

Bonanza in new venues

With events such as the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup coming soon, new or renovated spaces are in great abundance. By *Annie Makoff*

Scotland has seen several new venue openings and infrastructure developments over the past year. With a plethora of upcoming events such as the 2013 Commonwealth Games, the 2014 Ryder Cup and the recent marketing launch of the Year of Natural Scotland, now is the ideal time to explore some of the newest event spaces and venues that the country has to offer.

Neil Brownlee, head of Visit Scotland Business Tourism Unit, says: "Scotland is innovating its conference, meetings and events product thanks to a £2bn capital investment into tourism and infrastructure. The backdrop of young and emerging destinations such as Dundee and major renovations in Edinburgh show the constant evolution of Scotland for the corporate client."

As such, Edinburgh's iconic The Caledonian hotel, now part of the Waldorf Astoria luxury hotel group, reopened its doors in September as part of a £21m investment programme, and boasts event spaces for up to 250 guests, eight meeting rooms and a business centre.

Five minutes' walk from the hotel is the Edinburgh

Expanded horizons (right and above) The Caledonian; (far right) EICC; (below) Edinburgh Assembly Rooms

International Conference Centre (EICC) is currently undergoing an £85m expansion project that includes a recently opened 2,000m² multi-purpose hall – complete with bespoke moving floor – which caters for up to 1,600 delegates.

Additionally, the refurbished **Edinburgh Assembly Rooms**, which reopened in August,

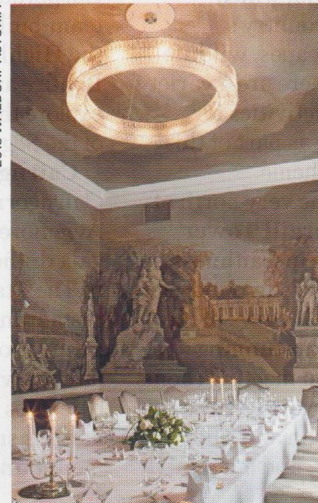
includes original and additional event spaces, from the opulent ballroom that caters for up to 500 guests, to well-equipped, state-of-the-art breakout meeting spaces.

In Dundee, the long-term, £1bn **Dundee Waterfront** transformation project will bring a wealth of conference and incentive venues to the area, including hotels, galleries, green spaces and the **V&A at Dundee**, due to open in 2015. The museum will feature more than 1,500m² of flexible meeting and conference space.

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Wyndham Grand The Angus, a new five-star 187-room hotel five miles from Dundee, will also open in 2015, complete with spa and leisure facilities, an 18-hole golf course and conference and banqueting suites.

Glasgow's **Hydro Arena** will open in September, designed for a wide range of conferences and events and boasting a seat capacity of 12,000; while in Aberdeen, the area around the airport will play host to the **ABZ Business Park**, a £100m investment project. The new development is intended to encourage more business tourism to the area due to its proximity to the airport. Plans have recently been announced to include two major hotel brands to its venue portfolio, the **Ibis** and the **Novotel**.

SCOTLAND

Natural Scotland

Corporate groups will be spoilt for choice of venues and activities on offer to celebrate the country's scenery, wildlife and heritage as part of the The Year of Natural Scotland

With 2013 being The Year of Natural Scotland, which celebrates the country's stunning landscapes, wildlife and heritage, there are a variety of venues and activities for groups to enjoy as part of this year's natural theme.

Situated in the very north of Scotland, **Ackergill Tower** hotel and castle in Caithness boasts incredible surrounding countryside with views of the Orkneys, several stunning boardrooms and meeting rooms – including Sinclair Palace, The Smugglers Saloon and The Writing Room – and a huge

variety of incentive options. Corporate groups can enjoy team-building activities such as the Highland Games, a Beach Bonfire and Barbeque or explore the area in teams as part of the Segway Rides activity.

Cairngorm Mountain, in Cairngorms National Park in Aviemore, hosts receptions, gala dinners and presentations in The Ptarmigan, the highest restaurant in the UK. As the venue is one of Scotland's most famous winter sports resorts, delegates can experience various snowsports activities, mountain biking or take part in



Country pursuits (left) Ackergill Tower, Caithness; (above) National Museum of Rural Life

guided walks of the area, learning about the area's local wildlife and geology.

Additionally, try the **National Museum of Rural Life** in Glasgow. The purpose-built museum, which showcases rural living and agriculture of bygone days, is set on a 1950s working farm in a secluded location eight miles from Glasgow's city centre.

In addition to the venue's event spaces such as the Alistair Grant Gallery and the Orientation Area, which can be used for receptions, gala dinners and meetings, delegates can enjoy a range of outdoor or indoor team-building activities, all within the grounds of the farm. ■

THE VERDICT What makes Scotland an ideal C&I destination

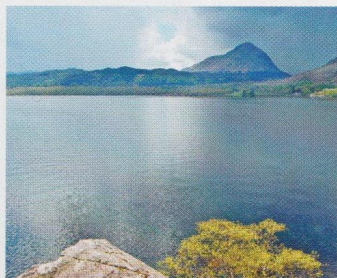


Richard MacDonald
Solicitor at
MacRoberts
Solicitors,
Glasgow

I've helped arrange various large-scale events for two companies including MacRoberts, and they've always been Scotland-based due to convenience. Scotland may be a relatively small country, but there is a diverse range of possible settings on offer for corporate events: the modern buzz of Glasgow, the cobbled streets of historic Edinburgh and the natural beauty of many wonderful places like Glencoe, Loch Lomond, Aviemore and Skye. Scotland caters well for

both indoor and outdoor activities of all types.

The agency we work with, Amazing Days Scotland, is always bursting with ideas and together we've created some fantastic events. This month, for instance, our team-building event involves a Champagne cruise and island BBQ at Inchmurrin Island.



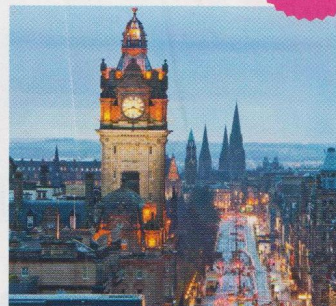
Famed beauty Loch Lomond



Shoena Payne
Director of sales,
Maximillion
Events

Scotland is a country of great tradition with a modern twist. We have a lovely mix of contemporary architecture and historic sites with huge scope for innovative and traditional team-building activities, like the Edinburgh International Climbing Area, which is built into an old quarry. It can hold conferences for up to 200 and is ideal for team-building.

Most Scottish cities are really well served with multiple transport links across the UK, so it's also really easy to get to.



Historic capital Edinburgh

When holding an event in Scotland, make sure you include something uniquely Scottish. Some agencies believe that activities like whisky tasting and the Highland Games have been done to death, but delegates love them. We shouldn't get complacent about celebrating Scotland's rich traditions.