

**Tourism in West Lothian
Plan
2007-10**

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1. Terms of Reference

The objectives of this plan are to define where we aspire to be in 3 years from now, how West Lothian might have to look if we are to reach this aspiration, and the ensuing implications for infrastructure, individual businesses and marketing.

This plan should provide a framework to guide development of annual joint activity plans of the West Lothian Tourism Forum, West Lothian Council, VisitScotland and Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian.

2. Vision

We aspire for West Lothian to further develop as a tourist destination and achieve in excess of the national ambition of 50% growth in revenue from tourism within ten years.

We want the tourism sector to make a key contribution to economic development in the area. We aim to work collectively to identify, develop and promote our key product offerings for visitors to enable the area to achieve annual year-on-year growth of 5% in real terms.

We will measure indicators of success to track progress towards achieving this vision:

- Accommodation occupancy figures
- Net change in bed stock
- Visitor numbers to West Lothian based visitor attractions
- Tourist information centre visitor numbers
- Number of West Lothian businesses in VisitScotland QA Scheme and Green Tourism Business Scheme

3. External Audit

The external audit highlights opportunities and threats and forms the basis upon which a plan of action to improve competitiveness can be built. The external audit focuses on:

- Macroenvironment
- The market
- Competition

Macroenvironment

Economic

- There is a continuing trend of rising affluence (e.g. real income doubles every 25 years in the UK) and this has led to more people travelling.
- New markets (and new destinations) are emerging with Brazil, Russia, India and China growing as global tourism markets.
- Rising fuel prices may have an impact on tourism.
- Events and festivals are seen as economic drivers for a region.

Socio-cultural

- Eclectic tastes of travellers / wealthy consumers (esp. food and drink)
- Short breaks – value for time
- More single travellers
- Multigenerational families
- Ageing UK population (> economic value)
- ‘Experiential’ trips (need for unique experiences)

Technological

- The internet is increasingly the method of choice to book a holiday
- ICT – information and booking
- The tourism industry lags behind other sectors on the adoption of web based technology to market to future employees.

Environmental

- Need to protect the environment that our visitors come to see.
- Environmentally minded travellers will seek out green focussed events.
- “Carbon neutral” / “green” tourism is gaining prominence with both employees and visitors.
- Alternative modes of transport need to be explored.

The market

The World Tourism Organisation is forecasting annual growth in tourism of 4-5% until 2020. In the Tourism Framework for Change, it is stated that current estimates suggest that gross tourism **revenues** in Scotland could increase by 50% by 2015.

Leisure tourism

VisitScotland’s consumer research confirms that today’s travellers want:

- Customised and flexible travel to a destination generally within 3 hours travel time;
- Special interest holidays and special experiences
- Authentic experiences
- Value for money

Other key trends identified include:

- Late booking
- Rising use of internet for information and booking
- Trend towards shorter breaks
- Interest in good health
- Use of breaks as personal reward / well-being experience
- Interest in extended education

These trends suggest a growth in city breaks, activity breaks, spa/pampering experience (as well as good food and drink), and history / culture related trips.

The largest market increase is predicted to come from the fast growing overseas market, predominantly from Europe and North America. Current trends support the

view that revenue in this segment could more than double by 2015. Although the emerging markets of Brazil, India, Russia and China are recognised as having potential to grow rapidly, this is from a very low base (most Chinese tourism will be to other destinations in south east Asia) so attention should still be predominantly focussed on North America and Europe.

It is predicted that the UK leisure market will continue to grow but fierce competition will mean that it will probably do so more slowly than the overseas market. Although, it is predicted to grow more slowly, the UK market still represents the large majority of leisure tourism revenue for the area.

Business tourism

Business tourism is also predicted to grow sharply with a predicted increase from the current level of 22% of all tourism revenues in Scotland to 25% of all tourism revenues.

This fast-growing high-yield sector presents significant opportunity for cities that can provide the appropriate infrastructure with appropriate bed stock, good transport links, good direct access by air and rail, and a range of flexible good quality core facilities.

Competition

There are now over 200 countries offering a tourism product so although the market will grow, so will competition for market share. It is vital for West Lothian to continue investing if we are to achieve our share of the growing tourism market and realise the economic benefits of doing so.

There are many new competitor destinations (e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia, Turkey, Slovenia, North Africa) and growing competitor destinations. The rapid expansion in internet use also means that potential visitors use price comparison websites which means it is important to offer value for money and have a distinct value proposition.

4. Internal Audit

The internal audit focuses on the activities and performance of West Lothian tourism in light of the external environment.

Results

Tourism has grown rapidly in West Lothian in recent years as demonstrated in the Edinburgh and Lothians Tourism Accommodation Audit (2006), which shows that the number of serviced rooms in West Lothian has grown by 65% in six years (from 569 rooms in 1999 to 937 rooms in 2005). Including non-serviced accommodation (e.g. campus and self-catering) there are 1,242 rooms in West Lothian and 163 pitches at holiday/touring parks.

West Lothian Council work with six principal hotels in the area (covering 384 hotel rooms) who provide regular occupancy statistics. This group of hotels achieve greater than 70% year round occupancy which is a great success in relation to the year-round

occupancy for the hotel sector in Scotland of 62% in 2005 (Statistics produced for VisitScotland by TNS Travel and Tourism).

There are not occupancy statistics available at the West Lothian level for all categories of accommodation but statistics at the Edinburgh and Lothians level suggest that non-hotel accommodation is much more prone to seasonal variation and that occupancies are significantly lower in winter months.

The Annual Business Inquiry (2005) produced by the Office for National Statistics states that 39,848 people in Edinburgh and Lothians (9.0% of the total workforce) are in tourism related employment.

Retail is a key sector in West Lothian employing 13.9% of the local workforce in 2004. Clearly, the success of the retail sector can benefit tourism and vice versa.

West Lothian Council's Economic Strategy Update 2007-2010 recognises the contribution that tourism makes to the local economy and underlines its vision of West Lothian "as a great place to live, work, invest and develop a business."

A limited number of visitor attractions in West Lothian participate in the Visitor Attraction Monitor produced by the Moffat centre at Glasgow Caledonian University. The most-visited local attractions that participate (2006 visitor numbers in brackets) are:

- Beecraigs Country Park (435,530)
- Polkemmet Country Park (286,200)
- Almondell & Calderwood Country Park (144,942)
- Almond Valley Heritage Centre (84,375)
- Linlithgow Palace (51,767)

Edinburgh Airport has grown rapidly in the last ten years: between 1996 and 2005, the number of passengers travelling through Edinburgh Airport increased by 154%, rising from 3.3 million to 8.5 million per annum. The number of direct international flights has increased substantially during this time.

Strategic Issues

Whilst tourism has grown in West Lothian in recent years, there is scope for continued growth in the years to come. In order to achieve this, West Lothian must address some key strategic issues:

- What is the competitive advantage (what are the primary reasons to visit)?
- Does marketing of West Lothian fit with VisitScotland's identified key markets?
- Is there capacity to enable sustainable volume growth?
- Is there sufficient choice and quality to enable growth in per capita visitor spend?

What is the competitive advantage?

West Lothian needs to define its competitive advantage and partners need to work together to strengthen this and promote it accordingly.

West Lothian Tourism Forum, West Lothian Council and VisitScotland have worked together to identify West Lothian's key potential strengths in relation to Scotland's Key Markets. These have been identified as:

- **Heritage:** There is already a wide offering in this area with many places of significant interest (e.g. Linlithgow Palace, Hopetoun House, Blackness Castle, Cairnpapple Hill). There is significant opportunity to attract visitors with interest in history; Mary Queen of Scots, genealogy, and historic buildings provided it is easily packaged for visitors.
- **Shopping / Food:** The Livingston Designer Outlet already attracts many day visitors to the area and there is potential in extending visits and in adding to the experience for existing overnight visitors. There is range of quality food and shopping available in the area and again this presents opportunity if easily packaged.
- **Outdoors:** It is clear from the visitor attractions monitor that West Lothian has strength in depth in outdoor products. In addition to the country parks and Almond Valley Heritage Centre there is a wide range of horse riding, wildlife, walking, and cycling in the area. West Lothian offers leisure visitors the opportunity to experience the outdoors whilst being in close proximity to both Edinburgh and Glasgow. The growth in green tourism offers potential for the area.
- **Events and Festivals:** West Lothian does not yet have a relative strength in Events and Festivals as drivers for tourism but it is recognised that Events and Festivals that play to the above strengths could have a very positive impact on the tourism sector.

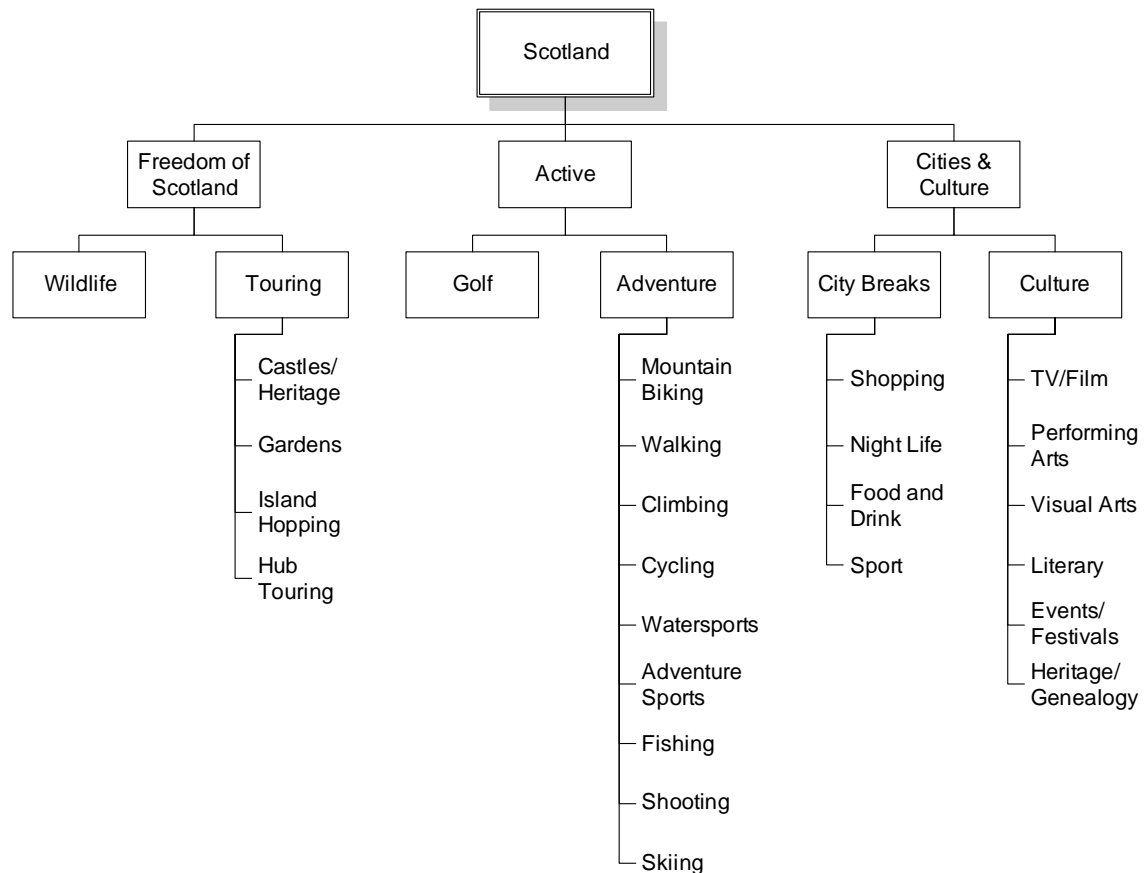
Does marketing of West Lothian fit with VisitScotland's identified key markets?

Scotland's Key markets as identified in the Tourism Framework for Change are identified overleaf. There is a very strong correlation between the potential sources of competitive advantage identified in West Lothian; and Scotland's Key markets which VisitScotland focus their marketing activity on. In particular, West Lothian's strengths match with the Touring, Adventure and Culture markets.

On top of this, West Lothian should seek to take advantage of its proximity to Edinburgh and Glasgow. Sixty per cent of Scotland's population are within one hour's travel time of West Lothian. Tourist facilities can serve overnight / day visitors and residents, and as such contribute both to the local economy and the local quality of life.

There are already pockets of strength in the areas of potential competitive advantage but there needs to be a concerted effort from the tourism industry in West Lothian to present a consistent, united front to capitalise on our strengths. Our aspiration needs to be to attract more overnight visitors and we need to package and present what we have to offer in a way that provides an appealing choice to potential visitors.

Scotland's Key Markets (Tourism Framework for Change, 2006)



Is there capacity to enable sustainable volume growth?

Accommodation occupancy figures suggest that there is significant spare capacity outside peak holiday season, particularly in non-serviced accommodation. To grow sustainably, we need to make best use of existing facilities in a way that allows businesses to prosper year round and provide year round employment opportunities. In order to achieve this, we need to develop and promote strong reasons to visit during the off-peak months.

The Edinburgh and Lothians Tourism Accommodation Audit (2006) suggests opportunities for more accommodation in Linlithgow and future provision of this may help increase the number of overnight visitors to the area.

Is there sufficient choice and quality to enable growth in per capita visitor spend?

It has already been recognised that development of Events and Festivals is required to enhance the choice of what is on offer for potential visitors. It has also been highlighted that there are some existing strengths, which if packaged effectively could create a much more appealing offering to entice visitors to visit, stay longer and spend more.

Green tourism is a potential opportunity for West Lothian but at present there is very limited participation in the Green Tourism Business Scheme. Wider participation would reinforce West Lothian's credentials in this increasingly important area.

5. Core strategic objectives

As a result of the external and internal audits, relevant strategic objectives have been identified. These have been grouped under the four main headings of the Tourism Framework for Change:

- Knowing your market
- Exceeding visitors' expectations
- Marketing your product
- Being sustainable

Knowing Your Market

Innovation in product and service development is key to the future competitiveness of the Scottish tourism industry. We operate in a fast changing consumer marketplace and it is essential to continually enhance our tourism product to keep pace with growing competition. Good market intelligence is a key driver of innovation and enterprise. To support the industry in this area, a new joint initiative, "Tourism Intelligence Scotland" has been developed by Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and VisitScotland. It is important that West Lothian tourism businesses are aware of, and capitalise on, this resource.

Livingston Designer Outlet currently attracts many day visitors to the area. There may be an opportunity to encourage overnight and repeat visits although the potential has not been clearly identified. There is a need to better understand what potential exists.

Similarly, it is believed that West Lothian's six 'principal hotels' primarily attract business visitors where there may be potential for repeat leisure visits. Again it is important to better understand what potential exists.

A deeper understanding of visitor dynamics would be of value in informing actions taken to promote visits to West Lothian.

Exceeding Visitors' Expectations

We want to exceed our visitors' expectations in order that they want to return and personally recommend the area to others. All tourism and related businesses should be encouraged to become part of VisitScotland's Quality Assurance (QA) schemes, where they will be supported in raising their standards. Best practice should be shared within the industry to enable West Lothian businesses to collectively exceed visitors' expectations.

To capitalise on the potential sources of competitive advantage for tourism in West Lothian, we must continue to focus on innovation and product developments in Heritage; Shopping / Food; Outdoors; and Events and Festivals. Many visitors come

to Scotland to participate in or watch cultural, sporting, business or other events. There is a need to focus collaborative efforts and resources on development and promotion of common themes and in particular Events and Festivals that best capitalise on the strengths of the area.

The tourism workforce is central to delivering and exceeding visitors' expectations and all tourism businesses must equip their workforce with the necessary skills. Businesses should be aware of, and utilise, available support such as the development of "100k Welcomes," a single portfolio of courses being developed by the Enterprise Agencies, which seeks to enhance tourism businesses' productivity and competitiveness.

There are also likely to be opportunities to extend the lessons learned from Linlithgow's successful Pride and Passion programme. Sharing of best practice within local industry should be encouraged and West Lothian Tourism Forum will continue to develop its role as an umbrella for all tourism interests and facilitate good communication between them all.

Customer-focussed information provision, be it through tourist information centres, the internet, or tourism businesses themselves, is crucial to enhancing the visitor experience and West Lothian tourism businesses and public sector partners need to continue to work in partnership to ensure we are all well equipped to promote the strengths of the area.

e-Technology provides countless opportunities for tourism businesses to change the way they work from on-line marketing or internet booking, to creating a customer feedback system or providing Podcasts to help guide visitors during their visit. Effective and innovative use of technology is essential if the tourism industry in West Lothian is to compete in a rapidly advancing market.

Marketing Your Product

For visitors to come to West Lothian, in addition to having quality products that will exceed their expectations, we need them to know about our product. Collectively, we need to market and provide information in a way that reinforces the key strengths of the area. Key strengths of the area that fit strongly with Scotland's Key Markets (as identified in the Tourism Framework for Change) are:

- Castles/Heritage (fits Touring market);
- Outdoors (fits Adventure market)
- Shopping / Food; and Events and Festivals (fits Cities and Culture market).

To take advantage of this existing potential for competitive advantage, we need to work collaboratively to package and promote what is on offer in order that potential visitors are aware of the strength and depth of product offering and are enticed to visit the area. Businesses should be encouraged to collaborate on marketing initiatives that reinforce the common strengths of the area and may, where appropriate, seek Challenge Funding to further strengthen their collaborative working.

Local businesses can promote themselves through a range of VisitScotland marketing opportunities and the more West Lothian businesses can participate, the stronger the

collective representation will be. VisitScotland content on West Lothian should also reinforce the common themes identified in this document.

Additionally, West Lothian Tourism Forum aim to provide local visitor information and act as a portal to individual member's sites through www.visitwestlothian.com. Further to this, West Lothian Tourism Forum promoted the area through VisitScotland Expo 2007 and look to continue such collaborative marketing.

Where there are common strengths across geographic boundaries (e.g. Castles and Heritage across all the Lothians), we should seek to collaborate to compete.

Being Sustainable

It is important that we achieve growth in tourism revenues in a way that is sustainable for our economy, our communities and our environment.

We should encourage off-peak growth in order that businesses can operate and succeed on a year round basis and provide year round employment for the benefit of local communities. To stimulate off-peak growth West Lothian needs to look to develop and promote events during the shoulder season of November to March. There may be opportunities for improved joint marketing and co-ordination of existing seasonal events run by various attractions and businesses, particularly those at Easter, October and Christmas.

Tourism businesses share a responsibility for protecting the environment, which in itself brings so many of our visitors. Businesses need to act sustainably both as a means of reducing costs (e.g. through reduced energy bills) and as a means of competitive advantage as numbers of sustainably minded visitors grow. To this end more West Lothian businesses should participate in the Green Tourism Business Scheme. Consideration should also be given by tourism businesses to healthy eating, use of local produce or other food-based initiatives as this sector is gaining prominence both in terms of sustainability and in visitors' expectations.

6. Implementation and control

This strategy will form the basis of annual West Lothian Tourism Action Plans. Progress against these plans will be updated quarterly. Each action will be assigned an industry sector champion and will also have identified public sector support and timelines.

The chair and vice-chair of West Lothian Tourism Forum sit on the Edinburgh and Lothians Area Tourism Partnership, which will monitor delivery of local action plans in support of the delivering the targets set out in the Tourism Framework for Change.

It is proposed to generate a set of key indicators to measure progress in achieving the goal of increasing tourism revenue in West Lothian. Suggested indicators are:

- Accommodation occupancy figures from West Lothian Principal Hotels

- Accommodation occupancy figures by sector (from TNS Travel & Tourism at Edinburgh & Lothians level)
- Net annual change in bed stock
- Number of businesses e-enabled for bookings on www.visitscotland.com
- visitscotland.com booking figures
- Visitor Attractions Monitor produced by Moffat Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University (visitor numbers to West Lothian based visitor attractions)
- Linlithgow Tourist Information Centre visitor numbers
- Number of West Lothian businesses in VisitScotland QA scheme
- Number of West Lothian businesses in Green Tourism Business Scheme
- Requests for Discover West Lothian leaflet on www.edinburgh.org

Appendix 1 – Action Plan 2007/08

Knowing Your Market

Project Title: TOURISM INTELLIGENCE SCOTLAND
Action: Raise Awareness of resources made available from Tourism Intelligence Scotland (e.g. Walking Tourism) to encourage use by local tourism businesses.
Measure: Distribution / downloads of publications.
Who involved: SEEL / VisitScotland

Project Title: WHO VISITS WEST LOTHIAN?
Action: Involve WLTF membership in capture and sharing of information from questionnaires or surveys that will tell us who visits West Lothian, when and why?
Measure: Local policy and joint marketing activity informed from above action.
Who involved: West Lothian Tourism Forum / West Lothian Council

Project Title: INFORMATION SHARING WITH INDUSTRY
Action: Raise awareness of research and statistics available on industry facing website (www.visitscotland.org). Encourage industry sign up to e-Updates and Ambitions as a source of relevant industry information.
Measure: Web traffic to www.visitscotland.org ; number of businesses signed up to e-Updates and Ambitions.
Who involved: VisitScotland

Exceeding Visitors' Expectations

Project Title: BROADENING OUR HORIZONS

Action: Develop a programme of meetings, speakers, learning journeys and training that will extend West Lothian Tourism Forum members' awareness of good practice, promote innovative thinking and promote cross-fertilisation of good ideas.
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To include hosting of West Lothian Annual Tourism Awards
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WLTF members offered opportunity to participate in Green Tourism sessions and E-Business workshops to enhance web design and marketing skills.
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Measure: Number of, and attendance at, learning events.
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Who involved: West Lothian Tourism Forum, West Lothian Council

Project Title: A WELCOMING WEST LOTHIAN
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Action: Encourage and support West Lothian Tourism Forum members in the delivery of excellent customer service, through promoting local identity and pride, and through a broader recognition of the importance of tourism to the life and economy of West Lothian.
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Measure: Industry participation in 100K welcomes and other customer care programmes. Lessons from Linlithgow Pride and Passion shared with Forum.
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Who involved: West Lothian Tourism Forum, support agencies

Project Title: CUSTOMER-FOCUSED INFORMATION PROVISION
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Action: Operate tourist information centre in Linlithgow from April to October. Provide customer service and product knowledge training for staff.

Maintain neighbourhood information point at Livingston Designer Outlet.

Integrate tourist information centre into Burgh Halls development and to provide alternative service during refurbishment period .
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Measure: Customer satisfaction through mystery shop programme. Visitor numbers to TIC.

Who involved: VisitScotland, West Lothian Council
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Project Title: PAN-LOTHIAN INITIATIVE – MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
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Action: Work with ATP Officers Group to identify common Lothian-wide strength (e.g. Castles / heritage linked to Mary Queen of Scots) and develop product and key messages to jointly promote area. Seek opportunities to incorporate theme into Homecoming Scotland 2009.

Measure: Implementation of initiative. Increased visitor numbers to locations identified in Mary Queen of Scots 'trail.'

Who involved: West Lothian Council, VisitScotland, SEEL, Other Lothian local authorities.
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Project Title: DEVELOP INITIATIVES TO ATTRACT VISITORS
Action: Create new initiatives in West Lothian that enable further promotion of the area E.g. James Doohan's memorial exhibit at Annet House in Linlithgow.
Measure: Increased visits to Annet House.
Who involved: Linlithgow Heritage Trust, West Lothian Council, Edinburgh Star Trek Assoc.

Project Title: OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES - CYCLING
Action: Creation of a mountain bike cycle trail in Fauldhouse.
Measure: Completion of cycle trail by end December 2007
Who involved: West Lothian Council, Forestry Commission

Marketing Your Product

Project Title: PROMOTING WEST LOTHIAN
Action: Continue to develop www.visitwestlothian.com website and increase and improve tourism presence on www.westlothian.com business portal website. Promote West Lothian through participation at VisitScotland Expo 2008. Capitalise on new twinning links with Grapevine, Texas to exchange information / promote one another's localities.
Measure: Web traffic. Leads generated at Expo event. Visits to West Lothian resulting from Grapevine twinning.
Who involved: West Lothian Tourism Forum, West Lothian Council, Grapevine Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Project Title: HELPING OURSELVES
Action: Identify and implement simple local initiatives that would help local businesses cross-promote each other, work together to provide packages, engage in joint marketing, and encourage a community of mutual support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Days Out in West Lothian's summer leaflet distributed across Central Scotland to develop day visitor market. • Tourism e-zine distributed across businesses and tourism industry in West Lothian. Recipients invited to submit details of deals / events for inclusion. • Music event in Bathgate '08 to encourage community working and an opportunity for local businesses to be promoted / involved.
Measure: Initiatives implemented. Incremental change in business.
Who involved: West Lothian Tourism Forum, West Lothian Council, VisitScotland

Project Title: USE OF KEY MESSAGES
<p>Action: Promotional messages to reinforce strengths of Heritage, Outdoors, Shopping/Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage: Promote heritage features of West Lothian (e.g. Mary Queen of Scots) through Homecoming Scotland 2009 initiatives. • Encourage ancestral tourism as part of new marketing initiatives. • Outdoors: raise awareness of new cycle trail at Fauldhouse (to open late 2007) • Food: Greater promotion of food in West Lothian on www.westlothian.com website and through Eat Scotland membership. • Food: tap into Slowfood movement (www.slowfood.org.uk) as part of Cittaslow initiative in Linlithgow & promotion of local farmers markets.
<p>Measure: Messages used in Discover West Lothian, Accommodation Guide, Essential Guide, www.edinburgh.org reinforce strengths. Online requests (from www.edinburgh.org) for Discover West Lothian leaflet.</p>
<p>Who involved: VisitScotland, West Lothian Council, Cittaslow</p>

Project Title: PAN-LOTHIAN INITIATIVE – MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS
<p>Action: Jointly market Mary Queen of Scots initiative through web and print materials.</p>
<p>Measure: Increased visitor numbers to locations included in initiative.</p>
<p>Who involved: West Lothian Council, VisitScotland, SEEL, Other Edinburgh and Lothians local authorities.</p>

Project Title: CITTA-SLOW
<p>Action: Support Citta-Slow initiative in Linlithgow (including appointment of consultant).</p>
<p>Measure: Consultant appointed.</p>
<p>Who involved: West Lothian Council, SEEL</p>

Being Sustainable

Project Title: GREEN TOURISM
<p>Action: Increase number of West Lothian businesses participating in green Tourism Business Scheme from 5 as at 1st April to 2007 to 8 by end 2007.</p>
<p>Measure: 8 West Lothian businesses in scheme by end 2007</p>
<p>Who involved: VisitScotland, GTBS</p>

Project Title: BEING GREEN

Action: Identify opportunities for collective action to promote good environmental practice by West Lothian tourism businesses, and consider potential market advantages.

Invite WLTF members to participate in green tourism workshop that provides advice on how to operate their business in a more eco-friendly way.

Measure: Number of members participating in workshops.

Who involved: West Lothian Tourism Forum, West Lothian Council, VisitScotland, Business Environment Partnership

Project Title: EVENTS AND FESTIVITIES

Action: Identify opportunities for co-operative action between tourism businesses in staging events and festivals, particularly during quieter months of the year. Jointly promote existing local events and festivals. Grow and support existing events (e.g. Celebrate Linlithgow, Linlithgow Folk Festival). Establish new music event in Bathgate (September 2008).

Measure: Attendance at events and festivals. Year round calendar of events.

Who involved: West Lothian Tourism Forum, West Lothian Council, local Town Centre Management Groups