

**Highland Area Tourism Partnership
Minutes – 15th September, 2006 hosted by Highland Council**

Present :	<p>Fran Cree, North West Highland area Andy Machen-Young, Inverness, Loch Ness & Nairn area Andrew Kirk, Badenoch & Strathspey area (Chair) Joan Campbell, North East Highland area Sandra Hutton – Skye & Lochalsh area Councillor Duncan Allan, Highland Council Councillor John Laing, Highland Council Councillor Thomas Maclellan, Highland Council Councillor John Green, Highland Council Colin Simpson, Highland Council Tourism Co-ordinator Chris Taylor, Cairngorm National Park John Ward, HIE Steve Hunt, SNH Scott Armstrong, VisitScotland Highland Mandie Currie, VisitScotland Highland Lorna Maclellan, VisitScotland Highland</p>
Minutes :	Margaret Crawford, VisitScotland Highland
Apologies :	<p>David Govan, Lochaber area Howard Brindley, HI Trans Robert Muir, Chief Executive – HIE Skye & Wester Ross Charlotte Wright, Chief Executive – HIE Lochaber</p>
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies : Andrew Kirk welcomed those present and introduced Lorna Maclellan, VisitScotland’s new External Relations Executive who is based in Strathpeffer but covers the Highlands and Outer Hebrides. Highland Council were thanked for hosting this meeting. Apologies are noted above.</p>
2	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting – approved by Andy Machen Young and seconded by Councillor John Green</p> <p>Matters Arising Item 2 – VisitScotland Update – Along with Fife network office, the Highlands is piloting a weekly e-bulletin detailing events in the area. Reports from Forum representatives is included on the agenda. Item 4 – VisitScotland’s main office has provided comments on Scotland’s National Transport Strategy. Mandie Currie provided comments on the regional transport strategy. Item 6 – DMO – sub-group to consist of John Ward, Scott Armstrong, Colin Simpson, Steve Hunt, Andy Machen-Young and Fran Cree. AOB – Scott Armstrong had written to Councillor Flear regarding his concerns with the lack of coverage on Caithness in the Scotland For Families campaign through the Daily Mail.</p>
3	<p>Colin Simpson gave a presentation on Highland Council’s contribution to tourism. Specific points raised :</p> <p>Access Forum – inclusion of walking routes for tourists and not just locals. The Access Forums are currently producing core path plans which gives opportunities for such input. Routes seem to be between settlements rather than coastal, scenic routes but these routes can prove to be expensive to maintain. Although plan preparation is under way and being funded there are no funds identified for any ensuing path work. Liaison with LECs – no formal meetings are organised but liaison is mainly through joint projects, meetings such as the Partnership and quarterly Tourism meetings are held with VisitScotland and HIE.</p> <p>Recycling – there are no immediate plans to introduce Highland-wide kerbside collections for recyclable waste in the near future. The Council are duty bound to provide a collection service for domestic waste but businesses can buy this service from other companies. Waste will be a big issue in the coming years with huge costs involved in the disposal. Colin Simpson will investigate recycling costs etc. and report back to the next Partnership meeting. This issue will be included as a future agenda item with each Forum being asked to report what facilities are available in their area.</p>

4	<p>Area Tourism Strategy & Action Plan</p> <p>Scott Armstrong gave the background to the production of the Strategy and the timescales involved with all area strategies to be available by the end of September, 2006. The Partnership has responsibility to produce and monitor the Strategy and report back on a regular basis to the Scottish Executive with progress in delivery of the actions identified. The final draft has been produced including comments from the Steering Group, Forums, agencies and the industry.</p> <p>The Strategy was approved with no further comments being made.</p> <p>Action Plan – The Plan currently has 76 actions. A number of comments/additions were agreed and they will be included in the final plan. It was agreed that the Strategy Steering Group will finalise the Action Plan. Mandie Currie reported that a summary document together with monitoring proposals will be prepared and presented to the Partnership.</p> <p>Andy Machen-Young expressed his disappointment at the way Highland 2007 has developed into an events co-ordinator and as such an opportunity to showcase the Highlands had been lost. Comments were made that there appears to be little involvement with establishments when Highland 2007 are promoting events, especially during periods when some areas are already busy. Colin Simpson pointed out that the Council looked more favourably on events being held during quieter months in a bid to attract visitors. VisitScotland are contributing £2m in kind marketing support to Highland 2007.</p> <p>It was agreed that HI-Arts be invited to future meetings of the Partnership. It was also agreed that Homecoming 2009 will be invited to give a presentation to the next Partnership meeting and that Highland 2007 would be invited to the same meeting.</p>
5	<p>Notified Business - Challenge Fund</p> <p>Fran Cree had asked for this item to be included. It was frustrating to groups who had been successful in securing funding from other sources that they had not been successful with Challenge Fund bids.</p> <p>In response Scott Armstrong outlined the changes being made to the application process : A simplified process for applications up to £15,000 has been introduced. A further change was that funding for an application co-ordinator was now regarded as an eligible cost up to 10% of the total budget. A Challenge Fund Manager based in Aberdeen has been appointed with 2 advisors are being appointed to cover the north and south of Scotland. These advisors will be available to help groups progress their applications. Of the 72 successful bids only 7 had been put together by an external consultant. 6 of those were from the Highlands. Of the successful applications the average value of award was £10,000. 30th November is the closing date for the next round of applications.</p>
6	<p>Reports from Forum Representatives</p> <p>Badenoch & Strathspey – Presentation by Highland 2007. Conference to be held at the Lecht to discuss transport and events. Presentation given on point of entry and information availability within the National Park. Further discussions on the Cairngorms Visitor Guide for 2007.</p> <p>Skye & Lochalsh – Presentation by Highland Council’s Local Access Office. Next meeting will focus on environmental issues.</p> <p>Northern Highlands – September meeting postponed due to visitscotland.com speaker cancelling. Other agenda item to be future role of Forum.</p> <p>Inverness, Loch Ness & Nairn – Agenda items – Eating out in Inverness after 9pm. LEC Grants, Signposting, coach parking, Strategy and the creation of a DMO.</p> <p>Fort William & Lochaber – OCUK and Centre of Excellence to be approached to consider re-establishing a Local Tourism Forum in the area.</p> <p>Discussion on opening hours followed and could be a future agenda item for each of the Forums.</p>
7.	<p>Date and Venue of next meeting</p> <p>15th December, 2006 at 11am in the SNH offices, Inverness. Agenda items : Presentation by Homecoming 2009, presentation from SNH and Action Plan monitoring. Sandra Hutton to chair</p>