



**Annual Review  
2023/24**



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### Foreword from Claire Bruce Chair

With data crunched and the numbers added up, it has become clear that 2023 was a very positive year for tourism in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, with a 26% increase in visitor numbers and a 15% increase in spend, and the £1 billion economic impact milestone surpassed.

The hard work by the whole tourism sector has led to this bounce back, with strategic leadership from VisitAberdeenshire and support from our funders and key partners. Growth was boosted in 2023 by the opening of the South Harbour for larger cruise vessels, by the growth of our adventure tourism facilities including Tarland Trails 2, and by a range of headline events and festivals hosted across the region. Memorable moments included the Staysure PGA Seniors Championship and Elton John's farewell to Aberdeen (itself generating over £850,000 from visitors to the area), and from perennial favourites from the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival to the Spectra Festival of Light in Aberdeen, not forgetting our homegrown Provenance Festival that celebrates wonderful North-east food and drink at source.

Whilst other destinations face supply constraints, there is headroom to accommodate more demand within our corner of Scotland, a place that is increasingly seen as the prime location for Scottish tourism to grow in a sustainable manner. This however will not happen without continued support to develop and promote tourism in our region.

I would like to thank our funders at Opportunity North East, Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council for their ongoing commitment and express my appreciation to our Board that has provided wise counsel to the executive team throughout the year.



### Message from Chris Foy CEO

I am immensely proud of the contribution that the VisitAberdeenshire team made towards a successful 2023 for North-east tourism, with many of the hard yards put in in the preceding years to establish our region as a destination of choice for UK and inbound visitors.

We built a resourceful, focussed team throughout 2023, with the skills to deliver our own programme of activities and to lead on implementation of the Destination Strategy. New Leadership for the Convention Bureau brought a clear focus to promote the region and strengthen the bid ambassador pool. The Tourism Development team's continued focus on supporting local business to grow and meet demand generated by our marketing activity that has driven business from visitors and trade buyers alike, and attracted the attention of travel media and new campaign partners.

The outcomes directly related to VisitAberdeenshire's work include £3.95 million of visitor spend stimulated from our own promotional channels alone to a quality rating of 90% given by local businesses for the work of our Tourism Development Programme. These examples demonstrate the value of effective measurement and analysis. It shows us where there is more to do and when, setting the scene for a creative and effective programme of work in 2024.





## Our purpose and vision

We are a driving force behind the significant growth of the tourism sector in recent years. Our work directly delivers millions of pounds into the North-east of Scotland, and through our leadership of the Destination Strategy, supports activity that secures millions more, helping the transition of our regional economy.

Quite simply, our purpose is to help drive demand to visit Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, and to support businesses to develop and to meet that demand. Our vision remains to be the leading destination organisation in Scotland increasingly recognised for growing the visitor economy through bold and dynamic initiatives.

## Everything starts with insights

The ethos of the organisation is to embed insights in all decision making. By being insights-led, we are able to make effective, informed choices for the work we are directly involved in and lead on. We are intentional about the way insights are used by us and the wider industry, always aiming to make them accessible, easy to digest and actionable.

What this means in practice:

- An annual study of consumer research provides a deeper understanding of motivations, behaviours and attitudes.
- Insights inform campaign briefs and resulting evaluation generates new insights.
- An annual survey among participants reflects upon the Tourism Development Programme, seeking input for the year ahead.
- Follow-up from on-site visits from potential conference organisers explores shifts in perception and feedback on their experiences.
- We are committed to our annual staff voice survey, a vehicle to obtain staff feedback and inform future initiatives and projects.
- Crucially, insights are shared with local businesses to help inform their decision making.





# Supporting North-east tourism: Tourism Development



# Tourism Development

Our dynamic **Tourism Development Programme** blends the needs of local businesses with up-to-date market insights, to empower businesses to develop the skills needed to scale up and meet consumer demand.

*“Aberdeenshire Sheepdogs would not be where it is at without the help and support of the team at VisitAberdeenshire. They have helped to develop a small idea into a business bringing 500+ people onto our farm this year alone. This would not have been possible without them.”*

**Aberdeenshire Sheepdogs**



## Growth programme for tourism businesses

The flagship of the annual programme, delivered by VisitAberdeenshire and Opportunity North East, this tailored, deep dive course has taken over 50 businesses on a rigorous journey, to identify target markets and understand consumer needs since its inception in 2019. Into its sixth year, a further ten businesses completed the programme with clear plans for growth as well as building a strong network within the cohort.



*“A fantastic opportunity to learn from a range of industry experts and peers; the workshops are fun and interactive, and you will leave with an array of tools and techniques to support you to develop and grow your business. The support provided by the trainers during the programme is invaluable and I would thoroughly recommend it to anyone considering taking part.”*

**Glen Garioch Distillery**

**6th** Year of the programme

**10** businesses completed the programme



**33** one-to-one coaching sessions delivered



**9** alumni businesses received Pioneer Award grant (funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund via Aberdeenshire Council)

## Tourism Development

### Travel trade ready programme

We continued to strengthen the region's product offer in the travel supply chain, helping local businesses develop bookable products to open the door to new customers, in new markets including the cruise sector. The team also provided focused support to businesses who participated in VisitScotland Connect, the national showcase at P&J Live.



### Customer and market insights

Understanding consumer trends and data is key to leverage opportunities and spark ideas. One-to-one sessions delivered bespoke action plans, and webinars on the behaviours of travellers and package travel regulations informed businesses to make positive changes.



### Inclusive tourism

Estimated to be worth £17.1 billion to the UK's tourism sector by VisitBritain, the 'purple pound' is a significant opportunity for the region. The team collaborated with VisitScotland, North East Sensory Services and AccessAble to host workshops and webinars covering topics including dementia inclusive tourism and visual awareness. We participated in Purple Tuesday, a social movement that aims to improve the customer experience for disabled people and their families.



# Tourism Development

## Sustainable tourism

We aided businesses with their sustainability ambitions by delivering sessions with VisitScotland, Zero Waste Scotland, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Business Energy Scotland relating to food waste, energy saving tips and growing a greener business.



## Digital marketing

The team hosted digital marketing masterclasses, facilitating expert reviews of businesses' social media presence and websites, providing food for thought and tangible action plans for them to put into practice. In addition, a series of webinars and training videos were created to help participants better understand how to use digital marketing to support and grow their business.



**186**   
business advice sessions delivered

**350**   
attendees at workshops and webinars

**90%**   
quality rating for Tourism Development programme





## Tourism Development



### Local networking meetings

We know that innovation and growth is often built on businesses connecting with each other so our delivery of networking events is key to bringing SMEs together in what can be a fragmented sector. Events in Stonehaven, Aberdeen, Huntly, Alford and Ellon also provided a platform to update businesses on our plans and actions.

### VisitAberdeenshire Presents

'VisitAberdeenshire Presents' webinars hosted by the team brought topics to businesses in a short and sharp, bitesize format. Deeper dives into our marketing and communications plans, understanding business events, and working together to welcome cruise guests proved popular as **94 attendees** joined the interactive sessions in total.

*"When VisitAberdeenshire first contacted us about working with the travel trade, it was a phrase we had never heard of. Fast forward a year, and with their support, we have opened to a completely new market. Attending the readiness workshop really helped us understand how the trade industry operates. This enabled us to refine our products and prepare ourselves for buyers' meetings.*

*Additionally, we have updated our website with a new booking system and listed our products on OTA sites, which has also proven to be successful. We would like to thank VisitAberdeenshire and for the fantastic support they have given us."*

**Garry Cormack, Hillgoers**

### Promoting to the travel trade

Building on the travel trade ready activity, we promoted the region into the UK and international supply chain, to highlight bookable experiences to secure a pipeline of business for future years. The team attended events including Destinations Exchange Europe, with appointments with tour operators, travel agents and cruise operators from the UK, North America, Scandinavia and Germany. The flagship UKinbound Convention in Belfast in September proved fruitful, with heightened interest in the region following Aberdeen's breakthrough hosting of this convention in 2022. Other events included the VisitBritain Showcase and Britain & Ireland Marketplace, both in London, Coach Tourism Association Conference, Newcastle, Meet the Nordics in Stockholm and ITB Berlin. This work was supported by a rebooted, online travel trade product guide for buyers.

# Tourism Development

## Familiarisation trips

Seeing is believing so welcoming buyers to the region is the optimum way to influence their decision to sell regional trade-ready products.



**4** golf familiarisation trips with golf operators generated future bookings



**4** fam trips with a range of tour operators and shore excursion companies



**25** buyers attended UKinbound virtual familiarisation experience

## VisitScotland Connect

VisitScotland hosted its 2023 travel trade event, VisitScotland Connect, at P&J Live in Aberdeen, and we exhibited and met with more than **50 enthused and engaged buyers**. The travel trade team hosted a half-day familiarisation trip around Aberdeen city and supported a buyer dinner.



## Industry communications

We talk directly to businesses with the latest news, updates and signpost our stakeholders to key research, data and insights.



**13** industry newsletters circulated



**4** event newsletters dedicated to upcoming webinars and workshops



An average of **1,572** subscribers



**32.5%** average newsletter open rate



# Tourism Development

## Provenance Festival 2023

Provenance Festival highlights the people and producers behind the region’s food and drink businesses and provides one-off interactive experiences. We led the project management and promotion of the Provenance Festival in 2023, and prepared festival participants with a focused webinar to help them get the most out of the event marketing, and ensure they knew what to expect during the festival. Promotion of the Provenance Festival ensured a local and neighbouring audience were aware of the engaging stories and people behind the food and drink businesses.



 **10-day**  
food and drink festival

 **100+**  
events throughout  
Aberdeen and  
Aberdeenshire

 **35**  
food and drink  
manufacturers

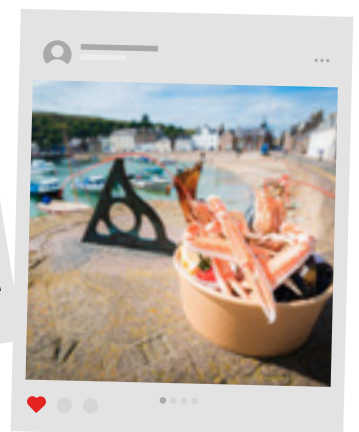
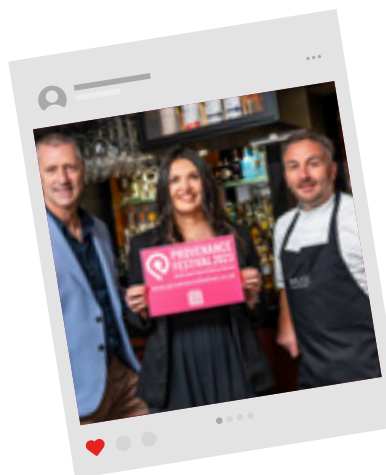
 **25**  
hospitality businesses  
took part



Paid social media ads delivered more than **1.3 million impressions** and more than **14,000 link clicks to provenancefestival.co.uk**. The festival was promoted via dedicated social media channels to build momentum ahead of the events, and drive visits.

Tourism development work completed by Millie Clarke, Kayleigh McLeish, Rachel Smith, Maryn Grieve, Alanna Fowler, Christina Wright and Kirsten Stitchell.

Provenance Festival campaign delivered by Elaine Bisset and Hayley McNab.



# Driving demand to visit: Marketing and Communications





# Marketing and Communications

The team landed impactful campaigns and carefully curated PR to maximise the destination’s reach and appeal, with key messaging around the region’s brand proposition driving clicks and visits.

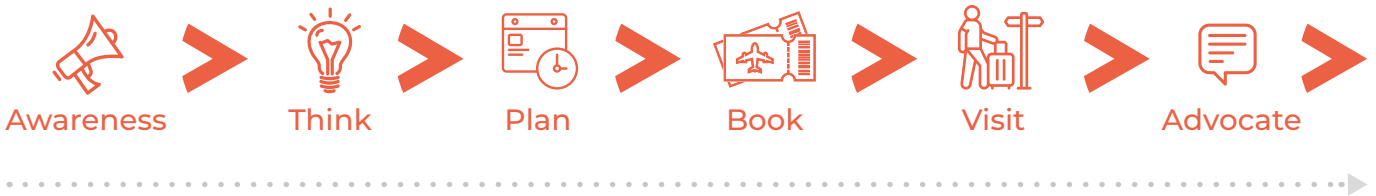
We influenced decision making at various points along the customer journey. From awareness raising through inspirational user generated content on social media, to changing perceptions with targeted advertising and media, the marketing and communications team took the audience on a path of discovery straight to the region.

*“Aberdeen is an important part of our Sleeper route map and we were keen to showcase more of the wonderful tourism potential of the region to future guests around London and the South East. Working in partnership with VisitAberdeenshire to do this quite simply made sense.*

*“The excellent joint approach with VisitAberdeenshire’s marketing team to define the objectives, the target audience and the relevant media was second to none and made for a well-rounded campaign encouraging people to wake up to Caledonian Sleeper as a unique, sustainable way to experience the many attractions of Aberdeenshire.”*

**Steven Marshall, Head of Sales & Marketing, Caledonian Sleeper**

## The Customer Journey



## Campaigns

The marketing and communications team devised and delivered bold campaigns tailored to domestic audiences in the UK, encouraging them to consider the region in their travel plans.



# Marketing and Communications

## Above and beyond

'Above and beyond' continued to be our main campaign to attract visitors. The creative alludes to the destination's geographical placement, but also to the exceptional experiences on offer.

We ran three seasonal above and beyond multi-channel campaigns – summer, autumn and spring. Typically targeted to audiences living in northern England and the rest of Scotland, as people in these areas are most likely to travel to the region based on travel tolerance times.

Campaigns featured content partnerships with Reach Plc, an effective way to reach target audiences in the right places, at the right time with advertorial across titles such as Manchester Evening News, The Chronicle (Newcastle) and Daily Record.

Evaluation of the summer campaign uncovered an estimated visitor spend of £1million, as well as establishing greater awareness of the destination in market.



## Working in partnership: Caledonian Sleeper

Commercial partners have a key part to play to help extend the destination's message. By collaborating with partners, we can reach new audiences and new possibilities.

We collaborated with Caledonian Sleeper on a four-week paid social media campaign across October and November to drive awareness of the destination and to generate leads.



Targeted to those in the Greater London region with an interest in travel

Almost **£500,000**

estimated visitor spend attributable to the campaign

Delivered **2.5 million** impressions and

**32,176** link clicks



**8,384** 

visitor nights generated as a result of the campaign



# Marketing and Communications

## Make a day of It

The team delivered two iterations of Make a day of It, a campaign designed to encourage the home audience to explore Aberdeen during Easter and October school holiday periods.

These multi-channel campaigns were delivered in partnership with DC Thomson, with inspirational editorial supplements, sponsored social media posts and digital advertorial highlighting Aberdeen’s things to see and do including museums, galleries, green spaces and burgeoning food and drink scene. The campaigns were supported by UK Shared Prosperity Fund via Aberdeen City Council.



## Adventure awaits

Adventure tourism is a key focus and the team created energetic campaign collateral and messaging to match the dynamism of the growing sector in the North-east.

A content partnership with Walk Highlands in spring 2024 drew attention to the region’s best experiences on foot and paid social media advertising highlighted the destination’s variety of experiences for all ages and stages.



A regional adventure marketing strategy has been created to help steer the direction of travel for all stakeholders in the region.

## Owned channels

Our owned channels are a proven, low-cost driver of high volumes of visitor spend. A strong social media presence coupled with inspirational newsletters not only drive traffic to the website but also direct to local businesses. In addition to sharing user generated content new imagery was commissioned in spring and winter, for use in future campaigns and to share on the content hub.

### £3.95 million

Visitor spend in the region can be attributed directly to our work across social media, website and e-newsletters from evaluation.

### 1.9 million

web page views

### 1.5 million

newsletters sent



### 114,820

social media followers

Leisure consumer activity was delivered by Elaine Bisset and Hayley McNab

# Marketing and Communications

## Read all about it: Destination PR

The region’s presence in national media ramped up with high profile coverage in prestigious titles.

We build relationships with the media and facilitate press visits. National Geographic Traveller featured the region twice, and The i highlighted the North-east’s value for money, dispelling myths and changing perceptions.

Features in Delicious and Sainsbury’s magazine celebrated the region’s larder, while travel desks at The Guardian, Daily Telegraph and The Sunday Times featured local businesses in top ten lists.

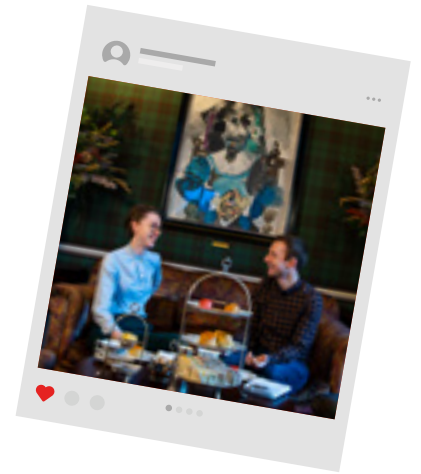


45

targeted travel features in national publications



5 press trips hosted



## Communicating with impact: VisitAberdeenshire in the news

We remained an authoritative voice in the news media. STV, BBC Scotland and the Press & Journal covered the arrival of the first cruise vessel at the Port of Aberdeen’s South Harbour, with coverage featuring our view on the impact of cruise tourism in the North-east.

Thought leadership features kept us in the news agenda, with more than 20 news releases circulated to regional media around Provenance Festival, successful applications to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the appointment of new hires to the team.

PR and communications activity was delivered by Laura Delaney



# Securing business events: Aberdeen Convention Bureau





## Aberdeen Convention Bureau

With a focus on the North-east’s priority sectors of energy, life sciences, food and drink, and tourism, our team targets conferences in these fields, working in partnership with stakeholders to position the region as a premier business events destination.

By adopting a ‘team Aberdeen’ approach, the team works with venue and academic partners to generate leads, collaborate on bids, and deliver joint events, site inspections and familiarisation visits. A critical element of this approach is the Aberdeen Ambassador Network, a collective of academics whose expertise strengthens the region’s credentials as a host destination.

*“The team at Aberdeen Convention Bureau have a real ‘can-do’ attitude. They are keen to promote and showcase their city and went above and beyond to ensure that the ABPCO delegates felt welcomed. Thank you!”*

**Heather Lishman, Association Director, Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO)**



### Trade events

The Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO) held its annual Excellence Awards in Aberdeen at P&J Live in December 2023, providing an opportunity for key decision makers to experience the city and venues first hand. As a result, the team saw an increase in leads, social media followers and interaction, plus excellent feedback on the Aberdeen experience.

The team also promoted the region at The Business of Events UK Policy Forum 2023, where Laura Wilson, Head of Convention Bureau, highlighted the significance of the Aberdeen Ambassador Network when securing association business events.



# Aberdeen Convention Bureau

To generate new leads, the team secured appointments with conference and incentive organisers at IMEX Frankfurt and The Meetings Show in London, as well as attending VisitBritain’s Business Events Conference in February 2024. This allowed the team to meet more than 70 association buyers, resulting in future site inspections and leads.

The ICCA UK & Ireland annual conference in Belfast provided an important opportunity to meet and learn from industry leaders and peers, further strengthening Aberdeen’s position as a conference destination.

Business events activity was delivered by Laura Wilson, Rebecca McIntyre, Rachel Mumford and Philip Chan.



**Bids submitted:**  
**47**  
(24 national and 23 international)

**£36,941,232**  
Total value of bids (if successful)

Bed nights:   
**185,236**

**Confirmed conferences:**  
**10**  
(taking place during 2024 to 2027)

**£11,968,920**  
Value of confirmed conferences

Delegate numbers:  
**12,190** 

Bed nights:   
**43,655**

The team provided support to  
**36** confirmed conferences

**17** site inspections delivered, two of which confirmed on-site

*“P&J Live and the Aberdeen Convention Bureau continue to work together to promote Aberdeen as a leading business events destination. We have been able to work closely to identify new opportunities and secure new global events which will provide greater economic and social impact to Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire.”*

**Steve Daun, Head of Sales – Associations, ASM Global**



# Sourcing the evidence: Insights and Evaluation





## Insights and Evaluation

Data and insight are at the heart of our work, informing the direction of travel and enabling us to truly get under the skin of consumer behaviour.

### Campaign evaluation

Understanding what our campaigns make visitors, and potential visitors think, feel and do is the team's priority.

From evaluation of five campaigns, more than **£2 million of visitor spend** was attributable to our work. As well as the project management of the campaign evaluation, the team created in-depth campaign factsheets, made available for local businesses on the industry website.

### Wider marketing evaluation

On an annual basis, we evaluate the wider work of the Marketing team, including the consumer website, the e-newsletter and all social channels where we have a presence. This annual exercise provides insights to feed back into the team to help inform the always on activity. The collective attributable spend for this activity in 2023 was almost £4 million (£3,950,202).

### Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM)

VisitAberdeenshire used the STEAM model to further understand how visitors are spending in the region, with the report for 2023 highlighting the value of tourism at more than one billion pounds to the regional economy. The team's involvement in this project includes gathering intelligence throughout the year, ranging from large venue data, cruise passenger figures, footfall data within the city centre and liaising with festival and event organisers across the region to obtain participant and attendee numbers.

### Attributable visitor spend

Adventure awaits campaign:	£307,037
Above and beyond spring campaign:	£69,933
Above and beyond summer campaign (achieved a record ROI 28:1):	£1,016,221
Above and beyond autumn campaign:	£212,000
Caledonian Sleeper campaign:	£499,935

*"An additional key factor in influencing our decision to partner with VisitAberdeenshire was the approach to evaluating the campaign's return on investment for the region. The in-depth evaluation debrief session provided some great insight and food for thought – allowing us to understand more about our guests."*

**Steven Marshall, Head of Sales & Marketing, Caledonian Sleeper**



# Insights and Evaluation

## Wider consumer research

Every year we survey the wider population to understand what motivates them to travel, and the types of breaks they enjoy. Based on a sizeable sample of over 1,600 in 2023, the results from this annual project inform activity across the organisation, particularly the Marketing team, with latest insights on consumer motivations and behaviours. This helps inform campaign messaging and always-on content and tone.

### Top words or phrases that best describe their "ideal" holiday or short break:



## Insights input at industry events

The Insights & Evaluation Manager presented at several industry events during the year, including:

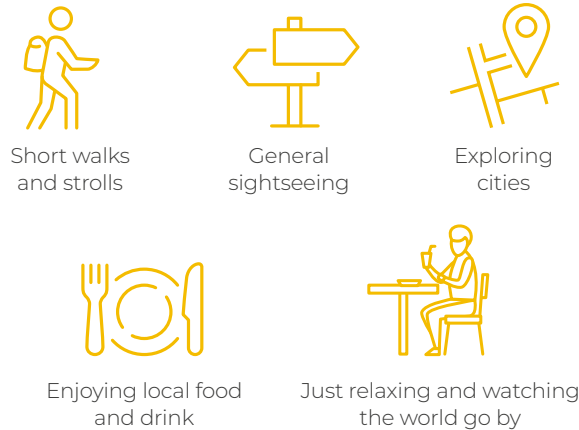
- Insights update within 'VisitAberdeenshire Presents' programme.
- Sourcing customer insights session within the Game Changer for Tourism Businesses; and
- Adventure Tourism trends update at the North East Adventure Tourism (NEAT) 'Unlocking opportunities' event.

The Insights & Evaluation Manager worked closely with data market expert David Edwards from Scattered Clouds to arrange a visit to the region. The focus of this visit was to deliver two insights and trends sessions, to the VisitAberdeenshire team and to the Aberdeen City and Shire Hotels Association.

# 1,638

Respondents from across the UK

Top activities whilst on holiday:



We also conducted research with our engaged audience, via our consumer database survey. Using a similar set of questions, we're able to understand this audience in greater detail.

## Destination strategy KPI reporting and management

The team has been feeding into destination strategy key performance indicators throughout the year. This has involved making sure there are metrics that can feed into each KPI to help the team report accurately on progress towards, and achievement of, the set KPIs.

Insights and Evaluation activity was delivered by Deirdre O'Donnell.

# Supporting our people: Business Services





# Business Services



## Welcome to Aberdeenshire volunteers

In 2023, we upscaled our volunteer scheme to enhance the visitor experience for cruise passengers arriving to the city. The Welcome to Aberdeenshire volunteer scheme was created to deliver a memorable first impression of our destination among cruise visitors.

The first cruise ship that arrived in the Port of Aberdeen's South Harbour on Tuesday 2 May heralded an exciting new opportunity for tourism in the North-east of Scotland. Easily identifiable in

their volunteer uniform, the volunteers welcomed passengers off the AIDAaura cruise ship, guiding visitors onto transport for planned excursions or how to explore the city centre. Volunteers also provided passengers with destination maps and shared ideas on things to see and do in the region.

As a thank you for the volunteers' work, a recognition event took place in early October celebrating the successful first cruise season.



**318** volunteer hours recorded during 2023 by 17 volunteers



The volunteers greeted **21** cruise ships



**4** volunteers donated more than 30 hours of their time from May to September



Volunteer team supported at the Port of Aberdeen's South Harbour open day and Offshore Europe exhibition at P&J Live.



*"Port of Aberdeen is a proud supporter of VisitAberdeenshire's 'Welcome to Aberdeenshire' volunteer programme and it is an integral part of the region's quality cruise service. The volunteers provide a warm and friendly welcome to disembarking guests on the quayside and are a very helpful point of contact for useful tourist information."*

**Bob Sanguinetti, CEO, Port of Aberdeen**

Volunteer support delivered by Fiona Douglas and Kayleigh McLeish.

# Business Services

## Educational support

Our partnership with young people in the community has grown, with two key projects.

The team engaged with Developing the Young Workforce via Peterhead Academy to support SCQF level 6 Travel and Tourism students to curate, plan and organise the Taste of Buchan community event in February 2024. Fiona Douglas and Rachel Smith from the VisitAberdeenshire team visited the school and held online meetings with the pupils to support the planning and delivery of the event.

We hosted Aleksandra Rzepka, a sixth-year pupil from Northfield Academy via North East Scotland College, as she completed a Business Skills Foundation Apprenticeship course. Aleksandra spent seven months with us working across all the teams and gained valuable experience and skills.

Educational liaison delivered by Fiona Douglas and Rachel Smith.



*“Aleksandra has had a fantastic experience at VisitAberdeenshire where the team were very proactive in encouraging and supporting her throughout the programme. One of the most exciting challenges for Aleksandra was to be included in the campaign to recruit cruise welcome volunteers. Her perspective was valued, and she developed such a lot of confidence from being involved and because she had to stand up in front of an unfamiliar group of adults and be part of the presentation to them.”*

**Amanda Smith, Assessor/Verifier/  
Distance Learning Tutor, North  
East Scotland College**



*“Peterhead Academy Higher Travel and Tourism pupils were lucky to work alongside VisitAberdeenshire to devise, plan, organise, and deliver an extremely successful community event, “A Taste of Buchan.” The input from Fiona and Rachel was so valuable for our young people. Not only did they provide key input as mentors throughout the planning process, but they also gave*

*the associated learning outcomes real-world context, which really motivated our young people and contributed toward them delivering a professional, well attended and successful event.”*

**Gerry McCluskey, Head Teacher, Peterhead Academy**

# Business Services

## HR and team support

Recruitment and subsequent induction are crucial elements of our onboarding process. New employees joined the team and were quickly immersed in the positive working culture.

Employee wellbeing was supported with 12 Wellness Wednesday sessions including a Duthie Park tour, bird watching at the River Don, His Majesty's Theatre behind the scenes tour and sessions on stress management, imposter syndrome and nutrition.

The team curated an away day at Aberdeen Sports Village with the focus centred around the company values, supporting the integration of new employees and delivery of the operating plan.



## Annual staff voice survey highlights 2023

The results for the 2023 annual staff voice survey recorded an overall engagement score of **98%**, an increase from the 92% achieved in 2022.



**What's best thing about working for VisitAberdeenshire?**  
*"The supportive, encouraging environment."*

HR and team support activity delivered by Fiona Douglas

## Advertising opportunities

This year, advertising opportunities were relaunched following recruitment of Partnerships Executive, Gemma Laing. New advertising opportunities developed for 2024 were made available on our website and cruise visitor map.

Advertising opportunities activity delivered by Gemma Laing and Fiona Douglas.





# Values and behaviours

Our values provide a benchmark for the work the team delivers.




C

### Collaborative

We work in partnership, internally and externally to work towards our company vision.

- Cross team working.
- Working with industry.
- Value and listen to counsel from key stakeholders and Board of Directors.




A

### Ambitious

We are creative, forward-thinkers and passionate about what we do.

- Be curious and question the status quo.
- Feel empowered to bring ideas to the table.
- Pursue bold and dynamic ways to inspire and engage with colleagues and industry.




R

ONE TEAM

### Responsible

We take an environmentally responsible and insights driven approach, operate inclusively and are respectful of others.

- Understand insights and customers' needs in all decision making.
- Strive to source and buy local to support wider sustainability and net zero ambitions of the region.
- Celebrate and support colleagues to create a one team approach.



E

### Empathetic

We listen and respond to the needs of others.

- Be friendly, approachable and open to listening to colleagues and industry partners.
- Demonstrate flexibility to our colleagues and stakeholders.
- Approach challenges with a positive perspective.

## Key Performance Indicators 23/24



Result



Target

### Activity

#### Tourism Development

Business advice sessions delivered	186	125
Growth Programme participants recruited	12	12
Attendees at workshops and webinars	350	250
Attendees citing positive change arising	83%	85%
Engagement with business monitor	47%	50%
Quality Rating for Dev' Programme	90%	85%
Provenance Festival participants	60	40

#### Marketing & Communications

Attributable RoI from visitor campaigns	19:1*	5:1
Visitor spend arising from own channels	£3.95m	£3.6m
Published articles arising from PR work	45	40
Growth in e-news subscribers	15%	10%
Growth in website page-views	10%	10%
Growth in social media following	8%	10%

#### Travel Trade

New trade bookable products **	8	20
Trade buyers engaged with at events	251	120
Operators committed to including the NE	24	20

#### Aberdeen Convention Bureau \*\*\*

Bids submitted	47	80
Successful conference bids	19	30
Ambassadors recruited	10	16

#### Corporate

Employee engagement score	98%	90%
Employee turnover	20%	15%
YE budget variance (2022/23)	zero	2%

#### Notes

\* Summer 28:1, Autumn 7.6:1, Caledonian Sleeper 50:1, Adventure - 11.4:1, Spring - 2.9:1 £2.3million attributable spend from evaluated campaign activity

\*\* Change of operational focus to support participating businesses at VisitScotland Connect

\*\*\* The Aberdeen Convention Bureau underwent a restructure throughout 2023

## Meet the Team



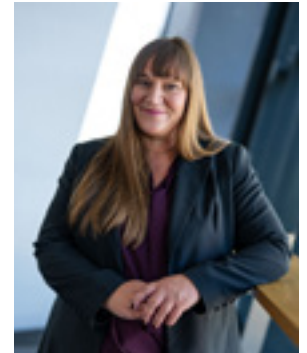
**Chris Foy**  
Chief Executive



**Fiona Douglas**  
HR & Business Services Manager



**Deirdre O'Donnell**  
Insights & Evaluation Manager



**Gemma Laing**  
Partnerships Executive



**Millie Clarke**  
Head Of Tourism Development



**Kayleigh McLeish**  
Tourism Development Executive



**Rachel Smith**  
Tourism Development Executive



**Maryn Grieve**  
Tourism Development Executive



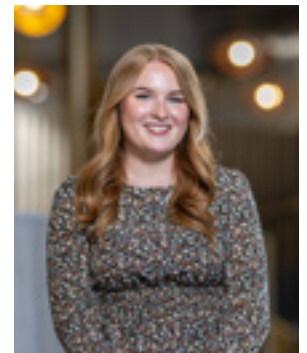
**Alanna Fowler**  
Travel Trade Executive



**Laura Delaney**  
Head of Communications



**Elaine Bisset**  
Marketing Manager



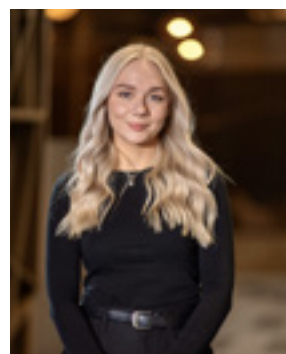
**Morgan Dunn**  
Digital Marketing Executive



**Laura Wilson**  
Head of Convention Bureau



**Rebecca McIntyre**  
Business Events Executive



**Rachel Mumford**  
Business Events Executive





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