

Stakeholder & Partner Feedback

Nick MacLean, SG's Trade Envoy to the UAE

Nick provided his reflections on his involvement with the Scotland at Expo programme and as part of the Expo Steering Group:

"I enjoyed significant interaction with Scotland during the six months of Expo 2020 and attended all those events that did not conflict with CBRE commitments. I was therefore able to act as host, co-host or moderator at a number of events; act as prize giver at awards ceremonies; and speak, representing Scotland, to familiar & new audiences. I attended the opening ceremony as a guest of UAE and the UK pavilion as a guest of HMG. I additionally accepted invitations to lunch/dine from Saudi Arabia, Australia, Germany and UAE. I visited EXPO 23 times during it's six months duration but never privately.

The specific focus of the Scotland strategy meant that the events hosted by the team were well supported at the pavilion. There may have been an opportunity to attract larger online audiences, particularly from home (Scotland) and particularly children via their schools participation.

I think that there continues to be a misunderstanding (in Scotland) of how the UAE operates and how it perceives other states and therefore how UAE decisions are shaped. However the attendance of senior Emiratis will provide opportunities to commercialise the success of these events.

The team was very successful at mobilising the Scottish diaspora for the evening events and the subjective consensus of the pavilion staff was that the Scottish events were 'the best'. The Scotland based organisational team worked extremely hard and well as a collective and is a credit to the Scottish Government.

The real test of the success of Scotland's participation will be in the follow up to the impressions made. This will require a dedicated resource(s).

Although the design of the pavilion was spectacular, and in many ways, one of the best national exhibits, the contents of the pavilion and it's organization, were weak and the feedback is that the interior of the pavilion did not match the expectations set by the exterior. The IT and technology third party support was poor, disorganised, sometimes unhelpful on the ground and almost certainly under estimated the workload that was required to support the pavilion through Expo. Their online platforms were weak and could not cope with corporate and governmental technology protocols and firewalls or the time differences.

The regularity of the planning meetings and hard work by the home team ultimately made Scotland's participation successful. On occasions however, the weaknesses of the external advisory teams, could have undermined Scotland's efforts and it was only the initiative, dedication and commitment of the planning team which prevented some events from failing. The leadership of the planning team should be praised.

The steering group was vital in creating a successful participation at Expo. The team included the right balance of expertise and was open in its consideration of ideas and plans for Scotland and was flexible enough to be able to cope with the delays and operational variations brought about by COVID; the difficulties of travel; and the procurement of poor external help (by HMG).

The key outcome for Scotland is that there plenty of opportunities for trade and investment dialogues to now take place. It is critical that these be followed up, so as to ensure, that Scottish Government's investment at Expo is not wasted.

It also became clear that there was pleasant surprise at Scotland's scientific innovation particularly in areas which are of particular interest to the UAE, for instance, space technology, digital health and alternative forms of energy, all of which, can attract UAE governmental investment. This investment however requires a strengthening of the G2G relationship.

Scotland's participation in future Expo events should be determined by the usefulness of the host nation to Scotland's trade & investment ambitions. Dubai's hosting of Expo 2020 was extremely valuable to Scotland because of the opportunities for growth in trade and the UAE's capability of significant capital investment to Scotland, particularly through the activities of its sovereign wealth funds and with the background of the sovereign partnership formed last year between the UAE and the UK.

The UAE and Scotland, perhaps unexpectedly, also share common ambitions for the future of their countries, their economies and their peoples and therefore the opportunity for future, project specific, cooperation is particularly interesting and potentially mutually rewarding.

The opportunity to interact with other nations and/or to attract collaborative visitors to the pavilion was limited.

Scotland's planning and participation in EXPO2020 should be praised and should reward the financial and time costs invested. The true benefit however will only become clear with appropriate 'follow-up' and exploitation of the opportunities uncovered."

Scottish Chambers of Commerce

SCC feedback and reflections on their Expo involvement and engagement with the SG/UKG delivery teams and the support received:

"The dedicated Expo team at Scottish Government was essential to support and enable engagement of the business community at Expo. The single point of contact enabled quick resolution of issues, speedy access to opportunities and regular sharing of information. This should be replicated for future events to ensure consistency and quality. The in-market support through local PR agencies enhanced the support available to businesses. Equally, the access and connections provided through SCC's Network was an important contributor to Scotland's Expo programme e.g. inviting key business/investor connections to SG events and

facilitating meaningful introductions which resulted in new international business being acquired.

Clearly articulated collaboration between Scottish Government and Scottish Chambers of Commerce provided clarity on outputs and strengthened our respective in-market positioning when engaging with partners/businesses. Specifically, SCC speaking slot at St Andrew's Day event showcasing business/govt working together and Scottish Government presence at the first SCC/Dubai Chamber bi-lateral meeting and a briefing with the Minister focusing on clean energy. This model of collaboration should be reviewed and emulated for future international exhibition style events to maximise opportunities for Scotland's business community.

From our interactions, we observed good working between both Governments, led by the SG Expo Team. This helped SCC visits immensely particularly with access to the UK Pavilion and discounted rates for accommodation.

The pandemic impacted all countries/partners participating in Expo so although not a specific Scotland issue, the various lockdown / travel restrictions made it challenging to attract businesses to participate in-market and travel within the UAE was challenging. However, the virtual options made available by Scottish Government was a useful tool to ensure participation in some format.

Scottish Chambers of Commerce believes Scotland should have an active presence and role in future World Expo events. This should form as a Team UK style approach with distinct contributions from Scotland, driving economic growth for the country."

Visit Scotland

As joint delivery partner for the St Andrews Reception, Visit Scotland have provided input and feedback on their involvement and engagement with the Expo delivery team:

"Expo provided the opportunity to showcase Scotland as a destination on a global stage and given the growing importance of the Middle East market, and its importance as a travel connection hub between long haul market and Scotland, the event provided a valuable opportunity to showcase Scotland. We were able to work alongside other National Tourism partners under the banner of Expo 2020 and the UK Pavilion to connect and engage with travel trade at an event hosted on 23rd November 2021 as part of the How will we travel? Themed week at Expo

The St Andrews event illustrated the benefits of a united Team Scotland approach. It offered all partners the opportunity to jointly showcase various aspects of Scotland to a range of important stakeholder groups: political and cultural diplomacy, Global Scots and other business connections, Scottish University alumni, and travel media contacts.

Though there were undoubtedly challenges in terms of the event organisation, this would not have been apparent to guest on the night. The event went very smoothly and verbal feedback suggested that the guests greatly enjoyed it. The choice of entertainment was inspired – the Dubai Police Band and the Heriot Watt University band playing together beautifully illustrated

cross-cultural collaboration in action. The buzz that was created for both consumers and invited guests thanks to the pipers outside the UK Pavilion really helped to elevate the recognition of Scotland at Expo, and in particular the St Andrew's Day celebrations. The invite-only event was well attended and an overall success with partners being brought together from a whole spectrum of contacts.

GCC is still a relatively new market to us so attending Dubai Expo presented the opportunity to build on activity with SG and SDI to establish our own activity programme."

Heriot Watt University

Feedback provided by the Heriot Watt leads who we engaged with has been broadly positive:

"There was regular engagement early on to discuss planning and share experience. We were also able to provide suggestions and content for each other's programmes. The Scottish programme worked well in challenging times, particularly where we could exchange experiences, information and issues when in engaging with DIT and the wider EXPO event.

I think the topic areas selected were useful in projecting Scotland's strengths. From a university perspective, Scotland's world leading research should be a key area focus as this can then pull in links to industry across numerous sectors."

Glasgow University

Feedback provided on Expo engagement and for consideration of any future similar engagement:

"The exact parameters and the border between UK and Scottish Govt interests was not altogether clear; the programme worked well, but the HE sector might have had more of an input in shaping it. It was a useful shop window for Scottish research but we do not have clarity on measurable benefits, more engagement with the sector on programme/expectations might have been helpful

In terms of key outcomes profile and exposure with a surprise impact of unexpected scale of Scotland's space industry particularly noticeable. Scotland should definitely consider participating in future World Expos or events of this type though trade and research outcomes should be discussed more clearly and openly from the beginning though recognize that the pandemic and UK/Scottish Govt interface was challenging."

Edinburgh International Science Festival

EISF provided positive feedback on their Expo engagement and delivery during Scotland's Net Zero Activation programme:

"Great working with Scottish Government team who gave clear guidance on event aims, budget, etc. and grateful to have easy access to branding collateral for design and print jobs.

Good partnership with Scottish Government social media teams who were supportive not only in promoting Net Zero events but also the work of Edinburgh Science upcoming Festival.

UK Pavilion and Dubai Expo had such a positive, friendly, welcoming atmosphere. We were very well received by audiences passing the UK pavilion and have compiled great photos and videos of the event.

Absolutely delighted that Ivan McKee, Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise stopped to watch our 'Street Science' performances (twice!). He seemed genuinely entertained and interested in our work – we really appreciated the special thank you in his speech at the drinks reception

Outcomes for EISF:

- The Opportunity to return to Expo and showcase another aspect of Edinburgh Science's work with the Expo Programme for People and Planet team (who we previously worked with at Expo for events in Oct, Nov 2021 and Jan 2022).
- Great coverage in UK Pavilion newsletter.
- Met some useful contacts at the UK Pavilion for potential working partnerships at future events work in UAE.
- Received interest from potential supporters of STEM education outreach work (UK and UAE) from business representatives at drinks reception. “

Spelfie – UK National; Day Representative

Feedback from **Spelfie** CEO on their engagement on UK National Day:

“I've got to say that we had an amazing experience which has resulted in some incredible opportunities which we continue to explore! I was the spokesperson for the entire UK National Day on Sky News on their morning news segment, which hopefully helped to generate record EXPO attendances on the day

The DIT team and their agency were a well-oiled machine, how they pulled such a complex day off is very impressive; the classic swan, elegant on the surface with all of the activity under the water. As always, it's about effective communication and support, my team were engaged with Bray Leino & DIT for months in the lead up, during and after the event. We saw it as a partnership, as did they, which was evident in their actions and words.”