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## Merger bid to boost activity tourism

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By Peter Ranscombe

WILD Scotland, the nature tourism operators' association, is merging with trade body Activity Scotland as part of efforts to grow the country's outdoor tourism market to £1 billion a year.

The new body - the Wildlife and Adventure Tourism Association - aims to market Scotland as a "one-stop shop" for outdoor activity holidays.

Tourists currently take about 2.5 million nature-based trips in Scotland each year, pumping about £259 million into the nation's economy.

That figure is forecast to reach £848m by 2015, with visitors taking 3.7 million trips.

Discussions over the link-up began at the Adventure Travel World Summit in Aviemore in October and coincide with the Scottish Government's "Year of Active Scotland".

The new body will be one of the tourist industry's "sectoral management groups", which provide marketing support and government advocacy for tourism businesses.

Ben Mardall, Wild Scotland's chairman, said: "This move will allow us to represent Scotland far better on an international stage."

Activity Scotland chairwoman Frieda Bos added: "With the two organisations coming together, we can really showcase what Scotland has to offer across the whole spectrum of adventure."

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