

German tourist guru checks in

Marc Horne

TOURISM operators in the northeast of Scotland have been told to emulate the German work ethic to attract more visitors from Europe's economic powerhouse.

A tourism guru hired by Aberdeenshire council, one of Scotland's largest local authorities, has warned that staff in the hospitality industry need to become ruthlessly efficient and speak more slowly to attract more German tourists.

Wilfried Kloepping, a travel and leisure consultant from the North Rhine-Westphalia region, has been hired by the council to help it boost the number of Teutonic visitors.

Kloepping claims his countrymen are fascinated by Scotland's rugged countryside, ancient castles and turbulent history but insists the country would become a far more attractive destination if it adopted a more Germanic attitude towards tourism.

"Germans are very organised, prepared and structured: it's not a stereotype; it's the way we were educated," said Kloepping. "You sometimes get a young person [in Scotland] serving you breakfast who did not get to bed until three or four in the morning and is not really awake. You can find yourself waiting half an hour for a cup of tea."

Kloepping claimed Scotland was a land of linguistic trepidation for many Germans, despite most of them being

able to speak fluent English.

"The German people are more afraid of the Scottish accent than they are of the old stereotype of them being mean. All the Scottish people need to do is be patient, speak a little bit slower than usual and try to put away any accent. I've had a few taxi drivers in Glasgow where I honestly did not have a clue what they were taking about."

He also claimed German tourists want to sample local craft beers and ales rather than mass-produced lagers such as Tennent's. "Germans love beer and are very keen to sample something new and exciting such as Brewdog, which produces fancy and unusual beers in Aberdeenshire."

Kloepping's website, aimed at Germans planning to visit Scotland, contains a number of backhanded compliments. "The Scots are a small folk on the edge of Europe. What makes them so unique is the combination of stubbornness, humour, hospitality and national pride. They use a dry, biting humour but are, at heart, very hospitable, warm and even romantic."

Figures published last week by VisitScotland, the national tourism agency, reveal that Scotland attracted 2.2m overseas visitors last year, generating a £1.4bn boost to its economy. The majority hailed from America, with 324,000 visitors spending a total of £274m. About 281,000 visitors came from Germany and 174,000 from France over the same period.