



ANNUAL REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2021/22

SSDA AGM 3rd November 2022

THE CHAIR'S REPORT

David Ibbotson
Chair

South of Scotland
Destination Alliance

A GROWING TOURISM NETWORK

SSDA believes that working together collaboratively is the best way to secure the most opportunities for our members.

Businesses join our growing network to be a part of a community, where they receive ongoing support, the opportunity to learn and hear from industry experts and peers, reach audiences outside the scope of their regular marketing activity, gain access to specific data, trends, and insights allowing them to make better informed business decisions and much more.

The SSDA continues to engage actively with members, supporting 'behind the scenes' through our business website and creating opportunities via 'our face to the world' regional brand Scotland Starts Here. We have delivered over 50 webinars and workshops benefiting over 500 businesses - with ongoing challenges facing tourism and hospitality today, we are committed to develop SSDA further.

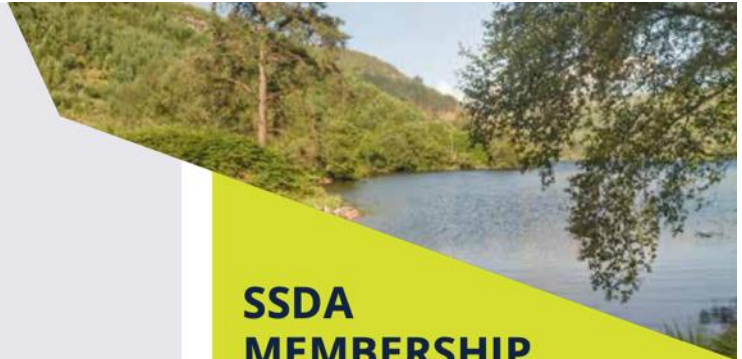
We would like to thank all our members for your support over the past year, you are part of an ambitious and inspiring community as we all work together to pave a strong future for the region by transforming the South of Scotland into a year-round world class destination, growing tourism spend in the region and increasing economic prosperity.



**OUR BEHIND
THE SCENES**



**OUR FACE TO
THE WORLD**



**SSDA
MEMBERSHIP**



INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

This year has been one of great progress for SSDA as we continue to grow our networks and offering whilst working with businesses, members and partners to align tourism activity, develop our product and increase awareness of our amazing region.

In March 2022 we hosted our first South of Scotland tourism conference, bringing together over 200 attendees from local businesses and organisations as well as representatives from government and local councils.

Strategy

We were delighted at the beginning of the year to launch our five-year strategy, underpinned by one of the biggest pieces of consumer research ever undertaken into the South of Scotland destination. This has now been integrated into the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) and Scotland's Tourism Strategy: Outlook 2030. This forms the backbone of our current and future activity, SSDA will continue to feed into the RES, representing tourism at the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership to ensure we all fully maximise the potential of the visitor economy within the region.

Partnerships

Our partner relationships continue to grow from strength to strength, particularly those with SOSE, D&G Council, Scottish Borders Council, VisitScotland, Scottish Borders College, Dumfries & Galloway College, and many other regional and sector organisations.





INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT AND BUSINESS READINESS

We recently issued our first barometer survey of tourism and hospitality businesses in the South of Scotland. This will be repeated in the new year and aims to build a comprehensive picture of the current state of the industry in the region and what operators' key challenges and priorities are as the economic picture changes.

This will become increasingly important as all of our member businesses navigate the next few years and even more economic uncertainty and political turbulence. 2021/22 has really been a year of two halves where we first saw our industry boom and benefit from the post-Covid staycation market, to today where the cost of living crisis, staff shortages, supply chain issues and the very stark challenge of economic uncertainty dominates headlines and all of our minds.

The results show that there are significant positive opportunities to work on in terms of marketing and sustainable, collaborative working – it's inspiring to see so many businesses genuinely intent on finding ways to make their business current, and we stand ready to do whatever we can to help support them.

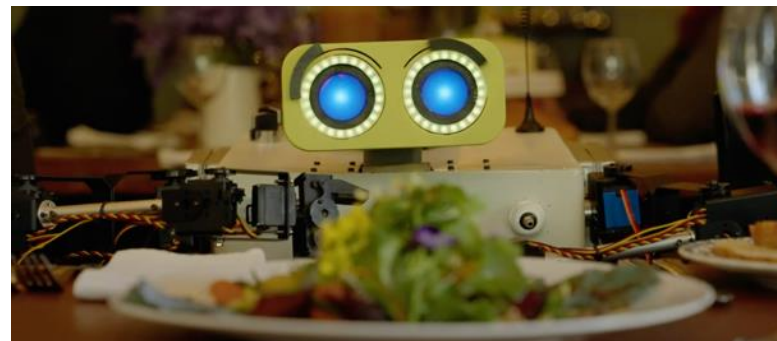


PLACE BRANDING AND MARKETING

We launched several key marketing campaigns through the year, including:

- **Curiosity Starts Here** proved to be a conversation starter through discovery and exploration of the region, the campaign outperformed set targets and we are keen to develop the curiosity theme further.
- **Year of Stories** activity highlighted a new potential USP for the region that was well-received by businesses, stakeholders and audiences. Richness of content resonated particularly well with local audiences and those familiar with the destination and it created a strong meaningful identity.
- **Dark Skies** campaign resonated best with target audiences and showed strong channel growth as a result. Increased interest from businesses to expand offering and take advantage of seasonal potential and enthusiasm from people unfamiliar with the South of Scotland to explore it as a destination.

Over 700 businesses are now listed on the Scotland Starts Here website and App. We integrated a range of walking, cycling and driving routes as well as historical and natural points of interest. In addition, new E-books, podcasts and audio content on the app bring the stories and the songs of the South alive.



SUPPORTING
**YEAR OF
STORIES**
— 2022 —



STORIES START HERE

**DISCOVER THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE OF THE
SOUTH OF SCOTLAND**

DISCOVER STORIES



DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

The SSDA received grant awards from the Destination and Sector Marketing Fund by VisitScotland which was based around literary tourism. Local stories were collated and promoted throughout the off-season to drive awareness. Through close collaborations stories were brought to life encouraging out of season visits with influencers and journalists to plan their entire trips using public transport.

Additionally, through Scotland's new UNESCO Trail, the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere support businesses to tell their own 'green stories' and develop sustainable experiences and product to market. Through Scotland Starts Here we continue to reinforce this commitment to connect with our landscapes, history & culture and become a recognised destination for sustainable and responsible tourism.

SSDA has been extolling the benefits of Experiential Tourism which allows the visitor to immerse in a sense of place and connect with locals, heritage, culture, the uniqueness of a place, and leave with an emotional connection worth talking about. Stories sit at the very heart of this. Authentic visitor experiences are an opportunity for tourism businesses to go beyond delivering conventional tourism products based on goods and services. This means rethinking the traditional approach and offering visitors immersive experiences to connect with places and a deeper understanding of where they are and giving visitors a distinctive and compelling reason to visit, create memories and return to year after year.

LOOKING FORWARD

For us all at SSDA, we will continue to seek out opportunities to shine a light on the South of Scotland, we will be flexible and fleet of foot with our product focus and marketing so that we can react more quickly to the market, for example the weakness of the pound is already starting to bring in more international visitors and our Travel Trade programme has been receiving incredible feedback. These international visitors need more help with planning and itineraries than our domestic travellers – this opens up greater collaboration and potential for innovation between our membership, communities and partners.

Next year will see SSDA bringing the industry together, with many exciting opportunities created through events, such as the UCI World Championships, and launch of the Coast to Coast cycle route. Other exciting events are made possible by our two regional events strategies recently launched by the Scottish Borders Council and D&G Council. Through these events we will be supporting and inspiring talented businesses to identify opportunities and achieve their aspirations.

Our main mission still remains to grow awareness of the South of Scotland, locally in our own communities, domestically and internationally.



SOUTH OF SCOTLAND
SCOTLAND STARTS HERE

Things to do Accommodation Places

CATEGORIES FACILITIES ACCESSIBILITY ROUTES CLEAR

ENJOYING THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND RESPONSIBLY STARTS HERE

The South of Scotland is a special place. And just like you, we want to enjoy and share it for years to come. That's why we ask our visitors to travel sustainably. Here you will find some simple things you can do to protect the places you visit in the South of Scotland.

- TRAVEL OFF-SEASON** Travelling outside the peak summer months helps to protect the local environment. It also gives you the time and space to look up everything the region has to offer.
- TAKE THE ROADS LESS TRAVELLED** Solacing our lochs gets a much greater way to have a truly unique experience while caring for the local environment.
- SLOW DOWN AND STAY LONGER** Travelling by car isn't your only option. Consider using public transport for a budget-friendly way to get around. Walking and cycling are great ways to connect with the places around you too.
- FIND AN ECO-FRIENDLY PLACE TO BLUNNIE** Why not try camping or staying for a night in a glamping site? Or support local and stay in one of the many family-owned B&Bs.
- CHOOSE SUSTAINABLE THINGS TO SEE & DO** Look out for Green Tourism companies – those that actively strive to reduce their carbon footprint. The Galloway and Southern Highlands National Park has schemes supporting environmentally-friendly businesses.
- SUPPORT LOCAL** Simple things like shopping, eating and staying in local businesses does so much to support the local community. Sample local delicacies, or buy some local crafts to help bring money back to the local economy.
- LEAVE NO TRACE BEHIND** When out and about in the South of Scotland, please remember to pick up your litter, take it home with you, or dispose of it correctly. The area and the people that live there are part of the local wildlife and avoid disturbing natural habitats and farm animals.

SCOTLANDSTARTSHERE.COM

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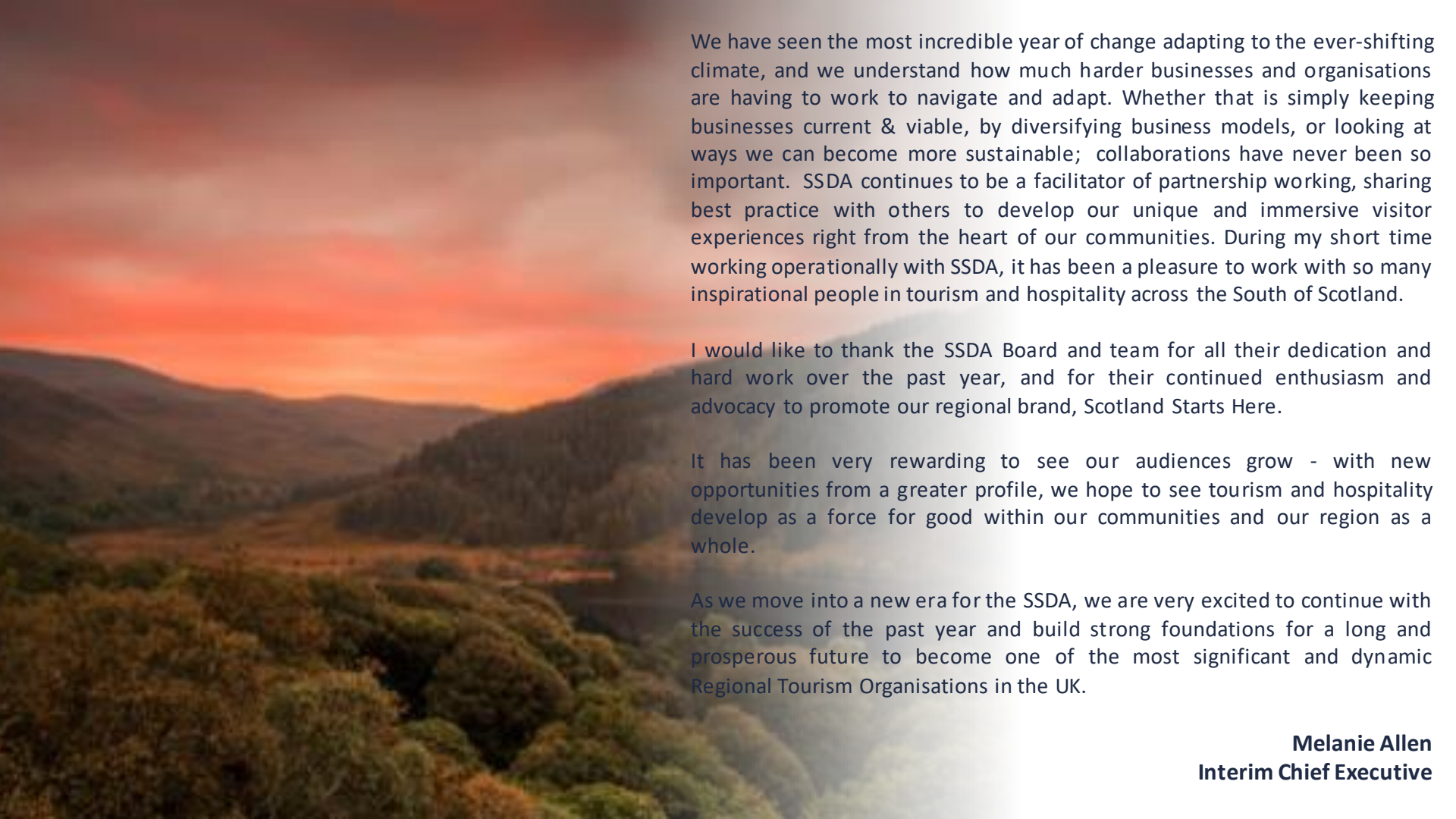


INTERIM CEO

Melanie Allen
Interim CEO

South of Scotland
Destination Alliance





We have seen the most incredible year of change adapting to the ever-shifting climate, and we understand how much harder businesses and organisations are having to work to navigate and adapt. Whether that is simply keeping businesses current & viable, by diversifying business models, or looking at ways we can become more sustainable; collaborations have never been so important. SSDA continues to be a facilitator of partnership working, sharing best practice with others to develop our unique and immersive visitor experiences right from the heart of our communities. During my short time working operationally with SSDA, it has been a pleasure to work with so many inspirational people in tourism and hospitality across the South of Scotland.

I would like to thank the SSDA Board and team for all their dedication and hard work over the past year, and for their continued enthusiasm and advocacy to promote our regional brand, Scotland Starts Here.

It has been very rewarding to see our audiences grow - with new opportunities from a greater profile, we hope to see tourism and hospitality develop as a force for good within our communities and our region as a whole.

As we move into a new era for the SSDA, we are very excited to continue with the success of the past year and build strong foundations for a long and prosperous future to become one of the most significant and dynamic Regional Tourism Organisations in the UK.

Melanie Allen
Interim Chief Executive

SSDA YEAR 2 = FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



South of Scotland Destination Alliance

Statement of financial position
31 March 2022

	Note	2022 £	£	2021 £	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets		1,334		-	
			1,334		-
Current assets					
Debtors		64,652		20,199	
Cash at bank and in hand		167,727		259,238	
		232,379		279,437	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		(232,380)		(279,438)	
Net current liabilities			(1)		(1)
Total assets less current liabilities			1,333		(1)
Net assets/(liabilities)			1,333		(1)
Capital and reserves					
Profit and loss account			1,333		(1)
Total funds/(deficit)			1,333		(1)

Turnover

Membership	24,705	-
Other revenue	10,481	-
Funding received	720,000	557,601
SOSE Year of Stories Grant	58,500	-
VS Destination Grant	60,000	-
	<u>873,686</u>	<u>557,601</u>
Gross profit	<u>873,686</u>	<u>557,601</u>

Overheads

Administrative expenses

Set up costs CEO	-	(10,000)
Consulting	(12,000)	-
Freelance agents	(137,151)	-
Salaries and pensions	(133,839)	-
Staff training	(680)	-
Project management and consultancy	-	(56,066)
Staffing contracts	-	(62,177)
Scotland Starts Here Integration	-	(116,884)
SSH website & app	(65,861)	-
Subscriptions	(3,993)	-
Travel Trade	(40,975)	(16,443)
Advertising & marketing	(389,440)	(43,745)
Audience research & segmentation	(41,430)	-
PR & Media	(34,850)	-
General expenses	(14,502)	-
IT Software & consumables	(18,798)	-
Literary Heartlands	(78,558)	-
VS Destination Recovery	(60,000)	-
Operational expenses	(62,354)	(14,333)
Insurance	(389)	-
SSDA Conference	(12,064)	-
Accountancy fees	(2,288)	-
Bank charges	(512)	(178)
Depreciation of tangible assets	(445)	-
	<u>(1,110,129)</u>	<u>(319,826)</u>

Operating (loss)/profit

	(236,443)	237,775
Year 1 projects paid year 2	<u>237,776</u>	<u>(237,776)</u>
Profit/(loss) before taxation	<u>1,333</u>	<u>(1)</u>



SCOTLAND STARTS HERE