

**Edinburgh and South East Scotland Cruise
Passenger Management Plan**

Cruise Forth Volunteers Impact Assessment

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1. Introduction

In addition to the community impact assessment, a volunteer impact assessment was conducted that specifically explores the work of volunteers at Cruise Forth.

Cruise Forth is an initiative dedicated to enhancing the experience of cruise ship passengers arriving at Edinburgh's ports—Leith, South Queensferry, Newhaven and Rosyth. The initiative is staffed by uniformed volunteers who offer a warm welcome, provide local information, and assist with travel arrangements. Their main goal is to promote local attractions and ensure visitors have a memorable stay in the region.

This assessment used a combination of a survey and interviews to gather data on the volunteers' experience. In total 28 volunteers responded to the survey. As part of the survey, Volunteers were asked if they wanted to be included in follow-up interviews as part of the survey, 8 agreed to an interview. Of those who agreed, 6 were engaged via interview.

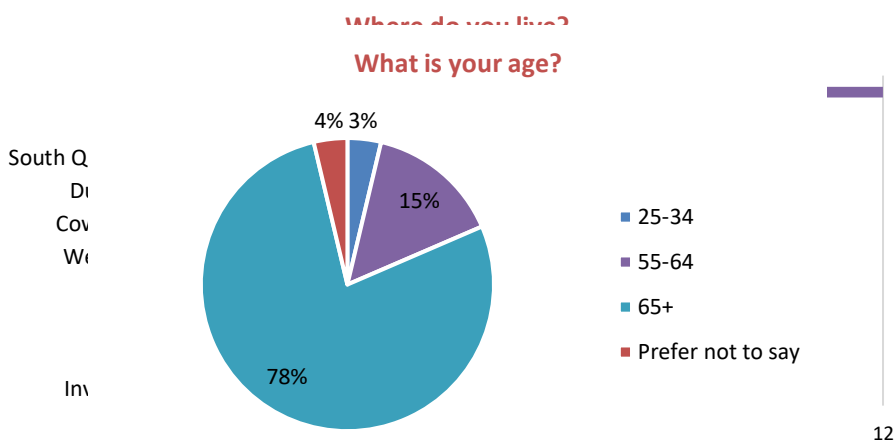
This method forms an assessment of local social impacts using both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis.

2. Survey Analysis: Quantitative

Quantitative analysis was conducted on the survey data relating to demographics and volunteer involvement with Cruise Forth. The results are discussed as follows.

2.1 Demographics

Most volunteers who responded to the survey reside in Edinburgh. However, there was a spread of locations beyond Edinburgh as well, likely due to the different areas that Cruise Forth operates in (Leith, South Queensferry, Newhaven and Rosyth).

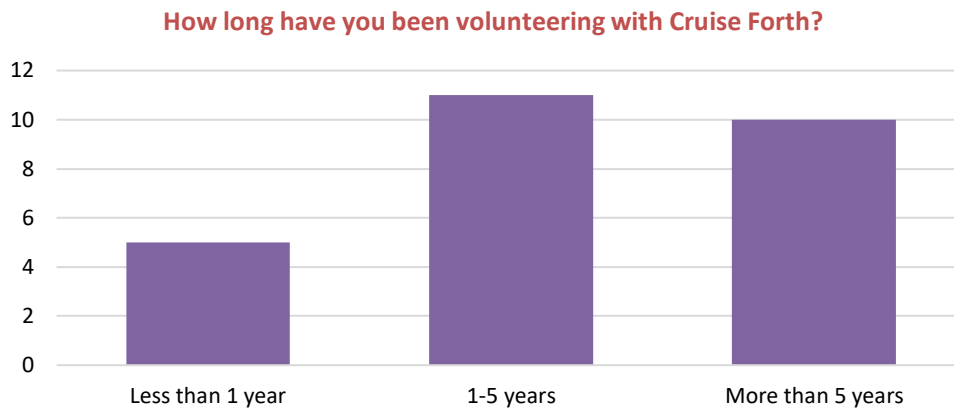


92% of survey respondents were over the age of 55.

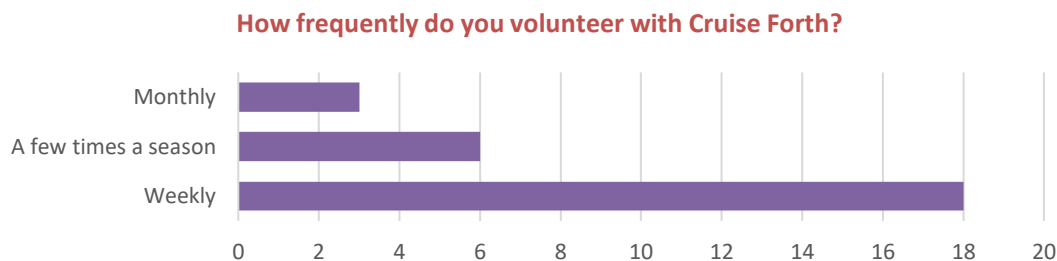
2.2 Volunteers' involvement

Respondents had been volunteering with Cruise Forth for a substantial amount of time; 35% had been volunteering with the organisation for over five years, and a further 39% for between one and 5 years. This indicates that volunteering with Cruise Forth offers volunteers a fulfilling environment that they feel they can commit to fully. This could be due to the flexibility offered by the organisation.

In addition to the volunteers' long-term commitment to Cruise Forth, the frequency of their commitment is also high. Of those who responded to the survey, 75% volunteer with the organisation weekly or monthly.



This may be due to the routine that volunteering can offer.



3. Survey analysis: Qualitative

Six questions were included in the survey to collect qualitative data:

- What do you enjoy most about volunteering with Cruise Forth?
- What is your main motivation for volunteering with Cruise Forth?
- Does your volunteering feel significant?
- Have you noticed improvements in your skills or general wellbeing since volunteering with Cruise Forth?
- Do you feel your efforts had noticeable results?
- Would you recommend volunteering with Cruise Forth to friends, coworkers, or family?

Responses to these questions were analysed using thematic analysis. Nine themes were identified through analysis of each question. Where a response referred to any of these themes, this was tagged and recorded. The nine themes identified are:

- Social interaction
- Friendship
- Pride
- Cultural exchange

- Skills, knowledge and problem solving
- Purpose
- Wellbeing
- Cruise experience
- Teamwork

3.1 Response to What do you enjoy most about volunteering with Cruise Forth?

Theme	No. of tags across total response	Proportion of total response	Comments
Social interaction	17	35%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Meeting with the passengers/people” • “Interaction with other volunteers” • “Other volunteers are friendly and helpful”
Pride	10	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Welcoming visitors to our town” • “Promoting our beautiful country” • “Recommending place of interest to be seen” • “Sending visitors of the beaten track” • “Helping passengers see the best sites”
Cultural exchange	6	12%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Meeting lots of interesting passengers from all over the world” • “Meeting people from different backgrounds” • “Chatting to them [passengers] about their travel experience”
Purpose	5	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The good feeling of helping them [passenger]” • “Helping in any way I can to take the strain of arriving in a strange city” • “Feel I’m helping people”
Friendship	5	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The involvement and friendship with the other volunteers” • “The camaraderie, friendships of my fellow volunteers” • “We enjoy each other’s company”
Skills, knowledge and problem solving	6	12%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I learn things from other very knowledgeable volunteers” • “Learning things from the other volunteers so that I can 'store' that information for

when the next time it might come in handy”

- “The logistics of helping passengers find their excursion buses”
- “Helping passengers with some really tricky situations and getting everything resolved”

3.2 Response to What is your main motivation for volunteering with Cruise Forth?

Theme	No. of tags across total response	Proportion of total response	Comments
Pride	8	24%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Showcasing our wonderful sights” • “Helping to promote the city of Edinburgh” • “Presenting a friendly Scottish face”;
Purpose	8	24%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I’m helping other people” • “Contribute to our local community in a positive way” • “I feel that I am playing a small part in helping tourism in the city”
Cruise experience	5	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It is because I enjoyed cruising” • “I have an interest in cruises” • “My own interest in cruising and travel” • “I love cruising” • “As someone who does cruise holidays it's good to help visitors to the various areas available”
Cultural exchange	5	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I enjoy meeting passengers from all round the world” • “To share Scotland and our local area with visitors from around the world”
Social interaction	4	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Enjoy interacting with passengers from all walks of life” • “It's one of my retirement activities which brings me into contact with other people”
Friendship	2	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Friendship”
Skills, knowledge and problem solving	2	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I have exceptional knowledge of shipping, local geography and the cruise product”

Teamwork	1	3%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Working as a team is very satisfying”
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3.3 Response to Does your volunteering feel significant?

Theme	No. of tags across total response	Proportion of total response	Comments
Purpose	9	64%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Passengers seem very grateful about the information received” “We feel it gives us a purpose in retirement”
Pride	5	36%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “It helps present our city well” “Passengers won't see Scotland in its best light [without the volunteers]”

3.4 Response to Have you noticed improvements in your skills or general wellbeing since volunteering with Cruise Forth?

The majority (77%) of respondents noticed improvements in their skills or general wellbeing; 23% had not noticed improvements.

Respondents were invited to explain their answers. Most of those who had not noticed improvements gave the reason that this was due to already having a strong set of skills or positive wellbeing. In contrast, one respondent who had not noticed improvements expressed that volunteering has caused them occasional feelings of anxiety.

A summary of comments from those who noticed improvements correlated to the identified themes is presented below.

Theme	No. of tags across total response	Proportion of total response	Comments
Skills, knowledge and problem solving	8	57%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Learning about the local transport, city attractions, increased knowledge of the city” “My language skills (German and French) have improved and my knowledge of our local area is much better”
Wellbeing	4	29%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “More confident dealing with the passengers” “My mental health has improved with the passenger contact”
Social interaction	2	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Has widened my network of people to talk to”

3.5 Response to Do you feel your efforts had noticeable results?

All respondents felt that their efforts had noticeable results.

Respondents were invited to explain their answers. Many cited that feedback from passengers was the primary reason for this, while some said that they had received positive comments from Forth Ports management on their problem-solving skills on site.

3.6 Response to Would you recommend volunteering with Cruise Forth to friends, coworkers, or family?

96% of respondents would recommend volunteering with Cruise Forth to friends, coworkers, or family.

Respondents were invited to explain their answers. A summary of the comments from those who answered yes and how they correlate to identified themes is presented below.

Theme	No. of tags across total response	Proportion of total response	Comments
Purpose	3	43%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “It's satisfying” “I believe it is worthwhile”
Pride	2	29%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I thoroughly enjoy being involved in promoting our local area”
Wellbeing	1	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Keeps you active, interesting group of people who respect each other”
Social interaction	1	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “It is ideal if the volunteer enjoys meeting and talking to strangers”

4. Interview Analysis

Interviews were conducted with those who indicated in the survey that they were willing to have a further discussion on their volunteering experience with Cruise Forth. A semi-structured interview script was developed to guide discussion and allow for comparison across responses.

The responses were analysed using thematic analysis. The nine themes identified through qualitative analysis (described above) were also identified through interview analysis:

4.1 Social interaction

A major benefit of volunteering is the opportunity to interact with both visitors and fellow volunteers. Volunteers enjoy conversations with passengers from different cultures and backgrounds: “I really enjoy the conversation that you get with passengers, from different cultures and continents.” The experience helps maintain social connections post-retirement, providing structure and preventing isolation: “I worked in a big office, where I was around lots of people, this changed significantly when I retired.”

4.2 Friendship

Beyond the role itself, the volunteer community fosters friendships and social engagement. Volunteers often meet up for lunches and outings, strengthening their connections: “We like to go out and have fun. We don’t just volunteer. They’re acquaintances. We have lunches and outings together.” There is also a strong sense of inclusivity and teamwork: “It’s very inclusive, an opening and welcoming culture.”

4.3 Pride

Many volunteers take pride in showcasing their local area and helping visitors enjoy their time in Edinburgh: “Pride in the city is a big thing.” Volunteering has also changed perspectives on their home, making them appreciate it in new ways: “I see things from a different perspective, see my home differently to how I did before.”

4.4 Cultural exchange

The role facilitates a rich cultural exchange, as volunteers not only share knowledge about their city but also learn about visitors' backgrounds: "I have learnt so much about other people's backgrounds and homes." Visitors often provide insights into their own towns and travel experiences, enhancing volunteers' understanding of the world: "Visitors are very good for sharing, they will give you facts about what they've seen as well." However, some volunteers have also gained new perspectives on the cruise industry, not always in a positive way: "It's opened up my eyes but not in a positive way".

4.5 Skills, knowledge and problem solving

Volunteers develop key skills, particularly in communication and problem-solving. They learn how to tailor information for visitors with different language abilities: "I make sure to tailor what I am saying to people so that they can understand, given English is not their first language." A collaborative knowledge-sharing culture exists within the team: "There is a lot of knowledge sharing between the volunteers. We have a glossary that everyone adds to."

Problem-solving is often required, from navigating language barriers to handling unexpected logistical challenges: "Ships have been diverted to Rosyth when we think they are going to Leith. Obviously this is frustrating." Volunteers also develop confidence and adaptability: "I feel more outgoing. Having that contact and taking time to talk to people about things I don't know. It has let my confidence increase with time."

4.6 Purpose

For many, volunteering provides a sense of purpose, structure, and routine: "I sought out the routine, the something to do." It offers a rewarding experience through helping others and receiving instant positive feedback: "Feedback from the passengers, it's instant. Different nationalities are more vocal about their appreciation." Seeing visitors enjoy their recommendations adds to their own sense of fulfilment: "It's certainly rewarding when I get feedback on the recommendations."

4.7 Wellbeing

Engaging with people prevents isolation and contributes to overall mental wellbeing: "It stops me becoming isolated in retirement." The gratitude from passengers makes the role satisfying: "Interaction, seeing the smile on someone's face. People experiencing things that they wouldn't have otherwise."

4.8 Cruise experience

Some volunteers had no prior connection to the cruise industry before joining: "I had never had a link to the cruise industry before." Over time, their perspectives on the industry have evolved. While some love engaging with the passengers and even going onto the cruise ships, "I love going on board the ships", others have developed a more critical view of the local impact of cruise tourism: "The cruise ship passengers can overwhelm."

4.9 Teamwork

Teamwork is a key part of the Cruise Forth volunteer experience, as volunteers work together closely to ensure passengers receive the best service: "There's a strong sense of working together to make sure passengers get the right information." When handling large crowds, volunteers rely on teamwork to manage the flow efficiently, even if they cannot always provide the full service they aim for: "Sometimes, there are hundreds of passengers all at once, which means we can't give them all the full service that we offer, but we work together to manage as best we can." Teamwork is also evident across skill levels, whereby newer volunteers feel supported by those with more experience: "It's really helpful that others are so experienced, I learnt a lot from them."

5. Conclusions

The impact assessment of the volunteer programme at Cruise Forth highlights the significant and multifaceted contributions of volunteers in enhancing the experience of cruise passengers visiting Edinburgh.

Most volunteers have a longstanding commitment, with many having volunteered for five years or more, indicating a stable and dedicated team. The high frequency of volunteering suggests a routine that volunteers find fulfilling, which is reinforced by the sense of social interaction, friendships, and cultural exchange experienced.

Volunteers reported improvements in their skills, particularly in communication and problem-solving, and noted positive changes in their overall wellbeing, including increased confidence and mental health benefits. That the overwhelming majority of volunteers would recommend the programme to others further demonstrates the positive experience they derive from involvement.

Volunteers derive satisfaction from promoting local attractions, connecting with visitors from around the world, and contributing to cultural exchange. Many express a sense of pride in showcasing their city and helping passengers to navigate unfamiliar environments. The sense of accomplishment and fulfilment is shown through responses around making meaningful contributions that have visible results.

In summary, the volunteer programme at Cruise Forth has a positive social impact on those involved, benefiting both cruise passengers and the volunteers. While supporting Edinburgh's tourism industry, the programme fosters a sense of community, belonging, and personal growth. The data collected in this assessment suggests that the programme enriches the lives of those who dedicate their time to volunteering. Ensuring the continued success of the programme requires further collaboration between the cruise industry, local authorities, and volunteer organisations to maintain the necessary infrastructure and resources that support these efforts.

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