VisitAberdeenshire

BUSINESS MONITOR

QUARTERLY | **JANUARY 2024**

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2023
TRADING OVERVIEW

ENQUIRIES AND BOOKINGS
JANUARY TO MARCH 2024

APRIL AND BEYOND
LOOKING AHEAD

This factsheet summarises the key findings from the most recent wave of our quarterly business monitor. If you, or your colleagues, would like more detailed findings, please visit https://industry.visitabdn.com to review our slide deck of results.

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION AND PERFORMANCE

Live: **8th – 15th January** 2024 (10th wave since the monitor was launched in October 2021).

Distributed to **1568** individuals via VisitAberdeenshire's industry newsletter.

60 responses were received – **3.8%** (falling within the standard response rate for surveys of this type (3-5%).

The distribution was widened during the live period to VisitAberdeenshire's LinkedIn account to boost response rates.

As with all surveys, do note there are sample size fluctuations from question to question.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Almost **7 in 10** businesses were based in Aberdeenshire.

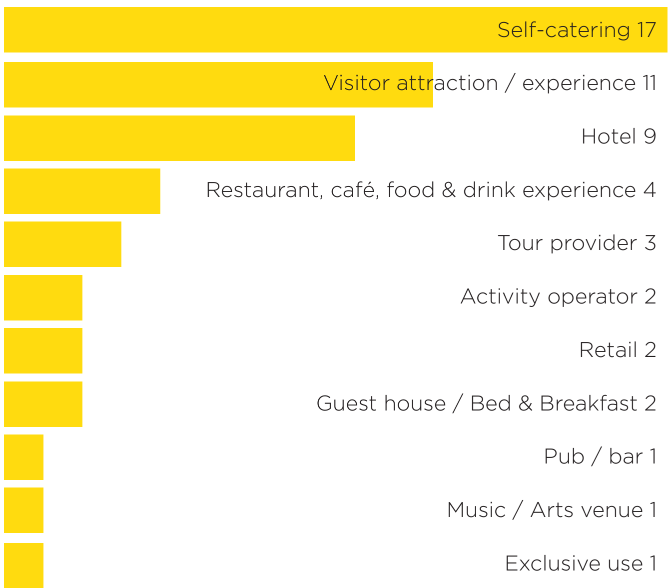
6 in 10 responding businesses classed themselves as micro (<10 employees).

Almost **3 in 10** classed as small (between 11 and 49 employees).

Self-catering was the dominant industry category for responding businesses.

Keep these profiles in mind when reviewing the results that follow.

Who responded to the survey?



HOW WAS THE PAST QUARTER?

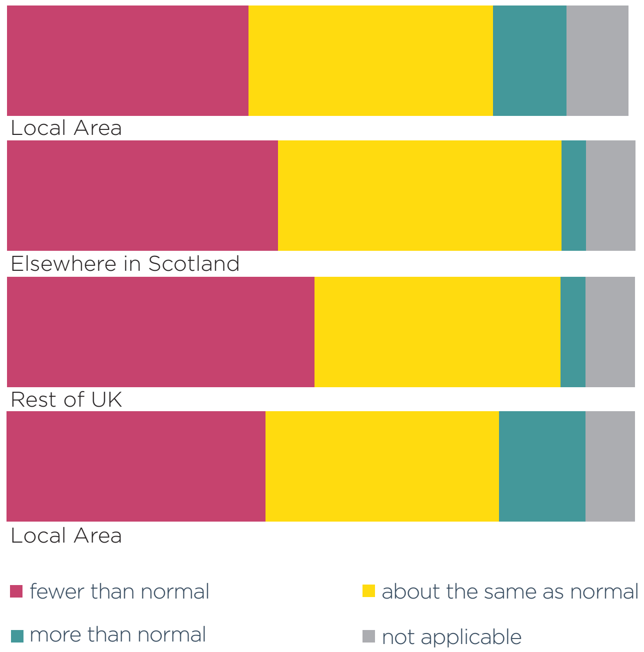
Quarter in focus: October to December 2023

96% of businesses were open during this period.

Respondents were split when it came to reporting on whether visitor numbers were fewer or same as normal.

What we do notice is that those selecting **"More than normal"** are far outweighed by those stating **"Fewer than normal".**

October to December 2023: visitor profile



Past Quarter Highlights

47% shared business highlights using an open-text box.

The comments covered a diverse range of topics, resulting in no strong themes emerging.

Local events driving volumes relating to apple harvest, Halloween and Christmas. Halloween however particularly strong (growth YOY) with visitors looking for low cost/get out of the house/fun events.

Visitor attraction/experience, Aberdeenshire

An impressive number of repeat bookings and great reviews – despite the terrible weather!

Self-catering, Aberdeenshire

A return in a number of international visitors, Australian, Americans and some European.

Self-catering, Aberdeenshire

It's quiet in the off-season but we had some last minute enquiries.

Tour provider, Aberdeenshire

December was a strong month in 2023, normally this is a quieter time of year for us.

Visitor attraction/experience, Aberdeen

Significant increase in room occupancy and restaurant spend

Hotel, Aberdeenshire

Past Quarter Barriers

57% stated they had experienced barriers this past quarter.

Strong themes emerged:

- The weather (mentioned by **50%** of those who experienced barriers)
- Reduced footfall (predominantly relating to weather)
- Increased business costs (eg. Supplies, utilities, staffing)

Energy costs remain high especially during colder months. Even though we had strong Christmas and Hogmanay spend, customers overall for the quarter were dining out and drinking less than forecast. Room reservations were low, even though forecasts put it at higher.

Hotel, Aberdeenshire

Shortage of stock at suppliers, and terrible road conditions during poor weather.

Restaurant, café, food and drink experience, Aberdeenshire

Storm events caused trees to fall and flooding – stopping countryside walks/poor weather causing visitors in general to think twice about outdoor travel.

Visitor attraction/experience, Aberdeenshire

Poor weather – caused cancellations and poor walk in footfall.

Hotel, Aberdeenshire

Weather has been consistently poor since October and we have incurred a lot of closed days due to this.

Visitor attraction/experience, Aberdeenshire

Even with reduced prices, customers still didn't book. Our costs remained high throughout.

Self catering, Aberdeenshire

HOW ARE ENQUIRIES AND BOOKINGS LOOKING?

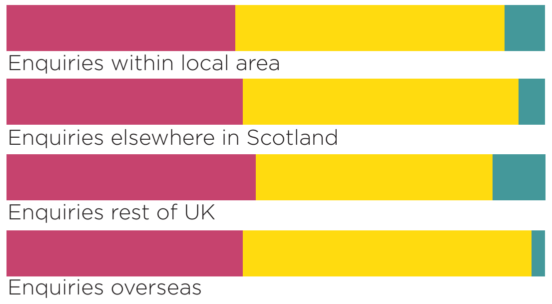
Next 3 months: January to March 2024

Compared to what they would normally expect at this time of year, once again respondents were split predominantly between **"fewer than"** and **"more than"** normal.

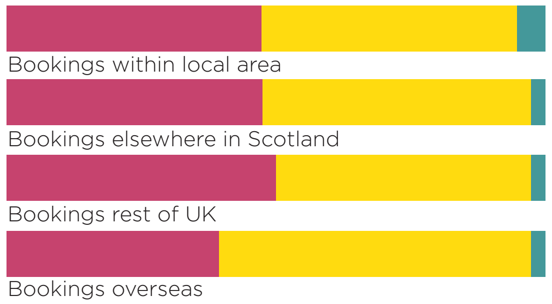
Again, we see **"fewer than normal"** far outweighing **"more than normal".**

The time of year in focus is, traditionally, off-peak season for some sectors of the industry which undoubtedly impacts the results.

ENQUIRIES FOR NEXT 3 MONTHS (January to March 2024)



BOOKINGS FOR NEXT 3 MONTHS (January to March 2024)



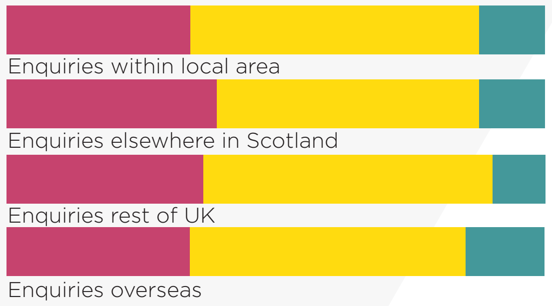
Beyond next 3 months: April 2024 onwards

The chart shifts more in favour of **"about the same as normal"** when we look to Spring and beyond.

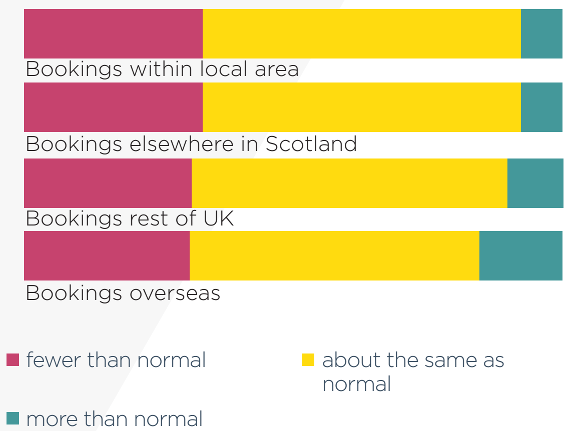
For each source market, a handful of respondents stated their enquiries and bookings were **"more than normal".**

The period in question focuses in on Spring and beyond, typically representing a more buoyant period in the year for many sectors.

ENQUIRIES April onwards



BOOKINGS April onwards



Comments on Enquiries and Bookings

Considering the economic climate, I'm surprised at the number bookings. (not a huge amount but at least some interest) However there is a price to pay as visitors like incentives. Booking.com pushes Genius frequent booker discount, no cancellation fee, no pet fee, etc.

Self-catering, Aberdeenshire

The number of bookings have increased year on year..... more looking to include Aberdeenshire in their itineraries.

Attraction/experience, Aberdeenshire

Definite dip in enquiries from within GB especially with the early spring breaks. Overseas enquiries are being made but a wee bit slower than previous years – expecting it to pick up.

Attraction/experience, Aberdeenshire

Very few new enquiries or bookings are coming through, but repeat guests are booking.

Self-catering, Aberdeenshire

Summer trading looks strong it's getting to the summer that's the problem. Cash flow is tough but no support from government is crippling the industry.

Hotel, Aberdeenshire

Even though we expect the next quarter to be a quiet trading period, several bookings look promising. We are optimistic we will be able to match last year's sales.

Hotel, Aberdeenshire

INVESTMENT

Almost half (48%) have plans to significantly invest in their business. Of those planning investment (22), the majority (**59%**) said it was to expand and grow.

For those who said they weren't planning any investment in the near future, the main reason by far was rising costs.

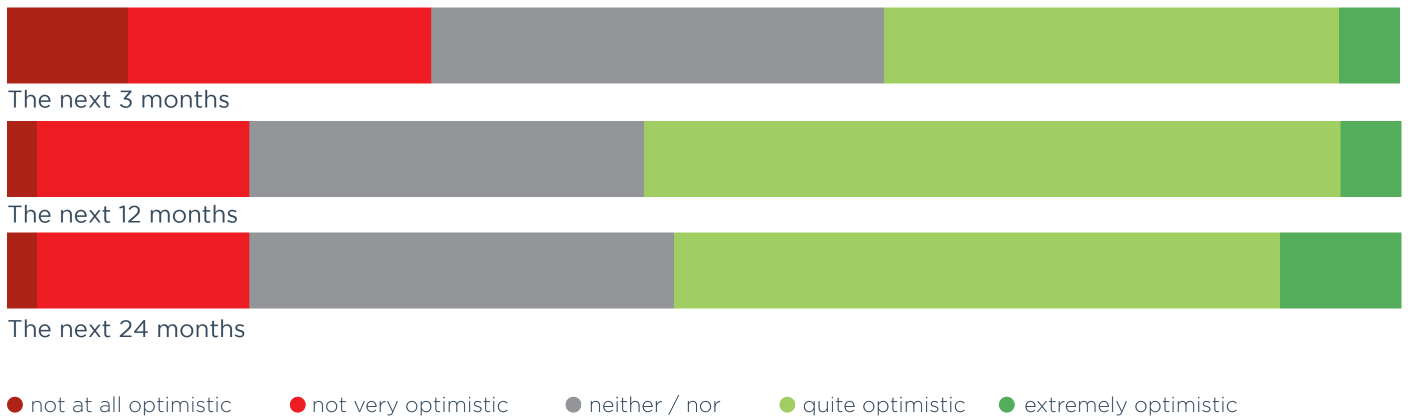
Several businesses stated they had recently carried out refurbishment/ investment.

HOW OPTIMISTIC ARE BUSINESSES FOR THE FUTURE?

Businesses were most optimistic about the 12 and 24 month periods.

Understandably there was significantly less optimism about the next 3 months, given short-time scales and a traditionally quieter time of the year.

Business performance optimism levels



USING THESE RESULTS

The quarterly results can help businesses gauge their own performance in relation to the overall performance of the region (if it's sensible to do this based on the responding sectors). This can be from a past performance perspective, ie. the most recent quarter, but also when looking ahead to future enquiries and bookings.

From a VisitAberdeenshire perspective, the quarterly results help us further understand the current challenges and barriers facing industry which feeds into our own planning for the year ahead. We will also use the results for awareness and lobbying purposes, as we have done with all our past industry surveys.

Remember you can read the results in more detail at
https://industry.visitabdn.com

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The quarterly monitor is aimed at tourism and hospitality businesses within Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. It runs quarterly: October, January, April and July. We will share a summary every quarter, building a picture of business performance across the peaks and troughs of the year. Do encourage your own network to participate in the Monitor, the more businesses that feed in and complete the survey, the more representative the results will be.

INSIGHTS & EVALUATION AT VISITABERDEENSHIRE

VisitAberdeenshire undertakes a range of industry and visitor research. To find out more about what we have available in terms of insights specific to your own business needs, or to discuss these results in more detail, contact **insights@visitabdn.com**