

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY
Regional Tourism Strategy 2016 - 2020



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FOREWORD



Dumfries and Galloway Council has made building the local economy our number one priority and there is no more important contributor to that aim than the tourism sector.

It is no exaggeration to say that when tourism does well the economy of Dumfries and Galloway does well.

That is why, along with the businesses in the sector and our many partners and stakeholders, our Council is committed to the ongoing support for the Tourism sector to assist with developing further growth, employment and income for our Tourism businesses across the whole of Dumfries and Galloway.

As with the development of any new regional strategy it is vital that it complements other national and regional strategies and all those businesses, agencies and organisations that have played such a key role in the Tourism Strategy have ensured that it has been aligned to The National Tourism Strategy, Scotland 2020 and the new Dumfries and Galloway Regional Economic Strategy.

Dumfries and Galloway is becoming widely recognised as a Destination of choice for visitors and the last year has seen our region receive a number of Tourism plaudits, awards and accolades in recognition of how very special our region is. This new strategy aims to build on that recognition for the benefits of our communities, visitors and businesses.

However, a regional strategy will only be successful if it has been developed through the consultation, support and 'buy-in' from the communities, businesses and agencies involved in Tourism; which for Dumfries and Galloway is all of us. I am delighted that there has been so much active participation from across the whole of the Tourism sector to develop the strategy and to support its delivery.

The aim now is to work together to achieve the strategy's aims and ensure that more people than ever before are able to enjoy visiting Dumfries and Galloway - a truly inspiring, beautiful and unique part of Scotland.

Councillor Colin Smyth

Chair Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Committee.
Dumfries and Galloway Council

TOURISM IN DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

Tourism is worth £302m to the local economy supporting 7,000 jobs¹. The sector is a resilient and important contributor to the economic and social sustainability of the area. Tourism is one of Scotland's most enduring industries and is recognised by many as the most sustainable long term sector of the Scottish economy.

Much has changed since the previous 2011-2016 strategy was written. Developments across digital and social media continue to make the customer more discerning, smarter and more demanding by the day.

Public sector resources are restricted and there is a new approach towards destination development with local groups and the business communities taking the lead in setting the local agenda. Businesses are taking the lead in determining the future of the sector whilst aligning with a private sector led national strategic framework. Such developments are dependent on a continued partnership approach between private and public sectors.

Dumfries and Galloway has a broad offering of tourism and hospitality products across the region. Many high quality operators and voluntary groups are now established, bringing with them enthusiasm and innovation around; new product development, events and festivals and bringing community and business closer together.

There remains a challenge in attracting and retaining a range of higher quality accommodation and food and beverage businesses. Such a gap in the local offering will hold back tourism development and restricts making the most from the visitor economy. The area also has many business operators who are content to service existing customers and not push for volume or value growth.

Research has highlighted the challenges the area faces in attracting returning visitors and their likelihood to recommend the area to other people. The strategy makes recommendations around improved networking, sharing of information and collaboration so putting the customer at the heart of the new strategy.

*Tourism is
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Source: 2014 Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM)



Dumfries and Galloway sits in an enviable position of being a rural and coastal destination, rich in a wide range of product and sectors, within relatively easy reach of the key markets of the Central Belt of Scotland and the North and Midlands of England. Such a configuration generates enormous opportunities, yet challenges, around the affinity between distanced sector and local interest groups. To travel the length of the region it is clear from the array of tourism businesses signposted that the area has a wide product offering. That offering could be stronger through closer collaboration and shared working.

Such a wide range of rural and town-based operators make the area what it is. There is however an ongoing challenge to pull together interest groups and share the ambition, no matter the size of business, to provide the customer with the very best experience.

The strategy sets out to be bottom up, industry driven, aimed at bringing growth to businesses that choose to engage, share and contribute to a customer experience driven industry. Collaboration between groups, membership bodies, sector and event-based interest groups is essential for the area to realise its full potential.

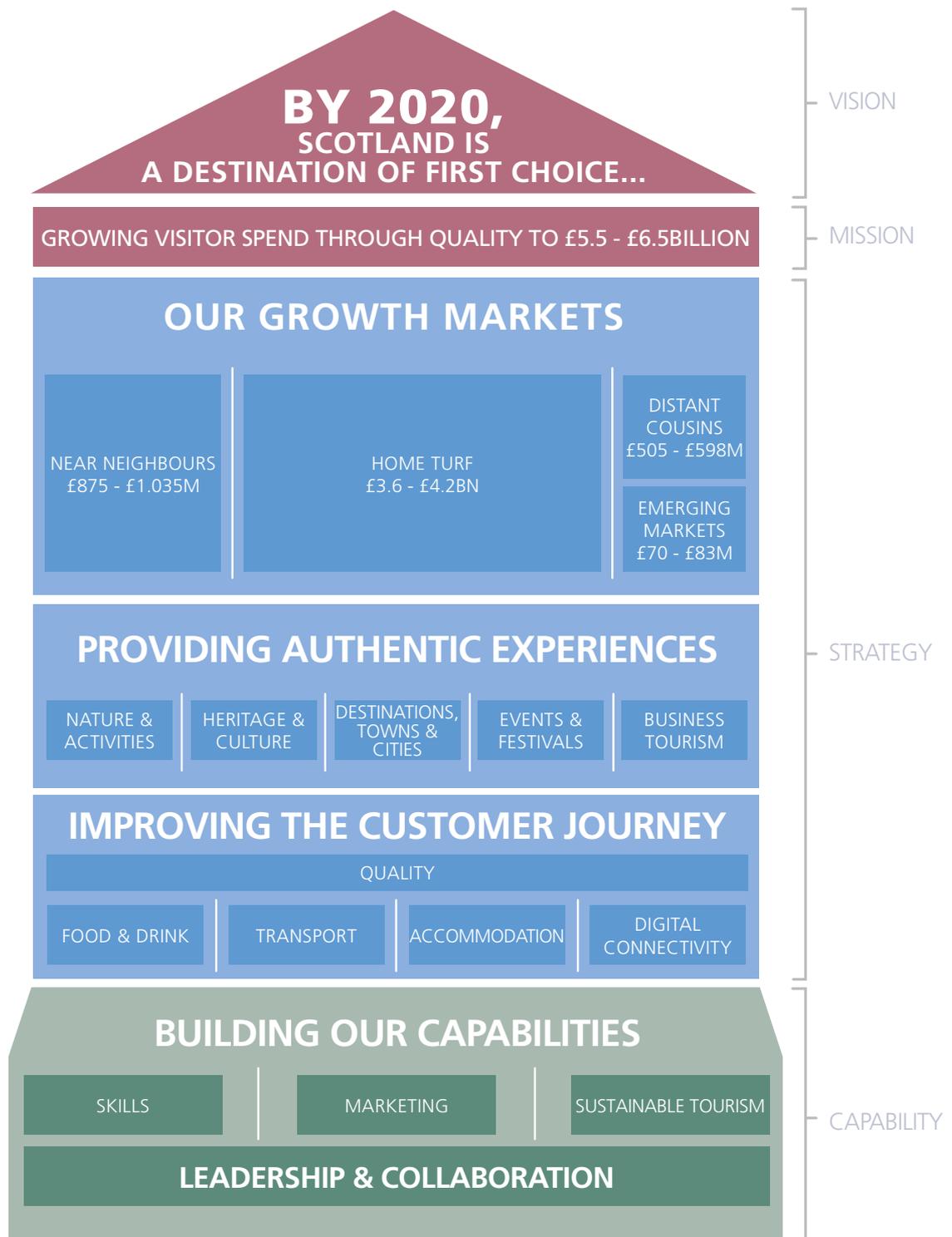
The strategy is based upon a partnership approach between public, private and community stakeholders to jointly influence, guide change and grow the value, volume and resilience of the tourism sector.

An action and delivery plan will accompany this Strategy and be developed and refreshed annually with all partners.

Dumfries and Galloway with its inspiring, distinctive and unique natural environment can stake a claim on the map of Scotland as a leading area for events and a place that will attract visitors to stay, return and recommend to others.

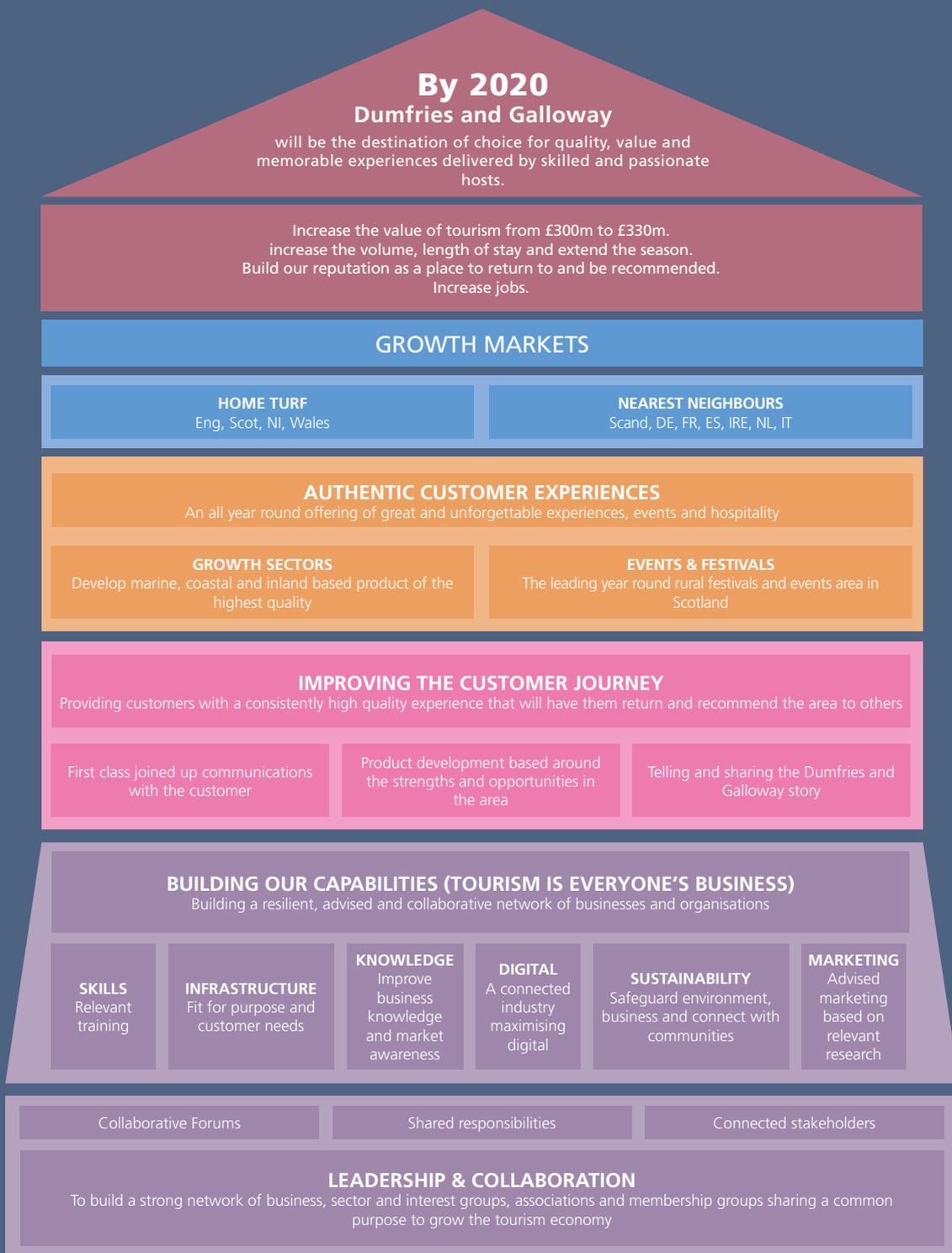
NATIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The national tourism strategy puts the customer at the heart of the tourism experience. This means providing excellent experiences which exceed visitor expectations and offers visitors a uniquely joined up experience that will generate future growth.



DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Dumfries and Galloway Strategic Framework adopts the National approach, but from a local context.



VISION, MISSION AND DELIVERY



Vision

By 2020 Dumfries and Galloway will be the destination of choice for quality, value and memorable experiences delivered by skilled and passionate hosts.



Mission

Increase the value of tourism from £300m to £330m

Increase the volume, length of stay and extend the season
from 2.43m tourist visitors to 2.6m visitors

Increase direct and indirect jobs from 6,969 to 7,300

Build our reputation as a place to return to and be recommended



Delivery

Delivery will be through three core themes:

Providing Authentic Experiences

Improving the Customer Journey

Building our Capabilities

STRATEGY IN ACTION

To grow the value of tourism from £300m to £330m by 2020

Authentic Customer Experiences

An all year round offering of great and unforgettable experiences, events and hospitality

Improving the Customer Journey

Providing customers with a consistently high quality experience that will have them return and recommend the area to others

Building our Capabilities

Building a resilient, advised and collaborative local network of businesses and organisations



Authentic Experiences

An all year round offering of great and unforgettable experiences, events and hospitality

Dumfries and Galloway has a unique mix of marine, coastal and inland based tourism assets supporting a broad range of nature, environment, activity orientated attractions and hospitality providers. In addition to this there is an opportunity to position Dumfries and Galloway as the leading rural area in Scotland for its all year round programme of festivals and events, appealing to differing customer sectors. The area boasts both internationally known events and a growing range of community led events.

1. Growth Sectors – Develop marine, coastal and inland based product of the highest quality.

- Nature based tourism - develop the rich and diverse product associated with the region's natural landscape (forest, hills, river, coast and lochs) and iconic international designations such as Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere and Dark Skies.
- Outdoor activities - develop focussed attractions and promotions offering innovative ways to enjoy the outdoors including walking, cycling, mountain biking, country sports, golf and other pursuits.
- Waterfront - maximise the coastal built settlements, natural environments and new opportunities.
- Arts, Culture and Heritage - further support and develop the sector that helps define the area.
- Food and Drink - identify the area as one of quality food through ongoing linkages with industry led activity.
- Marine - develop new product offering based on the water.
- Business Tourism - working through Conference Dumfries, develop a regional proposition to attract corporate business to the area supported with extender-stay and product build with local businesses.
- Gardens - the area is home to some of the best gardens in Scotland so further co-ordinated promotion is needed.





2. Festivals & Events - The leading rural year round festivals and events area in Scotland.

- Strengthening of the events and festivals partnerships to promote and raise awareness of a developing year round series of events and festivals.
- Develop sustainability capacities and resilience of locally led events.
- Development of the Major Festivals & Events Strategy will contribute to tourism growth.
- Build better awareness across sectors of the programme of festivals and events to help boost visitor numbers and overnight stays.



Improving the Customer Journey

Providing customers with a consistently high quality experience that will have them return and recommend the area to others

The ability to connect with the customer pre, during and post visit is essential to the success of the area. Built around local responsibility for the customer experience, local business networks will drive up the quality and experiences in their own back-yard. There will be more cross referring and cross selling of local and regional products and events so providing the customer with a real sense of place when touring or visiting the area.

1. Joined up communications with the customer - clear lines of communication connecting the customer to business and events

- Aligning tourism messages across digital web, app and print channels.
- Providing digital information gateways to the area.
- Information sharing supported through collaborative news network across the area.
- Packaging – support development and wider availability of packaged tourism products.



2. Product development - based around the assets, strengths and opportunities in the area. The following areas are earmarked as priority sectors and align with national strategy. Within each a clear action plan will be developed and targeted to develop the levels of quality and capabilities of operators.

- Accommodation, Food and Drink
- Activities, Marine and Nature
- Events and Festivals
- Arts, Heritage & Culture
- Business Tourism



3. Telling the Dumfries and Galloway story - connecting the visitor with the area and local businesses

- Development of the D&G story – an initiative that provides businesses with local updates, 'nuggets' and 'gems' about the area, what's on and what to do.
- Customer journey testing; local groups to self-assess their area and what can be done to improve the customer experience.
- Creation of a Business Communication Network thereby sharing news and business updates through a circulation news bulletin.



Building our Capabilities

Building a resilient, advised and collaborative local network of businesses and organisations

The building bricks of the industry will be based around the ambition of developing a knowledgeable, advised, digitally skilled and networked range of businesses, interest groups and organisations.

1. Skills - relevant training.

- Development of locally driven tourism customer service skills programmes suited to local businesses, local product and customer needs. The programmes will be developed to 'raise the bar' for entrants to the sector through to experienced and established businesses.
- Build the digital skills capability of the sector through development and delivery of a series of digital skills courses covering IT, web and social media awareness for business.
- In partnership with industry, Higher and Further Education develop hospitality and tourism courses suited to the local market to build opportunity to work and train in the area.



2. Infrastructure - fit for purpose and for customer needs.

- Broadband - fit for purpose for a rural trade based economy.
- Mobile network – allowing the customer to connect and buy when visiting the area.
- Signage - town and village signage, gateway signage and trail signage.
- Transport - working with transport providers to develop growth of passenger visits and local partnership tourism products to enhance connectivity. Active travel creating and maintaining a diverse range of opportunities for exploring, discovering and enjoying the local environment.
- Inward investment - attract and encourage further development of high quality tourism product.
- Countryside access - creating and maintaining a diverse range of opportunities for exploring, discovering and enjoying the natural environment

3. Knowledge - improve business knowledge and market awareness.

- Customer research – undertaking consumer research programme to advise and influence business decision making and marketing.
- Customer feedback – a programme of capturing feedback at business, destination and events will be grouped and shared to measure customer satisfaction, likelihood to return and to recommend.
- A Business Barometer - gathering local data for local businesses.
- Shared knowledge - mechanisms will be put in place to share and disseminate information, data, and statistics.

4. Digital - a connected industry maximising digital opportunities.

- Building the digital agenda into all strands of work.
- Maximise the potential of available Digital development programmes
- Enhancing business and event capabilities through structured support, advice and signposting to best practice and training support.
- Best use of digital network platforms to aid and support business to business networking.

5. Sustainability - to safeguard the environment, business and to connect with communities.

- Develop an inward investment opportunities profile for the area.
- Link with Zero Waste Scotland, Energy Saving Trust, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Crichton Carbon Centre and appropriate green tourism initiatives.
- Further develop the role of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere as an initiative to safeguard the environment and connect business and communities in a sustainable way.

6. Marketing - advised marketing activities based on relevant research.

- Guided by consumer research, targeted marketing to recognised key markets with prioritisation towards: North and Midlands of England and Scotland.
- Further developing the role of the local Marketing Interest Group to help shape and influence collaborative marketing.
- Recognition that the VisitScotland segmentation will influence marketing activities.

7. Leadership and Collaboration - to build a strong network of businesses, sector and interest groups, associations and membership groups sharing a common purpose to grow the tourism economy.

- Explore the potential of a collaborative business forum drawing together; businesses, organisations, communities, sectors, membership organisations. Such a forum to lead and shape the delivery of the strategy.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

This Strategy has been developed in collaboration and consultation with representatives from:

Abelio Scotrail
Association of Scottish Self Caterers
British Holiday and Home Parks Association
Business Gateway
Castle Douglas Food Town
Conference Dumfries
Crichton Institute
DG Food and Drink
DG Unlimited
Discover Scotland
Drumlanrig Castle and Estate
Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of Commerce
Dumfries and Galloway College
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Dumfries and Galloway Golf Partnership
Dumfries Retailers Association
Federation of Small Business
Forestry Commission Scotland
Forum of Private Business
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere
Galloway Tourism Alliance
Gretna Bed and Breakfast Association
Gretna Green Ltd
Langholm and Eskdale Tourism Group
Langholm Initiative
LEADER
Luxury Galloway
McMillan Hotel Group
Newton Stewart Business Association
Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Land and Estates
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Tourism Alliance
Southern Upland Partnership
Stranraer Harbour Users Group
SWestrans
University of the West of Scotland
Upland
Visit South West Scotland
VisitScotland
Whithorn Business Association
Wigtown Festival Company
Wigtownshire Chamber of Commerce
and Private Sector Tourism Businesses

For information and signposting to partner organisations please contact:

Dumfries and Galloway Council
Economic Development
Militia House
English Street
Dumfries DG1 2HR
Telephone 030 33 33 3000
www.dumgal.gov.uk

For additional business support contact:

Business Gateway
Provincial House
Buccleuch Street
Dumfries DG1 2AT
Telephone 01387 808738
www.bgateway.com/dumgal