

FIFE TOURISM ALLIANCE

MINUTE OF MEETING

27 September 2006

Cluny Clays, Kirkcaldy

ATTENDING: Chair – Nick White (hotels); Ken Lawson (guest houses, b&bs); Tom Potter (self catering, caravan & camping); Cllr Peter Douglas, Cllr John Cameron, Cllr Andrew Rodger (Fife Council); Linda McKnight (Fife Colleges); Duncan Dewar (Fife Chamber of Commerce); Steve Blaney (FSB); Stuart Grey (attractions, sport and leisure); Jim McLeod (licensed trade)

In attendance: Alan Graham (VisitScotland); Robin Presswood (Fife Council); Martin Grigg, Gail Sibbald (Scottish Enterprise Fife); Carolyn Baird (Springboard Scotland)

APOLOGIES: Keith Winter, Iain Whitelaw (Fife Council); Willie Johnston (Scottish Enterprise Fife); Sandra Montador-Stewart (Fife Council); Steve Blaney (FSB).

SPRINGBOARD SCOTLAND – PRESENTATION BY CAROLYN BAIRD

Carolyn Baird, project manager for Springboard Scotland, gave a presentation on the organisation – its background and objectives with particular reference to its role in encouraging skills and careers in tourism and hospitality and promoting the industry as a great place to work.

She outlined the partnerships which Springboard has and its work programmes which are focused on a number of key contact groups including young people, unemployed and the disadvantaged. She cited the Discovery Trails (as undertaken earlier in the year in St Andrews), Future Chef and Young Manager as examples of this.

In relation to its liaison with the industry, Springboard operates an Ambassador Programme – individuals who can act as advocates for the industry - and she is looking to grow this number in Fife. In terms of the broader ambitions for Fife, Carolyn outlined the involvement with the Fife Tourism Challenge and the ambition to extend the Discovery Trail concept to Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy. This was an area where she saw FTA partnership and support as there were cost implications in delivering this type of activity. She reiterated the ambition to grow the number of Ambassadors and advised that ideally a minimum of 8 individuals would require to commit to this in order for an Ambassadors Programme to be developed.

Nick White thanked Carolyn for her presentation and invited her to remain for the rest of the meeting.

Alan Graham undertook to circulate a copy of the presentation to FTA members.

VISITSCOTLAND FIFE REPORT

Alan Graham spoke to the report highlighting the circumstances which led to the closure of the Forth Bridge TIC. He also highlighted the statistics relating to occupancy and visitor attraction visitor numbers both of which showed modest growth. The report was otherwise noted.

FIFE TOURISM STRATEGY

Alan Graham spoke to the report and stated that the draft strategy should be regarded as work in progress and that the associated action plan was not yet in sufficient a state of health to be presented to the Alliance.

Nick White commented that a major omission was a lack of specific reference to education. Martin Grigg advised that this was seen as a cross cutting theme and that actions associated with training and business development would be contained within the action plan.

Tom Potter reiterated that he felt the target for growth (in revenue) was not ambitious enough. In addition, he felt that the issue of the potential threat posed by the ship to ship transfer of oil should be highlighted as an environmental concern in the section on "The Challenge for Fife". (There followed extensive discussion on this subject). He also queried the references to the proximity of Fife to Edinburgh and asked for clarity as to what this was alluding to. Alan Graham responded that the opportunity existed for Fife to offer products and experiences which were complementary to the experiences which Edinburgh, as a major urban centre, offered.

With reference to the section on Food, Nick White commented that there was a challenge insofar as there were very few Slow Food movement members in Fife. (Nick White outlined what was meant by Slow Food). Martin Grigg responded that this would be addressed as part of the action plan.

Cllr Rodger expressed concern that Fife was over-reliant on golf and that the strategy should take cognisance of wider Fife offerings especially those along the coast. Nick White responded that there was specific reference to the "Coastal Fringe" as a key strength for Fife and that the action plan would reflect this.

Robin Presswood commented that while there was still some work to be done in polishing up the strategy the aim should be to circulate the FTA by e-mail rather than wait for the next meeting for approval.

It was agreed that the strategy and action plan would be progressed by the officers group and circulated to FTA members accordingly.

THE FIFE TOURISM CHALLENGE

Nick White gave a verbal update on the Fife Tourism Challenge. This was launched at Myres Castle on 31 August and 15 of Fife's 19 secondary schools had committed to the project. The feedback from the teaching staff thus far had been very encouraging. He referred to the fact that there was still a shortfall in funding in relation to the prize giving / showcase event which would conclude the Challenge and it was hoped that it would be possible to vire the money from the amount allocated per participating school towards this. In response to a query on whether the remaining 4 schools were still likely to participate he advised that this may be the case. After some discussion, it was agreed that a separate paper should be submitted to the Alliance on this matter. Robin Presswood advised that as the amount in question would be within the delegated powers of the Head of Development Services this should be a relatively straightforward process.

FIFE STRATEGIC TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FUND – PROJECTS UPDATE

Linda McKnight advised that the launch of 100K Welcomes had been postponed and it was intended that the Fife launch would be at the Atrium at Adam Smith College. In view of this she asked whether it would be possible to use some of the funds allocated towards 100K Welcomes initiative for the production of a DVD resource to support this. It was agreed that this would have to be the subject of a separate report.

In relation to the Business Development Support for Arts and Cultural Festivals, Tom Potter asked which were the nine events that were being supported. Alan Graham undertook to circulate the earlier report which had this information.

The report was otherwise noted.

DUNFERMLINE HERITAGE QUARTER IMPROVEMENTS

This report was noted. The Fife Tourism Alliance agreed with the recommendation not to support this bid for financial support from the Fife Strategic Tourism Development Fund.

FIFE TOURISM ALLIANCE

Election of Vice Chair

Ken Lawson, nominated by Nick White and seconded by Steve Blaney, was elected as Vice Chair.

Stuart Grey, representing the visitor attractions and sport & leisure sector, was welcomed onto the Alliance.

Jim McLeod, representing the restaurants and licensed trade sector, was welcomed onto the Alliance.

Alan Graham advised that he had been in contact with Linda Greig who was Jaki Carnegie's successor at the BLCC. He would be meeting with her at a future juncture to discuss business tourism representation on the Alliance.

TOURISM TAXATION

Steve Blaney spoke to this item. He wished to bring the Alliance's attention to the subject of a tourism "bed tax" and hospitality service tax, the introduction of which the Federation of Small Businesses understood, was being debated in governments circles. FSB was opposed to such measures and he sought the view of the Alliance which he would relay to FSB.

There was extensive discussion on this subject. There was a general view that there was a lack of clarity on the matter and some members of the Alliance expressed the view that they were insufficiently informed to express an opinion.

It was agreed that the Chair would write to HM Treasury to seek clarification on policy on this matter and also obtain information from the British Hospitality Association in order that the Alliance could be fully apprised of the facts and make a more informed comment as a consequence. This subject would be an agenda item at the next meeting of the Alliance.

AOCB

Forth Crossing

A letter from the Chief Executive of Fife Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise was tabled which sought the support of the Alliance in lobbying for urgent resolution on the case for new Forth crossing. Duncan Dewar spoke to this item, giving further background and outlining the role of the Chamber and the Scottish Chambers of Commerce in leading the campaign to address what is seen as a critical issue facing Scotland's economic well-being.

It was agreed that the Chair would support this Chamber initiative and write to the leaders of the main political parties in Scotland. In addition, support would be sought from other area tourism partnerships in Scotland.

Planning

The Chair raised the issue of the planning process in Scotland and advised that the commonly held view in tourism business circles is that the planning process is costly and too protracted and an impediment to business growth.

Cllr Cameron advised that Fife Council for its part was looking at its own planning system as it was recognised that the 3 committee system was cumbersome and could result in undue delays in the consideration of planning applications.

Robin Presswood advised that the matter was being addressed by the Scottish Executive through its Planning Bill which was looking positive. He offered to arrange a presentation on the subject of planning to a future meeting of the Alliance.

Fife Economic Forum

Alan Graham advised that the issue of tourism representation on the Fife Economic Forum had yet to be officially resolved. He had been attending and reporting to the Forum in recent months but at the last meeting the outgoing Chair had asked for this matter to be clarified and so he was coming back to the Alliance for resolution of the matter.

After some discussion, it was agreed that Alan Graham should still attend the Fife Economic Forum but seek a substitute (from the Alliance) when he was unable to attend.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 12 December, 2pm – venue (in North East Fife) tbc