Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism

Implementation Report 2023

Summary of main takeaways
5th December 2023
What is the Glasgow Declaration?

The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism was launched in November 2021 at COP26 as an action framework to mobilize commitments from tourism stakeholders to:

- Support the global goals of halving emissions by 2030 and reaching Net Zero by 2050 at the latest
- Publish a Climate Action Plan aligned with five pathways (Measure, Decarbonize, Regenerate, Collaborate and Finance)
- Report on the implementation of their commitments publicly on an annual basis
Why was the Glasgow Declaration launched?

- **Tourism emissions were forecasted to increase** by 25% by 2030 in a business as usual scenario.

- **The tourism sector is acknowledged as vulnerable** in 56% of Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement.

The Declaration underscores the importance of mitigation, through its decarbonization pathway, while also recognizing the need to adapt to changing climatic conditions as well as the opportunities and resilience that integrated mitigation-adaptation approaches can deliver, through its regeneration pathway.
Who are the signatories of the Glasgow Declaration?

857 signatories as of 1 December 2023

- Business: 56%
- Destination: 34%
- Supporting Organisation: 10%

Glasgow Declaration
Climate Action in Tourism
What is the Implementation Report about?

The first reporting exercise of the Glasgow Declaration was conducted between January – June 2023.

A total of 420 progress updates were received, out of which 261 included the submission of a first Climate Action Plan.

The report presents the results of a systematic review of all the progress updates and plans received.

The reports received were in a majority of cases from signatories which joined the Declaration between November 2021 and June 2022.
How is the report structured?

The report describes the main characteristics and insights from Climate Action Plans across the five pathways of the Declaration.

Each chapter summarizes progress achieved and highlights useful insights, initiatives and resources from Climate Action Plans.

A series of appendices is also included, offering practical guidance for signatories looking to create their own plans, along with potential actions to consider for decarbonization and regeneration.
Who reported and submitted Climate Action Plans?

The 261 Climate Action Plans received are mainly from business signatories (59%), followed by supporting organization signatories (30%) and destination signatories (11%).
Main characteristics of Climate Action Plans
What is the context that plans are delivered in?

For the vast majority of signatories, this is their first ever attempt at creating a Climate Action Plan.

Moreover, they have made the commitment while trying to rebuild from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many plans frame the decisions made to implement actions by first acknowledging the risks it faced from extreme weather, natural disasters, biodiversity pollution, or disruption to power supplies.
How are Climate Action Plans developed and structured?

The plans and reports submitted have been independently conceived, guided by and aligned to the simple, flexible and shared framework of the Glasgow Declaration, i.e. the five pathways.

The majority of Climate Action Plans have been created by the signatories in-house (76%) rather than with expert support.

The majority of Climate Action Plans have been submitted as a stand alone plan (80%) rather than integrated in wider sustainability plans.
What do Climate Action Plans contain?

The majority of plans detail the specific actions the organization is undertaking or has planned to achieve objectives (86%) rather than only objectives.

Some plans include criteria that have been used to prioritise the selection of actions. For instance: emissions reduction, economic arguments, resilience and regeneration impact, reach, co-benefits.

While the primary focus of all plans is the signatory’s own climate action, some also used the opportunity to seek to catalyse wider engagement.
Insights per Pathway
Measure

- The majority of plans (70%) include emissions measurement for some or all aspects of the tourism operation (mainly CO2).

- Out of those plans, a baseline year is included in 56% (mainly 2019) and 72% followed the Scopes framework.

- Tourism’s diversity of business models makes it complicated to report on Scope 3 emissions. When companies report on Scope 3, these emissions nearly always account for over 75% of total emissions.

- A great variety of approaches are being used to measure (e.g. tracking energy bills, engaging consultants, using calculators, sending questionnaires to supply chains, etc.)
Decarbonize

• Climate Action Plans portray a diversity of approaches, including for the setting of reduction targets.

• There is only a limited number of organizations which report how they have selected and prioritized actions.

• Ofsetting is included in 43% of submitted plans and positioned as additional to the decarbonization strategy and/or stated they were investigating alternatives.

• Structural challenges are reported as limiting the ability to engage in climate action (e.g. remote location, energy mix, etc).
Regenerate

- Regeneration is too often seen as connected to offsetting rather than to redesign products and experiences.

- There is limited focus on climate adaptation or risk in plans (27%)

- Only 32% of plans make reference to climate justice related issues.

- There is a limited connection made between the health of our climate and ecosystems, and human health and wellbeing.
Collaborate

• Signatories who have developed their plans as part of a sectoral network submitted more thorough and thoughtful plans.

• Several signatories report creating training and resources for their own staff and community members – e.g. universities, trade bodies, DMOs.

• While the primary focus of all plans is the signatory’s own climate action, some also used the opportunity to seek to catalyse wider engagement.

• Different stakeholders – e.g. Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), Trade Bodies, Large Corporations, Tour Operators, Certifiers, Consultancies – can play complementary roles to further accelerate progress and deliver sector-wide action.
Finance

• Many signatories continue to mention the impact of COVID-19 on their finances and how it is restricting their capacity to deliver on climate related workstreams.

• There is only limited mention - mostly in Europe - of organisations reporting that they have benefited from external funding to develop aspects of their climate action.

• There is limited mention of stakeholders adjusting their financial strategies to take into account the relative emissions of different options.

• Only a few signatories make the connection between finance and accountability, detailing the staffing, processes and management responsibilities put in place to ensure delivery on their commitments.
Conclusions

- The richness and variety of the responses represents the complexity of tourism and its stakeholders.

- It is now possible to build on the responses received to support the implementation of Glasgow Declaration guided by both the actions and challenges reported.

- Finding consensus around methodologies and ensuring alignment of approaches is of growing importance.
Conclusions

• Regenerate remains the least engaged with pathway (along with Finance), despite it potentially offering the greatest opportunity for tourism to play a leading, transformative role.

• The value added of working collectively is confirmed. By connecting frontrunning actors and their initiatives to one another and to the wider landscape of tourism stakeholders, progress can be accelerated and support catalysed for those less advanced or resourced.