

Qualitative Research for the Scottish Government's Scottish Connections (Diaspora) Work

This report was prepared for the Scottish Government by the University of the West of Scotland.

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Disclaimer

The views summarised in this report are those of the organisations and individuals who chose to submit them. The recommendations expressed in this report are those of the contractors appointed. The report does not represent the views or intentions of the Scottish Government.

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Executive Summary

This is a report commissioned by the Scottish Government providing insight into what a successful diaspora policy should consider and include. It is designed to assist in the development of a strategy around the Scottish Connections diaspora activity. There are three aims that underpinned this report; the use of qualitative interviews to support previous desk based research, a strong consideration from within the diaspora itself, and a firm analysis conducted by experts in the area of the Scottish Diaspora. Therefore, the analysis is based around a significant level of input from key diaspora stakeholders, including officials of the Scottish Government, and of comparator governments, diaspora organisations and individuals.

The report provides a synthesis of existing evidence around diasporas in general, and the Scottish diaspora in particular. Existing material thus underpinned the direction and focus of the critical and analytical work undertaken. The themes that emerged informed later engagement with key stakeholders across the globe. Detailed interviews and focus groups provided the evidence herein, and thus gives voice to the groups and individuals that form the Scottish diaspora.

Additionally, the diaspora engagement policies and activities of four comparator states/sub-states were examined in detail, and support by engagement with officials from those cases. This provided a broad informed analyses of good practice and recent activity that can also inform the Scottish Government's approach. Fourteen specific issues were identified from these cases, and this also underpinned further analysis and discussion with the diaspora.

There were six key findings from within the analysis. They begin with a recommendation that the Scottish Diaspora is recognised in its widest possible, and most inclusive, form. The second was that this recognition requires an embracing of all aspects of Scottishness ranging from the historical and ancestral forms of engagement to the contemporary. The third key finding stressed the importance of additional resource allocation to underpin any meaningful diaspora strategy and appreciate that the diaspora needs to know what Scotland seeks from it.

Key finding number four was around issues of coordination with/within the Diaspora and the need for clear ongoing links to the homeland, in which the diaspora and Scotland were partners. This links firmly to the fifth key finding, which is a lack of clarity regarding diaspora responsibilities within the Scottish Government infrastructure. A clear lead and organisation for the diaspora to connect with is

strongly recommended. The final recommendation considers the role and engagement of UK officials and state organisations within diaspora policy.

Finally, this report highlights twenty nine specific recommendations, which are grouped together under the headings of Picturing and Understanding the Diaspora, Engaging the Diaspora, Supporting and Recognising the Diaspora and Diaspora Initiatives. These recommendations are also identified as short term, medium term or longer term objectives, with those that require additional resources also recognised. The specific recommendations can be found on pages 51-53.

1. Introduction

This research was commissioned by the Scottish Government in order to answer questions on what a successful diaspora strategy might look like, drawing on the experiences and expertise of key stakeholders, such as policy makers, officials and diaspora groups and organisations. It has been carried out to help inform the development of the Scottish Government's strategy on engaging with the diaspora, as part of Scottish Connections. This is linked to the Programme for Government 2021-22 commitment to 'engage with our Scottish Connections international community and expand on our work with Scottish diaspora networks across the world'.

Specifically, the work had three overall aims:

- Building on an earlier literature review,¹ to conduct qualitative research with key stakeholders regarding diaspora engagement strategies within certain states or sub-states to further interrogate earlier recommendations;
- Conducting qualitative research with key stakeholders in Scotland involved in engaging with diaspora, and representatives from Scottish diaspora groups, to assess current approaches;
- Providing a robust analysis of the evidence gathered, in order to identify specific recommendations and actions, including suggested approaches and priorities.

The research was carried out between March and July 2022 by Professor Murray Stewart Leith and Dr Duncan Sim of the University of the West of Scotland.

¹ McDonald, S and Murray, A. (2021), *Literature review for the Scottish Government's Scottish Connections (Diaspora) work*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government Social Research

2. The Scottish Diaspora

There is no need in this report to discuss the nature of diasporas themselves or the origin of the term, as this has been explored in a number of studies.² Much of the diaspora literature focuses on relationships with the homeland and this relationship is demonstrated in various ways. Diasporas may travel home or remit funds to relatives 'back home'; they may support political movements and, indeed, may even retain a vote in their homeland.³ In fact, diaspora relationships are essentially triangular ones, involving the diaspora group itself, the host society, and the homeland, which may be real, virtual or imagined, in a multitude of individual perceptions.⁴ The relative strengths of these different relationships depend on a range of factors, including the attitude of the host society to the homeland, the degree to which the diaspora has been made welcome within the host society, and the attitude towards the diaspora by the homeland itself.

Within some homelands, attitudes to diasporas have often undergone significant change, often driven by economic incentives, and there has been a shift from disinterest to a position where countries have started to recognise and become involved with their diasporas. So, after being ignored or rejected from national discourses for many years, populations abroad are now being seen as important to the homeland – a shift as some have portrayed it, from 'traitors to heroes'.⁵ Indeed, homeland governments can provide an 'enabling' environment with which diasporas can positively engage.⁶ A good example is provided by the then president of Ireland, Mary Robinson, in an address to the Houses of the Oireachtas in 1995 arguing strongly that Ireland should cherish its diaspora. She referred to the huge numbers of Irish people living across the world, and suggested that Ireland needed to respond to desires for dialogue, interaction and practical links involving trade and business.⁷ A diaspora therefore can be seen as a significant potential

² Safran, W. (1991), 'Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return'.

Diaspora vol.1.1, 83–99; Cohen, R. (1996). *Global diasporas: an introduction*. London: Routledge.

³ Esman, M. (2009), *Diasporas in the contemporary world*. Cambridge: Polity.

⁴ Shuval, J. (2000). 'Diaspora migration: definitional ambiguities and a theoretical paradigm'. *International Migration*, vol. 38.5, 41–57.

⁵ Kalm, S. (2013), 'Diaspora strategies as technologies of citizenship'. *Global Society*, vol. 27.3, 379–397; Ragazzi, F. (2014), 'A comparative analysis of diaspora policies', *Political Geography* 41, 71-89

⁶ Brinkerhoff, J. (2009), 'Creating an enabling environment for diasporas' participation in homeland development'. *International Migration*, vol 50. 1, 75–95.

⁷ Robinson, M. (1995) '[Cherishing the Irish diaspora](#)', Address to the Houses of the Oireachtas, 2 February.

resource and it has tended to be the perceived economic potential of the diaspora connection which has driven the development of many diaspora strategies.

Scotland's diaspora is extremely varied. It contains a number of differing categories, such as Scots who have grown up in Scotland and then emigrated – often referred to as the 'lived' diaspora, as they have actually lived in the country. The largest group is the 'ancestral' diaspora, consisting of those whose connection with Scotland is a more distant one, resulting from the emigration of an ancestor and the strength of the connection of these 'ancestral' Scots also varies. Some value the Scottish identity while having only limited knowledge of what modern Scotland is actually like, while others visit Scotland on a regular basis.⁸ Despite a generational distance from Scotland, many ancestral Scots firmly see themselves as having a stakeholder interest in the homeland

In addition, an increasing level of attention is being paid to the 'affinity' diaspora. This category of people is less easy to define but it can be considered to include those who feel a connection to Scotland, who may be active through cultural or extended family groups, or who may simply be attracted to the heritage or culture of the country itself. An increasingly large element within the affinity diaspora is that of university alumni, who may have no family or ancestral connections to Scotland, but who have studied in Scotland and, after graduation, have retained an affection for the country and may be associated with or active in alumni groups and organisations.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, the size and nature of Scotland's diaspora is unclear and, in the absence of reliable data, no firm figure can be provided. MacAskill and McLeish⁹ suggest a range from 40 to 80 million people, in comparison to a 'home' population of five and a half, while Carr and Cavanagh, reporting to the Scottish Government, simply refer to the diaspora as 'running into the tens of millions'.¹⁰ Either way, the numbers are huge, relative to the size of the population in Scotland itself. Although the Scottish diaspora may be found in all parts of the world and across dozens of nations, the largest groupings are generally acknowledged to be in North America and Australasia. Data from the 2020 United States Census, for example, showed that 5.3 million people claimed Scottish ancestry, representing 1.6% of the US population, in addition in 2017 the Census Bureau identified an

⁸ Basu, P. (2007), *Highland homecomings: genealogy and heritage tourism in the Scottish diaspora*. Abingdon: Routledge; Sim, D. (2011). *American Scots: The Scottish Diaspora and the USA*, Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.

⁹ MacAskill, K. and McLeish, H. (2007), *Wherever the Saltire Flies*. Edinburgh: Luath Press.

¹⁰ Carr, J. and Cavanagh L. (2009), *Scotland's Diaspora and Overseas-Born Population*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

additional 3 million people with Scots-Irish ancestry. In Australia, approximately 10% of their population claim Scottish ancestry.¹¹

¹¹ Scotland.org - Scotland and Australia

3. Diaspora Engagement

The Development of Diaspora Strategies

A diaspora strategy has been defined as ‘an explicit policy initiative or series of policy initiatives enacted by a sending state, or its peoples, aimed at fortifying and developing relationships with expatriate communities, diasporic populations, and foreign constituencies who share a special affinity’.¹² For many countries, ‘arguably, the main intended goal of diaspora strategies is economic development’¹³ or, perhaps rather more bluntly, ‘familiarity breeds investment’.¹⁴ Thus, diaspora networks act as an important conduit for portfolio and foreign investment between diasporas and homelands.

Some countries have developed diaspora strategies to try and counter a perceived ‘brain drain’ when talented individuals emigrate; such countries may have experienced difficulty accessing the capital and skills needed to succeed in the global economy.¹⁵ Thus, some strategies focus specifically on its highly skilled members or its ‘overachievers’. Such individuals are viewed as an important source of tangible help and resources and Scotland’s GlobalScot network has been highlighted as an example of a successful process of matching diaspora members and institutions in the home country to generate and support collaborative projects.¹⁶

In the case of New Zealand, the development of a strategy was part of that country’s neoliberal transformation and expatriates were seen as being useful in counteracting ‘the feared market failure of brain drain’.¹⁷ There was therefore a shift

¹² Boyle, M. and Kitchin, R. (2011). *A diaspora strategy for Canada? Enriching debate through heightening awareness of international practice*. Maynooth: MIRSA Project Paper 11–1, p.4.

¹³ Kalm, S. (2013). ‘Diaspora strategies as technologies of citizenship’. *Global Society*, vol. 27.3, p.380.

¹⁴ Leblang, D. (2010). ‘Familiarity breeds investment: diaspora networks and international Investment’. *American Political Science Review*, vol. 104.3, p.584.

¹⁵ Larner, W. (2007). ‘Expatriate experts and globalising governmentalities: the New Zealand diaspora strategy’. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. NS32, 331–345.

¹⁶ Kuznetsov, Y. (2013). *Why is diaspora potential so elusive? Towards a new generation of initiatives to leverage countries’ talent abroad*. Washington DC: World Bank Institute.

¹⁷ Gamlen, A. (2011). *Creating and destroying diaspora strategies*. Oxford: University of Oxford International Migration Institute Working Paper 31, p.5.

in policy, from encouraging skilled migrants to return to New Zealand to a policy of engaging expatriates in activities in their homeland without requiring them to return. This is similar to GlobalScot.

There is, however, a danger involved in diaspora policies which are overly focused on the economic aspects of the relationship. Thus:

The long-term project of building partnerships between governments and diasporas is much more likely to succeed if it has a strong foundation of good communication and mutual trust. Partnership is a two-way street. Too often, diasporas have felt that country-of-origin governments see them simply as cash cows.¹⁸

This is echoed by Ho *et al*,¹⁹ who criticise diaspora policies which work along the lines of “let me exploit our shared heritage for my sole gain” or “I see you as someone who can broker my interests”. They argue for diaspora policies which adopt what they call a feminist care ethic. By that they mean policies which are not purely economic but also have an element of care or emotion tied to them. Thus, when resources flow between homeland and diaspora, there is a shared interest in preserving and narrating the story of the nation. Diaspora tourism is an illustration of the way in which these emotional ties are built up, as is diaspora engagement in cultural and social institutions and events in the homeland. Second, there is a ‘moral’ dimension whereby diasporas are always viewed as partners, not only for economic purposes but also to advance social agendas; diasporas may wish their contributions to be used in a particular way, perhaps in less advantaged parts of the homeland. Third, there is a ‘service’ dimension, where the homeland ‘services’ the diaspora and vice-versa. Such services tend to involve the provision of diplomatic protection and wider consular services abroad.

It is certainly the case that diaspora strategies have become increasingly varied and many have moved on from a purely economic focus. So, while diaspora relationships can be used to drive exports and/or inward investment, it has been argued that culture ‘is the underlying glue that can bridge diaspora strategies’, and it has been highlighted that many countries have not developed or focused sufficiently in this area.²⁰ What is clear is that members of the diaspora itself should be involved in meetings, fora and policy making, and they can contribute significantly to ‘defining their home country’s value proposition and nation brand’.

¹⁸ Agunias, D. and Newland, K. (2012), *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development*, Geneva: International Organisation for Migration, and Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, p.29

¹⁹ Ho, E., Boyle, M. and Yeoh, B. (2015). ‘Recasting diaspora strategies through feminist care ethics’. *Geoforum* 59, p.208.

²⁰ Aikins, K. and White, N. (2011). *Global diaspora strategies toolkit*. Dublin: Diaspora Matters, pp.4-5.

Focusing specifically on Ireland, Aikins, Sands and White²¹ suggest that culture is the great 'Gateway to Ireland' and has a powerful role to play in connecting with the 'Global Irish'. They state that:

Whereas a small number of exceptional people in the diaspora can make a considerable difference, the potential now exists for the first time to connect with very large numbers of the diaspora. These approaches are not mutually exclusive.

This more cultural focus has led to developments in diaspora tourism, with large numbers of tourists revisiting homelands to undertake genealogical research or to visit sites of personal meaning.²² Some homelands operate 'homecoming' events; initially these may have been locally organised, such as Shetland's 'Hamefarins' in 1960 and 1985. More recently, they have been organised at a national level, such as the Welsh Homecoming of 2000, run by the Wales Tourist Board, the Scottish Year of Homecoming in 2009 and again in 2014, the 2013 Gathering in Ireland, and the Birthright Israel and Israel Experience programmes for Jewish youth from across the globe.

This development of diaspora tourism is an example of the shift in the relationship between diasporas and homelands. It reflects the fact that, over (and through) the generations, many diasporas may still wish to visit the home of their ancestors, without having any desire to move back to the homeland itself. Such tourism also, of course, has significant economic value, reflected in the diaspora strategies of several European countries.²³ In Ireland, for example, it has been a growth industry and large-scale Irish kin reunions are held each year where people of Irish descent congregate.²⁴

Within diaspora strategies, there is often a service element, whereby the homeland services the diaspora, as well as the diaspora providing service to the homeland. This might involve the extension of citizenship, voting rights or diplomatic protection to the diaspora; Scotland, however, with a devolved government, would not be in a position to provide some of these elements. The diaspora, however, can 'service'

²¹ Aikins, K., Sands, A. and White, N. (2009). *The global Irish: making a difference together*, Dublin: The Ireland Funds, p.4.

²² Timothy, D. (2011). *Cultural heritage and tourism: an introduction*. Bristol: Channel View; Basu, P. (2007). *Highland homecomings: genealogy and heritage tourism in the Scottish diaspora*. Abingdon: Routledge.

²³ Collyer, M. (ed.) (2013). *Emigration nations: policies and ideologies of emigrant engagement*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

²⁴ Timothy, D.J. and Boyd, S.W. (2003). *Heritage tourism*. Harlow: Pearson.

the homeland through soft power, acting as ambassadors for the country and as informal diplomatic actors.²⁵

As a result of legislative devolution in 1999 and, more specifically, the creation of a Scottish Government that could directly interact with the Scottish diaspora, Scotland has now been able to develop its own diaspora strategies and activities, following in the footsteps of countries such as Ireland. It is not necessary here to describe in detail the development of these, but we summarise it, before moving on to identify the themes emerging from this review, which informs the wider research study.

Scottish Government Diaspora Engagement

Although international relations are reserved to Westminster, Scottish governments have sought to engage internationally within the bounds of the devolution settlement, and engagement with the diaspora is a core element in this. In relation to North America, First Ministers post-devolution Henry McLeish and Jack McConnell attended Tartan Day celebrations in New York, and the Scottish Executive (as it then was) began to focus on the development of ‘an international network of Scottish influencers that can assist Scottish economic success’ throughout the world.²⁶ This work led to the establishment of the GlobalScot network, which has been seen as something of a model for leveraging highly skilled professionals among diasporas.²⁷

Although the initial focus of diaspora engagement from Scotland was on business and economic development, this was not necessarily the chief interest of many members of the diaspora. In 2003-4, for example, the Scottish Parliament’s European and External Relations Committee undertook an inquiry into the promotion of Scotland overseas and, of 74 submissions, 24 were received from diaspora individuals or organisations. It was striking that the majority of submissions from the diaspora referred to issues of heritage or ancestry and, in particular, Tartan Day as being the event that most engaged them. Subsequently, the Scottish Government commissioned research into improving its engagement

²⁵ Ragazzi, F. (2014), ‘A comparative analysis of diaspora policies’, *Political Geography* 41, pp 71-89.

²⁶ Scottish Executive (2001). *Scotland: A Global Connections Strategy*, Edinburgh

²⁷ Danson, M. and Mather, J. (2014). ‘Doing business with the Scottish diaspora’ in Leith, M. S. and Sim, D. (eds.), *The modern Scottish diaspora: contemporary debates and perspectives*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 64–80.

with the United States. By 2017, Scotland had developed a more formal US Engagement Strategy.²⁸

From 2007 onwards, the Scottish Government continued the work of its predecessor administrations, seeking to build on the ties of the diaspora, envisaging members as a potentially significant economic resource for Scotland and Scottish products throughout the world. Research identified eight areas of possible value that the diaspora represented to the Scottish Government, namely investment, transfers, trade, tourism, knowledge transfer, international influence, immigration and circular migration.²⁹ A subsequent Diaspora Engagement Plan was issued in 2010 and this clearly outlined, for the first time, the Scottish Government's 'ambitions for harnessing the power of Scotland's Diaspora'.³⁰ While the document spoke of a 'mutually beneficial' set of relationships, the diaspora was seen as a potential 'resource', which could 'contribute to the Government's core purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth for Scotland'. The three ways in which this could be achieved were identified as bringing the diaspora to Scotland to 'live, learn, visit, work and return'; promoting Scotland to the diaspora itself; and to 'manage' the reputation Scotland had with the diaspora, as 'an independent-minded and responsible nation'. Thus, this plan highlighted some strengths of a positive diaspora approach, but was strongly economic in its focus.

Perhaps because of this primary focus on economic growth, the Plan was targeted particularly at the 'lived' diaspora – those who had been born or who had lived in Scotland and then emigrated – and also the 'reverse' diaspora, namely immigrants to Scotland. The Plan also highlighted those organisations or agencies which were identified by the Government as 'key delivery partners'. These included VisitScotland, the Saltire Foundation, Scottish Enterprise and GlobalScot and they would present the opportunity to 'raise awareness of contemporary Scotland's strengths and culture'.

The Plan specifically highlighted the economic and communication aspects of engagement with the diaspora and this is a strategy that many other governments have followed. Clearly the diaspora can have a significant economic impact and can provide a significant source of skill transfers and wider civic experiences as

²⁸ Scottish Executive (2006). *Scotland's strategy for stronger engagement with the USA*, Edinburgh; TNS System Three (2007). *USA Strategy Research Report*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government Social Research; Scottish Government (2017), *Scotland's International Framework: US Engagement Strategy*, Edinburgh.

²⁹ Rutherford, A. (2009). *Engaging with the Scottish Diaspora: Rationale, Benefits and Challenges*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

³⁰ Scottish Government (2010). *Diaspora Engagement Plan – Reaching out to Scotland's International Family*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

well. However, establishing an environment in which the diaspora can fully contribute to the homeland, 'even in relatively more mature democracies'³¹ requires new forms of thinking, and structures and policies need to be developed specifically for such aims.

Significantly, and in contrast to other countries which have developed a more cultural and tourism focus in their diaspora strategies, Scotland's Plan paid only limited attention to the 'ancestral' diaspora, although this is undoubtedly the Scottish diaspora's largest element. The Plan did, however, highlight this as an unfinished task and identified a priority to 'work with VisitScotland to develop a delivery plan to improve connections and service delivery around ancestral tourism opportunities and build connections with Affinity and Ancestral Diaspora groups'. Subsequently, VisitScotland have established an Ancestral Tourism Welcome Scheme, and of course, major initiatives like the Years of Homecoming have been targeted directly at ancestral Scots. Interestingly, the US Engagement Strategy, while retaining an economic focus, did emphasise the importance of strengthening educational links between Scotland and the US, particularly in regard to students participating in exchange programmes and their continued engagement as alumni.

More recently, there has also been the launch of Brand Scotland³² in 2018, Education Scotland's strategy on international engagement, and ongoing work within the Scottish Government to develop a Cultural Diplomacy Strategy.

Emerging Themes

A number of themes emerged from an initial review of the literature on diaspora engagement and these informed our subsequent research – in particular the structure of and topics discussed in our interviews and focus groups

The main themes may be summarised as follows:

- It is clear that there is no agreement on the size of the Scottish diaspora, nor of its wider location(s) and its general skillsets. In part, this is because, while data may exist on birthplace and ancestry, there is no way to measure accurately the size of the 'affinity' diaspora. There is therefore no comprehensive data on the Scottish diaspora currently available.

³¹ Brinkerhoff, J. (2009). 'Creating an enabling environment for diasporas' participation in homeland development'. *International Migration*, vol 50. 1, 75–95.

³² Scotland.org

- It is also clear that not all elements of diasporas are given equal weighting. Because of the strong economic focus in many strategies, those diaspora members involved in business and with the ability to invest in the homeland are often prioritised over ‘ancestral’ diaspora groups. In addition, those who may be classed as an ‘affinity’ diaspora have, in some cases, been deprioritised, not least for reasons of capacity. It appears, however, that in Scotland’s case, the significance of this last group – who often include university alumni who have studied in Scotland, is now being recognised. It would appear that successful diaspora engagement should involve all its wider elements – ‘lived’, ‘ancestral’ and ‘affinity’ included.
- Following on from this, a number of researchers (including ourselves)³³ have commented on the importance of engaging the diaspora in such a way that its contribution to the homeland is not seen solely in terms of investment and economic development. The diaspora does not wish to be seen simply as a ‘cash cow’. The importance of cultural, historical and family connections must be recognised and emphasised. This research therefore seeks to explore the potential contributions of the diaspora in very broad terms, including, but certainly not limited to economic considerations.
- It is pointed out in the literature³⁴ that the relationship between the homeland and the diaspora is a ‘two-way street’. It is important therefore to explore what the diaspora feels it wants from Scotland, as much as what Scotland seeks from the diaspora.
- Many researchers emphasise how diasporas are viewed as being important ambassadors for their homelands and how they can wield significant soft power as ‘informal diplomatic actors’. This is a fruitful area to explore as, in the case of Scotland, there is clearly a great deal of goodwill towards the home country within its diaspora and many of its members may be willing to take on leading, if informal, roles.
- A number of research studies have emphasised the importance of diaspora strategies which have a strong cultural as well as economic focus, so that ancestral diasporas are not excluded. The Scottish Government has a current Culture Strategy which includes a tourism focus.³⁵ It is now developing a Cultural Diplomacy Strategy and this will set out how the Government will assist the recovery of the cultural sector from the pandemic through international engagement, and how it will use the opportunities which cultural exchanges create in support of Scotland’s broader international objectives.³⁶
- While they are considered very successful events and presentations of Scottish diaspora reach, research has shown that some in Scotland are

³³ Leith, M. S. and Sim, D. (2016), ‘Scotland’s diaspora strategy: the view from the current American diaspora’, *Scottish Affairs* 25.2, pp.186-208

³⁴ Agunias, D. and Newland, K. (2012), *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development*, Geneva: International Organisation for Migration, and Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute

³⁵ [Scottish Government \(2020\) Culture Strategy: vision and summary of actions](#)

³⁶ [Scottish Government \(2022\) Scotland's Global Affairs Framework](#)

uncomfortable with a focus on tartan and other traditional symbols of Scotland in events such as Tartan Day / Week to celebrate the links between Scotland and its diaspora.³⁷ It must be recognised, however, that many members of the ancestral diaspora in particular see a great significance in such symbols and their ties to Scotland are often focused around history, family genealogy and clan affinities³⁸. Ancestral Scots may also contribute economically to Scotland through tourism and home visits and it is important that this is recognised.

- University alumni are being increasingly recognised as important members of the diaspora. Some may be ‘lived’ diaspora, being born and raised in the country in which they study. But international students who study, for example at a Scottish college or university, may retain a strong affinity for Scotland after they graduate and leave Scotland. Strategies are increasingly making reference to alumni and Education Scotland emphasises the international aspects of Scottish education. An international strategy for higher education is also being developed by the Scottish Government and there are opportunities for cross-working with other forms of diaspora engagement. The contribution of the alumni is therefore discussed within this research.

These emerging themes have informed the interviews and focus groups which we have carried out and a fuller discussion of our approach is in the following Methodology section.

³⁷ Brown, I. (ed) (2010), *From Tartan to Tartanry: Scottish culture, history and myth*, Edinburgh University Press

³⁸ Leith, M. S. and Sim, D. (2016), ‘Scottish clan identities in America: symbolic or real?’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39.14, pp.2564-2582

4. Methodology

The first part of this research involved a brief synthesis of the existing evidence on diasporas and the identification of topics of interest and any research gaps. This stage of the work built on a previous literature review carried out in 2021.³⁹ The previous study was comprehensive in terms of material collected from ‘official’ sources, particularly in relation to a range of countries, whose diaspora engagement they studied. We focused therefore on the more critical and analytical academic literature and this has informed the earlier part of this report.

The themes which emerged from the academic and ‘official’ literature informed the second stage of this study. This second and core element of the study has involved engaging with key internal and external stakeholders and groups with experience of or in diaspora engagement. This engagement has involved a series of detailed interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders, as detailed below.

Comparative Case Studies

We selected four locations on which to focus. Ireland has often been seen as a key comparator for Scotland, with a well-developed diaspora strategy. Indeed, previous research for the Scottish Government has explored the lessons which Scotland might learn from Ireland’s strategy.⁴⁰ Our second case study was Canada, not least because of its having an extremely large Scottish diaspora presence but it is also a country which is beginning to develop an engagement with its own citizens abroad. Our third comparator was Estonia. We believed that there was a value in considering an eastern European country, as these countries, once they had achieved independence and democracy during the 1990s, have been able to develop diaspora strategies. In some respects, their progress is similar in both timeline and manner to that of Scotland’s trajectory, post-devolution. Finally, as an example of a sub-state with a devolved administration, but also one developing an active engagement with its citizens abroad, we selected Flanders.

We consider each of these comparator case studies in turn in a following section, drawing out potential lessons for Scotland.

³⁹ McDonald, S. and Murray, A. (2021). *Literature Review for the Scottish Government’s Scottish Connections (diaspora) work*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government

⁴⁰ Ancien, D., Boyle, M. and Kitchin, R. (2009). [*The Scottish Diaspora and Diaspora Strategy: Insights and Lessons from Ireland*](#). Scottish Government Social Research.

Face-to-Face Interviews

We conducted a series of face-to-face interviews⁴¹ during the course of the research, as follows:

- For each case study, we interviewed a number of people, ranging from government officials to honorary consuls and individuals involved in diaspora engagement. We were also sent copies of documents to supplement the material collected in the interviews.
- Scottish Government officials. Again, these varied but included individuals working in trade and investment, tourism and cultural diplomacy, as well as officials working in the Scottish Government's network of international offices.
- Diaspora organisations. It was important to obtain the views of officers of Scottish diaspora organisations to explore their ongoing connections with Scotland. The organisations that we interviewed were based in North America.
- Alumni offices. There is an increasing awareness within Government of the importance of engaging with younger members of the diaspora, who may not necessarily be members of the more traditional diaspora organisations. In addition, some 'affinity' Scots may not be Scottish by birth or upbringing but may have studied in Scotland before returning to their home country. To explore this aspect of the diaspora, we interviewed alumni officers at Scottish universities.
- Scottish Development International and GlobalScot. The GlobalScot business network has been seen as a very successful way of bringing together Scots working abroad who may be attracted to invest back in Scotland. We interviewed a number of people in this group.

Prior to interview, all individuals concerned were sent a Participant Information Sheet about the study, a Consent Form to be signed and returned, and a letter of support from the Scottish Government. In all, we contacted and interviewed a total of 24 individuals. All interviews were conducted online and lasted between 30 and 75 minutes and were recorded. Copies of the transcripts were made available to the interviewees.

⁴¹ Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of the West of Scotland

Focus Groups

We held four focus groups as part of the research. Participants were identified in a number of ways. Some were recruited as a result of organisations such as diaspora groups and alumni offices publicising our research to their own membership. In addition, we advertised and recruited individuals through social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.), publicising our work and asking interested individuals to contact us directly. For that purpose, we set up a dedicated email account. Once again, all volunteers were sent a Participant Information Sheet about the study, a Consent Form to be signed and returned, and a letter of support from the Scottish Government. In the end, we recruited 36 volunteers who all provided information and consented to take part. In addition, we asked volunteers to complete a very short questionnaire to tell us about their background, so they could be allocated to an appropriate group.

The volunteers were subsequently divided into four specific groups as follows:

- 'Lived' diaspora. This comprised those volunteers who had been born and / or brought up in Scotland and were now living abroad.
- 'Ancestral' diaspora. This group comprised individuals who were involved with a diaspora organisation and whose connection to Scotland was a more genealogically distant one. The organisations they belonged to varied from Saint Andrew Societies to Gaelic learning groups.
- 'Affinity' diaspora. This group had a connection to Scotland but it was less direct and often not familial. In some cases, it was through an appreciation of Scottish music, through a distant connection with a Scottish regiment, or through previously visiting Scotland.
- Alumni group. This group comprised graduates of Scottish universities, living abroad.

The focus groups were all held in the evening at weekends, to allow those in work to attend and to allow for time differences with North America and wider Europe, where many of the volunteers originated. The focus groups were all held online, were recorded and each one lasted approximately 45-60 minutes.

Topic Guides

Prior to conducting the interviews and focus groups, we developed a series of Topic Guides. Following a general outline of issues highlighted by our previous research, these varied slightly, depending on the interviewees and groups. However, there were core questions about policy, the role of government in diaspora engagement and the form such engagement took, the drivers behind diaspora engagement, the

events and activities taking place within the diaspora, the support which was being given to the diaspora by government, the support which was desired by the diaspora, and the ongoing links which the diaspora had with Scotland. In the case of our comparator case studies, we asked questions about their particular diaspora policies and assessed the implications for Scotland. We also sought specific input from all individuals around what they felt was the most single important issue that could/should be addressed by Scotland. Examples of the various Topic Guides employed are attached at the appendix.

Analysis

All interviews and focus groups were conducted online via Microsoft Teams, and were recorded, with transcripts downloaded into Word. These transcripts were then individually analysed by both team members to identify key themes, issues and specific points. Then the team compared their findings to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the information and data provided by respondents. A number of major themes were identified, as highlighted below. Where responses illustrated a key point or theme, these have been employed within this report. In order to ensure confidentiality specific identifying geographic or personal information has been excised as appropriate.

We now move on to discuss the findings from our interviews and focus groups before discussing the implications for Scotland's future engagement with its diaspora.

5. Case Studies: Analysis and Findings

In this section, we describe the diaspora engagement policies of our four case study locations and identify lessons which may be applied to a Scottish diaspora strategy. We deal with each location in turn, informed by information from the respective governments, published literature, and our various interviews.

Canada

The size of the Canadian diaspora is unclear but a study carried out for Statistics Canada⁴² estimates that the total could vary between 2.9 million and 5.5 million, with a 'medium number scenario' suggesting the figure is around 4.0 million in 2016. This seems to be the most up to date estimate. Around half of Canadian citizens living abroad are citizens by descent, i.e. they were born abroad to Canadian citizens. Members of the Canadian diaspora who were born in Canada make up around one-third of the diaspora, while naturalised citizens represent around 15%.

Within the UK, there are believed to be around 50,000 Canadian citizens, with around 7,000 in Scotland. A number of Canadians have travelled to other countries such as the UK because of ancestral ties, while a significant number have studied in the UK and taken up posts in teaching or the health services. Some have married UK citizens and this has led to settling in the UK. One interviewee stated:

They come [to Scotland] for various reasons and not all of them come because they have Scottish backgrounds. There are a surprising number who actually just come because they think it's a nice place to visit. You know, apart from the weather! Scotland does have a certain reputation with Canadians, whether they've a Scottish background or not. They come because they want to see what the country's like.

A number of researchers have suggested that the Canadian Government has not focused sufficient attention on its diaspora and has instead focused on the presence of other diasporas *within* Canada. Diaspora policy has therefore tended to focus on the integration of non-Canadian diasporas (particularly visible minorities) into Canadian society.⁴³ Indeed, many 'emigrants' appear to be individuals who

⁴² Berard-Chagnon, J. and Canon, L. (2022). [*The Canadian diaspora: estimating the number of Canadian citizens who live abroad*](#).

⁴³ Carment, D. and Bercuson, D. (2008). *The world in Canada: diaspora, demography and domestic politics*, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press

have arrived in Canada, gained Canadian citizenship, but at a future date, returned to their home country. One of our interviewees suggested that:

A lot of people will come here and spend two or three years and then go back to where their family are.

while another stated that:

... a lot of them are just returning home and therefore don't let go of their original identity. Being Canadian is an addition rather than being Canadian as oneself.

This 'hyphenated' identity is, of course, relatively common in North America.

Issues concerning diasporas are, to an extent, devolved to the Canadian provinces but, once again, the primary focus appears to be the integration of other diasporas into Canadian society. Even in Quebec, with its engagement with Francophone countries, previous research for the Scottish Government concluded that there was no evaluation of Quebec diaspora engagement from which lessons could be drawn.⁴⁴

Work by the Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada,⁴⁵ however, challenges the notion that Canada is essentially a nation of immigrants. It argues that a greater appreciation of out migration is useful for the nation's self-image, if for no other reason than to take Canadians abroad more seriously. Similarly, Woo⁴⁶ believes that there has been a long-standing antipathy to Canadians abroad, as if by emigrating, individuals have turned their backs on the country. He suggests that there is, at last, a growing interest in the diaspora, partly because of the achievements of Canadians who have moved abroad into high profile positions (an example being Mark Carney, former Governor of the Bank of England) and partly because members of the diaspora have now been given full voting rights in Canadian elections.

That said, previous research for the Scottish Government⁴⁷ has shown that, while the Canadian diaspora is substantial, there is no policy currently available from Global Affairs Canada (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). Prior to January 2021, the

⁴⁴ McDonald, S and Murray, A. (2021), *Literature review for the Scottish Government's Scottish Connections (Diaspora) work*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government Social Research

⁴⁵ Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada (2011), *Canadians abroad: Canada's global asset*.

⁴⁶ Woo, Y. P. (2021), '[Canadians living abroad should be embraced as hidden assets](#)', *Policy Options*.

⁴⁷ McDonald, S and Murray, A. (2021), *Op. cit.*

Prime Minister charged the Hon. Jim Carr, then Minister of International Trade Diversification, in his mandate letter to ‘support the ... export mobilization of our small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This should include an examination of current programming and ensuring that Canada is maximizing the comparative advantage it holds with its vibrant diversity and diaspora communities’. In January this year, however, that department was replaced by the Ministry of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, led by Mary Ng, who had no mention of diaspora in her mandate letter. This would certainly suggest that the development of a Canadian diaspora strategy is not a current government priority.

This is not to say that diaspora networks do not exist. Global Canada, for example, is an organisation whose aim is to curate a community of ‘Global Canadians’ who are generally in leadership positions and who can assist in global engagement. They seek to harness what they term ‘the considerable intellectual and implementation power that already exists in the country’ to enhance global success. They recognise that the development of a global engagement strategy for Canada is much needed and they plan to assist government in its development. They are a non-profit organisation which is not funded by the Canadian government.⁴⁸

There are also a number of less ‘formal’ groupings. The Canadian Expat Association⁴⁹ was established in 2007 and is a non-governmental community, linking all Canadians living abroad under one bilingual platform. They make the point that, until their establishment, Canadian expatriates had no collective voice. Their aims are to help Canadians to access Canadian clubs and business organisations around the world; to advise Canadians in relation to moving abroad and moving back; to help organisations with promotional activities, sometimes in collaboration with government offices; and to act in an advocacy role for Canadians abroad.

Within the UK, there is the British Association for Canadian Studies, aimed at academics; the Canada – UK Chamber of Commerce; the Canada Club, based in London; the Canadian Women’s Club, with a presence in both London and Scotland; and a number of universities with active Canadian clubs, including one in Edinburgh. There are also a number of active social media groups such as Canadians in the UK and Canadians in Scotland, operating on Facebook.

⁴⁸ [Global Canada website](#)

⁴⁹ [The Canadian Expat website](#)

Estonia

The Estonian diaspora is estimated to be around 200,000 people, which is small but sizeable relative to a population within Estonia of only 1.3 million. The diaspora was formed as a result of three waves of emigration. The first, from the mid-nineteenth century until the start of the First World War, largely arose because of an increase in the country's rural population and most migrants moved to Russia to work in agriculture. The second wave of emigration coincided with the Second World War and occupation by Nazi Germany and then Russia. The third wave occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin Wall, with a number of young people moving to Western Europe for greater opportunities.⁵⁰

Prior to the restoration of Estonian independence in 1991, the diaspora had played an important role in the maintenance of Estonian culture. One interviewee told us:

I think it's very interesting how effective a force the diaspora can be, even without any government input, and that's particularly the case for Estonia, even when it was part of the former Soviet Union. The diaspora all around the world was extremely active and continued to be passionate about how it could support the stolen culture continuing in exile, and even government continuing in exile. And that was a real force that continued up until the point that the country became independent and indeed one of its first presidents was born in North America and came back to Estonia.

In those countries where there was a sizeable Estonian presence, in North America and Western Europe, a number of Estonian societies were established, with a social and cultural focus, particularly around the Estonian language. Some communities bought buildings which became 'Eesti Majas' or 'Estonian houses' and operated as social clubs.

⁵⁰ Tammaru, T., Kumer-Haukanomm, K. and Anniste, K. (2010), 'The formation and development of the Estonian diaspora', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36.7, pp.1157-1174.

Diaspora engagement was initially very focused on language and culture and, in 2004, the government finances the Programme for Compatriots or 'Rahvuskaaslaste Programm'. Essentially, its priorities were the teaching of Estonian abroad; the preservation of Estonian culture abroad and support for feelings of Estonian cohesion; supporting an archive of exile cultural heritage; and encouraging diaspora return. This last aim appears to have been less successful.⁵¹ One interesting initiative was the organisation of annual summer camps for young people aged 13 to 18 years, whereby the children of Estonian expatriates could spend time in Estonia immersing themselves in the language and culture.

In recent years, the focus of diaspora engagement has become more business-orientated. In part, this is because many of those with connections to Estonia (including its network of Honorary Consuls) are involved in business. The country's strength in digital technology has encouraged investment in this area.

In 2020, the Estonian government commissioned research aimed at Estonian expatriate communities and potential returnees. This fed into a new Action Plan for the Estonian diaspora for 2022-2025, approved by the Government in November 2021. At its launch, the Estonian Foreign Minister, Eva-Maria Liimets stated:

People of Estonian origin across the world are an integral part of the development of Estonian language, culture and economy, and Estonia's future in general. This is why preserving and encouraging Estonian cultural identity across the world should be a priority for us because the greater the number of people who have connections with Estonia in one way or another, the greater the ambition of our plans. It contributes to the preservation of our people and economy, as well as to raising Estonia's profile and boosting our reputation. Estonians abroad help expand Estonia's reach.⁵²

The Action Plan itself has three main approaches. The first focuses on boosting and preserving Estonian identity abroad and this would involve creating a shared information space with diaspora communities, supporting various initiatives in communities, and promoting the study of the Estonian language abroad. The shared information space builds on Estonia's reputation as being possibly the foremost digital nation in the world and the Plan aims that these spaces should be multilingual – in Estonian, English and Russian. Russian was included, as it remains the primary language of a significant number of Estonians.

⁵¹ Saar, M. (2020), 'Diaspora policies, consular services and social protection for Estonian citizens abroad' in Laffeur, J.M. and Vintila, D. (eds.), *Migration and social protection in Europe and Beyond, Vol 2*, Springer IMISCOE Research Series, pp.161-176

⁵² [Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs \(2021\) Government approves the Foreign Ministry's action plans for climate diplomacy and the Estonian diaspora](#)

The second approach involves an increased engagement of the diaspora in Estonia's public life and development, and a key part in this is engagement with young people living abroad. There has been a concern that many younger Estonians have left to seek opportunities in other countries. This firmly relates to the third approach, which centres on those returning to Estonia and helping them (re)adjust to life there. Return migration has increased, particularly from Russia, a reflection of improved standards of living and prosperity in Estonia following its accession to the European Union in 2004.

Although diaspora engagement is increasingly business focused, the Estonian language and culture remain of crucial importance. A striking example of this is the Estonian Song Festival, one of the largest choral events in the world and held every five years simultaneously with the [Estonian Dance Festival](#). The joint choir has comprised more than 30,000 singers, performing to an audience of 80,000.

There are, therefore, a number of differences between Estonia and Scotland in terms of diaspora engagement. The Estonian approach has been much more culturally-focused, so as to preserve the language and culture, particularly throughout the period when the country was occupied. The creation of a shared information space, building on the country's digital expertise is also an important aim, while the increasing focus on return migration is also in contrast to Scotland where this has not been an explicit aim of the Scottish Government.

Flanders

The size of the Flemish diaspora is not clear. There must be significant numbers of ancestral Flemings in countries such as the USA, but the current estimate of Belgians living abroad is around 600,000, of which approximately half are from Flanders. Interviewees believed that, as Flanders was a relatively small region but with important export-driven companies, it was important for Flemings to be able to move abroad to work. It was suggested to us that significant numbers then return, although some may decide to settle abroad:

Some people go abroad for retirement, to Spain and France for the sun. There are people who leave Belgium for their job. Sooner or later, they may return after a couple of years or after a career. It all depends on the region. If you move to South East Asia or Dubai, it's often a function of the job and you return. But if you move as a Belgian to Australia or New Zealand, then more often it's a life changing experience and people who move there with their family, they will not return, they will stay and their children will not learn Dutch, they will go for English and they stay. People moving to the United States, it's a good life and you can make a lot of money working, but when you become older, it's very

expensive to live in the States with health insurance etcetera. So a lot of people then also return to Belgium and the European quality of life. So it all depends on the reason why you leave. We also see that the students who do their study abroad, Erasmus projects and so on, a lot of them find love abroad, and they often also stay there. And so it depends.

The ways in which Flanders engages with its diaspora have some significant differences from Scotland. In part, this reflects the constitutional position. Belgium is a federal state with three devolved governments in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels itself. Flanders therefore has important powers in relation to both foreign and macro-economic policy and has been able to develop a foreign presence and become a diplomatic actor on the world stage.⁵³

The government of Flanders has published its 'Vision 2050', depicting the Flanders it would like to see in 2050:

a social, open, resilient and international Flanders that creates prosperity and well-being in a smart, innovative and sustainable way and one where everyone counts. As an open society and an open economy, the future of Flanders is tied to development in the rest of the world. The Government of Flanders thus wishes to see Flanders more connected than ever with other countries. After all, a number of major challenges can only be effectively dealt with in an international context and via good co-operation with foreign partners. Maintaining good relations with our foreign partners is necessary for effectively promoting Flemish interests, a key task of Flemish foreign policy.⁵⁴

The Government has a Department of Foreign Affairs and a series of diplomatic missions across Europe and elsewhere. Most significantly, the Government, in 2005, launched Flanders Investment and Trade (FIT) to support Flemish companies in their export activities, while also promoting Flanders itself as a location for investment. FIT now has around 90 offices across the world, one of which is in Edinburgh. Interviewees believed that the Flemish approach was one of quite aggressive marketing, pursued through this very extensive network of offices. Although FIT is not strictly analogous to the Scottish approach, which involves organisations such as GlobalScot or SDI, the key difference is that the FIT approach does not rely on there being a Flemish presence in the places where offices have been established.

In contrast to the interventionist approach on investment and trade, the Flemish government's engagement with the diaspora has been outsourced to an

⁵³ Crikemans, D. (2010), 'Regional sub-state diplomacy from a comparative perspective', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 5, pp.37-64

⁵⁴ Government of Flanders. [Strategy Paper, Flanders – United States of America.](#)

independent body, Vlamingen in de Wereld (Flanders in the World or VIW). It has a Board of Directors and a small staff team of four, based in Brussels. Most of its resources come from government funding and in 2019-20 (the most recent available figures), this amounted to €264,000. The organisation provides advice and assistance to Flemish people intending to move abroad and return, in the form of a detailed guidebook, and also has close links with employers. They hold annual events (in English) in Brussels, for human resource managers in various companies to help them develop family policies for Flemish families moving abroad to work.

VIW maintains contact with expatriates through a network of volunteer 'ambassadors' around the globe and these ambassadors keep in touch with Flemish people abroad and also help to organise various social events and celebrations, for example on the Feast Day of the Flemish Community. There are some Flemish clubs operating around the world, with one in London (Vlaamse Club London).

VIW also publishes a magazine four times a year and

it's completely in Dutch because we believe and we think that it's the culture and the language that's also part of the bond between your compatriots worldwide. Dutch or Flemish is not a large language and for the people who live here, it's important that they can speak it with their friends, with their family. And that's also one of the reasons we publish in in Dutch.

Relationships with the Flemish government appear to be close and Ministerial visits abroad will usually involve VIW helping to identify Flemish expatriates with whom to meet. VIW's focus is primarily cultural with the economic aspects of diaspora engagement the responsibility of FIT. They believe that more focus is needed to develop the cultural side of things.

The main differences between Flanders and Scotland, therefore, relate firstly to the relatively aggressive approach to trade and investment by the Flanders government with its extremely extensive network of FIT offices around the world. This is in part a result of the greater powers possessed by the Flanders government in relation to foreign affairs. And secondly, the outsourcing of diaspora engagement to an independent body (VIW), who have responsibility for maintaining links with the diaspora, providing advice and the promotion of social and cultural events.

Ireland

In a speech at Trinity College, Dublin, in February 2008, the then First Minister Alex Salmond called for Scottish policy makers to study and extract lessons from the remarkable growth of the Irish economy after 1993, a growth which earned Ireland the nickname of the 'Celtic Tiger'. One of the areas which received growing attention was the relationship with the diaspora. Although the history of emigration from Ireland and Scotland was rather different, it was believed that the Irish approach to diaspora engagement was relatively successful and that Scotland could learn from it.⁵⁵ At the time, Ireland had adopted a relatively light-touch and flexible approach to diaspora engagement and this was felt to give 'ownership and freedom to its members'. Scotland's approach, in contrast, was viewed as being more muscular, state-centric and centrally managed, although the authors acknowledged that this may have reflected the fact that the Scottish diaspora was less well articulated and organised than the Irish. Thus, in being seen as a comparator for Scotland, Ireland's focus on cultural as well as economic issues, and its light touch and flexibility in diaspora engagement were seen as useful approaches for Scotland to consider.

The Irish diaspora is enormous, with around 70 million people worldwide claiming Irish descent. Of these, it was estimated in 2009 that only 3.1 million had Irish citizenship as passport holders, and a further 800,000 were Irish-born citizens living abroad.⁵⁶ The diaspora is essentially therefore an ancestral one, although interviewees stressed to us that they include the affinity diaspora within their strategy.

Ireland began fully to embrace or 'cherish' its diaspora, following a speech by the then President Mary Robinson in 1995, to which we have already referred. The importance of this was expressed in our interviews:

[The] bedrock is the fact that for most of the history of the state, emigration was constant ... And I think there was always a fundamental recognition that a lot of these people didn't leave Ireland by choice. They left by force of circumstance and... They played a key role in the economic and social supports during the early years of the Irish state. And I think there is a fundamental recognition that there's a debt owed to those communities on the part of the state.

⁵⁵ Ancien, D., Boyle, M. and Kitchin, R. (2009), *The Scottish diaspora and diaspora strategy: insights and lessons from Ireland*, Edinburgh: Scottish Government

⁵⁶ Aikins, K., Sands, A. and White, N. (2009), *The Global Irish: making a difference together*, Dublin: The Ireland Funds

Most families within Ireland have a connection to somebody living in the diaspora, and some Irish newspapers carry news of diaspora events or information about individual Irish emigrants. In that sense, the Irish diaspora is, in many ways, a part of Irish society, whereas the same is not entirely true of Scotland.

In 2011, the then US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, established the Global Diaspora Forum and the first co-hosting of the European strand took place in Dublin in 2013, recognising Ireland's place as a country with a long history of emigration and subsequent diaspora engagement.⁵⁷

The current Irish diaspora strategy has five strategic objectives,⁵⁸ embracing:

- 'Our People', whereby Ireland seeks to ensure that the welfare of Irish people abroad is at the heart of diaspora support;
- 'Our Values', whereby Ireland will work with its diaspora to promote Irish values and celebrate the diversity of the diaspora;
- 'Our Prosperity', involving the building of mutually beneficial economic ties with the diaspora;
- 'Our Culture' with Ireland supporting aspects of Irish culture within the diaspora; and
- 'Our Influence', in which Ireland seeks to extend its global reach.

Responsibility for diaspora engagement rests with a Minister for the Diaspora, located in the Department of Foreign Affairs. The implementation of this strategy involves a number of different elements, as follows.

The **Emigrant Support Programme** was established in 2004 to support the work of Irish organisations and communities around the world. Grants have ranged from small amounts for small voluntary groups to major allocations awarded to community organisations operating on a large scale. A major focus is on the front-line delivery of welfare services to Irish emigrants, including the elderly. Also of importance are grants to cultural, community and heritage projects, which foster a vibrant sense of Irish community and identity. In 2019 (the most recent data available) the amount of funding awarded was €11,954,107 for 275 projects. A further €224,125 was awarded through its 'Strategic Diaspora Project' stream to support work which extended diaspora engagement, for example to previously under-represented diaspora groups. 51% of all expenditure was in Britain, with a

⁵⁷ Aikins, K. and Russell, M. (2013), 'Diaspora capital: why diaspora matters for policy and practice', *Migration Policy Practice* 3.4, pp.26-30

⁵⁸ *Global Ireland: Ireland's Diaspora strategy 2020-2025*, Dublin: Government of Ireland

further 26% in the US.⁵⁹ Government interviewees suggested that the Programme had distributed around €200 million since its inception in 2004. They believed it had been very effective but they were now trying to focus more on youth-based initiatives and more cultural initiatives.

In order to recognise the importance placed by Ireland on the contribution made by the Global Irish, the Government in 2012 introduced a **Presidential Distinguished Service Award**. These awards are made annually and only people who live outside the island of Ireland can be nominated. Recipients must have given distinguished service to Ireland and/or its reputation abroad, contributed to, supported and engaged with Ireland and/or Irish communities abroad for at least five years, or have made a sustained and distinguished service on a global or international issue of importance. In 2019, the overall cost of the scheme was €42,000 and 12 awards were made.

An increasing number of Irish emigrants have expressed a desire to return and since 2017, the Irish Abroad Unit has had responsibility for an additional **Diaspora Affairs** budget to support returning emigrants. In 2019, ten projects totalling €616,422 were funded. Interviewees raised this as an increasingly important area of work:

You know, one of the big issues that we struggle with is how do we facilitate emigrants who want to return home? You know, how do we remove barriers that are stopping people from deciding to come back to Ireland, particularly those who have skills and talents we could use?

To assist with diaspora return, the Government supports a voluntary body, established in 2000, called **Safe Home Ireland**. This is an Irish emigrant support service that provides a range of services to more than 2,000 people each year, including an advice and information service and housing assistance to eligible applicants. Since its establishment, it has helped 2,196 people to return, of whom 75% were Irish-born.⁶⁰ It was described to us by our interviewees:

The Safe Home organisation has grown out of a lot of older Irish people wanting to return home not only in Britain but predominantly in Britain. And the organisation has really good relationships with the local authorities in Ireland and there is a small allocation of housing for those who are returning. So they work very closely with them, trying to bring people back to the communities. It's not without its challenges because obviously people have left and maybe gone to Britain or the US 50 years ago and sometimes think they're coming back to an

⁵⁹ *Support for the Irish Abroad: Annual Report 2019*, Dublin: Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Programme

⁶⁰ [Safe Home Ireland – Emigrant Support Service](#)

Ireland of 50 years ago, which obviously is not always the case. But it's an organisation that do really good work. It's often being said to us that we're great at bringing people back who are successful and maybe of great economic interest. But it's nice to look after people, maybe who worked in the NHS or worked on building sites or whatever and want to come back home and spend time with their family. So it's one of those kind of unique programmes we have. We have another organisation called Crosscare⁶¹ who would bring back people maybe who are in difficulties abroad and got separated from their family and try and help them, you know, get set up in the system. So we look after people who want to come back home, which obviously is very powerful. I think we settle a lot of people in some of the rural areas where there would be housing and the service keeps in touch with them and helps them settle back in.

Two further initiatives which have been introduced by Ireland are St Brigid's Day celebrations and The Gathering. **St Brigid's Day** was inaugurated in 2019 and is a programme of events taking place internationally over several days and is specifically aimed at celebrating the pioneering and creative role of Irish women in various aspects of life. It will be an annual public holiday in Ireland from 2023. **The Gathering** operated in a similar way to Scotland's Homecoming events, and was a tourism-led initiative, aiming to mobilise the Irish diaspora to return to Ireland during 2013. It was an initiative driven primarily by [Fáilte Ireland](#), the national tourism development authority, and [Tourism Ireland](#). There are discussions about holding a repeat event in 2023.

There are another two bodies involved in the area of diaspora engagement. The Ireland Funds was established in 1976 and has become one of the world's largest diaspora philanthropy organisations, generating substantial resources which have been distributed throughout the island of Ireland. It has 'chapters' in 12 countries and has raised \$600 million for various causes, benefiting 3,200 organisations. Finally, the Ireland Reaching Out programme is a volunteer-based, non-profit initiative which is based on reverse genealogy. Instead of waiting for people of Irish descent to trace their roots, volunteers worldwide will network with people of Irish descent in their local areas and help to connect people with their family histories. It is an interesting organisation at a time when genealogical research is growing in importance.

Diaspora engagement is therefore driven by both economic and cultural imperatives. There has been substantial investment in Ireland's economy (particularly in the technical industries) by the diaspora but the Government recognises that, for many members of the diaspora, there is a greater interest in cultural issues. Hence, as one interviewee put it:

⁶¹ [Crosscare - Supporting those most in need with Love, Respect and Excellence](#)

... one of the phrases I've often used is the importance of meeting the diaspora where they are. You know, if you go out looking for business connections, you'll only get the people who are interested in doing business. But if you meet people where they want to be met, that's where everything else reveals itself.

As a relatively small country, Ireland has a limited consular presence around the globe. In 2020, this amounted to 63 embassies, 10 consul-generals and a number of honorary consuls, making up 80 representations all together – moderate by international standards.⁶² As a result, the Irish Government sometimes turns to community welfare organisations to support citizens during consular emergencies. Embassies and consulates are encouraged to build networks with such local organisations and the process has been aided by the growth of social media. In an example from Scandinavia,

We had no contact with younger generations, so we got to the point of whenever anyone walked in with a passport application, we flipped it over and checked the email address and we knew that they were transitory, young Irish folk – the young professionals who get all over the world. So we reached out across our embassies in the Nordics and we created a LinkedIn for the Irish Professionals Nordic network and it still exists to some extent.

The Irish Government is also seeking to ensure that its diaspora strategy is an inclusive one and they are reaching out to groups who were previously under-represented. These have included black or mixed-race Irish, the travelling community and the LGBTQI community. An example of this is the greater recognition given to black Irish people, following an #IamIrish exhibition in London in 2016, to embrace the collective mixed-race experience of Irish heritage in all its diversity.⁶³

Summary of Issues for Consideration

The information collected from the four case studies raise a number of issues – and ideas – which may help to inform the development of a Scottish diaspora strategy and which we will expand on in the next section, with the help of information from our one-to-one interviews. Issues which have been identified and will be explored are grouped under headings, as follows:

⁶² Hickman, M. (2020), 'Diaspora policies, consular services and social protection for Irish citizens abroad', in Lafleur, J-M. and Vintila, D. (eds.), *Migration and social protection in Europe and beyond, Volume 2*, Springer, pp.259-272.

⁶³ [IamIrish - About](#)

Picturing and Understanding the Diaspora

- **There is a growing recognition in many countries that diaspora engagement is an increasingly important area of policy.** This is now true even in countries like Canada, which have generally been regarded as countries of immigration rather than emigration.
- **In Ireland, with its long history of (often forced) emigration, there is a feeling that a debt is owed to its diaspora.** Many, if not most, families in Ireland have relatives abroad and so the diaspora has a much greater recognition within Irish society than perhaps is the case in other countries.
- **The diaspora can play a significant role in maintaining aspects of homeland culture and language.** This was clearly the case in Estonia prior to its independence. In the case of Scotland, one might see this in the cultural interests of many diaspora organisations and, indeed, in the significant number of overseas Gaelic learners.

Engaging the Diaspora

- **A key issue for any diaspora engagement programme to be effective is the availability of resources.** Ireland has allocated substantial resources to its programmes, with over €12 million available in 2019 alone. It may be hard for a country like Scotland to match such a figure, but it requires consideration.
- **All diaspora engagement policies must be inclusive** and Ireland is reaching out to previously under-represented groups such as black and mixed-race Irish and the LGBTQI community. They have also introduced St Brigid's Day celebrations to promote women's equality. Scotland may wish to consider similar organisations and linkage bodies.
- **The mechanisms for diaspora engagement vary.** In Ireland and Estonia, it is essentially a government responsibility, located in their Departments of Foreign Affairs. But Flanders has outsourced this role to Flanders in the World (VIW) and they have built up a network of volunteer ambassadors around the globe. They also publish regular magazines as a way of keeping in touch with their diaspora. This is a significantly different model to other countries.
- **Engagement with the diaspora to enhance trade and investment is a particular strength in Flanders.** Their network of around 90 Trade and Investment offices is substantial and they have not relied on a Flemish local presence before opening these offices.
- There is **a growing use of social media** to allow diaspora members to engage with each other, and the growth of digital platforms to provide databases on the diaspora and diaspora organisations. Estonia perhaps leads on this as a digitally advanced nation, but Ireland and Canada have also developed social media platforms. We also understand from interviewees that the Welsh Government is establishing some form of digital networks to engage with its diaspora. This is clearly an area in which Scotland could expand.

- Across the case studies, there was an emphasis on **the importance of engaging with younger members of the diaspora**. Estonia makes use of summer camps to allow younger diaspora members to immerse themselves in Estonian culture. Ireland's Emigrant Support Programme is also increasingly focused on youth-based initiatives.

Supporting and Recognising the Diaspora

- **Some of the initiatives taken in other states and sub-states have been possible because of their legislative and administrative powers**, even in a sub-state such as Flanders. Any initiatives which Scotland develops, by learning from these case studies, will often clearly be limited by the constraints of the current devolution settlement and the powers available to the Scottish Government. Nonetheless, the initiatives noted have clearly borne fruit in diaspora activity and engagement for other states/sub-states.
- **Return migration is becoming significant in some countries**. In the case of Estonia, this occurred following independence. In Ireland, there is support through the Diaspora Affairs budget for returning migrants, while voluntary bodies like Safe Home Ireland and Crosscare can assist returners to settle. Return migration might be an important way in which Scotland could address its population challenges. Although Scotland lacks powers over immigration, this is clearly an area to be considered, in negotiation with the UK state authorities.
- Ireland's use of its Presidential Distinguished Service Award is a way in which **the contribution of individual diaspora members may be recognised** and may be an initiative to be copied by Scotland.

Diaspora Initiatives

- **Genealogical research is important to the diaspora in their search for their 'roots'**. In Scotland, the Scotland's People website is a valuable resource. Voluntary bodies such as Ireland Reaching Out might be encouraged to assist family historians, or diaspora organisations.
- Scotland has held two officially supported Homecoming events, with some local events in places like Shetland. Ireland is contemplating a second Gathering, after the success of their first (influenced, no doubt, by the Scottish Homecoming events). **It may be appropriate for Scotland to consider another officially supported, Scotland-wide Homecoming.**

6. Interviews and Focus Groups: Analysis and Findings

In this section, we consider the information provided to us in individual interviews and focus groups and we identify lessons which may be applied to a Scottish diaspora strategy. The section is thematically organised.

Defining the Diaspora

Defining the Scottish diaspora is a challenge not only for Scotland, but often for the diaspora itself. Given the spread, overall size (which as this report highlighted at the beginning, remains an elusive estimate) and the time that the diaspora has had to evolve into its contemporary form, there are many differing opinions held, even by those who engage with, or originate from, the diaspora itself. It is fair to say that the view of who the diaspora includes, and thus what the diaspora is, can shift, depending upon the specific aim of the organisation/individual/entity involved. As one individual commented:

We will move in a slightly different direction, but as a basis for engaging with the diaspora... what definition of the diaspora we're using in this context. It's not just an individual who maybe has ancestry, birth, your type of links to Scotland, but we see it in a much broader capacity, as individuals who have a capacity, who have a passion for Scotland, and a connection with Scotland.

Thus, this individual, working for a Scottish based organisation, had a very broad and inclusive view of the Scottish diaspora, but this was not fully shared across all organisations in Scotland. Another individual was much more emphatic about differentiating between aspects of the diaspora, but this did not diminish their understanding of the importance of such individuals as potential positive representatives for Scotland.

Diaspora to me, pure diaspora, is people who have Scots ancestry, who were born and bred, maybe in the States or wherever, but they have got their Scottish ancestry and they still very much connect with that. If it's a Scottish person that's born in Scotland, but they now work and live somewhere else... that to me is not diaspora. That is an expat. Alumni can be, but alumni could be a graduate from a Scottish University who is Scottish and now works and lives somewhere else. Equally, it can be American, or Chinese... They are not Scottish... But Scotland got under their skin and then they've gone home... they can be ambassadors in the exact same way.

As we have noted previously in this report, Ireland employs a very broad definition of diaspora, and includes people who are labelled as 'affinity' diaspora and who may not have direct Irish ancestry, but feel a firm connection to Ireland. This is a clearly accepted aspect of the Scottish diaspora within Scottish Government organisations, but perhaps clarity around the definition, to include individuals from not only the lived diaspora, but also the ancestral, and affinity, is not as fully widespread.

The diaspora themselves also have differing attitudes towards the nature of the diaspora and how and when the term is used. Many have a very clear and firm definition in mind as '*people of a country/ethnicity that live outside the country of origin (or of ancestors)*' but that can also be somewhat exclusive of groups that are now included in the Scottish Diaspora. In addition, previous engagement with leaders within ancestral societies in North America has shown that not everyone likes the term diaspora, itself, with some choosing not to employ it organisationally. Nonetheless, many individuals active within diaspora organisations have noted that the term '*is something that's commonly used, and I've heard it also refer to many different cultures*'. Yet, even where it is regularly employed, individuals can find the term 'challenging' and may define themselves simply as '*Scots who left Scotland and now live in another place*'. The challenge is just how widespread the general acceptance of the term is, as it is a definition that people do not always apply, or employ:

...here in [country]... it's a frequently used term... but I must say I would never think of myself as Scottish diaspora. I just think of myself as a lost clan, a relocated tribe. I think of diaspora as people who have had to flee misfortune. But, you know, many of us chose to leave for different reasons, leave Scotland.

What is clear from our discussions in interviews and focus groups is that individuals within what we refer to as the organisational diaspora (those belonging to established organisations that focus on Scotland/Scottishness) all know the term and use the term in both official and everyday discourse. This is because, traditionally, the term has been applied to individuals with birth or ancestry links to the nation and many organisations have also traditionally emphasised this aspect of belonging. However, while individuals from the lived diaspora (who have a direct family or birth link to Scotland) use the term, and those from the ancestral diaspora also employ and understand the term from their perspective, it is not widespread among other individuals from the affinity diaspora, or others from the educational (or what we refer to herein, as the alumni) diaspora.

What is clear from our discussions with individuals and groups is that affinity Scots are less aware of the term and often accept the position/definition that they themselves are not members of the Scottish Diaspora per se, and thus have difficulty in applying the term directly to themselves and other affinity Scots. This is

also a similar concern for individuals from the alumni diaspora. Both groups indicated that they saw the Scottish Diaspora as something related to birth or family origins, and including people who were born in Scotland and emigrated, or who were taken as children to other parts of the world and had families who are thus ancestral Scots.

Such a position was especially pronounced among the alumni diaspora. Some alumni organisation leadership reached out, during the research phase of this report, to specifically inquire if their members were 'eligible' to engage in the planned focus groups. As one interviewee noted

I gather within your mandate the definition's been expanded somewhat beyond the direct kind of birthplace point of view, to include sort of the economic and academic connections with the mothership, as opposed to just the strict birth location.

Such responses were not uncommon and reflected a widespread idea among individuals from the alumni group that they were not themselves directly part of the Scottish diaspora and that diaspora as a term applied to individuals only when it meant 'where they're born or their roots are from'.

Therefore, what was very clear is that an agreed definition was not present within the diaspora we engaged with, and that the discussions around the definition of diaspora were very much an issue of distinction between varying elements and personal opinions. This was the case whether this applied to people working for the Scottish Government or agencies, or people in organisations or even among people who felt an affinity, or who had lived in Scotland for a shorter period of time (to study).

At the same time, the diaspora can also be more inclusive when considered from a Scottish perspective. More than one person in Scotland tended to include immigrants to Scotland as part of the affinity diaspora. Such groups have often been called the 'reverse' diaspora within academic and previous research, and they represent a significant proportion of the Scottish population in 2022. Such inclusion points to a firm belief among many people involved in organisations and official agencies, that the diaspora must be as inclusive as possible and that, ultimately, everyone was a part of the diaspora, if they chose to be. This is an issue that was also highlighted in relation to the diaspora as defined to/from the homeland. It was argued by more than one person that the diaspora must be considered, irrespective of where they are, as part of Scotland, as part of the homeland. This reflects a position held by other countries. Ireland, for example, firmly associates the diaspora as a part of the nation, with individuals within the Irish government saying that the

country itself 'owes a debt' to the diaspora and thus the diaspora is incredibly important to Ireland as a whole.

This idea was reflected by some individuals working abroad for Scottish organisations. They pointed to both the strength of the diaspora within certain countries and how they regularly engaged with not only governmental organisations, but also wider social and cultural organisations and that seeing the voice of the diaspora in media, and the print media in particular, was a weekly occurrence in some countries. It was stated that *'it feels like that whole idea of the diaspora still being part of the country feels much more strongly developed [than in Scotland]'*. Therefore, the argument was that the diaspora must be seen not only as important to the nation, but as a part of the nation itself.

Economic Drivers of Diaspora Engagement

Economic considerations have often underpinned diaspora policy, irrespective of the country in question. Scotland has been very successful in terms of establishing this as a key aspect of diaspora engagement and activity through the GlobalScot network. This network is firmly part of the diaspora through the links GlobalScots have with the Scottish Government and Scottish based agencies/organisations such as Scottish Development International (SDI) and Scottish Enterprise. It was commented that the network is 'over 1000 strong now' and it is recognised that 'a lot of it has been about attracting inward investment to Scotland'.

Many of our interview subjects spoke of the importance of recruitment to keep the network growing and fresh, and of the importance of the firm focus on trade and investment. In addition, the idea of GlobalScot as a model to be copied was discussed as it is *'well perceived by others'*. Indeed, the idea of expanding the GlobalScot concept into other areas (such as the field of culture or education) was specifically highlighted. GlobalScot is seen as both a useful network and the concept is also seen as an exemplar by other governments. It is considered a model to be copied and employed, and may not only be useful for Scotland to expand in other areas, but is certainly useful for other countries to employ as an approach

The GlobalScots interviewed mentioned the effectiveness of various organisations involved with the diaspora, and working together with diaspora organisations, or individual GlobalScots. These included SDI, Scottish Enterprise, universities, charities, and other third sector and business bodies such as Scottish Chambers of Commerce. It is felt that the model not only works well in a number of ways, but the

interaction and engagement aspect also worked very well with specific geographic areas and key individuals, although not always in all areas.

At the same time, it was noted that a reconsideration of the strategy behind the model, and the ongoing expansion, could be firmly addressed as to why it exists; *'I think there is a fear of people just wanting the badge without thinking about who we're recruiting or why we're recruiting them or what we can do with them'*. This also related to the focus on trade or economic issues along, with a feeling that such a focus meant that the GlobalScots may be *'siloed'*. There was consideration of this issue from different approaches, nonetheless. It was argued that *'there could be a little bit of a more robust job done on the trade and investment side'* especially in relation to climate change as an economic and green activity. Likewise, the widespread nature of the Scottish Diaspora across the business sector in some areas of the world mean that the need to consider and recruit GlobalScots must be done outside the *'usual suspect areas'*. One response was that *'I do think from a, you know, whether it's a cultural or a business perspective, we could do a better job of bringing them together. I think the Irish do a much better job than the Scottish do'*. This respondent then went on to name several very highly successful individuals and several connections they had made as GlobalScots, but which they felt were not effectively engaged or currently networked properly.

One organisation that did crop up across several areas of discussion was the Scottish Chambers of Commerce. Highlighted as an organisation that can, and does do sterling work with the diaspora, it was felt by some that an overseas presence or organisation would be a useful consideration for focusing on a combination of economic and cultural activity. There was discussion around the Irish Chamber of Commerce in Ottawa, for example, and the general question was whether Scotland should have something similar.

The need for organisational links was highlighted time and again, and the role that Scotland, or the Scottish Government could play in this area was also highlighted. It was an area that was stressed by several individuals who felt that some *'coordinating entity'* or *'umbrella organisation'* could provide direction and links. Such an entity would have:

regional chapters [for example in the USA], say Northwest, West Mountain, West, Southeast. Were you to have a lead in those territories or regions that would be available, that would help coordinate the activities of the various groups within those subsets, and those regions. Part of what their role would be is to report on what's happening in those regions and then they would be a regional entity for when the Scottish Government wanted to get out a message, it would go directly to that body... That then would then go out to the appropriate groups... It's difficult to get a message out because there are just, literally thousands of

groups and so I think the local... localised strategic engagement. Not terribly formal, but structures that allow for coordination and strategic communication.

This discussion highlights a general feeling that firmer leadership and coordination could not only assist in the economic goals of diaspora policy but could also link with other areas. It was pointed out that diaspora organisations could also assist economic engagement; *'I think the Scottish Government should be trying to steer people a bit more into thinking through how can they be helpful with inward investment'*.

It is clear that a technology perspective to such an entity would be important and would build on the organisations Scotland has out in the diaspora:

...how would that translate into like practical things? You know, if you'd want some sort of website where you can access all kinds of information in one place and instead of kind of finding bits and pieces ... in order to actually have some sort of unit like that, we need a clear strategy in place to actually know what it is that they're doing so that they're not duplicating. I mean, would they kind of act as a hub that then directs them to the various teams that already do a lot of that work. So, it just be a kind of, I guess, suppose if it's a kind of coordination then.

It was recognised and accepted that any organisational entity would have limits and be quite challenging nonetheless *'Yes, but I don't think I'd want to be the people in that room because I think that could be quite difficult to coordinate... groups pushing back, but also groups maybe wanting to do the same thing'*.

One key aspect that does stand out about the economic aspect of diaspora strategy is that it does serve as an effective platform for engagement and that it could also be widened and used to link to other areas. Perhaps, it was suggested, there is a need to see the economic as both a driver and a key to bringing in wider, cultural and social individuals and organisations. *'I am a member of the Scottish Society of Artists... I look for opportunities through that, I can connect to Scotland, I would love to come and do a, you know, residency kind of thing'*.

This idea of the diaspora bringing economic, social and cultural activity to Scotland as individuals also connects the existence of diaspora tourists. They could often be called the tourists who reach the parts other tourists don't reach.

Diaspora tourists often visit areas that are off traditional tourist routes or foci. They are seeking information on their ancestry or clan history, and there is little doubt

they can have both a transitory economic impact on some local areas, as well as, perhaps, a slightly longer impact. The importance of *Outlander* (while not always positively reviewed) was specifically mentioned, '*they're using like the movies and stuff like that to bring people back to Scotland to introduce Scotland to the world... I think they're not doing enough about the modern Scotland*'. It was felt that connecting the diaspora to contemporary Scotland could have clear economic impacts, but this should not be the only driver, '*I'd like to know more about Scotland's little triumphs and efforts*'. Likewise, in creating an informed connection, it would not be the only success.

At the same time, clear limits to a focus on the economy as a diaspora strategy, or as the prime aspect of a diaspora strategy was emphasised. Previous research has highlighted that there are limits to the economic focus in terms of perception from the diaspora itself⁶⁴. Within the diaspora it is often not regarded as the best means to drive policy forward and can in fact be off-putting. Individuals working with diaspora organisations also argued that point, as '*culture is becoming more important*'. As we have highlighted, the key aspect emphasised within interviews and focus groups is that the diaspora do not wish to be seen as a 'cash cow' and that they need to feel that Scotland is reaching out to them and cares about them for who they are and their connections to Scotland.

Resources

The issue of resources underpinning any diaspora strategy are a significant aspect for consideration within that strategy. As we discussed in the case study sections above, Ireland invests money into their diaspora through a number of specific funding channels and aims them specifically at a variety of organisations in areas across the globe. This is an area that the Scottish diaspora is clearly aware of, as comparisons between Scotland and Ireland in terms of both the wider diaspora strategy, but also specifically around resources were numerous.

I think the Scottish Government is not investing enough resources into developing this relationship... I think that within the budget itself there needs to be more resources dedicated towards people on the ground, and funding initiatives... the budget is not where it needs to be. There's a lot of talking. There's a lot of reports. Good reports, good dialogue. But the resources and the budget numbers are not matching the rhetoric. There's a real gap in my view, with all the great reports on trade, on international engagement. All of that has been so positive and the points are spot on. But the budget is just not where it needs to be... I would love to be able to come back to Scotland, meet with Members of Parliament [MSPs] who do budget issues, whether it's a committee or specific ministers, and say you're not where you need to be with international budget numbers. You have to be increasing that number because you can't, you

⁶⁴ Leith, M. S. and Sim, D. (2016), 'Scotland's diaspora strategy: the view from the current American diaspora', *Scottish Affairs* 25.2, pp.186-208

can't just write the papers and have the dialogue and have the good reports. And again, there are many of them. You have to put resources behind it. To implement the strategy and so I feel there's a disconnect between the great vision. And a lack of wind behind the sails to get us moving.

This perhaps sums up the feeling among many individuals and groups within the diaspora and working with the diaspora. *'The feedback that we always receive is to tell us to do more, which isn't always easy to be honest because there is always lots to do'* and at the same time, there is recognition of the boundaries: *'there is always a money ask, which isn't as simple, and it can't always be yes because, you know, there's no bottomless money pit where we can get money for events and so on. I wish there was'*. The Irish Emigrant programme was also highlighted as an area where cash was 'effectively' utilised at the individual and group level through a solid working relationship with organisations.

OK, we can't compete with Ireland. We don't have this ton of cash to dish out to different groups, but it's like how, how do you support? At the end of the day, the 'ask' is the same. It's to do their bit for Scotland and how do we do that? I think Ireland is a good case study in many ways. But the key difference for me with Ireland is that they have the financial resources for various reasons which we won't go down that rabbit hole, but they've got resources that they send out grants and whatnot to all sorts of people to do things in the States and we just don't have the wherewithal.

At the same time, while monetary resources were a specific item mentioned throughout, additional offices and staffing overseas was also highlighted. Diaspora organisations and individuals across North America noted that there seemed to be a very small number of Scottish Government offices, or Scottish organisation officials, available in a limited number of locations. Scottish organisations are aware of this, but feel that diaspora organisations may not appreciate the wider situation, *'I don't think they're aware of the resource constraints.'* This situation was, again, contrasted poorly with the experience of the Irish Diaspora. Likewise, Flanders has a much more expansive organisation, which we have illustrated earlier in this report.

However, differences between the two cases of Ireland and Scotland were emphasised, *'The Scots are just kind of seamlessly integrated into lots of society but not identifiably'*. Also *'the Scots are very different to the Irish and I would always cite that the Scots tend to land and expand, whereas Irish tend to stay tightly knit together'*. It is accepted that that this diffusion made it more difficult to connect the diaspora both within regions and across large areas, but the importance of connection remained key. Organisational groups and individuals all noted that they sought links and support for many of their events, and clear links to Scottish Government and other organisations was vital in their mind.

Scottish Government officials also understood the problems of creating working connections and seeking to build around limited resources:

We just don't have the capacity. What we have done is give [diaspora organisations] the money and asked them to do it and organise it... the last three years has been a slow process to get them to all speak to each other. Most of them didn't know who each other were, the [officers] didn't speak to each other... And the events that they want to put on may suit their members, but not necessarily suit the purposes of the Scottish Government office. So rather than us being involved in logistics, which we just don't have the capacity for, we look for collective partnerships, either around thematic things or particular events, and they deliver them.

At the same time, while these links were often welcomed, there was a worry within some organisations about linking in with Scottish Government due to questions over who gets the credit. *'I think there's always a kind of worry, you know? ...is the Scottish Government going to take credit for it again?'* Nonetheless, the diaspora appreciated the effectiveness of working together *'I think the primary reason that the Scottish Government maybe, say the word latched on to us, or have been great supporters, is because [of] our biggest event'*.

What is clearly needed is not only financial resources, but organisational aspects too, and appreciating the aims of other organisations working from, and within, the diaspora:

making sure like the events management expertise is in place. So that things run smoothly. And so yeah, I feel like it's probably more than a practical level like that. And then improvements could be made... I mean the lead in time for ... events. I kind of forgot about those actually, because it's been so long since we've had one of those requests. That can be a real source of frustration.

This returns to the idea of some means by which to connect the diaspora and provide support with a limited number of Scottish Government offices and financial resources in play. In addition, as noted above, the diaspora exists within many areas of the world and it was asked by members of the diaspora when this expansion would occur. Again, it was felt that there were not enough offices and they lack spread to all the areas of the diaspora.

engaging with the diaspora in a more active way, you know, seeking out, you know, doing this kind of thing and just more actively engaging... you know, that connection back home, direct connection, active connection back home, which Scotland just doesn't seem to have, at least I'm not aware of anything like that. As I said there was that one big event that they held in [country], quite some time ago, but it was effectively a bit of a waste of money, because although it was

really well done and high production value and everything else, there's just no follow-up. There's no continuity to it.

Therefore, resources are a significant issue and an area that not only includes finance. It is an issue of presence, and it is an issue of connection, organisation and working together with the diaspora.

Culture and Heritage

We have seen above the extent to which Scottish diaspora engagement has hitherto been focused on economics and encouraging those members of the diaspora involved in business to assist with investment in the homeland. That in itself is a laudable aim and networks like GlobalScot have been extremely successful. But our previous research has indicated to us that the cultural and heritage aspects of diaspora engagement have tended to be neglected and some diaspora members have stated that they felt like 'cash cows', seen essentially as a source of finance.⁶⁵ Typical interviewee responses included:

The network has been relatively small, given what we think the size of the diaspora is. And it's probably not been completely representative. You know, I think traditionally it's probably grown up from men in high profile roles in multinational companies, and that kind of misses a lot of people.

My understanding is that the focus has always been on the business side and on the trade side a lot more than on the arts and culture side. And it's generally been a lot more to do with bringing in trade connections, inwards or outwards ones, and encouraging people to have their companies here.

I think if you're a Scot in the US, you're engaged in the cultural aspects, because of the familial relationship and what your connection is to Scotland, but I think that the Government's focus has been on economics.

The result of this apparent comparative neglect of the cultural and heritage aspects of diaspora engagement is that policy has tended to focus on the Scottish 'movers and shakers' abroad, and the more traditional diaspora organisations have sometimes been ignored. That said, the Scottish Government currently provides direct support to diaspora organisations through the international network offices. There is an 'open door' policy for requests. The Washington office considers that

⁶⁵ Leith, M. S. and Sim, D. (2016), 'Scotland's diaspora strategy: the view from the current American diaspora', *Scottish Affairs* 25.2, pp.186-208

they have a 'good if not excellent working relationship' with each Scottish group they know and are in frequent contact. Scottish Government representatives regularly attend events in their official capacity, especially around St Andrew's Day and Burns Night.

Lighter levels of support, such as video messages recorded by the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary and promotional materials, are provided for use at diaspora events, so organisations can show a level of official backing. For special occasions, such as a group's anniversary or milestone, messages of support can be and are provided in the form of video messages or official letters from the Cabinet Secretary to mark the occasion.

It has to be recognised that the ancestral and the lived diaspora are connected to Scotland in different ways. The ancestral group is perhaps more interested in history, in clan membership, in family histories and the Scottish traditions, but it is important not to be dismissive of this. While a television series such as *Outlander* may present a skewed version of Scottish history and one which we may see as not directly relevant to contemporary Scotland, nevertheless TV, films and books such as this are extremely important in relation to diaspora tourism, as we will discuss later.

We should also recognise that many of the traditional diaspora organisations like Saint Andrew Societies, while celebrating Tartan Day and Burns Nights, are involved in a significant range of other activities. Some have established scholarship programmes for younger Scots, either to allow young members of the diaspora in, for example, the US, to study in Scotland, or Scottish based students to study in the US. Others have set up lecture series, where topics discussed may range from political debate around the independence issue to Scotland's role in combating climate change. It is also clear that there is a political engagement, when members of the Scottish Parliament visit say the US or Canada. Indeed, there appeared to be a willingness to embrace contemporary issues and to seek to enrol younger Scots into these organisations – perhaps a recognition that the membership of some societies is ageing. For example,

[We're running] a series of four webinars per year on different topics and we get speakers from both Scotland and over here and that was our first one in November. I think we had over 100 participants and we will be having another one very shortly. The theme is Scotland and the sea and we'll talk about wave power and wave energy. So modern things. We're trying to not dwell on castles and battles of different clans from hundreds of years ago but not to ignore that either.

There has, in the past, perhaps been a reluctance on the part of Scotland, to promote images such as tartan as it is seen as rather backward-looking. Similarly, those living in Scotland may groan inwardly when tourists want to see the Loch Ness Monster. But we should embrace these images and acknowledge their marketability throughout the world. As interviewees stated to us:

I was recently in a meeting with [a foreign Government minister] and he said that of all the UK nations, Scotland is the one that's the most marketable and he was very surprised that the Scots didn't take more advantage of that. And it's true. If you go to a random European citizen and ask them what they think about Scotland, they'll start telling you about whisky and about Loch Ness and about tartan and about kilts, you know. The thing is that the Scottish identity is something that's quite marketable

I think that tartan – I mean, you know, there's not a country in the world wouldn't give their right arm for what we have, the whisky, the tartan, all these really strong motivators and connections. So there are some really exciting young designers, that have done things with tartan and tweed, presenting things in a contemporary as well as the traditional way. We shouldn't throw the baby out with bathwater. We've got great traditions. We should be very proud of them.

I think if we're trying to encourage Scottish diaspora to re-engage with Scotland, you need the culture, because it connects, you know, to the soul. It connects to their identity and we need to understand what they actually want to experience. Some will want to see the tartans and the Tattoo and all those things because they're all fantastic, but they're quite old fashioned and so I think what we need is a slightly more customised way of doing things, where we target our audience a bit better, doing stuff that appeals to different age groups and different demographics. So like you'll have music like a club night with musicians, then other times traditional bands for the people who want to be in full kilts and have a ceilidh.

Several interviewees mentioned modern Scottish fashions, including the work of Howie Nicholsby, in seeking to create kilts which did not necessarily use tartan and so might appeal to a younger demographic.

The importance of engaging with younger members of the diaspora is a theme which ran through a great many of our interviews and this was true of diaspora organisations who saw advantages in expanding their membership, and who recognised that they needed to reflect contemporary Scotland to a greater extent than they had hitherto. Some organisations had appointed a member of their Committee specifically to encourage a younger membership, had made greater use

of social media, and had widened the scope of their activities, keenly aware that younger people would not necessarily wish to attend traditional Saint Andrew's Day dinners. It was suggested to us, for example, that Tartan Day celebrations could easily include current Scottish bands, rather than traditional ceilidh or pipe bands. The annual Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow each January, for example, features bands from Scotland, the diaspora, and the other Celtic nations and they seem very likely to appeal to a younger audience in a Tartan Day setting.

The importance of recognising the different demographics also extended to thinking about diaspora tourism. Younger members of the diaspora would not necessarily wish to explore castles and heritage sites and so it was thought essential to focus on things like outdoor experiences, such as climbing, hillwalking, mountain biking and the like, as well as music and culture, food and drink and quality places to stay. Major events such as the Edinburgh Festivals, as well as the various music festivals which take place in Scotland during the year, also provide a focus for younger diaspora members to visit. It was suggested to us that financial assistance to help diaspora performers with their air fares, to allow them to perform at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe would also be a useful initiative. The importance of the Edinburgh Festivals was emphasised in interviews:

Well, I bailed from university into a world of rock and roll and did Fringe Festivals back-to-back, so there's actually what I call the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Diaspora as well, which is a group of people across the world who have heard of the Fringe. And then I walk into an Opera House or a theatre and within five minutes there's some connection back to my current partner, who spent a couple of very enjoyable Fringes in Scotland. It leaves its imprint on people and they suddenly want to be Scottish, or they suddenly want to move to Scotland because in that very compact period of time, they've experienced some of the best things that we have.

Scholarships aimed at young people are also important in enabling younger members of the diaspora to engage with Scotland. We have already mentioned that some diaspora organisations have introduced scholarships and we are aware of work within the GlobalScot network to facilitate some student exchanges. Wider university exchange schemes, perhaps similar to the Erasmus programme, should also be encouraged.

This perhaps leads us on to consider the cultural aspects of diaspora tourism which, we have already noted above, is extremely important to the Scottish economy. For members of the ancestral diaspora, there is often an interest in exploring family histories and places of meaning or sentimental attachment.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Basu, P. (2007), *Highland homecomings: genealogy and heritage tourism in the Scottish diaspora*, London: Routledge

Diaspora tourists visit their share of castles, museums and other attractions, but they are

more likely than most international tourists to have or make connections with the local economy, to stay in locally owned, smaller accommodations (or with relatives); to eat at local restaurants; and so forth. While they may not spend as much money as foreign tourists, on average, diaspora tourists' expenditures are more likely to go directly into the hands of local businesses. Thus, they generally have a different and, in some respects, more positive development impact.⁶⁷

In addition, diaspora tourism is not as seasonal as leisure tourism tends to be, and diaspora tourists tend not to confine themselves to the main tourist attractions. As one of our interviewees put it:

If you're visiting where your ancestry is based, you're not going round the honeypots. You're not going to do a quick visit to Loch Ness, Edinburgh and that's it. It's more spread out, which is exactly what we need for these rural communities.

During our focus groups, we also discovered a number of Gaelic learners within the diaspora. Some have attended summer schools in Scotland, or plan to do so. This involves going to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic college in Skye, and provides another example of diaspora tourism benefiting a rural community.

Homecoming events, such as those held in 2009 and 2014 and to which we have already referred are also important in encouraging ancestral tourism. We have already noted that Ireland, having similarly held a 'Gathering' in 2013 is contemplating a repeat event in 2023.

Younger members of the diaspora are likely to want different things and, as we have suggested above, a focus on outdoor activities, culture and food and drink may have a greater appeal for this demographic. Indeed, what might be termed 'cultural tourism' is important for Scotland:

Screen is obviously an increasingly important cultural export. [It] is definitely a big draw for people because they want to see where *Outlander* is filmed. And we've got the likes of the old *Highlander* films as well and all the *Avenger* films and then there's *Batgirl* that's being filmed just now and *Trainspotting* and so on. So screen is a big thing. Literature is also really important. Literature is another area where Scotland's already really well regarded in the world and so one of the

⁶⁷ Newland, K., & Taylor, C. (2010). *Heritage tourism and nostalgia trade: A diaspora niche in the development landscape*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, p.4

things that we try to do is promote Scottish artists and publishers overseas. And quite often there are hubs doing author and book events.

Finally, there were three significant suggestions made by our interviewees regarding diaspora tourism. The first is the need for greater publicity about cultural developments within Scotland itself, including cultural events but also developments of museums and galleries. One focus group participant told us:

The new museum in Dundee [the V&A] was built and open and everything before I saw anything online about it and it seems like it's a wonderful spot to go to. So I think they're not doing enough about modern Scotland.

The recent reopening of the Burrell Collection in Glasgow might be another example of the need to broadcast these developments to the diaspora.

There was also a feeling that it was difficult to receive the BBC Scotland and BBC Alba channels in the diaspora. We have not explored this in depth and some sort of streaming service subscription seems to be necessary but most focus group members referred to the BBC as their way of keeping in touch with Scotland so this is potentially an important way of disseminating messages about Scotland.

The second suggestion was the introduction of a network of Scottish Cultural Envoys. It was widely recognised that the GlobalScot network was important in economic terms and had worked extremely well, and some GlobalScots were involved in cultural activities – although that often appeared to be a result of an individual interest or commitment. But several interviewees believed that an equivalent cultural network was now necessary. Such a network would help to publicise Scottish art and culture around the globe, help Scottish artists to get their 'foot in the door' in artistic events abroad, and attract visitors to Scotland to sample Scotland's cultural offerings. This ties back to the general sense that culture and heritage had been rather overlooked in previous efforts at diaspora engagement.

Thirdly – and less positively perhaps, a number of our focus group participants expressed the view that, when they visited Scotland, they were sometimes disappointed by the quality of infrastructure, roads, and public services and sometimes places appeared rather neglected. One person felt that it just needed 'someone to trim it all up a bit'. There was therefore a concern about the image that Scotland itself was promoting to its tourists.

The Social Aspects

Much of the social activity within the diaspora is related to issues of culture and heritage, as we have discussed above. But it is important to note the extensive social networks which exist within the diaspora so that organisations and individuals are connected to each other, without necessarily being directly connected to Scotland itself. The Scottish Government, however, can make use of these networks as part of its diaspora engagement.

There are, for example, representative bodies covering clans and Scottish societies in North America – the Clans and Scottish Societies of Canada (CASSOC), and the Council of Scottish Clans and Associations (COSCA) in the US. Within Scotland itself, the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs (SCSC) has significant engagement with clans overseas. Similarly, although there are university alumni associations dotted across the world, they run social events for their members abroad and have regular get-togethers as well as engaging directly with their respective universities.

There may be lessons here from Flanders, where its network of volunteer ‘ambassadors’ keeps in touch with Flemish people abroad and organises various social events and celebrations, while maintaining contact with VIW in Brussels. It may be that the Scottish Government might assist the organic development of social connections within the diaspora – although the impetus would come from within the diaspora and not directly from Scotland.

Some organisations have been very effective about ensuring that their events also resonate with the wider population. An example is Hogmanay, which, while recognised as being a celebration with a particular Scottish resonance, is nevertheless celebrated across the world. One diaspora organisation took the decision to organise a Hogmanay celebration which would be open to all, family orientated, and was not to be seen as specifically Scottish. Between 7000 and 8000 people generally attend, so the event illustrates how Scottish diaspora organisations can become significant within wider social communities and also illustrates how people wish to engage with a typically ‘Scottish’ event. Some interviewees suggested that celebrations such as Burns Night could also be made attractive to wider audiences through involving modern writers and musicians. In this way, these events will not necessarily be seen as purely and traditionally Scottish but will have a wider social significance.

The main lesson in regard to social activities is perhaps to note firstly the importance of independent diaspora social activity *within* the diaspora, but also the

opportunity for the Scottish Government to make use of these social networks when engaging with Scots abroad.

The Alumni Diaspora

We have referred earlier to the importance of engaging younger members of the diaspora. Another group which has tended perhaps to be under-represented in discussions about diaspora engagement is the alumni diaspora – graduates of Scottish universities who have left Scotland to live and / or work abroad.

Universities themselves have alumni offices and so there is a regular engagement with graduates, but this engagement is essentially university-specific and not necessarily aligned with the aims of the Scottish Government. Much of it is focused on fund-raising and one interviewee was critical of the focus on what they called ‘moneymaking’.

I guess the university focus is really on building relationships between graduates and with us so that we all have a community focus. A lot of our work is in support of fundraising primarily and so some of it supports student recruitment activity or reputation management activity. But I'd say primarily where we invest funding in building alumni programmes internationally, it's where those areas align with our fundraising strategy. And I think there's also a lot of pride there. I think people genuinely want to know how the university is doing and they want the good news stories that we're able to share ... There's certainly an interest in connecting with other alumni. But I would say really at the heart of those programmes is the interest in maintaining a relationship with the university.

As we note above, in discussing the social aspects of the diaspora, local alumni groups organise events for graduates in their area, independent of the university. Indeed, there was sometimes a sense that the university was not doing enough:

My experience is that the alumni have a very strong affinity but more by good luck than good planning on the part of the university. I'm still in very regular contact with my classmates, most of whom are spread out through Europe, a few Americans and a few Asians as well. We have arranged to get together ourselves and have everyone meet in Brussels or wherever. But there's been no drive on the part of the university to encourage it in any way.

Alumni offices were able to instance events which they had held abroad and which had been well attended. These included Burns Suppers, whisky tastings and Tartan Day events. And, in some instances, universities are offered places at Scottish Government events abroad and contacts are then made with alumni groups locally, who may wish to attend. But class reunions of the kind referred to above tended to be held at the university itself.

That said, there was some criticism that Scottish universities did significantly less than, for example, North American universities in relation to their alumni.

I would say that the universities need to really do a better job. I'll say it because I went to university in the US and I'm the President of my class. And they make sure they're in touch with you. If it's alumni weekend, they want you to go. There's always somebody keeping you together. So I would say the universities need to understand the importance of their role in doing this and having the resources to keep up with it.

Some university graduates are members of the GlobalScot network or may attend GlobalScot events. But alumni offices suggested that the aims of such events were not always clear. There was an obvious tension between the alumni offices whose interests are very university-specific and solely related to their graduates, and the Scottish Government, which seeks a much broader diaspora engagement. Alumni offices were unhappy about short lead-in times and a lack of notice of Government events abroad. They would ideally like clearer information on event schedules, on the aims of events, and more discussion on their location. Scottish alumni may not necessarily be living in areas which the Scottish Government see as their key markets, for example. Alumni offices were also very protective of their contacts (particularly because of GDPR concerns) and unwilling to share information with the Government.

One important aspect of the alumni diaspora, and one to which offices referred, is that fact that many university alumni are not Scots but international students. The obvious example is perhaps China and we have seen increased numbers of Chinese students at Scottish universities, 6000 currently at Glasgow alone.⁶⁸ In the last year, *The Times* reports that students from China paid a combined £245 million in university fees at Glasgow, Edinburgh, Strathclyde and Heriot-Watt Universities, representing 31% of their total fee income.⁶⁹ Importantly, Chinese graduates from Scottish universities have become a significant affinity diaspora, retaining a strong affinity with the country, as well as with their university.

We often find that those alumni – sometimes just the people who have spent a year here, or a semester – are the ones with the strongest affinity. They have so many special memories and such strong feelings about their time here ... international students that have been here and then gone back home may be the ones that are more enthusiastic about Scottish themed events.

⁶⁸ [BBC News \(2022\) Why are Chinese students so keen on the UK?](#)

⁶⁹ [The Times \(2022\) Share of Scottish university fees from Chinese students revealed](#)

Finally, alumni offices stated that they were sometimes uncertain about Scottish Government points of contact and believed that a single point was preferable. We return to this later.

Socio-Political Considerations

As we have noted above, there is a strong feeling within the diaspora that an effective diaspora strategy must let the diaspora have as much a leadership role as the homeland. This is illustrated in our case studies above, where partnership between the diaspora and the homeland is considered the norm, because in many respects the diaspora is seen as part of the homeland. Therefore, regular consultations, engagements, and group meetings take place. Ireland presents a clear consideration here; 'we have had on occasion a thing called the Global Ireland Civic Forum, which is when we bring back leaders of the Irish partner organisations, the diaspora to Dublin for basically a thinking and recommendations meeting'.

It was felt that Scotland, not just the Scottish Government but even organisations such as Scottish universities, were not appreciating the need for seeing the diaspora as a part of Scotland to be brought in and connected with. This feeling was shared across demographic areas, groups and individuals within the Scottish diaspora with argument such as:

There's no drive on the part of the university or any other initiative to suggest that support or encourage it in any way... It's somewhat mind boggling because there's a considerable body of resources there that can be, you know, brought to bear in any number of ways for organisations, and it's a bit of a mystery to me.

Part of the strength of the connection that many individuals stressed about their sense of belonging to Scottish diaspora, and to Scotland, was the positive manner in which Scotland was viewed around the world. '*Does the Scottish Government, and Scots, and Scotland itself, see itself as fresh, as new, as innovative? Because that's what it is to me*'. Again, climate change and reputation were linked together, '*Scotland is considered quite forward looking when it comes to environment and climate change policies. So that's something that's also marketable about Scotland*' and another individual stated, '*I really believe that Scotland is ahead ... in terms of new sources, tapping into new sources of energy*'.

The emphasis was on the very positive image of Scotland that existed across the world and within specific regions. The speech by former MEP Alan Smyth asking Europe to 'leave a light on for Scotland' was also highlighted, as was not voting for Brexit, by several interviewees. The recognition of Scotland as a warm, welcoming, and above all, inclusive society was brought up in many interviews and all focus

groups. This stands in contrast to the problems highlighted above, when discussing the history of elements of the diaspora in terms of its imperial and colonial past, and serves as a counterpoint to be employed in such discussion.

There was also considerable enthusiasm from individuals across the diaspora for an ability to migrate to Scotland. Many of these were from the ancestral diaspora, with no immediate right of residency, although short term study had often been an aspect of previous visits and engagement with Scotland.

I think it's possible for a modern Scotland to be sustainable and I want to be a part of that because I think that we can grow. I think we can come home and I think that we should. Because Scotland deserves that and I think we deserve that'.

Obviously, it is appreciated that immigration is a reserved matter outwith the competency of the Scottish Parliament. However, it should be recognised that there are individuals within the diaspora, and not only the lived aspect of the diaspora, who want to have an *'easier way to immigrate if we can show that we have those connections, because most of us can. It would just make it easier to come home and work, and prove that we want to be there'*.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

During the course of our work, we have identified a significant number of challenges for Scotland and the Scottish Government.

The first one relates to diaspora definition, identity and belonging, and coming to terms with the past. The diaspora needs to be recognised in its widest possible form. This not only includes the various groups such as the ancestral, lived, affinity and alumni diasporas and so on, but also its geographical spread.

It was noted that when speaking of the diaspora, there was often a tendency to focus on specific areas of the world, such as North America, Australasia and Europe. It is thus important to note the existence of significant elements of the diaspora outwith these areas. This is not just an issue for the ancestral diaspora, which exists in many other areas of the world, such as the Caribbean, Central, and South America, Asia and the Middle East. The diaspora in the Caribbean, for example, which is mainly black or mixed-race and is made up of the descendants of Scottish slave and plantation owners has generally been ignored but it too should be recognised. This requires us to deal with our past as a nation and recognise the historical hurt suffered by these communities. Engaging with this diaspora will require sensitivity – and current approaches will not necessarily be appropriate – but it should be done.

While many individuals within these areas are lived diaspora, there are also significant numbers of ancestral diaspora in key locations, and functioning organisations that would serve to connect to them, and with the homeland, and also significant numbers of alumni diaspora, particularly in countries like China and India, given the shift in HE recruitment practices in recent years.

Even in traditionally engaged areas such as North America, diaspora in countries such as Mexico often felt they were overlooked due to their proximity to the United States. As one active member of the alumni diaspora noted, he had hosted ‘a party with about 50 people from the Mexican metropolitan area of Mexico’ with minimal resources, but that it could also serve as a ‘connection with the prospective student’ for any Scottish university looking to recruit. Thus, non-traditional areas require consideration. To illustrate this, engaging with alumni in several areas was unsuccessful due to limitations of time, contacts and resources. This potentially

illustrates the need for special attention to an area where many alumni diaspora to exist.⁷⁰

Secondly, we need to embrace all aspects of Scottishness and recognise the importance of tartan, whisky, Burns Nights and Saint Andrew's Days, even if we feel that it is not representative of contemporary Scotland. As highlighted above, there have been challenging instances, which we have witnessed, and similar events have been confirmed by interviewees. These events have involved dismissive attitudes and comments from Scottish Government and Scottish organisation representatives in relation to tartanry and heritage issues, which remain key to significant elements of the diaspora.

We should be able to embrace both the traditional and the contemporary; our tourist industry relies on both and diaspora engagement needs to respect the differing interests that exist within the different elements of the diaspora. Irish interviewees joked that they some of their diaspora engagement had to deal with shamrocks and leprechauns and so Scotland needs to do something similar.

However, this brings us to the issues of diversity and inclusion among the Scottish Diaspora. We have noted above the issue of expanding the understanding and acceptance of who is part of the Scottish Diaspora and the various sub-units, such as Lived, Ancestral, Affinity and Alumni, which comprise the contemporary Diaspora. Strategic consideration around this issue was also raised by numerous individuals and organisations during our research. This related to a number of distinct aspects of inclusion, such as LGBTQI, ethnicity, race, youth, and geographic location.

As stated above, there is also a need to deal with elements of tradition and history within the diaspora. There are issues of inclusion and diversity problems with some diaspora organisations. Some longstanding organisations have constitutions that make them men only, *'you have Saint Andrew Societies that don't allow women to join'*. Other organisations have office holders that fail to reflect the values of contemporary Scotland and the wider Scottish diaspora. As one individual noted *'a part of this is like the old dogs being resistant to some of the more 'woke' principles'* and this illustrates an uneven consideration of the values of the Scottish diaspora.

⁷⁰ For example, while we sought to engage with alumni diaspora in China, this was unsuccessful, and potentially illustrates the need for special attention to an area where many alumni diaspora do clearly exist. Scottish HE institutions would provide a clear link to such groups.

Other groups have witnessed issues of racism and sexism, that have impacted upon membership. It is felt that these may not be isolated incidents as, while the diaspora is broadly inclusive and many organisations are seen as welcoming, *'there is a culture and there are trends in that subculture'* and another individual indicated that this has caused them to shift their activity and memberships where possible to avoid such incidents among groups: *'I've stepped away from [an organisation] due to overt racism, sexism and somewhat hostile environments in those groups'*.

Issues that could impact upon the perception of the history of, and historical figures within, the Scottish diaspora were also mentioned by several individuals and groups. One specific element was a recognition of the need to accept, understand and deal with actions of the historical diaspora, and their connections with slavery and other colonial events.

There's a lot of people ... in the US and the Caribbean that I think are not getting tapped at all, because Scotland's afraid to talk about its history with slavery and the slave trade. And I'm not saying it's on purpose, it's just people are kind of light touch about it... they're losing out on people.

This individual felt that issues of race and history were negatively impacting people from having the opportunity to engage with Scotland and be part of the Scottish diaspora. They reported that they had been pro-active in seeking to connect to the GlobalScot organisation, but had they not, then they would have been 'missed'. They feel that others are thus being missed, and opportunities to engage individuals and groups within many areas are also being missed.

Similar issues were raised by individuals and groups within North America and the difficulties that sometimes arose due to past activities. It was reported that *'to some degree, we're being made to feel embarrassed about our culture because of certain Canadians that came here like 200 years ago and did things that weren't right'*. The role of the Scottish Government in aiding the diaspora in this area was specifically highlighted: *'I don't quite know how to combat that. And if the Scottish Government was able to do something to combat that, to change those, you know some type of communications or something of that nature'*.

Third, diaspora engagement requires resources and there is no doubt that the Irish are well ahead of Scotland in terms of the money committed in this area. But Scottish diaspora organisations also have resources which can be made available where they are needed. A common complaint among our interviewees was an uncertainty as to what Scotland actually wanted from its diaspora. We do not necessarily wish to see the diaspora as 'cash cows' as we have already explained, and we need a more cultural focus in future policy. But we need to be clear as to

why we wish to engage with our diaspora, what we expect from them and what we can offer back to them. As one interviewee put it, *'what is the ask'?*

Fourthly, there are the issues around coordination within the Diaspora and clear and firm ongoing links to the homeland. There was a firm reflection within the diaspora, and within individuals working with the diaspora that there needed to be a much greater considered strategy, with a clear vision of the role of diaspora organisations within that strategy. There were numerous comments that reflected the idea that groups within the diaspora, and groups dealing with the diaspora, either abroad or in the homeland, needed to have the space and resources to make connections in their way and with their wished focus. Perhaps none summed this up better than the ethos 'let the diaspora lead' and this has been the mantra of this nation's approach to diaspora engagement for some time.

That'll be a partnership. It can't be us trying to mould the diaspora as we want them to be. It's got to be a recognition of what the real connections are... you're not the horse pulling the cart. They're the horse pulling their own cart and you help and build the road. You're making a mistake if you're trying to be the horse.

This was certainly not an isolated opinion. Discussion with members of the GlobalScot organisation, which in itself is recognised (and copied) as a successful aspect of diaspora engagement, indicated very strong feelings about the need for organisational links and communication. It was felt that *'there needs to be greater coordination among the various groups' around the numerous activities to ensure lessening of duplication where possible, but also strengthening of activity and that if there were links that could 'allow for a sharing of best practices'*, this would greatly assist diaspora engagement. It was firmly recognised, and accepted, that there are clearly limits to what the diaspora can do for itself. Therefore, some formal process or organisation that would assist coordination and aid in information sharing would strengthen the diaspora, and homeland links with, and within, the diaspora.

It was noted that communications were fairly effective in areas where Scottish agencies worked with the diaspora, both groups and individuals, but that there needs to be greater cognisance around timing of communications and events and the other duties of individuals within diaspora organisations and associations. As one GlobalScot noted, *'they're very good at sending out, you know, bulletins and what they're doing... sometimes it's hard when you're working full time... if it's not there and right in front of you'*.

Fifthly, diaspora members were unclear about where responsibility for diaspora affairs sit within the Scottish Government infrastructure. A Google search for diaspora in Ireland leads directly to the Global Irish page of the Department of Foreign Affairs. An equivalent search for Scotland leads to Scottish

Government publications and documents. So, it would not be clear to members of the diaspora where they should engage, let alone who they should contact. We understand that responsibility sits within the International Division of the Scottish Government, under a single Director for External Affairs. We would suggest that there is a need for an improved web presence, so that there is an obvious 'gateway' for people seeking information about Scotland and Scottish Government policy, similar to that which exists in Ireland. This links to the discussions above about a clear digital presence and identity for diaspora engagement.

Finally, our discussions with GlobalScots highlighted the difficulties of 'threading the needle' between the Scottish and UK Governments, especially in regard to trade and investment. The delicacies of the situation were firmly appreciated by all, as '*the question of Scotland as a nation and its role within the UK apparatus is sometimes tricky*'. However, as was pointed out, there is a role for UK level officials and officers in engagement with the diaspora.

You have say, a diaspora event, a Burns Night or Tartan Week... To me it's a missed opportunity for the UK ambassador here not to engage directly with those activities... Just being a nation of the UK, as the President of the United States would embrace an important event for a state... the UK doesn't do very well in recognising these important events.

In conclusion, we have highlighted several areas for discussion and consideration. We now proceed to making recommendations.

8. Recommendations

In this section, we make a series of recommendations, arising from both our case studies and the individual interviews we have conducted. Our recommendations are listed below and are grouped by category. Our categories are *Picturing and Understanding the Diaspora*, *Engaging the Diaspora*, *Supporting and Recognising the Diaspora* and *Diaspora Initiatives*. Relative timescales and resource allocations for each recommendation should be considered within the Scottish Government.

Picturing and Understanding the Diaspora

1. Diaspora engagement has increasingly been recognised in Scotland as an important area of policy. Agreeing such a policy is now a matter of greater urgency.
2. A clear definition of the diaspora should be an agreed aspect of any policy. This should cover all categorisations and geographical locations.
3. The Scottish Government should consider making a statement about the importance of the Scottish diaspora to Scotland, as Mary Robinson did in Ireland in 1995. This should include a firm declaration vis-a-vis the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland.
4. All diaspora engagement policies must be inclusive. Ireland represents a clear leader in this area, by reaching out to previously under-represented groups such as black and mixed-race Irish and the LGBTQI community and introducing the St Brigid's Day celebrations for women. Scotland should see inclusion and diversity as core to any diaspora engagement.
5. The diaspora can play a significant role in maintaining aspects of homeland culture and language. Scottish diaspora engagement should have a much stronger cultural, as well as economic, focus.
6. The country should embrace historical Scottish imagery, given its worldwide marketability and use it to the country's advantage. Scotland should also recognise that there are many modern designers who are giving a new 'twist' to kilt designs, for example, so marketing can embrace both the traditional and the contemporary.

Engaging the Diaspora

7. A key issue for any diaspora engagement programme to be effective is the availability of resources. Investment in diaspora engagement should be considered as a priority and consultative discussions be held around resourcing any diaspora strategy. We have tried to identify resource implications for recommendations where possible.

8. Responsibility for diaspora engagement and strategy requires a visible and obvious presence within the Scottish Government infrastructure, one which the diaspora can immediately recognise and connect with.
9. The requirement for a significant and easily accessible web presence, serving as a 'gateway' for people seeking information about Scotland and Scottish Government diaspora policy should be a priority.
10. The Scottish Government should create a digital database of Scottish diaspora organisations and this directory could be used to target different elements of diaspora engagement and encourage awareness of the depth and spread of the diaspora.
11. Wales is a country which is beginning to develop digital platforms. The Scottish Government should continue to liaise with the other devolved administrations within the UK and exchange ideas and information.
12. There is a growing use of social media to allow diaspora members to engage with each other, and the growth of digital platforms to provide databases on the diaspora and diaspora organisations. Scotland should explore the viability of directly connecting with the diaspora across the full range of social media platforms. This would increase both awareness and connectivity with and between Scotland and the diaspora as a whole.
13. There are representative bodies which bring together diaspora organisations and clan societies in places like North America and Australasia, as well as a network of alumni bodies. The Scottish Government should make use of these bodies as part of any diaspora engagement especially in areas such as information dissemination.
14. The Scottish Government should assist diaspora bodies with the organic development of social connections within the diaspora, possibly including 'voluntary ambassadors' such as used by Flanders. We are not convinced, however, by the Flanders decision to outsource its diaspora engagement to a non-governmental body.
15. Alumni associations and Scottish Universities and Colleges have an important role to play in any future diaspora strategy and engagement policy given their connections with Scottish graduates abroad, and potential future students. They should be supported in their engagement with the alumni diaspora, especially in regard to international students, who are not Scottish but are graduates of a Scottish university.
16. Engaging young people within the diaspora and connecting them firmly with, and to, Scotland should be recognised as being at the heart of Scotland's diaspora engagement strategy.
17. As part of a focus on youth, the Government may wish to encourage and support traditional diaspora organisations to broaden their membership, through appointing Youth Officers, establishing scholarships and youth

exchanges, as some have already done. The greater use of contemporary performers at Tartan Week, and similar events, should be encouraged.

Supporting and Recognising the Diaspora

18. Return migration is becoming significant in a number of countries. In Scotland, returners may help to counter the challenges posed by a small population growth and an ageing population. Irish voluntary bodies such as Safe Home Ireland and Crosscare again provide examples of assisting returners to settle. Scotland should look to encouraging and supporting members of the diaspora who wish to return.
19. Ireland has a Presidential Distinguished Service Award to recognise the contribution of individual diaspora members. We believe that Scotland should consider a similar initiative.

Diaspora Initiatives

20. Scotland has a limited number of international offices, including eight Scottish Affairs offices and 30 SDI offices, as well as 11 Trade and Investment Envoys. Scotland should develop a greater global presence, looking to Ireland and Flanders as examples, this would include additional staffed locations and other initiatives such as our suggestion of volunteer ambassadors. The SG may wish to consider utilising combined offices/resource locations.
21. The contributions of individuals within the GlobalScot network were considered varied and changeable. The expectations of membership of the network and what is sought in terms of added value of/from individuals needs to be clearer when they are recruited.
22. The expansion of organisations such as the Scottish Chambers of Commerce network internationally should be supported.
23. The establishment of a network of Scottish Cultural Envoys around the world, similar to the GlobalScot network, should be pursued.
24. We need to acknowledge the importance of what has been described as 'cultural tourism' and the desire by visitors to explore aspects of Scottish film, literature and cultural events. The Edinburgh Festival is internationally known but other festivals and events may need greater publicity. Significant events such as the development of the V and A in Dundee or the reopening of the Burrell Collection should be publicised widely through the diaspora to encourage visits to Scotland.
25. Scotland should explore assisting access to BBC Scotland and BBC Alba channels by the diaspora.
26. Diaspora tourism is increasingly important economically and should be developed. Different elements of the diaspora have different priorities and so

campaigns aimed at expanding diaspora tourism need to be targeted across different demographics.

27. Scotland has held two Homecoming events, with some local events in places like Shetland. Ireland is contemplating a second Gathering. Scotland should consider leading on another Homecoming event.
28. Genealogical research is important to the diaspora in their search for their 'roots'. In Scotland, the Scotland's People website is a valuable resource. Voluntary bodies similar to Ireland Reaching Out should be encouraged, or even funded, to assist family historians.
29. Significant consideration should be given to the establishment of a Scottish based coordinating, or umbrella organisation, which could provide direction, links and oversight of all elements recommended above.

Appendix 1: Topic Guide for Interviews with Scottish Diaspora Organisations/Individuals (including Global Scots)

Subject Areas to inform questions:

Current Diaspora Policy

- Awareness of current diaspora policy (Economic/Cultural/Political/Etc)
- Organisational input to policy
- Their envisaged role for diaspora
- Events and Activities in Homeland/Resident Location

Engaging with the Scottish Government

- Role of engagement
- Forms of engagement (Formal bodies? Organisational links?)
- Factors driving engagement (Economic/Cultural/Political/Etc)
- The 'one' suggestion/advice

Researcher Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to the interview today, it is very much appreciated. I am Murray Leith/Duncan Sim. As you know we have been asked to conduct research into the subject of a successful diaspora engagement strategy to help inform future options for Scotland's diaspora engagement. As you may remember from the participant information sheet, all information is confidential and anonymous. Any identifiable comments will only be mentioned or used if you agree. You will have the opportunity to review a transcript of this interview and will be able to indicate if there is any information you wish us not to use in our research in any fashion.

I would now like to ask some questions about how your organisation/government department engages with the Scottish diaspora.

Are you aware of the Scottish Government's engagement with the diaspora?

(If interviewee mentions specific areas – follow up with prompts)
(See if the interviewee focuses on cultural, historical, economic, or other factors are in play – if/if not possibly prompt on these, bearing in mind the organisation in question)

What do you see as the principal drive for engagement with the Homeland/Scottish Government?

How effective do you think the Scottish Government's engagement with the diaspora is?

Which Homeland organisations or government units do you regularly engage with?

What kind of individuals from within these organisations do you engage with (organisational leads? Elected officials?)

Does your organisation organise events in the Homeland or where you are located? If so, what kind of events and how often?

What do you see as the most important factors (social, cultural, economic?) in how Scotland engages with you? (And other diaspora organisation)?

What would you additionally seek from Scotland?

One final question – if you could give only one key suggestion/point of advice about diaspora policy/engaging with the Scottish diaspora, what would it be?

Thank you (ensure you finish by asking) Is there anything you want to say that you have not had a chance to say?”

Researcher Conclusion

Thank you for your time and input today – it has been very valuable and as I said, it is very much appreciated. As I mentioned previously, you will have the opportunity to review a transcript of this interview and will be able to indicate if there is any information you wish us not to use in our research in any fashion. Please do feel free to contact us at any time if you have any questions whatsoever.

Close and end session.

Appendix 2: Topic Guides for Focus Groups

Subject Areas to inform questions:

- Diaspora – do they know what it is?
- Awareness of current diaspora policy
- Links with Scotland/visits to Scotland
- Involvement in Scottish diaspora organisations
- Attendance at events and activities in Homeland/Resident Location
- Scotland's services to diaspora (Economic/Cultural/Political/Etc)

Researcher Introduction:

Thank you for agreeing to engage with this focus group today, it is very much appreciated. I am Murray Leith/Duncan Sim. As you know we have been asked to conduct research into the subject of a successful diaspora engagement strategy to help inform future options for Scotland's diaspora engagement. As you may remember from the participant information sheet, all information is confidential and anonymous, and we ask you to only use first names if you use names at all today. All information from this focus group will only identify people by gender and very general geographic location.

(Ask if there are any questions after this)

I would now like to ask some questions about...

Diaspora – do you know what this term means?

Are you aware that the Scottish Government engages with the diaspora? (if so, what do you know about that?)

How do you keep yourself informed about what's happening in Scotland? Do you still have direct links with Scotland? (if so...)

Do you still regularly visit Scotland (how often, when, where to)?

Are you involved in any Scottish diaspora organisations? Do you yourself get involved in any Scottish activities, such as dancing, Highland Games etc.?

Do you attend any Scottish events and activities in either Scotland/Resident Location?

What would you like to see from Scotland in regards to engaging with and supporting the diaspora (Economic/Cultural/Political/etc.)?

Thank you (ensure you finish by asking) Is there anything you want to say that you have not had a chance to say?"

Researcher Conclusion

Thank you for your time and input today – it has been very valuable and as I said, it is very much appreciated. As I mentioned previously, all information will be anonymised and

people will be identified by gender and general location only. Please do feel free to contact us at any time if you have any questions whatsoever.

Close and end session.



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