



ASSC 40th Anniversary Celebratory Magazine

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A Statement from Scotland's First Minister

Nicola Sturgeon

"I am delighted to offer my congratulations to the Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers on the 40th Anniversary of its founding."



"We all know how important tourism is to Scotland and our self-catering sector does a vital job in supporting the contribution it makes to our economy and society.

"Without the hard work and effort put in by all those who work in self-catering, many of those who visit Scotland, or choose to holiday at home, would not have the authentic experiences they do which encourage them to return time and time again.

"The role that the ASSC plays is vital to the health and growth of the Scottish tourism industry and I'm happy to offer it my best wishes, both for this special anniversary year and for the years to come."

History of the ASSC - Supporting Self-Catering in Scotland for Forty Years

The Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (ASSC), the only trade body representing the interests of the traditional self-catering sector in Scotland and its main source of news and information, has celebrated the 40th anniversary of its founding.

Since it began in 1978, the ASSC has gone on to grow to over 650 members and bring together more than 7,000 self-catering properties across Scotland. Those properties, operated by ASSC members, now range from modern apartments at the heart of Scotland's busiest cities to rural cottages, lodges, and castles.

ASSC also plays a key role in ensuring that its members adhere to the highest standards of professionalism and uphold its principles of 'quality, integrity, cleanliness, comfort, courtesy and efficiency' in all their properties. Recently, these values were further enshrined in the ASSC's industry-leading Code of Conduct.

Throughout, the past four decades, the ASSC has been pivotal in promoting links between short-term letting in Scotland and other countries across Europe. It is a founding member of the European

Holiday Homes Association (EHHA) and of the Scottish Tourism Alliance Council.

ASSC Chief Executive, Fiona Campbell, said:

"From advocating on behalf of self-catering, which supports many jobs and families across Scotland, to setting the record straight on what our members do, the ASSC has been proud to be there for our members for the past four decades.

"In recent times, we've taken on the challenges and misconceptions facing our industry head on and we are proud of our record of working constructively – both internally and with external stakeholders across Scotland and the wider world.

"ASSC may be 40 this year but that doesn't mean we're slowing down or plan on taking it easy.

"We're still full of energy, optimism, and positivity – just like the short-term rental sector we represent."

Staff Team

The ASSC has a staff of three:



Fiona Campbell
Chief Executive



Eleanor McBain
Membership Secretary



Melanie Allen
Communications & Admin

Board Members

The ASSC is governed by a Board of Directors who give their time to support the development of the sector. They are all owners and operators of self-catering businesses in Scotland.

David Smythe – Chairman

Linda Battison – Vice Chair

Robert Kennedy

Nick Morgan – Financial Director

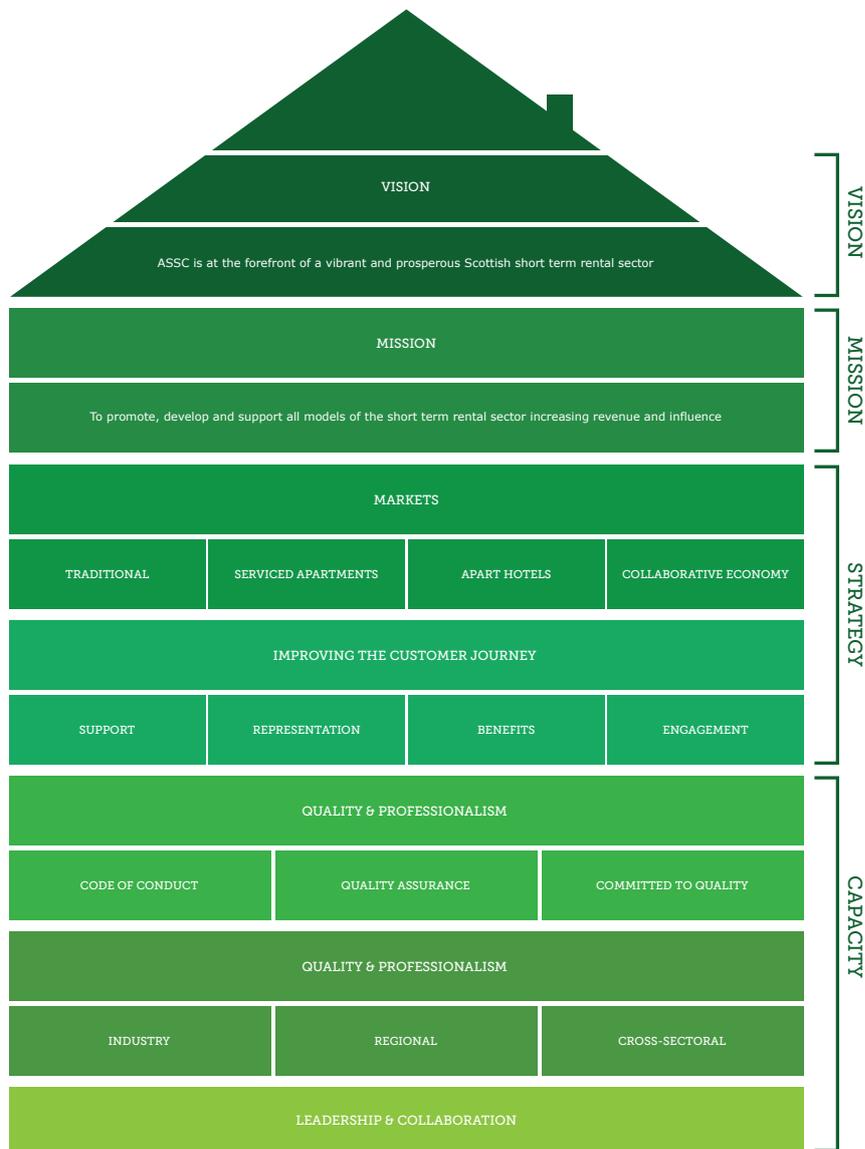
Les Robinson

Christine Ward

Tara Scott

Geraldine Hamilton

Emma Poulton Parley



Our Vision

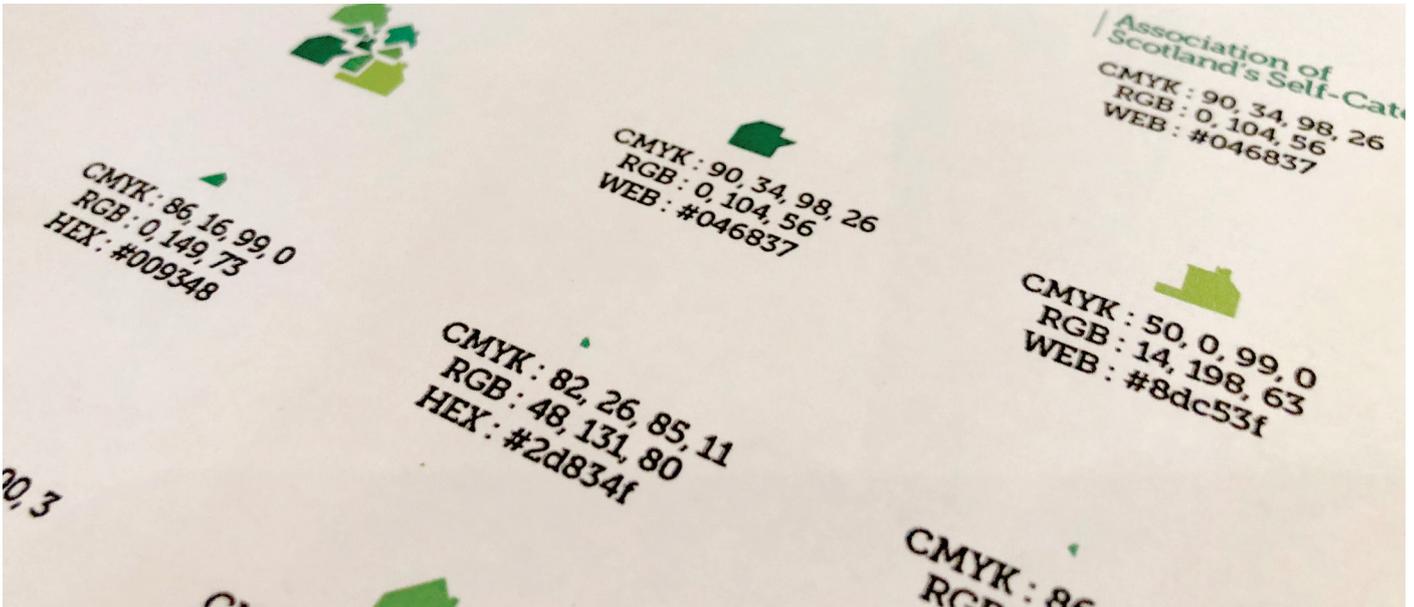
ASSC is at the forefront of a vibrant and prosperous Scottish short term rental sector.

The ASSC's purpose is 'to represent and promote the interests of all self-catering accommodation businesses in Scotland'.

Our Objectives

- To establish, support and promote quality standards for self-catering accommodation premises and businesses
- To represent and further the interests of members to Industry Bodies, Government, Executive Agencies, Local Authorities and any other appropriate organisations
- To advise on members' operational methods and to assist in marketing and profitability
- To develop and promote services for the benefit of members
- To negotiate special terms with suppliers for purchases made by members and to advise on sources of supply
- To promote the image of self-caterers in Scotland in general, and the members of the Co-operative in particular
- To pool information for the benefit of members
- To efficiently manage the Association and its resources

The ASSC Brand Refresh



The ASSC commissioned Ali Campbell Creative to rebrand the organisation in 2016.

The new look has been very well received by members and industry representatives since its release.

Ali said, "The chance to rebrand such an important organisation in Scotland's tourism industry was one that was too great an opportunity to pass up. I wanted to give the Association a much lighter, fresher feel. Part of the brief was to align the ASSC and EmbraceScotland brands. By using the same motif in repeat, I was able to give each brand their own identity, yet retain a strong sense of togetherness."

On her appointment, the ASSC's first-ever Chief Executive Fiona Campbell, identified rebranding as a priority.

In her words, "Since the ASSC executive committee decided to bring a Chief Executive on board, the Association has undergone a change of direction and is enjoying a period of growth. A forward-looking new brand identity reflects this progressive outlook. Aligning the ASSC with EmbraceScotland has cemented the significant synergy between the Association and the marketing members it represents."

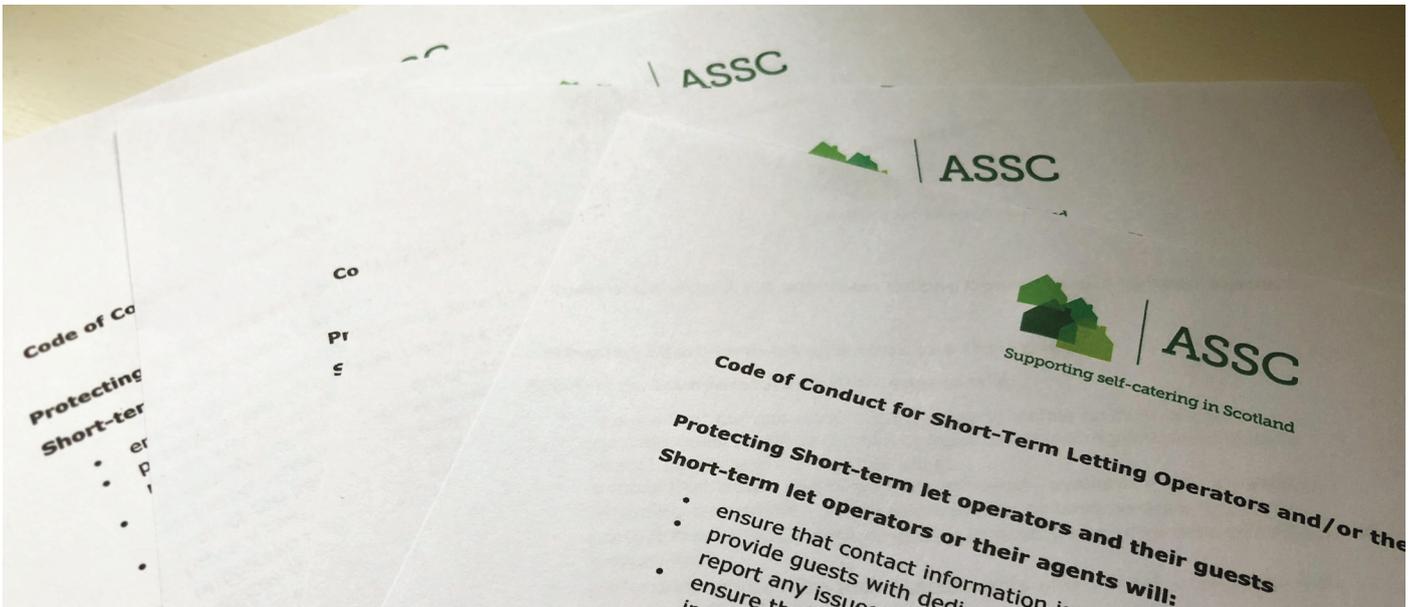
Ali is a creative consultant based in Argyll, with over 25 years of experience in the industry. He has worked extensively with voluntary organisations, as well as in the private and public sectors. His services include graphic design, brand creation & development and social media marketing. He was selected from a shortlist of 3 agencies to consult on the new image.



Supporting self-catering in Scotland



Code of Conduct for Short-Term Rental Operators



The ASSC launched a Code of Conduct in 2017, aimed at improving standards in the industry and encouraging best practice.

The ASSC launched a Code of Conduct in 2017, aimed at improving standards in the industry and encouraging best practice.

The Code was developed alongside a Scottish Government study into the Collaborative Economy and was published alongside a Policy Recommendation Paper which sets out how the vital self-catering sector in Scotland can be improved for customers, hosts, and all others involved.

ASSC launched its Code of Conduct in association with the Short-Term Accommodation Association (STAA), which has also developed a policy paper looking into improving working life for platform hosts. During the process of drafting both the policy document and the Code of Conduct, ASSC and STAA worked together in close collaboration, for the benefit of all parts of the industry.

Much care and attention has been paid to ensure that the ASSC's Code of Conduct reflects the organisation's core principles of quality, integrity, cleanliness, comfort, courtesy and efficiency in each of its points. The Code of Conduct is also particularly important as it has replaced ASSC's previous Charter and is now part of the Members Operating Agreement, which all ASSC members are obliged to meet.

The Code of Conduct will address many of the emerging concerns about the collaborative economy and its perceived lack of regulation.

In city centres, the Code will clarify the responsibilities of short-term let operators, give guests confidence that a property is safe to stay in, and provide local authorities with a robust tool to help tackle any problems.

Code of Conduct: Main Points

In order to contribute pro-actively to the ongoing protection of consumers, the industry has

incorporated the following pledges into its Code of Conduct:

- ensure that contact information is clearly visible on their websites;
- provide guests with dedicated contact details to register complaints or report any issues during their stay;
- ensure that terms and conditions are easily available on their websites, including cancellation policy and security door housekeeping deposits
- protect the personal data of guests in accordance with data protection and privacy law;
- undertake regular Fire Risk Assessments and show due diligence with regards to fire safety;
- comply with all health and safety standards which apply to short-term letting in the relevant jurisdiction, and to show a duty of care;
- provide guests with information on how to exit the building safely in case of emergency and emergency services numbers;
- delist guests who have been proven to be in serious breach of their terms and conditions, for example committing fraud or causing major damage;
- have in place relevant insurance protection including public liability;
- ensure that the booking process covers terms of rental, to include:
 - Maximum number of occupants
 - Minimum age for lead guest
 - The lead guest to be responsible for any nuisance or damage

- The apartment rental is for holiday (or business) purposes only and any other use, including parties, is by prior permission only
- Visitors are not permitted to the apartment without prior permission

managed to high, professional standards to support the responsible growth of this important industry for the Scottish economy.

"We look forward to collaborating with ASSC in the future to continue to drive the highest standards of professionalism in the industry."

ASSC Chief Executive, Fiona Campbell, said:

"With the collaborative efforts of our friends at STAA, we have developed these rules and safeguards that will make life easier and clearer for everyone involved in the vital self-catering or short-term let sector here in Scotland.

"By abiding by our Code of Conduct, we as a trade body, hope to set the groundwork for positive change within our sector both now and into the future."

STAA Chair, Merilee Karr, said: *"It has been a pleasure for STAA to work closely with the ASSC in developing its Code of Conduct.*

"By collaborating, we have produced a range of commitments and policy recommendations that will ensure self-catered and short-term lets are

Riddell Graham, VisitScotland Director of Partnerships, said: *"The self-catering sector is an important part of tourism in Scotland, contributing hundreds of millions of pounds to the economy every year.*

"VisitScotland has long recognised the importance of reassuring visitors about quality and safety standards in accommodation and of providing a quality visitor experience.

"We already support this through our well-established Quality Assurance star rating schemes. We welcome the work of ASSC and STAA to create pragmatic and unambiguous guidelines and policy which will clarify the responsibilities of tourism businesses and give visitors confidence and peace of mind when booking self-catering accommodation."

Jennifer Moffat

Jennifer Moffat, who owns and runs Airdeny Chalets at Taynuilt, has been a member of the ASSC since 2003 when she bought the chalet business. Airdeny has featured in the ASSC property register since 1978 and Jen served as secretary of the ASSC from 2004 to 2015.

In Jen's words: *"If you are in self-catering in Scotland then you need to be a member. ASSC offers so much advice and support and as the years have passed the importance of its role as a trade association has become vital."*

Airdeny Chalets are quietly situated a few miles from the Argyll village of Taynuilt. There are seven chalets in total offering two or three bedrooms with a range of amenities. Jen has kept her standard high and the chalets are quality assured through VisitScotland at 3 and 4 Star and all meet Gold standard for Green Tourism.

Jen said: *"I'm happy to wish ASSC and all my fellow*

members all the best, both for now and the future, as our organisation marks this milestone."

ASSC Chief Executive, Fiona Campbell, added, *"As the ASSC celebrates our 40th Anniversary, it's only right for us take time to thank the members who have made our organisation what it is today.*

Jen has given much of her time to the ASSC in addition to the effort it takes to run such a successful business as Airdeny Chalets.

"We're grateful for Jen's input and support over the years and look forward to working proactively together in the future."

"If you are in self-catering in Scotland then you need to be a member."

Far from Just Houses: The Benefits of the Short-Term Rental Sector to Scotland



The short-term rental (STR) sector has recently been the subject of increasing political and media criticism. The ASSC commissioned Frontline Consultants to produce an evidence base to investigate these criticisms and demonstrate the sector's impact on key areas across Scotland in 2018.

In stark contrast to the recent flurry of groundless criticisms aimed at short-term letting in Scotland, the new report, *Far More Than Just Houses: The Benefits of the Short-Term Rental Sector to Scotland*, brings together serious research to demonstrate the real impact of the industry in Scotland.

Far More than Just Houses builds on previous work, including a previous Frontline study into

the economic impact of short-term rentals and research undertaken by the Scottish Government, to show how essential short-term rentals are to the growing Scottish economy.

This comprehensive piece of work also looks into other areas of short-term rental in Scotland, including its impact on housing supply, tax, and society.



Frontline's research has shown that:

- **STR is a major component of Scotland's growing tourism offering, making a substantial contribution to the tourist economy.** Any regulations pursued by the Scottish Government should be arrived at through negotiation and dialogue with platforms and traditional operators, learning from best practice elsewhere in Europe
- **STR cannot be blamed for exacerbating the housing crisis as other longstanding issues are of far greater significance** (i.e. the number of empty properties in Scotland, or the failure of governments to build sufficient

levels of affordable housing)

- **Traditional STR operators do not have an incentive to avoid tax and all survey respondents confirmed paying some form of tax.** Airbnb data suggests a similar lack of incentive for hosts who have average earnings below the tax thresholds
- **The STR sector is not a driver of anti-social behaviour in Scotland** as the number of recorded complaints are negligible in comparison to the number of self-catering units/properties let
- **The STR Sector has seen a similar level of growth in other European cities and many countries are embracing STR,** implementing systems and legislation to make it simpler for their citizens to operate in this sector

It is clear that countries and cities are working with the STR sector and Collaborative Economy (CE) platforms to keep up with the ever-growing level of tourism across the globe. As more and more people travel and as technology continually advances, policy-makers, STR operators and CE platforms must continue to work together, share knowledge and adapt when there are any significant detrimental effects on the social, economic or environmental fabric of an area.

The claims that the STR sector is expanding uncontrollably as a result of CE platforms, driving people out of housing areas, driving up antisocial behaviour and avoiding tax are simply unfounded. The claims in themselves potentially threaten the ability of the STR sector to play a role in supporting tourism growth across Scotland, in part benefiting from the technological advancements offered by CE platforms.

Information exchange across all parties, policy-makers, businesses and CE platforms is crucial and this study confirms this is occurring and should continue to ensure the sustainable growth of the tourism economy in Scotland.

ASSC Chief Executive, Fiona Campbell, commented: "We at the ASSC are delighted to see the release of this important and timely report.

"The information and research contained in this excellent paper show how important the short-term rental sector is to the Scottish tourism and wider economies.

"We hope that stakeholders from across Scotland, particularly those who have drawn prejudicial conclusions about what we do, will take the time to read it and consider its findings."

"Buy one get one free! Subscribe to the Embrace Scotland website and get the support, guidance and advantages of belonging to a professional body free of charge!"

Fiona Briggs, Antonine Wall Cottages, Bonnybridge

Self-Catering In Scotland: The Economic Impact of Short-Term Letting on the Scottish Economy

The ASSC commissioned Frontline Consultants to carry out a major study to measure the Economic Impact of the Self-Catering sector in Scotland.

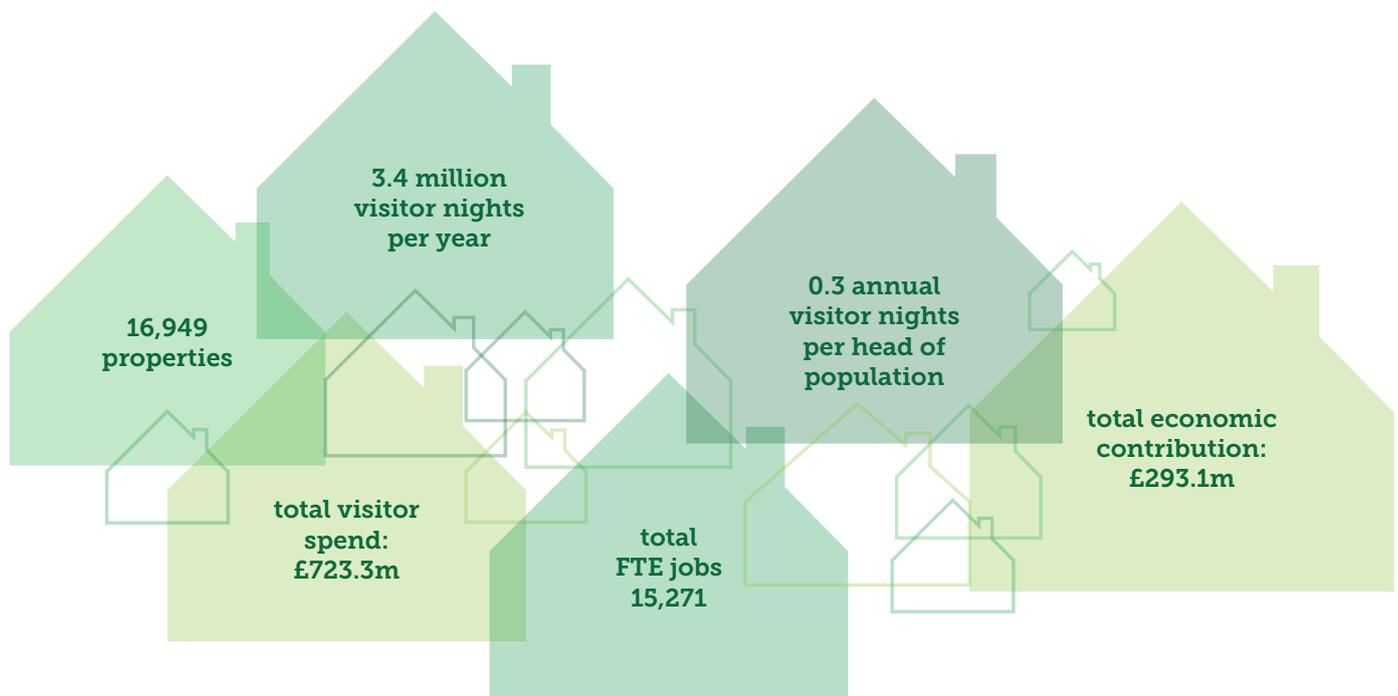
- The evaluation, published in 2017, reveals the economic impact of all visits made to self-catering providers in Scotland, and provides an area by area breakdown of this expenditure. It: assesses expenditure by property-owners and managers, and visitors in the local economy;
- provides an independent, evidence-based, understanding of the direct and indirect economic impact/contribution of the self-catering sector in Scotland;
- estimates the full-time equivalent jobs supported by the sector.

The findings from this research provide evidence of the value of the self-catering sector to the Scottish economy and heighten the recognition of the sector as an essential part of the tourism mix and economic growth.

The most comprehensive study carried out in the sector in recent years indicates that there are **16,949** self-catering holiday let properties in Scotland with the greatest number (**3,982**)



located in the Highlands. The self-catering sector represents **3.4million visitor nights** per year (1.8million non-Scottish visitors) generating an annual spend of **£723.3 million** (£470.1 million from non-Scottish visitors) and supporting **10,725** direct jobs including **2,884** in the Highlands alone.



Self-catering is an important part of Scotland's tourism sector and estimates from Scotland's Visitor Survey 2015 show that approximately **23%** of all tourist visitors to Scotland stay in **self-catering accommodation**. The Highlands and Argyll and the Isles were the most visited areas, accounting for just under half 45% of all visits to Scotland with 25% and 20% respectively. Not surprisingly, self-

catering is a key component in **rural tourism** and the study reveals that rural areas in Scotland had the greatest number of bookings with 81% of all bookings being made for Remote Rural (48%) or Accessible Rural (33%) properties. The **Highland** region (as defined by VisitScotland) took the greatest number of all bookings at 26% and 27% of all non-UK bookings. A percentage bettered

only by the Scottish capital with 43% of non-UK bookings.

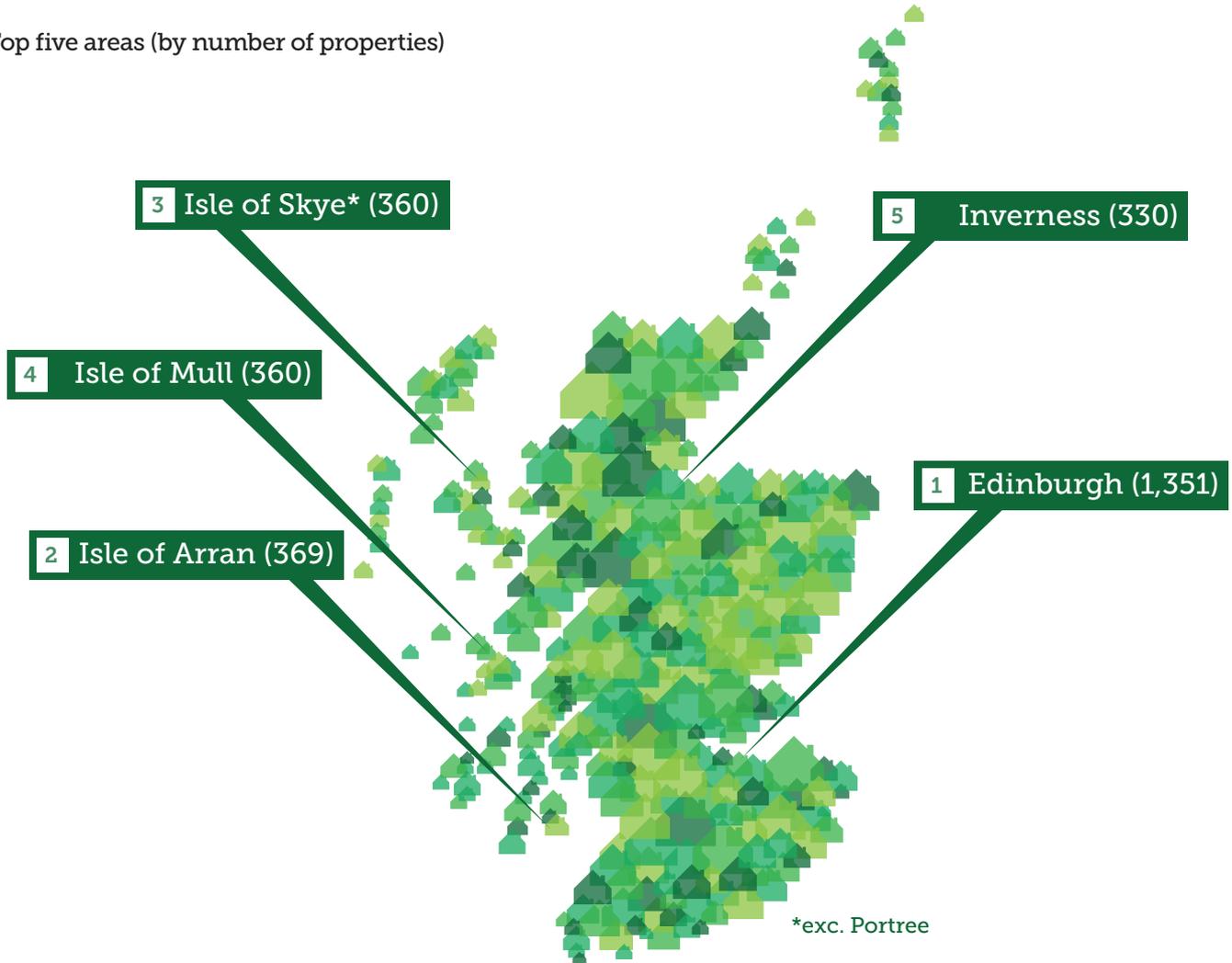
David Smythe, chair of ASSC's board of directors, commented, "The report compares the economic impact of the self-catering sector with other sectors of the rural economy and clearly demonstrates its value. In terms of direct Gross Value Added (GVA) the Highlands benefits more from self-catering than any other region of Scotland. It is significant

to the future sustainability of our rural towns and villages."

Robert Kennedy, Managing Director of SuperControl booking and management system, said, "We're delighted to have contributed to this ground-breaking research project. It's such an important study for the Scottish tourism sector and it's fantastic the ASSC has decided to focus on this."

ASSC's members are primarily involved in

Top five areas (by number of properties)



the traditional self-catering sector; properties providing holiday accommodation for visitors and the report focuses on this segment.

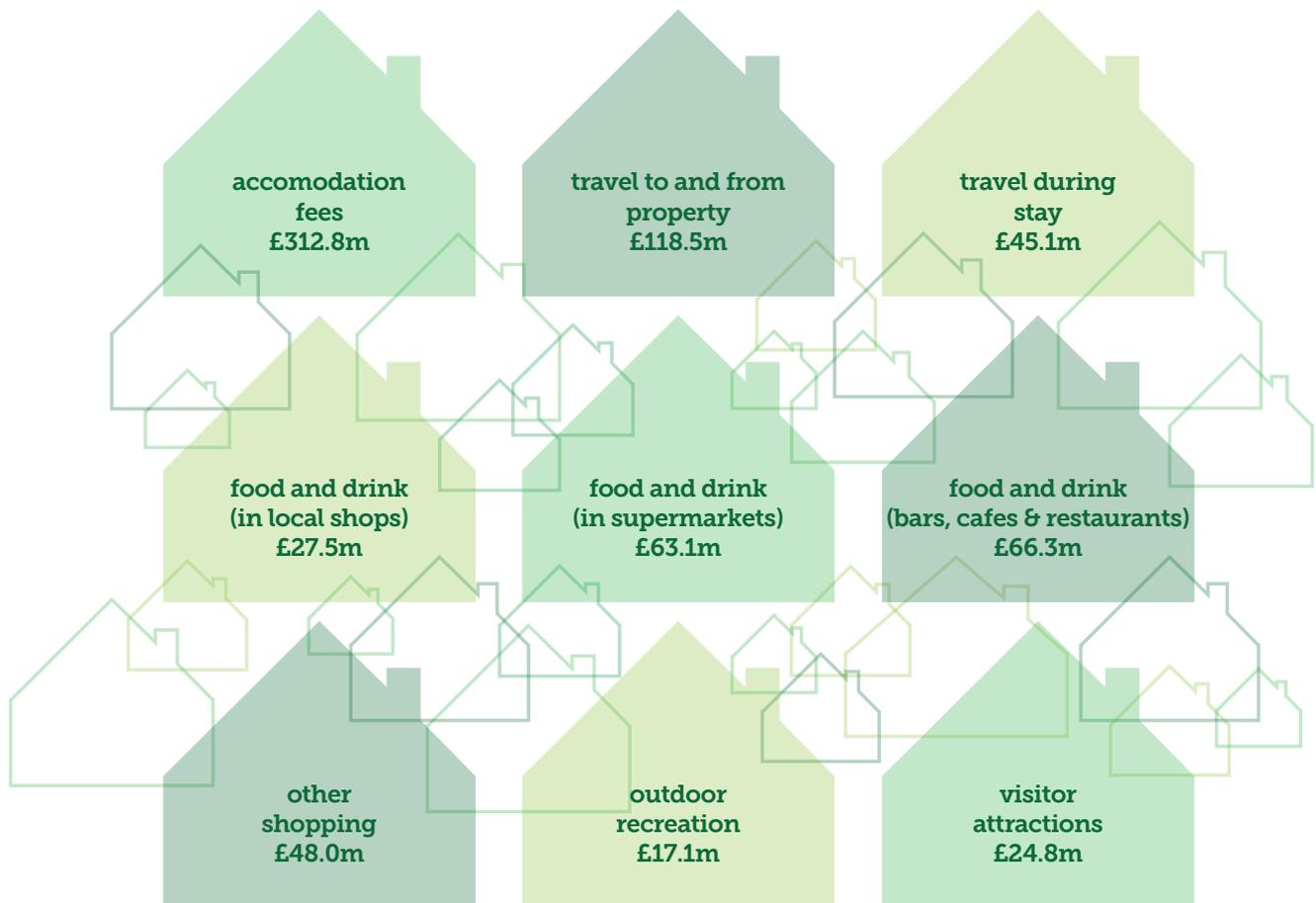
However, there are other models of short-term let operations whose economic contribution is growing quickly, particularly in cities, whereas traditional holiday short-term lets, as the research confirms, are predominantly rural or semi-rural.

Perhaps of most significance is the 'Sharing Economy' (short-term letting via online platforms) and serviced apartments, which provide amenities along the same lines as a traditional hotel. The ASSC is working with these new and fast-growing sectors to ensure that operators are aware of their

legal obligations regarding tax, health and safety and insurance and encouraging new operators to work within the ASSC's **Code of Conduct**.

ASSC Chief Executive, Fiona Campbell, commented: "Our research clearly shows the value and contribution that traditional self-catering makes to the Scottish economy. Short-term letting through the Sharing Economy is also a fast-growing contributor, but we only work with operators who can commit to our quality values, maintaining the principles of "comfort, cleanliness, courtesy and efficiency" offering visitors to Scotland consistently high standards within their self-catering properties."

Gross visitor expenditure by item (Scotland)



History of the Evidence given to the Scottish Government Expert Advisory Panel on the Collaborative Economy ASSC - Supporting Self-Catering in Scotland for Forty Years

The Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (ASSC) is a key stakeholder in the study undertaken by the Scottish Expert Advisory Panel on the Collaborative Economy.

The collaborative, or sharing, economy consists of giving, swapping, borrowing, trading, renting, and sharing products and services for a fee, between individuals, via an online marketplace.

In the case of self-catering/short-term rental - it relates to Airbnb, HomeAway, Houseswap etc. The Scottish Government's response to the recommendations made by the Scottish Expert Advisory Panel has now been published.

ASSC Chief Executive, Fiona Campbell, said: "The ASSC welcomes the publication of the Scottish Government's response to the recommendations made by the Scottish Expert Advisory Panel on the Collaborative Economy.

"In particular, we are encouraged by the

commitment to take an evidence based approach to the issue of short-term lets. This is crucial as our sector generates over £720million of economic activity to the Scottish economy and is a vital component of our country's tourism offering.

"The ASSC is also pleased to see the Scottish Government making such extensive use of our Code of Conduct that we published for the traditional short-term rental sector – such engagement is a positive indicator of the future direction of travel.

"The ASSC looks forward to engaging with the Short-Term Lets Delivery Group as it takes forward its work assessing the challenges and opportunities of short-term lets to Edinburgh and the rest of Scotland."

Submission to the Barclay Review

In February 2017, the ASSC reported that the self-catering industry had been hit by significant proposed rateable value increases, with a sector average increase of 65%, following the rates revaluation.



The Barclay Review was launched by the Scottish Government in order to make recommendations to enhance and reform the business rates system in Scotland.

The ASSC, Scottish Tourism Alliance, UK Hospitality, Scottish Licensed Trade Association and others provided a collective submission to the Barclay Review, calling on the Scottish Government to introduce a transitional relief system until the conclusion of the Barclay Review.

The ASSC welcomed several of the recommendations made in the Barclay Review but also expressed a desire to see further action taken to help the hospitality sector in Scotland.

The ASSC warmly welcomed the action proposed in the Barclay Review for a Business Growth Accelerator for establishing business in Scotland and believes doing so would be a boost for the Scottish self-catering and hospitality sector. The Association also gave a reserved welcome to the proposals for three-year revaluations but also drew attention to the need to have further input on this issue. Given that Barclay was developed with input from the ASSC, the Association hopes that its contributions will continue to be welcomed.

However, the ASSC has expressed doubts over the proposed changes to the Small Business Bonus Scheme (SBBS).

While the Association welcomed the threshold of 140 available days and 70 nights of lets in order for a small self-catering business to qualify for SBBS, as most such businesses already comply, it has expressed concerns that other aspects of SBBS reform proposed by the review will place an unfair burden on smaller businesses. This concern is supported by a recent SPICE report and, if realised, would cause the very effect that SBBS

was introduced to avoid in the first place.

ASSC feels that action needs to be taken to avoid this unfair impact on such an important element of Scotland's economy.

The Association has an excellent record of working with the Assessors on SBBS and, although every effort was made to encourage businesses to make accurate returns, the data submitted ahead of the 2017 revaluation could have been improved upon. ASSC also broadly welcomed the increased level of transparency contained within the review and hopes that the goal of ensuring a level playing field for all involved is achieved.

Generally, the ASSC welcomes the opportunity to further work with stakeholders from across government and industry as the recommendations contained in the review are discussed and implemented. While there will be areas of disagreement and need for negotiation, the Association is motivated to work with all interested parties in a spirit of honesty and good faith spurred by a desire to promote and protect Scotland's vital small businesses.

ASSC Chairman commented: *"The ASSC's attitude towards much of the Barclay Review of Non-Domestic Rates is one of cautious optimism and welcome.*

"While we see progress being made in a number of key areas, there are parts, such as the handling of SBBS, that give us grounds for concern.

"ASSC will continue to be a willing and enthusiastic participant in all future discussions and we will endeavour to work constructively with others in order to achieve the best results for our members and for the wider Scottish economy."

Working with Industry to support the Sector

The ASSC lobbies on behalf of Scottish self-catering on national and local issues and is recognised by consultative bodies, and local and central government, as a respected and effective voice. Our ethos is building relationships and working together with others.

We are actively involved at a political level in Scotland, and have had formal one-to-one meetings with **Ministers and MSPs** and the Scottish Government's Tourism team. We work with local authorities on issues as they arise on regulatory, planning, and enforcement matters.

ASSC consults regularly with **VisitScotland** at all levels, and, as an Association, we have our own relationship manager. We are also represented on the **Quality Advisory Committee** and work collaboratively on many issues.

ASSC is a founder member of the **Scottish Tourism Alliance** and we are part of the STA Council.

We work with the Irish Self-Catering Federation, the Holiday Home Association (formerly the English Association of Self Catering Operators), and the Professional Association of Self-Caterers.

As members of the **European Holiday Homes Association**, we are regularly around the table with some holiday home giants, like Wyndams and Novisol, as we take our voice to Europe.

We have working relationships with Scottish Land and Estates, Go Rural, and the National Farmers Union of Scotland.

We meet with the **Scottish Assessors** regularly, and are members of the **Scottish Ratepayers' Forum**.

We submit evidence to **consultations** on a regular basis and were instrumental in the revised Small Sleeping Accommodation **Fire Regulations**, working closely with the **Federation of Small Businesses**.

We were able to argue for financial assistance to bring **private water supplies** up to standard to meet new regulations. Recent consultations include those on **Energy Efficiency, Glasgow City Council's City Development Plan Supplementary Guidance for Economic Development, National Council of Rural Advisors Rural Economic Strategy, Islands Bill, Planning Bill, Water Intended for Human Consumption, Bank Closures** and **Fire Safety**.

Energy Performance Certificates: Legislative Shortcomings

Individual holiday homes, which are rented out in their entirety, now require an EPC in Scotland, despite official advice until Jan 2017 that this was not the case.

The ASSC affirm that short-term holiday lets should not be subject to the same regulation as tenancies in the private sector.

The ASSC requested legal advice from Brodies LLP, in light of the withdrawal of guidance from the Scottish Government as to the requirement for an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for self-catering accommodation, in June 2018.

Brodies LLP consider that only where the agreement comprises, or is to comprise a Lease, can the subjects be said to be "let" to a "tenant" or marketed to a "prospective tenant" as the case may be. In other words, only if the agreement comprises a Lease will it fall within the ambit of the 2008 Regulations requiring the provision of an EPC.

This is supported by the exclusion of 'Holiday Lets' from the ambit of the current legislation on private residential tenancies is not helpful. Paragraph 6 of Schedule 1 to the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016 states: "A tenancy cannot be

a private residential tenancy if the purpose of it is to confer on the tenant the right to occupy the let property for a holiday."

Furthermore, the UK Department for Communities and Local Government in their paper, Improving the Energy Efficiency of our Buildings, states the following on holiday lets:

"An EPC will only be required for a property rented out as a furnished holiday let, as defined by HMRC, where the building is occupied for the purposes of a holiday as a result of a short-term letting arrangement of less than 31 days to each tenant, and is rented out for a combined total of four months or more in any 12 month period, and if the occupier is responsible for meeting the energy costs for the property. The property must meet all the conditions of a furnished holiday let as defined by HMRC and the occupant must not be responsible for the energy costs in order for an EPC to be necessary."

In addition, Italy, Denmark, Sweden and Germany

have introduced exemptions – approved by the European Commission – for holiday lets in terms of energy performance improvements under the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive 2010/31/EU. To take two of those examples: the Danish Government accepts a 4-week rental period limit; while in Italy, regulations for short-term rentals (less than 30 days) do not require an EPC. The ASSC considers that Scottish operators should not be disadvantaged compared to their English and European counterparts in terms of EPCs.

A requirement to hold an EPC places yet another regulatory burden on a sector, which faces significant cost pressures. Furthermore, the introduction of EPCs to short-term holiday lets appears to run contrary to the principles of the Scottish Government’s Better Regulation agenda, particularly in relation to proportionality and targeting.

While measures to reduce carbon emissions and promote energy efficiency should be welcomed, the use of EPCs in short-term holiday lets is unlikely to have any real material effect on the behaviour of holidaymakers or owners. For long-term letting, an EPC under these circumstances is important as it could affect the consumers’ decision on what will be their home – but visitors making decisions about short-term letting will not choose a property based on its EPC rating.

Overall, we contend that the notion of an EPC on short-term holiday lets is both impractical, unnecessary and potentially damaging to tourism business. All types of accommodation should not be treated in the same manner in regard to the Long-Term Domestic Standard. Instead, the Scottish Government should be looking to maximise the opportunities for our tourist economy and not impose unnecessary burdens on the holiday let industry.

“The ASSC has been extremely useful to us in the running of our business. It has provided us with such helpful information about basic but important things like rates revaluation, private water supplies, and fire safety regulations, as well as giving us the opportunity to network with others running similar businesses. It has also been supportive to us in so many ways, and provided us with answers to many small administrative queries. The annual AGM meeting is now a highlight in our calendar.”

Denys Mathieson, Appin House Lodges, Argyll

Concerns over the Rising Cost of Doing Business

The Scottish Tourism Alliance conducted a study in 2018 into the cost of doing business.

This highlighted the:

- Rising cost of utilities
- Economic and political uncertainty
- Increases in business rates
- Poor connectivity; and
- Regulatory changes, especially in the self-catering sector.

Prior to a meeting with the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Constitution, Derek MacKay, in April 2018, the ASSC undertook a survey of its members to gauge their views on the possible introduction of a tourist tax in Scotland, issues around business rates and the Small Business Bonus Scheme, as well as on matters concerning the cost of doing business. In the survey, there was also an opportunity for our members to offer comments on the key issues. Nearly 200 responses were received, representing almost one-third of our membership.

The ASSC believe the Scottish Government should take cognisance of these views, especially due to the importance of the industry to the Scottish tourist economy. Self-catering is a vital component of the tourism industry and currently supports approximately 15,000 jobs, attracts £723m in consumer spending, £470m of which is spent by visitors to Scotland.

Headline Findings

- **Tourism Tax:** Nearly three-quarters (73%) of ASSC members are opposed to the introduction of a tourist tax in Scotland. The ASSC oppose the introduction of a tourism tax or levy. Scotland is already one of the most expensive destinations in Europe, with a high rate of VAT applied in comparison to other countries. In addition, while we appreciate the financial difficulties at local authority level, our members pay business rates (or council tax) and visitors to Scotland make a huge economic contribution to the local and national economy. Our findings show that there is a clear and robust opposition from ASSC members to the introduction of a tourist tax amongst our members. This chimes with an earlier survey produced by the Federation of Small Businesses (to which the ASSC contributed) that highlighted that 77% opposed a tourism tax.

- **Business Rates:** Around eight-in-ten (79%) ASSC members had received increases in the Rateable Value of over 30% following the recent Rates Revaluation. Many did not appeal the new Rateable Value as they were eligible for the Small Business Bonus Scheme; those who did appeal encountered considerable administrative difficulties. One member commented: "Our small business cannot sustain these wild increases - not least because we cannot increase our prices without losing customers. The 20% VAT makes it more difficult for us to price competitively compared to non-VAT registered self-caterers."
- **Transitional Relief:** Nearly six-in-ten (59%) of ASSC members did not apply for transitional tax relief for a variety of reasons.
- **Small Business Bonus Scheme:** A majority (60%) of ASSC members said they benefited from the Small Business Bonus Scheme and their business would be severely negatively impacted if it was modified or withdrawn. One member commented: "Without this I wouldn't make much in the way of profit. Losing this would probably force me to close down my business, stop hiring cleaner/laundry service / tax adviser / yearly gas-electricity reviews etc. and have a knock on effect to the immediate local community in terms of my guests no longer doing their bit to prop up local amenities (e.g. shops, bars, restaurants)." Another said: "For our business, the removal of SBBS would have a big impact. In short, we would have to increase our prices to the customer. This scheme has been a credit to our government's efforts to help the tourism industry, and has been of tremendous assistance to our business."
- **Cost of Doing Business:** According to recent research by the Scottish Tourism Alliance, despite confidence in the self-catering sector, attributed to a buoyant season in 2017 and favourable exchange rates for tourists, there appears to be concern surrounding a rise in business costs and loss of profitability. This was reflected in our membership survey. The overwhelming majority (91%) believe that the cost of doing business increased during 2017 and this has impacted on their profitability (indicated by 79% of respondents). Comments were offered on energy costs, VAT, water rates, and the introduction of Energy Performance Certificates.

'The Rising Cost of Doing Business and how we can tackle it as an industry'

Stephen Leckie: Chair of the STA Board and CEO Crieff Hydro Family of Hotels

As we approach the end of a busy and successful season for Scotland's tourism industry, and hopefully for your business too, it feels like a natural time to pause briefly, take stock and ask ourselves a good honest question – 'How am I really doing?'



Like you, I've grown my business through enormous amounts of pride, passion, love, money, blood, sweat, and occasional tears. This is because I want to give each and every guest who comes to stay in our hotels a quality, authentic, memorable, and happy experience – one they talk about and remember for years to come. I want to provide communities with employment opportunities, people with jobs, career paths, a future. I want to be the best leader I can - to contribute, collaborate, inspire, share what I know, learn from others, and make a difference to an industry that is fundamental to the future prosperity of Scotland.

Like me, you may have had some 'dark clouds swirling' moments over the last two years. Moments when you've looked at the figures and had to dig deep to summon the optimism to stare the perfect storm that is 'rising costs and unpredictable economy' right in the face and say 'It's all going to be ok'.

For some, it's 'not been ok'. We may be "busy" and revenues are growing for many – but so long as our industry is dealing with this ever-growing layer cake of accumulating costs, regulation, economic and political uncertainty, it could be 'not ok' for more and more operators.

All accommodation and hospitality providers, large or small, running fully serviced hotels or self-catering establishments, are challenged with having to overcome the rising costs of doing

business and ever increasing regulatory changes. Whilst at the same time we must continually invest in our properties to remain competitive, seek to be the best in class, and offer the high quality of experience that our guests expect.

So what can we do? Buckle down and pick our way through the challenges and opportunities alone or navigate these choppy waters with good folk around us?

The ASSC, like the STA, is a 'good folk' organisation. We're here to represent your interests, to help your voice be heard by the people who need to hear it, and to connect you to people who are running similar businesses.

It can be hard sometimes to remain passionate, creative, and optimistic when profits are at risk from rising business rates, the cost of food and drink, utilities, the cost of recruiting and retaining staff and all of these other administrative and regulatory costs; and that's before we look at unpredictable consumer demand in the face of an uncertain Brexit.

Investment in growth, our tourism product, ambition and innovation is where we want to be. Time and again that when people work together they generate more ideas, confidence and optimism.

Please do continue to connect and engage with the ASSC and the STA – both the organisations and your fellow members.

Your voice matters - and be assured that both organisations are working hard to help to create the right conditions for your business to grow and for Scotland's tourism economy to thrive.

I've seen at first-hand how the ASSC works incredibly hard to place your business at the forefront of a professional, vibrant and prosperous Scottish self-catering sector, to represent your interests and help you to deliver the authentic and memorable experience which lies at the heart of Scotland's tourism strategy.

Through membership of the ASSC, your voice is also represented at the highest levels by the Scottish Tourism Alliance. The ASSC is part of STA Member Council, which acts as a sounding board for the STA on industry challenges and opportunities, provides us with evidence from their

member business for us to take forward to help to shape, influences the creation of industry friendly policy, and also cascades information on our behalf to businesses like yours.

Through your membership with the ASSC, you are part of the STA, the largest member organisation for tourism business, enabling us to offer you the best possible representation of the issues and challenges we face as an industry and bring about

the change we need to drive our tourism economy forward.

We are a confident and resilient industry. We believe that by working more closely together, we can better deal with our current and future industry challenges and create opportunities for all sectors of Scotland's tourism industry to grow, become more profitable, and re-invest in the future."

Tourism is Future Proof

Since I became Chief Executive of the ASSC in 2014, increasingly frenetic activity and pro-active engagement on a number of key issues has occurred, which has and will have a dramatic effect on our sector going forward.



It has been exceptionally challenging year and there continue to be significant threats ahead of us.

On many levels, the laws of unintended consequences seem to be stacked against us.

However, it appears that self-catering operators feel confident about the future despite the challenges faced.

It's not all doom and gloom!

- Administratively, we have successfully transformed from an Association with a voluntary Executive Committee, to a Ltd Company overseen by a Board of Directors.
- ASSC is now financially sustainable and we are in a positive position.
- With the support of our partners for business and increased membership, we are able to achieve more and afford the support that we need to do so.

Thanks to a significant recruitment campaign in 2017, followed by a sustained recruitment strategy, we reached an all time high membership of 672 in

September 2017.

In conclusion, this is a pivotal time for the ASSC as an association, and in terms of representing a sector under threat.

As an association we are stronger than ever, and making the right connections to ensure that we can support and future-proof self-catering in Scotland.

Tourism is Future Proof

Whilst artificial intelligence and automation grows with ever increasing technological advancements, it will never beat experience. It will also offer people more time to travel and use that time to experience.

- The potential market is almost infinite.
- The staycation continues to rise, with a continuing trend towards self-catering accommodation.
- The benefits of tourism to the Scottish economy are exponential.

Despite the challenges facing our sector, if you take heed of the advice and information provided by ASSC and future-proof your own business as far as possible, the future of the sector is hugely positive.

**Fiona Campbell
Chief Executive, ASSC**

Regulation: how do we ensure it is proportionate?

The current campaign against short-term lets in Scotland frequently asserts that such properties are not subject to sufficient levels of regulation.

However, contrary to what is widely assumed, it is important to recognise that professional operators and the self-catering sector are already subject to numerous regulations. The ASSC provides comprehensive Guidance Sheets and advice on regulations and best practice to its members.

ASSC proposes that all platform operators should adhere to the pre-existing regulations in place for traditional short-term rental.

Operators, whether professional or peer-to-peer (P2P), must have full public liability insurance as well as specialist holiday home insurance. Other regulations apply including fire safety, carbon monoxide detectors, gas safety certificates, and so on.

We would advise that operators of traditional short-term rental exemplify best practice. The ASSC recommends that:

- Platforms build a check-list system into their registration/management system which they should actively enforce by requiring hosts to confirm that they are complying with their obligations/the required regulations.
- We further recommend that there should be one go-to organisation that hosts and operators can go to/get directed to by local authorities, online platforms and other agencies to get advice, support and information and who will promote best practice. We would respectfully suggest that the ASSC is the ideal solution here.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Tackling some of the other concerns associated with short-term lets, for instance in relation to anti-social behaviour, can be addressed through enforcement of existing powers available to local authorities. This includes using:

- Part 7 of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004
- And, the Antisocial Behaviour Notices (Houses Used for Holiday Purposes) (Scotland) Order 2011 that granted local authorities the power to deal specifically with the problem of antisocial behaviour in properties let for holiday use.

In respect of this, we also note the comments made by the Scottish Government's Minister for Local Government and Housing, Kevin Stewart:

"I expect them to use those powers effectively...I challenge local authorities to consider using

it [Order 2011] and other antisocial behaviour powers, as well as the powers in relation to noise and environmental health that are currently at their disposal...The powers may not be being applied properly, which might be the difficulty in all this."

Code of Conduct – Background

We understand that cities have to balance the needs and concerns of residents, visitors and workers carefully.

However, we feel that closure of short-term letting by authorities should only be as an absolute last resort once all avenues of finding a solution have been explored.

The ASSC proposes that the Scottish Government, local authorities and P2P platforms all promote the ASSC Code of Conduct, and promote membership of the only trade body representing the sector and promoting best practice.

Minutes of the City of Edinburgh Council Planning Committee, dated December 2016, noted that:

"Notwithstanding the relatively small number of new cases, it was evident from the growth of websites advertising short term lets that there were a large number of properties particularly in the City Centre and Leith that were being let out for short term lets. This had the potential to become a significant issue for the City. In this regard the Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers (ASSC) had advised that it had recently drafted a Code of Practice for short-term let operators to encourage best practice and promote a harmonious existence between short term let apartments and local residents. This proactive approach by the ASSC was welcomed but at this early stage it was not possible to say whether it was having any effect on how premises are used."

Unfortunately, despite this positive reaction to the Code of Practice, City of Edinburgh Council did not appear to promote it or utilise it.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The ASSC is concerned with the political direction of travel on short-term lets, and that disproportionate regulations will be pursued without due regard to the effect on our sector.

Short-term rentals are not new and have a long history in Scotland but recent political and media scrutiny has been wholly negative in tone and does not provide an accurate picture of our sector or the role it plays in the tourist economy.

Short-term rental (both professional and peer-to-peer) is a growing market; so it is now vital to define a framework within which it can flourish and allow opportunities to be maximized to the benefit of the Scottish economy, as well as contributing to the objectives of the Tourism Scotland 2020 strategy. At the heart of the strategy is growth via quality, authentic visitor experiences. More and more visitors rely on short-term rental accommodation to achieve an authentic experience, and consumer behavior continues to support this view.

The Scottish Government should take a bottom-up approach and engage with short-term rental accommodation players and online platforms. The STAA and ASSC believe that existing consumer protection laws are sufficient to protect consumers

but would support any efforts designed to ensure that consumers are fully aware of their rights and what protections are in place. The ASSC and STAA believe that their Codes of Conduct will address many of the emerging concerns about the collaborative economy and its perceived lack of regulation.

In city centres, the Code clarifies the responsibilities of short-term let operators, give guests confidence that a property is safe to stay in, and provides local authorities with a robust tool to help tackle any problems. It is hoped that adherence to the Codes of Conduct will ease existing and potential issues and encourage a harmonious existence between residential and short-term let apartments.

"As a new self-catering owner I have found the ASSC to be the best source of information, help and advice to get me going, with fast response from the team when needed. I am also benefiting already from being listed on Embrace Scotland with all my first bookings coming from this site. A super all-round service that I would highly recommend to anybody starting out!"

Jane Slaughter, Pinewood Steading, Inverness

EmbraceScotland and the Paws for a Break Campaign

ASSC offers commission-free online booking for members via EmbraceScotland.co.uk, with additional marketing opportunities in Featured Accommodation, Holiday Home Spotlight and Loved by Locals areas of the web site, as well as through our social media channels.



Embrace Scotland

Select Scottish self-catering

Members can also benefit from an exclusive low-cost web booking engine and availability calendar which automatically updates your EmbraceScotland and VisitScotland listings.

In 2016, the ASSC secured funding from VisitScotland GrowthFund for the 'Paws for a Break' Marketing Campaign

VisitScotland research shows almost a third (30 per cent) of holiday-makers base their holiday around how suitable a destination is for their pet, and 72 per cent of dog owners say they would take more holidays in the UK if there were a better attitude



towards their canine companions.

Further research showed that holidays with pets had an average extra spend of £126 compared to holidays without pets.

The ASSC, via its EmbraceScotland consumer-facing website, aimed to show that taking a self-catering property is "the easiest and most flexible way of holidaying with a pet", while also highlighting the fact that dogs aren't the only pets people can take on holiday – with some self-catering properties equipped with stables.

With the first award from its new-look Growth Fund, the national tourism organisation match-funded the £40,000 Paws for a Break campaign.

The year-long campaign was a huge success, with activity being delivered against the overall aim: to increase traffic to the EmbraceScotland website and increase bookings for our members. SuperControl statistics showed that the EmbraceScotland website delivered a 20% increase in bookings following the campaign. Social media engagement improved significantly, up by more than 100% since the start of the campaign.

Linda Battison, Vice Chair at the ASSC, said: *"Many of our members already provide a warm welcome to pet owners but we want to encourage them to go that extra mile and ensure potential customers know what they offer".*

Malcolm Roughead, Chief Executive of VisitScotland, said: *"VisitScotland's Growth Fund supports collaborative tourism marketing projects that focus on growth in the tourism sector and ensure that visitors experience the true Spirit of Scotland.*

"Pet tourism could be worth millions of pounds to Scotland's visitor economy so we are delighted to help the ASSC as they attempt to unlock this potentially lucrative market through the VisitScotland Growth Fund. The group's Paws for a Break campaign is an exciting and innovative way to appeal to those looking to enjoy a holiday with their four-legged friends."

Recognising the power and reach of social media, ASSC has since retained the services of a professional social media consultancy. The project demonstrated the value of investing in consumer marketing.

Paws for a Break Pets Welcome Charter



The ASSC's Paws for a Break Pet Welcome Charter allows owners to show potential guests that they make an extra effort to ensure pet owners feel comfortable on holiday, with appropriate facilities and services that demonstrate an alignment to

the ASSC's long-standing commitment to quality, which helps us stand out in a crowded marketplace. If facilities meet or exceed expectation of guests and pets alike, guests are more likely to return year on year. This is the long-lasting legacy of the marketing campaign.

Interview with David Smythe, Chairman, ASSC



David, When did you start working in the tourism business and how did you get involved?

Almost 30 years ago. We rescued 3 fairly dilapidated farm cottages on the farm, brought them up to a standard, joined the Scottish Tourist Board's quality scheme (we are still members), took a deep breath, and entered the self-catering world.

How has the industry changed since you started?

It has changed enormously. We began before the Internet and e-mail, though both were just emerging slowly, and we were early adopters. In the early days, you put an ad in your local tourist board magazine, perhaps the Scottish Tourist Board's Main Guide and even their Overseas Guide if you were feeling flush – and that was about it – you got on with your Christmas dinner and waited for the phone to ring, or letters to arrive – which they did.

When we started, visitors' expectations were modest: booking was Saturday to Saturday in the industry, with many people bringing their own linen as standard behaviour. Our early visitors were astonished that they did not have to clean the place (to their standard) on arrival.

Nowadays, visitors expect something better than

their own homes. We have focused on quality and comfort as far as the property size can go, and we are onsite to give a personal welcome – we see this as increasingly important in the depersonalized digital world. We have a very healthy repeat rate.

We have kept up and invested in the cottages with new kitchens, better heating, new bathrooms, better quality furniture, flat TVs, WiFi etc. Our cottages look very different compared to when we first opened.

We moved quickly to 'any day to any day' booking with a minimum 3 night stay. We took longer to become confident about online booking, but we changed at the right time, and now post is rare as everything is by e-mail. Our printed brochure went years ago.

But we still have analogue visitors, so we have to be able to adapt.

The personal touch – the welcome, time to talk etc. remains very important.

Is there anyone who has made a significant impression on you during your time in the industry?

Many people. Tourism is a positive industry and

interesting to work in.

Some good industry leaders and some less good. Generally, the **Chairmen and directors of VisitScotland or Scottish Tourist Board** have been very able, with **Riddell Graham** in particular consistently willing to engage helpfully. Other VisitScotland helpful guys were/are **Richard Pinn** and **Patrick O'Shaugnessy**.

The Scottish Tourism Forum (ASSC a founder member) morphing to **The Scottish Tourism Alliance** with **Marc Crothall** a particularly able current Chief Exec and **Stephen Leckie** an effective Chairman. The organisation has played a key role in making sure that politicians and Government know the volume and value of tourism, as well as (more recently) setting Tourism Strategy.

Tony Mercer who was in charge of the STB/VisitScotland Quality Assurance Scheme for many years, and had a strong team including **Colin Houston**, **Bob Flavell** and **Ranald Duff**. Working with this team, ASSC has shaped the Quality Assurance scheme positively over the years.

Effective colleagues in the industry including **Eva McDiarmid** at ASVA, **Douglas Logan** at SDMA and **Willie Macleod** (formerly at VisitScotland), now UK Hospitality and Susan Love, policy officer at Federation of Small Businesses Scotland.

As Chair of ASSC and before we had a Chief Exec, I always tried to identify and build a network of useful like-minded people, working with them. Sometimes when the powers that be have come up with a daft idea (and there have been some corkers over the years) you need to get together with industry colleagues and put them right with a united voice.

Is there a significant moment you can remember which has resonated with you?

2001 was a terrible year. Foot and Mouth effectively closed the countryside before Easter, with Tourism losing as much money as Agriculture in the final reckoning. ASSC was one of the key organisations involved in recovering the tourism industry, meeting the Government and keeping businesses up to date about the latest developments. Just when we thought we were getting back on track, two airliners were deliberately flown into the Twin Towers in New York. Grim times, but we were looked up to, to take a lead and did so.

Battling with early **visitscotland.com** which overnight provided a booking system that did not fit our sector, and which our sector did not want. We spent years trying to make it work with chief **Steve Langmead** (who was a good guy really) and his successor **Marco Truffelli** and their teams who never quite stayed long enough to see things through. We are in a better place now, but there were some tough meetings.

I spent a year fighting proposed **Furnished**

Holiday Let Taxation changes, marshalling forces across the UK, lobbying MPs and getting MSPs onside. We had a showdown meeting at the Treasury, but to be honest only won a compromise as FHL Taxation parliamentary business was lost in the General Election which saw Labour defeated. (Cider tax and Broadband tax proposals were also lost). I believe that our lobbying of the Tories (then opposition) made a difference when they took over and had to solve the FHL taxation conundrum.

What are the key triumphs for Self-Catering in Scotland?

- Growth in quality, coupled with selling the experience giving people the confidence to book a memorable holiday.
- Being early adopters of the Internet.
- The move to online booking – not as fast or as complete as we would like, but aided by the likes of SuperControl (who started off by coming to ASSC to learn about how self-catering works).
- Promotion through Online Travel Agents (OTAs) has raised awareness of our sector as a choice for visitors to make.

I think the traditional industry has become more professional over the years, although the growth of Peer-to-Peer has muddied the waters.

Who have you enjoyed working with?

The Executive Committee at ASSC (now the Board) and ASSC staff. Challenging at times, it has got better and become more focused over the years. **Wilma Marshall** was ASSC Secretary when I started as Chairman, and she was a valuable sounding board providing plenty of wise advice for which I am ever grateful.

Many inspiring **Colleagues in the industry** – public and private sector.

What were the reasons to set up ASSC 40 years ago?

ASSC was set up to promote quality. At the time, self-catering was a hit or miss affair with quality very variable indeed. There was a tradition of filling cottages with (probably a bit tatty) brown furniture out of the big hoose and thinking that was OK. Several more enlightened businesses got together to do things better and tell the world.

How has ASSC evolved compared to the early days?

ASSC has gone from being entirely representational, to being big on marketing to a more balanced organisation which does both, though there is currently a swing to representation just now.

We have slowly grown from 20+ founder members to over 650 now.

When I started as Chairman, there was only a part-time Secretary employed meaning the organisation ran on voluntary time. We were lucky to have a dedicated team who made a huge effort to get things done, and I am grateful for their expertise and help. We have more staff now, headed up by a particularly effective Chief Executive in **Fiona Campbell** making our organisation increasingly professional.

Like everyone else, we have embraced the digital world. When I was newsletter editor, I had to type out the articles and then fax them to the printer. The printer would give the faxes to his team to type and set. The finished proofs were faxed back. The mistakes were endless and it took several correction rounds to sort. How we have moved on: we have had several ASSC websites over the years, now successfully evolved into two co-brands. One early article in a newsletter I edited was called '*Should I Consider Getting a Computer?*'

What are the key triumphs of ASSC over the last 40 years?

Getting recognised as a serious sector. When we started in self-catering, anything you read in the press talked about Hotels and Bed and Breakfast only. ASSC has been instrumental over the years fighting our corner, getting heard in the right places and putting self-catering on the map. More recently, the OTAs have raised the profile even further of course, but we were out there first!

Sorting the rates out. A previous ASSC Chair, Len Sculthorpe worked with the Assessors to come up with a ready reckoner for calculating self-catering rateable values, moving the sector from a Scottish postcode lottery to something more rational. The grid system is still the basis used today, though there have been tweaks since. At the time, it was a big win for us, with a lasting legacy. We continue to have a good working relationship with the Assessors – something other sectors have not managed.

Being held up as a model Trade Association in the tourism industry.

Being (generally) **appreciated by our Members.**

Having the confidence to appoint our **first Chief Executive** to enable us to be even more effective, future-proofing the organisation.

How have you balanced your work in agriculture, work with your holiday cottages and developing ASSC as an Industry Trade Organisation?

It has not always been easy.

I have kept farming fairly straightforward to let me take part in other things, with ASSC taking up a significant part pre Chief Executive days. My wife Moyra and I run the self-catering cottages which take time, and we divide tasks.

As an arable farm, I cannot be away at peak times, with the worst clashes at the end of the summer holidays when Government and Schools go back and we are trying to get the harvest in. I have had to say no at times to key meetings, but if important, have generally managed to send a deputy.

What do you think the future holds for Self-Catering in Scotland?

It is a great sector with a stable future, but suddenly facing big challenges thrown up by the growth by the Collaborative Economy. These must be resolved. ASSC has two recent bits of research which will be valuable, and I am proud that we are the organisation to have produced and funded this.

We have never been really understood by Government, and we are still classified differently by various arms of authority, which is disappointing and this also needs to be resolved.

At the 2016 Spring Tourism Conference, delegates (tourism leaders) were asked for a show of hands on Brexit (ahead of the Referendum): around 200+ to Remain, around 12 to leave. While our members may be divided on the issue, I personally think Brexit will throw up a raft of problems for us and our visitors, and I struggle to see positives in tourism (or farming).

What are your aspirations for ASSC?

To be **the best Trade Association in Tourism**, held in high esteem not only in Scotland, but in the rest of the UK and Europe – possibly beyond.

Anyone operating in the short-term rental sector in Scotland should be queueing up to join the ASSC as a given.

ASSC seen as the self-catering/short-term rental 'Go To' organisation.

ASSC should continue to **grow sustainably.**

Thanks very much to David for providing us with an insight into his thoughts and experiences.

The ASSC Conference: 2018 brings a UK Wide Event



ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018 The first ever UK wide self-catering conference **The Business of Self-Catering** Tuesday 30th October 2018 Hilton Glasgow, 1 William Street, Glasgow G3 8HT

The ASSC Annual Conference and Exhibition is the only major event aimed directly at the people and businesses providing short-term let and holiday rental accommodation in Scotland.

ASSC's 2018 Conference **is a UK-wide event**, attracting fellow self-caterers / short-term rental operators, suppliers and industry representatives from all over the United Kingdom.

The Conference will be held on Tuesday, 30th October 2018, at the Hilton Glasgow. We will be focusing on **The Business of Self-Catering**, gaining essential insights into future developments in the sector; drawing on the expertise and knowledge of UK-wide experts; understanding the challenges being faced in different parts of the country and offering the opportunity to take away valuable and essential practical knowledge from our break-out sessions.

We expect over 300 business owners, property managers, service providers and industry decision makers to attend. It will offer the opportunity to network with other accommodation providers, industry leaders and providers of sector-specific products and services. It will inspire, motivate and educate.

The Conference will once again be hosted by **Willie Cameron**, Director of Visit Loch Ness, Director of Highlands & Islands Tourism Awards and Founding Director of the Cobbs Group. We are delighted to confirm that **Xavier Font**, Professor of Sustainability Marketing, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Surrey; **Geoff Ramm**, motivational and inspirational speaker and Creator of Celebrity Service and OMG Marketing; **Stephen Whitelaw**, Digital Marketing

consultant, Social Media Evangelist and Technology public speaker; and **Mark Beaumont**, Athlete, Broadcaster and Ambassador will be presenting in the afternoon.

Hear first-hand from **Geoff Ramm, Speaker & Author, Geofframm.com / Creator of Celebrity Service and OMG Marketing** on how to **Discover the Gap In Your Service You Never Knew Existed**. "You think you deliver great service and then along came an A list celebrity? And everything about you and your business changed. Forever". The Celebrity Service philosophy will rethink and re-design your levels of service for each and every customer. Through Consistency, Excitement, Love, Engagement, Bravado, Response, Independence, Thank You and You and Your Team will leave the conference with ideas to go way beyond 10/10 for customer service.

Do you want to appreciate **The Importance of Quality Assessment & Accreditation in the Hospitality Industry?** **Stephen Martin, Managing Director, International Serviced Apartment Accreditation Process (ISAAP)** will guide you through the six important steps to improve upon the quality you already provide. The aim of the session is to consider the value of Quality Accreditation as a differentiator in the hospitality industry, and for the audience to participate in developing a comprehensive list of Best Quality Practices for the Self-Catering sector.

Xavier Font, Professor of Sustainability

Marketing MSc PhD, Surrey University will explain **Five Benefits of Marketing Your Authenticity and Sustainability for Self-Catering Businesses** – Self-catering businesses will benefit from improving their products and communications, to show the uniqueness of their offering. This session will review how better marketing and communication of sustainability can help businesses save money, increase demand, improve customer satisfaction, improve the quality of service, and reduce seasonality.

James Cassidy, Senior Director EU Sales and Supply, HomeAway UK Limited will discuss **The Usage of Real Time Data to Improve Traveller Experience and Conversion** – Renting out a holiday home is an excellent way to make money and use of a place which otherwise would be vacant outside of one's personal holiday time. But how to set the rates holidaymakers should pay? How to stay competitive with others in the area, increase the occupancy or adapt prices to market needs when necessary? Figuring out the optimal rates for a holiday home owner's property can be complex and time consuming. HomeAway designed a new revenue management tool that gives its partners real time insights to help them make informed decisions, set competitive rates in alignment with their personal goals and ultimately increases their revenue.

We will also have a **UK Industry Overview** with representatives from Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales participating.

Questions will be asked from a panel of UK-wide experts about the Challenges & Opportunities Throughout the UK. The session will be hosted by

Linda Battison, Marketing Director at ASSC; Owner Cologin Country Chalets and Lodges (Oban); Director Oban & Lorn Tourism Alliance Ltd and Development Agent Argyll and the Isles Tourism Cooperative Ltd. Panel members to include:

- Chris Greenwood, Senior Tourism Insight Manager, VisitScotland
- Alistair Handyside, Professional Association of Self-Caterers
- Martin Sach, The Holiday Home Association (formerly English Association of Self-Catering Operators)
- Peter Downey, Chair of Irish Self Catering Federation
- Wales Association of Self Catering Operators
- John Donnelly, Chief Executive, Marketing Edinburgh Ltd

Household name **Mark Beaumont, Athlete & Broadcaster**, will share his experiences of showcasing Scotland as a destination in a global context. Aside from his athletic career, Mark lead the BBC's build-up to Glasgow 2014 in a documentary series around the Commonwealth and has been at the heart of a series of filming projects within Scotland aimed at promoting locations to both a domestic and international audience. A proud Scot, Mark will also share his passion for Scotland and how he trained here, and built a team to take on the World. **Around the World and Back to Scotland** will be an inspiring and interesting session to finish conference off and a session which you **MUST** stay to listen to.

Where next? What's on the horizon?

1. **The ASSC will continue to constructively engage with policymakers on a local and national basis to find proportionate and workable solutions to the problems raised** so that we can continue to grow our flourishing tourism sector in Scotland in a sustainable manner.
2. **We must remain mindful of advancing disproportionate regulations**, which could damage an important part of Scotland's vital tourist economy, and operators and government should work together.
3. **We should encourage others in the sector to follow our proactive and responsible action** in adhering to a Code of Conduct.

David Morris Reminisces

The dinner at the ASSC Conference in 1991 was held at the Highlander Hotel in Newtonmore. This was the first time I had ever seen the meal being 'piped in'.



Since then I have attended many ASSC Conferences and have met many of you.

The quality of your insurance determines whether 'unusual' claims will be met. Over the years there have been some novel situations where we have been able to help ASSC members.

Bed bugs in Edinburgh

About £18,000 was paid by our insurers for a property in Edinburgh which experienced a bed bug infestation just before the Festival. Bed bugs will cause the property to be closed down whilst the pests are eradicated which meant that bookings could not be taken, and bookings already made had to be cancelled. This time of year was the most expensive holiday period and without this cover our client would have been severely financially disadvantaged.

The claim covered not only the value of the lost / cancelled bookings but also the cost of fumigation and replacing the soft furnishings and bedding.

Private water supplies

Many Scottish self-caterers rely on private water supplies, and when damage occurs there is no water for the guests – in the bathroom, or for cooking. This falls under loss of income defective sanitation and we experience a claim of this type usually every two or three years.

If the cause of the damage to – usually – the pump is due to a stone or piece of grit the cost of repairs to the pump is also covered.

Loss of attraction

Your self-catering accommodation may rely upon facilities provided by somebody else. For example, you might benefit from a tourist attraction which could be one of the reasons guests book with you. If that attraction has a fire and is no longer open for tourists, how does that affect your confirmed bookings and future enquiries.

A large historic building has been converted in to holiday apartments, with separately owned benefits such as a swimming pool, sauna, snooker room and restaurant. A fire put the swimming pool out of action for several months. Our client had to either offer a discount due the damaged facilities or cancel bookings. The claim was met under the loss of attraction loss of income part of the policy – this is probably unique and not available elsewhere.

As you can see, these are all claims to protect your income and demonstrate that for reasons well outside of your control your earnings can be severely affected.

After all, you are in business to make money, so it is reassuring to know that loss of income insurance protects you and your livelihood.

Congratulations to the ASSC for looking after the interests of members for the last 40 years!

David J Morris ACII
Chartered Insurance Broker
J L Morris (Insurance Brokers) Limited

J.L.MORRIS
INSURANCE BROKERS LTD

Samantha Mossman – West Coast Cottages, Argyll

When did you start working in the tourism business and how did you get involved?

I've an extensive background in the hospitality industry, my parents ran pubs and I 'did my time' in a big chain hotel. I love great customer service so when a relocation from our native Northumberland coincided with opportunity for me to take over West Coast Cottages - I did, in April 2017



Is there a significant moment you can remember which has resonated with you?

Yes! Quite literally laying with my head on my desk sobbing with pure frustration - I couldn't get a link on my website to work after hours of struggling and it was the straw that broke the camel's back. Moments later an email from a guest came through saying in all the years of self-catering in French Gites our newest property was the highest quality she had ever experienced and promptly booked again. It was then I realised the magnitude of different ends of the emotional scale. It takes passion to run your own business and that comes at a price.

Is there anyone who has made a significant impression on you during your time in the industry?

I've learnt something from everyone I have come into contact with- both good and bad. I look at those who have been in the industry for decades and still have that fire in their belly and I want to be like that. The support I had in my first year has been humbling.

What's great about self-catering in Scotland?

Us! The providers. Living locally, knowing our properties inside out, our area and our market puts us streets ahead of the centralised call centres of the big corporates. They may have the big budget but we have the local knowledge and we care.

The jobs our industry creates. This time last year, as a direct result of self-catering properties and the supply chain that supports us there were over

15,000 jobs registered. Then of course there is the money spent in Scotland by self-catering guests, last year this was in excess of £720 million pounds.

From your experience, what are the challenges faced by owners of self-catering properties today?

Marketing budgets and reliable cleaning staff

Why did you take up Marketing Membership with ASSC?

The support is invaluable- it's like belonging to a club.

The ASSC via Embrace can reach an audience far greater than I can on my own.

How does EmbraceScotland add value to your business marketing?

It's a massive time saver and hits a far wider audience that I can on my own

It's commission free and a fraction of the annual fees charged by some of the bigger marketing companies who insist on some quite Victorian terms.

Signposts! They really do work. Tell guests what you actually have, don't make them have to look. You only have around 8 seconds to make an impression.

Would you recommend Marketing Membership and EmbraceScotland to other ASSC Members?

Without hesitation!! The network is massive- it's a support group for the self-catering industry.

What do you think are the key triumphs of ASSC & Embrace Scotland?

- Bringing professional polish to our industry
- Continually lobbying the Scottish Government on our behalf. Currently on the EPC requirements for holiday lets and change of planning use for short term lets
- Embrace is great at showing guests the extent and breadth of different styles and the guest can still book direct.

What does the future of self-catering in Scotland look like for you?

It excites me enormously. The industry is growing - fast, but we mustn't get complacent. Let's keep our properties well maintained, immaculately clean and offer a good price with a genuine smile. Our guests are not the interruption to our work, they are the reason we can keep doing it

Les Robinson, Gael Holiday Homes, Ross-shire



When did you start working in the tourism business and how did you get involved?

12 years ago. I started my own business providing changeover services, mainly on the West coast in the Gairloch area. Based in Culbokie, on the Black Isle, there was a fair bit of travelling involved and in those days bookings were weekly with Saturday changeovers.

A friend of many years, who had holiday accommodation in Gairloch persuaded me that starting a holiday rental property management business was a good idea as many owners struggled to get help for changeovers. Through time the business evolved into a Marketing and Booking Agency, continuing to help owners with property management services.

We now have 7 staff based in our Dingwall office and my wife, son and daughter also work in the business.

How has the industry changed since you started?

A lot has changed. 12 years ago the rental market mainly only offered weekly bookings, many owners didn't have a website, most didn't have any online presence or online booking, some didn't have a computer and there was no such thing as Booking.com or Airbnb and TripAdvisor had just started.

In those days there were 2 camps, those who subscribed to Visit Scotland QA and those who didn't. With no review sites and very little access to view photos of the property prior to booking, except in publications such as the ASSC's Embrace Scotland yearly brochure, it was difficult for guests to get in-depth information about an area and

rental options.

The internet has changed that significantly and changed how the industry operates. As guest expectations change the industry is moving at a pace to stay ahead of this curve. Back in the day the pace of change was much, much slower and many of the traditional operators found it a challenge to embrace the new world that was emerging. Quality of accommodation and service is everything and now there are no hiding places for those operators who aren't willing to invest in the future of Scotland's tourism industry. This is a good thing.

Is there anyone who has made a significant impression on you during your time in the industry?

There are 3 people who have mentored, supported and guided me over the years in the industry.

Firstly, Frank Buckley, formerly an ASSC committee member, introduced me to the ASSC at a Highland regional event and got me started with changeovers in Gairloch. A friend and self-catering owner for over 30 years his experience and help have been invaluable.

Secondly, David Smyth, Chairman of the ASSC. David requires no introduction of who he is and what he has done and does for the industry. His approach is uber-professional and he always takes a pragmatic and measured approach to how the ASSC operates and develops its place in the industry. In times where it could be easy to get distracted by challenges faced in a busy business I defer to what I have learned from being around David.

Finally, but not lastly, my wife Sheila. Taking aside the personal support she always provides, as a business partner I could not have done or continue to do what we do at Gael without her at my side.

Is there a significant moment you can remember which has resonated with you?

2008 – We launched our first marketing agency website and met Robert Kennedy from SuperControl who convinced me to add the newfangled online booking. He said it was the future, so we dived in with 5 properties. We now have 120 properties, are on version four of the website and still have a SuperControl booking system which helps us manage over 4,000 bookings a year.

What are the key triumphs for Self-Catering in Scotland?

Quality of product and service. The Scots were always renowned for their hospitality and this continues today. The self-catering sector was to

a degree quite 'cottage industry' back in the day. Today this has grown into a thriving sector where the vast majority of owners are business people developing the quality, flexibility, accommodation range and service on offer whilst growing the significant contribution to the economy and employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas.

Who have you enjoyed working with?

A bit of a cliché but everyone. Our property owners, guests, businesses, the ASSC, my colleagues here at Gael Holiday homes and as you say on the radio, 'and everyone that knows me'.

Joking aside, it's not like working, there are so many great people in the self-catering sector, lots of knowledge, experience and everyone is so enthusiastic and enjoys being involved with self-catering.

How has ASSC evolved compared to the early days?

In the time I have been on the committee and now a Director I have seen a fair bit of change. From the appointment of our CEO Fiona Campbell to a shift in focus from primarily being about a route to market for bookings with advice and guidance about how to operate a successful self-catering business, to a trade body that engages at the highest level with Government and other organisations involved in shaping, developing and protecting the future of the sector. The advice and help in running a successful self-catering business hasn't changed, it grows from strength to strength alongside the representation the ASSC delivers for our businesses.

What do you think are the key triumphs of ASSC over the last 40 years?

Many, without going into the detail of what the ASSC does for me the main triumph is the recognition the ASSC has in Europe, and wider, as being the example of how a trade organisation for the self-catering sector should be. As a founder member of the EHHA (European Holiday Home Association) many of the other member organisations from Denmark & Spain, for example, see the ASSC as the model. Closer to home the English and Irish associations see the ASSC as aspirational. This years ASSC conference sees them come together at a national conference hosted in Glasgow.

From your experience, what are the challenges faced by owners of self-catering properties today?

Many from outside the sector, whether this be competitor sectors, politicians, local level and otherwise, see the growth in tourism and visitor choices as a threat and to blame for short comings in communities and housing.

The outcome could be the introduction of regulation and restriction of growth for the sake of it without taking time to understand the sector, demand and economic implications.

The development of self-catering can only be a positive outcome for the economic growth of Scotland from one of its highest opportunity sectors. As a sector we need to keep developing the standard of accommodation, ensuring we continue to offer a quality and safe place to stay, whilst not supporting those peer to peer operators that are unwilling to contribute to the development, investment and fiscal contribution that the majority of self-catering operators willingly respect.

What do you think the future holds for Self-Catering in Scotland?

The sector is a success story, both due to the quality product and service we offer. With the shift in the expectations of visitors to Scotland who prefer the benefits self-catering has over other accommodation options, we need to grasp this opportunity and grow our offering to meet and exceed expectations.

Due to changes in legislation and taxation many landlords have moved out of the long-term rental sector into self-catering. This has created challenges for the future of the traditional operators as the market place may saturate and some of these peer to peer operators don't have buy in to the high operating standards that the majority of self-caterers businesses have offered over the years thus potentially causing damage to reputation.

My view is that this is a bubble that will burst in the short-term. The traditional self-catering business will continue to deliver what they always have and will continue to develop the sector. Those others will find it's not unregulated, easy and the goose that laid the golden egg, as many believe, and will leave as quickly as they began.

Visitor expectations have changed over the past few years and many want the benefits of space and experience that only self-catering can offer. I don't see this changing anytime soon, and if it does the demand will only be greater. We need to meet this opportunity and look forward and not back.

What are your aspirations for ASSC and the Self-Catering Sector in Scotland?

To continue to grow as the trade body that everyone in self-catering wants to be part of and the 'go to' organisation that continues to deliver quality and growth for tourism through self-catering accommodation.

What do you think the next 'big thing' could

be for self-catering?

If I had shares in Booking.com or Airbnb I wouldn't be holding on to them for too long.

Not that long ago neither of them existed. In a very short timescale they have changed the way we all source and book accommodation.

Google and Amazon have yet to get involved to any great extent. Google will find it challenging as they don't want to damage their biggest revenue

generator in Adwords by upsetting what would be a competitor. Booking.com reportedly spend \$1 billion a year on Adwords.

Amazon don't have that problem and are now the second biggest global company and are in every sector, they are now the biggest global car dealer. They bring different ways of buying and selling and when they jump in to the accommodation booking sector we may just see things shaken up again.

A Light-hearted Look Back to the Good Old Days of Self-catering!

Linda Battison, owner Cologin Country Chalets and Lodges, Oban

Have you noticed – retro is in! Nostalgia casts a rose-tinted veil over our memories and we always look back and think it was 'better back then'. Well in the case of self-catering, I am not so sure. Having to pack your car to the gunnels with everything from sheets and pillowcases to toasters and towels was a major faff and left little room for any actual luggage!



Have you noticed – retro is in! Nostalgia casts a rose-tinted veil over our memories and we always look back and think it was 'better back then'. Well in the case of self-catering, I am not so sure. Having to pack your car to the gunnels with everything from sheets and pillowcases to toasters and towels was a major faff and left little room for any actual luggage!

My family liked to camp – so admittedly I do look back and remember our first self-catering cottage as a huge step up in comfort. We were used to sleeping bags and (if you were lucky) a blow up Li-lo which would slowly deflate during the night abandoning you to the floor, so a proper BED was luxury indeed. And as it was always Mum who had the chore of making up the beds who was I to complain. Back then, owners didn't mind how

many folk slept in their properties and kids were topped and tailed to squeeze in extra friends or a visiting relative.

The other major advantage of a house rather than a tent, was a bathroom with running water – not always hot as the meter regularly ran out when the immersion heater was doing its thing. But most places that we hired had a bathroom. (That of course implies that we did occasionally rent cottages without – it only happened once as drawing water from a well felt too much like camping for my mother: she thinks the current fascination for glamping is quite bonkers!)

Today, you would probably find at least one en-suite bathroom – back in 70s when the ASSC was in its infancy this really would be unusual for the average self-catering property. TVs too were rare and occasionally you had to pay extra for a telly. Of course, this was long before the great Sky revolution so with only 3 channels on terrestrial telly there really was not much to miss. Board games and charades kept us entertained and if we'd had a particularly active day we were happy to be packed off to bed early with a cup of coco and a piece of shortbread. And by the late 70s when I was at university there were plenty of other distractions to keep us occupied!

In the 80s self-catering really took off. The 'loads of money' culture of booming Britain fuelled gentrification and second home ownership and having somewhere in the country was the height of fashion. Scotland was having its own revival and with the Glasgow Garden Festival in 1988 Scotland's largest city finally had something to rival the Athens of the North and the Edinburgh Fringe.

Anyone with a bothy, croft or cottage recognised the potential revenue that could be made for letting and lofts, sheds and outhouses were raided for spare furniture and old curtains to ride the wave. All you really needed was a brochure and a newspaper ad and you were in business.

In the 90s the sector came of age and operators became more professional as they embraced new technology. However, it was still the era of postal enquiries and I can remember well the daily run to the post office with bundles of 50+ envelopes containing brochures and a carefully typed letter. Websites started to appear and space had to be found for the office PC as the electronic typewriter was abandoned. The arrival of a fax on the mysterious facsimile machine was black magic – my husband NEVER got to grips with the fax and sod’s law dictated that whenever he went to use it the fax roll would run out! The pace of change was driven by technology but social and demographic shifts also affected the market.

By the naughties self-catering had begun to mature. Operators knew what the customer wanted – and they wanted better quality and value for money. The sector responded with new developments and upgraded accommodation. Green tourism began to emerge and environmental considerations were given consideration. Online booking began

to change the market and the short break trend, which now dominates the industry, got its first foothold. After all who could be bothered to post out a written enquiry, wait for a reply and then book and confirm with a cheque just for a weekend break! The summer season was still largely weekly or fortnightly lets but even those in tourism hotspots could not hold back the tide and the short break sea change began to shape different pricing policies.

Now, with the power of the online booking agent we have almost come full circle. When self-catering was in its infancy many operators simply signed up to an agent and let them market their properties. The temptation today is to do the same – but at what cost? Booking commissions are high and it’s easy to lose the personal contact through the booking process. But it’s hard to argue with the figures. If only we had a crystal ball and could see the next decade. Will our customers be demanding en-suite bathrooms for every bedroom? Superfast broadband in the wilds of Scotland? A catering service for their self-catering cottage! Brexit will bring change, but no one knows what or how this will affect our sector. One thing is certain. ASSC has been with us throughout and will continue with us on the journey; promoting and protecting our industry. So here’s to the next 40 years.

“If you want to find the broadest range of quality self-catering in Scotland, Embrace has the best directory”.

Christopher Nairn, Lochend Chalets

Significance of the self-catering / short-term let sector to the Scottish Economy

Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs

Having somewhere really nice to stay on holiday is perhaps one of the most important elements of any trip. So sometimes we need to take a step back from the high-level tourism statistics and think carefully about what they actually represent for an individual visitor to Scotland.



Let's consider, for example, the term "visitor bed-nights".

We can, and do, look at the long-term growth in visitors and growth in visitor bed-nights and we are pleased to see the economic impact tourism is having, right across Scotland. Taking a strategic approach is crucial for the Scottish Government - and we'll continue to do all that we can to help the tourism industry achieve our shared ambition for sustainable growth across the visitor economy.

That shared success though has meant increasing stress on popular locations and attractions, and as a Government we are determined to take action. The Scottish Government recognised the impact of these pressure points on local communities which is why the First Minister announced the establishment of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF).

The fund, £6 million of match funding towards much needed facilities such as car parking was launched in March with VisitScotland responsible for administering it. The first round of successful applications will be announced later this year. Our visitors to Scotland, whether domestic or international, stay in many different types of accommodation. When we look at what the individual visitor experiences, during each one of their bed-nights, we gain a very different

perspective. Whether we are looking at cottages, canal boats or yurts, we know that to continue to grow and succeed in an intensely competitive, global market, every individual visitor should get, without exception, a great experience.

Self-catering accommodation in particular provides an important geographical spread, allowing visitors to see more of our country and, in doing so, supporting our rural economies. Whether the setting is urban, rural or remote, there is a self-catering property to meet everyone's needs. That of course is only part of the story. I am also sure that the individual visitor will encounter knowledgeable and committed hosts who want to share the best of what the area has to offer - experiences, as well as local food and drink.

Tourism remains an industry of vital importance to Scotland's economy. Everyone in it welcomes our visitors and works hard to ensure they have an excellent time. That's why, in this their 40th year, I am only too happy to commend the work of the ASSC, to their members and for their members.

The ASSC's support for its members, and the wider Scottish tourism sector, helps to ensure the highest standards of professionalism in every one of those visitor bed-nights taking place in a member property.

Less obviously perhaps, the ASSC bring a wealth of experience and expertise to its engagement with the Scottish Government and our public agencies. It provides a valuable range of data and research and ensuring that the views of members are fully reflected in Scotland's tourism journey. That research can help destinations work with stakeholders and funders, attract new markets and help communities promote and grow their own local events.

We want Scotland to be the best place to visit, live, work and invest. We are a government committed to growing the economy in a sustainable and inclusive way.

Scotland's visitor economy has huge potential and I look forward to working closely with the ASSC and its members as Scotland continues that successful tourism journey.

With warm regards on your anniversary year.

Contribution of the ASSC to the Scottish Tourism Offer

Malcolm Roughead, VisitScotland

There is no denying the draw of Scotland's scenery and landscapes for visitors. But creating a world-class destination goes far beyond the natural assets and rich history and heritage, which we have become accustomed to.



When visitors arrive on our shores, whether from across the UK or further afield, it is important that they experience a Scotland which makes them wish to return.

Everything that the Scottish tourism industry does is about creating a passion for Scotland - building an army of advocates through innovative marketing, partnership, events and business excellence to create a destination and customer experience worth talking about.

The ASSC is no exception and plays a significant role in creating an industry that continually strives to do better.

For forty years it has been a pioneer in quality, sustainability and diversity through collaboration with the industry and its members in creating accommodation that is now pet friendly, child friendly and accessible. Promoting and developing areas like these feeds into the visitor experience and contributes to Scotland's world-wide reputation as a friendly and welcoming nation.

The ASSC's principles of "quality, integrity, cleanliness, comfort, courtesy and efficiency" which it encourages members to adhere to - through its Committed to Quality scheme - and are enshrined in its Code of Conduct, speaks volumes to the importance it places on delivering a strong visitor experience.

Self-catering properties in VisitScotland's own Quality Assurance scheme have an average rating of 3 stars and above, reflecting the work that is being done in this sector.

For the value of self-catering to Scottish tourism cannot be underestimated.

Self-catering continues to be one of the most popular types of accommodation, particularly among UK visitors, according to the latest Visitor Scotland Survey.

Indeed, a recent study by the ASSC itself found that the self-catering industry contributes £723 million to the Scottish economy per annum and the Great Britain Tourism Survey reported 11.1 million nights were spent by visitors in self-catering accommodation last year.

Tourism is more than a holiday experience - it is the heartbeat of the Scottish economy and touches every community, generating income, jobs and social change. We need to encourage the industry to provide world-class service, facilities, events and attractions to keep up with ever-changing consumer demands and ensure visitors continue to have memorable experiences.

The ASSC understands this and has been a leader in the industry over the past four decades making progress in the face of challenging times. Here's to the next forty years.



Why Your Voice Matters

Marc Crothall, CEO, Scottish Tourism Alliance

2018 has been one of the busiest years I can remember for a long time. Over the past two years particularly, the STA amplified its voice on the big issues affecting Scotland's tourism industry, particularly in relation to the business rates crisis, tourism tax, the processes and costs of regulation and compliance and we have continued to build on the opportunities to influence and shape future policy.



Our focus as an organisation is to create better conditions for our tourism businesses, tourism industry and tourism economy to grow. For that to happen, we need to stay connected to the businesses who are at the 'coal face' of our tourism industry. Businesses like yours, who are experiencing challenging times due to our current economic environment and the rising costs of doing business.

Your voice is represented by ASSC at the STA Council meetings and through regular dialogue and engagement we have with your association. Your views in relation to how you're doing as a business, your challenges in terms of regulations and policy, which make it harder for you to operate a profitable business are areas that we actively seek to glean evidence around to present at the regular meetings we have with Scottish Government Cabinet Ministers and policy makers. Our voice as an association is stronger than ever, as are our opportunities to engage and consult with Scottish Government and Westminster.

The relationship we have with the ASSC offers your business many benefits and opportunities aside from the representation work we carry out on your behalf. As an STA Alliance Member, you have access to a range of discounts on goods and services, from business consulting, digital marketing to energy and utilities. You can also

take advantage of a generous member discount on tickets to the STA Annual Autumn Conference in October, an opportunity for you to gain important insights which will help your business to rise to the challenges ahead, and the STA Signature Conference in March. We want your business to be as profitable as possible, and to gain value from the membership you have of the ASSC and the STA.

As we look ahead to the second half of the year, the STA agenda remains firmly focused around creating opportunities for positive policy change to support the growth and competitiveness of Scotland's tourism industry and create the best possible conditions for your business to grow.

The role of the STA is to work with you through the ASSC to shape the future of Scotland's tourism industry – your voice in tourism matters; it's what gives the STA our voice. You make the difference. By supporting us through your membership of the ASSC, we can support your business in saving money, growing and becoming more profitable.

Please do continue to stay closely connected to the ASSC and be assured that both organisations continue to be focused around the sustainability and profitability of your business and our tourism industry.

I would like to offer my congratulations to the ASSC in this important 40th anniversary milestone and in your continued success in representing, supporting and growing Scotland's thriving self-catering accommodation sector and applaud David Smyth (Chair) and Fiona Campbell (Chief Executive) on their excellent leadership of the ASSC over past years and their great commitment to helping ensure the ASSC is the strong association it is today.



Working to Achieve a United Consensus on the Collaborative Economy from a European Perspective

Carlos Villaro Lassen, Secretary General, EHHA

Turning 40 years is quite an accomplishment within the self-catering association world.



The ASSC is one of Europe's oldest and most well-organised trade associations in a fragmented European landscape organising short-term accommodation for tourists. In Germany, Spain, Italy and France associations are happy turning 4 years old and have already had good luck in learning from the experienced Scottish self-caterers association.

The collaborative economy and short-term rental accommodation industry needs regulation, and it needs good regulation, and to accomplish this it is necessary to get all the players in the industry to sit around the same table and agree all from property owners, property managers, platforms, and IT-companies. Consensus is the key.

But one thing is to agree within the industry – another is agreeing with the rest of the society. The ASSC is a bright example on how long-term involvement and taking responsibility on the product and towards the guests can make a difference. Across Europe few years ago most of the industry had no voice at all in contrast to the ASSC's code of conduct and highest standards of professionalism.

The ASSC is a founding father of the European Holiday Home Association (EHHA) that today brings together all the main parts of a growing European industry. Together the ASSC and the rest of the European trade associations and pan-European

companies can learn from each other and set higher standards.

No matter how the Brexit process develops, a European consensus and understanding of how to approach the collaborative economy is needed, and Scotland and the rest of the UK will, like Switzerland and Norway, always be part of Europe and therefore part of the solution on a consensus on short-term rental.

What sometimes comes as a surprise to politicians and civil servants is, that the industry itself wishes to increase regulation so that everybody knows the rules and are safe with renting a property and being involved in the sector.

With this in mind, the sector looks into a prosperous future and so does the ASSC.

We should be confident about working in a sector that gives so much happiness to people when they are on their holidays, and we should be proud that companies can get together and support an association such as the ASSC which sets high standards, is involved in public dialogue and encourages sustainable growth of the sector.

On behalf of the European self-caterers, I heartily congratulate the ASSC and thank those who have contributed to it.



European
Holiday Home
Association

Testimonials from Partners from Business

Derek Nicol, Bruce Stevenson

"Bruce Stevenson Insurance Brokers has a specialist hospitality division. Over the last few years we have been working with underwriters to develop a scheme specifically for the Self-Catering market. The response has been incredible and this is in no small part due to our involvement with the ASSC.

I contacted Fiona at ASSC at the beginning of the year and expressed our wish to become an ASSC Partner for business. I saw this as a useful platform to demonstrate our capabilities and commitment to the market. The exposure we have gained has been invaluable and ties in most favourably with our other hospitality and tourism partners at the Scottish Tourism Alliance and Hospitality Industry



Trust. Moreover by working together with the team at ASSC we have been able to ensure a Self-Catering category that is to be included in future VisitScotland Thistle Awards.

My business thrives on recommendations and our association with Fiona and the ASSC team has assisted many discussions and allowed us to develop and grow. Their focus on the sector is unrivalled and they continue to do their best by their membership and partners.

I am proud that Bruce Stevenson Insurance Brokers has been able to work alongside the ASSC and that we share the same focus and drive to develop and self-catering sector."

<http://www.brucestevenson.co.uk> | 0131 553 2293

Robert Kennedy, SuperControl

Congratulations to the ASSC on celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. SuperControl's co-founder and Product Director, Robert Kennedy, a long-term committee member of the ASSC says,

"Collaborating with the ASSC as a Partner for Business is massively important for SuperControl. The ASSC excels at the vital job of representing, supporting and educating our sector in Scotland and beyond."

The SuperControl story started back in 1999 when Robert and his wife Melinda took on three family-run holiday cottages at Orroland, near Kirkcudbright. They invested in the properties and built a website and marketing strategy to progress from agency-managed to privately-managed business achieving 90% occupancy within three years.

SuperControl was launched in 2007 to a UK holiday rentals market hungry for a specialist property management system.

Today SuperControl is used by more than 1,800 owners, managers and agencies to manage 40,000+ properties across the world.



SuperControl's success is a key indicator of the health of the self-catering industry. To accommodate a growing team, SuperControl opened a technical office in Poland in 2015, and the head office in Scotland moved to larger premises in Market Street, Castle Douglas in May this year.

As the industry evolves, guests booking behaviour is changing, and SuperControl enables self-caterers to stay current. SuperControl helps self-caterers thrive by saving you time, making you money and giving you control. It's more than a booking system, it provides a complete service. The built-in channel manager makes it easy to manage listings on sites including Embrace Scotland and Visit Scotland as well as Booking.com and Airbnb. Guest management features enable you to stay in touch with guests and build relationships to encourage direct bookings when guests return. From connecting you where it matters to sharing success models and evidence-based best practices, the SuperControl team will continue to provide the tools and insights self-caterers need to deliver an excellent guest experience.

www.supercontrol.co.uk | 01556 506 701

Brian Neilly, Travel Nest

Having been a member of ASSC for a few years now we have been given unparalleled access to industry insights which has helped TravelNest in our growth and product strategies. Here's to the next 40 years.



The events hosted by ASSC are an invaluable source of collaboration between all in the vacation rental market space.

www.travelnest.com

Grant Seaton, Cumberland

The Cumberland's business team is honoured to be part of the fabric of the self-catering sector, supporting some great businesses and a thriving industry.

We are well aligned as one of few lenders who will support lending into the self-catering market in Scotland, and proud partners of the ASSC.

We welcome the chance to create relationships with members of the ASSC, as we pride ourselves not just on funding enterprises but creating long-standing relationships.

Working in the self-catering sector allows us to meet some interesting, passionate, and talented businesspeople. We aim to help our clients grow their businesses and we strive to make their

dreams come true.

Although we are based in Cumbria, we operate across the mainland UK, including with a range of Scottish hospitality businesses. We welcome new relationships from Scotland, and our team is always available to speak to those working in the sector, or looking to move into the sector, in Scotland.



We look forward to working closely with ASSC for many years to come and see them as a strong voice and force for the good in the tourism industry in Scotland.

Being part of the organisation has allowed us to forge a strong reputation within Scotland's self-catering sector.

www.cumberland.co.uk/business | 01228 403 141

Simon Law, Scottish Cottages

Scottish Cottages, as part of the cottages.com brand family, is a proud ASSC Partner for Business, and we have enjoyed working collaboratively with the ASSC over many years to promote tourism in Scotland.

As a result of growing demand for Scottish holidays, supported by the effective work of the ASSC for the self-catering sector, cottages.com now recruits over a third more properties per year than three years ago (36% uplift).

The portfolio now includes more than 2,000 individual properties available for cottage holidays across Scotland, offering a host of unique and luxurious experiences from stays in dramatic castles to chic city apartments and everything in between. Properties with hot tubs have proved particularly popular in 2018, with bookings up nearly a quarter (23%) compared to the previous year, and luxury properties have achieved 14% more bookings, as holidaymakers seek out moments of indulgence from their getaways.

Our collection of hand-picked properties sits alongside Hoseasons' extensive portfolio of lodge parks, and together represents a significant contribution to the domestic holiday and leisure

market. Welcoming hundreds of thousands of customers to Scotland each year, our membership to the ASSC is a mutually beneficial partnership, with clear benefits from the beginning.

We would like to extend our congratulations to the ASSC for their 40th Anniversary, and for their achievements in uniting a disparate sector to create a single voice with greater visibility and impact. The research and lobbying undertaken by the ASSC on behalf of owners and operators alike is admirable, whether in Holyrood, Westminster or Brussels.



The ASSC conferences represent a real highlight in the calendar as being hugely informative and with excellent networking opportunities among a high calibre of industry individuals. As regular exhibitors at the annual conference, our local team of Area Managers and Business Development Managers, as well as staff based at our Arran Office, find the event to be incredibly useful for developing business opportunities.

We look forward to many more years working in partnership with the ASSC, collaborating to continue raising the profile of the Scottish tourism sector.

www.scottish-cottages.co.uk | 01228 406731



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