**TRANSCRIPT FROM DAY 2**

**CHRIS VEITCH KEYNOTE**

CHRIS VEITCH:

I will need to adjust this, can everybody see me? Good morning, everyone. We went out to dinner last night and had great service. It was great to meet somebody who was trained in hospitality, not hostility.

It is a great pleasure to be here today and to share my experiences will stop also to learn from others, I found yesterday informative and interesting.

For me, accessible tourism is one of the most exciting parts of tourism development. There is only so much that we can do, but accessibility opens up so many opportunities, which is why I find it so exciting. I had a colleague who said, know quality when you don't see it, and they think you know accessibility when you don't see it.

Today I want us to re-familiarize ourselves with the process that we go through to get to and experience a destination. Then we can go through some of the solutions we have, within the UK. They are not perfect, but they are things we have done to tackle the issues.

I'm often asked if there is a perfect destination that has done it well, and I have to say no, but there are many destinations that have done great work with that goal in mind.

Who else besides me has a great collection of travel adapters at home? What a miracle they are. The system is different, but you have that plug and it works. Look at the tools on the right, the camera, the laptop. All of those things, suddenly the experience of the holiday might diminish if you cannot plug in those electronics. But you buy an adapter, and you are relieved, you are saved.

But if you have access requirements, you can't go out and buy an adapter. It's a very different experience that you have. When you buy a travel adapter, think of me. Think of me as your travel adapter.

For me, what is tourism all about? It was early last year that I really sat down and thought about it. Everything that we do is based around emotions. We are trying to elicit emotions from people. A business and a destination wants to elicit that 'wow' factor and elicit an emotion to that incredible experience. They are trying to get you to want to go somewhere, the images, the imagination, wanting you to get there, it is all about that experience.

The president of Scandinavian Airlines, he defined moments of truth with this statement. "Any time a customer comes into contact with a business, however remote, they have a chance to form an impression." On the right, there are some examples, newspapers, social media, all of those things. We come into contact with businesses in so many ways and we make impressions through those moments of truth, before we even get there, but on that journey and while we are there. Only one moment of truth may let everything down. That is the key with the journey.

What I wanted to do is take a journey to show you. I don't know about your experiences, but as a visitor and as a human being trying to use this, it is clearly not designed by anybody who thought humans would use it. Let's take a journey in this pair of shoes. They are not mine, by the way.

Let's look at the tourism value supply chain. It is not like an industry that produces a can of beans or a car, a single tangible product. At home, government doesn't really appreciate tourism. It is one of our sixth largest industries, but because it doesn't have an easily measurable production, it is not well recognised. It is seen as a candy floss industry. It are of what it is a very complex industry. All of this moment of truth put in.

The supply chain includes accommodation, food and beverage, arrival, moving around. You have all of these different elements that have to be managed to a standard. Add on to that accessibility and inclusion and the challenges grow, but it is clearly well worth doing. Improving the experience by making it more accessible would improve the experience for everybody, not just a few.

Let's take a look at the breakdown of this journey. Where is the start? They start with the information, the marketing. Are they seeing images of themselves? Can they easily find information relevant to their requirements? Is booking easy? Are they able to tell you about their requirements? Are they able to add something, or is your booking form restrictive? You can't contact anyone? How easy is booking?

How easy is it to travel to the destination? Are we giving information about accessibility on trains, buses, ferries? At the destination, getting around? Where do we stay, what do we see?

And then recollection. Coming back to this moment of truth. What were the high points and what were the low points? In recollection there will be telling family and friends. The best marketing any business or destination can have is recommendation.

Throughout this journey people acquire information. There needs to be good quality information throughout the whole experience.

Accessibility includes these three pillars. Information, accessibility, and inclusion. We try and support businesses around the three pillars. We also have to take into account transport and the built environment.

The public realm is vital but we often forget about it. We talk to businesses about being accessible for the benefits, but if the public realm does not play a part in being accessible, if we can't get people from the hotel to the attraction, what is the point? It needs to be a partnership of different people coming together.

Accessibility is no longer for disabled people, but for all of us. That is Robin Christensen. You can see this cartoon, 10% to 40% of the population, comfortable for 100% of the population.

I want to stop talking about disabled people, because I think when we talk about disabled people we stop talking about everybody. All of us, as we heard yesterday, have access requirement at some point in our lives. So I talk about people with access requirements, and that is any of us.

Here is a different quotes about unlocking the potential in businesses. Find out the desires of disabled customers as they relate to your profitable enterprise. Attract their business and then execute this in line with the company's business and culture.

Mistakes are often made when companies try to disable their business and comply with regulations. Compliance is very limited. There is not motivation there. You need to go beyond compliance. If customers are part of your business, you need to be focused on the customer, not what compliance tells you to do.

There is no need to become an expert in disability. Attack this market as you would with any other. That is a really acute factor, because many businesses that I would talk to, there is a fear. We did a charity with Scope, and they found that 75% of British people are uncomfortable with people with disability. You could say that is horrifying, but that is the statistic. There are people who do not want to engage. They need to realise that what we are dealing with is people who want to travel, people with desires as we all do.

Again, disabled people don't want special product, they are hungry to be included in the mainstream. It is not about them and us, it is about producing a product that everybody can enjoy. We are seeing more and more the extended family, great grandparents and grandchildren, different combinations. There are loads of access requirements in there. So why on earth don't we design our products and services to meet those needs?

To me it is all about seeing the customer, not the disability. "How can I help you" are the magic words for any customer. It is also very important for businesses to be honest, to say, "Yes, we can make adjustments," or, "No, sorry, we can't do that."

Trying to understand barriers. Back in 2012, business in Scotland were trying to get involved, were getting invigorated about accessibility. They were doing some research. Top three barriers were identified. The accessibility of the built environment and facilities was a barrier. The second was the lack of relevant information.

Information is so important for all of us in decision-making. When we make a choice, we need good, accurate information.

The third, they were not made to feel welcome. All of us want that smile, don't we? People need to be made to feel welcome. It doesn't just start when they set foot in the business, it starts in marketing, website, brochures. It is the early stages.

As we heard yesterday, and I am sorry to repeat certain things, there are markets to be gained or lost to accessibility. Like it or not, there are growing numbers, and there is money in these sectors, and if we choose to acknowledge that and design our products and services around that, everybody will benefit. If we don't, people will go elsewhere.

Often I hear quoted that disabled people are very loyal customers. That's good. But I often ask, "Loyal for what reason?" If it is because there is no choice, that is appalling and we need to change that.

We also need to think that there are different markets, leisure, business, events, meetings, conferences. There are events like this, as well as just leisure. A city or destination can lose large amounts of money in terms of conferences as to whether they are accessible.

Back in 2014, the European Commission spent a lot of money commissioning studies on European accessibility in tourism. One was looking at supply, one was looking at training, and one was looking at markets. They found that €140 million are being lost annually because people were not able to access infrastructure, because of accessibility requirements.

They also found that medium-sized businesses had been recouping the cost of adapting to accessibility requirements. The research showed that this cost was not only recovered, but resulted in market growth. It is growing the market if you invest.

Far from being a niche sector, accessible tourism offers a huge opportunity. Research shows that there is clear evidence that accessible services are also better services. I am sorry to repeat myself. I know it seems obvious, but that is the point. It is always better and it is better for everybody. That is the key.

It increases the visibility of tourism destinations and gives a competitive edge to operators.

I have a diagram from 2003 that was produced for research that Britain undertook. Basically, it goes from low impact on the left, people with partial hearing, mobility impaired, walking aids, to high impacts, people with mental health and behaviour issues. It says on the left-hand side that people can participate but experience is diminished if accessibility is not addressed. That is someone like myself, with glasses. If I have somebody who is a guide and I can't read their vest, I love the exhibits, but my experience is diminished because I don't know what I can see.

Then we go all the way to the right-hand side of people actually can't get access to a hotel, to a destination, or can't get into an attraction. Then they have no opportunity whatsoever.

So there is a whole range. The difficulty we have in the industry is that when we talk about its people think it is just about the high impact and. Wheelchair users add expense, and we can't cater for those. But that is actually the smallest number. The largest number veer towards the left. There is a lot we can do to improve experience and create opportunities for disabled people.

We've heard this one before. Not every disability is visible. That is reflected in this breakdown. Visit England and Visit Wales and Visit Scotland collect information about visitors. 2015 was the last collection. 5% learning difficulties, 6% mobility impairment. Compare that with 24% mobility impairment non-wheelchair user, 20% deaf or hearing loss, and 60% long-term illness. Things like heart conditions, diabetes, things like that. Where perhaps a small fridge for medicines in a hotel room, small adjustments could be made for people with long-term illnesses. It is not all about expense.

It's important to understand the breakdown of different requirements that there are. But they are all important, and that is the point. Numbers may be small, but they are just as important. Everybody is important there.

Marketing information. Accurate information gives you the power of choice which we don't have at the moment, referring back to the Visit Scotland research. It's so important. I get so frustrated if I can't find the information I want easily. Imagine if it is crucial information. It must take double the planning time if you are trying to go through and find the things that you need to enable you to actually go somewhere.

So these little bits of jigsaws are some of the key things that people want to know. They want to know local geography and the rain. They want to know what assistance is available during their stay. Other useful information that is helpful. Accessibility of tourism businesses. Access statements. Travelling, planning, getting around. Information about transport systems.

Five key criteria for information is that it is easy to find, is in an accessible format, alternative formats, like Word, PDF, audio files, large print. You need to offer a variety of formats.

It has to be reliable, accurate, and up-to-date. If not, as for all of us, it is a waste of time, isn't it? It makes the anger higher. It is a case of, "Mind the gap" on the train. This is mind the information gap. I've had people who have driven hundreds of miles to a picturesque cottage because they were told there were no steps, and just arrived to find the steps. Back to the car, and find somewhere else to go. The information needs to be accurate.

Plain language. So many businesses say, "We are wheelchair friendly." Never mind a person, but the wheelchair is OK. What does the term 'wheelchair friendly' mean? It doesn't think that people are different sizes, shapes, with different abilities and requirements. Who can say? I feel really uncomfortable with phrases such as wheelchair friendly.

We have signs that say disabled toilets and disabled car parking. I say what is wrong with them? What is wrong with the toilets? Fix it. "Accessible toilet, accessible parking." Nice language, uses symbols to explain what they mean.

But home we really encourage businesses to produce what we used to call 'access statements'. There are building access statements, and just to confuse we call them access statements. But now we call them accessibility guides. It encourages businesses to produce a guide for their business, describing facilities and services. It describes the journey, how to get there, what the terrain like, photographs and videos. Focus groups have told us photos are really important.

It can become a great promotional tool, painting a picture of the business. It is a really worthwhile tool.

I worked for Glasgow Centre for Accessible Arts. When I worked for them, I asked to read their access statement. They use the word 'accessibility', not 'disability'. It was clearly on the front page. They did that, they measured it, and saw a 205% increase over three months. It is clear and easy to find.

Floor plans are important. Nobody likes surprises. We all like floor plans! Accessibility guide should not be seen for those people. They should be seen for everybody. We did some research around accessibility guides. Older people, seniors and families, they did not think it would be useful to them. They did not have the label of disabled. The less we use the label the more I like it, I think. I think we should start a movement.

This is a tool from a partnership between Visit Scotland and Visit England. A goes through accommodation, attractions, you can go in and produce a template. It is published on your own website but is also in a database, so that there is a place where people can search for accessibility guides.

That will be a really useful tool, I believe. Being shown what is on offer is great. It can save time and save customer disappointment. If people can see it, you don't have to spend time answering questions.

It also helps show socioeconomic and demographic things. We all want to see ourselves in situations. We do target markets. It is hard to say that we don't want tokenistic pictures.

I have seen pictures of people in a wheelchair on the edge of a cliff. We need the imagery, but we also needed to cover not just the abilities but the ethnicity, that is another issue in terms of inclusion, but we want to be able to present people in natural situations and the narrative of what we are telling people that also reinforces the imagery.

The other thing that a lot of attractions are now producing, many years ago, we were not talking about autism. You don't go there.

But now, a lot of institutions are producing easy to read guides. They're great for international visitors who don't have English as their first language. Families can show this to the children and they will be familiar with the place they are visiting and can be comfortable and at ease when they arrive.

Scandic Hotels boast that they don't welcome disabled people, they only welcome guests. Magnus is their accessibility director. If you come to the hotel, disability and accessibility is talked about a lot and they are very proud of it.

Do you know why they do it? They earn lots and lots of money. They get conferences, they get meetings, they have lots of people staying with them because of their accessibility.

They don't distinguish in their accessibility marketing. It gives a clear advantage. I'm not going to talk through all of these pages. When I am going to do, the slides will be available to you. There is a guide called Winning More Visitors. It covers all these areas. Access for all, getting here by train, coaches, taxis, busses.

Geography, on the beach, there was a great presentation yesterday about that.

Accessibility of tourist attractions, restaurants, meet and greet and accessible toilets. Accessible toilets are really important for changing places. We need more.

Accessibility information on websites. This came from a European project. Europe seems to have paid for so much. We produce this and businesses will check what they have got, we ask for the data about their business and they are asked these questions about accessibility.

It is self-assessed extensibility detail. How many steps do you have and so on.

This is used in conjunction with an access statement and is a very powerful tool. It also becomes powerful, because I know these are statistics, it is still being actively promoted, more than 2 million searches of accessibility were made across websites in England. And there is a 20% increase in bookings of accessible accommodation.

This proves, if there are people looking for it, there will be a market.

That is an example of England's website. They are promoting.

Germany, of course it is barrier free, but they are doing a lot of work. As is Belgium, Spain and Italy.

I want to look at some of the things being done to address some of these issues. Travel agents have a checklist for travel operators. That is a useful list of requirements for people to be asking questions.

People with access requirements need to be very honest and upfront as well as the businesses responding to them. These are key questions that we need to ask, potential visitors.

Transport, all forms, trains, buses, ferries. We need them to join up as well. We also need to know if they are accessible to us. Are we going to have a seamless journey or is there a break in the chain? In other words, I can fly to London, but I cannot get any further. It is really important to consider.

At the destination, the public realm. We need to think about all these key elements. The diagram on the right, that comes from a document from Spain that they produced about accessibility for different hotels and restaurants.

This was produced by Barclay's Bank. It is not limited to DMOs and businesses. Based in Edinburgh, we also have Euan's Guide. It is like TripAdvisor for disabled people. They are encouraging people all over to sign up for it. Reviews are very powerful because people are looking to hear what others are saying. People with access requirements are looking into this website.

How are we doing? 10 minutes left? No?

Important - we do not ask customers enough. The other important thing that businesses don't do is tell their customers that they have acted on the feedback. Give them that incentive. You have told us that you want so-and-so, we have done it. You have faith and confidence of why they are asking the question.

There was a report produced around the Olympics saying we need to mainstream accessibility. We need to move accessibility to be in the mainstream. If there is marketing, it needs to be on accessibility. We also need to make sure that we connected to it.

We also need to make sure that SMEs have this information. Banks, government, they need to be promoting this. It won't work otherwise. We also need to celebrate. We need to share in their successes.

Many businesses say that the customer is at the heart of their business. If they are not looking at accessibility, they are off the radar somewhere. Accessibility helps with the customer at the centre of the business. This is all about putting the customer at the heart of the business - I don't believe you can do that without accessibility.

If we look at this as the heart of the business, it improves it for everybody. It also benefits local communities.

This is my iceberg. I also believe that we should not see accessibility as a means to an ends in itself. It should be called to our business objectives.

Such as, increasing market opportunity. Differentiating our products, making ourselves more competitive. Responding to changing markets. Greater unique selling proposition. It also comes down to investment. If the location is enticing, businesses will want to invest there.

For customers, there are loads of benefits.

We need champions. I am one of them in 14 sectors. We were all a bit sceptical, but we have music, retail, banking, hotels - we come together and we share. The role of an accessibility champion can be a resource for everyone. Scotland has a steering group. England has an Inclusive Action Group.

There are resources, they get started with a video, documents. There is customer service, information and facilities. Sorry if I am going too fast.

There is resources for architects and planners, who need to get on board. In London and some other places they are not.

They have awards. One hotel developer, he felt he went to hospitals rather than hotels because he did not like the rooms at all.  Who wants to stay in a room that looks like a clinic? You can also sell the room to other people.

Case studies are really important. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. We had yesterday about Ireland's Universal Design Centre. Visit England worked with them to produce them, and Ireland said you can have them for free if you produce some case studies and videos. Look out there to see where you can work with others and adapt.

Training is really important. The staff need to know not just what they are doing what the wire, it is just as important. This course is available for people at home. They have just read on this, Welcoming All Customers.

We also have awards, and from that we produce a winner's brochure. Awards are great, people become really competitive.

Communication and PR. I had a business ask me last week if I could tell them for a report which businesses are not doing it very well, and I said no. But I would tell them places that are doing accessibility well. We also have a charity where people can sign up to nine commitments, which include staff training, access guide, Access Champion, access quality. It is a great way for businesses to show they are commitment to accessibility.

The last word - stop thinking about access as access, but think of it as encouraging as many people as possible to enjoy your business. This is Peter, who is blind and rewired his own house.

If we get accessibility right, who are the winners? Our businesses are the winners. Our businesses, our destinations, and local people are the winners. It is a win-win situation.

Thank you.

(Applause)

Just to say, I will be around during the day if you want to ask the questions. Thank you for your time.

LENNA KLINTWORTH:

Thank you, Chris. On a personal note, I would like to thank you for your help with Destination Gold Coast and your insights. When I first heard him present on a Tourism Australia webinar, I was hooked. You are the reason I love doing what I do. Thank you, Chris.

Chris will be in the room next door to the next session, so if you do have any questions, had next door for the next session.