



SEALLADH OUTLOOK 2030

Tourism Strategy for the Outer Hebrides: Creating a Leading 21st Century Tourism Destination

Islands Deal

Delivering a long-term legacy

P04

Hebridean Way

Sustainable tourism success

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Outer Hebrides Tourism

The voice for our industry **P26**

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Our Islands



Our Vision

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“
Their stay with us is the highlight of our visitors’ holiday in Scotland.”

WE INSPIRE curious travellers everywhere to visit our chain of Wild Atlantic Islands.

Those from just across the Minch and those from the four corners of the globe;

Those seeking a holiday of vibrant adventure and those seeking sanctuary from a frenetic world.

We WELCOME every one of them as a friend.

Those on their first trip and those who have been coming for as long as they can remember;

Those returning to the place their family once called home and those arriving to make a new home here.

Our Islands FEED their soul like nowhere else, inviting them to:

Explore our landscape and unique culture;

Encounter a different and special way of life;

Expand horizons, no matter how long the stay.



Our Mission

“ Tourism helps provide prosperity for all.

Harnessing the passion, energy and drive of our islands to create authentic experiences from more of our unique, natural, and cultural assets - to grow tourism sustainably.

In doing so this will help stimulate population growth, engage with our vibrant communities, ensure businesses thrive, enhance economic performance, and provide other opportunities.

Our islands are multidimensional, important, proud, traditional, beautiful.

By balancing the economic benefits of tourism without compromising the quality of life enjoyed by local residents and our unique environment, we can all achieve the above goals.



Our Aims

To actively engage everyone in the development and promotion of tourism.

Together we can positively enhance the benefits of tourism across the Outer Hebrides by delivering an outstanding experience for our visitors and the absolute best for our businesses, our people, our communities and our environment. We aspire to a sustainable visitor economy which supports - not damages – these shared values.

Our aims are ambitious:

- Creating new memorable visitor experiences, delivered by skilled and passionate people that increases spend per head
- Maintaining our outstanding visitor satisfaction levels and number of returning visitors by ensuring visitors love their stay
- Working with transport to ensure capacity does not hinder our industry, nor islanders' travel plans
- Helping to deliver infrastructure improvements to accommodate visitors in ways that enhance rather than undermine island life

- Contributing to vibrant communities and preserve our unique heritage and way of life

- Acting as pioneers for delivering responsible tourism, reducing our footprint and working alongside our communities

- Encouraging emerging young talent, driving leadership and the right skills for tourism from within Scotland

- Creating additional employment opportunities for existing islanders and encouraging those elsewhere to make their home here

- Supporting our businesses to develop and promote their unique offers and grow the value of our industry sustainably

- Creating an out of season demand into the autumn and winter months

- Lead and deliver a digitally innovative and collaborative destination.

A well-managed destination attracts inward investment, talent, skills, and a shared value. This makes our islands a great place to live, work, invest and visit.

“ Make a positive contribution to our islands.





**Giving our visitors
a richer understanding
of our island home.**

The Islands Deal is a £100m investment by both the UK and Scottish Governments in the communities, economies and infrastructure of the Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland announced in the Summer of 2020.

One of the pivotal strands of the Deal in the Outer Hebrides is a tourism destination masterplan that will see funding for a number of new gateway centres in different locations across the islands. These will be major attractions in their own right, that;

- celebrate a specific part of our heritage and help visitors engage and understand it more deeply,

- stimulate the economy in the communities where they are located in a way the Isle of Harris Distillery has done in Tarbert, and;

- encourage visitors to dig deeper by exploring more of the islands, visiting our Comainn Eachdraidh (Historical Societies) and speaking to and learning from islanders.

We know that these opportunities to learn about island life both today and in the past are a special part of our visitors stay in the Outer Hebrides. The new gateway centres will go hand in hand with the Stornoway Port Cruise Development and will be pivotal to the experience that cruise passengers on vessels docking in Stornoway will have of our islands. They will create new opportunities for micro-businesses around them providing tours, food and gifts.

Island Deal

Our Communities

The benefits of a thriving and sustainable tourism industry are not just economic. The assets enjoyed by our visitors, from our restaurants and signature attractions - to coastal walks and exciting events, help make the Outer Hebrides a place that our local residents can both enjoy and be proud of.

“
Tourism can protect and preserve our places.”

“
A force for good.”

It enriches the lives of those who live and work here.

This is not the time for 'vanilla'. This is the time for doing things differently, embracing different views, working together.

By forging new collaborations, listening to our communities, developing local partnerships, highlighting shared values, spreading the love, and helping to deliver infrastructure improvements we can benefit all parts of our corner of the globe.

St Kilda

Centenary 2030

On 29th August 1930, over 4,000 years of human habitation on St Kilda or Hiort came to an end. St Kilda's remaining 36 inhabitants were evacuated, following their decision to leave that embodied both the recognition that their own way of life had become unsustainable and the lure of opportunities further afield.

St Kilda was Scotland's first World Heritage Site, and today is one of six across the country. It is one of less than 50 places anywhere in the world that are listed for both their cultural and natural heritage, earning it a place among the elite of the planet's most prized locations alongside Uluru at the heart of Australia. It has been entrusted to the National Trust for Scotland since 1956.

The archipelago of four main islands tower out of the storm-tossed waters of the Atlantic Ocean, its huge cliffs and sea stacks are a natural habitat for around a million seabirds, including gannets and puffins.

Tourism on St Kilda began in the nineteenth century, and made a significant contribution to the islanders cash income. Today St Kilda has a growing reputation as a "bucket-list" destination for

people from around the world who want to experience for themselves what life would have been like on this most remote of islands. Day cruises operate from several locations in the Outer Hebrides and give visitors an up-close view of the cliffs, the chance to wander through the deserted village including its school and climb Conachair for spectacular views and a reminder of just how far away the rest of the world is. Given the global importance of St Kilda, the poignancy of its story, and its haunting beauty, the years leading up to 2030 will see increased worldwide interest in the evacuation and the events surrounding it. This will raise the profile of our islands and also promote interest in the broader stories of Gaelic culture, wildlife, emigration and the diaspora. Being prepared for an anniversary of this importance will require us to begin planning several years ahead of the actual events.

Our People

People are at the centre of what we do. Their entrepreneurial spirit, pride and passion.

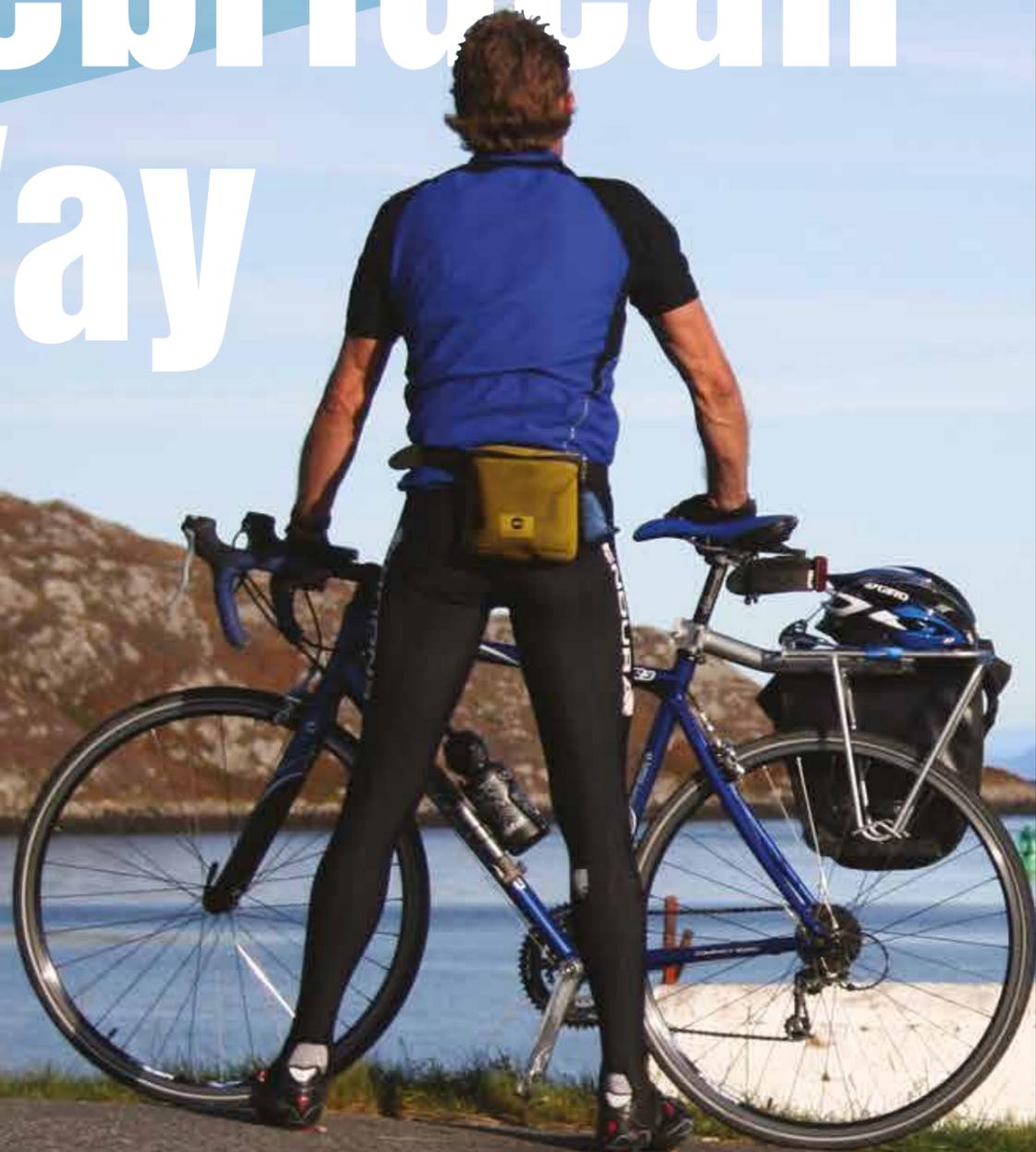
Our people are proud Hebrideans, with unique stories to tell. They provide a warm welcome, the best hospitality, local knowledge and authentic experiences that make any visit memorable.

Our marketing and communications will reflect this. We will tap into these skills and lead, mentor and participate in offering meaningful opportunities to allow our people to thrive and provide unique, quality experiences which visitors can share with the world. We will inspire a generation.

“
What is the story you want to tell?”

10 islands, 6 causeways, 2 ferries

Hebridean Way



From Vatersay to the Butt of Lewis, the Hebridean Way is actually two routes – one for walkers and one for cyclists - spanning nearly 200 miles across 10 islands, boasting rugged hills and dazzling Atlantic beaches and coastline.

Launched in 2016, the Hebridean Way is designed to bring something new to Scotland's network of long-distance routes. The aim is to encourage slower tourism, where people leave their cars behind and spend time getting to know some less-visited parts of the islands, such as Vatersay. Today it provides an important boost to overnight accommodation providers, and attracts a younger visitor segment.

In 2019 the two routes attracted around 7,500 people to the islands adding around £3 million to the islands' economy.

Visitors tell us the best things are the variety of landscape, the real sense of space relative to similar routes on the mainland and the chance to chat with locals along the way. It also continues to generate significant press interest, and has given a number of people the confidence to install pods and cabins in areas where there is little accommodation.

As the route has become more established, we have partnered with the Offcomers to produce guidebooks for both routes, launched a network of pit-stops to support those out on the route and developed maps and merchandise. You can even get your own completion certificate when you have finished the route.





OUR MISSION

OUR AIMS

OUR COMMUNITIES

OUR PEOPLE

OUR VISITORS

OUR BUSINESS

OUR EXPERIENCES

OUR ENVIRONMENT

- Supporting Biodiversity Plan
- Preserving natural environments
- Reducing our footprint
- Secure Funding
- Promoting 'eco' start ups

OUR VISION

We INSPIRE curious travellers everywhere to visit our Chain of Wild Atlantic Islands, WELCOME every one of them as a friend and our islands FEED their soul, like nowhere else they have ever been.

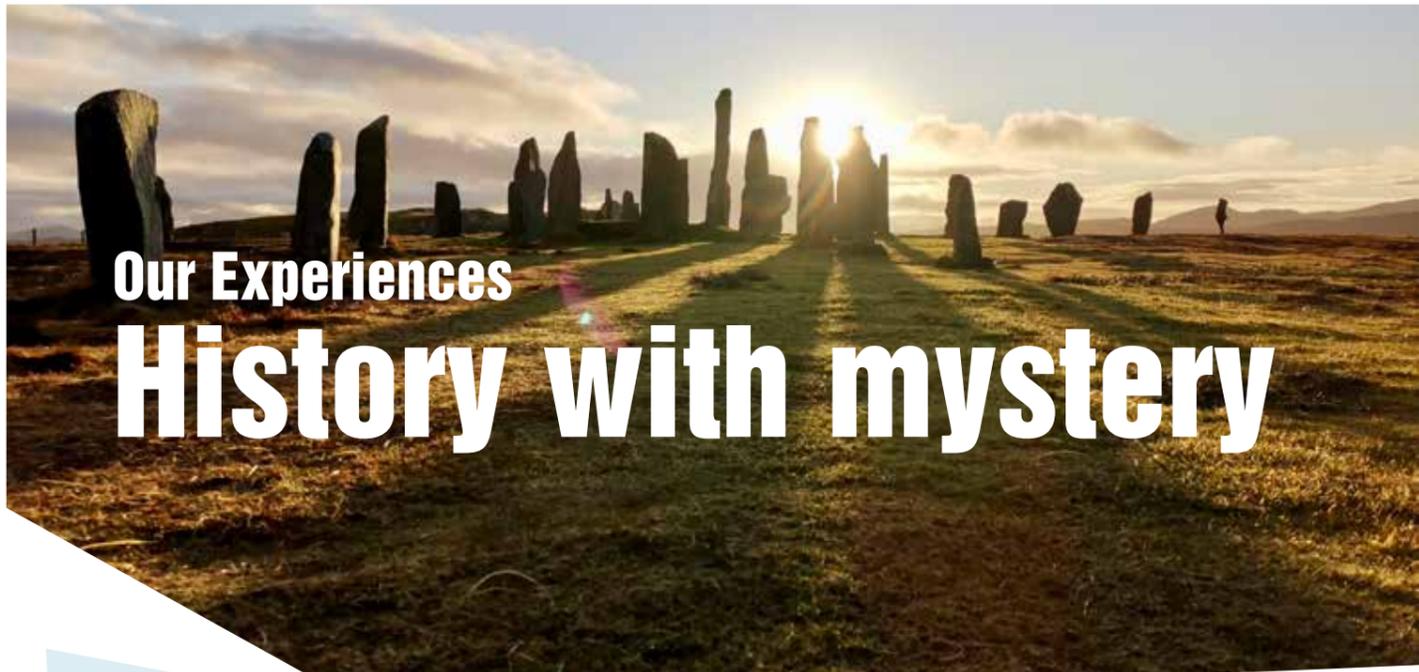
Creating authentic, engaging experiences from more of our unique, natural and cultural assets in order to:

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Visitors | Grow tourism sustainably | People | Stimulate population growth |
| Communities | Support vibrant communities | Businesses | Enhance economic performance |
| Visitors | Visitor satisfaction; Visitor spend; Transport capacity. | People | Employment growth; Promote as place to live; Development programme for young people |
| Communities | Community sentiment; Environmental footprint; Deliver infrastructure improvements. | Businesses | Industry value; Out of season demand; Digital business |
| Collaboration | Shared Value | Events & Experiences | Infrastructure |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Partnerships • External Collaborations • Community Land Trusts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hebridean Way • Local Lives • Trails/Itineraries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OH Event Diary • OH Cultural Programme • National Theme Years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signage & Information • Motorhomes & Parking • Toilets & Facilities |
| Marketing | Young People | Skills | Customer Service |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Intelligence/Data • Marketing Campaigns • Customer Feedback • Customer Communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools & College Links • Mentoring & Careers • Training • Participation in Sector Leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaelic • Digital • Sustainability • Entrepreneurship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Excellence • Hospitality Skills • Hebridean Welcome • Customer Service |
| Source Market | Core Visitors | Growth Markets | |
| Travel Mode | Scotland | Northern Europe & Rest of UK | Heritage links to Scotland |
| Mindset | Independent | Cruise | Tour/ Short Break |
| | Seasoned Explorers | Young Fogies | Active Families |
| Transport | Accommodation | Food & Drink | Business Competitiveness |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity • Timetabling & Ticketing • Integration • Flexibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting Expectations • Single-night Accommodation • Range & Capacity • On-Line Booking • Year Round Viability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Provenance • Accreditations & Listings • Trails & Events • Food with a View • Eating at Home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity • COVID Recovery • Islands Deal • Managing Groups • Transport • Extending Season |
| History with Mystery | Living Gaelic | Closer to Wildlife | |
| Intriguing stories and Ancient cultures. Familiar but distinctive. | Living Traditions, Music and Language. | Seals, Eagles, Puffins, Otters, Whales, Dolphins and Birdlife. | |
| Epic Landscape | Mind, Body and Spirit | Atlantic Larder | |
| Beach, Machair, Peat, Moor, Mountains and Lochs. | Relax, Rejuvenate and Reinvigorate. | Seafood, Crofting, Smokehouses and Distilleries. | |

LINKS

- Islands Deal
- Scotland Outlook 2030
- 2030 St Kilda Centenary
- Great Places Project





Our Experiences

History with mystery



Our visitors are curious about new cultures and enjoy making their own discoveries. They will visit the main attractions and museums on holiday, but also want time to dig beneath the surface and wander off the beaten track.

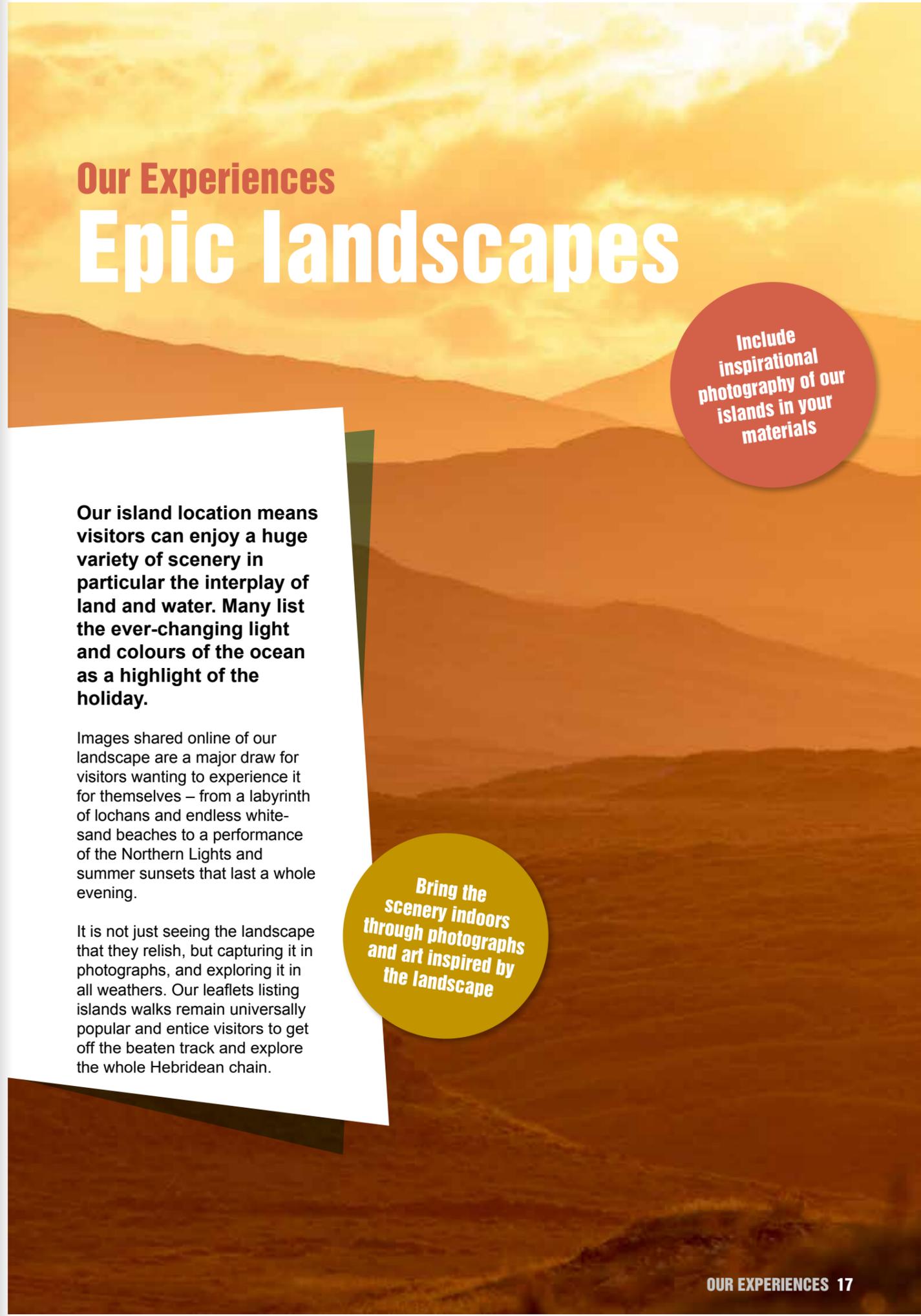
They forego the conventional, preferring to explore anything that is unusual or intriguing. Anything that gives them “bragging rights” with their friends goes to the top of the list.

Our distinct history, only becoming part of Scotland in 1266, gives us huge scope to tell unique and special stories.

From the stones of Calanais and the neolithic remains of ancient peoples scattered across the landscape to the galleons of the Kings of the Isles in Castlebay. From the hunt for Bonnie Prince Charlie following the battle of Culloden, to the fate of the whisky from the SS Politician. From the evacuation of St Kilda to the discovery of the Lewis Chessmen in a hole in the ground after hundreds of years.

The Islands Deal has at its heart, developing new and interesting ways for us to tell our story and help visitors engage in our unique heritage.

Share your own story or that of your local community with your visitors



Our Experiences

Epic landscapes

Include inspirational photography of our islands in your materials

Our island location means visitors can enjoy a huge variety of scenery in particular the interplay of land and water. Many list the ever-changing light and colours of the ocean as a highlight of the holiday.

Images shared online of our landscape are a major draw for visitors wanting to experience it for themselves – from a labyrinth of lochans and endless white-sand beaches to a performance of the Northern Lights and summer sunsets that last a whole evening.

It is not just seeing the landscape that they relish, but capturing it in photographs, and exploring it in all weathers. Our leaflets listing islands walks remain universally popular and entice visitors to get off the beaten track and explore the whole Hebridean chain.

Bring the scenery indoors through photographs and art inspired by the landscape

Our Experiences

Living Gaelic

Though few of our visitors, other than those with island roots, may speak much Gaelic, the language itself is of interest to many of them, as it makes the islands different and special.

The fact it is still used in daily life makes it more intriguing as does the fact that the spelling is not particularly accessible. Returning home with a word or two of the local language is part of any holiday for them.

However, beyond the language, the culture of the Gaels is of universal appeal to our visitors. This ranges from the music and traditions to crofting and weaving. "HebCelt", the annual Hebridean Celtic Festival and its southern cousin, Eilean Dorcha Festival have developed strong followings over recent years, with island musicians, both young and old, enjoying growing reputations.

The Harris Tweed Story exhibition in the Town Hall tells the story of a unique part of our culture with a global reputation for quality and craftsmanship.

The new investment in Cnoc Soilleir in South Uist, and developments at Comunn Eachdraidh Nis and Kinloch Historical Society provide superb facilities for our visitors to meet islanders, hear some Gaelic, maybe try a world and learn about the special culture and community that is at the heart of the Outer Hebrides.



Include some Gaelic words or sayings in your promotional materials

Make some Gaelic music available for guests to sample

Our Experiences

Mind, body and spirit

Have a range of wellbeing ideas from visitors from a bare-foot beach walk to an open-water swim

Visitors come to the islands for a myriad of reasons – to trace family roots, to taste the gin, or see tweed being woven. Whatever the reason, they almost all comment that they leave the islands feeling calmer and more settled than when they arrive.

The islands get under their skin, and their troubles recede. They spend more time in the real world and less time in the digital

world, less time indoors and more time outdoors. This gives them the chance to connect with themselves, with friends and family, but also with something bigger.

For some this is the chance to let-off steam surfing or mountain biking, for others it is spending time close to the land and for yet others it is just the chance to switch off and watch the colours change on the landscape. The Hebridean Way, whether by bike or by foot provides people a real opportunity for reflection among some stunning scenery.

We have a wide range of artists and craftspeople attracted to the islands whose galleries and workshops highlight their skills and traditions.

This ability to send people home with a sense of "wellbeing" is priceless and is often what brings our most loyal visitors back year after year.



Give people some relaxation and wellbeing ideas for their holiday – this is their chance to de-stress

Highlight walking routes and photography spots nearby – they will not naturally know where to go

Our Experiences Closer to wildlife



With the islands containing some of the last untouched wilderness in Europe, the Outer Hebrides is blessed with abundant wildlife particularly in the air and in the water.

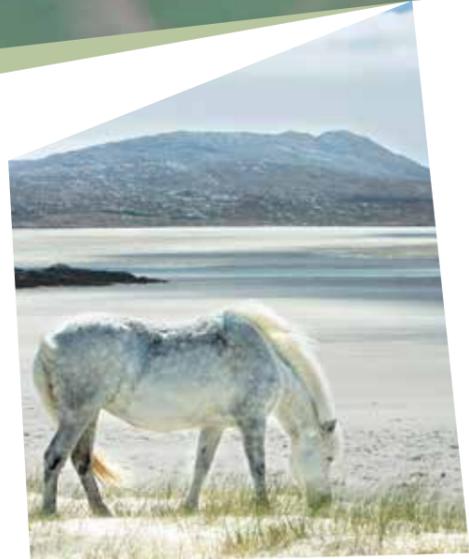
Both white-tailed eagles and golden eagles are resident in the islands, along with an abundance of other birds of prey species. Puffins inhabit several of our offshore islands and coastal birds congregate on our beaches, particularly around the RSPB reserve of Balranald.

We are one of the best places in Europe for whale and dolphin-watching, and are home to a third of the sites suggested by the Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust in their recently launched whale trail. Otters are fairly easy to spot in our lochs, despite their reclusive nature.

We have a great range of boat tours that offer a chance to see wildlife up-close, in the Shiant, Monachs, or on Mingulay, but relatively few of our visitors take a boat-trip as part of their holiday.



The Bird of Prey Trail spans the Outer Hebrides highlighting the best places to see birds of prey, and North Harris Trust have created an Eagle Hide on their land. The creation of the Hebridean Whale Trail provides the opportunity for improved interpretation at the sites they recommend.



Recommend a local boat tour operator to ensure visitors experience our wildlife



Our Experiences Atlantic larder



Incorporate local food & drink on your menu, in your tour or in your accommodation, and shout about it.

The quality of our ingredients lies at the heart of our Food and Drink story.

Our ingredients are second to none. Livestock free to roam the land, and seafood caught in crystal-clear waters are the heart of heritage recipes passed down through the generations and artisan products created with skill in small batches.

Age-old crofting traditions have been supplemented by new distilleries, aquaculture, artisan producers and international recognition for Stornoway Black pudding. Our task is helping visitors understand the story of our local produce, incorporating it into our menus and presenting it in a variety of settings.

Our visitors who are drawn by things out-of-the-ordinary have their interest and their taste-buds aroused by our eclectic island food scene.

They are as happy in roadside seafood-shacks and with take-away espresso shots as in formal restaurants and traditional tearooms. Wherever they go local food and drink is an essential part of any experience they undertake and visitor experiences, built around food and drink are always high on their list. For them, provenance, freshness and local ingredients have replaced formality as a sign of quality.



Our Visitors

Independent, seasoned explorers from across Scotland, are traditionally our core market and will remain so. We will make our destination more resilient by diversifying our visitor base beyond this solid core in three stages.

Our ambitions to maintain very high visitor satisfaction levels, vivid recommendations and returning visitors, remain, and can be strengthened by working alongside the appropriate parties and stakeholders.

Level 1

Targeting younger Scottish visitors that are attracted by our nature and heritage.

Active families are multi-generational groups that thrive on the outdoors. They relish time spent in the natural world, and the opportunities to renew family ties. Young Fogies – young professional couples who enjoy cultural experiences, but have a passion for crafts and traditions – be that music, food & cooking or fabrics.

We need to feature them more extensively in our marketing, and show them that the rewards of a visit justify the time invested in the journey.



Level 2

Growing our presence in the rest of the UK and Northern Europe.

These three core segments of 'Seasoned Travellers', 'Active Families' and 'Young Fogies' are present in Scotland, but also in the rest of the UK and in Northern Europe (Benelux, Scandinavia, Germany).

'Staycationers' from the rest of the UK are an immediate opportunity, and as international travel resumes, we can focus on those further afield.

Level 3

Attracting those from further afield by improving our trade presence.

We will remain a destination focused on the independent traveller, but in the second part of the decade, will seek to persuade those with Scottish and Islands heritage, particularly from North America and Australasia that no trip to Scotland is complete without a visit to the Outer Hebrides.

By emphasising the convenience of air routes to the Central Belt, and focusing on our overnight accommodation, we can see more people include the islands on touring itineraries of Scotland.

This will also help us develop a short-break market, which is key to extending out-of-season demand. With the completion of the Cruise Terminal, we will invest in our attractions and our visitor-management capabilities so that both land and sea visitors enjoy a rewarding experience.



Our Businesses

To compete with other destinations we need a linked-up view. A view that drives healthy competitiveness and allows businesses to grow.

This relies on digital investment, integrated online booking facilities and convenient transport solutions with adequate capacity

It all starts with a Covid-19 recovery. We will evidence and shape the strategic direction to guide the industry to recovery, lobbying on key issues, supporting our sector and ensuring a unified voice.

Accommodation

A dynamic, thriving tourism sector in a dynamic and unique destination requires a carefully balanced and full range of accommodation options.

One that meets future visitor expectations. We need to safeguard that this accommodation range becomes future-proof and that capacity matches demand, whilst considering the need for single night accommodation, tours and group travel.

Food and Drink

The Outer Hebrides have some of the very best seafood, smokehouses, distilleries and crofting produce. Artisan, independent producers showcase the best that our location has to offer. Through trails, events and marketing campaigns we can help to drive a local food culture throughout the islands, one that then recognises this 'Atlantic larder provenance' through accreditations, awards and recommendations.

By supporting product and accommodation development we can help deliver year-round direct bookings and dispersal of tourism value throughout the Outer Hebrides.

“The tourism sector is a cornerstone to the island's economy.”



“Supporting our retailers, tradespeople and facilities.”



The Voice for Tourism

Making Your Voice Heard



We are the voice of the tourism industry throughout the Outer Hebrides and are owned and managed by our 400 members, each of them an island business.

We are independent of government and VisitScotland, but work closely with them both. The breadth and depth of our membership ensures we have a strong and credible voice with others within the Outer Hebrides and nationally.

We are members of the Scottish Tourism Alliance, the national body for the tourism industry, with representation on its council that provides the opportunity to get the view of the Outer Hebrides heard on the mainland. Throughout the COVID pandemic we have worked with members to deliver safe operating procedures across the industry, and pushed for the broadest financial support from the Scottish Government to help our members withstand this unprecedented crisis.

Our webinars kept the entire industry up to speed with the evolving regulations.



Promoting Your Business

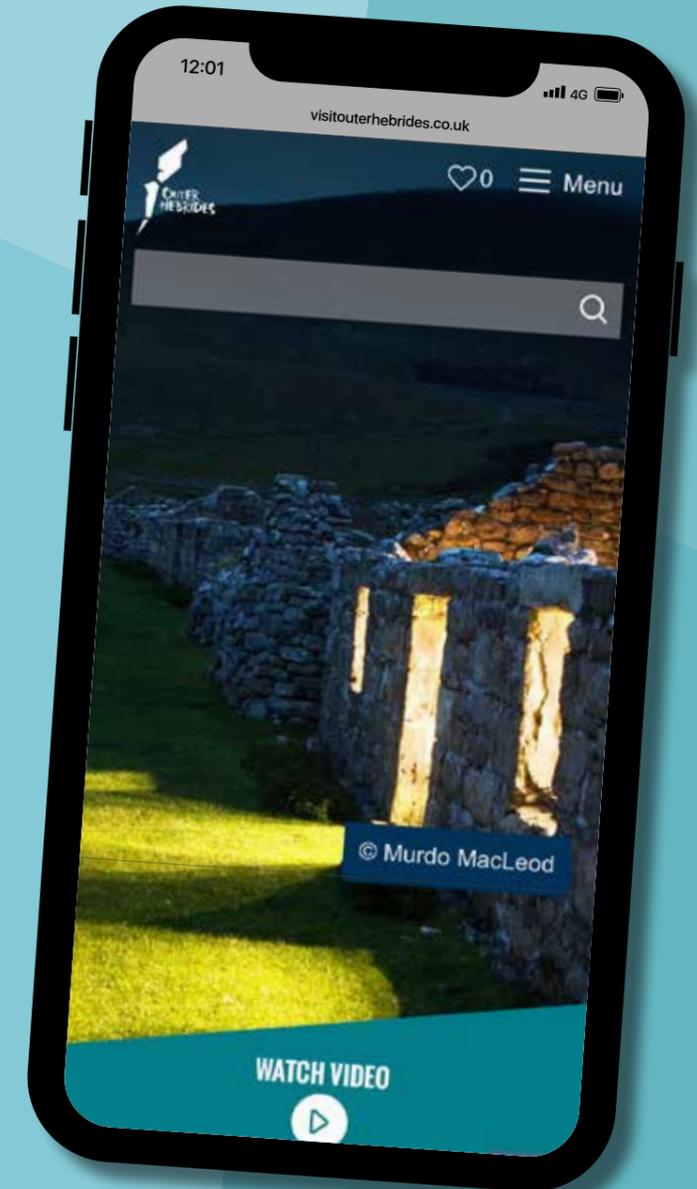


Our new destination website is the main source of information for visitors wishing to holiday in the Outer Hebrides, with over 2 million page views each year.

The new image-led design showcases the best of the islands and provides all the essential details for planning a trip, as well as providing a broader range of promotion opportunities for members to highlight their business.

We have the widest choice of accommodation on the islands and offer the convenience of online booking, video and social media feeds.

Our Pit Stops and Welcome Points help visitors make the most of their visit to the islands through insider local tips.



outerhebridestourism.org

Inspiring Visitors



Through regular social media and digital campaigns we raise the profile of our organisation with our target audiences in Scotland and beyond.

Each campaign highlights a different aspect of what makes the Outer Hebrides such a special place to visit - from our Gaelic culture and language to our adrenaline sports.

Our mailing list enables us to retain a connection with our most regular visitors, who return year after year. We participate in the annual ViistScotland Expo, attracting more boutique tour operators from around the world to offer the Outer Hebrides as a destination.

Our trails down the islands help to group individual attractions to make them more compelling to visitors, such as the Bird of Prey Trail and Eat Drink Hebrides.

Securing Funding



By joining OHT you are making an investment in the future of your destination.

We have delivered a decade's worth of constant growth driven by more prominent promotion and new developments, such as the Hebridean Way.

We have a reputation for reliability and a strong track record of results, which unlocks significant grants and partnership funding.

We aim to triple every pound we receive in membership fees through funding from our partners at a local and national level.





We work with individuals, organisations and businesses across our islands and we'd love you to be involved, to ensure it reflects your needs. If you'd like to find out more about how you can support this strategy, help us share its message and raise awareness, please get in touch with us.

 **@visitouterhebrides**

 **@OuterHebs**

 **@theouterhebrides**

Outer Hebrides Tourism is the official voice of tourism in the Outer Hebrides and is recognised within the islands and on the mainland for its significant contribution to the sector. We are an ambitious, forward thinking and collaborative Destination Management Organisation composed of a skilled Delivery Team, a committed Executive Board and an Industry Council led by around 30 business and community leaders. Most importantly we rely on our large and loyal membership base to carry out our work.

outerhebridestourism.org

visitouterhebrides.co.uk



Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean



COIMHARLE NAHÀI GÈILTÀ SAIBH