

# Getting it right

When it comes to tourism, no one is in any doubt that Scotland has fantastic assets. However, we're also in the most competitive market on the planet, with up to 180 countries battling it out for business.



All these destinations offer much the same thing - landscape, culture and heritage - to much the same people - affluent citizens of the developed world. We expect the global market to grow by 4% a year between now and 2020. But to all intents and purposes it's still a battle to keep our share.

We've never been more ambitious than we are today. We want a bigger slice of that cake for Scotland. But that means being better than the rest. Whatever angle they look at us from, people must see a world-class holiday destination.

We have to satisfy all the demands of the modern tourist, bearing in mind that visitors today are sophisticated, enterprising and highly demanding. Who would have thought, a few years ago, that someone from the UK might go shopping in New York for the weekend or trekking in Mongolia for a week? With such choice at their fingertips, people should be able to get to Scotland more or less on a whim, and be guaranteed the time of their lives when they arrive.

Then there are our competitors. Many of them are starting with a clean sheet, dreaming up their tourism industries

from scratch. Who would have imagined the Comoros Islands phoning VisitScotland for help? One thing is certain: the Comoros Islanders won't be slow to pick up on best practice and use it to their advantage.

So we have some hard selling to do, not just to bring our guests to Scotland, but once they're actually here. Because if tourism's the most cut-throat business on the planet, it also has the most perishable product. I know. I run a hotel where a golf tee-time lasts 10 minutes and if I don't sell it then, it's gone. I can't put it back on the shelf. Even newspapers last longer!

We just can't afford to be reticent. Our guests come here expecting to be sold to. Surely the ultimate accolade in tourism is to hear someone say: "I spent more than I meant to but it was well worth it" It means we got it right. The welcome, the service, the quality were all in place. So was the marketing.

And critically, we have to have the right attitude. One pleasant exchange in a shop or restaurant or taxi can

send someone home with a good feeling about Scotland. Tourism is manifestly everyone's business.

#### **upping our game**

The Scottish Executive knows all this. They've provided the funds to support a vision for growth that recognises clearly: tourism is Scotland's most important industry. They've set out what they believe the industry can achieve by 2015. Now we need to up our game to deliver that vision.

We - and I mean VisitScotland and the industry together - have to show that we can produce a good return on our investment. Because that's what it is now, an investment in marketing, skills and product development that will generate real growth.

Gone are the days of 'government spending' on tourism. This is hard commercial reality, and we have to come up with the goods ourselves.

So we have to work together as an industry. We know we can. We've learnt a huge amount since foot and

mouth and 9/11 and the signs are we're getting it right.

But we cannot be complacent. Here at VisitScotland we play our part, but it is only a part. We're 200 people in an industry of close on 200,000. We can do a lot but we can't fix or change everything. We need to speak clearly to one another; we need people to come forward with solutions.

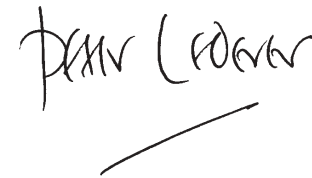
We put out a lot of information at VisitScotland, but people have to take responsibility for being aware of it and using it. Equally, we have to be aware of what others are saying. None of us can survive, let alone grow, if we're not sharing and exchanging detailed knowledge of our market.

Above all, that means understanding our guests. Taking the trouble to learn about what makes them different. If you want Russian business, at least learn a few words of welcome in Russian. Remembering that what our guests want here is exactly what we want when we go elsewhere.

#### **ready to go**

The tourism landscape is changing fast today. The view from Scotland is an exhilarating one. There's a buzz here at VisitScotland, a new sense of ourselves as a commercial organisation, fired up and ready to go.

We have a great team here and a great deal of youth and experience, with many new faces bringing new skills. They've brought a wealth of marketing expertise with them. Their colleagues have squared up to the changes with relish. I'm very proud to work with them all. We have an exciting future together.



**Peter Lederer, OBE**  
Chairman