



PRESS RELEASE

Tourism skills blueprint targets sector growth

Skills Investment Plan focuses on leadership, digital skills and visitor experience

An action plan to help tourism employers develop the skills they need for further growth has been launched by the industry.

The Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's Tourism Sector features a three-year programme of initiatives aimed at helping Scotland's tourism businesses improve skills in key areas and to attract new talent.

Priorities include improving management, leadership and enterprise skills; supporting the development of professional and digital skills; enhancing visitor experience; and raising the attractiveness of the sector to new entrants. It aims to build on progress achieved since the publication of the original Skills Investment Plan in 2013, with the second edition again facilitated by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) in partnership with industry.

The new plan was welcomed by Robert Allan, HR Director at Apex Hotels and Chair of the Tourism Skills Group.

He said: *"In recent years, Scotland's tourism sector has grown faster than the economy as a whole, and ensuring that employers can access the skills they need is a key part of maintaining and strengthening that growth."*

"Extensive consultations with a wide range of employers and industry voices have identified the key skills issues facing businesses of all sizes, with the Skills Investment Plan representing an opportunity to boost competitiveness and innovation."

"It will help the sector make the very best of future growth opportunities and to deal effectively with the challenges that lie ahead."

Scotland's tourism sector is worth £3.7billion a year to the economy and employs around 200,000 people.

John F. McClelland CBE, Chair at SDS, said: *"The Skills Investment Plan aims to reflect the shifting landscape in which Scotland's tourism sector operates, from the development of new markets such as China and India to the growth of new sub-sectors such as adventure and marine tourism."*



"As a result of this, the range and variety of careers available in the sector has never been greater, with the Skills Investment Plan offering a strategic framework to help employers ensure they can access the skills they need both now and in the future."

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop visited Edinburgh's Apex Grassmarket Hotel to help launch the plan.

She said: *"Our tourism industry is an industry about people – those who come to visit us, and those who welcome them when they do."*

"We need those working in our industry to be skilled and valued and to be able to provide the warm welcome that our visitors expect and deserve. The refreshed Tourism Skills Investment Plan will support all of our industry – public, private and third sectors – in helping us do this."

The publication of the Skills Investment Plan coincided with the Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA) launching their Big Five Questions programme to support tourism business productivity in Scotland.

STA Chief Executive Marc Crothall said: *"People are at the heart of Scotland's tourism industry delivering the quality, authentic and memorable visitor experience which is the focus of the tourism strategy vision."*

"It's absolutely vital that we are connecting education with industry to develop our people and grow what has been widely acknowledged as the most important industry in Scotland."

"The Scottish Tourism Alliance welcomes the publication of the refreshed SIP and we look forward to continuing our working relationship with Skills Development Scotland and the wider industry skills group to support the engagement of industry in the four skills priorities."

The Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's Tourism Sector is available to download at www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/42345/tourism-digital-skills-investment-plan.pdf.

ENDS

Apex Hotels

Head-quartered in Edinburgh, Apex Hotels owns the Apex City of Edinburgh and Apex Grassmarket (in Edinburgh's Grassmarket), the Apex Haymarket in Edinburgh's West End, the Apex Waterloo Place in the East End, the Apex City Quay Hotel & Spa in Dundee and the Apex City of Glasgow. There are also three hotels in London and the new Apex City of Bath Hotel opening in Bath in summer 2017.