

## Visit Inverness Loch Ness Welcomes New Destination Director

Visit Inverness Loch Ness (VILN) is delighted to welcome Ellen Fogel Walker as the organisation's new Destination Director, bringing a wealth of experience, passion, and energy to this vital role. Ellen's appointment marks an exciting new chapter for VILN as we continue to promote and develop our region as a must-visit destination for both domestic and international audiences.

As Destination Director, Ellen will lead the organisation's strategic vision, working closely with members, partners and stakeholders to raise the profile of Inverness and Loch Ness, champion the visitor economy, and strengthen collaboration across the tourism and hospitality sector. Her appointment reinforces VILN's commitment to ensuring the voices of members are heard, represented, and supported.

Joint Chairs of VILN, Victoria Erasmus and Tony Story said:

*"We're thrilled to welcome Ellen, her experience in sustainable tourism makes her the ideal person to lead Visit Inverness Loch Ness into its next exciting chapter. She brings a fresh perspective, and a strong track record of collaboration and innovation. We're confident she will build on our region's strengths and drive forward our vision for a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable visitor economy."*

*"This is a critical time for our industry as we continue to recover, adapt, and grow in a rapidly changing landscape and economy. Supporting our membership and wider community requires strong, focused leadership — and that's exactly what Ellen brings to the role."*

Ellen originally hails from South Carolina's Lowcountry and brings over a decade of experience across hospitality, heritage, and tourism sectors in the USA, Spain, and Scotland. She holds degrees from Flagler College in Florida and completed her postgraduate studies at the University of Stirling, where she specialised in heritage planning and cultural development.

Her deep passion for empowering communities and delivering outstanding visitor experiences has been a consistent theme throughout her career. In Scotland, she has worked extensively with the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), holding roles at Culloden Battlefield and, most recently, serving as Operations Manager for Aberdeenshire North, overseeing Castle Fraser, Fyvie Castle, Haddo House, and Pitmedden Garden.

Ellen first visited Inverness in 2016 through a cultural exchange programme and immediately felt a connection with the area. She returned permanently in 2020, settling in Inverness and continuing to build strong links with local heritage and tourism through her work and community involvement.

Speaking about her new role, Ellen said:

*"I am beyond honoured to be representing our members to promote our incredible and internationally acclaimed region. Finding a chosen home is an incredibly special thing, and I am passionate about sharing the love that I have for this destination with the world."*

*"My hope for this role is that I will share how the people of this region make it a globally recognised destination. The thing that attracted me to this role and VILN as an organisation is their commitment to their members. As the new Destination Director, I look forward to advocating for them and driving increased visibility for our region."*

Looking ahead, Ellen is committed to prioritising member engagement and representation across key industry matters.

*“Our members can expect to have their views heard and have representation on essential matters for our industry. Experienced in political advocacy on local and national levels, I understand the accountability we have to our members to deliver our business plan and provide value.”*

*“Starting in my first few days in June, I will be prioritising getting out into the community and meeting our members. At the same time, I will be working closely to ensure our members are represented throughout the ongoing situation with the impending Visitor Levy. VILN exists not only to promote the region, but also to improve relationships between our members to create a welcoming environment where we all can benefit.”*

With first-hand experience across all corners of the visitor economy—from hands-on roles in hospitality to strategic leadership and conservation—Ellen brings a grounded and empathetic perspective to her new role.

*“As someone who has worked in almost every role of our industry—from changing beds and washing dishes to compiling reports for world heritage—I understand the hard work that goes into making it all happen. I hope that this experience will allow me the insight to represent you all in the coming years. It truly is an honour and a privilege.”*

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#### **About Visit Inverness Loch Ness**

Visit Inverness Loch Ness is the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the Inverness and Loch Ness area. Representing a wide network of tourism and hospitality businesses, the organisation is dedicated to promoting the region, supporting sustainable tourism growth, and delivering value for its members.