



House of Commons
Scottish Affairs Committee

Promoting Scotland Internationally: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2022–23

**First Special Report of
Session 2023–24**

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The Scottish Affairs Committee

The Scottish Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Scotland Office (including (i) relations with the Scottish Parliament and (ii) administration and expenditure of the offices of the Advocate General for Scotland (but excluding individual cases and advice given within government by the Advocate General)).

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First Special Report

On 13 September 2023 the Scottish Affairs Committee published its Eighth Report of Session 2022–23, [Promoting Scotland Internationally](#) (HC 625). The Government response was received on 14 November 2023 and is appended below.

Appendix: Government Response

Introduction

The UK Government is grateful to the Scottish Affairs Committee for their report ‘Promoting Scotland Internationally’.

This response addresses the Committee’s recommendations in the order in which they appear in the ‘Conclusions and Recommendations’ section of the inquiry report. We look forward to continuing to work with the SAC on this matter.

Beyond the tartan: Scotland’s international brand

Recommendation 1: *The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) should publish a strategy, to be circulated across its international diplomatic network, which sets out guidance and expectations for embassies on holding events to mark Scotland’s key Dates, St Andrew’s Day and Burns Night. This document should give clear direction on what current UK Departmental (e.g. FCDO, Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and Department for Business and Trade) priorities are for promoting Scotland internationally, and how both the modern and traditional aspects of the Scottish brand should be incorporated as part of this activity. In its response to this report, the UK Government should agree a definition of the Scottish brand to be advanced by it internationally, followed by annual reporting updates on embassy activity promoting Scotland that has taken place each year. The Committee recognises the interest of successive Scottish Governments in this area which currently resides in the portfolio of Cabinet Secretary for External Affairs—we therefore urge the Scottish Government adopt a similar approach.* (Paragraph 18)

The UK Government recognises the importance of holding events at our overseas Missions to celebrate key dates such as St Andrew’s Day and Burns Night.

The UK’s overseas network across 280 posts promotes Scottish culture, business and other critical sectors throughout the year, not limited to St Andrew’s Day and Burns Night—although these remain key points in the cultural calendar.

The UK Government’s written evidence to the Committee in October 2022 provided wide-ranging examples of UK missions across the network taking advantage of St Andrew’s Day and Burns Night to celebrate Scottish culture and host suppers, which promote Scottish produce and reinforce Scotland’s international profile. This includes events conducted in collaboration with the Scottish Government. This year, joint UK-Scottish Government events to celebrate St Andrew’s Day are due to take place in Paris and Copenhagen, and the Secretary of State for Scotland will attend an event hosted by the British Ambassador in Washington D.C.

Ahead of those dates, the FCDO Communications Directorate issues a note to all Posts in the overseas network, which highlights the key dates, requests details of planned events and invites staff members to further publicise the celebrations via social media channels. The Communications Directorate also interview diplomats based overseas with Scottish heritage to talk about the significance of celebrating Scotland's key dates. A recent example from January this year is the widespread coverage of the FCDO and British Antarctic Survey staff celebrating Burns Night around the world, including the biggest ever Burns Supper to be held in Antarctica. In addition, the Directorate promote stories of Scottish diplomats representing the UK overseas, such as the recent appointment of His Majesty's Ambassador to Ukraine.

There is wide variation across the global network in terms of how the Scottish brand resonates locally. Issuing prescriptive guidance to the overseas network does not necessarily provide the most effective way to promote the best of Scotland. Therefore, Posts are given discretion to celebrate national days how they see fit, based on many years of tried and tested experience, and the relationships they have developed with host organisations, including Scottish diaspora groups.

The FCDO will continue to work closely with the Scotland Office, Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and the Scottish Government to provide overall advice on combining the modern and traditional aspects of Scotland, including continuing to recognise and use the opportunities which key cultural dates undoubtedly create.

UK Government departments will also continue to coordinate together to identify promoting opportunities for key Scottish industries unrelated to cultural days. The UK Government's written and oral evidence to the Committee included various examples of how the overseas network has helped to forge international links in sectors such as offshore wind and hydrogen technologies.

In the UK Government's written evidence to the Committee, an annex provided an overview and examples of how the GREAT Campaign is internationally promoting the stories of some of Scotland's most important people, places and cultural icons. GREAT works closely with local organisations and individual companies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure the campaign is representative of businesses, universities and tourism destinations across the whole of the UK. This is done through campaign partners who include Territorial Offices, DBT, FCDO, VisitBritain, VisitScotland, Defra and the British Council. Scottish examples from 2023 include:

- i. Japan Seafood Show, Tokyo. GREAT and DBT Scotland supported a collaboration between Seafood Scotland (Scottish Government funded) and DBT's Seafood Export Support package to take a group of nine companies across the UK to exhibit at the Japan Seafood Show. Five of the attending companies were based in Scotland.
- ii. VisitBritain x VisitScotland Travel Trade Workshop, China. The VisitBritain team in China co-organised offline travel trade workshops with VisitScotland in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Beijing, which attracted over 80 key buyers and suppliers. The event successfully showcased the new travel experience "see things differently" of 2023 and sustainable tourism.

- iii. Four Nations Festival of Flavours, France. To coincide with food and drink trade fair, SIAL Paris, HMA France Dame Menna Rawlings, hosted a Four Nations Festival of Flavours at her Residence in Paris, offering the UK companies attending the trade fair an opportunity to meet with the international buyers in a more intimate setting than simply the trade fair itself.

To promote Scotland's brand internationally, DBT Scotland has experts covering the following sectors:

- i. Agricultural, Food and Drink
- ii. Healthcare and Life Sciences
- iii. Energy and Clean Technology
- iv. Advanced Manufacturing
- v. Financial, Professional and Business Services

The team's structure reflects the diverse exporting strengths of Scotland. Sector experts are embedded within DBT's UK Sector teams and aligned with the established and innovative strengths of Scotland ensuring the nation's economic potential is supported internationally by the UK Government. They collaborate closely with Scottish Development International's (SDI) sector teams to align activity. For instance, where UK sectoral trade missions are relevant to Scotland's strengths, DBT and SDI cooperate to identify Scottish companies that would benefit from participating.

International Strategy for Scotland

Recommendation 2: *In response to this report, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland—in consultation with the FCDO—should provide a clear strategy containing its measurable priorities and objectives for promoting Scotland internationally alongside the actions it is undertaking—and will undertake in the future—to achieve these goals. This work should be undertaken in conjunction with the Government's response to the recommendation made in paragraph 18. To inform the strategy, the UK Government should consider:*

- ***conducting an audit of international activity which is currently undertaken in relation to promoting Scotland internationally;***
- ***horizon scanning to identify relevant upcoming opportunities or events that could be used as additional opportunities to contribute to the UK Government's priorities for promoting Scotland internationally; and***
- ***consulting with stakeholders from the Scottish business and cultural sectors to inform these priorities.***

In addition, the new cross-Whitehall delivery board for Scotland cited by the Secretary of State during evidence should cover the UK Government's activity and strategy for promoting Scotland internationally as part of its remit. (Paragraph 29)

The Scotland Office and FCDO will continue to provide leadership on the promotion of Scotland internationally, but this remains a cross-government endeavour.

The strategic direction of this work will result from the priorities identified by various UK Government departments and through collaboration with Scottish Government and their agencies, in particular SDL.

In order to inform the joint Government response to this inquiry, a survey was conducted of UK missions to seek examples of the types of promotional activity that take place to promote Scotland overseas. Some of the examples of this work were included in our response.

Horizon scanning to identify relevant upcoming opportunities or events that could be used as additional opportunities to contribute to the UK Government's priorities for promoting Scotland internationally is a continual process carried out by UK Government departments and our diplomatic missions overseas.

The Scotland Office, FCDO and DBT engage with a wide range of Scottish business and cultural stakeholders on a frequent basis to ensure that appropriate support is provided and priorities identified. For example, the Scotland Office worked with the Scotch Whisky Association and Scottish Seafood Association to ensure that market access issues were raised during the Secretary of State's recent visit to Vietnam. The Scotland Office also coordinates regular Ministerial-level briefings for the Edinburgh Consular Corps, a key group of stakeholders, and utilises this engagement to identify with international partners what opportunities may be available for the promotion of Scotland within their countries.

The Delivering for Scotland Board, chaired by the Secretary of State, includes senior representatives from UK Government departments including the FCDO and DBT. It seeks to help in the coordination of UK Government work in support of Scotland and includes the promotion of Scotland internationally.

Recommendation 3: *Given that the Secretary of State has confirmed that there will be ministerial representation at New York "Tartan Week" next year, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland should set out in its response to this report:*

- ***the outputs and impact arising from its participation in "Tartan Week" this year; and***
- ***how the UK Government will work with the Scottish Government in ensuring the most strategic and constructive inter-governmental approach.***

Following this, the UK Government should explore with international partners whether there is an opportunity to establish "Tartan Day" events in other countries where there are strong Scottish links. (Paragraph 32)

The UK Government—represented by Scotland Office Parliamentary Under Secretary of State John Lamont—attended Tartan Week 2023 to mark the 25th Anniversary of Tartan Week. The Minister engaged with a range of important stakeholders to Scotland, including those from the whisky industry, financial institutions, cultural organisations, education and civil society.

The Scotland Office, DBT, Scottish Government in Washington and the FCDO are discussing potential collaboration for Tartan Week 2024 in New York. Discussions have also been held with various Scottish diaspora groups in New York and the New York City authorities. Detailed plans for this will be developed during the autumn/winter 2023.

As discussed in paragraph 7, there is wide variation across the global network in terms of how the Scottish brand resonates locally. Posts in our overseas network carry out a wide range of events to promote Scotland internationally and have the local cultural expertise to understand what will work. Tartan Week in New York is a specific event run by diaspora groups which resonates well in the USA.

Engaging Scotland's Global Diaspora

Recommendation 4: *In response to this report, the UK Government should clarify:*

- *what activity is currently undertaken by embassies to engage with the Scottish diaspora, for example in countries in which that diaspora has a sizable presence;*
- *what role the UK Government intends to play in future in developing closer relationships with the Scottish diaspora; and*
- *how the UK Government intends to engage with the Scottish Government to help develop these relationships following the Scottish Government's recently published Scottish Connections Framework.* (Paragraph 38)

As noted above, the UK's overseas network marks St Andrew's Day and Burns Night to celebrate Scottish culture and host suppers, often in collaboration with diaspora groups. Our diplomats overseas play an active role in engaging Scottish expatriate communities and organisations during these events.

For example, in Australia where there is an active Highland Games tradition, the UK's Consul General in Melbourne is also Chieftain of the Highland Games, and regularly attends events to promote Scotland. This year, Burns Night events were held by UK missions across the globe including in Bangkok, Boston, Buenos Aires, Copenhagen, Kuala Lumpur, South Sudan and Wellington.

The British High Commission in Accra hosted the centenary Burns Supper of the Caledonian Society of Ghana earlier this year, and UK Government staff at the British Embassy Manila celebrated Burns Night with the St Andrew's Society and alumni from Scottish universities.

The FCDO remains fully committed to working collaboratively with the Scottish Government in the delivery of devolved policy objectives. This includes discussing how both governments can work together to further engage the Scottish diaspora.

Overseas Posts will continue to build and develop connections with Scottish diaspora groups in the most effective way, taking into account the local context and environment.

The UK's diplomatic network

Recommendation 5: *The FCDO should enhance its programme of training for relevant embassy staff at all band levels to improve the knowledge base of UK officials of the Scottish market and industry landscape, as well as the current priorities of the UK Government in relation to promoting Scotland internationally (considering the recommendation made in Chapter 3 above in relation to strategy). In those locations where staff are not co-located, regular meetings should be held between relevant embassy teams and Scottish Government officials or Scottish Development International staff to ensure communication and information sharing. Beyond this, teams should also be encouraged to meet periodically with other Scottish institutions, be that in industry or academia.* (Paragraph 47)

As part of their formal pre-posting training programmes, Heads and Deputy Heads of Mission (HoMs/DHMs) receive briefing on priorities for Scotland from representatives from the UK Government, and via direct engagement with Scottish Government officials as part of a stand-alone session with the devolved governments. This is a bespoke opportunity for those priorities to be communicated and for Heads and Deputies to consider how they can effectively promote these during their posting. DBT Scotland also regularly take opportunities to brief the UK's overseas network on Scottish trade and investment opportunities.

Existing HoMs are actively encouraged to undertake visits to Scotland and engage with a range of key stakeholders, including business and trade organisations. DBT Scotland and Scottish Development International (SDI) support visits to Scotland by UK diplomats to engage with industry and provide intelligence on Scotland's export priorities and potential.

Such visits to Scotland in the last 12 months included: the Deputy Head of Mission to Ankara (designate) (November 2023); the Deputy High Commissioner Kolkata (July 2023); British High Commissioner to India (June 2023); His Majesty's Ambassador (HMA) Buenos Aires (February 2023); HMA Berne (Dec 2022). His Majesty's Trade Commissioners have also visited and engaged with Scottish stakeholders in that period.

DBT Scotland regularly engages His Majesty's Trade Commissioner regions across the overseas network to provide information on Scottish sectoral strengths and export market priorities. Opportunities such as regional conferences are utilised by the team to provide learning tailored to specific international markets.

SDI and Scottish Government officials will routinely engage with UK Government staff at Post, both informally and through formal engagement structures. For example, SDI is represented in the Country Board at BE Copenhagen. In Berlin, Scottish Government officials will participate in cross-network governance discussions and the head of the Scottish Government office participates in the monthly heads of office meetings. SDI has a presence in 23 countries and works closely with DBT Teams co-located within UK Missions.

In the spring, the FCDO organised a familiarisation visit for officials of the devolved governments to visit FCDO's King Charles Street office in London and engage with a range of geographic and thematic policy teams. The FCDO also conducts teach-ins with teams across the department and briefing sessions with the Diplomatic Fast Stream cohorts to ensure they have a solid grounding of devolution issues from the very start of their FCDO careers.

This broad range of engagement provides ongoing opportunity for evolving Scottish priorities and opportunities to be identified, discussed and responded to.

Promoting Scottish trade

Recommendation 6: *In response to this report, the UK Government should provide an annual written update to the committee on how the Hub is supporting the delivery of the UK Government's trading outcomes and its priorities for Scotland. The UK Government should also provide more detail on how the Department of Business and Trade will provide greater access to UK Government export support, while working with SDI to avoid duplication.* (Paragraph 57)

DBT works closely with Scottish Government and SDI officials to support exports and investment ensuring business has the benefit of both Governments, and that services aren't duplicated.

Recent joint initiatives include:

- i. THAIFEX, Food and Drink Trade Fair, Bangkok Thailand – May 2023. Five Scottish companies and trade body Seafood Scotland joined the UK pavilion at Thaifex, funded by DBT Scotland (total 13 UK exhibitors). Companies took part in market familiarisation, importer meetings and retail visits supported by DBT Thailand staff. SDI SE Asia staff joined the group at the exhibition and provided further support through a Global Scot networking event for attending companies.
- ii. UK Pavilion at ProWein, Dusseldorf Germany – March 2023. DBT Scotland worked with SDI to select and support three Scottish Companies attending and participating as part of a wider UK delegation at the alcoholic beverage trade fair. Connections made to DBT Scotland and overseas teams with a further six Scottish companies exhibiting independently at the show.
- iii. UK Pavilion at Money 20/20 Amsterdam, Netherlands – June 2023. DBT worked with SDI and FinTech Scotland to form a delegation consisting of eight Scottish companies.
- iv. Energy Exports Conference, Aberdeen – June 2023. DBT Scotland and SDI led a panel session entitled 'Investments to bolster the supply chain: opportunities in Hydrogen, Wind and Freeports' discussing with an international audience trade and investment opportunities in Scotland.

DBT's Scotland, Export, Investment and Trade Policy teams regularly engage with their counterparts in Scottish Government. DBT officials work closely with their colleagues in each devolved administration to ensure that their views are considered in the formulation of the UK's international trade policy. DAs receive draft text on matters where implementation of the FTA is a devolved competence, on which they can comment. UK policy teams host regular roundtables with the DAs on both reserved and devolved areas of policy and the Department's devolution team meets weekly with DA counterparts to discuss the department's work. Additionally, DBT Scotland collaborates closely with SDI on a day-to-day basis to support Scottish companies seeking to export to overseas markets.

The UK's Export Strategy: Made in the UK, Sold to the World was published in November 2021, setting out a 12-point plan including the Export Support Service and the UK Export Academy. The UK Government's strategy complements the Scottish Export Strategy 'A Trading Nation'. The UK's export support offer supports business sectors important to local economies on the world stage through campaigns and by ensuring that UK trade policy reflects all parts of the UK.

Furthermore, the latest investment results for 2022/23 show, Scotland continues to be a prime destination for inward investment, attracting 130 new projects delivering 3,428 new jobs, while safeguarding a further 1,240. The Office for Investment and DBT work with Scottish Government to promote a range of investment projects across the nation. For example, in March 2023, DBT Scotland and SDI hosted a Global Webinar regarding High Potential Investment Opportunities in Hydrogen to explain the collective support for investors in Scotland. An international audience of 143 investors from 21 countries attended the event.

On a monthly basis, DBT provides SDI with relationship management data to promote collaborative working. UK Government officials are committed to working with Scottish Government and SDI counterparts to agree appropriate processes for increased data sharing in both directions to maximise export support cooperation.

A regular Executive Forum brings together DBT's Directors General for Exports and Investment with the senior leaders of the Devolved Administrations' trade and investment promotion agencies, Scottish Government and SDI are represented at Director level respectively. These meetings aim to improve strategic and operational alignment between UK government and the DAs, providing a senior forum for discussion of trade priorities.

On the 21 September, DBT published 'Exporting for Growth: DBT Services in the Nations' which outlines our plans to enable equivalence of DBT services across the UK by expanding in-person support to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. DBT Scotland is working closely with Scottish Government and SDI to ensure this will be complementary to existing services. Hundreds of Scottish businesses are set to benefit as UK Government invests in International Trade Advisers to support exporters. An 8-week engagement period continues until 16 November to enable businesses and stakeholders to have an opportunity to feed in their thoughts on how the new service should be rolled out in Scotland. DBT and SDI are jointly meeting stakeholders and businesses to hear their thoughts directly.

DBT Exports Minister Lord Offord and Scottish Government Trade Minister Richard Lochhead met on 1 November as part of our continuing collaboration. Furthermore, the UK Exports Minister and senior DBT officials can appear before the Committee to provide an update on the UK Government's continued work to support Scottish trade and investment and the role of the DBT Scotland team since its formation in 2021.

UK and Scottish government cooperation

Recommendation 7: The UK and Scottish Governments share many of the same priorities for Scotland on the international stage and there is an important role for the Scottish Government to play in promoting Scottish interests overseas in areas of devolved competence. Despite recent publicised tension between the two governments

surrounding international activity, we found there to be positive and constructive collaboration between officials during our visit to Washington DC earlier this year, where UK and Scottish Government officials are co-located in the British Embassy. This kind of collaboration should be encouraged across the wider Embassy network where teams are co-located. In locations where Scottish Government officials are not co-located or based, it is important to embed regular communication between the teams to facilitate or identify any opportunities for joint initiatives between the governments. We encourage the UK and Scottish governments to work constructively and cooperatively on Scottish interests internationally. Whilst recognising that foreign affairs and international trade are reserved to the UK Government, the Scottish Government have international interests in devolved policy areas. (Paragraph 64)

Scottish Government staff are co-located in UK Missions in seven locations overseas (with Scottish Government's Brussels office being a standalone office). There is regular engagement and collaboration—both formal and informal—between UK Government and both Scottish Government and SDI officials. Members of Scottish Government or SDI at Post will often be part of Senior Leadership Teams, Country Boards or other formal internal Mission structures.

Where Scottish Government or SDI colleagues are co-located in UK Missions, they are routinely involved in the corporate life of the Mission and work collaboratively with UK Government officials where appropriate. This is to avoid duplication of efforts and to maximise benefits of delivery.

The formal pre-posting training programme that HoMs and DHMs receive on briefing on priorities for Scotland is provided to all HoMs, regardless of where they are being posted. This ensures that all HoMs are aware of the Scottish Government's devolved objectives before their posting begins.

The FCDO also has a network of 'devolution champions' embedded in both thematic and geographic directorates in London and at Post, including where the Scottish Government do not have a presence. This is a corporate contribution in addition to their business-as-usual roles, whereby staff champion devolution issues within their teams.

The FCDO established an FCDO-Devolved Government Senior Officials' Group (SOG) in March 2022, which meets to discuss international issues that impact on devolved interests. To date, five meetings have been held on a range of topics of interest to the devolved governments. As well as regular engagement at working level, we also facilitate ad hoc briefings on common areas of interest, such as the International Development White Paper and on the FCDO's multilateral work.

Our written response to this inquiry included various examples of Posts—which do not have Scottish Government or SDI co-located in the Mission—delivering to promote Scotland internationally and working in the interests of the Scottish people. However, the FCDO is always open to discussing how Scottish Government's devolved objectives can continue to be communicated to Posts across the network, including where there is not a Scottish Government or SDI presence in the UK Mission.