

ETAG

**Sustainable Urban Tourism Strategy
(SUTS)**

Final Version

**Approved by ETAG Full Group
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1 The purpose of this Strategy

This strategy has been prepared by the Edinburgh Tourism Action Group (ETAG) to complement its strategy *Inspiring Tourism in Edinburgh: A Framework for Growth 2007-2015*. The purpose of the Sustainable Urban Tourism Strategy (SUTS) is to facilitate collaboration across Edinburgh, so as to increase the sustainability of the city's tourism industry. The SUTS will start off as a 'stand alone' document however it is intended that it will be embedded in the main ETAG strategy when it is next revised.

Edinburgh's ambitious framework for growing tourism revenue in the city must be implemented responsibly, with due regard to potential impacts on the environment, the local economy and residents. The city's tourism industry must also prepare for possible changes in demand as consumers respond to price changes, climate change and environmental concerns.

We have the opportunity to grow tourism and at the same time create a more sustainable tourism industry, which will give Edinburgh a competitive advantage in the world tourism market. The SUTS sets out ten principal objectives, which ETAG proposes are adopted across the city's tourism sector. These objectives will see the formation of a detailed SUTS action plan which will span six years (2009 to 2015), with the actions for each year embedded within the annual ETAG action plan.

2 Our tourism growth ambitions

Scottish Tourism: The Next Decade (Scottish Executive 2006) sets a national target for increasing gross tourism revenues in Scotland by 50% by 2015. The document states that this "must not be at the expense of our environment, or our culture and communities". The focus is on "growing value faster than volume" and it is suggested that the growth will come from more visits to Scotland (+20%) and an increase in spend per trip (+25%). Particular emphasis is placed on business tourism and extending the season with events in off-peak months.

ETAG's strategy document *A Framework for Growth 2007-2015* sets a target of 5% year-on-year growth in tourism revenues to Edinburgh, which is equal to a 63% growth in income over 10 years.

Tourism represents around 35% of the world's exports of services (World Trade Organisation). ETAG accepts that tourism is an essential part of the economy of Scotland and a major driver of economic activity in Edinburgh, and encourages its development in a responsible and sustainable manner.

3 What is meant by sustainable tourism and why it is important

3.1 The Scottish view

Scottish Tourism: The Next Decade (Scottish Executive 2006) states that “Sustainable Tourism in its purest sense is an industry which attempts to make a low impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate income, employment and the conservation of local ecosystems. It is responsible tourism, which is both ecologically and culturally sensitive”. The national strategy goes on to say that “we need to ensure that tourism growth doesn’t result in the degradation of the very environment which is one of our unique selling points” and “We want to be Europe’s most sustainable tourism destination”. The City of Edinburgh Council’s Vision for Edinburgh (2003) also states that by 2015 “...Edinburgh will be the most successful and sustainable city in Northern Europe”.

In the long term, sustainable tourism means preserving the product, the cultural, natural and built heritage for future generations. The national and city aspirations above are designed to provide sustainable competitive advantage and the dangers of not acting boldly in this area jeopardises the long term ambitions for sustainable growth.

3.2 The World Tourism Organisation view

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (*Sustainable Development of Tourism Conceptual Definition*, 2004) states that sustainable tourism should:

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

While the principal focus of the UNWTO is tourism in developing countries, the elements of this definition are relevant to Edinburgh.

3.3 Climate Change

We are living at a time of increasing scientific and public concern over Climate Change. In the report *Climate Change and Tourism* (UNWTO, UN Environment Programme, World Meteorological Organisation, October 2007) the concerns over climate change are emphasised, with reference to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Study (*The Physical Science Basis* IPCC 2007) that states that the pace of climate change is “very likely”

(>90% probability) to accelerate with continued greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at or above current rates, with the best estimate that globally averaged surface temperatures will rise by 1.8C to 4.0C by the end of the 21st century.

Climate Change and Tourism discusses direct impacts of Climate Change on tourism, as well as the effects of tourism on Climate Change. The report lists a number of actions local stakeholders can take and concludes that now is the time to work together to produce a more sustainable and environmentally aware tourism product.

The argument that acting now will save money in the future is emphasised by *The Economics of Climate Change* (Lord Stern October 2006) which states that 1% of global GDP invested at the time of the report will result in the avoidance of the worst affects of climate change and global GDP falling by 20%. In June 2008 Stern increased the estimate of investment required to 2% to take into account faster than expected climate change.

4 What sustainable tourism means for Edinburgh

To achieve an effective sustainable tourism strategy, ETAG considered all three interdependent elements – economic, environmental and socio-cultural – and, in line with the European Commission Tourism Sustainability Group’s list of key challenges, identified seven areas for action in Edinburgh. The first three challenges in this list are considered to be of greatest importance, with the following four of considerable importance.

Greatest importance:

- i. Transport impacts
- ii. Seasonality
- iii. Resource use

Considerable importance:

- iv. Natural and cultural heritage
- v. Quality of life for residents
- vi. Quality of jobs
- vii. Accessibility to all

4.1 Transport

VisitScotland’s *Carbon Neutrality and Sustainable Tourism* (December 2006) notes that “Transport ... is central to tourism, but it also puts pressure on our natural resources and makes a contribution to our global environmental impact.” The transport challenges for sustainable tourism in Edinburgh range from the global (eg reconciling economic growth with greenhouse gas emissions from air travel), the national (eg encouraging modal shift from road to rail transport) and to the local (eg city congestion, public transport and ‘walkability’). There has been detailed research on this subject, some of which is summarised below with additional background detail in Appendix 1.2.

Globally, the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that aviation's contribution to man-made climate change is currently about 3.5%, and could rise to 15% by the year 2050 if no measures are taken. Air travel is however essential for the majority of international visitors to reach Edinburgh. We need to have a flexible outlook on where future trade will come from and changing economic circumstances should be reviewed annually in order to identify trends. A high oil price or recession may for example result in increased use of video conferencing by business people or a reduction in long haul tourists, which would change the balance of tourists coming to Edinburgh.

Any focus (even in part) on attracting international tourists may appear contentious since it is likely that air travel will be involved which is carbon-generating, however it is important to think of the carbon footprint of travellers against their potential economic spend. It is likely that a tourist travelling further may spend significantly more during a longer stay in Edinburgh, therefore producing a positive economic impact to some degree outweighing the environmental impact. Efforts should be made to measure carbon footprints relative to spend.

Nationally, efforts should be directed towards encouraging alternative travel methods for trips within the UK. A London Sustainable Development Commission study in 2004 stated that “Between London, and Edinburgh and Glasgow, air has three-quarters of the combined air and rail market. On routes where rail should be viable, air has a high share of traffic. The lack of a high speed line coupled with poor operator performance means that air travel may often be preferred to rail, particularly if time is at a premium, for example a weekend away.”

Locally, ETAG should encourage tourism-linked infrastructure developments in the city – such as new hotels - to be built on major or planned public transport routes, so as to minimise the impact on traffic congestion. ETAG should encourage local tourism businesses to promote public transport to and in the city. Walking can be encouraged with appropriate pedestrian signage and maps. Cycling can also be promoted with cycle lanes, increased bike parking and hire facilities.

Key Theme: Global - support the aviation and transport industries' own efforts to reduce their impact on the environment by operating as efficiently as possible with cleaner aircraft with a high proportion of occupied seats and fuel which has a less harmful impact. Direct ferry routes are also important as an alternative to flying, or sailing to England and then driving to Scotland.

Key Theme: National and local - encourage train and coach travel as an alternative to air travel where available.

Key Theme: National - possible collaboration with LSDC (London Sustainable Development Commission) and other London-based and Scottish organisations/interest groups to raise awareness of the need to improve the London-Scotland rail link and promote this to visitors.

Key Theme: Local - support and promote local transport options, including trams, park and ride, Waverley Line, pro-cycling policies, late-night buses, improved signage around the city and integrated transport ticketing/timetabling. The website www.travelinescotland.com is a useful tool that can also be promoted to visitors. The concept of accommodation providers offering day tickets for Lothian buses can also be investigated.

Key Theme: Marketing - develop, agree and use consistently a clear Edinburgh Statement on the acceptable balance between economic, social and environmental impacts of international air travel.

Key Theme: Marketing - encourage local tourism businesses and economic initiatives to promote and integrate greener travel in their plans in accordance with the transport hierarchy.



The Green Tourism Transport Hierarchy

4.2 Seasonality

The *Framework for Growth*, in line with *Scottish Tourism: the next decade*, targets growth in tourism revenue rather than volume. Instead of greater numbers of visitors at peak times, the focus is on increasing year-round tourism, length of stay and visitor spend, with the emphasis on higher-spend international and business tourists. There is also an opportunity to encourage business visitors already in Edinburgh to extend their stay for leisure purposes.

The aim is therefore to meet revenue growth targets with the greatest possible increase in visitors at the quietest possible time of year.

The tourism industry in Edinburgh has been working towards increasing the spread of visitors throughout the year, and growth in accommodation occupancy in the traditionally quieter months of January to March has already been observed (Appendix 1.1 table).

This strategy takes account of the potential long-term seasonality effects on leisure travel of Climate Change. The Mediterranean is expected to become hotter, which could mean more domestic consumers as well as more Southern Europe consumers seeking cooler weather. The knock-on effect could mean that a proportion of consumers may seek to avoid the increased summer-time congestion by visiting the UK in the 'shoulder' seasons.

It is important that where possible, consideration is given to the removal of any statutory obstacles which may impact on a business's ability to trade year-round. A recent change in City of Edinburgh Council policy means that 'outside table and chair' licences allow the holder to have external furniture all year, rather than just the summer months.

Key Theme: Marketing - minimise perceptions that Scotland suffers 'bad winters' and emphasise that this can be a relatively dry season, with very little snow in recent years.

Key Theme: Marketing - encourage leisure tourism in shoulder months (October to March) where there is the greatest requirement and opportunity for increased trade.

4.3 Resource Use

The UK's Green Tourism Business Scheme (GTBS) was set up in 1997 specifically to promote environmental good practice and is now the leading sustainable tourism certification scheme of its type in the world. The GTBS is recognised by UK national and regional government as a crucial part of its drive towards sustainability.

ETAG will use the GTBS as a tool to encourage local tourism businesses to improve their consumption patterns, including energy efficiency, sustainable procurement of goods and energy, minimising food miles and food and packaging waste, managing waste effectively (including reusing, recycling and composting) and optimising use of local public transport by both the business and its users.

High quality local produce is a major asset to Scotland and provides a strong Unique Selling Point (USP) for visitors. The use of 'provenance' on City menus, greater linkages with Farmers Markets and the NFU Scotland's "What's on your plate" campaign can all be promoted to make best use of this asset.

Key Theme: actively encourage Edinburgh businesses to join GTBS to help reach national targets for 2010 and 2015 set out in *Scottish Tourism: the Next Decade* (2006). This can be done through the promotion of GTBS and also "Going Green" a relatively new programme, which is seen as an introduction to GTBS membership.

Key Theme: highlight the opportunity of making best use of resources. An example of this is the Edinburgh Cyrenians FareShare project (www.cyrenians.org.uk) which provides 15,000 meals per week in Edinburgh with unused supplies from companies such as Prêt à Manger, Radisson SAS Edinburgh and Marks & Spencer. The greater availability of recycling street bins would also reduce tourists' paper/plastic/cans being sent to landfill.

Key Theme: support the usage of local produce and sale of local products by Edinburgh businesses.

4.4 Natural and Cultural Heritage

Edinburgh's tourism industry needs modern infrastructure in order to compete with other worldwide destinations, but visitor surveys regularly rate Edinburgh's built heritage as the biggest attraction. It is vital to preserve and maintain Edinburgh's world heritage status and therefore new city-centre developments must be carefully planned. To accommodate this, as well as to enhance local access to jobs and benefits to neighbourhood businesses, there must also be greater emphasis on spreading accommodation and other tourist facilities to other areas of the city.

In the Edinburgh Visitor Survey (TNS 2007), participants were asked "What has most impressed you about the City of Edinburgh". The top answer given was "Architecture and buildings" as stated by 41% of respondents.

A recent survey showed that in the circumstances where a visitor levy could be charged, 54% of visitors surveyed thought the money should be spent on sustainable and environmental improvements.

In December 2006, VisitScotland's Chairman Peter Lederer set out an aspiration for Scotland to become the world's first carbon neutral tourism destination. The City of Edinburgh Council's target is that the city's economy should be zero carbon by 2050. In terms of local action, in June 2007, the Radisson SAS Edinburgh launched a programme to offset carbon emissions associated with meetings and events at the hotel. The programme, called "Climate Friendly Events" incorporates a combination of significant reductions in resource use, comprehensive staff training to improve awareness of environmental issues, as well as complimentary carbon offsetting for all events delegates. The hotel offsets approximately 40 kg of CO₂ per day delegate through Climate Change Scotland, a non-profit carbon reduction scheme that benefits the Scottish tourism industry. Climate Friendly Events services are standard for all events, and are included in the day delegate rate.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) 1990 defines Ecotourism as "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well being of local people". Although this is an urban tourism strategy, this definition is an important basis for the relationship required between host and visitor to maintain the physical fabric of the city. A commitment to this relationship in turn will increase the attractiveness of the city to those who are committed to the values of ecotourism.

Key Theme: encourage businesses to reduce carbon emissions and offset unavoidable carbon emissions with emphasis on schemes that support initiatives that invest in Scotland, such as 'Climate Change Scotland'.

Key Theme: encourage the use of natural and cultural heritage as a reason to visit Edinburgh.

4.5 Quality of life for residents

For tourism to be sustainable in Edinburgh, the tourism product needs to be a high quality experience, which includes the reception that the visitor receives from the local population. In order for this reception to be friendly and welcoming, residents must see visitors as supporting their quality of life.

Direct 'quality of life' benefits from tourism include job creation, new infrastructure including better public transport, improved facilities and diverse events. All of these are not only necessary for the strength of our tourist industry, but are also made possible because of the local economic impact of the 3 million plus visitors who come to the city every year. International visitors provide an opportunity for cultural interchange and are vital to Edinburgh's thriving arts scene, which also benefits the local population. The Inspiring Events strategy sets out the benefits of events and festivals to the City.

The Edinburgh Residents Survey (IPSOS MORI, Spring 2007) showed that 63% of those polled thought that tourism benefited the resident population. This shows that tourism is generally regarded positively in relation to its impact on local people.

Key Theme: promote the 'quality of life' benefits of tourism such as better transport, improved facilities and diverse events.

Key Theme: continue the 'Tourism is Everyone's Business' campaign.

Key Theme: encourage local marketing campaigns aimed at increasing take up of entry to local attractions by residents eg Edinburgh-Glasgow fun day.

4.6 Quality of jobs

With around 31,000 employed in the sector, tourism is a major component of Edinburgh's job market. With the *Framework for Growth's* ambition to grow tourism value by 63%, emphasis must be placed on employment opportunities for local residents.

Migrant labour currently provides a very valuable resource. However with a likely reduction in the future flow of European migrant workers and effects of demographic change; we need to reduce our dependency on itinerant workers. To attract people to tourism as a first choice career, efforts have to be made to raise the perception of tourism, with improved links between educational and training establishments and business.

Key Theme: Recruitment - support tourism businesses to promote career development opportunities within the sector.

Key Theme: Recruitment - support tourism businesses to improve conditions of service for employees.

4.7 Accessibility to all

As with quality of life, we have to ensure that the resident population benefits from tourism but also feels included. There is potential for Edinburgh to further expand itself as a luxury destination however there must always be provision at the 'affordable' end of the market. Social inclusion means that the vast majority of the resident population can enjoy the services and products being offered across the city. This includes world class public transport and opportunities to enjoy the events that are often sustained by tourists. We should also ensure that DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) legislation is recognised and implemented in the city; and transport is accessible to all.

Key Theme: examine how well local tourism businesses have been able to meet the requirements of DDA (including premises and websites) and signpost to advice that can be offered to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Key Theme: encourage the promotion of businesses that are particularly disability friendly via websites such as www.disabledgo.info

Key Theme: support the City of Edinburgh Council 'Local Transport Strategy 2007-2012' objective 5.6 to 'provide a sustainable transport system in Edinburgh that is accessible to all regardless of disability, income, age or ethnic group'.

5 Objectives and Implementation

Below are the ten principal objectives of Edinburgh's Sustainable Urban Tourism Strategy:

- 1) To establish an ETAG Sustainable Tourism Sub Group and raise awareness of this strategy. Communication is a key activity and it is important to make people aware of the current situation and what actions need to be taken in future. This will encourage them to become involved and increase the likelihood of them implementing sustainable practices. An ETAG website section devoted to 'sustainability' should be created to emphasize key contacts and organisations that provide support.
- 2) To produce a SUTS Action Plan for six years from 2009-15 and embed each year's actions in the annual ETAG action plan.
- 3) To develop an appropriate set of sustainability indicators and targets designed to make Edinburgh a European leader on sustainable tourism, consistent with Scottish and ETAG tourism growth targets as well as local and national sustainability priorities.
- 4) To act on Transportation key themes via the SUTS action plan-

Key Theme: Global - support the aviation and transport industries' own efforts to reduce their impact on the environment by operating as efficiently as possible with cleaner aircraft with a high proportion of occupied seats and fuel which has a less harmful impact. Direct ferry routes are also important as an alternative to flying, or sailing to England and then driving to Scotland.

Key Theme: National and local - encourage train and coach travel as an alternative to air travel where available.

Key Theme: National - possible collaboration with LSDC (London Sustainable Development Commission) and other London-based and Scottish organisations/interest groups to raise awareness of the need to improve the London-Scotland rail link and promote this to visitors.

Key Theme: Local - support and promote local transport options, including trams, park and ride, Waverley Line, pro-cycling policies, late-night buses, improved signage around the city and integrated transport ticketing/timetabling. The website www.travelinescotland.com is a useful tool that can also be promoted to visitors. The concept of accommodation providers offering day tickets for Lothian buses can also be investigated.

Key Theme: Marketing - develop, agree and use consistently a clear Edinburgh Statement on the acceptable balance between economic, social and environmental impacts of international air travel.

Key Theme: Marketing - encourage local tourism businesses and economic initiatives to promote and integrate greener travel in their plans in accordance with the transport hierarchy.

- 5) To act on Seasonality key themes via the SUTS action plan-

Key Theme: Marketing - minimise perceptions that Scotland suffers 'bad winters' and emphasise that this can be a relatively dry season, with very little snow in recent years.

Key Theme: Marketing - encourage leisure tourism in shoulder months, where there is the greatest requirement and opportunity for increased trade.

- 6) To act on Resource use key themes via the SUTS action plan-

Key Theme: actively encourage Edinburgh businesses to join GTBS to help reach national targets for 2010 and 2015 set out in *Scottish Tourism: the Next Decade* (2006). This can be done through the promotion of GTBS and also "Going Green" a relatively new programme, which is seen as an introduction to GTBS membership.

Key Theme: highlight the opportunity of making best use of resources. An example is the Edinburgh Cyrenians FareShare project (www.cyrenians.org.uk) which provides 15,000 meals per week in Edinburgh with unused supplies from companies such as Prêt à Manger, Radisson SAS Edinburgh and Marks & Spencer. The greater availability of recycling street bins would also reduce tourists' paper/plastic/cans being sent to landfill.

Key Theme: support the usage of local produce and sale of local products by Edinburgh businesses.

- 7) To act on Natural and Cultural Heritage key themes via the SUTS action plan-

Key Theme: encourage businesses to reduce carbon emissions and offset unavoidable carbon emissions with emphasis on schemes that support initiatives that invest in Scotland, such as 'Climate Change Scotland'.

Key Theme: encourage the use of natural and cultural heritage as a reason to visit Edinburgh.

- 8) To act on Quality of life for residents key themes via the SUTS action plan-

Key Theme: promote the 'quality of life' benefits of tourism such as better transport, improved facilities and diverse events.

Key Theme: continue the 'Tourism is Everyone's Business' campaign.

Key Theme: encourage local marketing campaigns aimed at increasing take up of entry to local attractions by residents eg Edinburgh-Glasgow fun day.

9) To act on Quality of jobs key themes via the SUTS action plan-

Key Theme: Recruitment - support tourism businesses to promote career development opportunities within the sector.

Key Theme: Recruitment - support tourism businesses to improve conditions of service for employees.

10) To act on Accessibility to all key themes via the SUTS action plan-

Key Theme: examine how well local tourism businesses have been able to meet the requirements of DDA (including premises and websites) and signpost to advice that can be offered to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

Key Theme: encourage the promotion of businesses that are particularly disability friendly via websites such as www.disabledgo.info

Key Theme: support the City of Edinburgh Council 'Local Transport Strategy 2007-2012' objective 5.6 to 'provide a sustainable transport system in Edinburgh that is accessible to all regardless of disability, income, age or ethnic group'.

Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and requires constant monitoring of impacts and the introduction of the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

ETAG is best placed to implement this strategy by setting up a sub group to help co-ordinate sustainability actions. The first step for the sub group will be to develop an action plan detailing how the SUTS objectives will be taken forward. It is expected that six years will be required to deal with the majority of objectives in this strategy. The action plan will include information on how progress will be measured and who will be responsible for leading on actions. The SUTS actions to be implemented in each year will be embedded in the annual ETAG action plan.

Appendices

1.1 Seasonality – occupancy figures

Hotel Rooms in Edinburgh (Scottish Tourism Occupancy Survey)

Av of Occupancy (%)	Year				
Month	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Jan	48	51	53	53	56
Feb	63	62	66	64	68
Mar	67	64	70	71	71
Apr	65	68	74	70	72
May	74	76	78	81	82
Jun	81	82	83	84	86
Jul	83	79	85	82	83
Aug	89	89	86	89	89
Sep	79	87	85	85	87
Oct	77	80	80	80	76
Nov	71	73	73	76	72
Dec	58	62	64	64	64

1.2 Transport – additional information

Tourism in Edinburgh is heavily dependent on air travel, with 74% of (non UK) European and 61% of other International visitors arriving by plane (Edinburgh Visitor Survey, TNS 2007). Currently Edinburgh airport has 87 international connections and 26 domestic connections.

On a national level “Inward tourism by air accounts for 80% of foreign visitor spending and contributes over £10 billion to the UK economy annually” (British Air Transport Association).

Especially at a time of significant route expansion, we have to recognise the local environmental impact such as noise and air pollution as well as the global environmental impact of carbon emissions from flights. ETAG is not responsible for aviation policy and must operate within the framework provided by Scottish and UK governments, however there is opportunity to express and promote a view point.

There is the overall economic case, which is laid out in “Carbon Neutrality and Sustainable Tourism” (www.visitscotland.org/about_us/faqs/carbon_neutral.htm December 2006) Within the statement, it is asked “If you want Scotland to be a carbon neutral destination, should you be working to attract more direct flights to Scotland?” It goes on to answer this as follows “Transport is a key issue. It is central to tourism, but it also puts pressure on our natural resources and makes a contribution to our global environmental impact. Tourism is crucial for Scotland’s economic future and it is important this industry still continues to grow. However, for tourism to grow, **we must accept that air travel will continue to be important.** We support the aviation and transport industries’ own efforts to reduce their impact on the environment by developing cleaner aircrafts and fuel which has a less harmful impact on the environment. Some airlines have their own carbon off-set schemes. VisitScotland works with the full range of transport providers including ferry companies, bus and train companies as well as airlines”.

Air travel is currently essential for a high volume of international visitors to reach Edinburgh. Efforts should however be directed towards encouraging alternative travel methods for trips within the UK, where air travel is not considered essential. The London Sustainable Development Commission (LSDC) study “The impacts of air transport on London 2004” found that “(from London) five and arguable six of the top ten destination...could potentially be served by high speed rail rather than air, either at present or in the future. These services represent... 14% of all London airport travel” and they state that “350,000 trips per year are made by London residents to and from Scotland to visit friends and relatives. Between

London, and Edinburgh and Glasgow, air has three-quarters of the combined air and rail market. **On routes where rail should be viable, air has a high share of traffic.** The lack of a high speed line coupled with poor operator performance means that air travel may often be preferred to rail, particularly if time is at a premium, for example a weekend away”.

The LSDC study found that the London to Edinburgh rail journey (632km/typically 4hrs20) is fairly comparable to journeys such as Tokyo to Osaka (515km/typically 2hrs30), Madrid to Seville (471km/typically 2hr15) or Paris to Lyon (430km/typically 2hrs) but with significantly higher speed trains operating on these routes, the rail market as a proportion of rail/air is just c.25% between London and Edinburgh compared to 86%, 82% and 88% on these comparable routes. The report goes on to state a ‘Key Finding’ is that London-Scotland rail links should be improved.

There is a clear trade-off between environmental impact and the benefits of trade, be they economic or the social benefits of linking people across the world. ETAG believes that we must support the growth of flights to International destinations since air travel is the most viable method of transport to and from these overseas destinations. We must all work to explain the economic and social benefits of air travel, where there is no viable alternative and also encourage the air travel industry to reduce their impact on the environment.

In contrast however within the UK, where it is available, encouragement needs to be given to train and coach travel as an alternative to air travel where available. National Express announced in February 2008 that they would be adding extra seats on the East Coast line – and the company would “consistently” achieve travel times between Edinburgh and London of 4 hours 20 minutes, with fewer average stops per journey.

The Scottish Government’s “Go Greener in 2008” pledge states “Pay back the environmental impact of any flights you take and choose not to fly when there’s a suitable alternative”.

The new Edinburgh trams will assist in improving the public transport offering within Edinburgh. ‘Park & Ride’ and eventually the Waverley line will also assist in bringing visitors into the city. Ferry connections are also important as an environmentally sound alternative to air travel. We must also support pro-cycling policies and improved signage around the city.