

ARGYLL, LOCH LOMOND & FORTH VALLEY TOURISM PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 28th NOVEMBER, 2006

CALENDAR HOUSE, FALKIRK

Present:

Cllr Billy Petrie (Chair)	Argyll & Bute Council
Cllr Eddie Carrick (Vice Chair)	Clackmannanshire Council
Cllr Bob Spears	Falkirk Council
Cllr John Paterson	Stirling Council
Cllr Paul Nelson	Stirling Council
Provost Alistair Macdonald	West Dunbartonshire Council
Rowena Ferguson	Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire
Dan McKirgan	Trade representative
John Cross	Trade representative
Ronald Peebles	Trade representative
John Urquhart	Trade representative
Steve Bleasby	Trade representative

In Attendance:

Iain Close	Area Director
Catherine Dunkerley	Strategy & Partnership Executive
Neil MacFarlane	Business Marketing and Relationship Manager
Barbara Rogers	Office Co-ordinator
Fiona Morrison	Business Relationship Manager
Donald Hoy	Business Relationship Manager

1. Welcome & Apologies

The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Anne Craig, Cllr Gillie Thomson, Ian Cleaver, Ian Fox, Sue Fink, Dr Stephen Page, Cllr Len Scoullar and Ray Welham.

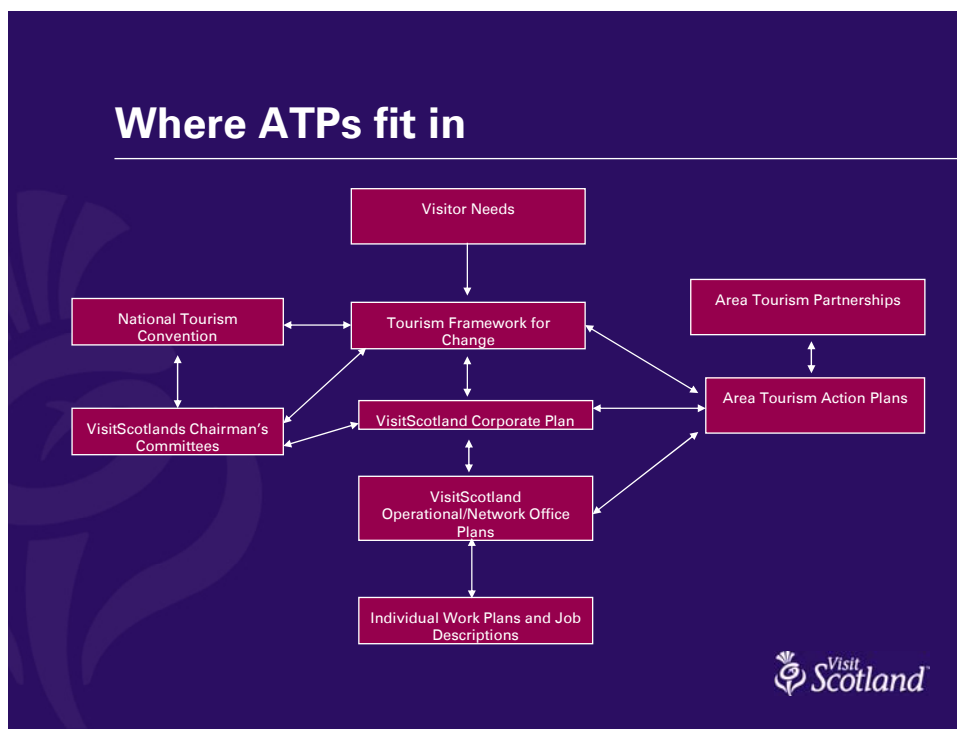
2. Minutes

The minutes were proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Rowena Ferguson.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

4. Presentation by Catherine Dunkerley on Area Tourism Partnership Action Plan



ATPs - what do they look like?

- Mix of public and private sector
- 17 covering almost all of Scotland
- Vary in size (7 to 35 members, av. 15)
- Numbers involved
- Local Authority representatives - 75
- Industry - 112
- Others (LECs, VS, SNH, Chamber etc) - 63

Role of an ATP

- Identifying local issues, needs and priorities
- Delivery and monitor Area Tourism Action Plans (ATAP)
- Encouraging the provision of resources for ATAP implementation
- Reviewing local alignment with, and input to, national strategy
- 'Voice' for local tourism - promoting interests and shared vision
- Promote joint working

What ATPs are NOT

- Part of VisitScotland structure
- Area Tourist Boards with Board Members
- Budget holders
- There to manage the local VisitScotland network office
- There to oversee the relationship between VisitScotland and local authorities

VisitScotland's role in ATPs

- Participation in tourism partnerships
- Deliver ATAP activities in which they lead
- Support the Partnership's ongoing development
- Assist the Partnership to develop monitoring and reporting on ATAP delivery
- Feedback ATP comments on national strategy
- Feedback to TFFC Monitoring Group

Role of an ATP Champion

- Contribute ideas to a shared vision
- Review and challenge Partnership priorities/actions based on the region's 'highest commercial imperative'
- Champion and drive delivery of ATAP projects
- Review ATAP performance against key activity targets and the TTFC
- Report on ATAP performance
- Contribute to the united local tourism 'voice'
- Never lose sight of the region's long-term vision/goals

A Successful ATP

- A powerful local partnership
- Focuses local actions
- Has a prioritised Action Plan with clearly defined Champions and delivery targets
- Challenges all sectors to prioritise activity based on best commercial imperative
- Challenges all sectors to expand their vision
- Major contributor to 50% growth ambition

Challenges for Partnerships

- Increase the focus, and deliver on, the ATAP given the diverse nature of the industry
- Attract high calibre commercially oriented industry Champions
- Attract key senior development officers from local authorities
- Report against Action Plan activities
- Act as a unified non-political 'voice'
- Never lose sight of the long-term vision and goals for the local area

The presentation was followed by a general discussion on aspects of the presentation, including the lack of responsibility of the ATP members as the Partnership exists now.

John Cross felt that trade members had not been adequately consulted in process of formulating the Area Tourism Partnership and felt that his position on the ATP was unnecessary if he was not involved in the decision making process. Dan McKirgan agreed with these sentiments. The Strategy & Partnership Executive concurred that trade should be heavily involved in developing the Partnership's Action Plan for the region and there was the option to review the Action Plan in the light of this.

It was felt the Challenge fund system was too complex but it was noted that the scheme had been simplified for groups requiring smaller amounts of funding and this was working well.

Cllr Eddie Carrick felt there should be more opportunities to feed information gleaned at grass roots level up to VisitScotland and the Scottish Executive and better methods should be introduced to filter new reforms to the trade. He felt that VisitScotland should communicate directly with Councils and trade more adequately. Cllr Carrick also felt that the basic strategy should be put in place before spending money on major events such as the Fashion Show during Tartan Week.

Steve Bleasby expressed disappointment as he had fully expected to be involved in the decision making processes but was concerned about the lack of accountability and deadlines for ATP projects. The Strategy & Partnership Executive concurred stating that the current plan was not specific enough and had too many action points, 63 in total.

It was agreed that the Chairman should write to Philip Riddle expressing the Committee's concerns regarding the formulation of the ATP. This was suggested by Cllr Carrick and seconded by John Cross.

The Strategy & Partnership Executive asked him what changes he would like to see made to the ATP. She stated that while VisitScotland is a Partner itself in the ATP it cannot determine what is in the plan in the future as it was the trade who delivers tourism to the visitors and it was up to them to enhance the visitor experience with the Partnership assistance. John Urquhart requested guidance on how the new framework would develop and expressed concern regarding the future of the Rob Roy & Trossachs Visitor Centre which he regarded as a major asset.

Cllr John Paterson said the RRTVC was under review at SDT and Council levels and should not be discussed at a Partnership meeting. He stated that there were operational issues and there were several options still in the frame. Dan McKirgan thought the local trade should be involved in the consultation process and it was noted that SDT Ltd were committed to VS strategy and were still scrutinising the scheme to check out tourism operational issues. Cllr Paterson said Stirling Council could champion for certain aspects but may be unable to change due to VisitScotland strategy. It was noted that access and signage were issues that had to be addressed.

After discussion, it was agreed by the Committee that Council Officers should be invited to attend future ATP meetings and become involved in formulating the strategy of the new Area Tourism Action Plan with the assistance of the Partnership & Strategy Executive. Contributions should also be made by trade members through the Tourist Associations and Marketing Groups.

The consensus of opinion was that while both the VisitScotland merger and the Partnership were moving through a revolutionary phase it was essential to give value for money and to allow all interested parties to participate in the progress of the Area Tourism Action Plan to get the best overall result. It was also noted that an invitation for agenda items would be circulated prior to each ATP meeting.

The Area Director said it was expected to take two to three years for the merger to stabilise and that VisitScotland would act in an advisory capacity to the trade and integrate fully with Marketing Groups and Tourist Associations to give everyone the opportunity to participate and contribute to the growth agenda over the next decade.

It was mentioned that the trade own the visitor experience as it is down to them to supply the accommodation for the visitor and a variety of experiences and attractions to visit. It was also agreed that that the Rob Roy & Trossachs Visitor Centre was an extremely essential mechanism to the tourism operation in Callander providing heritage and wet weather facilities, not to mention toilet facilities

In general it was agreed that TICs and Visitor Attractions provided an essential service but as the Area Director pointed out, very few of them were profit making. However, it was agreed that they were essential to the tourism product and with the influence of Economic Development departments, Councillors and the Scottish Executive they would continue to be a fundamental part of the Scottish tourism effort.

The Strategy & Partnership Executive agreed that the present Framework for Action document was lacking in direction as to the way forward but hoped that this would be remedied by the members of the Partnership over the coming months. It was proposed that a working group be set up to review the Action Plan incorporating timelines and targets.

Cllr Robert Spears queried if the Tourism Forum was still in operation involving all Tourist Associations and Marketing Groups. It was agreed that this was a good way of touching base with the trade at a local level.

The Strategy & Partnership Executive spoke of the Perthshire ATP set up which includes representatives from local Tourist Associations, Visitor Attractions, Local Authorities and other public sector bodies including Perth College and the Forestry Commission which allowed for exchange with the industry in general. It was agreed that the format of each ATP would differ depending on location.

It was also noted that Edinburgh had a small core group but regularly invited champions of industry to address the group on specific issues such as transport, specific marketing promotions and development.

It was generally agreed that the ATP structure should be reviewed and Council Officers from the five officiating Councils be invited to join the group. It was also proposed that regular workshops would also be held with appropriate industry officials being invited to speak on a variety of tourism topics to members of the trade to give a professional point of view. It was also agreed to have more consultation with Local Authorities and the trade.

The Chairman felt that if the trade were cut off from the formation of new policies, it would create a problem and he felt it important for the links to be re-established and built on.

It was noted that few Local Enterprise Company representatives were present at the meeting, but it was noted that Rowena Ferguson was present for SED. She reported that £59 million had been earmarked for expenditure in the Loch Lomond area and that officers were heavily involved in planning for the future.

Provost Alistair Macdonald felt that in the past the Councillors could see how their money was being spent and that more positive decisions were made.

John Cross looked for advice on the way forward for the ATP and wanted confirmation that the money would be spent in the local area. He felt Local Authority

Officers should take a strong line with VisitScotland and give continuity to the partnership.

It was also suggested that a joint working group be formed to discuss issues such as transport, toilets and car parking which were ongoing issues involving various bodies. It was agreed to form such a group with regular reporting back to the ATP.

The Chairman thanked the members for their contributions to the discussion and felt it had been worthwhile. The Area Director agreed to update David Noble on the ATP members' concerns.

The Strategy and Partnership Executive hoped to see the Action Plan for the ATP created with challenges for priorities, with set actions and targets, deadlines to be met and accountability for delivering projects for the greater good of tourism. It was to be acceptable to the Local Authorities and give them a guideline to decide on the amount funding to be granted.

5. Customer Services Update

The Area Director spoke to the Customer Services report and Cllr Paul Nelson voiced his concern about the lack of detail in the report compared to previous years. He felt there should be more accurate figures to show the increase/decrease in footfall and profits within the tourist information centres and visitor attractions. It was generally agreed that Councils wanted maximum information about the performance in individual areas. It was considered possible that some TICs could close earlier to save some costs. It was noted that Bo'ness TIC had trebled their income since merging with the Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway and it was hoped to make this happen in other tourist information and visitor centres. The Area Director said that VisitScotland could make footfall figures available but not operational costs.

It was reported that the overall retail distribution strategy could affect local trade, with tourist information and visitor centres stocking items not currently on sale locally. Steve Bleasby welcomed this initiative and agreed this should be taken into account when buying for the centres.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was arranged for **Tuesday, 6th March, 2007** and Cllr Carrick suggested the Clackmannanshire area as a venue.