

## **Visit Report**

### **Background**

2023 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tartan Day, a particularly auspicious occasion for the Scottish diaspora in the US. As he did in 2022, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, Culture and External Affairs, Angus Robertson, led the Scottish Government delegation.

The US is a key partner for Scotland on a number of fronts. It represents Scotland's largest overseas trade and investment partner; the most recent export statistics show the US receiving 16% of all Scottish exports, valued at £6bn. There are around 655 US owned enterprises in Scotland (around 25% of all foreign-owned), employing over 114,000 people and generating turnover of £35.5bn.

The Scottish diaspora in the US is extensive and well-established. Recent census figures put the figure at over 5 million, however the US census format can restrict those with multiple historic links, and informal estimates of those with Scottish connections in the US are significantly higher than this. Outwith the direct diaspora, there are particularly strong connections in higher education, the US is the third largest non-EU market for students – over 6,300 US-based students studied in Scotland in 2021-22. These students can help support and sustain our diaspora over the coming years.

### **Purpose**

The visit aimed to cover a number of areas in the Scotland/ US relationship. It had a particular focus on trade and investment, culture, higher education and – linking all of these things – Scotland's network in the US. The engagement with our network is exemplified by the huge efforts of our diaspora to make Tartan Week happen. This is recognised by SG in our support as sponsors of the parade, and of a range of events throughout the week – as well as the US launch of the Scottish Connections Framework, Scotland's new approach to engaging the diaspora.

The visit was an huge success, culminating in the biggest parade in Tartan Week's 25-year history; preceded by a number of high value business meetings; the launch of "Scottish Connections"; brilliant cultural performances, and public displays of affection for, and engagement with, Scotland. This included the Empire State Building being lit in blue and white, the Mayor of New York leading the parade (and dropping by for a photo call); and a diaspora who welcomed the Scottish Government's genuine, long-standing engagement and support – [Redacted].

### **Business Meetings**

The Cabinet Secretary attended a number of business meetings, which were themed around priority areas for Scotland: high tech, high value jobs in digital markets. The Cabinet Secretary was joined by Scottish Development International (SDI) in-market representatives, and also by Reuben Aitken, SDI's Managing Director. The combination of Ministerial presence and SDI leadership was well received, and SDI reported that having the Cabinet Secretary lead the delegation got them higher-level engagement than they would otherwise have received.

These meetings included a conversation with **XPO Logistics** about [Redacted]. Discussions included opportunities to help XPO connect to Scottish universities and tech hubs, as well as our burgeoning hydrogen sector, to help grow and develop their operations further.

**Mirador**, a rapidly-scaling tech company offering services to the wealth management industry, gave great feedback about the quality of their Scottish operations in Edinburgh. [Redacted]. We offered support to help them engage further with the Scottish tech ecosystem, and Entrepreneurial Scotland – which they were eager to do, as well as have a personal follow-up with the Cabinet Secretary later in April.

**Rockstar's** Head of Finance and Corporate Development, Rowan Hajaj, had met the Cabinet Secretary around Tartan Week last year, and this year welcomed us to Rockstar's NYC HQ, Rockstar having invested over £4m in Scotland in the intervening 12 months. [Redacted]. Such was the engagement here that Rowan subsequently arranged for Rockstar's new academic outreach lead to fly from Boston later in the week to attend our Higher Education and alumni event in NYC.

**Amp Energy's** Chief Investment Officer Paul Ezekiel confirmed that Scotland is essential to their global plans – as a global energy leader alongside Australia and the US. Amp are currently building Europe's largest storage batteries in Scotland, [Redacted] and welcomed offers of support and follow up meetings both with Reuben Aitken and the Cabinet Secretary.

[Redacted]

There was a positive meeting with **AiiM Partners**, a leading Climate & Impact Investment fund based in California. [Redacted].

Alongside this, the Cabinet Secretary attended an SDI-supported investment delegation with 14 Scottish businesses pitching to venture capitalists (VCs) in a space donated to us by GlobalScot [Redacted]. Notably, [Redacted], spent a significant amount of her own time in a session with the cohort, and various NYC-based GlobalScots with VC experience offered their services as mentors to the group, but also to subsequent delegations.

We heard welcome positive feedback on the role of SDI in the US, notably from Amp and from Catalent, and interest from a number of investors in making connections with our academic system, and in supporting Saltire Scholarships.

### **New York Diaspora/ Global Scot/ Alumni events**

Alongside the business meetings, the Cabinet Secretary (and "Team Scotland") had a packed and varied schedule. As well as our diaspora groups, partners included Visit Scotland, the V&A in Dundee, the Hebridean Baker, the Kilted Yogi, City of Glasgow College/ National Chef Gary McLean, the Edinburgh Fringe Society, Scottish Business Network, Scottish North American Business Council, and Forth Valley Chambers of Commerce. The overall Scottish contingent was stronger than ever.

Events included a Global Scot luncheon where we looked to learn how to improve our service to, and value from, the network. This meeting inaugurated the new Global Scots New York regional advisory group which will aim to have a significant impact on supporting trade and investment between the city and Scotland. We held an event at His Majesty's Trade Commissioner's residence convening high value alumni, businesses and showcasing Scottish higher education offer, which was attended by a number of senior higher and further education leaders, including the Principal of Napier University. We had cultural performances and discussions, services of thanksgiving, a diaspora breakfast where demand for copies of the Scottish Connections framework exceeded all expectations, and of course the parade itself – led by Gail Porter and 30 enthusiastic drummers from the charity Pulse Of The Place. At over 3,600 registered participants, this was the largest parade ever – we await figures from NYPD on spectator numbers, but expect that these will be well into the tens of thousands.

All SG events, and our partner's events, were well-attended, creating the busiest Tartan Week ever. These offered opportunities for the US team to find new connections, including to businesses interested in Scotland. We have already had feedback from Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe that they intend to return next year, and do more.

### **Parliamentary/ UKG/ Scottish Affairs Committee attendance**

Tartan Week NYC had engagement this year from the Scottish Parliament, with the Presiding Officer and two MSPs (Finlay Carson - Con, Collette Stevenson – SNP) in attendance at a range of events, including those organised by SG.

The Scottish Affairs Committee were in NYC to continue their enquiry into the promotion of Scotland overseas by the UK Government. They were joined by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland, John Lamont, MP, and Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, Ian Murray, MP. This was the largest cohort of politicians ever to attend Tartan Week, and was the first time the UKG has been represented at Tartan Week since 2012, [Redacted].

### **UKG activity**

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland engaged in a number of activities whilst in NYC, including a Fintech round table, a discussion with the Scottish North American Business Council on sustainable cities (where Reuben Aitken was a speaker and where SG connections helped fill the room). His team recreated the short route of the original parade [Redacted]. He attended the main public and diaspora events and he was, as a matter of courtesy, invited to SG organised events. This was reciprocated by UKG officials, though with a busy schedule the Cabinet Secretary was unable to attend any UKG events.

Officials liaised in advance across the parliament, SG and UKG, [Redacted].

The Presiding Officer spoke on behalf of the parliament at a number of public events. Mr Lamont gave a short speech at the St Andrew's Society cocktail reception, after a Scottish Government official, and at the Bryant Park Observance ceremony, after the Presiding Officer and the Cabinet Secretary – his comments were mainly warm words about Tartan Week, and (thankfully) without political aspect.

[Redacted].

### **Reflection**

This was an extremely successful visit. A much-increased Scottish delegation showed the value of Tartan Week across the business, culture and HE ecosystems. Increased political representation from across Holyrood and Westminster could have caused issues, especially given the timing of recent FCDO Guidance on working with devolved governments in overseas posts, but this was well managed by all concerned.

[Redacted]. This year our collaboration with SDI, and the wider Scottish community in arts, culture (some supported by funding from Culture colleagues) and higher education definitely helped amplify the overall positive Scottish messaging, and we would do well to continue to support such partnerships in the future.

All evidence from partners and metrics currently available (more will come in our wider monitoring and evaluation work) point to the success of the visit and the week. Our tweet about the Empire State Building has over 64,000 views, and our hotel partner estimates around 1,000,000 people per week will walk past our almost 300sq ft. street-side banner throughout the month of April.

Going forward, our long history of working in partnership with the diaspora organisations will continue to hold us in good stead, [Redacted].

The team in the US will now look to follow up on the myriad introductions and opportunities identified, feed these into activity over the coming year, and begin planning for Tartan Week 2024.