Tourism is an important element in the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Scotland, from major cities to rural areas, many of which depend on the industry for jobs and infrastructure.

In a tough trading environment, Scottish visitor attractions are currently holding market share, driving visitation and showing evidence of real creativity in marketing and generating media coverage.

The Visitor Attraction Monitor is an annual report on the performance of Scotland’s visitor attractions, with analysis by geographic location and other key variables such as the split between those who visited paid and free admission attractions.

The Visitor Attraction Monitor is compiled for VisitScotland by the Moffat Centre for Travel and Tourism Business Development at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). This invaluable research on visitor attraction performance has been delivered by the Centre since 1999 and is used as a source of data by Museums Galleries Scotland and Scotland’s local authorities, and subsequently used by not only the attractions themselves, but also the media, economists and by policy makers.

The work involves collecting, collating and verifying data from public and private sector attractions across Scotland including large operations like national museums and galleries to small independent operators. While the resulting Visitor Attraction Monitor provides a comprehensive picture for one year in the Scottish tourism industry, the monthly Barometer provides an early indication of seasonal and sectoral fluctuations.

“The Visitor Attraction Monitor gives a timely cross section of the visitor attraction industry in Scotland and its performance,” explains the Moffat Centre’s Marina Martinolli.

“The analysis is carried out by type of attraction, by location and by size and is as objective as possible. We also monitor the accuracy and validity of the data being collected, so each year the database of attraction operators is updated as new attractions open and others close.”

The number of people visiting Scotland’s top tourist attractions held steady over the past year - defying 2012’s wet summer and withstanding the huge draw of the Olympic Games in London.
Researchers for the Visitor Attraction Monitor 2012 recorded a total of just over 48 million visits to 654 participating tourist sites across Scotland.

In the free admission category, the National Museum of Scotland attracted just under 1.9 million visits – up more than 29% on 2011, after a full year of operations following its £47 million transformation. Attractions in Edinburgh dominated the paid admission top ten – Historic Scotland’s Edinburgh Castle retained its No1 spot with more than 1.2 million visits, followed by Edinburgh Zoo, which experienced a 50% increase in visits following the arrival of the two new giant pandas and Edinburgh Bus Tours with just over half a million visits in 2012.

Overall, Scotland’s museums enjoyed the biggest rise in visitors, up more than 500,000, while wildlife and animal attractions also drew increased visitor numbers by 362,793.

Professor John Lennon, Director of the Moffat Centre for Travel and Tourism Business Development, said: “We have a set of world class attractions that are comparable with those in much larger nations and they constitute a major element of the appeal of Scotland as a visitor destination.”

Mike Cantlay, Chairman of VisitScotland, said: “As we prepare to welcome the world to Scottish shores in 2014 for the Commonwealth Games, Ryder Cup and Homecoming, it will be an honour to be able to inspire visitors with such a mix of fascinating sites from historic castles, distilleries and houses to breathtaking gardens, wildlife centres and parks - and of course everything in between.”

The research and expertise involved in the Visitor Attraction Monitor is a valuable resource for the Moffat Centre and it is frequently called on in its wide range of consultancy and research projects both in the UK and internationally. “It’s the most comprehensive range of data on visitor attraction performance in Scotland – and we have data on file since 1991,” adds Marina Martinolli.

The breadth and depth of expertise in the field of visitor attraction monitoring and analysis, together with its reputation for practical, vocational guidance for building capacity means the Moffat Centre is the first port of call for an organisation seeking expert advice in attraction development and marketing. The Moffat Centre undertakes consultancy and research in tourism, hospitality, events and travel. The Centre has delivered strategies and planning in these areas at regional and national levels and has undertaken high profile business training and development activities nationally and internationally.

“WE MONITOR THE ACCURACY AND VALIDITY OF THE DATA BEING COLLECTED, SO EACH YEAR THE DATABASE IS UPDATED AS NEW ATTRACTIONS OPEN AND OTHERS CLOSE.”

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**At Glasgow Caledonian University, we work with industry and public sector partners to ensure our expertise responds to the need for realworld innovation. GCU’s strategic business development and knowledge transfer teams work with academic experts in our Schools and Research Institutes to support businesses with a problem-solving approach.**

**Contact us to find out more about building a brighter future with GCU at www.gcu.ac.uk/business.**

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**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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