

SNP tourism delay to cost sector millions in cash and customers

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The SNP's two-week delay in opening Scotland's tourism industry will cost at least £11 million and almost half a million visitors.

Analysis by the Scottish Conservatives has revealed the huge blow to the economy dealt by Nicola Sturgeon's decision to delay the restart of tourism and hospitality until July 15 at the earliest.

That compares to the sector in England which is looking forward to getting back to business on July 4.

Now a study of previous tourism figures has revealed the cost of that delay to businesses across the country.

According to official figures, Scotland's tourism industry brought in £2.86 billion in 2018 from overnight visitors from within the UK.

That means a two-week period would have stood to generate £11 million for the sector, and that's without taking into account this time of year being far busier than average.

In the same timeframe, domestic tourists made 12 million trips in 2018 which, using the same calculation, would result in 461,000 visitors – again a cautious estimate considering this is peak season.

Yesterday, the Scottish Conservatives called for the SNP to provide more support for the very businesses they were forcing to stay closed.

And the party said the SNP government should be launching a far-reaching tourism campaign to make up for lost time.

Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“Even by the most cautious of estimates Scotland's tourist industry stands to lose millions of pounds and hundreds of thousands of customers.

“That's because the SNP government is refusing to open up the tourism and hospitality industry in line with the rest of the UK.

“The damage happens now financially, but also for the future too – these are people who would have come to Scotland but are now being made available to competitors.

“If Nicola Sturgeon is insisting on this lag, then her government needs to provide financial compensation for that delay.

“And it also needs to generate a marketing campaign to make up for lost time.

“This valuable sector is already on the brink – it needs an SNP government which will back it up, not make life even more difficult.”