



Workforce Development in the South of Scotland's Visitor Economy A roundtable facilitated by the SSDA

Wednesday 25th April 2024,
Conference Room, Carmont House, The Crichton, Bankend Road Dumfries DG1 4TA

Executive Summary:

On the 25th April 2024, c.25 representatives of key partner agencies came together to discuss a shared approach to supporting workforce development in the South of Scotland's visitor economy, as part of the delivery of the [Responsible Tourism Strategy](#). A shared vision was agreed and 13 challenges were identified. For each challenge, an initial set of actions will be agreed through this working document, prioritising those areas where we have greatest impact, namely: improving the perception young people have of the industry and strengthening the vocational training available.

Context:

Together, the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Visit Scotland, D&G Council and Scottish Borders Council, [launched the South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy](#) on the 20th March, following almost a year of consultation. Behind this ten-year [Strategy](#) (2024-2034), is an [Action Plan](#) (initially, 2024-27, with annual updates), which gives greater detail as to which combination of agencies will lead with which aspects of delivery.

Through the consultation process, it was clear that, for businesses, communities, public agencies and other key stakeholders, the issue of workforce development was critical to developing the South of Scotland's visitor economy. We need to inspire more young people to stay in the South of Scotland and work in tourism and hospitality, we need to ensure they have the right skills to do so, and we need to create quality year-round employment.

Page 36 of the Strategy and pp18-19 of the Action Plan specifically focus on workforce development. They are pasted here on page 8.

On the 25th April, the SSDA convened a roundtable of key partners to deep-dive into the visitor economy question.

Organisations attending included:

1. Scottish Borders College
2. Dumfries and Galloway College
3. Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)
4. Springboard UK
5. VisitScotland
6. South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE)
7. Dumfries and Galloway Council
8. Scottish Borders Council
9. South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA)
10. University of Glasgow
11. The Usual Place (inclusion perspective)
12. Lagganlife (business perspective)
13. *[Apologies from Skills Development Scotland]*

It was emphasised from the outset that we are no longer consulting on the strategy or looking to simply describe and better understand the issues: we are now in the delivery phase and are looking to identify tangible actions we can, together, take.

These notes from the discussions, and the actions which follow, are essentially the first version of our Workforce Plan for the South of Scotland’s visitor economy.

By working through partnership and collaboration we will ensure no duplication of effort or reinventing of wheels.

Our Shared Vision:

Distilled from 41 Menti contributions, the following vision was collated:

Young people see tourism and hospitality as a desirable career and are inspired to stay and work in the South of Scotland, securing the right training and qualifications to succeed.

Businesses are able to recruit and retain a skilled, capable, motivated workforce and, as a result, offer a high-quality visitor experience and year-round, fair, quality employment.

Challenges in achieving this vision:

Distilled from 61 Menti contributions, 12 key issues/challenges in achieving the above vision were identified. They are listed below and have been scored 1-5 against the scale of the issue, and our combined ability to influence the issue. They are listed in priority order, based on scale of issue x ability to influence.

Ref	Challenge	Scale of issue (1-5) [a]	Our ability to influence (1-5) [b]	Priority (1-25) [a x b]
1	Poor perception of careers in the tourism and hospitality sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young people being encouraged to go to universities in the central belt by schools for higher education - Teachers and parents are not encouraging of careers in hospitality. - The breadth of different jobs available is often not known – people see it as just being a waiter / waitress. - Small businesses (which make up most of the South of Scotland’s visitor economy) do not have the capacity to do the outreach with schools and further education. 	5	4	20
2	Limited access to appropriate vocational training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colleges, schools and businesses not working together as well as they could - Courses do not always include placements - Travel to training venue, availability of training when required 	4	3	12

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Businesses don't have money for training - Cuts in funding results in lack of courses and opportunities available due to cuts in resource - Low numbers of candidates applying for tourism and hospitality courses. - Lack of training/support for young entrepreneurs 			
3	Low expectations of people with disabilities or additional support needs in the workforce	2	4	8
4	Rates of pay.	4	2	8
5	Lack of appropriate, affordable local accommodation for staff.	3	2	6
6	Seasonal nature of some work.	3	2	6
7	Some businesses would benefit from information, training and support on recruitment, retention and the value of work placements.	2	3	6
8	Support lacking for young entrepreneurs in tourism and hospitality, hard to get a foothold if you want your own business	2	3	6
9	<p>Lack of structured career paths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long term career prospects - Perceived lack of upwards mobility in roles. Lack of work life balance in events and tourism - 	2	2	4
10	<p>Competition with other sectors and other parts of the UK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public sector offering pay and terms of employment which the private sector cannot compete with. 	4	1	4
11	Little/no public transport at the times needed for employees	4	1	4
12	<p>Some applicants seem unmotivated to secure work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benefits - Not turning up to interviews - Young people not equipped to be work-ready or prepared at interview - No incentive to work over 16 hours if on benefits and second jobs crucified by tax 	3	1	3
13	Business climate not allowing the generation of enough profit to encourage better investment in people. This is exacerbated by excessive business rates and VAT	3	1	3

Practical actions:

1. Poor perception of careers in the tourism and hospitality sector:

Ref	Action	Purpose
1.1	Collate information about, and key learning from, previous/existing work which connects primary and secondary age young people with the sector to improve perceptions. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - examples in the region (LagganLife’s school engagements, Kickcudbright work experience, etc), - examples outside the region (Mercat tours), - learning from other sectors (NHS), - the current and future work of Springboard, DYW, The Usual Place - the courses currently offered by the two colleges and the University of Glasgow 	Ensure we are not duplicating or reinventing existing/planned work and are informed by the learning from past efforts.
1.2	Publish clear information about who is already doing what and where the existing/upcoming opportunities	Increased collaboration, with businesses able to tap into, and get involved in, existing work.
1.3	Create inspiring case studies for businesses, giving examples of successful work in this area (e.g. LagganLife) and sharing their learning.	Inspire businesses to get involved by showing other businesses that have succeeded in this area.
1.4	Drawing on their learning, look to replicate and scale-up models of engaging primary and secondary pupils in the visitor economy which have worked well, either through existing programmes (Springboard, DYW, etc) or through new work. This should be a collaborative, collective and inclusive endeavour, able to give the right support such that even the smallest businesses can engage if they wish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer work experience in a variety of roles - Debunk myths & misconceptions - Influence the influencers: show teachers and parents there is a rewarding career - Use advocates sharing their own stories as champions - Show staff are looked after: that the workplace is like a family/team where even the youngest and most junior is valued

2. Limited access to appropriate vocational training

Ref	Action	Purpose
2.1	Collate information on all courses currently offered in the South of Scotland which relate to tourism and hospitality, including the Hospitality Skills Passport. Get feedback from businesses and graduates of these courses and, from this, generate clear recommendations on how the courses could better reflect the needs of businesses in the region.	Help existing vocational courses delivered in the SofS evolve to be better aligned with the needs of businesses, to maximise employability of those who take the courses.
2.2	Work with colleges and businesses to build more paid industry placements into existing courses.	Give those in training real-world work experience in the region
2.3	Explore whether a joint course, bringing together the two colleges, could be developed which could then be marketed	Develop a bespoke course, based around the needs of businesses,

	both inside and outside the region, potentially with a specific focus on entrepreneurialism	which can draw talent into the region
2.4	Explore creating an apprentice scheme for the South of Scotland	Attract young workers into the sector
2.5	Develop an action plan to specifically increase the number of qualified chefs in the region, either by developing a specific chef school or partnering with an existing training provider.	Increase the number of qualified chefs working in the South of Scotland

3. Low expectations of people with disabilities or additional support needs in the workforce

Ref	Action	Purpose
3.1	Support businesses to engage with The Usual Place, offering them training, advice and support to help businesses be confident employing those with additional support needs.	More businesses employ individuals with additional support needs.

4. Rates of pay:

Ref	Action	Purpose
4.1	Encourage businesses to pay the Real Living Wage for those 18+	Aim to make this the norm for the South of Scotland visitor economy

5. Lack of appropriate, affordable local accommodation for staff.

Ref	Action	Purpose
5.1	Advocate for planning dispensation for staff accommodation.	Make it easier for businesses to find accommodation solutions for their staff

6. Seasonal nature of some work:

Ref	Action	Purpose
6.1	Highlight innovative case studies through which businesses have been able to keep staff on year-round	Share learning between businesses, showing the benefits of retaining staff
6.2	Work to extend the visitor season across the South of Scotland	Have year-round employment

7. Some businesses would benefit from information, training and support on recruitment, retention and the value of work placements.

Ref	Action	Purpose
7.1	Through webinars and in-person training, give businesses information and support on recruitment, retention and the value of work placements.	Help businesses succeed in recruitment and retention

8. Lack of structured career paths:

Ref	Action	Purpose
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8.1	Build collaborations across the sector, so young people can see a career path which allows them to stay in the South of Scotland	Retain people in the SoS through their career
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9. Competition with other sectors and other parts of the UK.

Ref	Action	Purpose
9.1	Make a positive case for our Visitor Economy, selling the South of Scotland as a fantastic place to live and work.	Attract people to work and stay in the SoS

10. Little/no public transport at the times/days/locations needed by employees

Ref	Action	Purpose
10.1	Advocate for innovative transport solutions such as 'Pingo' which is used in Berwickshire and highlight failures in integrated public transport systems to the relevant Council (e.g. connecting buses leaving as train arrives)	Build public transport available to employees

11. Some applicants seem unmotivated to secure work

Ref	Action	Purpose
11.1	Liaise with the relevant agencies (DWP, Social Security Scotland and Local Authorities) to get good information on the benefits system which can be disseminated to businesses	Ensure businesses have the best information – for example how many hours can be worked before benefits are lost

12. Business climate not allowing the generation of enough profit to encourage better investment in people.

Ref	Action	Purpose
12.1	Lobby for the Real Living Wage to only be for 18+	Get clarity and fairness in this area
12.2	Advocate on business rates and VAT, possibly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VAT relief for those paying real Living Wage - In 25/26 Rates review, move to being based on profit rather than turnover 	With others try to influence these costs

Exerts from South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy and Action Plan

Workforce development:

There are many challenges in recruiting and retaining staff across the industry, including a lack of housing, seasonal employment, fair wages, and career development. Although these issues are not unique to the South of Scotland, or the tourism sector, ageing demography and early retirement means that the region has a smaller workforce than other areas – put simply, there is less of a pool of people to draw upon.

This workforce challenge is exacerbated by negative perceptions of the industry, which is putting off young people from embarking on a career in tourism and hospitality. Too often, the prevailing narrative is of poor wages, long hours, little career progression and poor mental health. This needs to change. We need to build a strong visitor economy, proudly at the heart of the community, providing quality year-round employment for a skilled local workforce.

We will do this by:

- Developing a workforce skills plan for the South of Scotland's visitor economy
- Advocating for careers in tourism and hospitality, building respect and recognition
- Working closely with Skills Development Scotland and other stakeholders to have a clear and compelling package of services to support workforce development
- Looking for practical solutions to the specific shortage of trained chefs in the region
- Supporting the development of relevant qualifications and pathways, to encourage our young people to choose it as a career as they leave school
- Working directly with the two colleges in the South of Scotland to provide appropriate practical training, which is linked to industry and embedded in the South of Scotland, such that young people can train, work and stay in the region
- Encouraging and supporting businesses and enterprises to adopt a Fair Work approach to their staffing policies to ensure that the South of Scotland is a Fair Work destination
- Establishing the South of Scotland as a year-round destination, with year-round employment.

Ref	Action	Lead Stakeholder/ Input required by	Delivery through	Timescale	2027 Objective
Workforce development					
3.3.1	Developing a workforce skills plan for the South of Scotland's visitor economy	SOSE, SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC, Colleges, SDS, Glasgow University	Identify key gaps and priorities, and specific actions which can address these	Winter 2025, then reviewed annually	Stronger workforce, better visitor experience
3.3.2	Advocating for careers in tourism and hospitality, building respect and recognition	SOSE, VS, SSDA, DYW	Positive representation of the visitor economy to prospective future workforce	Ongoing	Young people inspired and supported to enter tourism
3.3.3	Working closely with Skills Development Scotland and other stakeholders to have a clear and compelling package of services to support workforce development	SOSE, VS, SSDA, DYW, Colleges, SDS	New/improved services developed and clearly communicated through schools, colleges etc	Winter 2025 for initial package, then reviewed annually	Significant increase in young people accessing relevant training in key areas of skill gaps
3.3.4	Looking for practical solutions to the specific shortage of trained chefs in the region	SOSE, Colleges, SSDA, DYW, SDS	Most ideally, a chef school within the region	Plan agreed in 2024, developed in 2025.	Increase in the number of qualified chefs working in the region as a result of new/improved training
3.3.5	Supporting the development of relevant qualifications and pathways, to encourage our young people to choose it as a career as they leave school	SOSE, Colleges, DYW, DGC, SBC, SSDA, SDS	Outreach programme to young people in the region, linked to relevant training	Spring 2025, then ongoing and reviewed annually	More young people proud to be entering into a career in hospitality and tourism
3.3.6	Working directly with the two colleges in the South of Scotland to provide appropriate practical training, which is linked to industry and embedded in the South of Scotland, such that young people can train, work and stay in the region	SOSE, Colleges, DGC, SBC, SSDA, SDS	Specific new/improved practical training courses in areas of current skill gaps	Development in 2024-25. Live by 2026	Enhanced employment opportunities, improved community wellbeing
3.3.7	Encouraging and supporting businesses and enterprises to adopt a Fair Work approach to their staffing policies to ensure that the South of Scotland is a Fair Work destination	SOSE, SSDA	Practical training, information, advice, support and representation	Initial plan developed by Autumn 2024, then ongoing	More Fair Work businesses
3.3.8	Establishing the South of Scotland as a year-round destination, with year-round employment	SSDA, VS, DGC, SBC, SOSE	Supporting businesses to stay open more of the year/week, including through marketing and local collaboration	Ongoing	More businesses open week-round and year-round, offering quality, reliable employment