



VisitScotland Business Events Hosts North American Virtual Roundtable Amid COVID-19

The #ScotlandWillWait campaign offers meeting planners the opportunity to discuss impact of COVID-19 on the business events industry in North America

APRIL 20, 2020 – VisitScotland Business Events wrapped up its first virtual roundtable on April 15 to gain insights on the impact of COVID-19 from meeting planners in North America. The virtual roundtable was led by Richard Knight, Director of the Americas, VisitScotland Business Events, moderated by Daniella Middleton of Development Counsellors International, and participants included 5 meeting planners from the U.S. and Canada, representing some of the industry's most prevalent third party meeting planning agencies. The roundtable is associated with the #ScotlandWillWait campaign which serves as a communication vehicle for the business events industry during the pandemic.

The virtual roundtable discussed the repercussions of COVID-19 on business for meeting planners, and how destination marketing organizations can offer support. Highlighted insights for business events industry recovery include:

- Uncertainty is what has the industry on hold. To mitigate uncertainty during this time, industry leaders must provide constant updates, user-friendly websites, and offer round-the-clock communication.
- Planners trying to secure proposals, whether it be venues or booking space for programs in the latter part of 2020, are reporting obstacles to secure hotelier responses as many have been furloughed or laid off. This is a dilemma as the future business will help the industry recover, but the current situation is not encouraging.
- Events and incentives may not look the same in the future. Due to changing budgets and representation, tourism companies may not be able to attend major events, and therefore attendance will be scaled back. The changes of border control across different countries may also prevent destinations from bringing in major events and incentive programs.
- Humanity is critical. Basic communication with DMOs and tourism offices is key leading up to recovery, it's reassuring and allows for the brainstorming of creative solutions going forward.

The insights further inform communication for the #ScotlandWillWait initiative. The campaign showcases the destination as a leader for the business events industry during COVID-19. VisitScotland Business Events encourages industry members to engage with the organization on social media via the hashtag. The latest campaign video can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2KmmhWi>.

“The business events industry is built on the principle of relationship building,” notes Knight. “It is critical, perhaps more than ever before, that we share our knowledge along with our hopes and fears, to better understand how to help each other get through this unprecedented time. While Scotland waits until it makes sense to welcome people back to our beloved home, we want to let our partners know that we are here for them and want to help however we can as we navigate this crisis together.”

VisitScotland Business Events will continue to host a collection of virtual roundtables with meeting planners as it attempts to navigate the heavily impacted meetings and incentives industry. A date for the next roundtable will be discussed for May.

Assistance with stories for editorial consideration are to be directed to Tania Kedikian via email tania.kedikian@aboutdci.com. For more information on how to plan an event or conference in Scotland, contact +1 416 506 3000 or email businesstourism@visitscotland.com.

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April 2020

PITCH: Scotland's local businesses overcome COVID challenges

While business events and conventions are clearly on hold during this pandemic, Scotland's local businesses are fighting to stay open, adapting to challenges faced by COVID-19. These local businesses and the communities they serve are models of how the industry and our global community can cope with COVID now and post-pandemic.

Scotland's notable cities in the meetings industry – Edinburgh and Glasgow, for example, can sometimes outshine the small islands that dot along its coast. Even the loneliest place in the United Kingdom needs supplies during the COVID-19 crisis, and one Scottish small business is stepping up to help. Ewen and Janice of [Seafood Skye](#) could no longer run their seafood cruises as COVID-19 began shutting down the tourism industry. So they did what any smart small business would do and pivoted. From their base in Portree, they are using their resources to bring vital supplies to the Island of Rona, about an hour by water, and its four inhabitants.

It's just one example of innovation in Scotland, where its remote islands and remote areas have been uniquely impacted. These small islands have always practiced the idea of self-isolation before it became widespread due to the pandemic, being geographically distant from larger society. The communities cope and showcase how their typical life differs from our industries understanding of hectic schedules and large-scale meetings. Thinking of these local communities and businesses as part of future incentive travel and tours for large groups position Scotland as an attractive destination to visit for the MICE community.

The Isle of Harris, for example, is home to the famed [Harris Tweed](#), but today, the island is switching gears. [Isle of Harris Gin](#) has stepped up to help produce hand sanitizer for local communities, with a reduced team of just three dedicated workers. Other local distilleries, like [Glenwyvis](#), a community owned Distillery that produces gin and whisky based in Dingwall, have literally gone to the max, using all of their resources to produce a few hundred bottles of hand sanitizer. For those who still want a taste of Scottish spirits, [Eske Spirits](#) is holding virtual gin tastings on Facebook Live.

With normal shipments of food low, those on the islands look to local providers, supporting local businesses like never before. The [seafood industry](#) is innovating, while castles like [Kincardine](#) are using their kitchens to provide menu items at the [North East Food Hub](#). [Connage Highland Dairy](#) is an organic farm producing cheeses from its own herd located about three miles from Culloden Moor, outside Inverness. While their café has closed, their shop and deliveries continue providing for the local community, offering the familiar tastes that will help them weather the storm. This can serve as an excellent tour idea for future groups.

“We are proud of the much-needed community initiative undertaken by our local suppliers,” notes Richard Knight, VSBE’s Director of Marketing in the Americas. “Our tourism industry has certainly taken a hit, but this hasn’t stopped our local business from fighting this pandemic by pivoting and helping our small communities and the global community alike, showcasing Scotland’s humanitarian nature. The gin, whiskey and spirits that have made Scotland an attractive place to visit will still be here once the conferences and groups come back, to which we will welcome with open arms. Until then, our focus continues to be utilizing our highly-regarded establishments to make the world a safer, healthier place. And I applaud our smaller communities and businesses, and all other Scottish companies, for taking action.”

The list goes on, so get in touch if you’d like to hear more about how Scotland is surviving now so that its small businesses can thrive when the meetings industry can safely return.

June 2020

SUBJ: Invite: VisitScotland welcomes you to an evening of good food, drink and company!



[Scotland will wait](#) ... yet in the meantime, join us for a virtual evening of Scottish delights with Royal Chef Darren McGrady, former chef to Queen Elizabeth II, Diana, Princess of Wales and Princes' William and Harry.

We've invited you to hear the latest regarding VisitScotland's business event initiatives, and more specifically (and excitingly), learn about Scotland's culinary incentive tour offerings from Darren McGrady as he prepares a royal meal during a live cooking demonstration of Scottish salmon. Revel with your business event peers over a gin and tonic and delight in Darren's regal stories of the past!

When: Thursday, June 25, 2020 @ 3:00pm PT/5:00pm CT/6:00pm ET

Where: Zoom (details to be sent upon registration)

This is an invite-only event and your invitation is non-transferrable. Please RSVP by **Friday, June 12th** [here](#). Early RSVPs will be provided with a Scottish mailer of goodies!

We look forward to hosting you for this virtual rendezvous!

Looking for Scottish inspiration from the VisitScotland Business Events team? Our campaign [#ScotlandWillWait](#) encourages participation in social distancing, and [this VisitScotland Business Events video](#) exemplifies Scottish hospitality.

The business events team at Scotland got really creative and became published storytellers! The team created a new story from Scottish folklore that will keep the entire family entertained with tales of Fergus and the Finfolk. This is a story of a special Finfolk, a young Finman named

Fergus who dreamt of exploring, of discovery and of great adventure. Written by Rory Archibald, narrated by Fiona MacKinnon and illustrated by Morven MacKinnon, [you can listen to the stories here](#).

The history and culture of Scotland is worth reading up on during this global downtime. Although we may not be able to enjoy the bonny scenery, attractions and convention spaces that Scotland has to offer in person, [this page](#) is dedicated to bringing the destination to you. See Scotland from home through creative ideas, delicious traditional recipes, fascinating history trips back in time, interactive eBooks, and inspiring videos.

Regards,
Tania Kedikian, Publicist
VisitScotland Business Events



VisitScotland Business Events Participate in New UK-Wide Industry Standard

The Good To Go scheme offers industry support to ensure COVID-19 risk guidelines are met, helping attract business events members in North America to Scotland.

JULY 2, 2020 – The North America team of VisitScotland Business Events (VSBE) is pleased to announce its participation in “Good To Go”, a certification process of the UK’s new industry standards of that adhere to each local Government and its public health guidance.

Responding to numerous pieces of feedback from industry clients, the VSBE team will work with Scotland’s local businesses to align with the Scottish Government’s COVID-19 Visitor Economy Guidelines. To demonstrate Scotland’s readiness for reopening, local businesses will self-assess through the free online platform, www.goodtogoscotland.com, and will receive the official “We’re Good To Go” mark and certification.

“This crucial step in Scotland’s recovery is indicative of the careful planning for an eventual return of our business events industry,” states Richard Knight, Director of Marketing for The Americas, VSBE. “We want our meeting planners to keep Scotland top of mind – after all, they are our story tellers. Our meeting planners promote Scottish culture and history which help to make our bonny destination the top choice. As we utilize ‘Good To Go’ as the next big step in making Scotland safe and ready for international visitation, our meeting planners are on the ground and booking major conferences and events, as well as incentives that promote our beautiful spaces and outdoor experiences. We will continue to keep our lines of communication open and make smart and safe decisions.”

Scotland’s “Good To Go” scheme is complemented by VisitScotland Business Event’s team collection of industry virtual roundtables. In an effort to release a meeting-planner-directed relief strategy, Knight and the VSBE team host monthly meetings, gaining insights on the impact of COVID-19 from meeting planners in North America. Participants include meeting planners from the U.S. and Canada, representing some of the industry’s most prevalent third-party meeting planning agencies.

“We anticipate a new way of business events and Scotland looks forward to pioneering this change,” notes Knight. “While the EU may temporarily ban U.S. travellers, Scotland is still ready to plan for future business events once it becomes safe to welcome all travellers again. We hear the feedback from our partners – we will do our very best to anticipate the bumps along the way and work together to ensure we have a prosperous industry.”

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