

New plan to drive rapid recovery of Scottish tourism sector

- UK Government Tourism Recovery Plan to help sector build back better from the pandemic
- Plan aims to recover domestic tourism to pre-pandemic levels by 2022 and international tourism by 2023 – both at least a year faster than independent forecasts predict
- New initiatives to boost tourism include £10 million National Lottery Days Out scheme to support attractions and a new rail pass to encourage domestic breaks

A new rail pass and vouchers for popular tourist attractions are at the heart of a plan to return domestic tourism across Scotland and the whole UK to pre-pandemic levels by 2022 and international tourism by 2023.

A rail pass for “staycationers” will be launched later this year, helping to make it easier and more sustainable for domestic tourists to get around the UK. The new pass will build on the success of the BritRail pass, which is sold through VisitBritain and currently gives international visitors flexible travel across the country, as well as providing discounted entry to tourist attractions.

A £10 million voucher scheme will be launched by The National Lottery this autumn to encourage trips beyond the peak summer season, with players having the chance to claim vouchers to redeem at tourist attractions across the UK between September 2021 and March 2022.

There will be a new focus on technology and data. The UK Government will explore how tourism data collected at the border can support the sector and we will look to create a tourism data hub to give the sector access to robust, accessible and timely data. The hub could track consumer trends in travel, such as the growth in “active tourism” such as watersports and hiking, and booking of sustainable tourism experiences. The data gathered will help inform policy and marketing whilst working to improve visitor experience.

The UK Government will develop a Sustainable Tourism Plan later this year to put the UK at the forefront of the global discussion on sustainable travel. This will look at further measures to reduce the impact of tourism on our environment whilst balancing the needs of local communities with the economic benefits generated by tourism.

In 2019, Scotland welcomed almost 3.5 million inbound visitors who spent £2.5 billion while here, helping secure the UK’s position in the top five countries globally for inbound visitor spending.

However, the sector has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. £19 million has also been earmarked to promote destinations across the UK,

with a £5.5 million domestic campaign already underway.

The UK Government has acted decisively over the past year to protect jobs and businesses in Scotland's tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors, with the furlough scheme, self-employed income support scheme and VAT cuts.

The plan also looks ahead to 2022: a massive year for the UK showcasing the nation on the world stage with three major events. Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, Festival UK 2022 and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games will promote the very best of Britain at home and abroad. An additional bank holiday for the Queen's Jubilee will provide a further boost for tourism and hospitality.

UK Government Tourism Minister Nigel Huddleston MP said:

Our brilliant tourism sector is one of our country's greatest assets, making a huge contribution to our economy and delivering jobs across all communities. This is why we've provided it with £25 billion in support so far during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Tourism Recovery Plan is our blueprint for how the sector can build back better from the pandemic, even faster than forecasts predict.

It's been a challenging year for the tourism sector, especially for our cities, but I know they stand ready to welcome visitors back and I encourage everyone to rediscover the UK's fantastic tourism offer.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart MP said:

Tourism is a cornerstone of Scotland's economy, so it's fantastic that this ambitious UK Government plan is helping the sector recover.

Scotland has a huge amount to offer tourists, from our vibrant cities to our spectacular scenery. The launch of a new rail pass will encourage people from across the UK to come and explore our beautiful country while giving the tourism and hospitality sectors a much-needed boost.