



**TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND**
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

transport.gov.scot

Trunk Road and Motorway Tourist Signing Guidance

for tourist attractions and
tourist facilities

Introduction	3
Background	3
Document Purpose	3
Importance of Tourism to the Scottish Economy	3
Tourist Signs.....	4
Tourist Destinations	4
Tourist Attractions	5
Tourist Facilities	5
Eligibility Criteria.....	6
Recognition by VisitScotland	6
Location of Tourist Destination	6
Visitor Numbers.....	6
Visitor Parking	7
Cross Boundary Signing	7
Other Considerations.....	8
Restrictions on Tourist Signs on Motorway and Trunk Roads	8
Environmental Impact	8
Applying for Tourist Signing Approval	10
Obtaining Approval	10
Home Traffic Authority (One-Stop-Shop).....	10
Home Traffic Authority Responsibilities	11
Cost of Tourist Signing.....	12
What Costs can Applicant expect to Pay	12
Factors Influencing Cost of Tourist Signs	12
Location.....	12
Design	12
Materials.....	13
Manufacture and Installation	13
Ownership, Control, Maintenance, Removal and Replacement	14
Provision of Tourist Signing	16
Design, Manufacture and Installation.....	16
Appendix A - Indicative Costs of providing a single tourist sign	17
Appendix B – Sample Brown Tourist Sign.....	18

Introduction

Background

Transport Scotland, on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, has responsibility for the operation and maintenance of Scotland's strategic road network which connects Scotland's major cities, towns, airports and ports enabling the movement of people, goods and services.

The strategic road network comprises all of Scotland's motorways and trunk roads, it is a hugely diverse network of roads ranging from the ten-lane M8 in the centre of Glasgow to single carriageway sections in the west Highlands.

The [Scottish trunk road network map | Transport Scotland](#) shows the extent of the strategic road network for which Transport Scotland is responsible. All other public roads are local roads and are the responsibility of Scotland's 32 local authorities.

Document Purpose

This document provides guidance primarily to Scottish tourism businesses on Transport Scotland's responsibilities for brown tourist signs on Scotland's strategic roads. The guide is intended to help applicants to know if their business will be eligible for brown signs and to understand the process of applying to have signs erected.

The guidance is not a replacement for the 'Trunk Road and Motorway signposting Policy and Guidance' (2006), at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/trunk-road-and-motorway-tourist-signposting-policy-and-guidance/>, but rather should be read in conjunction with the policy and guidance.

Importance of Tourism to the Scottish Economy

The tourism sector is of vital importance to the Scottish economy.

- In 2023 there were 103 million total overnight and day visitors in Scotland with an associated expenditure of £10.7 billion.
- Spending by visitors in Scotland generated £13 billion of economic activity in the wider Scottish economy and contributed around £7 billion to Scottish GDP (in basic prices). This represents around 4% of total Scottish GDP.

- In 2023 there were 16,045 sustainable tourism businesses in Scotland (9% of all Scottish businesses) supporting 245,000 jobs (9% of all Scottish employment).

Tourist attractions and tourist facilities make an important contribution to this economic activity and it is important that visitors are able to find their way to these destinations.

Tourist Signs

A tourist signs purpose is to direct people to a tourist destination in the final stages of their journey. However, tourist signs are just one of the many ways in which a tourism business can help visitors reach their intended destination easily and safely.

Tourist signs are not advertising signs and therefore are not a substitute for effective marketing.

In order to be effective, tourist signs need to provide clear and consistent directions to drivers, enabling them to reach their destination safely. Tourist signs should be seen as a means of guiding visitors to their destination and should supplement rather than duplicate information already provided on other directional traffic signs.

Tourist signs are traffic signs and as such are regulated in legislation. The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 provides general provisions for traffic signs and sets out the powers and duties of roads authorities in respect of the placing of traffic signs. The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 as amended for Scotland (referred to throughout this document as TSRGD), specifies the type of traffic signs and the manner in which they may be used on roads.

Tourist Destinations

The TSRGD define a tourist attraction or tourist facility as being a permanently established attraction or facility which,

- a) attracts or is used by visitors to an area;
- b) is open to the public without prior booking during its normal opening hours;
and
- c) is recognised as a tourist attraction or facility by the appropriate national promotor of tourism (VisitScotland in Scotland).

The following are some examples of tourist attractions and tourist facilities;

Tourist Attractions

- visitor centres
- theme parks
- historic building and properties
- ancient monuments
- zoos
- museums
- parks and gardens
- natural attractions
- tourist shops
- sports centres and stadiums
- golf courses
- concert venues
- theatres and cinemas

Tourist Facilities

- hotels
- guesthouses
- visitor information centres
- bed & breakfast establishments
- restaurants
- holiday parks
- caravan and camping parks
- picnic sites
- youth hostels
- garden centres
- visitor participation establishments (e.g. potteries, cook schools, etc.)

Eligibility Criteria

Recognition by VisitScotland

To be eligible for tourist signs, all tourist destinations must be recognised by VisitScotland. VisitScotland's role in respect of brown signs is set out in the TSRGD, which is linked to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Road Traffic Act 1988.

The VisitScotland Quality Assurance Scheme was closed to new applications in 2024, and a digital application process introduced which retains the requirement for businesses to sign up to VisitScotland's code of conduct and terms and conditions, and meet updated eligibility criteria. Where eligibility is demonstrated and agreed, VisitScotland will supply a letter of accreditation, which will subsequently enable the application for a brown tourist sign to be submitted to the relevant Home Traffic Authority, see chapter "Applying for Tourist Signing Approval".

Information for tourist operators is available on the VisitScotland website at <http://www.visitscotland.org> or via email at signposting@visitscotland.com.

In addition, there are a number of criteria that have to be met in order for a tourist destination to be eligible to apply for tourist signs from Scotland's motorways and trunk roads, these are as follows;

Location of Tourist Destination

Where the access to a tourist destination is from a local road, tourist signing from a motorway or trunk road will only be considered where there will be continuity of signing on all necessary local roads between leaving the motorway or trunk road and arriving at the destination. This means that the local authority with responsibility for the intervening local road network must also consider and agree to the erection of tourist signs on their roads.

Visitor Numbers

To be eligible for tourist signs on the Scottish motorway network, tourist destinations should normally receive at least 50,000 visitors a year, or in excess of 10,000 visitors in the peak month. In either case these thresholds should have been met in each of the previous three years. Please note that these visitor number thresholds apply only to motorways – there is no visitor number requirement for non-motorway trunk roads (A class roads).

Where a tourist destination has been established for less than 3 years or where it is a new destination and visitor numbers are available, Transport Scotland may at its discretion consider the projected visitor numbers in assessing eligibility. In the case of new destinations, VisitScotland accreditation will be required before the erection of tourist signs is approved.

Visitor Parking

Adequate vehicle parking should be provided either at the destination or in its vicinity to accommodate the volume of vehicles expected to visit the tourist attraction or facility at peak times. Where appropriate this parking should include provision for the parking of minibuses and coaches.

If public parking is to be used to provide some or all of the parking needs of the tourist destination, confirmation of permission from the owner or operator of the car park must be provided with the application.

Cross Boundary Signing

Where the route from a motorway or trunk road to a tourist destination crosses more than one local authority boundary, all affected local authorities must agree to the erection of tourist signs.

Further information on these matters is provided under the heading The Home Traffic Authority (One-Stop Shop) details of which are provided later in the chapter “Applying for Tourist Signing Approval”.

Other Considerations

Restrictions on Tourist Signs on Motorway and Trunk Roads

Meeting the eligibility criteria discussed earlier does not guarantee that an application for tourist signs will be approved. Transport Scotland will also take account of factors including the existing sign provision at the relevant motorway or trunk road junction, the availability of space for new signs, vertical and horizontal road alignment, and road safety considerations including accident history.

It should be noted that tourist signs on motorways will only be approved to tourist attractions, and not to tourist facilities.

Tourist signs will only be approved on approach to the nearest motorway or trunk road junction.

If signing on the local roads between a trunk road or motorway and the tourist destination is refused by a local traffic authority, trunk road or motorway signs will not be permitted. This is to avoid situations where drivers having been directed off a trunk road or motorway are left with no continuity of signing to their destination.

Environmental Impact

When assessing tourist signing applications consideration will be given to the environmental impact of the tourist signs and the need to have regard to the character of Scotland's exceptional natural landscape and historic environment.

The flow chart in Figure 1 summarises the process of confirming eligibility for tourist signing. The flow chart should be carefully considered by the applicant prior to making a tourist signing application.

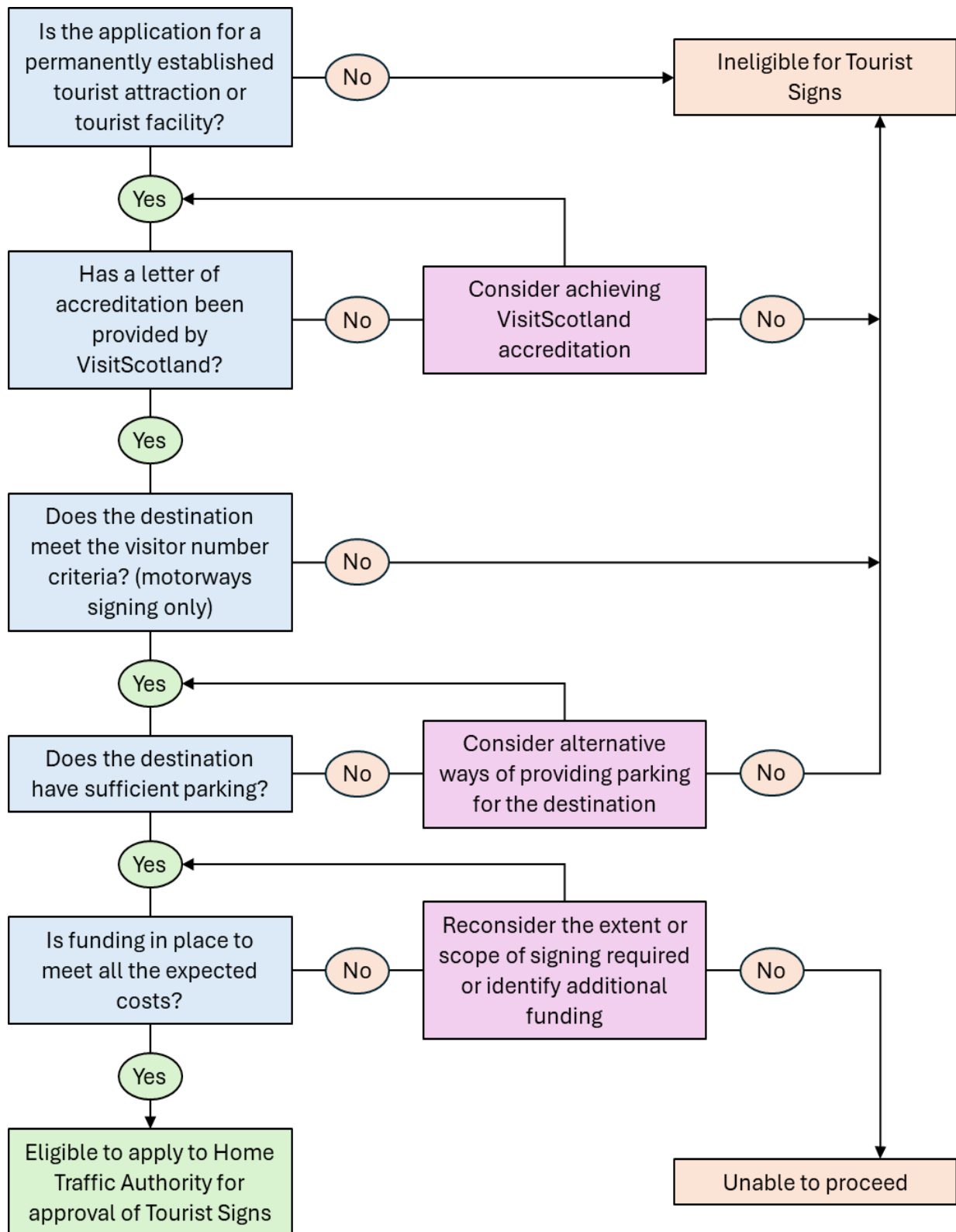


Figure 1 – Trunk Road and Motorway Tourist Signing Eligibility Criteria

Applying for Tourist Signing Approval

Obtaining Approval

If after reviewing the Eligibility Criteria as set out in this document, you wish to make an application for tourist signing for your tourist destination, you must complete the relevant application form and send it together with a copy of the letter of accreditation from VisitScotland confirming your eligibility.

The relevant application form can be found in the 'Trunk Road and Motorway Tourist Signposting Policy and Guidance' document on the Transport Scotland website at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/trunk-road-and-motorway-tourist-signposting-policy-and-guidance/j7818-20>.

Completed application forms should then be submitted to the relevant Home Traffic Authority (see below).

Home Traffic Authority (One-Stop-Shop)

The concept of the Home Traffic Authority was introduced in 2006 to facilitate a seamless 'One-Stop-Shop' application process. The intention of the One-Stop-Shop is that applicants deal only with the authority in whose area their tourist destination has its main direct access. This ensures that applicants are not required to make multiple applications if their signing requirements cross multiple local authority boundaries or include a mix of trunk road, motorway and local road sites.

The Home Traffic Authority is the traffic authority for the road that provides the main direct access to a tourist destination.

For a destination taking access from a local road the Home Traffic Authority will normally be the council for the area in which the access lies.

Transport Scotland is the Home Traffic Authority only in those cases where a destination takes its access directly from a trunk road or motorway. Completed applications should therefore only be made directly to Transport Scotland where your tourist destination has a direct access onto a motorway or trunk road.

Home Traffic Authority Responsibilities

The Home Traffic Authority is responsible for liaising with all other relevant authorities (including where necessary Transport Scotland and VisitScotland) and for obtaining any necessary approvals from those authorities.

The Home Traffic Authority does not decide what signs are approved in another traffic authority area but rather to seek the approval of the other relevant authorities on behalf of the applicant.

As co-ordinator of the application process, the Home Traffic Authority must be provided by the applicant with all the information necessary to process the application. This includes any information pertinent to trunk road or motorway sites.

The Home Traffic Authority will need the agreement of any other relevant authorities before signs can be approved in their areas. Applicants should be aware that this can lengthen the time required to process an application (often significantly where there are multiple authorities involved) and should forward plan accordingly when submitting an application.

Cost of Tourist Signing

What Costs can Applicant expect to Pay

Applicants are expected to meet the costs associated with the provision of tourist signs. These costs are no different from the costs associated with the provision of traffic signs generally.

The overall cost of tourist signing can sometimes be high, due to the influence of the type of road on which the signs are to be installed and the distance to the destination. High speed roads such as dual carriageways and motorways require much larger signs than single carriageway local roads and there may be a need for a number of signs on local roads in rural areas where the distance between the trunk road and the destination is considerable.

Factors Influencing Cost of Tourist Signs

The cost of traffic signs can be significantly influenced by a number of factors including location, design, materials, manufacture and installation. Common examples of these considerations are set out below;

Location

Location can have a material and often significant effect on the overall cost of providing tourist signs. For example, where an applicant wishes signs to be erected on a motorway or other high speed road they should understand that the traffic management required for works on or adjacent to such roads will be significantly more extensive than that required on a remote lightly trafficked local road.

Design

Signs must be designed in accordance with existing statutory requirements and technical standards. Foundations and supporting poles require to be designed to withstand the wind loading likely to be experienced. This often results in a need for a sizeable concrete foundation. Where the diameter of the sign poles and the speed of traffic on the road exceeds certain thresholds, the poles must be designed to be either 'passively safe' or the sign must be protected behind a safety barrier.

Materials

The materials used in the manufacture of traffic signs are subject to the EU Construction Products Regulation (CPR), which makes it mandatory for sign manufacturers to apply CE marking to their products.

The use of cheaper, non-compliant materials or non-compliance with standards or statutory requirements is not permissible for brown tourist signs located on public roads.

Manufacture and Installation

The manufacture and installation of traffic signs must comply with the relevant standards which specify, amongst other things, the retro-reflective requirements of sign face materials and the structural requirements of signs, sign supports and safety in use, including vehicle impact.

The requirements of safe working practice require the provision of appropriate traffic management to ensure the safety of both road users and road workers. Working on the strategic road network may on occasion require multiple lane and day or night time closures. Traffic management may be required during the excavation and formation of foundations, erection of posts, and the fixing of the signs. To allow the foundation to properly set, it is often necessary to return to the site at a later date to fix the sign to the poles.

Figure 2 provides an illustration of some of the key elements that can influence the cost of signs and reflects what their relative impact can have on overall costs.



Figure 2 – Key Elements Affecting Sign Costs

The costs of providing tourist signing can vary greatly depending on these elements which can have a significant effect on the nature and complexity of the application.

Where a tourist destination is accessed from the local road network it shall only be signed from a trunk road if continuity signing will be provided on the local road network from the trunk road to the tourist destination. The number of signs required will be dependent on the distance to the tourist destination.

Indicative costs (inclusive of VAT) have been provided in Table 1 to allow applicants to have an appreciation of the variations in costs of providing tourist signing on the trunk road and motorway network to a tourist destination.

Tourist Sign Location	Cost of Providing Single Brown Tourist Sign (2024)
60 mph Single Carriageway	£ 5,477
70 mph Dual Carriageway	£ 9,553
70 mph Motorway	£11,293

Table 1 - (refer to Appendix A for breakdown of costs)

Supported businesses operate in the road sign manufacturing sector, and those looking for a tourist sign are encouraged to consider using these. Lists of known supported businesses can be found at the webpage: [Procurement: requirements reserved for supported businesses dynamic purchasing system - gov.scot](https://procurement.requirements.reservedfor.supported.businesses.dynamicpurchasing.system.gov.scot).

Ownership, Control, Maintenance, Removal and Replacement

Whilst ownership of any tourist sign will remain with the organisation or individual who paid for it (generally the applicant), once a tourist sign has been installed on a trunk road or motorway it comes under the strict control of Transport Scotland. No alteration, repair, removal, replacement or other work to the sign will be permitted without the express consent of Transport Scotland granted through their Operating Company.

Transport Scotland will be responsible through its Operating Company Contracts for the general maintenance of tourist signs, including cleaning and the operation of any flaps or covers. These operations will be undertaken by the Operating Company at no additional cost to the owner.

The owner of a tourist sign will be responsible for the cost of replacing the sign when it reaches the end of its serviceable life. Purely as an indication of the life expectancy

of a sign, properly manufactured and erected traffic signs are typically expected to last around ten years before they need to be replaced.

Transport Scotland reserves the right to modify, replace or remove tourist signs at any time for traffic management, safety or other reasons. If it becomes necessary to remove a tourist sign within the first three years from a trunk road or motorway (other than by reason of the closure of the destination) the owner will be entitled to make a claim for the reimbursement of the cost of installing that sign on a pro-rata basis for the outstanding period. No compensation will be payable after the expiry of the initial three year period.

Provision of Tourist Signing

Design, Manufacture and Installation

Transport Scotland's Operating Companies can offer design, manufacture and installation services to applicants who have obtained approval for tourist signs on trunk roads and motorways. These services will be offered to applicants at commercial market rates although in some cases these costs may be significant depending on the number of signs required.

Applicants are strongly advised to have a realistic understanding of the likely costs and to have appropriate funding identified before proceeding. Reference should be made to Appendix A & B which provides a breakdown of costs for a fictitious location requiring a single tourist sign.

Alternatively, applicants may wish to procure the design, manufacture and installation of their tourist signs independently.

In all cases the following requirements will apply;

- The design of the signs must be in accordance with statutory requirements and be approved by Transport Scotland's appropriate Operating Company
- The signs must be manufactured by a certified traffic sign manufacturer and CE marked in accordance with the Construction Products Regulations
- Installation must be carried out by an approved contractor who is certified to work on trunk roads or motorways.

Appendix A - Indicative Costs of providing a single tourist sign

Single Carriageway (National Speed Limit)		
Material / Personnel	Quantity	Cost (£)
1 no. sign = 150 mm	3380 mm x 900 mm	302
Posts + Clips	2 x 140 mm x 3200 JEROL	1,524
Concrete	1.49 m ³	396
JCB + transporter	1 day	541
2 person squad	2 days	1,087
Tipper truck	5 hours	195
Traffic management (signals)	2 days	1,350
Spoil removal	3 tonnes	83
Total		£ 5,477

Table 2 – Single carriageway costs

Dual Carriageway (National Speed Limit)		
Material / Personnel	Quantity	Cost (£)
1 no. sign = 250 mm	5640 mm x 1500 mm	778
Posts + Clips	3 x 168 mm x 3750 JEROL	3,118
Concrete	5.04 m ³	1,225
JCB + transporter	1 day	541
HIAB	1 day	532
2 person squad	2 days	1,087
Tipper truck	5 hours	195
Traffic management (lane closure)	2 days	1,800
Spoil removal	10 tonnes	278
Total		£ 9,553

Table 3 – All-purpose dual carriageway costs

Motorway (National Speed Limit)		
Material / Personnel	Quantity	Cost (£)
1 no. sign = 250 mm	6770 mm x 1800 mm	1,123
Posts + Clips	3 x 219 mm x 4050 JEROL	4,052
Concrete	6.43 m ³	1,604
JCB + transporter	1 day	541
HIAB	1 day	532
2 person squad	2 days	1,087
Tipper truck	5 hours	195
Traffic management (lane closure)	2 days	1,800
Spoil removal	13 tonnes	360
Total		£ 11,293

Table 4 – Motorway costs

Appendix B – Sample Brown Tourist Sign





**TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND**

CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

© Crown copyright 2025

You may re-use this information (excluding logos and images) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the [Open Government Licence](#).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Further copies of this document are available, on request, in audio and visual formats and in community languages. Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at info@transport.gov.scot.

Published by Transport Scotland, June 2025

Follow us:



transcotland



@transcotland

transport.gov.scot