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hen arriving in Scotland, it is hard to miss the love and pride of the people for their country. Walking around the cities and talking to locals, one feels the importance the Scots place in keeping their surroundings green and clean and their sense of justice within society.

This notion of not only environmental, but also social sustainability has found its way into business events as a means of acquiring new knowledge, creating new policies, and spreading the message of immediate action outside of Scotland.

Rory Archibald, Associations & Sectors at VisitScotland Business Events, says: "Before COVID, Scotland was already taking significant steps to being a better 'global citizen': producing the equivalent of 90% of its electricity from renewable sources, investing in carbon decommissioning, implementing policies for inclusion and diversity across society such as becoming the first country in the world to embed lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) inclusive education across the school curriculum. COVID has accelerated the ambitions of the nation to be one that puts people and planet first."

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Scotland's sustainability efforts have been anchored in the country's National Performance Framework. Based on the UN SDGs, the Framework is designed to create a more successful country that champions inclusive and sustainable growth and reduces inequalities.

The Scottish business events industry supports this sustainable direction. From hotels and restaurants to convention bureaus and event venues, sustainability in all its forms (environmental, social, and economic) is considered a driving force for a better future. What is more, they all work separately but in close collaboration to achieve their goal. Even transportation company Little's Chauffeur Drive, used particularly for business events, has an extensive hybrid fleet of cars and is actively supporting the conservation charity Trees for Life as a means of offsetting their carbon footprint.



Cross-sectoral cooperation is working wonders for the country. Alongside the private sector, academics get in the game providing new knowledge based on research and serve as national ambassadors telling the world about Scotland's new ideas and initiatives. The government plays a key role too, providing the financial and policy-changing support needed to take effective action. In fact, an innovative strategy was launched by the government in spring of 2020 called Scotland Outlook 2030. Focusing on "responsible tourism for a sustainable future" the strategy sets out "the beginning of a bold new approach putting our communities, our people, our visitors, our businesses and our environment at the heart of everything we do."

Beyond tourism, the Scottish economy, both private and public sectors, has made a turn towards a more circular and fair system, which tends to serve the people first and growth second. The Scottish Government released a vision of a wellbeing economy, a new ten-year strategy for economic growth focusing on five areas: entrepreneurial people and culture; new market opportunities;

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productive businesses and regions; a fairer, more equal society; a skilled workforce and a culture of accountability.

Scotland has been exploring the idea of a different style of economy for a while. The Scottish Government is a member of the Wellbeing Economy Governments partnership (WEGo) along with New Zealand, Iceland, Wales and Finland, who collaborate in pursuit of innovative policy approaches to a create fair and ecological world. This work is supported through a partnership with the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAII - see sidebar), who also work with the private sector to changes attitudes about what growth and success look like.

TRUE VALUE OF BUSINESS EVENTS

Business events and their true value as platforms for change, innovation and knowledge sharing are at the centre of this movement, something VisitScotland have seized upon and are working into their core message: that transformation is possible andbusiness events can make it happen.

Archibald confirms: "We believe that business events play a front-line role in helping Scotland reach its ambition to be an inclusive country where equality is paramount, universal healthcare and education are cherished and where we fight against injustice and poverty. In March 2021, VisitScotland launched Journey to Change, our voice to the global business events community that business events have changed. We need to meet with new purpose, put people and planet first and use the power of meeting face to face to be a leading industry in social sustainability that other industries can follow. Business events are a platform for those whose voices are less heard and can be used to lobby for a better world for the next generation."

Wellbeing Economy Alliance

The WEAll global collaboration of organizations, movements, and individuals was formed 10 years ago, after the realization that the current economic system needs to be transformed into one that delivers social justice on a healthy planet. The Scottish hub is one of the most advanced ones, with strong debates around putting people first and growth will follow and emerging socially-conscious businesses.

Katherine Trebeck, cofounder of WEAll, explains: "WEAll is the connecting tissue between all the actors working to make the economy more humane and sustainable. We amplify the incredible range of activities already out there, that prove change is not just desirable, but feasible too. We connect the pieces of the jigsaw of a wellbeing economy together so that they add up to the systemic change so urgently needed. People and organizations who know there is more to the economy than just GDP growth, more to business than just short-term profit extraction, and more to life than just consumption are all part of the movement to create an economy that serves humanity, rather than the other way around."

Examples are bubbling up around Scotland; cooperative companies, employee-owned businesses working towards creating solutions to environmental challenges, giving back to the community they belong to. Jaw Brew, a beer brewing company in Glasgow, makes beer in an environmentally-sustainable way, using surplus bread from a nearby bakery. Up Circle takes coffee granules to make face serums and scrubs, and Green City Whole Foods, whose 50 staff members are co-owners, work with a new economic model of shared profit and community sustainability.

Trebeck asks: "Why do we want the economy to grow? What sort of growth do we need and of what? Environmental breakdown and social justice questions are two sides of the same coin with economy linking the two."

Key Industries to Match a Destination's Goals

Achieving high employee satisfaction, eco-friendly businesses and realizing the, positive impacts and job creation these can bring, a nation needs to recognize its existing and potential assets. Natural habitat and talent, combined with a passion to do better, have shaped Scotland's key industries. It is business events in these key sectors that Scotland's' city convention bureaus, companies, academics, and individuals with a dedication to advancing their city - are committed to attracting. The right association conferences can increase knowledge, boost productivity and further existing sustainability efforts.

LOW CARBON INDUSTRIES

Did you know that Scotland was the first country in the world to declare the climate change emergency and pass world-leading climate change legislation? Scotland has set out clear goals of becoming a net zero emissions country by 2045 mostly by means of investment in cleantech projects and academic research and innovation. The University of Strathclyde and the University of Edinburgh are leading the way with their progressive work.

Scotland's location offers a big natural advantage for creating and harnessing renewable energy. Scotland has a strong offshore renewable energy industry, already producing enough power to keep Scotland on target to meet the 75% emissions reduction target by 2030. A new power plant at Peterhead is the world's first gas-fired power station equipped with carbon capture storage technology to capture up to 1.5 million tons of CO² every year. Add projects like H100 and ACORN (which produce green and blue hydrogen) to the list and you get an idea of the contribution the country is making to the world's energy challenges.

HEALTH & LIFE SCIENCES

A consistent growth area for many decades, Scotland's life sciences sector is one the country's most important – driving jobs, research, and investment. Strong collaboration across industry, the NHS (Scotland's unified healthcare provider), universities and government have helped shape Scotland as a country perfectly adapted to conduct efficient, and safe clinical trials. Several government backed innovation centres support advancement

of new medicines and technologies, and bridge the gap between pure research and major life science companies - helping to share learnings and information in both directions.

The Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre, the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland in Renfrewshire, a new Precision Medicine Living Lab in Glasgow, and BioHub in Aberdeen are just some of the organizations that associations can connect with for knowledge exchange and to create new partnerships.

Aileen Crawford, Head of Tourism and Conventions at Glasgow Convention Bureau, says: "Glasgow has been at the epicentre of medical innovation for centuries. The city's universities boast alumni such as Sir David Livingstone the celebrated medical missionary. Sir William Macewen who conducted the world's first bone graft and successful removal of a brain tumour, Lord John Boyd Orr who won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in establishing the link between poverty, poor nutrition and health and the UK's first female medical professor, Dame Louise Mcllroy."

LOUDER THAN WORDS

It comes as no surprise that the tourism industry is thriving in a place so full of rich heritage and history, diverse leisure activities, sporting and cultural attractions, delicious food and drink, and vibrant cities. A proven green destination, the Scottish Government continues to invest in sustainable projects like the transformation of the waterfront in Dundee, the major investment to transform Diageo's Scotch whisky experience and improve

sustainability across its visitor centre network, or the regeneration of Edinburgh's city centre.

The fact that business events rival leisure tourism expenditure speaks louder than words. Scotland's two largest cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow, boast impressive track records for hosting high-profile international events. In November 2021 Glasgow hosted the United Nations global COP26 climate change summit, the largest business event ever held in the UK. Glasgow was recently voted the 'friendliest city in the world' by Rough Guide, and Edinburgh was voted second in the world for quality of life, in a recent Deutsche Bank study, facts which all add to attraction of Scotland.

DIGITAL & TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRIES

Boasting over 110,000 tech companies, producing over 15,000 graduates every year, and with 100,000 people employed in the sector, Scotland's digital tech ecosystem is as advanced as they come. Settled as the "data capital" of Europe, Edinburgh is already the UK's top city for startups, with 92% growth potential, while Glasgow is one of the UK's biggest tech investment hubs, according to Tech Nation.

The government has invested money and talent in a tenyear Data-Driven Innovation program to make Scotland the location of choice for data science startups and data science companies. Global names in software and IT such as Amazon, Microsoft, and IBM, have offices in Scotland. A secret talent unless you know where to look, is the space sector which too benefits from the digital tech expertise in Scotland. Did you know Scotland manufactures more satellites than anywhere else in Europe? This list is far from exhaustive. Scotland's major convention bureaus are the link between these key industries with their stakeholders and the like-minded associations who choose Scotland as destination and country to engage with. They assist in joining forces to ignite discussions and policy changes towards a more broad-minded economy.

Crawford says: "The Glasgow Convention Bureau can help connect conference organizers with a variety of stakeholders across the city's academic, and business community to promote and support any relevant conference. The city recognizes the importance of academic conferences in supporting the economic development of the city, whilst also raising the profile of Glasgow's research institutions. Glasgow established the UK's first Conference Ambassador Programme over 30 years ago because we understand the relevance of the knowledge hub economy, where areas of world-class research influence the conferences held in Glasgow."

At the time of writing, Edinburgh does not have a dedicated convention bureau, but options of creating one are being considered. This means that the city's success in promoting its assets and attracting conferences comes from passionate people and institutions in the industry who believe in their city's abilities to deliver major events.

Stephanie Lee, Cluster Director of Sales at IHG Hotels in Edinburgh, says: "In this new world we cannot rest in the success of the past. We need to offer better solutions which align our key industries with the right conferences in order to maximize the benefits that come from business events. Edinburgh sits well in this new era harnessing the strength of its expertise in certain sectors."



Conferences that Make a Difference

Scotland is well on its way to becoming a country which can claim that the transformations needed to move our world to a more humane and sustainable place has already begun and is here to stay. The nation is reinforcing actions and industries which will contribute to this shift, but it's not a fight they can win alone, and it's not something which Scotland claims to have all the answers – it needs global action, global communities and global voices to make the real impact the world needs. What better way to achieve this global transformation than through the immense power of business events and the global reach they bring? Conferences with a focus on the wellbeing of people, wildlife, nature, and the knowledge that can be acquired from them may prove to be of more value than economic growth.



ENGAGE INVEST EXPLOIT (EIE): WHERE INNOVATION MEETS INVESTMENT

This high value event was held this April at the London Stock Exchange and was attended by the First Minister of Scotland and the Lord Mayor of the City of London, as well as James Close, Head of Climate Change and Sustainability, NatWest Group and former World Bank. Under the theme EIE London: Scotland's world class Innovation inspires Global Investment and Finance. its aim was to showcase, inspire and harness the global power of Data Driven Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Impact Investment, in order to drive a positive paradigm shift for the benefit of society. In partnership with The Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise, the London conference showcased how innovation meets investment with a vision to make the world a better place by addressing tomorrow's greatest challenges today.

Home of the EIE is the Bayes Center, the University of Edinburgh's Innovation Hub for Deep Tech, Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, which looks at enhancing Scotland's tech talent pool. Investment and support start at the early stages of a business, and the support scales up as the company grows. The talent pipeline culminates in an investor ready company showcasing at the EIE conference, seeking further investment to expand and move on to the next stage of business development. The next EIE will be in October in Edinburgh.

Karen Wood, Director of Enterprise at EIE, says: "The conference was a global gateway to impact investment and finance, as we continue to play our part to inspire, support and scale high growth companies, providing innovative solutions to real world problems through Scotland's International Market Square. As Official Nominators for The Earthshot Prize.

we have an acute focus on Energy, Climate and Cleantech, with 10 companies in our EIE22 cohort, in this critical sector."

Working in collaboration with the Scottish Tech Ecosystem, EIE has supported more than 540 companies who have raised more than \$1.5 billion in investment. Seven of these companies have been nominated for the Earthshot Prize, an initiative from The Royal Foundation and the Duke of Cambridge, Prince William. The Earthshot Prize is meant to be the most prestigious global environmental prize, designed to incentivize change and help repair our planet by showcasing positive examples of how human ingenuity can turn the tide and save our planet.

COP26

The much-anticipated event was an excellent example of 'practice what we preach'. Attended by global leaders who arrived in Glasgow to make decisions for the future of our planet, the organization of the event itself demonstrated leadership within the field of sustainable event management relating to environmental, social, and economic performance.

The city made sure to prioritize sustainability throughout the conference by collaborating with delivery partners and suppliers to create positive change beyond COP26. Active travel, alternative energy sources (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil in generators instead of diesel), locally sourced and in season food items, reusing and recycling material, and employing local people for specific event roles were some of the actions taken. In this case, Glasgow, and Scotland shouted: If we can do it for such a big event, why not you too?

The 200 countries which came together in the UK to commit to take action on climate change forged the Glasgow Climate Pact, giving the city a place in the sustainability building history.

THE FIRST A3 CONFERENCE

A3 Scotland 2022 is an inaugural not-forprofit conference for the Animal Health, Agritech and Aquaculture (AAA) sectors to encourage innovation, investment and collaboration. Organized at the end of April at the purpose-built John McIntyre Conference Centre, located on the University of Edinburgh's Pollock Halls Campus, the two-day event gathered industry, investors, scientists, and government officials from all over the world.

Its creators, Lawrence Brown, Vet, Consultant and Innovation Manager for Health at Edinburgh Innovations and John MacKenzie, former CEO of the Roslin Innovation Centre, saw the need to connect the right people and organizations so as to attract investment, start new companies, and bring fresh talent to Scotland. Having attended similar business events themselves, they saw the value a conference brings for knowledge exchange, new ideas and partnerships.

The theme for the event was 'transition to net zero' and 'One Health', which is a cross-sector approach to designing and implementing programs, policies, legislation, and research to achieve better public, plant, and animal health outcomes. Tech innovation which was born as a result of the conference will optimize the three sectors (which have already a strong presence in Scotland) into transitioning to net zero and fall in line with the nations 2040 strategy.

Commenting on what he hopes to achieve with A3Brown said "Success to me would be the start of a legacy, that A3 Scotland becomes an essential and regular event in the calendar for advancing sustainable food security, economic development and One Health both at home and around the world."

A Suitable Setting for Sustainable Meetings

Meetings with a purpose need venues that match their ambitions and are set up to achieve optimal results. Scotland is one of the few nations worldwide where most venues for business events are aligned with the nation's mission to achieve sustainability on all levels. From universities to conference centres, associations can expect to find the same common denominator: respect for the people and the environment.

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION CENTER

Part of the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, the Technology & Innovation Center (TIC) has a reputation for research excellence in fields such as advanced manufacturing, health & wellbeing, innovation & entrepreneurship. What sets it apart from other research centres is the focus on collaboration; the TIC actively promotes partnerships across different disciplines in academia, the public sector, business, and industry.

Gordon Hodge, Head of Conferencing and Events at the University, explains: "The research that takes place here is designed that it should ultimately have an impact of what you might refer to as the wicked problems in society, like low carbon energy, medicines manufacture, the digitization of health and social care, photonics." Hodge highlighted the creation of a "personalized pill" to replace the combination of medicine a patient might need to take in a day as an example of the outputs collaboration can produce. "We encourage entrepreneurs and small businesses to evolve in the city and create an ecosystem where they can communicate and support one another."

TIC's meeting capacity filled a gap there was in the city for medium-size events. Hodge says: "The reason we have these dedicated conferencing facilities is so that there is a space for the people who are conducting research to invite their collaborators and their partners and other people who might be interested in collaborating with them."

With a goal of achieving Net Zero by 2040, TIC has a focus on practical sustainability too, implementing food waste and

water management policies, responsible food sourcing, plasticfree events and introducing a living wage for employees. For TIC it is important to work with their clients towards making smart choices, creating meetings with a small footprint and a big impact.

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

One of Scotland's most prestigious and famous institutions is the University of Edinburgh. For over 400 years Edinburgh has been a seat of academic excellence, and has recently launched the new Strategy 2030 to help positively transform the future not just for its students, but for wider society. The Strategy focuses on four key areas: people, research, teaching and learning, and social and civic responsibility.

Putting people and society first and embedding this in academic settings fits well with Scotland's national ambitions. Gordon Dow, Business Development manager at Edinburgh First, the commercial arm of the University of Edinburgh, explains: "The University's dedicated sustainability team makes sure everyone has a role to play. Students and staff are required to work towards zero carbon and zero waste, widen participation in higher education and support inclusion, share knowledge and skills with local communities, and contribute towards SDG's."

All conferences are held with sustainability at heart; from food choices and multi-purpose furniture to diversity support and zero waste shops, the university flies the flag on sustainability and inclusion.

SCOTTISH EVENT CAMPUS

Who said that size and sustainability can't go together? The Scottish Event Campus in Glasgow, recent hosts of COP26, has played a central role in organizing our industry's Net Zero Carbon Events pledge. The venue itself has committed to reaching Net Zero by 2030, focusing on five key goals: climate, governance, partnership, people, and resource. "We are developing an ambitious energy strategy to get us off gas and into renewable energy and water efficiency; we have sustainable event toolkits that our team uses to help clients make smarter choices. But the first we wanted to do is make a commitment and then we looked to develop and make it happen," says Jennifer Ennis, Environment & Waste Manager.

A strict food strategy is also in place, using a minimum of 80% Scottish-sourced, seasonal food, grown by producers using sustainable and responsible agriculture processes. The SECalso work with charity partners to, give back to the planet and the community. They have a long standing partnership with Trees For Life, donating with every conference that is held at the SEC.

Dawn Lauder, Head of International Conference Sales, says: "It's really important that we stay relevant as a business; sustainability and technology are the top two biggest things to ensure that. This way we can keep hosting associations responsibly, and they keep bringing that social, economic, and environmental progress that they do when they come here."

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE

The capital's largest venue is also a beacon of sustainability for the city it serves. On top of its Sustainable Food Revolution strategy, the newly-launched Step Change initiative focuses on three equally significant, interconnected areas of impact: environmental, societal, and economic. The venue's Sustainability Program Manager, Aaron McKeen, says: "Through our Events Impact Reporting we are trying to bring the sustainability conversation in the center of every event. Aiming to achieve a true net zero by 2030, we have extended our plan outside our walls through Desk To Door, a project to encourage everyone travelling to EICC to do so using the most sustainable method of transport available."

The venue prides itself in helping the community. EICC Live is a series of free public talks, which cover a wide range of topics (including sustainability and wellbeing) and is well attended by students, local business people, academics and members of the public. On the social side, EICC encourage their clients to collaborate with local, socially-minded businesses. Conference delegates can for example take a walking tour of Edinburgh with Invisible Cities, who offer unique walking tours of Edinburgh led by tour guides who have experienced homelessness. Invisible cities give a job and a voice to those often marginalized and forgotten, and gives delegates the opportunity to get a truly unique perspective on Edinburgh!



Venues Capacities

The *Technology & Innovation Center (TIC)* offers a main auditorium of 450-person capacity and a smaller one of 150, as well as eight conference rooms and can host medium sized meetings of up to 600 people.

The *University of Edinburgh* can offer meeting facilities for large conferences in unique venues like the McEwan Hall, which can seat up to 1,700 delegates in its recently reopened tiered auditorium.

The Scottish Event Campus (SEC) features the SEC Centre – five interconnected exhibition and meeting spaces, the iconic 3,000 seat SEC Armadillo and the most recent addition, The OVO Hydro – a 14,300 capacity events arena.

The Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) can hold 2,00 delegates in its biggest Lennox suite, followed by 1,200 people in Pentland suite and several other spaces of various capacity and style.

Restaurants & Hotels Are Part of the Transformation

Scotland has made sure that more and more restaurants and hotels get onboard the environmental and social journey. Creativity, new ideas, governmental support and, of course, passion for a more sustainable nation are the drivers in this journey.

SCOTLAND PUTS ITS MONEY WHERE ITS MOUTH IS

In response to COP26, restaurants in Glasgow started to consider the impact their activities were having and to explore ways to reduce waste. Led by the hospitality industry, a campaign was launched that ed focused on restaurants and food waste: Plate Up For Glasgow. Highlighting the issue of food waste and its impact on the environment and the local economy, the campaign was piloted by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce through its Circular Glasgow initiative.

The idea was to challenge businesses to limit food waste. Chefs and experts advised restaurants and takeaway businesses on how they can help the local economy by collaborating in a sustainable and profitable manner. Each participating business created a dish with ingredients from surplus or donated food, which would otherwise have gone to waste, and added it to their menus as the 'sustainable' option.

Giovanna Eusebi, Owner at Eusebi's Restaurant, and a great supporter of the initiative says: "These special dishes were served for weeks and the people's response was overwhelmingly positive. We offered a sustainable choice on the menu, explained its sourcing, and customers opted for it happily."

Rethinking existing menus with unused ingredients, showcasing food preservation techniques, and using unfashionable cuts of



meat were all part of the initiative. Eusebi says: "Food waste is costly and damaging. Restaurants in Scotland are reconsidering, turning to their roots when food was naturally sustainable since it always came from nearby farms. Urban farms and farm-to-table models work best in big cities." The campaign may now be over, but the learnings remain, and more restaurants intend to adopt these clever and sustainable practices.

HOTELS ARE MORE THAN BEDS

A big vital component of any business events, hotels are often used to capacity during an event. Can business events in this case be part of a solution for a sustainable future? Hoteliers in Scotland have taken it upon themselves to promote social and environmental sustainability through tangible actions.

Janice Fisher, General Manager of Novotel Glasgow and Co-chair of the Greater Glasgow Hotel Association, says: "At Novotel, people come first. We promote diversity and offer above living wage, so our employees have a better quality of life and are satisfied in their workplace. We also encourage international students to work with, gain the experience in responsible hospitality and then spread the word. For us, this is the best advocacy for social transformation."

She continues: "Hotels in Scotland have realized that technology has caught up with customer demands for sustainability. There is no excuse not to follow the sustainability rules expected of us."

Sustainable responsibility in hotels is established following the journey of the customer, from what they use upon arrival and until their departure. Novotel, for example, has a zero-plastic strategy, food waste policies using the right suppliers, and a carbon-neutral goal for 2050 utilizing the technology available to manage energy and use renewable energy sources.

What is the World Waiting for?

What elsewhere could be considered as an eccentric and difficult business idea, in Scotland it becomes a people-centric successful company. Many of those come together to form an alliance and lead the nation to a socially profitable future. Industries are selected for growth based on the social and natural strengths the nation has to offer, spreading the

rumor that transformation is not only needed, but it is not that hard to achieve, and it has, in fact, began. Responsible conferences hosted in sustainably conscious venues increase collaboration opportunities to back this transformation. All this joined by everyday life businesses which do their part to complete the sustainability picture.

"We must hold ourselves accountable on where we meet. Are our delegates all welcome in the destinations we choose? Are our rights respected? Are our delegates all equal in our host destinations? We cannot preach on social media about the UN SDGs and creating an equal and inclusive industry, yet, in practice, exclude wide parts of society in the destinations we choose," says Rory Archibald, Associations & Sectors at VisitScotland Business Events.

Scotland has proved that change is possible and that the business events industry has an important role to play. Associations are encouraged to come to the nation prepared to contribute their share to making this world financially fairer, more inclusive and more planet friendly and are demanding that their expectations are met. Their conferences can provide the necessary platform for discussions to turn into actions.

Starting small but with a consistent pace, transformation can be done. But it cannot remain just within Scottish boundaries. "It is time to take what we say and preach on stage and put it into action. The industry must embrace sustainability/social sustainability to remain relevant. We must hold ourselves accountable for the impact we have on this planet and accountable for the positive change we can collectively have on our global society around the world. Many leaders say that our industry 'changes the world.' It's time to stand up and stand together and start actually changing this world for the better. It's time to start that Journey to Change," concludes Archibald.



For more information about Scotland as an association destination:

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