

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA)

VisitScotland Information Strategy/iCentre closure programme

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Project Lead | Head of Information Services |
| Sponsor (if relevant) | Director of Industry & Destination Development |
| Department & Directorate | Industry & Destination Development (IDD) |

Project overview and context

The updated VisitScotland Strategic Framework outlines its core purpose as driving the visitor economy, growing its value to Scotland.

VisitScotland has carried out a review of its information strategy and provision, taking into account changing consumer behaviour and the needs of businesses.

The VisitScotland Board has agreed, based on the evidence and insight we have, to focus on an information strategy to reach visitors before they leave home. This reflects changing visitor behaviours with visitors using digital channels and travel advisors across all our target markets to research, plan and book all aspects of their trip before they travel. This shift has reduced VisitScotland’s opportunity to influence the spread and spend of visitors when they are in Scotland. VisitScotland is confident that this strategy will improve the economic outcomes achieved in localities by investing its available public funds in this way. Conversely, sustaining iCentres will have a much lower impact on spending decisions from visitors to a destination. Therefore, it will manage a phased closure programme of its iCentres and focus on pre-arrival information in the future.

The closure programme will effectively form the third and final phase of information centre closures over recent years. Previous closure programmes have been carefully managed with high levels of stakeholder engagement. No significant concerns around impacts on people with protected characteristics were raised during previous phases.

The review of previous iCentre closures also highlighted that communities and businesses themselves play an important role in providing local information to visitors. VisitScotland has reviewed a number of best practice case studies which highlighted that community tourism facilities which often combine local information with other important local services can better serve the needs of local communities and visitors.

Which users are in the scope of this Project?

| Type of user | Delete as appropriate | Additional information about the users |
|---|-----------------------|---|
| Employees | YES | |
| Members of the public/visitors | YES | |
| Stakeholders | YES | MPs / MSPs / Local Authorities / Local Community Groups / DMOs/other Scottish Government agencies |
| Partners/industry/business customers/sponsors | YES | Suppliers / Commercial Partners / Tourism & Events Businesses |

Gathering Evidence and Stakeholder Engagement

The following table summarises key research sources that were used to develop our information strategy and identify the areas of change. In addition to these resources, we drew upon the professional knowledge and experience of our staff and engaged with key stakeholders.

| Please name any research, data, consultation or studies referred to for this assessment | Please state if this reference refers to one or more of the protected characteristics (age, disability, race and/or ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity) | Do you intend to set up your own consultation? If so, please list the main issues that you wish to address if the consultation is planned or note the outcomes if the consultation has been completed |
|---|--|---|
| Stakeholder Engagement | A stakeholder prioritisation exercise was completed for this project which considered timing and channel of communication/engagement. We anticipate ongoing communication with key local stakeholders aligned to our documented processes - visitscotland.org/about-us/what-we-do/visitor-information Stakeholders for this project included Local Authority key contacts, industry groups (where relevant), MSPs/MPs. Ongoing engagement | Ongoing |

| | | |
|---|---|-----|
| | with stakeholders such as Local Authorities and destination and sector organisations around the closure of iCentres has been constructive to date with no significant equalities concerns raised. | |
| Previous iCentre Closure programmes conducted by VisitScotland | The closure programme outlined in this assessment is the third iCentre closure programme we have carried out over recent years. Previous closure programmes have been carefully managed with high levels of stakeholder engagement. No significant concerns around impacts on people with protected characteristics were raised during previous phases. | |
| Our Annual Performance Report VisitScotland.org | This analysis was to review our annual performance activity to determine what activity was driving the greatest return on investment in line with our objective to grow the value of the visitor economy. | N/A |
| Motivations, influences, decisions and sustainability research VisitBritain.org | This primary visitor research looked at the needs of all global travellers and provided a comprehensive view of the visitor journey to help understand the channels visitors use for information to plan and book their holiday. | N/A |
| EconomicPortraitofTraveler2023.pdf (tripadvisor.com) | This primary visitor research looked at the needs of all global travellers and provided a comprehensive view of the visitor journey to help understand the channels visitors use for information to plan and book their holiday. | N/A |

Will the project deny access to people with any protected characteristic defined by the Equality Act 2010 or affect their opportunity to benefit from/participate in the project?

| Protected characteristic | Is there a potential for positive or negative impact? | Positive Impact | Negative Impact | Action to address negative impact |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Age | There may be an impact on people in relation to age from this activity. | <p>Globally, almost 90% of mobile phones are smartphones, and most of the world's population (85%) currently owns one.</p> <p>We expect that visitors will continue to access information digitally when in Scotland.</p> <p>By reaching people, with the right message, at the right time we can inspire when they decide to come, where they go and what they will do. Put simply, at the stage of the planning journey before visitors book, we can ultimately shape how long people stay in Scotland and how much they spend when they are here. We can provide information in advance of the trip which is relevant to the requirements of the individuals and help them to plan/tailor a trip which right for them. We can target the channels we know visitors use to maximise our reach and influence in our key markets, ensuring Scotland is a "must visit, must return" destination.</p> | <p>The shift to focus on digital, predominantly pre-arrival, information with removal of physical iCentres, will have an impact on an increasingly small proportion of visitors, who may prefer to access on-arrival information and buy tickets in-person.</p> <p>It is recognised that this impact may be more prevalent in older age brackets who do not use digital technology in the same way as other generations, however there is no evidence of age being a factor in this regard.</p> | <p>The changes being delivered will not specifically deny access to information.</p> <p>iCentres do not offer unique services. All the services provided by the iCentres can be obtained elsewhere.</p> <p>Visitors can make bookings directly with establishments (e.g. visitor attractions and travel companies) via phone or in-person as the bulk of tickets we sell on an agency basis can also be purchased at the time of entry or travel. We have been in contact with these ticketing suppliers so they have time to make alternative arrangements. Paper-based guides are available via distribution services in public areas, including accommodation providers and visitor attractions.</p> <p>We recognise the importance of community tourism and believe that visitors will continue to obtain information from locals. Conversations are taking place with stakeholders and local community groups to mitigate negative impact.</p> <p>Our visitscotland.com website will continue to be regularly reviewed and updated with</p> |

| | | | | |
|------------|--|--|---|--|
| | | | | <p>advice and information which will complement information that visitors may access on the ground, from businesses and communities.</p> <p>Where an iCentre is closing and not being retained by the local authority, community or private enterprise as an information and booking hub, the programme will seek to ensure that prospective users of the service are redirected via temporary signage to alternative information sources e.g. our online functionality or other physical resources in that local area.</p> <p>As mentioned, these resources include local businesses who are equipped to deal with queries, hold physical leaflets and other site-specific information packs.</p> <p>All development work on visitscotland.com (consumer) and VisitScotland.org (corporate) follows the guidelines in the Scottish Government's Digital Scotland Service Standard. This helps to ensure a highly accessible design and implementation based on the varied needs of end-users.</p> |
| Disability | There may be an impact on people in relation to disability / accessibility from this activity. | <p>By reaching people, with the right message, at the right time we can inspire when they decide to come, where they go and what they will do.</p> <p>Put simply, at this stage of the planning journey before visitors book, we can ultimately shape how long</p> | The shift to focus on digital provision of predominantly pre-arrival information and removal of physical iCentres will have an impact on an increasingly small proportion of visitors who may prefer to access on-arrival | <p>The changes being delivered will not specifically deny access to information.</p> <p>iCentres do not offer unique services. All the services provided by the iCentres can be obtained elsewhere.</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| | | <p>people stay in Scotland and how much they spend when they are here. We can provide information in advance of the trip which is relevant to the requirements of the individuals and help them to shape a trip which right for them. We can target the channels we know visitors use to maximise our reach and influence in our key markets, ensuring Scotland is a “must visit, must return” destination.</p> <p>Provision of information in advance may allow those with specialised support tools to utilise those within their own homes before they depart for their holiday.</p> | <p>information and purchase tickets via phone or in-person.</p> <p>It is recognised that this impact may be more prevalent where there are disability / accessibility requirements, however there is no research evidence to back this up and we do anticipate that planning ahead of travel is more important for people with a disability and therefore we are supporting businesses to develop their Access Statements to make it easier for visitors to plan ahead.</p> | <p>Visitors can make bookings directly with establishments (e.g. visitor attractions and travel companies) via phone or in-person as the bulk of tickets we sell on an agency basis can also be purchased at the time of entry or travel. We have been in contact with these ticketing suppliers so they have time to make alternative arrangements. Paper-based guides are available via distribution services in public areas, including accommodation providers and visitor attractions.</p> <p>We recognise the importance of community tourism and believe that visitors will continue to obtain information from locals. Conversations are taking place with stakeholders and local community groups to mitigate negative impact.</p> <p>Our visitScotland.com website will continue to be regularly reviewed and updated with advice and information which will complement information that visitors may access on the ground, from businesses and communities.</p> <p>Where an iCentre is closing and not being retained by the local authority, community or private enterprise as an information and booking hub, the programme will seek to ensure that prospective users of the service are redirected via temporary signage to alternative information sources e.g. our online functionality or physical resources in that local area.</p> |
|--|--|---|---|---|

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|----------|----------------------------------|---|
| | | | | <p>As mentioned, these resources include local businesses who are equipped to deal with queries, hold physical leaflets and other site-specific information packs.</p> <p>All development work on visitscotland.com (consumer) and VisitScotland.org (corporate) follows the guidelines in the Scottish Government's Digital Scotland Service Standard. This helps to ensure a highly accessible design and implementation based on the varied needs of end-users.</p> <p>We will continue to work with industry partners and businesses to develop accessible guides. This will support businesses who deliver information services, to help them improve their accessibility.</p> <p>Accessible & Inclusive Tourism VisitScotland.org</p> |
| Sex | We do not anticipate a specific impact on people in relation to sex from this activity. | As above | No negative impact is perceived. | N/A |
| Ethnicity | We do not anticipate a specific impact on people in relation to ethnicity from this activity. | As above | No negative impact is perceived. | N/A |
| Religion/Belief/Non-belief | We do not anticipate a specific impact on people in relation to religion/belief/non- | As above | No negative impact is perceived. | N/A |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|----------|----------------------------------|-----|
| | belief from this activity. | | | |
| Sexual Orientation | We do not anticipate a specific impact on people in relation to sexual orientation from this activity. | As above | No negative impact is perceived. | N/A |
| Transgender | We do not anticipate a specific impact on people in relation to gender/transgender from this activity. | As above | No negative impact is perceived. | N/A |
| Pregnancy/Maternity | We do not anticipate a specific impact on people in relation to pregnancy and maternity from this activity. | As above | No negative impact is perceived. | N/A |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership | We do not anticipate a specific impact on people in relation to marriage and civil partnership from this activity. | As above | No negative impact is perceived. | N/A |

Internal VisitScotland staff

The changes being delivered will result in staff having to understand the overall impact of change, for example, processing announcements and recognising what it means for them, such as financial and career impacts. For some staff, redeployment and re-skilling will be required.

We recognise the significant impact change has on all affected staff, however, HR processes and policies related to the change programme are inclusive and do not discriminate against any specific groups or individual member of staff. We will offer support to staff and will make, in line with our equality duties, any reasonable adjustments that may support staff.

If yes, outline the actions you will undertake to change or mitigate the impact.

We recognise that there may be an impact on people in relation to age and disability / accessibility from this activity. Having considered the potential or actual impacts, we have decided to continue our work to close the iCentre network.

The changes being delivered will not specifically deny access to information. All the services provided by the iCentres can be obtained elsewhere. Visitors can make bookings directly with establishments (e.g. visitor attractions and travel companies) via phone or in-person as the bulk of tickets we sell on an agency basis can also be purchased at the time of entry or travel. We have been in contact with these ticketing suppliers, so they have time to make alternative arrangements. Paper-based guides are available via distribution services in public areas, including accommodation providers and visitor attractions.

Where there has been an expression of interest in relation to an iCentre property from a community group or otherwise, we will work with interested parties to establish if there is a way for the provision of information and other services to be provided by such a group going forward.

Governance and assurance

The Strategic Change Programme Board has been briefed on the approaches previously outlined and will receive updates on progress, helping to provide assurance that we are delivering on our commitments.

Results from your engagement/action undertaken

Where appropriate, and helpful there are a number of internal staff groups who can be consulted on how changes may impact staff, including our Staff Consultation Group. This is made up of representatives from across the business and provides feedback and consultation on a range of organisational and operational matters. In addition, a staff engagement group has been established specifically for information staff impacted by the closure of our iCentre network, this group provides impacted staff with a regular, structured forum where they are updated on the changes and progress relating to the closure of the iCentre network, giving them the opportunity to raise any matters of importance.