

FIFE TOURISM ALLIANCE

MINUTE OF MEETING

12 December 2006

The Gateway Centre, University of St Andrews

ATTENDING: Chair – Nick White (hotels); Ken Lawson (guest houses, b&bs); Tom Potter (self catering, caravan & camping); Cllr Peter Douglas, Cllr John Cameron (Fife Council); Linda Greig (business tourism); Steve Blaney (FSB)

In attendance: Alan Graham (VisitScotland); Sandra Montador-Stewart (Fife Council); Robin Presswood (Fife Council); Martin Grigg, Gail Sibbald (Scottish Enterprise Fife); Paul Buchanan (part); Catherine Dunkerley (VisitScotland)

APOLOGIES: Keith Winter, Iain Whitelaw (Fife Council); Jim McLeod (licensed trade, restaurants); Stuart Grey (attractions, sport and leisure); Duncan Dewar (Fife Chamber of Commerce); Cllr Alex Thomson (Fife Council).

RESEARCH AT VISITSCOTLAND – PRESENTATION BY PAUL BUCHANAN (VISITSCOTLAND)

Paul Buchanan, corporate research manager for VisitScotland, gave a presentation on the research functions of VisitScotland with an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the organisation in a number of key areas including Scenario Planning; Brand Research; Consumer Insights; Industry Insights. He also described the current status of the survey methods used in relation to Scottish tourism. With regard to the UK Tourism Survey (UKTS), this had undergone significant changes in its methodologies and as a consequence 2004 was not reliable at a regional level. Volume and value information was now available at a regional level from 2005 onwards. The International Passenger Survey (IPS) is undertaken by the Office of National Statistics and from April 2007 it will include Rosyth as a passenger survey point of entry. The Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) relied on input information at a local level to measure the volume and value of tourism for a local area and was recognised as a useful indicator of trends in tourism in a given area. Alan Graham advised that he regularly gave top line reports from STEAM and the Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey and Visitor Attractions Monitor to the Alliance. Paul Buchanan reiterated the importance of participation in such surveys by the trade and advised that the Alliance could play a role in encouraging participation.

TOURISM GROWTH – PRESENTATION BY CATHERINE DUNKERLEY (VISITSCOTLAND)

Catherine Dunkerley, strategy and partnership executive with VisitScotland, gave a presentation on the theme of tourism growth and what this means for Fife. She outlined the five levers for growth:

- Capacity Utilisation
- Cross Selling
- Marketing Positioning
- Incremental Marketing
- Infrastructure

The foregoing were the areas at a national level which VisitScotland anticipated would drive growth and it was for individual areas to determine the degree of emphasis in each one in order to achieve local growth in tourism revenue. She then outlined possible scenarios for growth – using UKTS and IPS figures to illustrate current analyses of expenditure and what an incremental shift in certain sectors such as the UK leisure market, or visiting friends and relatives market could deliver for Fife. An underlying question for any region was whether there was capacity to absorb growth. She stressed that this was for illustration purposes only in order for area partnerships to start thinking about what the opportunities were for regions and for individual businesses.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF 27 SEPTEMBER 2006

The minute was accepted as a fair and accurate record of the meeting of 27 September 2006.

Matters Arising

Robin Presswood gave a verbal update on the changes to the planning system in Scotland as had been requested at the September meeting of the Alliance. (He offered to circulate a detailed document on this subject). Robin advised that there had been recognition that the planning process had to be quicker as this was one of the big frustrations of business. This would mean a clearer demarcation between minor applications (which could be determined at officer level) and the more major (which would require greater scrutiny by elected members). At the strategic level, in the future there would be greater emphasis in Scotland on city region plans and for Fife this would have implications in terms of Edinburgh and Dundee city region plans. At the local level, he advised that Fife Council now had its full complement on planning officers and will be introducing an e-planning system from 1 April next year whereby planning applicants will be able to monitor the progress of an application online.

VISITSCOTLAND UPDATE

The report by Alan Graham, VisitScotland Area Director, was noted. Nick White noted the item on the Dine Around initiative and asked whether there was scope to run a version of this for the gourmet end of the market. Alan Graham advised that while the initiative was to be intended to address the mid range restaurant sector he would welcome initiatives that emerged from this sector and VisitScotland could look to support such initiative through its Challenge Fund for example. Martin Grigg commented that SE Fife would be interested in looking at such industry led initiatives from a business development perspective.

There was general discussion on VisitScotland.com with Tom Potter and Ken Lawson commenting that they were aware of industry disappointment with the new technology platform and extranet which seemed difficult for the industry to use.

FIFE TOURISM STRATEGY

Alan Graham spoke to this item and advised that once the Strategy was approved the associated action plan could be progressed. The report was noted and the Strategy was approved.

FIFE TOURISM CHALLENGE

The recommendation to vire funds (amounting to £4,700) to support the Fife Tourism Challenge Showcase event was approved.

FIFE STRATEGIC TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FUND

Sandra Montador-Stewart advised that the budget figure was a fluid one as there were commitments that had yet to be drawn down. The report was otherwise noted.

SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

The progress report was noted. After some discussion, it was agreed that there should be a time limit set for applicants to draw down the approved grant awards as it was evident this was not happening in certain instances.

CULROSS AND ENVIRONS TOURISM AUDIT

After some discussion, the recommendation to award up to 75% of the costs of a tourism audit and action plan (up to a maximum of £10,000) for Culross and the surrounding area was approved.

TOURISM TAXATION

The report by the VisitScotland Area Director on tourism taxation and the recommendations to Ministers of the Local Government Finance Committee was noted.

FIFE ATTRACTIONS FORUM

The report was noted. In response to a query from Nick White, Sandra Montador-Stewart advised that the production of an attractions map could be the type of activity upon which visitor attractions could focus.

TOURISM BUSINESS BAROMETER

The report on the first business confidence monitor of tourism businesses in Fife was noted. Steve Blaney reiterated the support of the Federation of Small Businesses in obtaining as wide a sample of business interests as possible for future business surveys.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Fire Safety Risk Assessments

Tom Potter advised that the Association of Scotland's Self Caterers was concerned at how the new legislation on fire safety risk assessments was being applied across Scotland. There appeared to be inconsistencies and there was a concern that if certain steps were enforced in relation to safety equipment and specifications of properties it would make many small self catering businesses completely unviable.

Alan Graham advised that they had informed businesses of their obligations and had communications with the Fife Fire Service who would be issuing them with a bullet point/headline guide for onward distribution to businesses.

PPL Licences

Nick White brought to the Alliance's attention the fact that the PPL (Phonographic Performance Ltd) were insisting that hotels and accommodation providers were now liable for PPL fees in relation to the tv and audio equipment in bedrooms. Furthermore, it was understood that the PPL could make claims for up to ten years in arrears. The cost implications for small hospitality businesses could be considerable and the British Hospitality Association was monitoring this situation.

St Andrews Ice Festival

Nick White advised the Alliance of the discussions that were taking place in relation to a possible ice/winter festival for St Andrews. This concept could be developed to embrace other themes such as food, as well as other locations in Fife, and had the potential to become a major event for Fife.

Tomorrow's Tourism Event

Gail Sibbald highlighted the event for tourism employers, "Tomorrow's Tourism", which will be taking place on 25 January at the Balbirnie House Hotel. Invitations to the trade had already been issued and responses were being received.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was set for Tuesday, 20th February at 0930 hrs. The venue would be in the Dunfermline, West Fife area.

The proposed dates for other meetings in 2007 are:

Tuesday 24 April

Tuesday 26 June

Tuesday 25 September

Tuesday 11 December