

ARGYLL, LOCH LOMOND & FORTH VALLEY TOURISM PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 6th MARCH, 2007

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, GREENFIELD, ALLOA

Present:

Ian Cleaver (Chair)	Vice Chairman (West), Argyll & the Islands Enterprise
Cllr Eddie Carrick (Vice Chair)	Clackmannanshire Council
Cllr John Paterson	Stirling Council
Rowena Ferguson	Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire
John Cross	Trade representative
Anne Craig	Trade representative
John Urquhart	Trade representative
Steve Bleasby	Trade representative
Ian Fraser	Stirling Council
Ian White	Falkirk Council
Paul McCafferty	Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley
Kevin Neeson	West Dunbartonshire Council
Jane Adamson	Clackmannanshire Council

In Attendance:

Iain Close	Area Director
Catherine Dunkerley	Strategy & Partnership Executive
Patrick O'Shaughnessy	Business Marketing and Relationship Manager
Barbara Rogers	Office Co-ordinator
Fiona Morrison	Business Relationship Manager

1. Welcome & Apologies

The Chairman welcomed all members to the meeting and thanked Cllr Eddie Carrick and Jane Adamson, Policy Officer, for hosting the event at Clackmannanshire Council.

Apologies were received from Convener William Petrie, Cllr Bob Spears, Cllr George Harper, Dr Stephen Page, Cllr Gillie Thomson, Cllr Robert Spears, Ian Fox, Ronald Peebles, Cllr Len Scoullar, Cllr Paul Nelson, Dan McKirgan, Provost Alistair Macdonald and Ray Welham.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes were proposed by Steve Bleasby and seconded by John Cross.

3. **Matters Arising**

Cllr Eddie Carrick expressed his displeasure that correspondence which was sent to VisitScotland from the Chairman and the response, was not included on the agenda for discussion. A general discussion ensued and an unsuccessful effort was made to have the correspondence faxed to the meeting. It was agreed that the correspondence would be circulated to the ATP members as soon as possible.

John Urquhart felt that VisitScotland should be discussing various planning issues with the Park Authority and requested that planning officials be invited to a future ATP meeting. It was agreed that Councillors could be talking to the Park Authority regarding planning issues and John Cross intimated that he wished to be included. It was agreed to write again to Mike Cantlay to invite him or a nominated official to speak to the ATP.

Cllr John Paterson intimated that Stirling Council, with the assistance of Ian Fraser, had produced a salvage package for the Rob Roy & Trossachs Visitor Centre, Callander which would remain open for another year.

John Cross asked if an extraordinary general meeting could be called and it was agreed to seek clarification on this issue. The Strategy & Partnership Executive asked members to clarify the agenda when circulated in advance of meeting if they had any concerns in the future.

4. **Operational Guidance**

The Strategy & Partnership Executive spoke to an operational guidance paper which was circulated prior to the meeting and after some discussion, it was agreed to invite Philip Riddle, Chief Executive of VisitScotland, to speak to a future ATP meeting. The Area Director pointed out the Chief Executive had no involvement with individual ATPs but that information was fed back through regular national Area Directors' meetings. After a discussion, the meeting felt it was important to clarify the voting procedures of the ATP which at present was one company, one vote, and also to bring forward more public sector members to the group.

Cllr Carrick suggested a small Management Committee, of possibly six members, could be set up to meet between ATP meetings to ascertain action points to be dealt with and again to ascertain they had been progressed before the next ATP meeting. The Management Committee would also be responsible for setting the agenda for the forthcoming meeting. It was suggested that the representatives of the Management Committee be re-elected on a two yearly basis to give a selection of members across the board. This was unanimously agreed. The suggested combination was Chair, Vice Chair, trade representative, VisitScotland and Council representative. Further discussion suggested representatives from Historic Scotland, the National Trust and Forest

Enterprise could be invited to join the ATP. Cllr Carrick felt that elected members should not be removed from the partnership as this could affect funding contributions to VisitScotland. It was noted that Dr Stephen Page from Stirling University is a trade representative and should be co-opted on to the partnership to support the importance of the Skills agenda.

Kevin Neeson thought representatives from Scottish Enterprise and the Park Authority were critical to the make up of the Management Committee. It was also proposed that separate working groups could be developed and meet independently to move forward on action points pertaining to the plan and reported back to the Management Committee. The Strategy and Partnership Executive stated that independent working groups created a structure which was workable and likely to make delivery more achievable. Ian Fraser thought the LEF set up had similarities and Rowena Ferguson agreed. Paul McCafferty said action should be taken to set the system up and was willing to become involved. Ian White and Ian Fraser spoke of project groups already set up so it was important the ATP identified them and assisted whenever possible. John Urquhart wished a paper to be written in principle and circulated at the next meeting. It was agreed the Strategy & Partnership Executive would rework the Operational Guidance notes to correspond and circulate to ATP members for comment. It was also agreed to make amendments to the existing constitution. John Urquhart asked for clarification on the election process to the Management Committee. It was agreed that interested parties should declare an interest in standing for the Management Committee to the Area Director. It was noted that Councillors would not be certain whether they would be eligible until after the May Council elections.

The Strategy & Partnership Executive informed the ATP the action of the workshop was to draw everyone together and prioritise the action points and evaluate timescales for the action plan. It was agreed to encourage all trade members to participate in an occupancy survey and the Business Relationship and Marketing Manager agreed to take this on board. He will establish the results and feed them to the ATP so the partnership can proceed with evaluating accommodation requirements. John Cross expressed a wish to action procedures on behalf of the trade and Paul McCafferty felt there were many businesses which could contribute to the exercise of increasing the tourism industry by 50% within the decade.

The Strategy & Partnership Executive explained that other ATPs from other regions had different methods of approach ie Angus & Dundee has appointed ambassadors with sector specialists representing the Partnership in its priority areas.

5. Workshop Review

The Strategy & Partnership Executive told the meeting she was heartened by the discussion at the workshop which had substantially cut down action points from the original 63. It was noted that additional detail was necessary on targets to be achieved and the resulting notes would be circulated for fuller consultation and consideration prior to the June ATP meeting. Paul McCafferty suggested a

second workshop. John Urquhart commented that this was the third consultation exercise and questioned if the resulting document would be included. The Strategy & Partnership Executive indicated that the previous strategy document had not had wide buy-in from the trade as minuted at the last ATP meeting and the new process enabled everyone to be involved. The revised action plan would therefore articulate everyone's contribution to the Partnership and should form the basis of the ATP agenda. Paul McCafferty thought more clarity was required over the approach and selection of actions. A discussion ensued regarding number of action points and John Urquhart was concerned that some of the main points from the first discussions might be lost. The Strategy and Partnership Executive felt that it was difficult to action so much within the time frames allowed. The Area Director felt the ATP needed to work together but was not currently following this agenda. Ian Cleaver thought it important to continue moving forward and communicating the message to the trade succinctly and effectively, as smaller businesses find it difficult to relate to larger organisations and is essential to make the ATP work well.

Paul McCafferty thought the ATP had a major role to play in delivering the action plan and requested names of organisations who could be added to the group, in order to invite them along as guests to share their expertise on chosen subjects. He felt it was important to involve the industry who cared passionately about tourism and would also give the opportunity to avoid duplication of effort. Rowena Ferguson felt that clear articulation of actions was the way forward and the Strategy & Partnership Executive agreed that the ATP had a strong and powerful role to play in the future of tourism. John Urquhart aired the view that the ATP should support compulsory registration of trade members, as there were many trade operating outwith the formal tourism structure, which caused grievances amongst the operators who paid fees to VisitScotland and adhered to the main national concept. He felt the lead must come from VisitScotland, as was the case with the Quality Standards scheme, but asked if the ATP thought it deliverable.

The Area Director asked the meeting if it was felt there were too many action points on the plan. The Strategy & Partnership Executive thought it essential to keep major items in sight within the nucleus of what should be undertaken, and deliver the end result, rather than undertaking too many points. She felt the workshop had created a greater focus and clarity on what was achievable and asked permission to transcribe into format to enable the partners to focus on definite time lines. She reiterated that it was her job to assist the Partnership evaluate, monitor and report its progress against the action plan back to VisitScotland and identify support where required. It was also stated that all partners had a role to play ie Paul McCafferty would feed back to SEFV, Rowena Ferguson to SED; Councillors and Council Officials to their respective Councils.

The Area Director spoke of VisitScotland's partnership with the Park Authority who were considered key stakeholders and it was important this aspect was introduced into the Constitution. It was agreed the Park Authority had a part to play in the action plan and it was noted VisitScotland met with Park Authority colleagues on a regular basis about various tourism aspects. Cllr Carrick felt a

representative from the Clackmannanshire Tourism Association would benefit the group.

Ian Fraser felt the ATP should be lobbying for additional resources using influence on differing segments of government bodies to attain increased funding. He thought it was also important for the Area Tourism Partnership to become more influential and that a geographical approach to trade representation assured this would continue. It was agreed that sectoral representation would be more difficult to achieve. It was thought that the trade was under-represented and it was agreed that this should be an agenda item at the June meeting.

Publicity of the ATP came under discussion and the Strategy & Partnership Executive assured the members that the Communications team at VisitScotland will be developing a Communications plan around ATPs to highlight the work being undertaken. It was agreed that the trade could assist the Partnership and the Business Relationship & Marketing Manager agreed to follow this through. The Chairman thought it important that the trade understood the ATP was working hard on their behalf. Steve Bleasby asked for guidance on communicating the fact he was the Mid Argyll, Kintyre & Islay representative to the trade. It was suggested that information could be passed through www.visitscotland.org and the Strategy & Partnership Executive undertook to make sure all the trade details were available on the ALLFV site. It was noted that several mail outs were taking place in the near future such as Breakaway and Springwatch, giving opportunities of sending out information to the trade.

6. Industry & Stakeholders Issues/Presentations

A general discussion ensued regarding accommodation supplies for major events in rural communities such as the Isle of Islay. The BRMM considered each area should be looking to work collectively and VisitScotland and Scottish Enterprise would be able to provide resource on occasion. Kevin Neeson asked the meeting how best to encourage more discussion at each level and Ian White asked for a definition of stakeholders and how best to involve them. It was thought the ATP could act as the representative to communicate to Marketing Groups and Tourist Associations to involve the tourism industry as a whole. It was pointed out that VisitScotland can only link up with officially registered members of the Quality Standards scheme and that Partners had a role to play in linking with companies not engaged in the VS QS scheme.

To clarify, the Strategy & Partnership Executive told the meeting that VisitScotland were responsible for the secretariat of the ATP and thanked the Council representatives for offering venue and hosting arrangements for meetings. A list of stakeholders would be drawn up shortly and circulated to the members. It was noted that a Constitution for the ATP existed but this had not been formally ratified and would be enhanced to achieve the desired document. Roles and functions would be clarified in the Operational Guidelines and a rolling agenda produced for each ATP meeting based on the action plan. Industry Engagement and Challenge Fund issues, which had taken the place of the Small Grant Scheme, would be dealt with by the BRMM. It was noted that the Challenge Fund application for small events had been streamlined and it was

simpler to apply for assistance than in the past. Kevin Neeson said SED has some money available and the Loch Lomond & Clyde Tourist Association was responsible for putting in an application. Rowena Ferguson mentioned the Small Business Gateway scheme and Paul McCafferty said a presentation was required as part of the application.

It was agreed to include the funding item on the ATP agenda in June and Paul McCafferty would draw up a proposal on how to obtain funding through the SBG scheme, although it was sometimes easier to fund large scale business initiatives.

The Strategy & Partnership Executive suggested there may be a more innovative way to seek funding, such as identifying angel investors in the region for smaller project support. The Chair acknowledged this may prove challenging.

7. ATP Communications

The Strategy & Partnership Executive told the meeting that the 3 S&P Execs were meeting to discuss national issues during the coming week. Some of the items under discussion were how VisitScotland can more effectively assist ATPs and how to develop a higher awareness of the work taking place on the trade's behalf.

8. Industry Engagement/Challenge Fund Update

The Area Director re-introduced Patrick O'Shaughnessy, BRMM, and told the ATP that any issues regarding Challenge Fund should be fed back to him. Rowena Ferguson said that funding budgets had now been allocated and there was an element of discretionary funding available at Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire. Paul McCafferty said this would have to be applied for through the usual channels. Cllr Carrick felt rural areas should have additional assistance and Events' Officers could not be expected to run an event without financial backing.

Event Scotland was responsible for funding national events and money is provided for sustaining recurrent annual events. The Area Director pointed out that Falkirk had been successful with Challenge Funding to the tune of £61,000 and £7,000 for the Dalriada Project and also Callander Jazz & Blues Festival had received a contribution.

9. Meeting Venues & Date of Next Meeting

The Area Director announced the dates of the ATP meetings until the end of the year. These were namely, 26th June, 25th September and 13th December, 2007.

10. Strategic Environment Assessment

The Strategy and Partnership Executive spoke of the S.E.A. assessment which was coming into force and said it appeared that all projects of public good may need to go through the SEA. She stated that ATPs may come under that jurisdiction and it is being explored by VisitScotland as to the nature of the requirement. The Strategy and Partnership Executive also told the meeting that Lanarkshire was undergoing the assessment at the moment and the decision may have an affect on the ATP when it next reviews it strategy significantly. Kevin Neeson offered to report back on this matter.

11. Overview of Clackmannanshire Tourism Industry

Jane Adamson, Policy Adviser, spoke of local initiatives in Clackmannanshire such as the reinstatement of the railway, successful events and progress in accessing visitors to Stirling and Falkirk. It was noted that Clackmannanshire was easily accessible from both Glasgow and Edinburgh for day trip visitors and the investment in the Kincardine Bridge, possibly to be named the Clackmannanshire Bridge would assist this venture.

It was noted that Clackmannanshire Council had, for the first time, instigated an Events Budget and the World Archery Championships and 150th Anniversary of the Alva Games were among some of the events to benefit from this fund. The Ochil Hills provided a variety of sporting activity and there was scope to reinvent the old Mill Trail with a Tower Trail. The Sterling Mills Shopping outlets and Sterling Warehouse were popular with visitors and there was plenty of good quality accommodation available.

Jane reported a Tourism Officer had been appointed to move forward projects and a new website was being developed. It was also intended to reproduce the official guide for the County to increase visitors to the area.

12. AOCB

Anne Craig introduced the problem of small rural hotels with changing ownership which could have a detrimental impact on small communities. She asked if anything could be done to prevent ownership by unqualified operators and various points of view were brought to the table. It was decided that the Police had a remit regarding the operation of the establishment and it was also governed by Health & Hygiene and Licensed Trade regulations. Cllr Carrick suggesting contacting the local Councillor to take up the matter. The Strategy & Partnership Executive thought this was a national problem which should be examined. The Chair summed up by saying there were in fact two issues, namely the licensee was governed by the Local Authority and secondly VisitScotland QS Officers provided an annual inspection so each premises was monitored carefully and for this reason all businesses should be encouraged to join a QS scheme.

This being all current business the meeting closed at 1.00pm and lunch was hosted by Clackmannanshire Council.