



Speech by The Scottish Minister for Tourism Culture and Sport, Patricia Ferguson MSP, to the 5th Biennial Conference of The Global Association of Mural Arts and Cultural Tourism at The Community Centre, Prestonpans, August 18th 2006.

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen and a warm welcome to Scotland to all delegates. I am delighted to be here this evening to join you as you convene to develop your unique and fascinating art form.

I am also delighted that the Global Association for Murals Art and Cultural Tourism has chosen Prestonpans and Scotland to host its conference – the first venue in Europe to do so.

Whenever an arts festival, convention or conference takes place, the host town is transformed. On my way here this evening I took some time to see some of the magnificent murals on display in and around the town, and the newly raised totem pole, and I was reminded of the impact that major events have on Scotland’s communities.

And it’s not only the town’s appearance that has changed. Prestonpans has become a melting pot of ideas, inspiration and ambition. The town benefits both culturally and financially - and there are unique opportunities to learn and experience new and exciting art forms. It is the kind of enterprise we are seeing here that makes the world sit up and take notice of Scotland. It is this level of imagination and dedication to the promotion of Scotland’s culture that I would like to see happening more and more as Scotland grows in confidence and takes its proper place in the world.

Scotland is currently in the middle of a frenzy of Festival activity – and while the festivals and events taking place down the road in Edinburgh have a huge profile, it would be wrong to allow Scotland’s other important festivals and cultural events to be eclipsed.

And that’s part of the reason I am here today - events like the Prestoungrange Arts Festival and the Global Mural Conference are a credit to Scotland’s cultural identity, they are vital in the continuing promotion of Scotland as a world class cultural tourism destination and they demonstrate that Scotland is ready and able to host excellent major events.

Scotland is being increasingly recognised as a world class destination for events and conferences and Prestonpans has been a fantastic host for the Global Mural conference. Events like this bring visitors to parts of Scotland that may not be visited as often as the main cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The whole of Scotland has much to offer the world culturally in so many ways. Scotland is a venue that is always open.

Thank you for inviting me, and have an enjoyable evening.”

