
Economic Perspective 1

A TALE OF TWO CITIES AND TOURISM

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Edinburgh and Glasgow are Scotland's foremost cities accounting for approximately one quarter of the country's total population. Traditionally, Glasgow has formed the industrial heartland of the West of Scotland, while Edinburgh - Scotland's capital - has been a focus of the industry of the Eastern Central Belt as well as being the financial, administrative and commercial hub of the nation. Edinburgh's capital status, its fine old buildings and its culture, ceremonial and shopping have meant that it has always attracted visitor traffic. On the back of the post-war tourism "boom", especially the sharp rise in overseas visitor traffic to Britain between 1964-75, it became one of Europe's great tourist centres and one of the few real alternatives to London as a destination for overseas tourists visiting Britain. Redolent with history and with tourist attractions, the most obvious of which were the Castle and the Festival, Edinburgh by the mid-seventies had become synonymous with Scottish tourism. Put simply, it was Scotland's pre-eminent urban resort. The rise to prominence of Glasgow as a tourist centre in the subsequent decade (1976-85) has therefore effected a remarkable change. The latest published estimates show that **the throughput of visitors to the two cities is roughly similar** (see Table 1) and, as this article seeks to show, the future may well see Glasgow become miles better.

Glasgow's tourism renaissance

Glasgow is Scotland's largest city and suffers both from a negative image (based

Table 1 Volume of tourism to Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1984

	Trips m	Bednights m	Bednights as a % of the all- Scottish total
Edinburgh			
GB residents	1.70	5.04	8.0
Overseas visitors	0.61	0.31	26.8
	2.31	2.35	
Glasgow			
GB residents	1.83	5.04	8.0
Overseas visitors	0.19	0.15	12.8
	2.02	5.19	

Sources: National Survey of Scottish Tourism,
International Passenger Survey

largely on past violence and deprivation) and from deep-seated problems of economic decline whose symptoms are high levels of out-migration and unemployment and poor housing and environment. Its diaspora - in combination with new hotel developments¹ and its wealth of Victorian architecture, its museums and parkland, and its surrounding countryside - provided the basis for early tourism promotions, culminating in the 1983 "Welcome Home to Glasgow" campaign. Glasgow's narrow range of created visitor attractions was significantly enhanced by the opening late in 1983 of the £20.6 million **Burrell Collection**. While the majority of

Table 2 Annual admissions to principal visitor attractions in Glasgow and Edinburgh

Edinburgh	Glasgow
Band 1:	
Over 1 million visitors	Burrell Collection
Band 2:	
Over 500,000 visitors but less than 1 million	
Edinburgh Castle Royal Botanic Gardens	Kelvingrove Gallery and Museum
Band 3:	
Over 150,000 visitors but less than 1 million	
Scotland's Clan Tartan Centre Royal Scottish Museum Edinburgh Zoo Palace of Holyroodhouse Scottish National Gallery	Museum of Transport Botanic Gardens People's Palace Pollok Huse
Band 4:	
Over 50,000 visitors but less than 150,000	
National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland Museum of Childhood Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Scott Monument Butterfly Farm Outlook Tower - Camera Obscura Huntly House Lady Stairs House	Haggs Castle Provand's Lordship
Band 5: less than 50,000 visitors	
Georgian House Brass Rubbing Centre Gladstone's Land John Knox's House Royal Observatory Visitor Centre Carlton Hill Observatory	

Source: Visitor Attractions Survey, based on 1985 admissions data

visitors to the Gallery are undoubtedly resident day trippers rather than tourists (the collection appealing only to a rather narrow sector of the latter), it was of critical importance in the evolution of Glasgow's tourism industry for two reasons. First, it enabled the city's stock of municipal cultural assets, particularly its museums and art galleries, to be offered realistically on the market place as a major UK tourist attraction. Secondly, it gave a major impetus to the highly successful "Glasgow's miles better" public relations campaign. The positive images of Glasgow fostered by the miles better campaign were a powerful antidote to the negative images which act as a strong deterrent to potential visitors.

Also in 1983, two events occurred which indicated the degree to which there was now a strong commitment to using tourism as a tool of economic development, via a co-ordinated approach involving both the public and private sectors. First, the Greater Glasgow Tourist Board (GGTB) was formed to promote and advertise the Greater Glasgow area and to service the information requirements of visitors arriving in the area. The Board is a voluntary body, with an annual spend for 1985 of £451,000. The vast bulk of its income (83%) is derived from public sector grants and commercial membership fees. The prime financiers are the district councils of Glasgow, Strathkelvin, Clydebank and Renfrew (82% of the total grant and fee income), with the Scottish Tourist Board (14%) and commercial tourism enterprises (4%) supplying the remainder. Despite the proportionately low financial stake of the commercial tourist interest, private sector representatives form 12 of the 25 person executive committee which governs the operation of the Board, the remaining 13 comprising local authority nominees and a single Scottish Tourist Board representative. Because the GGTB reflects a wide range of tourism interests, it is able authoritatively to act as a centralised marketing mechanism and to resolve some of the potentially damaging conflicts of interests which characterise the fiercely competitive nature of local tourism industries, eg recent opposition by Glasgow hoteliers to plans for an on-site hotel at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) was transformed into support after GGTB mediation.

Secondly, an in-depth study of Glasgow's tourism potential was completed in 1983 by the consultants Pannell Kerr Forster (PKF). The PKF study was commissioned by the Scottish Development Agency (SDA) and brought together the themes of environmental **improvement** and leisure **development as a means of stimulating economic regeneration**. That study advocated:

1. A series of mostly minor improvements to existing nodes of touristic interest such as George Square, the Cathedral precinct and the Botanic Gardens (eg landscaping, signposting, construction of a butterfly house in the Botanic Gardens, and stone-cleaning of the Cathedral).
2. An outline tourism marketing strategy to counter Glasgow's image problem.
3. Three major developments to give Glasgow a unique selling point.

The suggested **nodal improvements**, subsequently modified and extended, have formed the basis for a series of measures implemented by the Glasgow District Council (GDC). Its 1984 planning document "A Locational Strategy for Tourism in Glasgow" called for a clustered programme of initiatives to be provided in three zones: the City Centre, the West End, and the South West (based on Pollok Country Park). Recent activity has centred on the conversion of the Kelvin Hall to a sports centre and transport museum (£3.6 million capital spend) and the refurbishment of the old Fishmarket to provide tourist-related retail, catering and craft workshop units (capital cost £1.5 million). Projects under investigation include the upgrading of the Peoples' Palace and Winter Garden and its restyling as a local history museum, and the creation of new visitor attractions centred on the Fossil Grove in Victoria Park and on the Cathedral precinct.

The outline **marketing strategy** contained in the PKF report provided the basis for

the GGTB to evolve the formal marketing plan which currently gives purpose and direction to the Board's sales and promotions activity.

To give Glasgow the pulling power to attract substantial numbers of additional tourists, **especially within the holiday as opposed to the visits to friends and relatives (VFR) and business/conference segments**, the PKF report identified **three major tourist development initiatives** that would be suitable for Glasgow: an aquarium, a Science Centre and a Folk Heritage Museum.

The projected combined capital costs of the three developments was £47 million. With operating subsidies envisaged for the science centre and folk museum, and with the aquarium likely only to break even on revenue, the realisation of these schemes was clearly to be dependent on the creative deployment of public authority investment powers. The SDA's Tourism and Leisure Division has assumed the lead brokerage role, aided by Glasgow Action.² With respect to the science facility (known as the **Scottish Omni Centre**), SDA seems likely to secure the financial package necessary to launch the project. The intention is to have the Omni Centre on the eastern edge of the Garden Festival site (see below). This translucent, crystalline structure will comprise three elements:

1. a domed omnitheatre for the showing of omnimax films on the evolution of the universe and on science exploration,
 2. an exploratorium which will house scientific exhibits which visitors will be encouraged to manipulate (eg echo tubes),
- and
3. a space ride providing a simulated experience of a journey through the universe.

As such the Omni Centre will capitalise on two other SDA projects: the £36 million Scottish Conference and Exhibition Centre opened late last year on the site of the old Queen's Dock and the Glasgow Garden Festival (GGF).

The **Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre** contains a central 2,000 seat auditorium and is the country's foremost meeting facility. Funding for the project came from the local authorities (£14 million), the private sector (£8 million) and the SDA (£14 million). Opposite the SECC, on the site of the former Princess Dock, is the location for the 1988 **Glasgow Garden Festival**. Executive responsibility for the operation and marketing of the Festival lies with Glasgow Garden Festival 1988 Ltd - a wholly-owned subsidiary of the SDA. The Festival will have six major themes (viz, land and scenery, plants and food, health and well-being, recreation and sport, water and the maritime world, and science and technology) and is expected to cost £38.4 million to stage (84% capital: 16% operating). Income generated is projected at £30.9 million (71% of which 83% is to come from gate receipts), resulting in a net deficit of £7.5 million. The revenue projection is dependent on over 3 million visitors being attracted to the event.

The rationale behind the GGF is, of course, the wider economic gains delivered as a result of running up the deficit. The Garden Festival, SECC and Omni Centre, taken alongside the building of a major hotel on the site of the Exhibition Centre and plans to fashion a restaurant complex out of the old rotunda on the north of the Clyde, promise to transform the docks area and, more importantly, to provide "lift off" for Glasgow's fast growing tourist sector.

Edinburgh and its tourism 'problem'

Edinburgh has a resident population of 425,000 and an employment base of 236,000 jobs. The latter are overwhelmingly

service orientated, with two-thirds being attributable to just four service sector categories: retail distribution (21%), public administration (19%), financial and business (13%) and "tourism" (13%).³ The city's tourism potential is vast. It has an extensive range of attractions (see ~~Table 2 for some of the more notable ones~~), supplemented for three weeks each August by its International Festival of the Arts and the associated Fringe and Tattoo events. It has a well developed base of transport, shopping, and evening entertainments. The accommodation stock includes 21 large hotels with a combined capacity of 2,182 bedrooms, to which the Leeds-based Mount Charlotte hotels group will be adding a further 265 bedrooms at the Greenside Place gap site beside the St James Centre. In addition, there are a large number of smaller hotels and guesthouses.

Edinburgh's tourism 'problem' has four principal dimensions. **First, policy for tourism is lacking** in the sense that there is no actual agreed strategy for marketing and developing the industry being implemented. In this respect, the situation in Edinburgh differs markedly from that in Glasgow and in heritage towns elsewhere in Great Britain (eg York, Windsor and Chester) where policies to guide the development and promotion of the industry have been articulated. In Edinburgh there is a strong case for the town having a positive plan of action for tourism. In commissioning the consultants PEIDA to produce an economic strategy document for Edinburgh, the local Chamber of Commerce has made a tentative beginning in that the report contained a small section on tourism which highlighted the need for action. However, the first real steps towards strategy formulation have yet to be taken and, in this respect, the local district council - not the Chamber of Commerce - is ideally placed to act as prime mover.

Secondly, **Edinburgh does not have a conference/exhibition centre on a scale and of a sophistication necessary to attract international meets.** There have been countless proposals, including a current initiative aimed at the construction of such a centre with a delegate capacity of 1,200 situated on the Lothian Road between the Caledonian and

Sheraton hotels. Capital costs of between £18-19 millions are envisaged, to be met by the public sector, along with an estimated annual operating deficit of approximately £400,000. To help finance the revenue deficit, the private sector - through **Edinburgh's Capital**⁴ - intends to contribute £200,000 each year via an endowment trust fund of £2 million. However, finalisation of the funding package for the Edinburgh conference centre project is still a considerable way off. The scale of the setting-up costs and the annual operating deficit is formidable, and from a national perspective there must be doubts as to the logic of building a facility which will compete directly with the SECC. But without such a centre, it will be well nigh impossible for Edinburgh to maintain existing levels of conference business. Signs of decline are already evident.

Thirdly, **the market performance of Edinburgh's visitor attractions has been far from satisfactory over the 1980-85 period**, and many are in clear need of revitalisation. The Castle and Holyrood Palace both suffered from a major reduction in visitor numbers between 1980-83, as did a number of smaller attractions such as the Childhood, Huntly House and Wax museums. As visitor attractions, their respective trading formulae have become tired and outdated, a criticism which applies with particular force to what should be the jewel in Edinburgh's tourist crown - the Castle. Ways to improve it as a tourist facility by extending the quality and range of interpretative and other visitor services are currently being assessed by the Scottish Office's Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings. Plans are also being considered for the development of two new tourist facilities proximate to the Castle. William Muir (Bond 9) are seeking to convert Castlehill School to a Scotch Whisky Museum and Visitors Centre, while Heritage Projects - operators of the Yorvik Centre⁵ - are associated with a heritage centre project which would utilise the Tolbooth Church to interpret the history of the Old Town and the religious "Spirit of Scotland". Anticipated annual visitor throughputs are 150,000 and 500,000, respectively. Capital costs for the whisky centre will be in the region of £500,000 while the Tolbooth project will involve start-up costs of approximately £1,600,000, with

substantial levels of financial assistance being provided by the Scottish Development Agency and the Scottish Tourist Board.

Fourthly, **the attitude of the Edinburgh District Council's Labour Administration towards tourism is less than positive**. This is in spite of its written statement on tourism in its 1984 election manifesto which seemed to have welcomed tourism unreservedly, and in spite of its commitment to the Edinburgh conference centre proposal. Direct spending on tourism marketing has been reduced from £300,000 to £175,000. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the City Fathers' desire to prevent "junketing" by councillors and officers, from a tourism point of view it has resulted in missed promotional opportunities, eg the Expo 86 trade fair being held in Vancouver - Edinburgh's Canadian twin city. The Council's restrictive car parking policies have adverse 'knock-on' effects from which the tourist suffers. The stance of the Council on tourism appears to be a Canute-like one, wavering between ignoring the problems and opportunities raised by tourism to considering tourism as a nuisance that either has to be put up with or even discouraged. Within the Council there is no corporate strategy for tourism. The tourism-related work of the three departments most closely involved - Industrial Estates and Economic Development, Public Relations and Tourism, and Recreation - remains unco-ordinated. Nor does the Council provide the public sector lead which the Edinburgh tourist industry requires. Its own inactivity in tourism, reinforced by its decision to remain outside the official national network of area tourist boards,⁶ prejudices a united and purposeful approach to the development of Edinburgh's tourism industry.

Conclusion

As the foregoing analysis suggests, there is a growing feeling that Edinburgh is losing its hold on tourists to Glasgow, and that the latter will soon take over as Scotland's major urban resort. Such a feeling can obviously be overstated and exaggerated: Edinburgh is one of those

historic parts of Britain which are particularly attractive to tourists, especially overseas visitors who will continue to want to visit the city. Moreover, there are powerful vested interests which will ensure that this happens. National government and the commercial tourist sector naturally want Edinburgh to give itself over to the needs of the tourist. Government has the overall national benefit in mind, especially tourism's balance of payments contribution and its job creation spin-off. Commercial tourism interests are well represented in Edinburgh. They have the aim of ensuring their own profits and growth, but in doing so they provide job opportunities locally as well as contributing significantly to the rates base. The tourism problem of Edinburgh is essentially one of the city's own making. As is the case in most other heritage towns, there seems to be an attitude which resists the city being given over to the needs of the tourist which, as reflected in the stance of the City Fathers, becomes a recipe for vacillation and inaction. Successive political administrations have failed to intervene authoritatively in tourism. In Glasgow, the opposite has occurred. It cannot be denied that the Glasgow District Council has kept an open mind on tourism and has energetically taken a leading role - alongside SDA - in tackling the tourism issue so as to deliver jobs and wealth and a heightened domestic and international image. **While Glasgow has actually done things, tourism in Edinburgh has stood still.** Political indecision has stymied the local tourist industry precisely because its smooth functioning depends upon the close collaboration of the local public and private sectors. Tourism is a local resource industry par excellence in a truly corporate sense, in that it gives back to the community (in jobs, wealth, civic pride, enhanced services etc) while extracting a commercial living from it, so that **both the tourist industry and its community base stand to benefit mutually from a long-term partnership.** In Edinburgh such a partnership is demonstrably lacking.

The political dimension whereby Glasgow has stolen Edinburgh's tourism crown is paramount. The real sense in which Glasgow's tourism is miles better lies in its tourist organisation and policy. Edinburgh take note.

FOOTNOTES

1. Between 1979-83 three developments in particularly greatly improved the quality and quantity of accommodation available: the Holiday Inn, the rebuilt Grosvenor and the Skean Dhu.
2. Glasgow Action is a consortium of public sector (ie SDA and local authority) and business community interests who are fronting a campaign to renew the city centre area generally by a £300 million package of proposals outlined in their 1985 plan "The Potential of Glasgow City Centre".
3. Viz, the Census of Employment classifications "Hotel and Catering" and "Recreational and Cultural".
4. A wholly-owned subsidiary of Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce.
5. A heritage centre in York which attracts approximately one million visitors annually by recreating Viking York via a "journey through time" experience.
6. In Scotland a national network of area tourist boards exists which, south of the Highlands and Islands area, is co-ordinated by the Scottish Tourist Board. the Boards are local partnerships of the public and private sectors. Edinburgh is one of a handful of district councils which chooses to continue to discharge tourism promotion functions directly as opposed to through the agency of an area tourist board.