of re-opening in order to comply with the government endorsed cleaning protocols amounted to £1,809 on average per business.
- 50% of businesses said they were blocking days between bookings for additional cleaning.
- Businesses estimated that the average number of additional hours per week that Covid-19 cleaning takes is 8.79 hours.
- 26% of businesses responding to the survey had taken on additional staff (FTE or parttime) to assist with the government endorsed cleaning protocols and reopening guidelines.
- 82% of businesses have re-opened and were operating at 76-100% capacity.

The Impact Of Lockdown 2.0 on the Self-Catering Sector

Economic modelling from SuperControl, the leading online booking and management system for holiday let businesses in the UK suggests that a further £79million of bookings are at risk of being cancelled during Lockdown 2.0, between 5th November and 2nd December.

This analysis only related to accommodation losses. It does not consider the knock-on effects from the cancellation of self-catering bookings for the footfall that other businesses (i.e. pubs and restaurants, attractions and activities) benefit from our guest spend.

⁶ <https://www.assc.co.uk/policy/coronavirus-covid-19-business-impact-survey-for-the-self-catering-sector-2020/>

Business Interruption Insurance

The coronavirus pandemic has led to widespread disruption and business closures resulting in substantial financial loss. Many customers have made claims for these losses under their BI insurance policies. There has been widespread concern about the lack of clarity and certainty for some customers making these claims, and the basis on which some firms are making decisions in relation to claims.

The ASSC wrote to the Chancellor on 18th March to seek immediate intervention from the UK Government.⁷

Following considerable lobbying over many months, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) intend to obtain court declarations as part of a test case, aimed at resolving the contractual uncertainty around the validity of many BI claims.

The judgement for the case of the Financial Conduct Authority vs Insurance companies was handed down on 15th September, with the court ruling in favour of the FCA on a majority of key issues raised.

The judgement does not declare the eight defendant insurers liable and each policy will need to be considered against the detailed judgement in order to establish what it means for the policy and claims intimated. It is a complex document which runs to over 150 pages and brokers have engaged legal experts to review this and provide further detailed guidance, which we will of course relay to you once available.

Business Interruption Insurance: Grant Deduction

In the summer of 2020, our colleagues at the Professional Association of Self- Caterers (PASC UK) led a PR campaign to stop insurers deducting Government Grants from insurance pay outs during Covid-19. The ASSC supported this campaign, and a large number of ASSC members participated in the campaign, known as #justpayit.

The campaign finally gained traction with the FCA and HM Treasury in mid-September. The final breakthrough occurred and the FCA wrote to insurers as part of the Business Interruption Case and told them that this practice was not acceptable.

Short-Term Let Legislation

In July 2020, the Scottish Government announced that they were resuming their plans first unveiled back in January 2020 for the introduction of a licensing system, planning control areas and a review of the tax treatment of short-term lets.

It is the aspiration of the Scottish Government to lay the regulations in December 2020 in order that they can become law by Spring 2021; and prior to that, there will be a short period of stakeholder engagement commencing in Autumn 2020.

The Scottish Government published their consultation on short-term let regulation in September, which focuses on the introduction of a licensing scheme and planning control areas.

- The Scottish Government maintain that their proposals are fair, robust and proportionate and balance the needs of local communities, tourism and operators. They argue that the previous consultation illustrated broad support for regulation from stakeholders.
- The Scottish Government will use the 1982 Civic Government Act + the Planning Act 2019 for the short-term let regulatory framework.
- The consultation covers three main points: the definition of short-term lets, the establishment of control areas under the Planning Act; and the creation of licensing under the Civic Government Act. The tax treatment of short-term lets will be dealt with separately.

This consultation will have significant ramifications for our sector.⁸

The ASSC's policy recommendations on licensing and planning control areas from January 2020 provide a proportionate, evidence-based and future-proofed solution for national and local government in Scotland.

Furthermore, due to Covid-19, this takes on even more relevance due to the economic consequences for cash-strapped local authorities – who will have to take on the burden of licensing – and the impact any disproportionate system could have on the recovery of the Scottish tourism. The ASSC therefore wish to

⁷ <https://www.assc.co.uk/covid-19-the-uninsurable-risk/>

⁸ <https://www.assc.co.uk/policy/short-term-let-licensing-and-control-zone-proposals/>

work with policymakers to make the regulations work for communities and the tourism industry.

The ASSC believes that a licensing system is a blunt tool to fix a perceived and localised problem of amateur operators in Edinburgh, rather than being a solution that is appropriate for the whole of the Scotland, nor is it one that makes a necessary distinction between different types of visitor accommodation providers.

The ASSC remains concerned that little differentiation is made between different types of operator in what is a diverse short-term letting landscape, with potentially dire unintended consequences to the professional self-catering sector that contributes £723m to Scotland.

The ASSC also believe that, due to the impact of Covid-19, the potential pitfalls and shortcomings of licensing come into sharper focus in two main respects: (a) the impact for resource stretched local authorities having to deal with an influx of tens of thousands of licensing applications; and (b) the impact any disproportionate licensing system could have on the recovery of Scottish tourism.

The ASSC undertook a campaign of engagement with the self-catering sector. The webinar video, STL Licensing: a Briefing Session with ASSC and Gilson Gray was watched over 1000 times in 2 days. ASSC was copied into numerous pieces of correspondence with Ministers and MSPs.

With the secondary legislation expected to be tabled in December 2020, our programme of lobbying and political engagement remains ongoing and rest assured that the ASSC are continuing to fight your corner in respect of these regulations.

Short-Term Let Legislation Policy Papers

The ASSC has provided a proportionate, evidence-based and future-proofed solution for national and local government in Scotland in terms of short-term regulation:

- **Forward Together: A Collaborative Approach to Short-Term Letting.**⁹
- **Licensing or Registration for Short-Term Lets in Scotland.**¹⁰

Overall, the ASSC has continued to strive towards securing the best regulatory outcome for the short-term let industry, **one which recognises the Scottish Government's strength of intent to regulate, but also ensures that anything taken forward is not disproportionate and which would threaten the fragile recovery of Scottish tourism.**

Short-Term Letting and the Housing Crisis

In recent times, the self-catering and short-term letting sector has been used as a convenient scapegoat for longstanding failures in housing policy. However, the challenges facing Scotland are far more multifaceted than the existence and growth of short-term and holiday lets alone.

There have been concerns raised over the impact of increasing tourism and the growth of short-term lets on the housing market, particularly on some communities within City of Edinburgh Council and Highland Council areas. In response, the Scottish Government has announced proposals to regulate short-term lets, including the introduction of a licensing regime.

In taking forward measures to regulate the sector, the ASSC argue that any policies must be based on accurate, reliable and empirical data given the importance of tourism to the Scottish economy. That has always guided our approach.

In February 2020, the ASSC launched a paper: **Short-Term Letting and the Housing Crisis**, which builds on our commitment to ensure that housing challenges are viewed in a balanced and holistic context. Our paper highlights the following:¹¹

- The number of self-catering units registered on the Business Rates Roll compared to those on the Council Tax Register in two key areas, or indeed 'hot spots': Edinburgh and Skye.
- Data from Airbnb, the industry leader in terms of accommodation platforms in Scotland who have provided background on their number of listings.
- Finally, information on the number of second and empty homes in Scotland.

⁹ https://www.assc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020ForwardTogether_Covid.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.assc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Licensing-or-Registration.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.assc.co.uk/policy/short-term-letting-and-the-housing-crisis/>

National Tourism Strategy 2030

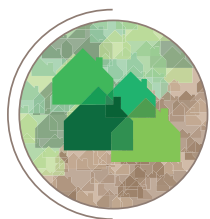
Scotland Outlook 2030, was developed through an equal partnership between the Scottish Tourism Alliance, Scottish Government, VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland. It was guided by the Strategy Steering Group with representatives from industry, public bodies and the partner organisations. I was one of those representatives, on behalf of the ASSC. The National Strategy was launched at the STA Spring Conference on 4th March, just before the pandemic took hold.¹²

The strategy, which has already had a 'Covid overlay', is reflective of the changing world we live in, our new mindset and approach to how we live and work, and represents the beginning of a bold new approach putting our communities, our people, our visitors, our businesses and our environment at the heart of everything we do.

- Vision – We will be the world leader in 21st century tourism.
- The Mission – Together we will grow the value and positively enhance the benefits of tourism across Scotland by delivering the very best for our visitors, our businesses, our people, our communities and our environment.
- Key Priorities – Our passionate people, our thriving places, our diverse businesses, our memorable experiences.
- Our Commitments – For each of our key priorities we have an agreed set of commitments. These commitments will ensure that we deliver on our vision to be the world leader in 21st century tourism.

I was honoured to have been part of the Strategy Steering Group, and look forward to supporting the strategy when some semblance of normality reigns and we have moved past survival, recovery and reset.

Autumn Talks



ASSC
AUTUMN TALKS
2020

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, and continued uncertainty regarding indoor gatherings, we took the very difficult decision to cancel our Annual Conference & Exhibition on 27th October 2020.

It was deemed essential, however, to continue to share knowledge, build upon the extensive support already given to our membership, allowing continued networking and collaboration and continue to support our members. We therefore decided to organise a series of weekly webinars called "Autumn Talks", with support from our brilliant event organiser, Joyce Borthwick of Crescent Events and in partnership with VisitScotland. These commenced Tuesday 1st September 2020¹³.

These were supported by Main Sponsor, Tunnocks. A message from Sir Boyd Tunnock OBE:

"Thomas Tunnock Ltd is delighted to be associated with and support the ASSC. We view this sector as hugely important to our economy and believe it has fantastic growth potential, even more so now that more and more people are choosing to holiday at home."

We are delighted to report that over the 8 Talks:

- **1151 people registered onto Eventbrite**
- **899 attendees**
- **The above figures include 41 paying non-members**
- **Attendance rate (expected to be 60%) = 78.1%**
- **1908 = Number of video views on ASSC YouTube Channel (at 10th November)¹⁴**

We secured Sponsorship from:

- Beyond Pricing
- Landlord's Little Helper
- Tunnocks
- VisitScotland

As well as our valued Partners for Business:

- Bruce Stevenson
- Cumberland Business
- Discover Scotland
- DM Hall
- Gilson Gray

¹² <https://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/scotland-outlook-2030-overview/>

¹³ <https://www.assc.co.uk/autumn-talks/>

¹⁴ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC66NV3Ix-YbZo-c3uyfhUOA?view_as=subscriber

- Interhome
- NoiseAware
- Quality in Tourism
- SuperControl
- Vrbo (previously HomeAway)

And our Trade Supplier Plus partners

- Cleaner EV
- EQ Accountants
- Landlord's Little Helper
- Solway Water Management

Speakers have included:

- Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Sec for Rural Economy and Tourism
- Marc Crothall, Chief Executive, Scottish Tourism Alliance
- Malcolm Roughead, Chief Executive, VisitScotland
- Andrew Mott, Chair, Short-Term Let Delivery Group, Scottish Government
- Jake Gingerich, Team Lead for European Market, Beyond Pricing
- Robert Kennedy, Product Director, SuperControl & ASSC Chair
- Jen Burton, Director, Landlord's Little Helper
- Iain Jardine, Water Hygiene Consultant, Solway Water Management
- Fiona Holmes, Marketing Manager for UK & Ireland, VisitScotland
- Rona Wallace, Senior Manager, Global Intermediary Marketing Team within the Industry, Destination and Development Team, VisitScotland
- Joanna Millar, Legal Director of Gilson Gray LLP
- Patrick O'Shaughnessy, Industry Development Manager, VisitScotland
- Rene Looper, Founder / Managing Director, Tuminds Social Media
- Grant Seaton, Senior Business Lending Manager, The Cumberland Building Society
- Scott Greig, Partner at EQ Accountants and Head of EQ Leisure

Sessions have included:

- Leadership, Recovery and Opportunities
- Dynamic Pricing – A Necessity in Scotland's New Normal
- Cleaning Up: Future-Proofing Your Business
- Extending Your Season With UK & Irish Visitors
- Regulation of Short-Term Lets
- STL Licensing: a Briefing Session with ASSC and Gilson Gray
- Digital Reset for the New Normal
- Business Finance in the Context of Covid-19

We are delighted that the Autumn Talks have been so successful. We are very much looking forward to establishing a regular monthly talks programme in the future. It has been a valuable resource for ASSC Members, which has provided them with an excellent opportunity to learn more from industry experts and to engage and understand some important issues, which will help them navigate through future business challenges.

We would like to acknowledge the support and work that has been undertaken by the team at VisitScotland to make these talks possible, we are very grateful for their time and guidance in making our virtual communications run so smoothly.

The ASSC Team: Top 100 Women in Tourism

I am absolutely delighted to announce that the **entire ASSC team were recognised as part of the Top 100 Women in Tourism awards in October**. Our industry benefits from some visionary woman leaders and we are thrilled that they have been recognised in this way. The support and kind words that we have received from ASSC members around the country have kept us going through these very challenging and difficult times.

"During what has been one of the most challenging years to date for the Scottish tourism industry, Women in Tourism today announce the 2020 Top 100 Women In Tourism. Following the inaugural Top 100 which was launched in 2018, today's announcement recognises not just individual achievements over the last year, but the combined passion which has supported the sector throughout 2020." (Susan Russell, Chair, Women in Tourism).

Everyone at the ASSC sends sincere congratulations to all the other women on the list.

Membership / Engagement

The ASSC has grown significantly over the past year. It now has **1203 members** (on 10th November), including 650 members (with no marketing). This compares to 632 at the same point in 2019, with 137 members (with no marketing). This is an incredible increase in membership.

I am hugely proud of what the small ASSC team of just three has achieved over the last nine months. We have had conversations late into the night; we have cried together and laughed together. The overtime put in by the team has been mesmerising, but throughout, it was driven by a passion and real commitment to support the self-catering sector.

I would like to thank the ASSC Board, who continue to support the team and offer sage counsel.

The ASSC is nothing without its members, and we value every single one of them. I hope that you believe that we have addressed the very real issues that have affected your businesses over the last torrid months. I'd personally like to thank everyone who has responded to our surveys during the crisis – the responses have been invaluable in providing the evidence we needed whilst lobbying on your behalf.

One of our members posted a recommendation on Facebook on 10th November: "*An informative industry body that really stands up for its members in an effective way*". If that is how we are seen by our members, then I believe we are doing our jobs right!

We have valued the support of our Partners for Business and Sponsors.

Looking at the Longer-Term

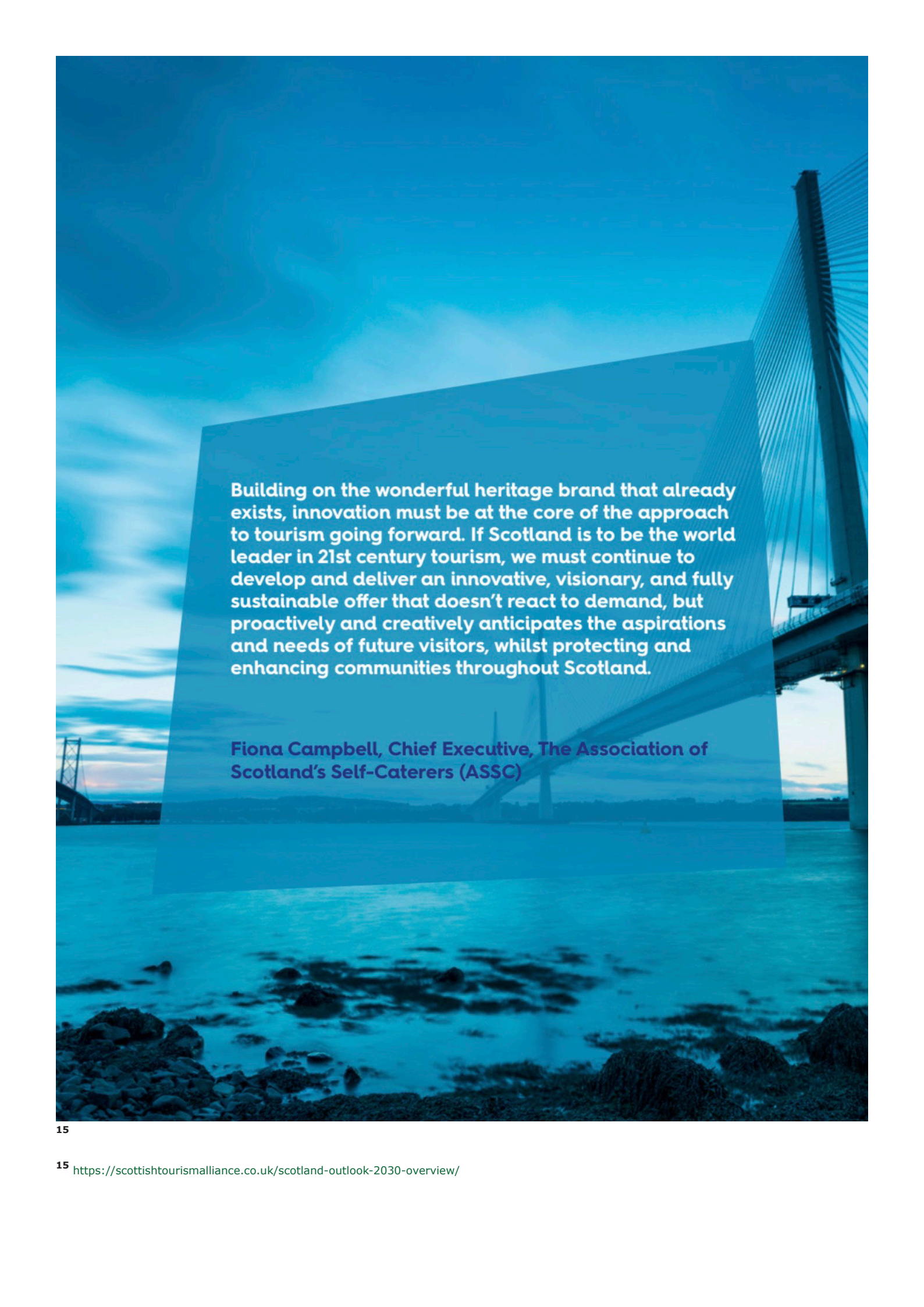
As an association, we will continue to do everything we can to support the self-catering sector in Scotland, as we have done since 1978.

However, in order to support the Self-Catering Sector through the challenges that lie ahead in 2021, we need the continued support of our existing members alongside attracting new members. We cannot stress the importance of our membership highly enough; the work we do can only be achieved by Member's ongoing commitment to valuing their Membership. Our Board has agreed to retain membership prices for 2021/22 and currently the standard membership costs just 35p per day. We very much hope that you feel that this is extremely good value for money and we will continue to work hard to engage with members, nurture our existing relationships and develop our reputation, and we will continue provide the guidance and support that Self-Catering Business Owners value as we move into a new world of unknowns.

We will continue working with the Scottish Tourism Alliance, VisitScotland and other industry friends to promote Scotland's self-catering sector to staycationers for the remainder of 2020 and 2021 and to the international market going forward. The road is open, but there are plenty of pot holes to navigate over the coming months and years. However, we will continue to support the STA's goal of Scotland becoming a world beating destination by 2030 in line with the national strategy.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone at the ASSC for all their hard work and diligence over this past year. It has been horrendous to say the least, but the support and loud voice of the ASSC has been a lifeline! I personally can't thank you all enough for giving me a voice and the strength to fight on, not to mention the glimmer of hope which thankfully turned to belief that we could indeed survive. Without the support and endless efforts of the ASSC, I fear we would have sunk with so many others, a heart-breaking thought and realisation. The fight is far from over, but knowing that the ASSC has our back plays a huge part in enabling us to keep putting one foot in front of the other, so thank you all, from the bottom of my heart."

Nicky McClymont, Shieling Holidays Mull, Isle of Mull



Building on the wonderful heritage brand that already exists, innovation must be at the core of the approach to tourism going forward. If Scotland is to be the world leader in 21st century tourism, we must continue to develop and deliver an innovative, visionary, and fully sustainable offer that doesn't react to demand, but proactively and creatively anticipates the aspirations and needs of future visitors, whilst protecting and enhancing communities throughout Scotland.

Fiona Campbell, Chief Executive, The Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (ASSC)