

**Perthshire Tourism Partnership  
Minutes of Meeting held on 26 October 2006  
Blair Castle, Blair Atholl**

**In Attendance**

Vicki Miller, Jennifer Moran and Catherine Dunkerley (VisitScotland), Ken MacDonald (P&K Council), Ian Reynolds (SET), Cllrs John Hulbert, Joan McEwen, Lewis Simpson and Alan Livingstone (P&KC), David Smythe (ASSC), Scott Edwards (Parklands Hotel), Jane Grimley (Dewars World of Whisky), Tim Waters (Pitlochry Tourism Assoc), Su Cox (Dunkeld & Birnam Tourism Assoc), Kirstie Crerar (Blair Atholl & District Tourism Assoc).

**Apologies**

Apologies were received from James MacDougall, Forestry Commission; Joanne DePonio & Anne Marie Sinclair, PKC and Geraldine Balfour, Perth College.

**Matters Arising**

Following on from Tony Mercer's presentation at the last meeting Tim & Scott again raised the issue of their continued concerns about the implementation of common standards and how they are affecting the small hotel sector. Vicki agreed to speak to Tony again, particularly in relation to the claims that the criteria are being applied differently by both VisitScotland and the AA. There is a strong view that small country house hotels are being expected to provide the same levels of service and facilities as a city centre hotel, yet there is no evidence of demand from their visitors for some of these facilities e.g. 24 hour room service. There was some concerns around applying dispensation which Tony had referred to at the last meeting; how frequently it might be applied?, was it timebound? and was it formally recorded? Vicki also agreed to find out who the industry contacts are on the Hotel Overseeing Committee.

**Item 3 – Area Tourism Partnership Plan**

The final version (V4) was unanimously approved. Cllr McEwen thanked Vicki and Joanne for providing a clear and focussed document. The final version of the strategy incorporates comments from a number of organisations including Perth City Centre Management & Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust. The plan has also been endorsed by the Enterprise & Infrastructure Committee within the Council and the Economic Partnership, both chaired by Councillor Alan Livingstone.

Vicki highlighted that the document would not be produced into a glossy as there was no budget to do this. It was more important that ATP meetings were used to focus on progress against the action plan.

Vicki noted that the agencies involved in the consultation had agreed to incorporate their actions into their operational plans. However, it was now a key role for the partnership to bring the plan and the ambition for 50% growth to life for businesses. What does it mean for businesses in terms of what should they stop, start and continue?

There then followed a presentation by Catherine Dunkerley on the "tourism prospectus" which has been developed by VisitScotland in order to stimulate greater discussion on the growth agenda and encourage greater industry buy in to the growth agenda. The presentation covered the 5 key levers for growth:-

- capacity utilisation
- cross selling
- market positioning
- incremental marketing

- infrastructure

The group were shown a spreadsheet which provided Perthshire base line statistics and Catherine presented two versions of the spreadsheet based on two different growth scenarios. The two scenarios discussed included a 20% increase in visitor numbers, largely coming from an increase in overseas leisure and business tourism trips and a small increase in spend per trip. The second scenario looked at a slight decrease in UK leisure trips and a greater dependency on growth coming from spend per trip.

Catherine pointed out that the scenarios were just examples of what could happen but what these models helped to do was to make our growth objectives more meaningful by looking at what these changes would mean to spend per visitor per night or spend per trip. Everyone agree that this was a useful way of helping businesses relate to the 50% growth objective.

It was however noted that if the planned infrastructure growth for Perthshire was to happen (resort development etc.) the growth target could be easily met however actions had to be put in place in case these developments did not come to fruition.

The meeting acknowledged the importance of developing a strong market positioning for Perthshire; sustaining investment in marketing activity and the need for businesses to be better at cross selling.

#### **Item 4 – Consumer Perceptions of Scotland**

Presentation by Vicki attached. This presentation highlights that visitors to Scotland including Scots themselves tend not to think about the regional boundaries we all refer to. Knowledge of the geography of Scotland is poor and visitors tend to think of Scotland as a one dimensional destination i.e. beautiful scenery only, they don't realise the wealth of activities available.

Vicki outlined how VisitScotland was adapting its marketing strategy to take account of this research. Key developments include a new consumer segmentation model overlayed with a visitor loyalty ladder to ensure that VisitScotland can improve the effectiveness of its marketing activity through better targeting of relevant messages and increasing the return on investment of its activity, therefore making a contribution towards the 50% growth target. Vicki also talked about the different approach required for acquisition marketing (targeting 1<sup>st</sup> time visitors) v retention marketing (encourage visitors to visit more frequently).

#### **Item 5 – Update on Perthshire Brand & Communication Strategy**

Ken MacDonald gave a presentation covering the work to date in both the development and implementation of the Perthshire brand. The presentation covered:-

- what is a brand & why have one
- what are our marketing objectives
- who is our main target audience
- marketing forum
- progress to date (inc G8, Tartan Week, Cittaslow, Buy Local Eat Local initiative and the ambassador programme)
- measurement & monitoring
- the future

#### **Item 6 – Information & Sales Update**

Vicki covered the salient points from the paper which was circulated with the agenda including operational changes to the Perthshire TIC network and new initiatives which are being piloted in Perthshire to take forward recommendations from the Information & Sales review.

Cllr Hulbert challenged VisitScotland on the way (not the reason why) the changes in the TIC network were implemented and made particular reference to the fact that the closure of Auchterarder TIC was not put before the council. Cllr Livingstone suggested that now was the time to 'draw a line' under the subject.

Vicki requested at this point that it be noted that VisitScotland did fully consult with Ken McDonald and officers in the Economic Development Unit. The final decision to close the TIC was made following this consultation and it was agreed that this was an operational matter for VisitScotland that did not require full consultation given the circumstances of the TIC i.e. end of the lease, seasonal nature of the staff contracts, problems with the building etc.

Scott questioned why such an operational decision should even be considered by councillors. Ian Reynolds pointed out that the former Perthshire Tourist Board had previously agreed to the closure of the TIC in Auchterarder once information could be provided from the new Tullibardine retail site. Information units were installed in both Baxters unit and in the Distillery at Tullibardine in April this year. Cllr McEwen focussed on the positives in the paper and applauded the outreach pilot at the Enchanted Forest.

Vicki agreed to keep the group updated with any developments in Perth to relocate the TIC. Cllr McEwen also asked that VisitScotland explore the opportunities to showcase local products in TICs.

#### **Item 7 – Blair Atholl Tourist Association**

Kirstie Crerar (vice-chair) gave a short presentation on the remit and the work of the BATA which included:-

- geographical reach
- print published to date
- membership
- web activity
- fundraising activities
- attendance at events
- development of skills trail

#### **Item 8 – Tourism Conference**

Jennifer led a discussion on the 2007 Perthshire Tourism Conference and the following points were agreed:-

- date confirmed as Thursday 15 March to coincide with Scottish Tourism Week
- conference theme to be Going for Growth/Sustainability
- venue to be Murrayshall House Hotel if available
- John Lennon to be approached as conference facilitator
- Working group consisting of Jennifer, Scott, David and Joanne to take forward

#### **Item 9 – Re-appoint Chair and Vice Chair**

Scott Edwards was appointed in the role of Chair and was proposed by Cllr Simpson and seconded by Ian Reynolds. Cllr Simpson was appointed vice chair and was proposed by Cllr Hulbert and seconded by David Smythe.

#### **Item 10 – Next Meeting**

It was agreed to hold the next meeting towards the end of January in Kinross and to accept an invitation from Springboard Scotland to discuss recruitment and retention issues in the hospitality sector.