

11 August 2020

### **Request under The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request dated 19 July 2020, in which you requested the following:

I would like to raise issue with the promotion of Scotland in conjunction with the UK Government. This is misguided because our facilities are already oversubscribed with ad-hoc car and camping visitors where services are not back at normal levels. We have Police Scotland limiting on road parking at numerous sites where there are no public health facilities such as toilets and handwashing. We have a dearth of open facilities which means we are noting defecation in roadside lay-bys, streams and ditches which include those which serve public and private water supplies. Numerous public services are understaffed due to offices being out of bounds due to current public health contact obligations. Notable closures of facilities include camping and caravan club sites due to their inability to maintain hygiene practices. My question which I ask under freedom of information rights is Which specific agencies were consulted by Visit Scotland when determining readiness for marketing rural Scotland to domestic tourists- specifically were Highland Council, Argyll and Bute Council, the West of Scotland Resilience Partnership, NHS Highland consulted on their readiness for an inundation of domestic travellers from areas where the R numbers are significantly higher than rural Scotland's "high risk" / current low COVID incidence? Were Public and Environmental Health professionals within these organisations consulted? We're Health Protection Scotland party to the decision? Were the Scottish Executive party to this decision? How many of Scotland's Consultants in Public Health Medicine (Health Protection) were directly consulted?

I have considered your request for information, and can respond as follows:

Throughout the pandemic VisitScotland has worked closely with Local Authorities, local destination organisations and community groups to establish a way to reopen tourism in safe and responsible ways. This has certainly included representatives from The Highland Council and Argyll and Bute Council. VisitScotland is not a member of the West of Scotland Resilience Group, but I have highlighted this to my Regional Director colleagues.

The decision on the restart date for tourism was made by the Scottish Government, which announced that tourism would reopen fully from 15 July; subsequently advising that some sectors of the industry, self-catering and holiday parks, were able to begin reopening from 3 July.

Here is a link to the Scottish Government's release from 20 June.

<https://www.gov.scot/news/restarting-tourism-safely/>

Throughout the pandemic the decisions on reopening all areas of the economy have been made by the Scottish Government. It has always been clear that these decisions have been made based on

medical advice from the health agencies that report to Scottish Ministers. This includes Health Protection Scotland.

Guidance on reopening for tourism businesses was created by the Scottish Government in consultation with a number of partner organisations and, as explained above, in line with medical advice received. Here is a link to that guidance, which is part of a suite of information resources made available to businesses.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-tourism-and-hospitality-sector-guidance/>

VisitScotland did not begin any marketing until 15 July, when tourism was restarted. Prior to this our message to visitors was that they should not travel and follow the Scottish Government advice as set out in its Route Map.

Our activity since 15 July has focused exclusively on the Scotland market, with no marketing activity taking place in any other markets. This includes the rest of the UK. The advice we give to visitors includes that they should adhere to Scottish Government and medical advice when travelling, be responsible in their actions and respect the communities in the destinations that they visit.

To help encourage this we developed a Visitor Charter explaining how people should behave.

<https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/advice/coronavirus-recovery/visitor-charter>

Many local communities and business groups have developed their own visitor pledges, which are shared with visitors as they arrive and move around destinations.

I hope this information and the explanation on the safe reopening of tourism in Scotland is helpful to you. If, however, you are not satisfied with the response or the manner in which your request has been handled, you may in the first instance contact our Chief Executive, Malcolm Roughead, whose contact details are set out below:

Mr Malcolm Roughead  
Chief Executive  
VisitScotland  
Ocean Point One  
94 Ocean Drive  
Edinburgh, EH6 6JH  
Telephone: 0131 472 2201  
Fax: 0131 472 2223  
E-mail: [malcolm.roughead@visitscotland.com](mailto:malcolm.roughead@visitscotland.com)

If you wish to request a review of your application under either the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 or the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004, your request should be submitted to us in writing, or another permanent format (for example e-mail or voice recording), and be received by us within 40 days of the date of this letter. Any request for a review should also set out, in as much detail as possible, the reasons why you are not satisfied with our

response or the manner in which we have dealt with your application.

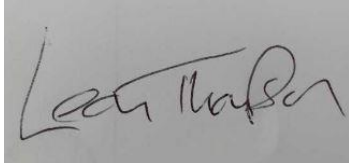
If you are still not satisfied with our handling of your application after we have responded to your request for a review, you have a right to apply to the Scottish Information Commissioner for a decision on whether we have dealt with your request in accordance with the Act.

The Scottish Information Commissioner may be contacted at:

Scottish Information Commissioner  
Kinburn Castle  
Doubledykes Road  
St Andrews, Fife  
KY16 9DS  
Telephone: 01334 464610  
Fax: 01334 464611  
E-mail: [enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info)

You also have the right to appeal to the Court of Session in Scotland on a point of law concerning our response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background. The signature reads "Leon Thompson" in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

Leon Thompson  
Government and Parliamentary Affairs Manager  
VisitScotland