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**INQUIRY
BY SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT'S
EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS
COMMITTEE**

The Promotion of Scotland Worldwide

**SUBMISSION BY
SCOTTISH ESTATES BUSINESS GROUP**

16th November 2004



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1. Background

SEBG represents a group of progressive land-based estates with significant agricultural and rural business interests. It aims to promote a modern business approach in the management of Scotland's land resource in ways which deliver social, economic and environmental benefits. The group seeks to secure a sustainable and prosperous future for rural areas.

Estates are proven business models that assist the development of smaller rural businesses, and landowners and estates have a vital role to play in the ongoing and future development and prosperity of Scotland.

2. Promoting Scotland in the round

SEBG welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the wide-reaching inquiry currently being carried out by the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee into the promotion of Scotland. The tourism industry is one of Scotland's largest, contributing over £4 billion to Scotland's economy and supporting more than 200,000 jobs. It has an important role to play in particular across rural Scotland, through helping to sustain many small businesses and rural communities.

People come to Scotland for many reasons – for our beautiful scenery and landscapes, our distinctive history, our rich and varied culture and environment. The way in which these features are combined and our countryside nurtured, worked and enjoyed – whether for niche market quality produce, for outdoor activities and sports or for its wild and rugged nature – draws many hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The total package of our built and natural heritage is what sells Scotland, so any promotion of Scotland should play to its strengths in the round.

Whilst many visitors come to Scotland for its historic houses, its fishing and sporting attractions or its natural environment, it should not be forgotten that all of these activities are interlinked and together play a key role in the sustainability of rural communities. The angler who visits for a weekend of fishing will, as likely as not, bring his partner and they'll stay in a local hotel or guest house. They'll eat in the local restaurant or bar, buy provisions at the local newsagents or corner shop, and gifts and souvenirs at the local crafts outlet. Their economic contribution to the local economy will help to support a range of local jobs, not simply those related directly to angling, the original focus of their visit.

Tourism clearly has a wide indirect as well as direct impact on Scotland's economy. In promoting Scottish tourism, what is needed is a co-ordinated approach, which maximises our appeal. Promotion of Scotland's attractions should play to its strengths by highlighting a package of attractions, between them suited to a wide range of tastes, rather than target individual activities or pastimes. This is where Scotland's progressive estates have a key role to play. Run as modern businesses, the estates offer a diverse range of services, often including farming and food production, forestry, let properties, field sports, the built as well as natural heritage.

Whilst most rural land based industries contribute to the natural environment which forms the backdrop to what is considered to be Scotland the Brand, Scottish estates provide the integrated land management which is able to offer enhanced opportunities for maintenance and development of our landscape. Long term land management over substantial areas can provide a balance, facilitating historic design landscapes in harmony with forestry cover and farmland within a working countryside.

Private estates also manage a rich variety of heritage properties and artefacts and make them available to the public as tourism venues, often to the highest international standards and without public support.

There are a number of examples where the member estates of SEBG contribute significantly to the tourism offering in various parts of Scotland. Blair Castle is Scotland's most visited privately owned historic home and is also home to the Bowmore Blair Castle International Horse Trials and Country Fair. These facilities and events - only two of a wide range of attractions, built and natural - draw tourists to the area from far and wide. Drumlanrig Castle, ancient Douglas stronghold and Dumfriesshire home of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, is one of the first and most important renaissance buildings in the grand manner in Scotland. Steeped in history, this castle, filled with treasures, with its estate and gardens is one of the principal visitor attractions in South Scotland.

Roxburghe Estates, near Kelso, offers what to many is a complete package for tourists. Floors Castle attracts around 40,000 visitors a year. The estate has also built a championship golf course and runs a high quality country house hotel. Apart from these activities the estates also offers shooting and fishing packages. Dunecht Estates offers not only prime shooting and fishing facilities but also owns and maintains Dunnottar Castle in Kincardineshire, an impressive ruined clifftop fortress and historic home of the Earls Marischal of Scotland attracting between 30-40,000 visitors each year.

Clearly, not only are many of Scotland's important heritage sites being looked after for future generations but they are adding greatly to our national tourism product.

With tourism activities frequently contributing a significant proportion of business turnover, marketing of facilities and attractions forms an important aspect of the commercial operation of these estates. In most cases, marketing effort – through websites and promotional material - presents the range of facilities available as a package, with the whole being much more than the sum of individual attractions available. Visitors to the area are thus offered a range of activities and attractions - historic houses, sports facilities, quality produce and crafts, holiday accommodation - which together can create a full programme for visitors of any age.

With numbers of short, frequent and repeat visits to all parts of Scotland on the increase, the development and promotion of such packages which combine a number of features and activities can encourage short and long stay tourism across all parts of Scotland by highlighting the wide range of interests which are there to be explored. Nor should we shy away from the traditional perception that Scotland is a nation of heather, whisky and tartan. All have their place in the quality niche markets to which we aspire.

Scotland has so much to offer discerning travellers; we sell ourselves short if we focus only on specialist interests and in doing so, fail to set out the full canvas of Scotland's rich natural and built heritage.

Polly McPherson
SEBG
16th November 2004