

**Perthshire Tourism Partnership
Minutes of Meeting held on 26 April 2007
Crieff Hydro Hotel**

In Attendance

Vicki Miller, Jennifer Moran, and Catherine Dunkerley (VisitScotland), Joanne DePonio (P&K Council), Ian Reynolds (SET), David Smythe (ASSC), Scott Edwards (Parklands Hotel), Ian Brown (Pitlochry Partnership), Su Cox (Dunkeld & Birnam Tourism Assoc), Kirstie Crerar (Blair Atholl & District Tourism Assoc). Geraldine Balfour (Perth College), Stuart McLaren (Crieff & Strathearn Tourist Assoc) and Douglas Ritchie (Cittaslow Project Manager)

Item 1 - Chairman's Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Jane Grimley, Sara Wood & Angus MacDonald

Item 2 – Matters Arising

Scott discussed a meeting held between himself, Joanne DePonio and Ken MacDonald which negated the need to send the letter to PKC re the funding cut to VisitScotland. It was noted that in future any issues like this that concerned the Tourism Partnership and that would impact on the delivery of the Area Tourism Strategy needed to be raised earlier by the Partnership in order to influence a change in decision making.

Vicki advised that to date Carolyn Baird from Springboard was still to engage representatives from the local tourism associations in the employer focus groups on recruitment and retention issues. Any business willing to be a consultee should contact Caroline direct.

Vicki also advised that the first Web in a Box has been launched in Perthshire for The Meikleour Hotel. This can be viewed via http://www.visitscotland.org/visitscotland.com-updates-web_in_a_box

Item 3 – Feedback from Perthshire Tourism Conference

Generally the feedback from delegates has been extremely positive. There was some criticism of the presentation by EatScotland which, it was felt, didn't really deliver on the brief. David also suggested that closer links with Scottish Tourism Week should be forged. It was agreed to hold another conference in 2008 at a new venue (in order to showcase more local businesses) and Vicki confirmed that VisitScotland had allocated budget for this.

Item 4 – Cittaslow Presentation

Douglas Ritchie gave a presentation on 'Maximising the benefits of Cittaslow' which covered;

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| - What is Cittaslow? | - The Advantages of Cittaslow |
| - What is Slow Food? | - Where are we now? |
| - What Kind of Food is Slow Food | - Planned Initiatives |
| - The origins of Slow Food | - How can Tourism Businesses Help? |
| - The origins of Cittaslow | - How can Cittaslow help Tourism Businesses? |
| - Cittaslow Membership | - Cittaslow manifesto |

Following on from the presentation (a copy of which is attached) there was general discussion around the need to extend awareness of Cittaslow amongst businesses and encourage more businesses to use local produce and promote this to their visitors. The development of a 'Cittaslow Champions' scheme which would involve local businesses being accredited and then able to promote their business as a Cittaslow supporter was welcomed. It was also recognised that other towns in Perthshire could become Cittaslow Towns relatively easily as a great deal of the background work done for Perth would apply to other towns. Other initiatives associated with the project were also welcomed as they will

help to strengthen Perthshire's credentials as a leading environmental tourism destination – these included - Perthshire breakfasts via farmers markets; a “green gym”; developing young local chefs; a local food convivium.

Item 5 – Six month review of Perthshire Area Tourism Strategy

A discussion took place on the recorded progress to date against actions in the Strategy document which was published in September 06. The following is a brief account of these discussions grouped in order of the actions.

Knowing Your Market

- There is a need to conduct a survey of local businesses to establish key base line information to inform the strategy. VS/SE to review.
- Discussion on Tourism Intelligence Scotland, a joint research initiative set up between VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise & Highlands & Islands Enterprise. TIS has been formed to interpret key research information and make this more user friendly for businesses. The first publication was on the walking market, further publications will be produced in 2007/8 including, Future Tourism; Golf; UK Consumer Segments; Ancestral Tourism. TIS are also looking at providing tourism businesses with customer survey templates for use in their own businesses and tools for collating this information for national analysis.
- Network Events and Tourism Conference have all delivered on this theme however it was noted that it tends to be the same faces at these events each time.

Exceeding Visitor Expectations

- Are we at capacity for self catering? Research needed to establish supply v demand of self catering stock. SE to follow-up.
- Better promotion of Quality Assurance needed. Fear businesses will start to leave QA due to disenchantment with visitScotland.com.
- It was noted that average QA ratings have increased.
- Public toilet provision – review completed and PKC to develop more comfort schemes and better promotion of these via signage, leaflets etc.
- It was agreed that further work is required to spread the “tourism is everyone's business” message although good progress is being made via local tourism associations who are engaging many non traditional tourism businesses.

People & Skills

- Fully Booked courses no longer viable (too expensive). 100K Welcomes leadership programme does include some marketing advice. 100k Welcomes now being actively promoted. This is being managed by SE with delivery via SE appointed trainers.
- Fam trips – hard to gauge private sector activity in improving front-line staff product knowledge.
- Perth College appointed John Lennon to develop a Perthshire Product Knowledge training resource – this will be aimed at any tourism business, front line staff and will also be ideal for incoming workers.
- Skills workshop to be held and 1 Perthshire skills publication will be produced which will focus on the training and development needs of Perthshire businesses. It was felt that having one overview publication would make it easier for businesses to see what is available. This publication will also provide an overview of the area strategy objectives; key customer segments and area's brand positioning to help businesses buy into the area's tourism ambitions and articulate the role they play. Progress will be discussed at the next Partnership meeting.

- Springboard discovery trail – good feedback from employers and individuals who attended. Aim to make this an annual event.
- PKC producing new international workers guide in Polish, Czech and Russian

Innovation & Product Development

- Positives are Cittaslow accreditation and Perthshire Green Tourism Network
- A Customer Payback scheme will be piloted between Gleneagles Hotel and Perthshire Big Tree Country
- It was recognised that it is a challenge to gauge collaboration between private sector businesses (other than via Challenge Fund).
- Theatre breaks now being promoted between Horsecross and PADHARA.
- VS developing “Dine Around” initiative and a Perthshire Adventure Pass
- Good progress via Perthshire Gardens Collection offering weekend break packages

Culture, Events & Sport

- New events to be added to Events Strategy are Etape Caledonia, A Truly Scottish Evening, Live at the Palace, RAF Airshow (Balado, Aug 08) and Gododdin (linked to the Blair Atholl Highland games in 2008).
- Waste Awareness leaflet to be available shortly on Perthshire.com to encourage events to reduce their carbon footprint
- Recent economic impact survey (conservatively) estimated the value of events to be 15-20 million
- Event toolkit now been developed and will be available to download from Perthshire.com shortly

E Business

- Web in a Box launched in Perthshire with the Meikleour Hotel
- What percentage of Perthshire businesses are giving allocation to visitscotland.com – need to ascertain. VS to follow-up
- Promoting best practice needs to be factored into any industry communication activity/network events etc.
- Blairgowrie & East Perthshire Tourist Association running a best practice workshop for their local members.

Access & Transport

- VisitScotland's / PKC public transport guides/bus walks leaflets in development
- Public Transport strategy out for consultation but not seen by ATP – Joanne to investigate

Marketing your Product

- A contact report has been produced by VisitScotland highlighting the range of promotional material featuring Perthshire
- A Perthshire brand toolkit is being produced to encourage businesses to use the Perthshire brand and ensure we are all using consistent messages, good quality images etc. to promote the area
- PKC developing a new marketing strategy (inc tourism) for Perthshire. VS, other agencies and businesses will have access to funding if they are developing campaigns/initiatives in line with the objectives of the strategy

- Good examples of local marketing collaboration – Great Scotland; local tourist associations; Perthshire Gardens Collection etc.

Sustainability

- Perthshire Green Tourism Network created with around 100 businesses involved
- Looking to increase participation in EatScotland and Green Tourism Business Scheme and both initiatives were recently promoted to delegates at tourism conference
- Recognition that we have a long way to go to meet the 2015 target for GTBS participation...some issues with cost v value of the scheme; scheme also seen as too onerous for some businesses.

The meeting also reviewed progress against the main growth levers:-

Maximising existing capacity – good progress but need to continue to encourage businesses to stay open over the winter and focus our marketing efforts on extending the season

Incremental marketing – good progress but again need to ensure sustained investment via local collaboration

Market positioning – Big Tree Country is a strong USP, need to build on this; need to continue to focus on quality – product and customer care

Cross selling – good progress but need to continue to encourage new networks and collaborative projects that will help to develop new visitor experiences and ensure good cross referral of customers to other local businesses. Perhaps a focus for next year's tourism conference?.

Infrastructure Investment - SDI and SE working with interested parties to establish suitable locations for high end hotel and new resorts in Scotland – Perthshire an attractive proposition for some high profile names which is encouraging. Feedback from businesses is also highlighting a good level of product investment – also apparent via improved QA results.

Item 6 – Post Election Lobbying Activity

David suggested that the ATP needs to engage with relevant Councillors and all MSPs post election. Suggestion that a short presentation on the challenges for developing tourism in Perthshire is required, highlighting areas that we need their support. This could be followed by a fam trip to take in a number of key businesses, local tourist associations. David and Joanne to work up an itinerary and establish dates for this activity.

Item 7 - Update from Crieff & Strathearn Tourism Association

Stuart provided an overview of activity and membership:

- 65 members
- Initially established as a marketing group
- Group continuing to develop a local website
- Recently received funding from the lottery and PKC to assist with the buying of market stalls for the community market which the association run
- Concerns locally about the closure of a key central hotel – Drummond Arms and local caravan parks – reduces the ability of the area to attract visitors for longer breaks
- Concern also about a new local supermarket taking trade away from small independent shops which enhance the visitor experience of the area

- Keen to raise awareness of the areas issues with local councillors from other parts of Perthshire – very conscious that decisions are taken by committee's and often by Councillors from out with Crieff and Strathearn

Item 8 – AOB

David concerned about the lack of national representation for the ATP. Catherine reported that plans were in place to create an ATP Chair's Forum to allow Chair's to share experiences and issues and raise these with the Scottish Exec. This would progress post election.

Date of next meeting; Friday 13th July was proposed. However, please note this has had to be moved to Friday, 20th July, 12 noon at Scotland's Hotel, Pitlochry.