



visit **Inverness**  
**Lochness**

# A Manifesto for the Future

A call to action ahead of the  
7<sup>th</sup> May 2026 Scottish  
Parliamentary Elections

# About Visit Inverness Loch Ness



Inverness and Loch Ness represent one of the most desired destinations in the UK, second only to Edinburgh in Scotland in terms of overall visitors. It is where our wild landscapes meet the heartbeat of Highland culture. Visit Inverness Loch Ness works as the official tourism body for the destination. Directly representing over 490 businesses to the world and working with our communities in mind, VILN endeavours to support a bright future for our ever-evolving landscapes.

The organisation became the first Tourism Business Improvement District in the UK when it was established in 2014 and operates within a defined destination covering over 1200 square miles, including the Highland Capital Inverness and the world-famous Loch Ness.

To support its members, who operate in more than 30 sectors, the organisation delivers a range of activities from its business plan, including marketing, infrastructure, events, business tourism, business development, and lobbying.

# Foreword:

## Vision for Inverness & Loch Ness

## What we need from Scottish Government



Ellen Fogel Walker

CEO, Visit Inverness Loch Ness

Inverness & Loch Ness sit as a region that is at the cusp of unprecedented change and investment. The projects that are planned over the next 20 years have the potential to irreversibly change our places for the better. Visit Inverness Loch Ness is urging those not to forget the industry, which is working to keep Highland traditions and culture alive for both its people and visitors at a time when rising costs are increasing pressure on our sector.

We recognise the importance of a stronger working relationship with the energy sector to tourism to provide effective management over accommodation pressures for staff and ensure that positive steps are taken to contribute to infrastructure development for local communities and visitors alike.

Tourism is the heartbeat of our communities. It sustains jobs, supports local enterprise, preserves culture, and enables our region to share its remarkable landscapes and stories with the world. In sustaining these jobs and businesses, tourism creates happy, thriving places. Places which are lived in, worked in, and visited.

This manifesto sets out Visit Inverness Loch Ness's clear priorities ahead of the 2026 Scottish Parliament election. It aligns closely with and supports the policy positions of the Association of Scotland's Self-Caterers and the Scottish Tourism Alliance, reflecting our shared commitment to a sustainable, competitive, and community-focused visitor economy.

We stand ready to work in partnership with Government, industry and communities to ensure that Inverness and Loch Ness continue to thrive as a world-class destination. One that delivers lasting benefits for those who live, work, and visit here. We need a Scottish Government that will do the same.

# Introduction

## Uniting for a shared vision and what we need from Scottish Government



The visitor economy is a cornerstone of Scotland's prosperity, supporting communities, businesses and jobs across all regions. Yet, with rising costs, increased regulatory burdens, and mounting cost pressures on businesses and travellers alike, the continued success of the sector, particularly in rural and fragile economies such as Inverness & Loch Ness, is at risk of being compromised if decisive action is not taken.

We are a region that stands to benefit from billions invested in green energy over the coming decades. We need projects that will build on the success of the tremendous momentum building in our region over the past few years, from opening the Inverness Castle Experience and continually making record-breaking years of sustainable tourism growth across the destination.

We are world-leading in our efforts to maintain a sustainable destination for our future. We need leaders in Scottish Government to represent our sector because in Scotland tourism touches every home. Tourism is not only for visitors, but ensures that our places are thriving as it keeps heritage, culture and activity alive for its residents as well.

# 1. Champion Scotland's Visitor Economy

We call on all political parties and the next Scottish Government to:

**Recognise the value of the visitor economy** as a national economic priority and a key driver of jobs, investment and community sustainability across Scotland's regions.

- Tourism and hospitality underpin thousands of jobs and generate vital economic activity, especially in the Highlands and Islands and more specifically in Inverness and Loch Ness.

**Promote coherent regulation and proportional policy frameworks** that protect local communities while enabling businesses to compete globally as called for by both ASSC and STA.



# 2. Support Sustainable Growth and Competitiveness

The continued resilience of our visitor economy depends on a **policy environment that supports growth rather than constrains it**. As costs rise our business communities risk not only growth, but the livelihoods of their teams. We ask for:

**2.1 A fair and competitive fiscal framework**, including reform of Non-Domestic Rates that reflect the realities of seasonal and visitor-focused enterprises.

**2.2 Practical, proportionate regulation on letting and hospitality**, drawing on the ASSC's evidence-based recommendations for short-term lets reform that supports businesses and communities alike.

**2.3 Targeted interventions to address rising cost pressures**, including energy, insurance and payroll costs ensuring that Scotland remains an attractive and affordable place for both visitors and operators.

**2.4 A visitor levy framework that is simple, equitable and beneficial**, supporting destination marketing and infrastructure without imposing undue burden on small enterprises or deterring visitors.

Together with these requests, we request that changes to taxation and fees be considered at similar rates to those found across the UK as to not discourage growth in Scotland compared to other countries.



# 3. Connect People, Places and Experiences

Investment in connectivity remains central to future success.

**3.1 Strengthening transport and digital infrastructure** that enhances visitor access to Inverness, Loch Ness and surrounding areas, improving competitiveness and visitor satisfaction.

**3.2 Aligning investment in broadband, digital transformation and data collection** so that local businesses can leverage technology to market, manage and adapt to changing visitor behaviours.

**3.3 Supporting aviation, bus, rail and integrated ticketing systems** that reduce travel friction, improve the safety of our destinations, encourage longer stays and disperse visitor spend throughout the region.

**3.4 Mandated investment in place for potential energy projects** that are accessible on a region-wide basis to maximise benefit.



# 4. Invest in People, Places and Communities

Our manifesto's vision is rooted in thriving local communities that benefit from sustainable visitor economy growth:

## 4.1 Skills and Workforce Development

Support for training, career pathways and business resilience programmes that address recruitment challenges and seasonal workforce gaps.

## 4.2 Place-Based Partnerships

Investment in community tourism initiatives that diversify product offerings throughout shoulder seasons, spreading economic benefits more widely.

## 4.3 Strengthened Destination Management

Stable, ring-fenced funding for VisitScotland, DMOs and local partnership organisations who are essential for building long-term marketing, experience development, and place management. Taking note of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership framework being used in England.



# 5. Evidence-Led Policy and Strategic Collaboration

We urge a **strategic partnership model between government and industry**, with structured engagement and robust impact assessment protocols before introducing new regulations or levies. This collaborative approach should:

- Ensure local voices and destination insights inform national policy design.
- Provide transparent evaluation of regulatory impacts on investment, competitiveness, and visitor demand.
- Promote Loch Ness & Inverness and more widely Scotland as a destination that blends **authentic cultural heritage, world-class experiences, and community benefit.**



# Conclusion

## A Shared Future for Scotland's Visitor Economy

We have a successful sector which has long left a mark of all of those who have visited, forever carrying a piece of Scotland with them. To protect this welcoming space for the future, we need to work in partnership - with all levels of Government, with fellow BIDs, with other tourism bodies, with the education sector and the energy sector.

Visit Inverness Loch Ness stands with the ASSC and the STA in seeking a future where Scotland's visitor economy is championed, supported, and empowered to deliver sustainable economic success for all regions and communities.

We call on all political parties contesting the 2026 Scottish Parliament election to adopt bold, practical, and partnership-driven commitments that safeguard competitiveness, address cost pressures, and cement Scotland's position as a globally admired tourism destination.



Want to make  
contact with Visit  
Inverness Loch  
Ness?

---

Call Ellen our CEO at  
07443 456 549

---

Email us at  
[ellen@visitln.com](mailto:ellen@visitln.com)

visit **Inverness**  
**Loch Ness**