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SCOTLAND SEES 5.48% INCREASE IN VISITOR NUMBERS IN 2015 - UK visitors attractions see increase of 3.2%, while London sees 1.61% increase -

The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) announced its members' visitor figures for 2015 today (Monday, March 7, 2016), which Scottish attractions have the greatest increase of 5.48%. Overall 124.4million visits were made to the top 230 ALVA sites.

Edinburgh Castle was the most visited attraction in Scotland – ahead of the National Museum of Scotland for the first time in five years - with 1,568,508 visitors resulting in a 5.9% increase. The **National Museum of Scotland** was not only the most visited free attraction in Scotland with 1,567,310 visitors but was the most visited museum outside of London. The National Museums Scotland (comprising **National Museum of Scotland, National War Museum, National Museum of Rural Life** and **National Museum of Flight**) saw a combined total of 2,338,240. For the first time, the National Galleries of Scotland welcomed a combined total of more than 2.1million visitors – which included a 35% increase in visitors to the **Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Two** which had hosted a highly-successful *The Amazing World of M.C. Escher*, while the **Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art One** had a 47% increase as a result of *ARTIST ROOMS: Roy Lichtenstein*. The **Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh** saw a 10% increase which they credited to their *Lights* programme in the winter months. **Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum** enjoyed an increase of 12.4% to 1,261,552 visitors. **Riverside Museum** has continued to attract more visitors every year since it opened in 2011 and also moves up the rankings, welcoming in excess of 1.1 million people - an increase of 7.8%. Glasgow's nine civic museums continue to be a huge draw for citizens and visitors to the city alike, with almost 4 million recorded visits - up 5% on 2014.

Stephen Duncan, Director of Commercial and Tourism at Historic Environment Scotland, said, "It's great to see **Edinburgh Castle** at the top of the table in Scotland after another record breaking year for the castle. We've seen particular growth in online and travel trade at the castle in 2015, and following a refresh of the castle website towards the end of the year I'm sure this will continue. Both **Stirling Castle** and **Urquhart Castle** have also had record years, with each seeing a rise in visitors signing up for membership –

showing that Scotland's historic visitor attractions continue to be a vital component of the country's tourism experience.”

A staggering 65,218,272 people visited attractions in London and therefore it is no surprise that the Top 10 most visited attractions were all London based. The **British Museum** continued to be the most popular visitor attraction overall for the 9th year running with 6,820,686 visitors and remaining in 2nd place was the **National Gallery** with 5,908,254 visitors. 3rd place was achieved by the **Natural History Museum**, which saw 5,284,023 visitors.

Temporary Exhibitions played a crucial part in this year's figures throughout the UK. The largest increase in visitor numbers in the top 10 attractions was **Somerset House**, which saw an increase of 31% (3,235,104 & 8th place) – mainly as a result of their temporary exhibitions and public programmes. In addition the **National Maritime Museum** saw a 10.6% increase following the opening of the new AHOY! Children's Gallery and their family-focused exhibitions such as *Against Captain's Orders* last summer and the **Royal Academy** credited their 33% increase to Ai Weiwei plus the hugely popular Summer exhibition.

The **Library of Birmingham** remained the most visited free attraction outside London, in 11th place with 1,828,999 visitors, while **Chester Zoo**, which saw an 18% increase to 1,694,185 visitors, was the most visited paid for attraction in England (outside London) (12th position) – mainly as a result of the opening 'Islands' in June - the biggest new Zoo development in Europe formed by the recreation of amazing tropical environments of six South East Asian islands.

Bernard Donoghue, Director of ALVA, commented: “2015 continued to be a record year mainly due to our members continuing to show how diverse the UK is to both domestic and overseas visitors. More people visited **Edinburgh Castle**, the **National Museum of Scotland**, the **National Gallery of Scotland**, the **Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh** and the **Scottish National Portrait Gallery**, combined, than visited Jamaica, Barbados and Cuba. More people visited **Stirling Castle**, **Kelvingrove**, the **Riverside Museum** and the **Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA)** in Glasgow, combined, than visited New Zealand. Together more people visited these 9 Scottish attractions than visited Australia and New Zealand combined.”

He continued; “The current weakness of the £ to the \$ and Euro is making the UK a more affordable destination and 2016 is on target to be another memorable year for ALVA members, notably the **National Museum of Scotland** will see ten new galleries open on Friday 8 July, and later in the same month *Facing the World | Self-Portraits from Rembrandt to Ai Weiwei* will open at the **Scottish National Portrait Gallery**.”

For further information on ALVA and to download images,
please visit www.alva.org.uk
Twitter @alva_uk

For further Press Information and to arrange interviews, please contact
Rachel Aked
Rachel@rachelaked.co.uk
Tel: 07790 732448

NOTES TO EDITORS:

ALVA's Members are the UK's most popular, iconic and important museums, galleries, palaces, castles, cathedrals, zoos, historic houses, heritage sites, gardens and leisure attractions. The 64 ALVA members manage some nearly 2,200 tourist sites and welcome over 119 million domestic and overseas visitors each year; some 28% of the visits made annually in the United Kingdom.

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