

**FIFE TOURISM ALLIANCE**  
**MINUTE OF MEETING**  
**25 SEPTEMBER 2007**  
**THE SCORES HOTEL, ST ANDREWS**

11 December 2007

**ATTENDING:** Chair – Nick White (hotels); Ken Lawson (guest houses, b&bs); Andrew Pirie (self catering, caravan & camping); Steve Blaney (FSB); Linda McKnight (Fife Colleges); Duncan Dewar (Fife Chamber of Commerce); Stuart Gray (visitor attractions, sport and leisure); Linda Greig (business tourism); Cllr Dorothea Morrison

In attendance: Alan Graham (VisitScotland); Robin Presswood (Fife Council); Martin Grigg (Scottish Enterprise Fife); Amanda McFarlane (Fife Coast and Countryside Trust); Sandra Montador-Stewart (Fife Council).

**APOLOGIES:** Cllr Ross Vettraino, Cllr Tony Martin

**PRESENTATION ON THE FORTH ROAD BRIDGE AND THE CHALLENGES FACING FETA – ALASTAIR ANDREW**

Alastair Andrew, Bridgemaster for the Forth Estuary Transport Authority, gave a detailed presentation on the challenges facing the organisation in relation to the ongoing care and maintenance of the road bridge.

He set the context for the present programmes of remedial action, citing the heavy growth in traffic volumes particularly heavy goods vehicles since the bridge first opened and the physical impact that this has had on the present structure. FETA is now seeing 8 years life in the present surface and the parapets are acknowledged as being sub-standard. Resurfacing is a highly technical process that requires significant traffic management arrangements being put in place.

He also addressed the main cable situation with 2007 seeing the commencement of the dehumidification process to address corrosion of the wires which comprise the cable. If the dehumidification process is not successful then it is anticipated that a ban on HGVs would be required by 2014. Even if there were an early commitment and commencement of works for a new crossing, there would still be a 3 to 4 year overlap in terms of the implementation of such restrictions and the opening of the new crossing.

With reference to the new crossing options study and consultation, Transport Scotland's preferred option is a cable stay bridge. This would be the cheapest option (£1.5bn at present prices) but would have the shortest construction period at an estimated 5.5 years. However, Alastair advised that an additional time allowance would have to be factored in to address resulting legal procedures, enquiries, land acquisition etc. This might amount to an additional 5 to 7 years before construction actually commenced.

Alastair Andrew then took questions. In response to a question from Steve Blaney regarding a tunnel option, he advised that, in his professional opinion and taking account of the evidence which was available to him, a tunnel was not a viable option on cost and engineering grounds. Stuart Gray commented that a bridge could be a strong icon for Fife and Scotland.

With reference to short term remedial works, Alastair advised that activity was highly weather dependent and FETA operated an alert system via its website ([www.feta.gov.uk](http://www.feta.gov.uk)) to advise whether weekend work was to be postponed. He acknowledged that, from a tourism perspective, communication was key and FETA was committed to doing everything it could to advise on the situation regarding works. He advised that no major works were planned at this stage for 2008 and, in response to Ken Lawson, he commented that the opening of the new M9 spur had made an improvement to traffic flows from the north.

The Chairman thanked Alastair Andrew for his detailed presentation.

## **MINUTE OF THE MEETING OF 19 JUNE 2007**

### **Matters Arising**

#### **St Andrews World Class – Skills Academy**

Nick White gave a verbal update on the development of the St Andrews Skills Academy. He advised that the precise format was still to be determined but it was envisaged that it would be a one stop shop for businesses to source information and solutions to training and development needs. He outlined current thinking in relation to the development by hotels of a minimum standard of SVQ which would require to be agreed with the college sector – the aspiration was not to interfere with the colleges' approach but to "raise the bar" from a St Andrews World Class perspective. He added that there may be future opportunities to link with Cornell University in terms of hospitality management development programmes through links that had already been established with that educational establishment.

There was general discussion on the development of the Skills Academy with reference to the structure and format of such an entity.

It was agreed that this matter should be subject of progress updates at future meetings of the Fife Tourism Alliance.

#### **VISITSCOTLAND FIFE REPORT**

In response to a query regarding a possible replacement for the Forth Bridge TIC, Alan Graham advised that this was highly unlikely as VisitScotland did not have a capital budget for the purposes of new build structures. Robin Presswood commented that there may be an opportunity to look at infrastructure in general at the Fife landfall site in the context of a new Forth crossing and tourist information provision could be factored into that.

With regard to tourism statistics, Nick White commented that the visitor numbers to the Open at Carnoustie and at the Women's British Open were down against predictions. Alan Graham advised that there were a number of factors at play in Scottish tourism's external environment which were making for very tough trading conditions.

The report was otherwise noted.

#### **FIFE COASTAL PATH DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION – AMANDA MCFARLANE**

Amanda McFarlane gave an overview of the key findings of the recently completed Fife Coastal Path Usage and Economic Impact Assessment.

This was an extensive research exercise which pointed to the Path generating in the region of half a million visits each year with around half of these being short visits from home and 26% staying away from home. Overall, it is estimated that the Path brings an additional £24 to £29 million to the Fife economy.

The survey had raised a number of issues in terms of visitor satisfaction. In particular, dog fouling and public toilet provision were issues which had emerged and Amanda referred to two initiatives that FCCT was developing to address this. "Welcome Ports" would be facilities offering Path information provision and public toilets and discussions were underway with leisure centres along the way to pilot this service. The Trust was also looking to pilot the distribution of a biodegradable bag for dog waste to tackle this problem. Signage and interpretation was a further issue that the Trust was addressing – looking at a technological solution, including mobile phone technology, to provide an innovative approach to the dissemination of interpretation and information.

In terms of physical developments, Amanda highlighted three areas for the creation of circular loop walks from the Coastal Path: Silverburn/Leven; Ravenscraig; Ross Point (Burntisland). There are also plans to extend the Path from Culross to Kincardine and along the Tay coast to Perth from the Tay Bridge. The Trust is also looking to develop interpretation and viewing facilities for the Eden Estuary at Guardbridge.

This would be one element of a wider plan for the Tentsmuir area and the Alliance would have an opportunity to consider an application for funding to support this initiative at a later point in the meeting.

## **FIFE STRATEGIC TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FUND**

### **Town Centres Events and Promotions**

Nick White queried the impact of the support given to date to the town centre management companies for tourism initiatives. Sandra Montador-Stewart advised that the Town Centre managers had reported on outputs and impacts but this could be revisited. Robin Presswood commented that guidance on investment from this financial input could be tightened up.

### **Fife Tourism Challenge**

Nick White welcomed the commitment to an additional year's funding support for a Fife Tourism Challenge event but felt that this should be extended to a further year beyond 2008. It was agreed that a further year's support for the Challenge should be factored into the forward commitments for the Fund.

### **Tentsmuir Interpretation Plan**

Amanda McFarlane spoke to this paper. Funding support of up to £20K was approved.

### **Anstruther Harbour Project Feasibility Study**

Sandra Montador-Stewart spoke to this paper. There followed a general discussion on the terms of reference and focus for the project. Ken Lawson expressed concern that for that level of investment in a feasibility study the project appeared too restrictive and it should focus on the development requirements and opportunities for the whole of the Anstruther Harbour area. There was concern expressed that the proposed location for a new combined harbour office and visitor facility was not the best one in view of parking and traffic patterns. The application for funding support of up to £8K to support the study was approved on the basis that Sandra Montador-Stewart would relay to the project sponsors (Anstruther Community Regeneration Partnership) the concerns that the study should take a broader view of visitor needs in the Anstruther harbour and waterfront area. Ken Lawson offered to act as a communication link should that be required.

## **FIFE FOOD TOURISM REPORT**

Alan Graham spoke to this paper which was intended to give a progress update to the Alliance on the development of a strategy for the food and tourism sector. This plan would be shared with the Alliance in due course and it was anticipated that there would be a submission for funding support from the Fife Strategic Tourism Development Fund at a future juncture. The report was noted.

## **REVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SCOTLAND**

Robin Presswood gave a verbal update on the government review of economic development support arrangements. The new administration was keen to reduce apparent "clutter" in the support mechanisms and the results of the review would be communicated to Parliament on Wednesday 26 September. He commented that the Fife approach to the review process had been to stress the importance of partnership working – Nick White, as Chairman of the Fife Tourism Alliance, had signed a document which had been prepared to highlight the Fife approach and the benefits of agency partnerships.

There was a general discussion on the review process with particular reference to the level of consultation. Duncan Dewar expressed concern that the Fife Chamber of Commerce had not been consulted and he was not aware of the Fife submission document being prepared. Robin Presswood responded that the government's consultation period over the summer had been so short that it was not possible to carry out as extensive a local consultation as would have been desirable. Indeed, Fife Council had received communication from the government on the day after the consultation process was to be concluded.

The outcomes from the review would be communicated to the Alliance in due course.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Steve Blaney advised that he had been appointed Chairman of the newly established partnership for the creative and new media industries CreativeFife.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, 11 December 2007. 10:30 am at Knockhill Racing Circuit.