

Scottish Golf Tourism
and Visitor Strategy

2022- 2030

Embracing A New World

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1 Overview

Foreword by Ivan McKee MSP

Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise

Scotland is the Home of Golf and the Scottish Golf Tourism and Visitor Strategy will help to shape the future of the entire golfing sector in addition to providing a range of community, educational and, of course, sporting benefits. Golf is a huge, growing, worldwide sport and Scotland is at the forefront of the industry.

The strategy will build on Scotland's position and global reputation as a world-class golf destination, and ensure the benefits are felt in every golf visitor-related business nationwide.

It will deliver in key areas such as community engagement, developing opportunities for young people, improving health and well-being, skills development and delivering collaborative projects with key partners – with a focus on the short, medium and long-term priorities.

This is all the more important during the current COVID-19 pandemic as more and more people opt for staycations and this, together with the impacts of Brexit, makes it all the more important that we deliver a strong golf offering.

This Strategy will help Scotland build on its golf profile to showcase its worth to audiences once more.

I would like to thank the Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group for their hard work, enthusiasm and passion in bringing this strategy together.



Foreword by Stuart French

Chair of the Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group (SGTDG)

It has been a hugely challenging period for everyone across society. COVID-19 has affected the way we live, work and travel on a global scale for over 18 months. As restrictions ease, the Scottish golf tourism and visitor economy is a key area in our nation's recovery.

We are therefore immensely grateful to have been provided with the opportunity by the Scottish Government to develop the 2022 – 2030 Scottish Golf Tourism and Visitor Strategy.

Given the huge significance of the Strategy, we have extensively consulted with and researched the extended golf tourism industry to ensure the outputs identified in the document reflect the views of key stakeholders within Scotland, The Home of Golf.

The Strategy has key aims, notably placing a focus on destination development, community engagement, education and health as the industry looks ambitiously to the future.

It aims to build on Scotland's position and global reputation as a world-class golf destination, and ensure the benefits are felt in every golf visitor-related business nationwide.

From the nation's major championship courses and 9-hole layouts to golf tourism businesses and organisations from related sectors, the Strategy intends to have a wider visitor golfer focus and how stakeholders can effectively engage with them to positively impact their organisation.

The previous Scottish Golf Tourism Strategy was delivered between 2013 and 2020 – spanning two of golf's biggest events with The 2014 Ryder Cup and The 2019 Solheim Cup staged at The Gleneagles Hotel – and we felt it prudent to build on the success of that Strategy and incorporate innovative opportunities that support the wider industry.

The SGTDG includes Scottish Golf, The PGA in Scotland SIGTOA, Scotland Where Golf Began and Regional Golf Tourism Development Groups from across the country, spanning multiple sectors including accommodation, tour operators and travel companies, and we thank them all for their time and support. Observers of the group include VisitScotland, the national tourism organisation, who we generously thank too.

We would like you to join us as we take ownership of this Strategy – a Strategy we believe will help sustain and grow our industry and maintain Scotland's position as offering one of the most engaging, authentic and diverse golf experiences on earth.



The strategy needs to meet the needs of the small and micro operators as well as the big players.

Introduction

We live in a new global world. A world that provides challenges, yet also opportunities.

While COVID-19 continues to affect our daily lives, golf in Scotland continues to recover from the ravages of the pandemic and is seeking to build a positive future.

Memberships have increased, participation is on the rise and key target groups, notably women and younger golfers, are coming into the sport for the first time. Driving visitor tourism is another vital focus for the industry as travel opportunities return and we seek to position golf in Scotland as an experience to savour for all ages and abilities.

The previous Scottish Golf Tourism strategy was delivered between 2013 and 2020 – spanning The 2014 Ryder Cup and The 2019 Solheim Cup that put Scotland at the forefront of the global stage – and grew the impact of golf tourism to Scotland from a projected £286 million to over £300 million.

The former strategy focused on developing platforms and supporting regional groups and events that provided the industry with opportunities to reach new customers and develop golf experiences in key markets, notably through the increase of Regional Golf Tourism Groups, the introduction of Scottish Golf Tourism Week and continued trade facing engagement through events such as the PGA Merchandise Show and IGTM.

It also effectively introduced the digital era and engaged the industry to embrace social media and capture and utilise consumer data for marketing purposes, as well as supporting clubs to adopt an environmental focus in their business practices – the survey undertaken to develop this strategy showed this has been hugely successful, with 86% of respondents reporting that sustainability and protecting the environment is now part of their organisational strategy.

There has never been a more important time to harness those successes and build on Scotland's position and global reputation as a world-class golf destination, ensuring the benefits are felt in every golf visitor-related business nationwide.

A destination that includes our renowned championship courses and family friendly 9-hole layouts; to golf tourism businesses and organisations from related sectors.

The industry requires us to work together and create opportunities to engage with the visiting golfer – whether travelling from another continent or from just a few miles down the road.

Incorporating innovative opportunities that support businesses and stakeholders during their recovery from COVID-19 and into the future, the new strategy will deliver in key areas, including community engagement; developing opportunities for young people to work in the industry; improving health and wellbeing; skills development; and delivering collaborative projects with key partners.

Led by the Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group (SGTDG), the strategy was developed through a shared vision with contributions from public and private sector, industry, public bodies and partner organisations. The new strategy will help shape the future of the industry from 2022 – 2030 and is fully representative of golf tourism within Scotland, the Home of Golf.

There is a huge opportunity for the industry to be innovative and ambitious as it looks to capitalise on changing trends and attitudes, embracing the rapidly moving technological opportunities and meeting changing consumer travel behaviours.

It's a time to be bold, to embrace the new world and develop pathways that support further integration of golf tourism into communities and the wider tourism industry to deliver truly authentic golf experiences.

Golf Tourism and Visitor Market: An Overview

Global Picture

Golf is truly a global sport. As of year-end 2020, there were 38,081 golf courses, spread among 206 of the world's 251 countries. That is an 82% diffusion rate of the sport globally.

Still, golf is geographically concentrated, with 80% of the world's supply of courses located in the top 10 golfing countries, including the United States of America, Japan, the United Kingdom (inclusive of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), Canada, Australia, Germany, France, Republic of Korea, Sweden and China.

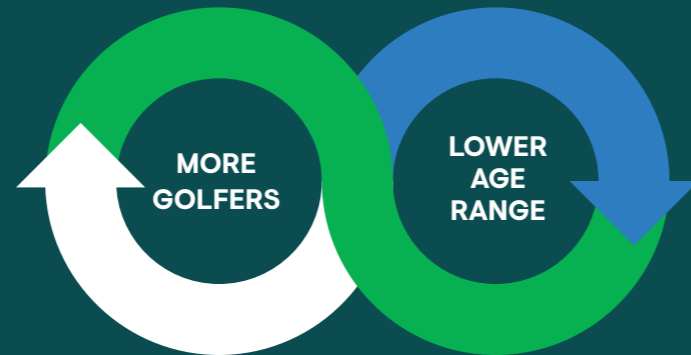
The majority of worldwide golf course supply remains located in the western hemisphere. North America is home to 50% of world supply; the USA alone has 42% of the world's total.

Scotland has 594 courses on 30,081 square miles of landmass, which equates to one every 50.6 square miles. Indeed, Scotland is fifth in Europe for its number of golf courses.

As of 2019, the percentage of registered golfers in Europe as a proportion of the population in each country sees Scotland sitting third in the top five markets (3.3%), only behind Sweden (4.8%) and Iceland (5%). Moreover, Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) account for over 850,000 registered golfers or a fifth of golfers in Europe.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the pandemic also fuelled a rise in golf participation – given the sport's ability to be played safely outdoors and its well documented health and wellbeing benefits.

Figures revealed that golf enjoyed an increase in participation by 2.3 million on-course adult golfers in Great Britain and Ireland in 2020.



The average age of golfers fell by five years to 41, with the majority of new golfers aged under 55. Moreover, 25% of female golfers were new to the sport – and tried it for the first time because of the pandemic.



– The UK features third in the world's supply of golf courses

Golf remains a huge, growing, worldwide sport and Scotland is at the forefront of the industry.

Golf Tourism and Visitor Market: An Overview (continued)

Scotland: The Audience

According to 2019 European statistics, there were 180,281 (3.3% of the population) golfers registered to Scottish Golf, the national golf union in Scotland. Of that number, over 143,000 were male, over 21,000 female and over 15,000 junior golfers. Over the last decade, golf club membership has largely been in decline in Scotland (almost 200,000 registered golfers in 2015), although 2020 offered a notable boost given golf was one of the few sports people could play safely and enjoy health and well-being benefits during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are 294 registered golfers per course in Scotland and the sport remains a fabric of life within cities, towns and villages throughout the landscape.

Governing bodies also know that an active involvement in golf can occur in many different formats and at many different venues – from driving ranges to pitch & putt courses; from adventure golf to indoor golf simulators; as well as initiatives to play on full length golf courses from six holes, to nine holes or to a full 18-holes, as well as numerous local options in between. Therefore, there are many independent and nomadic golfers having some form of active involvement in the sport who are not registered with the national federation.

From a visitor perspective, Scotland has long been looked upon as a must-visit golfing destination given the history, quality and variety of our courses.

In 2017, it was revealed that overseas golfing visitors spend on average £338 per night during a trip to Scotland, which was more than four times the daily spend of an average Scottish visitor (£78.90).



■ Almost half (47%) of overnight visitors travelled from overseas to play golf in Scotland

■ The North American market was key, representing 30% of all overnight golfing visitors with 14% coming from Europe

81% of overnight visitors agreed their trip was one of the best golfing holidays or short breaks they had ever taken.

On average, overnight domestic golfing visitors spend 6.79 nights in Scotland on their trip, while for overseas visitors the duration jumps to 10.21 on average

Golf also remains very affordable for the visitor. From the clubs who submitted their information for this strategy, the average standard visitor green fee rate in 2019 was £44, while in 2020 it was £37.

The impact of COVID-19 was also highlighted from survey results from clubs. Average total revenue on one day in June 2019 was £917, yet total average revenue on one day in June 2020 was £197.

Scotland needs to build on its golf profile to showcase its worth to audiences once more.



Sources: The R&A – European Golf Participation Report 2019, Scottish Golf, Scottish Enterprise

Golf Tourism and Visitor Market: An Overview (continued)

Scotland: Overview of Events and Economic Value

Pre COVID-19, the economic impact of golf tourism to Scotland was worth over £300 million.

The country has hosted leading golf events across the years, none more than in recent years with The 2014 Ryder Cup and The 2019 Solheim Cup, both staged at The Gleneagles Hotel and creating worldwide exposure for Scottish golf.

The Open and the Men's and Women's Scottish Opens, plus other leading professional and amateur events, also drive interest in golf in Scotland from across the world and play a key role in driving growth in tourism.

There are also additional and wider policy benefits of hosting major events – namely supporting participation, diversity, inclusion and sustainability initiatives.

We explore the benefit of three events in the three case studies opposite.

Sources: Ryder Cup Europe, The R&A, Scottish Golf, VisitScotland



£100m
economic value

The 2014 Ryder Cup at Gleneagles

—

Researchers from Sheffield Hallam University found The 2014 Ryder Cup generated over £100 million in economic activity for Scotland.

With millions of fans watching the event on TV, a report showed that £106 million was spent in Scotland as a direct result of hosting the event – including the event week and extended stays by Ryder Cup attendees – £22 million of which was in the host region of Perth & Kinross.

The event at Gleneagles, held in September 2014, attracted more than 63,000 visitors from outside Scotland and attendees accounted for a total of 133,104 bed nights during the competition week.

The 2014 Ryder Cup was part of a landmark year for Scotland during which it also held the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and the second Year of Homecoming Scotland.

Photo: Getty Images



£140m
economic value

The 2015 Open at St Andrews

—

The Open in St Andrews delivered £140 million of economic benefit to Scotland – the largest amount then ever achieved by a golf event in Great Britain or Ireland, according to an independent economic impact assessment.

The study showed spending by visitors to Scotland for the tournament generated £88 million – nearly double the £47.5 million in visitor impact achieved in 2010 when the event was last held at the Old Course.

A further £52 million in marketing benefit was realised thanks to the exposure gained by St Andrews and Scotland being broadcast to more than 500 million households worldwide.

Photo: R&A via Getty Images



£120m
economic value

The 2018 Open at Carnoustie

—

The Open at Carnoustie boosted the Scottish economy by £120 million in July 2018.

The 147th Open, golf's original championship, attracted 172,000 fans to watch Francesco Molinari triumph, becoming the first Italian to lift the Claret Jug.

An independent study found the economic impact of the tournament was a boost of £69 million, in addition to £51 million in destination marketing activity from The Open being broadcast on television to more than 600 million households in 193 countries.

The study also concluded the Angus area alone received a £21 million injection of new money from The Open. Almost half of the spectators who attended (49.8%) travelled from outside Scotland, while the majority of Scottish fans (84.8%) came from outside Angus.

Photo: Getty Images

Post COVID-19 Trends: An Opportunity

If we lived in a fast-paced, ever-changing world before the advent of COVID-19, then the global pandemic has highlighted that fact even further. Following the easing of lockdown restrictions, we are all adjusting to a 'new normal' as we seek to go about our daily lives as safely as possible.

COVID-19 has accelerated behavioural changes, and we are now moving towards a period of Transformational Tourism. What does that mean?

Transformational Tourism is a movement amongst consumers to travel with purpose and cause. Maximising their time, giving something back to the destination they visit and consciously off-setting the impact of their travel. Driven by the mainstreaming of wellness, betterment and mindfulness, visitors want their trips to have meaning, challenge, connection and impact.

What does this mean for golf tourism in Scotland?

There are key trends now emerging to help golf in Scotland recover from COVID-19 and capitalise on the opportunities.

Through them all, resilience and adaptability are two fundamental characteristics for a rebirth of the hospitality and tourism sector within golf.

Increase in Domestic Tourism

The golf season in 2021 at least allowed golf clubs across Scotland to welcome visitors from other areas of the UK, then internationally, as COVID-19 restrictions began to ease.

- Overall, there is still a high demand for travel as consumers seek to make up for the lockdown measures that kept them housebound for much of 2020. Even during the worst times of the pandemic, travellers never stopped researching and planning their trips.
- Travellers overall see domestic travel as a safer and less complex option, with holidays less likely to be affected by further changes to restrictions.
- According to a study conducted by Booking.com, 53% of travellers wanted to take shorter holidays in 2021 than in 2019 (ecobnb.com).
- There will be more families and group of friends travelling together to make up for lost time.

Greater Focus on Digital and Technology

- Utilising digital resources to plan and book vacations, especially among millennials who are going to be a stronger segment of travellers with a digital upbringing.
- The expectation digital platforms will provide a rewarding and fulfilling customer journey.
- Staying one step ahead of competitors will mean working on online presence and on direct distribution channels.

Booking and Information

- The need for booking flexibility is vital.
- Communications highlighting a clean and safe vacation are also important. All activities that allow social distancing and promote hygienic conditions will be preferred by travellers.

Desire for Authentic Experiences

- Connection with nature and open spaces is growing. According to a Tripadvisor White Paper, after the lockdown, 70.5% of Italians opted for outdoor tourism, with a growth of 26.6% compared to the previous year (ecobnb.com).
- Supporting localism to positively impact communities given the challenges of COVID-19.
- A desire for a personalisation of experiences.
- The wish of the traveller is to support sustainable tourism destinations.
- There are an increasing number of people looking for alternative ways of staying healthy and physically fit.

The Environment

- There is a critical need to the industry to fully commit to green agendas and deliver environmental and sustainable practices in line with objectives.
- Consumer expectations for experiences to align with wider environmental and green initiatives.

A study by Booking.com reports that 70% of travellers are ready to support the tourism industry in its recovery (ecobnb.com). Golf can reap the benefits of such desires.



Research 2

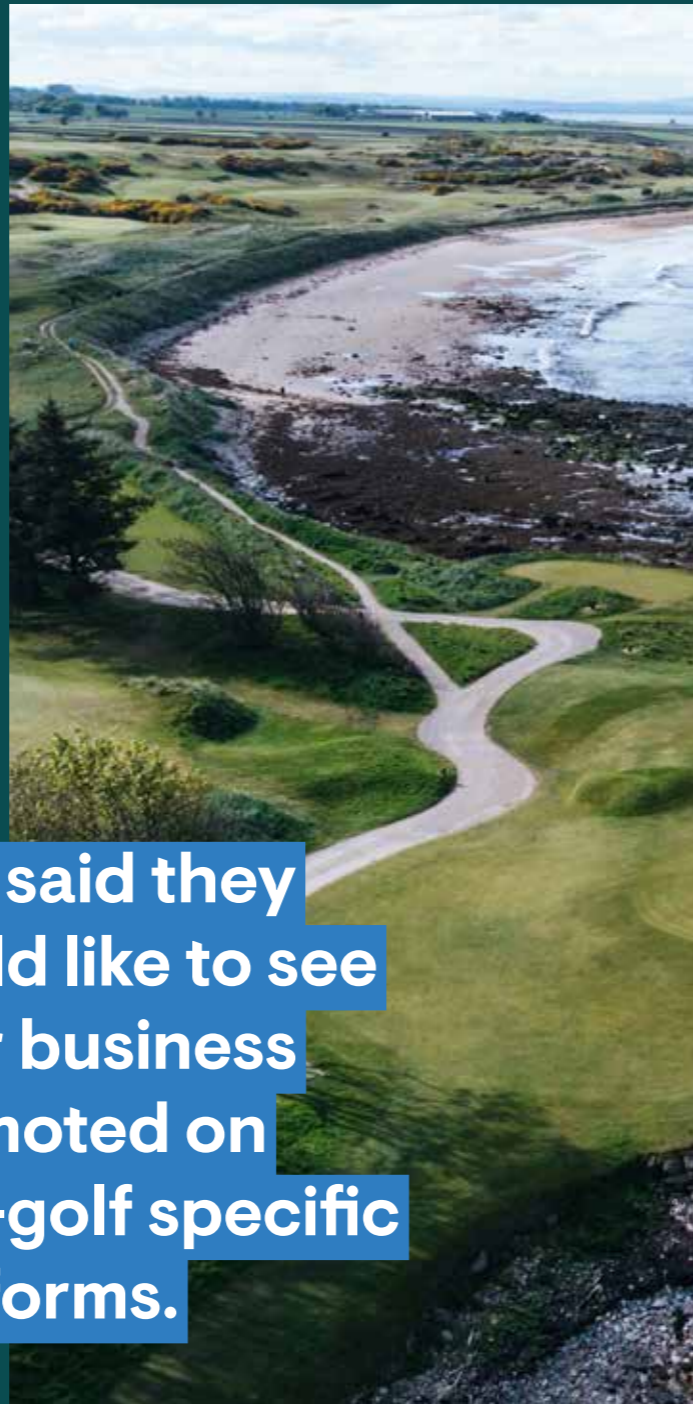
Survey Results in Brief

Approach

The strategy is the culmination of a process of engagement, consultation and data analysis to ensure it is built on the foundations of benchmarking and using trends and insights considering the development and sustainability of the golf tourism industry over the coming decade.

The areas researched included people, community, destination, education and the environment and sustainability. These areas have been identified as key tourism development drivers over the coming decade.

The questionnaire was circulated by, and research undertaken with, key industry associations and organisations (including VisitScotland, Scottish Golf, the Regional Golf Tourism Groups, Scottish Local Authorities, The Scottish Tourism Alliance, HIT Scotland, Glasgow Life and the Edinburgh Tourism Action Group) to the golf and related tourism sectors. In total, 208 respondents provided quantitative and qualitative responses to the questionnaire, with the findings used to form the basis of the strategy.



93% said they would like to see their business promoted on non-golf specific platforms.

Key Findings

Marketing

- Only 54% have a marketing and communications plan that includes engaging with the golf and tourism sector.
- The biggest sales and marketing challenge is budget at 63%, followed by lack of in-house skills at 31% and lack of networking collaboration opportunities at 24%.
- Businesses identified engaging with golf tourism sales and marketing opportunities, general marketing opportunities, introductions to golf tour operators and collaborations relevant businesses/sectors as important going forwards.
- 36% of businesses engage with online golf specific marketing organisations, 27% with non-golf specific platforms and 37% with related sectors outside of the golf industry.
- 93% said they would like to see their business promoted on non-golf specific platforms.

Developing Customer Experiences

- 52% of businesses stated they do not currently work collaboratively with other businesses, although 90% felt open to working collaboratively with businesses in the future.
- 94% of businesses felt positively towards the golf industry engaging with other sectors to reach new customers.
- Qualitative findings identified the following:
 - *too much focus on trophy courses and not the others/a sense of smaller clubs being overlooked*
 - *service levels at courses needs to be optimised to ensure a memorable customer experience is delivered*
 - *more should be done to target the UK and Scottish markets*



■ 52% do not currently collaborate with other businesses
■ 90% are open to future collaborations

Key Findings

(continued)

People Development

- The largest perceived gap in the current workforce was marketing at 40%, followed by social media at 35% and customer experience at 24%.
- 45% marketing, 43% social media and 34% customer experience were the leading areas where businesses would value development opportunities for their staff.
- Only 30% provided staff with access to physical and/or mental health programmes.
- 32% of businesses currently support or engage with apprenticeship programmes, but 64% were possibly interested going forwards.
- 74% of businesses do not have links with further education institutions, but 68% said they may be interested going forwards.
- 32% said they currently offer work experience opportunities for school aged children, with 41% saying it may be of interest going forwards.

Community Engagement

- 67% currently engage with local community organisations, the majority of which are schools.
- Those not currently engaging with community groups are most likely to engage with schools, get into golf initiatives and local authorities.

The Environment

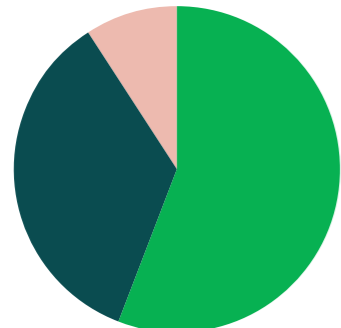
- 86% say environmental sustainability is part of their organisational strategy.
- Those that said they didn't engage said budget and a lack of support were the main reasons.
- 64% that do undertake environmental practices don't work with organisations or industry bodies to support the activity.
- 35% said they would be interested and 44% said they might be interested in engaging with a Scottish led environmental organisation.

Data

- 36% said yes and 39% maybe to sharing anonymised data with the Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group for the evaluation/planning of activities, development of targeted support, help accessing funding and informing marketing/business planning for the industry.

Future

- COVID-19 support remains the focus in the short term at 84%, with over 60% identifying marketing, strategy/planning, staff training, and community engagement were all priorities going forwards.



■ 56% of respondents would engage with SGTSG in the delivery of the strategy
■ 35% of respondents said they might be interested in engaging

e.g. lobby government and help facilitate a number of benefits such as training programmes, grant funding opportunities and community engagement initiatives for your business

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- ✓ Scotland globally recognised as the Home of Golf
- ✓ A rich heritage that offers authentic experiences
- ✓ Variety of courses that suit all tastes and budgets
- ✓ Courses easily accessible, with short journey times between many
- ✓ Activities of national golf tourism group (Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group) supported by VisitScotland, Scottish Government, the PGA and Scottish Golf Limited
- ✓ Regular major events that bring global media focus on the game in Scotland
- ✓ Many courses designed by iconic architects of the game; past and present

Opportunities

- ★ Adopt a creative and innovative approach to engage with new types of golf visitor
- ★ Work with courses to positively engage with the communities around them
- ★ Maximise business development opportunities provided by technology
- ★ Increase visitors in the shoulder seasons of Spring and Autumn
- ★ Create mutually beneficial relationships with other sectors such as food and drink
- ★ Capitalise on the new emerging tourism trends
- ★ Increase awareness of golf opportunities for travellers on city or other activity breaks
- ★ Create pathways and skills development programmes that provide fulfilling and rewarding careers in golf tourism

Weaknesses

- ✗ Variable levels of customer service quality
- ✗ Slow adoption of digital technologies reduces the effectiveness of promotional opportunities and impacts customer experiences
- ✗ Low levels of collaboration between courses and businesses makes the industry fragmented
- ✗ Absence of relevant in-house skills in certain business disciplines
- ✗ Disjointed industry employment pathways
- ✗ Over-reliance on some of the 'major' courses in some markets versus capacity and availability
- ✗ A general focus on the national and international tourist and not the local golf visitor
- ✗ Lack of opportunities for lesser-known courses / businesses
- ✗ Lack of structured relationships with other sectors
- ✗ Customer perceptions of experience – too expensive, not welcoming and only suitable for good players
- ✗ Lack of clarity around brand proposition – how do lesser courses maximise opportunities to reach customers
- ✗ Fragmented marketing activity – not easily understood by industry or potential partners
- ✗ Opportunities around major events poorly understood and not maximised
- ✗ Lack of funding / collaboration for regional golf groups

Threats

- ! A reduction in public sector funding for golf tourism
- ! An increase in investment by competing golf tourism destinations
- ! A decrease in high spending visitors due to COVID-19 impacts
- ! A reduction of flight routes, frequency of flights and customer numbers
- ! A reluctance of businesses to collect and share data which negatively impacts planning and decision making



Vision & Mission

Embracing A New Future



Our Vision

Scotland will be a world leader in 21st century sustainable golf tourism



Our Mission

Making golf tourism sustainable and meet the changing consumer, workforce, community and environmental need and expectations, whilst growing the industry's overall year-on-year economic contribution to the Scottish economy to 2030.

The golf tourism landscape has changed significantly – a change that has been accelerated by the fall-out from COVID-19. Resultantly, to fulfil our vision and mission, the scope of this strategy has grown.

The pandemic has provided the opportunity to re-evaluate the tourism environment and embrace innovation to access customers and support businesses and stakeholders during their recovery from COVID-19 and into the future.

What are the key areas that will drive the new strategy to success?

Over the following pages, we will highlight five key areas, along with related case studies, that are central to the strategy's success.

- > Developing our Destinations
- > People
- > Reaching Out to Communities
- > Maximising the Value of Golf Events
- > Protecting the Environment

“It is a hugely important time for the tourism industry in Scotland as it emerges from COVID-19 and builds for a brighter future, aided by the resumption of domestic travel.

Scotland is the Home of Golf and this strategy will help to shape the future of the entire golfing sector in addition to providing a range of community, educational and of course, sporting benefits. The Scottish Government is fully behind the tourism sector as it looks to rebuild from the pandemic.”

Tourism Minister, Ivan McKee

> Developing our Destinations

Recovery of the economic, social, historical and cultural heritage of our destinations is necessary.

- Work with the industry to develop and promote products and itineraries that inspire different consumer segments
- Develop sustainable tourism practices by increasing engagement with different customer types and undertaking initiatives that maximise the spread of visitor spend
- Utilising digital connectivity to support sustainable growth by creating mutually beneficial relationships with relevant sectors that enable promotion to new customers
- Support localism through working with communities to help shape and deliver authentic experiences
- Collating and using data to inform decision making and direct marketing activities

> People

People remain key to the success of golf tourism in Scotland.

- Recruitment – golf must be perceived as a career of choice with clear pathway(s) to attract the right people through the development of golf tourism related career pathways that provide employment opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds
- Education and Skills Development – work with partners to develop education and skills programmes to overcome skills shortages and which allow the industry to flex and adapt
- Inclusivity – golf is for everyone in a modern Scotland and by welcoming people from all backgrounds it enhances its reputation and promotes inclusive growth as well as supporting the wider health and wellbeing agenda

> Reaching Out to Communities

Localism is a factor considered by a growing number of tourists, whose decisions will be influenced by ‘hyper local’ experiences and how their visit positively impacts on communities.

- Support and develop initiatives that put golf courses at the heart of their local communities
- Use technology to continue the growth and integration of golf tourism into the wider tourism industry and to reach new customers from local, national and international markets

> Maximising the Value of Golf Events

Build on Scotland's renowned reputation to host leading golf championships.

- Provide opportunities for businesses to collaborate with each other and new sectors
- Offer golf to as an option for visitors attending non-golf events and conferences
- Provide valuable opportunities for businesses, regardless of size, type or location

> Protecting the Environment

During the COVID-19 era, we have developed a greater awareness of environmental issues, our responsibilities for future generations and the consequences of our actions on the environment.

- Support the industry to embrace environmental practices
- Develop tourism products that meet the environmental expectations of the visitor

“There is an opportunity to develop a narrative around our people, places and authentic experiences to appeal to different customers groups.”

Developing our Destinations

Scotland is the Home of Golf, a destination of choice for thousands of visitors across the world. Famous links courses, world-class resort hotels, historical connections, whisky and a warm welcome are often in the top five of reasons to visit our shores. Indeed, there is a perception that golf in Scotland is expensive and elitist that is aimed at the US and Asian markets with a focus on world class venues linked to golfing majors and 5-star experiences. There is an opportunity to develop a narrative around our people, places and authentic experiences to appeal to different customers groups.

We can do more to market and promote our rich golfing country – from those championship courses to the beautiful 18-hole parkland lay-outs to the stunning 9-holers... and more. Scotland, after all, also offers a phenomenal array of outdoor experiences and many visitors coming to enjoy these experiences are interested in golf. We need to position Scotland as the ultimate golf destination of choice for visitors from local, national and international markets, by providing compelling and authentic experiences that deliver on all aspects of customer expectations. The opportunity exists to develop products that suit diverse golfer types.

How can this be achieved?

Make the golf tourism industry one that is straightforward for other sectors to engage with

- There are many other tourism related sectors that have a valuable golfer demographic in their audiences
- The golf tourism industry can access these different visitor types by creating strong and sustainable links to these sectors

Develop opportunities for businesses and experiences to be promoted effectively via non-golf activities platforms

- The opportunity exists to reach the valuable holiday golfer market i.e. those visiting for other reasons, but are keen on playing golf when here
- By engaging with these visitors, it helps increase visitor income and include courses located in

regions and areas that may not normally be associated with golf

- Non golf activity platforms are many and varied and technology offers the opportunity to develop mutually beneficial relationships that increase diversity of customer

Develop and communicate experiences that suit a diverse range of golfer type

- Messaging, content, and promotional channels require to reflect this focus in Scotland, the Home of Golf
- Work with golf and other tour operators, courses and tourism experiences to explore opportunities to increase the scope of packages
- Utilise golf specific digital platforms to reach golfers and provide tee time booking access, like the Scottish Golf App
- Develop experiences for golfers in local, national and international markets

Courses in Scotland's Towns and Cities

- City courses in Scotland are often overlooked by the golf visitor and not on the radar of the business tourist or those visiting for other reasons
- There is the opportunity to work with courses, tour operators and accommodation providers to create visitor golf opportunities

Provide valuable promotional opportunities for businesses

- Support businesses to develop golf specific marketing plans and work collaboratively with key stakeholders to reach a diverse customer audience
- Access to regional and national tourism marketing groups can help achieve this

People

“I’ve loved playing in Scotland,” said the legendary American Golfer, Jack Nicklaus. “I’ve always been received very well in Scotland, always loved the people and felt like I am one of you.”

Our people are our priority, promoting and sustaining golf tourism in Scotland. They are the vital cogs that turn the tourism wheel and drive it forward.

It is therefore important to establish golf tourism as a career of first choice, enhancing the reputation of Scotland as a global leader in skills development, leadership and innovation.

How can this be achieved?

- Create Educational Pathways
- Customer Experience Support
- Apprenticeships
- Socially Inclusive and Diverse Workplaces

Create Educational Pathways

Golf is a wonderful sporting sector to work in – we need to highlight that more.

There is a need to effectively promote and communicate that working in the golf tourism industry can provide a rewarding and life-long career.

The golf tourism industry should play its part in developing individuals to fill employment gaps and create opportunities. The creation of education to employment pathways provides opportunities for individuals of diverse ages and backgrounds. It means individuals have the opportunity to access jobs that best fit their skills and qualifications.

Industry engagement would also add value to the programmes delivered by further education institutions across Scotland.



Customer Experience Support

Variable service quality greatly impacts on the customer experience for visitors within golf clubs.

There is a requirement for targeted training to improve key aspects and the opportunity to partner with organisations to deliver industry specific training.

Apprenticeships

We must create clear pathways for businesses to engage with apprenticeships and support internships.

It is thus important to develop close links with industry and apprenticeship providers, who should work together to develop apprenticeships that meet industry and educational needs.

Socially Inclusive and Diverse Workplaces

Golf has a habit of talking to itself or looking inwards rather than outwards. Why not access skills from outside the industry to help drive innovation and create positive change?

Initiatives that offer transferable skills development and employment opportunities for socially diverse groups will help sustain and grow the industry.

Reaching Out to Communities

“The scientific research clearly shows that there are significant physical and mental health benefits to be gained from playing golf.”

Golf is at the heart of Scotland’s cities, towns and villages. The game is part of the very fabric of communities the length and breadth of the land. It’s simply a way of life.

It is a sport that can be played from the age of four to 104. It can be played in the fresh air in the great outdoors, in many different forms and even indoors too. It allows golfers to enjoy a form of exercise, as well as boosting their mental wellbeing in a social environment.

Yet, for many courses, the golf tourist is a customer demographic that isn’t relevant for their course. It’s about member play, not visitor play.

Resultantly, the Scottish Golf Tourism and Visitor industry has a responsibility to take its place in supporting participation and the growth of the game across the country. Encouraging golf as a force for good in the local community can protect the natural environment whilst bringing social, economic and health benefits to local people and businesses.

Put the Golf Course at the Heart of the Community

Courses should see golf tourists as a golfer who isn’t a member – even if they are just travelling a few miles to play. The local visitor can be extremely valuable to a course as it brings the course closer to the local community and helps create a more sustainable business model. Indeed, for many clubs, targeting the local visitor is of far more benefit than those from further afield.

To do so, effective engagement with the local community can provide courses with valuable income and create positive PR. By the courses collaborating with stakeholders, they can not only support their own business but those in the local area.

Schools and Community Groups

The COVID-19 pandemic has once again reinforced how golf is a game for all that provides noticeable mental and health and wellbeing benefits.

By engaging with schools and community groups, clubs can encourage participation and help promote golf tourism as a career option at a developmental level. Golf facilities provide numerous educational options, including nature, finance, business management and food and beverage and for the use by community social groups.

The opportunity exists for other groups and charities to access the facilities for health and wellbeing benefits and thus create visitor revenue opportunities all-year round.

“The scientific research clearly shows that there are significant physical and mental health benefits to be gained from playing golf. We believe that golf can provide a fantastic opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to have fun, get fit and socialise with family and friends – something that is important to today’s society.”

Martin Slumbers, Chief Executive of The R&A

Maximising the Value of Golf Events

The role golf events play in tourism in Scotland is well-known, but that must never be taken for granted. In the last decade alone, The Open (four times), The Ryder Cup and The Solheim Cup have graced Scottish fairways – all among the biggest events on the global golfing stage.

The economic benefits, both for the host area and the country, always prove significant when such events are held, together with the millions of viewers who tune in to watch on TV.

When the sun rose above the Ochil Hills on the Friday morning of The Ryder Cup at The Gleneagles Hotel in September 2014, just before the first tee shot was struck, the pictures being beamed to more than 600 million homes around the world could not have shown Scotland in a better light. Perth and Kinross, for example, also benefitted from £22 million of supported spend that week.

Even in times of adversity, 2020 and 2021 showed how key stakeholders work together in Scotland to attract and deliver high-standing events.

Like all sports around the world, golf was hit hard by COVID-19 with postponements and cancellations. However, despite the challenges posed by travel restrictions and a ban on live spectators, Scotland lived up to its reputation by hosting four world-class elite tour championships in 2020 – namely the AIG Women's Open, the Aberdeen Standard Investments Scottish Opens (for men and women) and the newly-created Scottish Championship.

The championships also delivered powerful moments for good across sport and society, supporting official charities such as the East Lothian Foodbank and the Scottish Association of Mental Health (SAMH) and key initiatives such as health and wellbeing, public safety messaging and recognising NHS workers.

It is important that Scotland continues to use events as the catalyst for promotion and legacies that genuinely benefit the industry and maximise the value of events to the local economy.

How can this be achieved?

- Utilise digital and other platforms to target and engage with audiences, both those in attendance and not
- Work with communities and support businesses to maximise the value of events to the local economy
- Engage with related stakeholders to focus key industry messaging through the broadcast and PR of events e.g. sustainability, education, health and wellbeing

With 2022 set to be another memorable year for Scottish golf, the collaborative approach to attracting championships must continue. The Open returns to St Andrews for an historic 150th staging, the AIG Women's Open goes to Muirfield for the first time and The Gleneagles Hotel also hosts The Senior Open Presented by Rolex for the first time too.

“Scotland’s reputation as a destination for major events is recognised nationally and internationally, and by continuing to support a portfolio of annual golf events which deliver sustainable impact and international profile will ensure that Scotland continues to raise the profile of golf tourism and events as a force for economic and social good.”

**Alan Grant, Senior Golf Manager,
VisitScotland**

Protecting the Environment

Given the impacts of climate change, individuals have developed a greater awareness of environmental issues, our responsibilities towards future generations and the consequences of our actions on the world around us.

Research suggests 69% of global travellers now expect the travel industry to offer more environmentally sensitive travel options (ecobnb.com) and prefer to choose a sustainable accommodation option.

On top of that, climate change is changing the way we live. Some of our best and most historic courses are at risk from rising sea levels and erosion.

It is vital for the golf industry to take heed. We must demonstrate best practice by putting the environment and sustainability at the heart of golf tourism and make the best of a sport based outside, typically in beautiful surroundings.

We should also consider sustainable products – electric hire vehicles for example – and be more creative and innovative in product development and marketing to a more environmentally conscious customer.

The Environmental Expectations of the Customer

Post COVID-19 consumer trends have accelerated this change as consumers have had time to reevaluate their behaviours and consider what their future choices will look like.

They are now far more aware of the impact their behaviours have on the climate and consumers are therefore keen to align themselves with greener modes of transport and experiences.

Golf tourism has an important part to play in affecting behavioural change around the environment and demonstrating best practice. Moreover, adopting a greener approach offers engaging content for promotional campaigns and PR.



Building the Environment into Customer Experiences

It is crucial to use experiences to demonstrate to customers how changes to the environment are impacting golf destinations. Consumers have a greater desire to have a positive impact on the environment around them when they travel.

For example, the impact of COVID-19 has inspired more than half (53%) of travellers to consider reducing waste and/or recycle plastic on the go once all restrictions are lifted (ecobnb.com).

It is therefore important that visible onsite practices that demonstrate sustainable behaviours e.g. recycling, no single use plastics, rain water use and more



Action Plan

Aims and Actions

Objective #1

Position Scotland as the ultimate golf destination of choice for visitors from local, national and international markets, by providing compelling and authentic experiences that meet customer expectation.

	Outcomes	Actions
1	Make the Scottish golf tourism industry one that is compelling for other sectors to engage with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work collaboratively with other sectors to reach new customers, including development of a network of cross industry contacts to devise and implement mutually beneficial opportunities
2	Enable the opportunity for businesses and experiences to be promoted via non-golf channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to general tourism and other activity focused platforms to develop collaborative opportunities
3	Develop and communicate experiences that suit a diverse range of golfer type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate collaborative working practices between businesses Support businesses in their engagement with general and golf specific tour operators Support businesses in their engagement with online booking platforms Work with tour operators to expand the scope of the products they develop Encourage businesses to join golf marketing groups Ensure businesses are in a position to embrace opportunities provided by technological advancements Develop core messaging that reflects sustainable 21st century golf tourism Provide opportunities for all businesses, regardless of size, type or location
4	Offer training and support in key disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop training programmes in key disciplines that match industry requirements Work with businesses to develop bespoke marketing and communications plans Provide targeted social media and marketing training and seminars
5	Provide valuable promotional opportunities for businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with related sectors to develop mutually beneficial campaigns Develop campaigns that showcase the wider golf tourism industry Utilise digital and other platforms to target customers effectively

Objective #2

To establish golf tourism as a career of first choice, enhancing the reputation of Scotland as a global leader in skills development, leadership and innovation.

	Outcomes	Actions
1	Create clear pathways for businesses to engage with apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pull together an industry working group to work with key stakeholders to develop golf tourism specific apprenticeship opportunities Provide businesses with a checklist regarding apprenticeship regulations and processes
2	Provide support for customer experience training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an industry standard customer experience training programme
3	Provide access to mental health support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create links with mental health charities
4	Develop mutually beneficial pathways for businesses to engage with further education institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a framework of further education institutions that can provide research support to the industry Industry to work with further education institutions to provide employment opportunities for students
5	Develop socially inclusive and diverse working environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with stakeholders to challenge industry norms and create opportunities



Objective #3

Encourage golf as a force for good in the local community whilst bringing social, economic and health benefits to local people and businesses.

	Outcomes	Actions
1	Put the golf course at the heart of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Support and enable courses to build mutually beneficial relationships with groups in the local community, including mental health charities <input type="checkbox"/> Create links with organisations, schools and charities interested in engaging with the health and wellbeing aspects of the game <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with local authority and other public sector organisations to deliver initiatives <input type="checkbox"/> Support courses to effectively engage with visitor golfers from the local area <input type="checkbox"/> Work with courses to develop facilities that meet the expectations of the 21st century golfer

Objective #4

The Environment – protecting the natural environment whilst delivering a first class visitor experience.

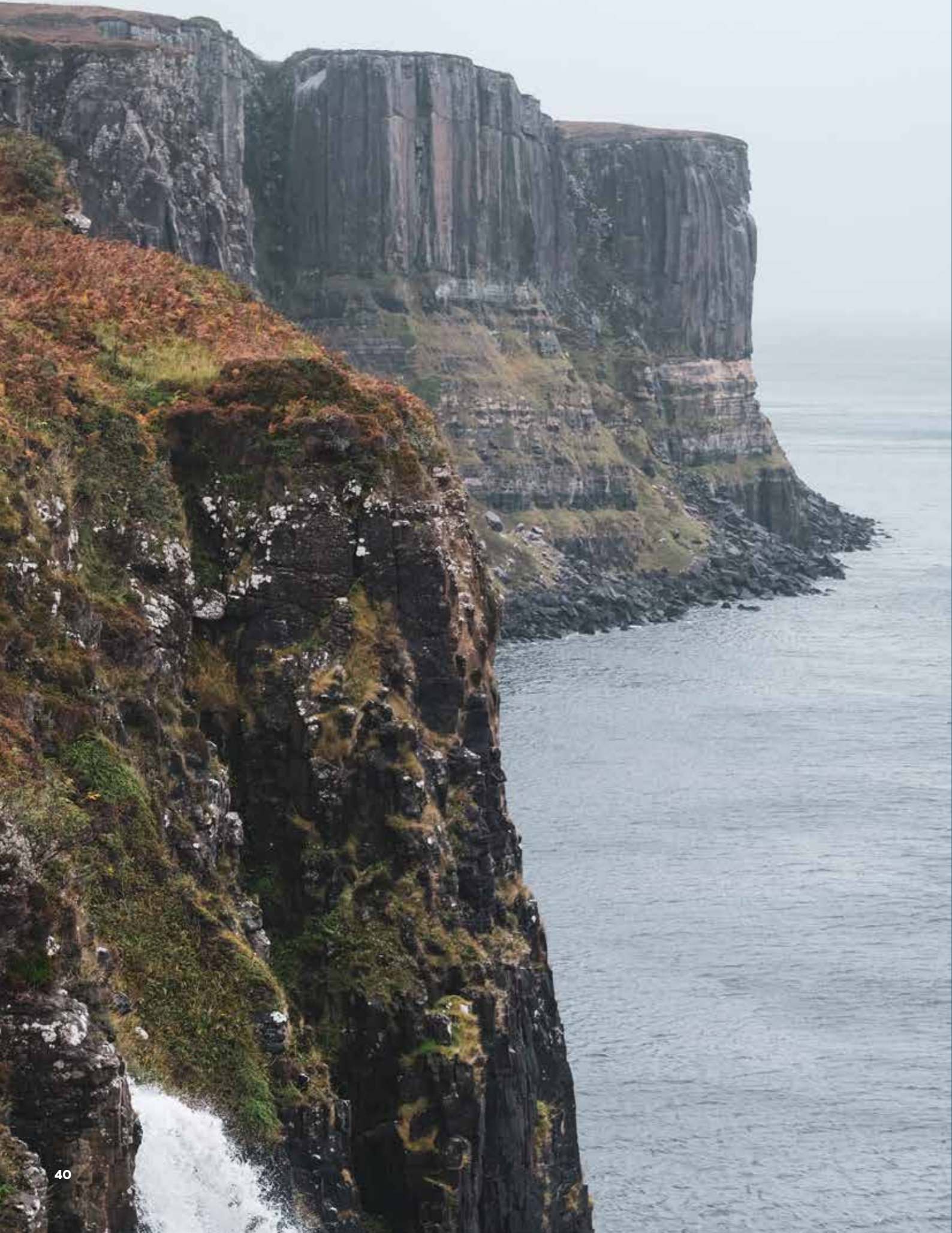
	Outcomes	Actions
1	Demonstrate best practice by putting the environment at the heart of the golf tourism decision making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Work with the industry to develop an industry standard approach to the environment <input type="checkbox"/> Consider environmental factors when developing customer experiences

Objective #5

Maximising the value of golf events.

	Outcomes	Actions
1	Use events as the catalyst for promotion and legacies that genuinely benefit the industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Capitalise on digital platforms to provide event attendance opportunities to a greater number of organisations <input type="checkbox"/> Key stakeholders to work together to attract and deliver key events <input type="checkbox"/> Maximise the value of events to the local economy





In Conclusion

Implementation

This strategy sets out a number of objectives and identifies actions that help support the sustainability and growth of the golf tourism industry in the coming decade.

The challenges and opportunities are varied, but collaborative golf and cross sector working between stakeholders and a commitment to an ambitious and innovative approach will ensure Scotland continues to offer a golf tourism product that delivers on customer expectations time and time again.

The following key golf tourism stakeholders will lead on delivering the objectives, but the scope of the document requires a far wider collaboration with other areas, including further education, hospitality and engagement with enterprise agencies. It is only by adopting this collective approach that true benefits will be felt by businesses of all types and sizes across the golf tourism and visitor sectors.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility and delivery of the strategy will be overseen by the Scottish Golf Tourism Development Group (SGTDG) (comprising Scottish Golf Limited, The PGA in Scotland, VisitScotland, Scottish Incoming Golf Tour Operators' Association (SIGTOA), the Regional Golf Tourism Development Groups and Scotland, Where Golf Began.

Group Observers

VisitScotland

Supporting the golf tourism industry by delivering marketing and communications activities in key global B2B and B2C markets under 'Scotland, The Home of Golf' brand message. As the national tourism organisation, they support the promotion of a number of key events and were integral in the hugely successful delivery of The 2014 Ryder Cup and The 2019 Solheim Cup at The Gleneagles Hotel

Delivery Stakeholder Overview

Scottish Golf

The national governing body for the sport of golf in Scotland who provide support to Scotland's affiliated golf clubs representing and adding value to around 180,000 golf club members.

The organisation supports clubs to be more welcoming, open, and inclusive with a view to increasing membership for all, with a particular emphasis on women and young people; provide the insights, tools and resources that help golf clubs embrace the needs of demographic change, digital transformation and influence cultural change; and identify and secure new investment channels to reinvest in the evolution and growth of the game in Scotland.

The PGA in Scotland

With over 600 members, the association educates and trains PGA Professionals to degree level. The programme offers the very latest skills which they can employ across all areas of the sport, from golf club management to coaching other golfers.

Their CPD programmes build on core training and provide the opportunity for professionals to develop skills in specific areas of interest, including customer service and sports science.

This comprehensive educational approach enables golfers to play better golf and enjoy world-class facilities and outstanding experiences at clubs across Scotland.

Regional Golf Tourism Development Groups

A number of regions have their own golf specific tourism development groups. These groups are structured and operate independently but have the shared aim of promoting the golf experience available to golfers in local, national and international markets via B2B and B2C channels.

This support is delivered via multiple channels including tour operator and media engagement, attendance at events, marketing and promotion (including collaborative campaigns) and PR. They also collaborate as a sub-group within the SGTDG to develop and deliver cross regional initiatives.

Collaborative Tourism Groups

There are established regional and national collaborations which operate to support, promote and develop opportunities for businesses and organisations in their region or sector. These organisations provide valuable skills and knowledge and undertake a number of initiatives including marketing, tour operator and media engagement, networking, funding and development of promotional assets and materials.

There are an extensive number of these organisations in operation that have differing structures and purposes, including Ayrshire and Arran Tourism, The North Coast 500, Moray Speyside Tourism BID and VisitAberdeen.

SIGTOA

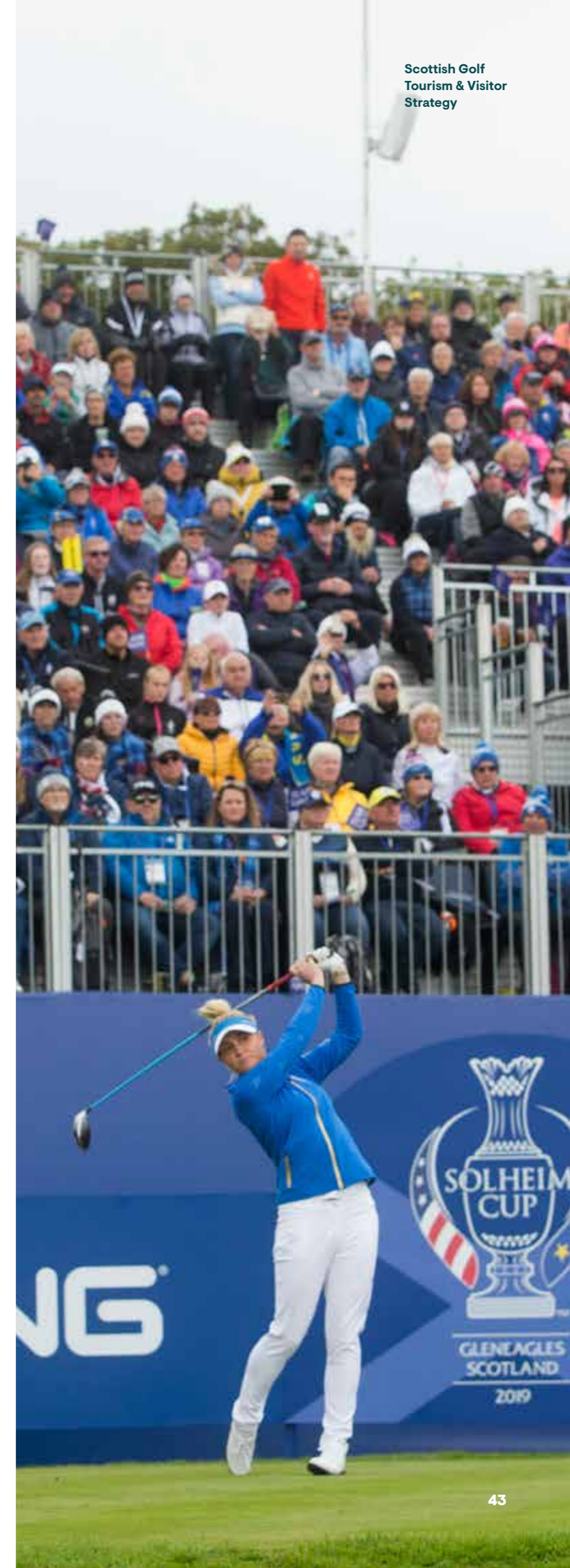
SIGTOA is recognised by both VisitScotland and the Scottish Government as the official industry trade Association.

The association is intended to be representative of companies based in Scotland, who provide an incoming golf tour management service and comply with acceptable minimum membership criteria. The body operates as a tour operator business collective and has a variety of core objectives including the development and implementation of industry standards, lobbying government on key travel trade issues and the provision of specialist support, guidance and information on golf tourism related issues to the public and private sectors.

SWGB – Scotland Where Golf Began

Scotland Where Golf Began is an industry-led, not for profit company, whose mission is to inspire and inform golfers of the nation's outstanding golf experiences.

It focusses on destination marketing, supporting individual businesses and regional collaborations in addition to the delivery of national campaigns. It aims to encourage a more even spread of golf tourism spend across Scotland through its storytelling, product development, media and travel trade engagement and PR.



Conclusion

Scotland is acclaimed around the world as the home of true golf authenticity.

A wonderful variety of courses combined with a rewarding visitor experience puts the country at the top of wish lists for golfers across the world.

However, the environment is continually evolving, and the industry requires to ensure it is prepared and demonstrates the agility required to meet the desires of changing consumer behaviours and aligns with global trends.

This strategy aims to support the industry and create opportunities and pathways; making a career in golf tourism a rewarding one; putting sustainable tourism at its heart and placing as much importance on engaging with the local golfer as with those located in countries throughout the world.

“By achieving this, we will not only benefit and support the core golf tourism businesses, but also help sustain and grow community clubs and businesses the length and breadth of the country.”

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Community Engagement: Noah's Ark Golf Centre and the North Inch Golf Course, Perth

The Perth facility is the prime example of one at the heart of a community. Offering a 22-bay covered floodlit driving range with free clubs for use, a 18 hole Adventure Golf putting course, state-of-the-art putting studio and a Coaching Academy, Noah's Ark has the facilities to cater for all ages and abilities.

At the nearby North Inch Golf Course, the creation of a short 6-hole junior course (within the main course) with holes between 90 and 150 yards is also significant in trying to attract newcomers to the sport.

Increasing participation and engagement with local school and community groups are at the heart of their ethos. Niall McGill, who is PGA Professional and Managing Director at Noah's Ark Golf Centre, as well as managing the North Inch course for Perth & Kinross Council, highlights some key factors in their success.

"We built the 18-hole mini golf putting course, which we have found to be a great way of bringing people to try golf from initially having a game of putting," he said. "We sell combined tickets so people can play putting and hit balls on range.

"At the North Inch, we also offer a 'get into golf' category and transitional lower priced categories for youth 18-21 years, intermediate 22-25 years and young adult 26-29 years. We offer free club hire for anyone playing the golf course. Our junior season ticket is priced at just £20 for year and this includes attendance at weekly junior coaching sessions."

Aided by funding received through the local authority for golf development during both The 2014 Ryder Cup and The 2019 Solheim Cup, as well as funding from Scottish Golf for the junior club hire scheme, McGill's work has taken him into Perth schools.

"We have worked with local schools in various ways over the years, from running taster sessions in primary schools," he explains. "We also offer discounted range balls to two local secondary schools who use the driving range as part of their PE classes.

"We take part in an annual primary 7s transitions day, for those moving into S1 at Perth High School and we have worked along with Scottish Golf in running the Young Leaders programme, training S4 -S6 pupils in delivering basic golf coaching sessions."

Noah's Ark dementia-focused social group is also a success story. The 'Golf Memories' group has been running for over five years, offering local people with memory-related conditions to rekindle their love of golf. Noah's Ark sponsor the group by offering free use of their facilities every Monday and also provide all the teas and coffees at the end of each session.

"Golf memories is a fantastic project which allows people with dementia and other age-related memory issues to continue playing golf," states Niall. "We initially started the group focusing on memory recall, looking at old pictures of famous golfers, as this was based upon the successful Football Memories programme. When we started to introduce the physical activities of hitting balls on the range and putting, this transformed the group and we saw a huge change in participants."

Since the pandemic, Niall has seen an increase in the number of mental wellbeing groups who have approached Noah's Ark and the North Inch for use of their facilities. "We plan to work closely with these groups in using golf as a way to help improve people's physical and mental wellbeing," he concludes.

Case Study 2

Providing Skills to meet Industry Needs: Fife College

There are different pathways to working in golf tourism, with local education providers a well-trodden route to success. Fife College is one body that provides opportunities through their programmes to send individuals on a career journey and meet industry needs.

Geoffrey Proudlock, Director Faculty of Business, Enterprise and Tourism with Supported Programmes at Fife College, is working hard in this area. With the College home to approximately 21,000 students, Proudlock has some 3,500 in his own Faculty and is kept busy running courses to create opportunities for future employment – especially in a changing world.

"In terms of tourism, we have courses in event management, travel and tourism, hospitality, culinary arts, business and accountancy," explains Geoffrey, whose main base is in Kirkcaldy.

"I think the relationship between the college and businesses has changed. The way it is working in my Faculty is that we are trying to engage businesses and find out what they need in terms of upskilling. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed things quite a lot really and what we're finding is that people are coming to us wanting people ready for work, sort of immediately."

The College work closely with the hospitality sector, such as hotels and restaurants. They also engage with the University of St Andrews, training Chefs for example, and catering companies.

Geoffrey, who hails from the north-east of England, only started his role at the start of 2021 so has a fresh perspective on the local business infrastructure.

Visit: www.fife.ac.uk/

"We are working with the Old Course Hotel as well to try and get people ready for work," he added. "I'm new to Scotland but I see the amount of golf venues around and I see scope for opportunities. We're trying to make sure all of our courses have some sort of element of either work placements or volunteering."

To fill skills gaps in industries and encourage students from different backgrounds to enrol in college programmes, Geoffrey and his team are also consistently looking at their own approaches to benefit individuals.

He explained: "We're looking at our own performance indicators and doing a full curriculum review in my area and asking ourselves how we upskill staff and meet the needs of students and industry? We've got a business development unit who work very closely with businesses. We also do a lot of number crunching in terms of local employment market intelligence so we can think about our best approaches. We then encourage students who have been through our programmes to come back and highlight their work, as they are our best ambassadors really.

"We're looking at shorter programmes, too, and how we can best approach developing and implementing this. We need to meet the needs of people who don't want to come into college all the time, maybe once or twice a week or month."

"We are open and accessible and do some target marketing. For instance, we're starting to look at the indexes of deprivation and how do we reach a wider range of people. How do we widen participation? How do we get students who have never thought about ending up in a career, into a career?"

Case Study 3

The Benefits Events Bring to Local Communities

Scotland has become renowned for hosting the biggest events in golf and showcasing the country on a global scale. From The 2014 Ryder Cup to The 2019 Solheim Cup, from Challenge Tour events to European Tour and Ladies European Tour tournaments, Scotland is put emphatically on the map.

The support of the Scottish Government and VisitScotland plays a key role in bringing these championships to our shores, as well as their associated promotion. There are also a host of benefits these events bring to local communities.

“Every event brings local benefits, whether it is a Challenge Tour event, a Ryder Cup or an Open,” explains Alan Grant, Senior Golf Manager at VisitScotland. “Obviously, the level of return is commensurate with the size and scale of each event, but every one will bring benefits to local golf clubs, businesses and communities. The last couple of years have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic so events haven’t generated the same influx of spectators, but it has also seen an increased focus on the use of local suppliers and businesses during a time when it was needed more than ever.”

Working with event providers, the value to businesses in the region starts well before the opening tee shot is struck. Event builds start three months in advance, with contractors in the area staying nearby, dining and using local facilities – thus investing money into that local community.

Pre and post pandemic, the event week itself sees thousands of spectators arrive to boost local regions. Perth and Stirling were both bustling, for example, in 2019 for The Solheim Cup at The Gleneagles Hotel. Post-event, there is a six-week breakdown among contractors, so the investment continues. These are benefits people perhaps don’t always realise.

Economically, events deliver for Scotland. Over 90,000 fans attended the Solheim Cup, for instance, and spent on site and within the Perthshire area. Beyond economics, local charity work is associated with a number of events. For example, the ASI Scottish Open has partnered with Leuchie House, an East Lothian respite centre, in recent years. Under-16s also gain free access to golf events in Scotland, boosting junior interest as well as supporting and inspiring participation programme activities in partnership with stakeholders such as Scottish Golf and The PGA in Scotland.

The 2014 Ryder Cup also left an infrastructure investment locally in Auchterarder, with improved 4G phone signal. “From a tourism perspective, events can be a catalyst to deliver lasting infrastructure and facility transformation which is left behind not only for local communities but tourism businesses such as hotels, golf courses and tour operators to benefit from,” continues Alan.

Looking ahead to 2022, with demand to travel back to Scotland expected to be strong provided COVID-19 continues to ease, it’s a huge year for golf here with The Open and the AIG Women’s Open part of a glorious summer of golf events.

Alan adds: “There’s no doubt it was vital to keep our major events portfolio running in 2020 and 2021 to keep Scotland front of mind on the global stage and support businesses at a crucial time. Looking ahead to 2022 and beyond is exciting because we have a world-class run of tournaments, possibly our biggest ever, and for Scotland and its communities it provides a global opportunity to tell the world we are once again open for business and capitalise on the pent-up demand for international travel.”



Thank you to our partners



