

AI Summary of collated data from Responsible Tourism Strategy consultation:

Including data from: 14 in-person meetings (3,500 Menti submissions) 13 digital thematic meetings, one-to-one deep-dives

Key Elements for a Successful Strategy:

1. Collaboration and Involvement:

- Collaboration beyond agencies, involving key stakeholders.
- Emphasis on team work and joined-up thinking.
- Partnership working with tangible, evaluable results.
- Opportunities for businesses to collaborate and share knowledge.

2. Realistic Expectations:

- Setting achievable goals.
- Being honest about what's achievable.
- Given budget constraints, prioritize simplicity and effectiveness.
- Having realistic time frames and understanding lead times.

3. Transparency and Communication:

- Regular information dissemination on developmental progress.
- Ensuring strategies are widely communicated.
- Direct communication with actionable items in common language.

4. Clarity and Measurement:

- Clear measurable actions where everyone understands their role.
- A clear definition of success and metrics to measure it.
- Reiterative measurement: Deliver, measure, and then measure again.
- Using holistic metrics and having clear targets with full agreement on achievement.

5. Unified Vision and Approach:

- Shared mission, vision, and values.
- Multi-layered cooperation among government, agencies, councils, and communities.
- Everyone working towards a same unified goal.
- Public sector being aligned with the strategy and held accountable.

6. Practical Considerations:

- Understanding the functioning of the private sector by public decision-makers.
- Identifying realistic funding opportunities and ensuring total buy-in.
- Implementing "low hanging fruit" initiatives for immediate engagement.
- Being to the point with local involvement and prompt follow-up.

7. Governance and Accountability:

- Good governance practices.
- Ownership and commitment from key players.
- Changes in policy and practice stemming from strategy insights.
- Clear planning, regular review, and accountability mechanisms in place.

8. Mindset:

- Adopting a "completer" mindset.
- Emphasizing quality in all aspects.
- Ensuring achievable results.

VISION:

Collated as a single paragraph:

"South of Scotland aspires to be a world-renowned, year-round tourism destination, celebrated as the first choice for visitors seeking unparalleled experiences in the UK and Scotland. With a commitment to sustainability, excellence, and community involvement, we aim to enhance our local economy and elevate the standard of living for residents, all while preserving our rich natural and cultural heritage. As the bridge between two countries, we champion collaboration, innovation, and high-quality, diverse attractions. Our dedication extends to providing exceptional customer service, robust business support, and a myriad of choices that resonate with both domestic and international tourists. Drawing strength from our storied history, breathtaking landscapes, and vibrant community spirit, the South of Scotland is synonymous with memorable experiences and meaningful connections."

Collated as points:

Defining the South of Scotland's Identity:

1. Transform the south of Scotland into a premier 'Go to' destination, competitive with the Highlands and other renowned locations.
2. Celebrate and promote the region's unique natural beauty, history, and culture.
3. Preserve the rural, peaceful character of the area, offering an authentic Scottish experience without the excessive commercialization.
4. Recognize the region's distinctive offerings, from its rich ballad history to the possibilities of being a national park.

Economic and Employment Prospects:

5. Bolster the local economy with increased visitor numbers, ensuring sustainable economic growth.

6. Provide ample career opportunities in the visitor economy and support local businesses in benefiting from tourism year-round.
7. Ensure tourism plays a pivotal role in the local economy, coupled with support for business initiatives and reduced over-regulation.

Quality, Diversity, and Experience:

8. Prioritize quality in all tourism offerings, aspiring to world-class standards and experiences.

9. Offer diverse experiences, from gentle walks to extreme sports, that cater to a broad spectrum of tourist preferences.
10. Celebrate local gastronomy, promoting the region's food and culinary experiences.
11. Position the area as not just a transit point but a primary destination, encouraging longer stays by tourists.

Sustainability and Environment:

12. Emphasize sustainable and profitable tourism, ensuring benefits to the local economy without environmental damage.

13. Transition to net-zero, prioritizing regenerative and circular economy practices in the tourism sector.

14. Champion the region as an eco-friendly destination, with visitors understanding their responsibilities towards preserving its beauty.

Infrastructure, Accessibility, and Connectivity:

15. Invest in improved transport systems, from sustainable infrastructure to effective local signage.

16. Emphasize accessibility, catering to diverse needs and ensuring ease of travel within the region.

17. Develop strategic connections between various tourist spots, fostering a collaborative approach among businesses and stakeholders.

Promotion, Awareness, and Reputation:

18. Raise awareness nationally and internationally, establishing the region as a distinct and prime tourist destination.

19. Develop effective promotion strategies, from highlighting adventurous offerings to utilizing clear and informative signage.

20. Ensure the south of Scotland is equitable to top destinations, thriving alongside competitors and being recognized for its quality and diverse offerings.

Community Engagement and Collaboration:

21. Engage local communities in tourism decisions, promoting interconnected thinking among businesses.

22. Embrace heritage and local culture, integrating and valuing them in all tourism offerings.

Visitor Experience and Standards:

23. Ensure a welcoming atmosphere with an emphasis on cleanliness and tidiness.

24. Provide clear information hubs, improving the overall visitor experience and services.

25. Maintain high standards in hospitality, learning from competitors, and continuously innovating.

The vision for the south of Scotland's tourism seeks to strike a balance between economic growth, preserving its unique identity, and ensuring sustainability. It captures the essence of the region's aspirations to be recognized, both nationally and internationally, as a destination that offers quality, diversity, and an authentic experience. The south of Scotland is poised to emerge as a holistic destination, combining natural beauty, history, and modern attractions, while prioritizing community, environment, and visitor experience.

TANGIBLE ACTIONS (How we achieve this vision):

1. Recognition and Promotion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocate for governmental recognition.• Highlight region's unique attractions.• Collaborate with entities like VisitScotland, SOSE, and local councils.
2. Collaboration and Partnership:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage towns to showcase unique identities.• Foster collaboration between businesses, organizations, and authorities.• Create platforms/events for travel companies.
3. Marketing and Technology:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase funding for marketing.• Utilize modern technologies for promotions.• Recognize the declining trend of newspapers.• Maintain a rolling calendar of tourism activities.
4. Infrastructure and Investment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure infrastructure supports increased tourism.• Seek support from the Scottish Government.
5. Engagement and Inclusion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage local communities in planning.• Educate on the region's history.• Provide business and staff training.
6. Operational Efficiency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer a single point of information.• Reduce bureaucratic hurdles.
7. Development and Expansion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage development of tourist infrastructure.• Foster careers in tourism.
8. Diversity and Inclusion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draw in culture and minority groups for a rich experience.
9. Economic Support:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support business growth and offer incentives.• Learn from models like the Highlands and Islands Enterprise.
10. Facilities and Services:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement clear policies on parking and toilets.• Enhance quality activities for tourists.
11. Transportation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve transport infrastructure.• Enhance transport links.
12. Online Presence and Digital Marketing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boost online visibility and bookings.• Raise the profile of "Scotland Starts Here".
13. Sustainability:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address biodiversity loss and climate change.• Promote responsible tourism.
14. Support and Development:	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a task force and engage businesses. • Support initiatives in areas with limited tourism.
15. Engage the Next Generation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage youth participation in tourism.
16. Education and Training:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer marketing and digital guidance.
17. Extend the Tourism Season:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote off-season attractions.
18. Character Preservation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the unique charm of the borders.
19. Targeted Marketing and Branding:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise to key segments. • Use influencers and PR.
20. Events and Activities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop tourist-friendly events.
21. Infrastructure and Accessibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernize transport and offer camping facilities. • Develop a dedicated tourism app.
22. Engagement and Collaboration:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with local stakeholders.
23. Support and Investment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund initiatives and support community projects.
24. Research and Analysis:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand tourist needs. • Map themed trails.
25. Product and Service Enhancement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better information and support transport collaborations.
26. Innovation and Technology:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize technology for enhanced visitor experiences.
27. Local Produce and Sustainability:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote local produce use.
28. Event Portfolio and Integration:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop diverse events aligned with strategy.
29. Quality, Training, and Best Practices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in training and celebrate best practices.
30. Equestrian Focus:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop equestrian-specific routes and offerings.
31. Engagement and Data Analysis:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with stakeholders and utilize data.
32. Infrastructure Development:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance routes and establish tourism hubs.
33. Local Business Engagement:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage collaborations and form unique tourist trails.
34. Community and Environment Focus:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect natural and cultural assets.

35. Interactive and Digital Enhancements:

- Introduce interactive boards and gather data.

36. Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Initiatives:

- Promote eco-friendly travel and sustainability education.

WHO WE SHOULD EMULATE:

Regions the South of Scotland should emulate:

1. The Netherlands (cycling provision/infrastructure)
2. Norfolk Tourism
3. Visit Scotland (quality visual images emphasizing South of Scotland)
4. York (fantastic visitor experience with historical aspects)
5. Ireland and Spain (lower VAT rates for tourism businesses)
6. Europe (facilities for motorhomes/camervans)
7. Fife (marketing themselves as a food and drink destination)
8. North Harris Trust (improving footpaths and stopping places for motorhomes)
9. East Lothian (signage to attractions)
10. Northumberland (Coastal Walk and quality offer)
11. New Zealand (range of outdoor activities and ease of travel)
12. Cornwall (tourism strategy and coast path)
13. The Peffery way (Strathpeffer to Dingwall path)
14. Disney (customer experiences and care)
15. South Upland Way (D&G side)
16. Highland and Islands (community and business capacity building)
17. Australia (1st class food and service)
18. Locations promoting friendly communities
19. Iceland (unique experiences)
20. Lake District NP (clean facilities for a fee)
21. Coast to coast concept
22. New Zealand (connecting visitors with locals)

Regions the South of Scotland should NOT emulate:

1. Big cities
2. NC500 (over-promotion, infrastructure issues)
3. Lake District model (high concentrations of visitors in few attractions)
4. Northumberland (negative marketing)
5. Highlands (overuse of tartan and shortbread)
6. Game of Thrones (potential over-hype)
7. North Coast 500 (multiple issues cited)
8. Overtourism in areas like Lake District in summer

Unique aspects to emphasize or work on:

1. South of Scotland's uniqueness
2. Collaboration between businesses and communities
3. Focus on climate targets and sustainability
4. Emphasize cultural identity
5. Utilize buildings and scenery from popular films/series
6. Exceptional customer service
7. Promote the region's unique landscape, history, and heritage
8. Encourage collaboration between businesses for visitor ease
9. Highlight special places and "secrets" of the region
10. Improve overall visitor experience

WHAT 'RESPONSIBLE TOURISM' MEANS:

1. Environmental Consciousness:

- Leave no trace.
- Promote eco-friendly practices.
- Think about the carbon footprint.
- Encourage environmental tourism.
- Tread lightly and minimize impact.
- Manage the natural capital.
- Decarbonize where possible.
- Ecologically sustainable practices.
- Encouraging a zero waste approach.

2. Local Economic Impact:

- Create jobs and value addition.
- Use locally sourced and seasonal products.
- Spend money but leave no mess.
- Focus on high-value tourism, not high volume.
- Target visitors who contribute to the local economy.
- Support local economies and markets.
- Emphasize on community initiatives.
- Avoid bringing in big chain providers; prioritize quality local enterprises.

3. Community Engagement:

- Respect and support local communities.
- Ensure locals aren't displaced.
- Engage communities in the planning process.
- Foster collaboration and have a shared vision.
- Encourage businesses to network and support each other.
- Prioritize community-driven strategies and consultations.
- Foster a win/win for both visitors and residents.
- Take care to listen to local voices.

4. Infrastructure and Services:

- Provide ample parking places, toilets, recycling bins, electric chargers, and water stations.
- Ensure infrastructure can handle the influx of visitors.
- Maintain trails and other natural resources.
- Invest in infrastructure like car chargers.
- Ensure all services and infrastructures are up to the standard required.

5. Visitor Management:

- Make sure services cater to everyone's tastes and budgets.
- Give value for money.
- Provide clear guidelines and signposting.
- Educate visitors on outdoor access codes.
- Offer good visitor management techniques.
- Encourage visitors to respect the natural environment and local communities.

6. Holistic Approach:

- Achieve a balance between economic, environmental, and community interests.
- Promote sustainable and green practices.
- Think long-term rather than short-term.
- Foster genuine offerings without overselling.
- Take a holistic approach, considering all stakeholders.

7. Education and Awareness:

- Raise awareness of responsible practices among visitors.
- Educate both locals and tourists about the region's offerings and guidelines.
- Update the Scottish Access Code and other relevant guidelines.

8. Collaboration and Strategy:

- Collaborate across businesses, communities, and agencies.
- Develop a clear and cohesive marketing strategy.
- Avoid being too idealistic; be practical and realistic.
- Innovate in areas like waste management and technology use.

9. Preservation and Respect:

- Preserve the unspoiled attraction of the region.
- Maintain respect for the local community and their traditions.
- Encourage respect for both the landscape and local people.

10. Special Considerations:

- Emphasize the unique offerings of the region, like equestrian tourism.
- Ensure ongoing maintenance of routes for all types of tourism.
- Prioritize regenerative and circular economic practices.
- Think about a wide range of potential visitors, including those with disabilities.

This list captures the essence of responsible tourism for the South of Scotland, based on the comprehensive feedback and consultations provided. The aim is to offer a tourism experience that is sustainable, beneficial to both locals and visitors, and preserves the natural and cultural treasures of the region.

CHALLENGES:

Major Challenges Facing Tourism in the South of Scotland

1. Infrastructure and Transport

- Inadequate transport links.
- Infrastructure deficiencies including digital and eco-infrastructure.
- Poor broadband and digital communication.
- Condition of roads requiring repair.
- Need for EV charging facilities.
- Lacking infrastructure for large-scale events.
- Absence of well-connected east-west transport routes.
- Insufficient facilities for specific groups like mountain bikers.
- Narrow roads not fit for large vehicles.
- Overemphasis on traditional means of promotion, underscoring digital awareness.

2. Regulation and Governance

- Complexities with the Short Term Lets regulation.
- Red-tape and bureaucratic challenges.
- Local authority funding cuts.
- Licensing challenges for short term stays and B&Bs.
- Short-term planning cycles.
- Overly strict and changing regulations.
- Issues with governing bodies such as Scottish Borders.
- Duplication of efforts by different tourism agencies.

3. Economic Concerns

- Economic volatility and local financial challenges.
- Staffing shortages and recruitment issues.
- Seasonal impacts on various sectors, especially hospitality.
- Financial instability concerns among potential visitors.
- Competition with better-known regions.
- Depressed local economy and high business costs.
- Economic strategy misalignments and potential biases.
- Seasonal job challenges and the dominance of major brands.

4. Local Community and Stakeholder Engagement

- Council and resident apathy.
- Need for collaboration among stakeholders.
- Misunderstandings around the value and impact of certain tourism forms like equestrian tourism.
- Necessity for well-trained workforce and clear career paths in tourism.
- Challenges in mindset and attitudes of local communities.
- Perception of tourism's financial benefits to locals.
- Stigma surrounding inter-organizational collaborations.
- Over-reliance on volunteers.

5. Accommodation and Services

- Quality accommodation issues.
- Mismatch between quality accommodation and restaurants.

- Licensing small holiday lets.
- Challenges in self-certification for accommodations.
- Lack of town center solutions for retail, accommodation, and transport.
- Services required for specific groups like mountain bikers.

6. Awareness, Promotion, and Branding

- Need for better awareness, marketing, and a robust marketing budget.
- Competition for funding and investment.
- Branding and identity concerns.
- Lack of understanding and awareness about the region.
- Need for clear and effective messaging for visitors.
- Challenges in event organization and promotion.

7. Sustainability and Environment

- Climate and weather issues including extreme events.
- Need for greener practices and reducing carbon footprint.
- Environmental challenges like biodiversity loss.
- High costs of sustainable business practices.
- Challenges in extending and managing tourism seasons responsibly.
- Threats from tourism activities like littering, fires, and habitat damage.
- Issues with commercial logging and farming affecting the landscape.

8. External Influences and Future Uncertainties

- Ongoing global financial uncertainties.
- Potential threats from pandemics.
- Impacts of regional initiatives like the Berwick Cultural and Creative Zone (CCZ).
- Future of local government structures.
- Influence of national policies on local interests.

9. Cultural and Historical Recognition

- Need for recognizing and valuing local history and culture.
- Overemphasis on certain sectors at the expense of tourism.

10. Demographics and Migration

- Loss and displacement of younger residents.
- Demographic challenges, notably an aging population.

Given the extensive list provided, the above is a collated overview. Each of these major challenge categories encapsulates various specifics, which can be expanded upon based on detailed requirements or focal areas of interest.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Opportunities Facing Tourism in the South of Scotland

1. Infrastructure and Communication

- Pioneering tourism initiatives.
- Enhancements in road and rail links, with notable mentions of routes to Berwick and extensions into Kelso.
- "Build it and they will come" transportation philosophy.
- Advanced digital connectivity with full-fibre for fast internet.

2. Embracing Culture and Heritage

- Amplified celebration of local culture and history.
- Promotion of literary tourism, including initiatives like the Borders Book Trail.
- Digital modernisation of historical sites.

3. Sustainability and Eco-friendly Initiatives

- Strong emphasis on green travel and sustainable options.
- Integration of wind farm developments and eco-tourism projects.
- Strive for net-zero goals and focus on green and circular economy principles.

4. Sports, Activities, and Events

- Serving as an epicenter for outdoor activities and major events.
- Promotions around cycling, equestrian, shooting, fishing, and other activities.
- Year-round tourism prospects.

5. Local Collaboration and Development

- Encouraging community-led tourism initiatives.
- Empowerment of local communities for economic regeneration.

6. Youth and the Next Generation

- Engaging young residents to build a future in the region with better housing and job opportunities.

7. Digital and Social Media Opportunities

- Integration of digital advancements in tourism experiences.
- Harnessing the power of social media for widespread promotion.

8. Unique Selling Propositions and Projects

- Branding the distinct identity of the region.
- Capitalizing on projects like Borderlands and promoting the area as a choice filming location.

9. Travel Patterns and Trends

- Promoting staycations and targeting a diverse range of visitors.
- Banking on changing global travel preferences.

10. Experiences and Festivals

- Dive into niche sectors like agri-tourism, dark sky tourism, and wellness experiences.
- Leveraging regional festivals and culinary attractions.

11. Engaging Broader Markets

- Alluring tourists seeking authentic Scottish experiences and collaborations with established tourism hotspots.
- Amplifying local ambassadorship for the region.

12. Geographical Advantages

- Leveraging proximity advantages and branding with the "Scotland Starts Here" motto.

13. Adaptation and Strategy

- Strategic planning and adaptive responses to the evolving tourism landscape.

14. Natural & Cultural Heritage

- Embracing the UNESCO Biosphere and celebrating the region's intricate history and folklore.

15. Infrastructure & Amenities

- Augmenting existing infrastructure like marinas and railways.

16. Strategic Marketing & Collaboration

- Unified marketing strategies and enhanced collaborations.

17. Local Workforce & Education

- Capacity building through education and skills development.

18. Diversification & Niche Markets

- Focusing on agritourism, inclusive tourism, and outdoor activities.

19. Environmental Consciousness & Sustainability

- Transitioning to eco-friendly operations and leveraging the post-Covid "Staycation" trend.

20. Engagement & Policies

- Collaborative engagement with government and formulation of effective policies.

21. Experience & Engagement

- Crafting unique and immersive visitor experiences.

22. Digital Innovations & Accessibility

- Advancements in digital solutions for a modern tourist experience.

23. Economic Considerations

- Supporting local business growth and retaining younger demographics.

24. Historical and Cultural Heritage

- Spotlighting the region's rich history and diverse cultural offerings.

25. Culinary and Beverage Tourism

- Enhancing and promoting local culinary skills.

26. Outdoor and Recreational Activities

- Developing comprehensive networks for various outdoor activities.

27. Arts, Culture, and Craftsmanship

- Showcasing the region's vibrant artistic community.

28. Agritourism and Nature Conservation

- Supporting nature-oriented projects and promoting agritourism.

29. Transportation and Accessibility

- Improving public transport and promoting the region's centrality.

30. Community Tourism and Business Promotion

- Amplifying community experiences and unifying promotional efforts.

31. Infrastructure and Development

- Advocating for tourism-friendly infrastructure.

32. Inclusive Tourism

- Promoting inclusivity in tourism offerings.

33. Local Employment and Youth Retention

- Providing local job opportunities and retaining young talent.

34. Brand Image and Promotion

- Reinforcing the region's allure and advocating staycations.

35. Events and Market Adaptability

- Harnessing events as major drawcards and ensuring product adaptability.

The South of Scotland presents a plethora of opportunities to carve a niche in the tourism sector. From its rich history to its modern attractions, this region is poised to offer unique and memorable experiences to every visitor.