

**East Lothian Tourism Plan**  
2007-10

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## **1. Introduction**

**East Lothian is officially the sunniest area of Scotland. Over 40 miles of magnificent coastline mix award-winning beaches with spectacular cliffs and fantastic links golf courses.**

To the east of Edinburgh lies the county of East Lothian, with over 40 miles of magnificent coastline, golden beaches including those at Gullane, Yellowcraig and Dunbar, rolling countryside, spectacular cliffs, award-winning tourist attractions and the world's finest selection of links golf courses including Gullane and North Berwick, East Lothian combines the best of Scotland in miniature

East Lothian has something to offer everyone. A mixture of castles and churches are steeped in history with award winning attractions to suit all tastes,

The picturesque towns and villages throughout East Lothian, including the traditional seaside towns of Dunbar and North Berwick to the county town of Haddington are ideal locations for visitors to base their holiday.

## **2. Tourism economy**

Tourism is a significant sector of the East Lothian economy, generating income in inter-dependent sectors including: accommodation, visitor attractions, food, drink and leisure. Visitors are attracted to East Lothian for the quality of the environment and a range of cultural and sporting activities. Current drivers include the growth in the number of day trippers and the short break market. In 2005 the Distribution, hotels and restaurants sector (as defined by The Office for National Statistics NOMIS), is the second largest sector in East Lothian employing 5,453 people, which accounts for 22% of all employment in the area, excluding self employed.

## **3. Terms of Reference**

The objectives of this plan are to define where we aspire to be in 3 years from now, how East Lothian might have to look if we are to reach this aspiration, and the ensuing implications for infrastructure, individual businesses and marketing.

This plan provides a framework to guide the development of annual joint activity plans of the East Lothian Tourism Forum, East Lothian Council, VisitScotland and links to tourism activities as directed by Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian.

## **4. Vision**

We aspire for East Lothian to continue to develop as a tourist destination and achieve in excess of the national ambition of 50% growth in revenue from tourism within ten years.

We want the tourism sector to continue to make a key contribution to economic development in the area. We aim to work collectively to identify, develop and promote our key product offerings for visitors to enable the area to achieve annual year-on-year growth of 5% in real terms.

## **5. External Audit**

The external audit highlights opportunities and threats and forms the basis upon which a plan of action to improve competitiveness can be built. The external audit focuses on:

- Macroenvironment
- The market
- Competition

### ***Macroenvironment***

#### **Economic**

- There is a continuing trend of rising affluence (e.g. real income doubles every 25 years in the UK) and this has led to more people travelling.
- New markets (and new destinations) are emerging with Brazil, Russia, India and China growing as global tourism markets.
- Rising fuel prices may have an impact on tourism.
- Events and festivals are seen as economic drivers for a region.

#### **Socio-cultural**

- Eclectic tastes of travellers / wealthy consumers (esp. food and drink)
- Short breaks – value for time multiple breaks
- More single travellers
- Multigenerational families
- Ageing UK population (> economic value)
- ‘Experiential’ trips (need for unique experiences)

#### **Technological**

- The internet is increasingly the method of choice to book a holiday
- ICT – information and booking
- The tourism industry lags behind other sectors on the adoption of web based technology to market to future employees.
- Email marketing and online marketing

#### **Environmental**

- Need to protect the environment that our visitors come to see.

- Environmentally minded travellers will seek out green focussed events.
- “Carbon neutral” / “green” tourism is gaining prominence with both employees and visitors.
- Alternative modes of transport need to be explored.

## ***The market***

The World Tourism Organisation is forecasting annual growth in tourism of 4-5% until 2020. In the Tourism Framework for Change, it is stated that current estimates suggest that gross tourism **revenues** in Scotland could increase by 50% by 2015.

### **Leisure tourism**

VisitScotland’s consumer research confirms that today’s travellers want:

- Customised and flexible travel to a destination generally within 3 hours travel time;
- Special interest holidays and special experiences
- Authentic experiences
- Value for money

Other key trends identified include:

- Late booking
- Rising use of internet for information and booking
- Trend towards shorter breaks
- Interest in good health
- Use of breaks as personal reward / well-being experience
- Interest in extended education

These trends suggest a growth in city breaks, activity breaks, spa/pampering experience (as well as good food and drink), and history / culture related trips.

The largest market increase is predicted to come from the fast growing overseas market, predominantly from Europe and North America. Current trends support the view that revenue in this segment could more than double by 2015. Although the emerging markets of Brazil, India, Russia and China are recognised as having potential to grow rapidly, this is from a very low base (most Chinese tourism will be to other destinations in south east Asia) so attention should still be predominantly focussed on North America and Europe.

It is predicted that the UK leisure market will continue to grow but fierce competition will mean that it will probably do so more slowly than the overseas market. Although, it is predicted to grow more slowly, the UK market still represents the large majority of leisure tourism revenue for East Lothian.

### **Business tourism**

Business tourism is also predicted to grow sharply with a predicted increase from the current level of 22% of all tourism revenues in Scotland to 25% of all tourism revenues.

This fast-growing high-yield sector presents significant opportunity for cities that can provide the appropriate infrastructure with appropriate bed stock, good transport links, good direct access by air and rail, and a range of flexible good quality core facilities.

### **Competition**

There are now over 200 countries offering a tourism product so although the market will grow, so will competition for market share. It is vital for East Lothian to continue investing if we are to achieve our share of the growing tourism market and realise the economic benefits of doing so.

There are many new competitor destinations (e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia, Turkey, Slovenia, North Africa) and growing competitor destinations. The rapid expansion in internet use also means that potential visitors use price comparison websites which means it is important to offer value for money and have a distinct value proposition.

## **6. Internal Audit**

The internal audit focuses on the activities and performance of East Lothian tourism in light of the external environment.

### **Results**

Tourism is a key sector in the local economy. The Annual Business Inquiry employee statistics (2003) show that East Lothian has a higher proportion of tourism-related jobs than the national average (13% for East Lothian, 9% for Scotland; 8% for Great Britain). Define this figure, more clarification, seasonal, full time, hospitality etc..

The Edinburgh and Lothians Tourism Accommodation Audit (2006), shows that the number of serviced rooms in East Lothian has remained consistent in recent years with 694 rooms in 1999 and 700 rooms in 2005. Including non-serviced accommodation (e.g. campus and self-catering) there are 1,173 rooms in East Lothian and 1,497 pitches at holiday/touring parks. The accommodation mix in East Lothian is very different to the surrounding areas: whilst East Lothian accounts for around 5% of rooms across Edinburgh & Lothians, the area accounts for 67% of pitches.

There are not occupancy statistics available at the East Lothian level for all categories of accommodation but statistics at the Edinburgh and Lothians level suggest that non-hotel accommodation is much more prone to seasonal variation and that occupancies are significantly lower in winter months. This is clearly the case for holiday/touring parks.

A limited number of visitor attractions in East Lothian participate in the Visitor Attraction Monitor produced by the Moffat centre at Glasgow Caledonian University. The most-visited local attractions that participate (2006 visitor numbers in brackets) are:

- National Museum of Flight (104,240)
- Tantallon Castle (23,006)

- Dirleton Castle (19,495)
- John Muir Birthplace (11,931)
- Newhailes House (10,335)

There are a range of well known other attractions in the area including The Scottish Seabird Centre, Glenkinchie Distillery, Musselburgh Racecourse, and East Links Family Park. In addition to these attractions East Lothian has a very wide selection of links and parkland golf courses. Golf is a key asset in the area and a significant draw for visitors.

Edinburgh Airport has grown rapidly in the last ten years: between 1996 and 2005, the number of passengers travelling through Edinburgh Airport increased by 154%, rising from 3.3 million to 8.5 million per annum. The number of direct international flights has increased substantially during this time.

### ***Strategic Issues***

Whilst tourism is a key contributor to East Lothian's economy, there is scope for growth in the years to come. In order to achieve this, East Lothian must address some key strategic issues:

- What is the competitive advantage (what are the primary reasons to visit)?
- Does marketing of East Lothian fit with VisitScotland's identified key markets?
- Is there capacity to enable sustainable volume growth?
- Is there sufficient choice and quality to enable growth in per capita visitor spend?

#### **What is the competitive advantage?**

East Lothian needs to define its competitive advantage and partners need to work together to strengthen this and promote it accordingly.

East Lothian Tourism Forum, East Lothian Golf Tourism Alliance, East Lothian Tourism Attractions Group, East Lothian Council and VisitScotland have worked together to identify East Lothian's key potential strengths in relation to Scotland's Key Markets. These have been identified as:

- **Golf:** Golf has long been recognised as a key driver for tourism in the area. There is an excellent range of golf courses in the area including internationally recognised links courses and the East Lothian Golf Alliance brings together businesses working to develop and promote golf to visitors. Many of the golf courses have a high profile as major championship and championship qualifying courses.
- **Active / outdoors:** East Lothian's stunning coastline has beautiful beaches for walking and watersports, spectacular cliffs and top quality golf courses. There is a wide range of holiday and caravan parks along the coastline (which account for over half of the bedstock in the county). East Lothian offers great walking with the John Muir Way, and a range of other coastal and inland walks.

- The South East Water sports Guide to Scotland was the first of its kind in Scotland. Developed in partnership between East Lothian Council and the private sector, with support from Challenge Funding, the 64-page pocket guide was an immediate success. The guide provides visitors to Edinburgh, East Lothian and Berwickshire with information on a range of water sports activities, where to do the sport and who provided it if you were a beginner. The guide has helped to establish a network of new water sports businesses and provided the basis of a strategy for water sports which is currently under development.
- **Food and drink:** Food and drink is gaining prominence as a driver for tourism and East Lothian has some firmly established product strengths. The 7<sup>th</sup> East Lothian Food Festival takes place in September 2007: the festival celebrates the county's fine food and drink traditions with participating restaurants, food outlets and visitor attractions staging a variety of events and offering a selection of dishes featuring East Lothian produce. Haddington Farmers Market runs on the last Saturday of every month and has promoted and sold East Lothian produce since 2000. Glenkinchie Distillery opened a visitor centre in 1997 and is one of only two lowland whiskies sold as a single malt. Greywalls, which overlooks Muirfield golf course, is one of only 20 restaurants in Scotland to have been awarded three AA rosettes and so is recognised as being of very high calibre. La Potiniere, Gullane also has 2 AA rosettes
- **“Freedom” – wildlife and touring:** There are a number of sites for birdwatching in East Lothian including the Scottish Seabird Centre and Aberlady Bay. There are also many other attractions that are suited to a touring holiday including Musselburgh racecourse (which contains Scotland's oldest golf course within the grounds), Concorde at the National Museum of Flight, and a whole host of historic buildings including Tantallon Castle, Dirleton Castle, Newhailes, John Muir's birthplace, St. Mary's Parish Church and Seton Collegiate Church. With East Lothian being rich in both natural and built heritage there is the market for putting together packages suitable for attracting this audience Joint working across local authority boundaries could be pursued to develop and promote this common strength.

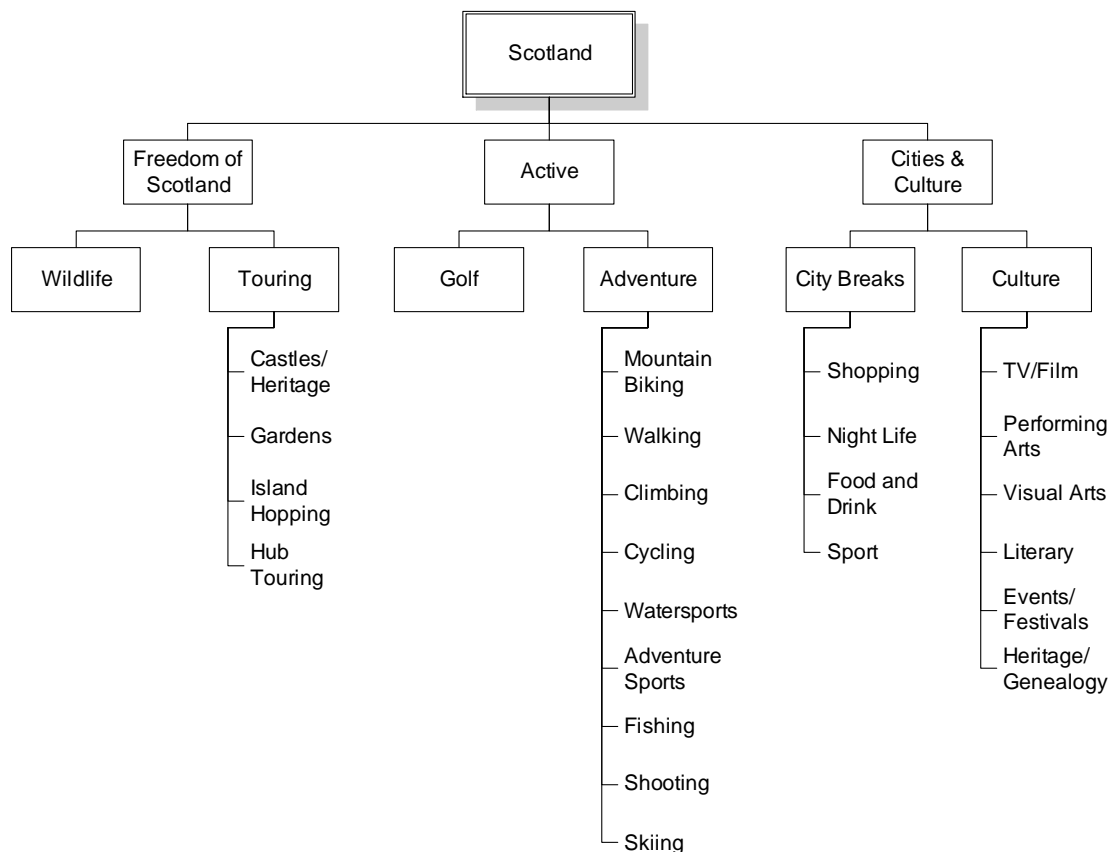
### **Does marketing of East Lothian fit with VisitScotland's identified key markets?**

Scotland's key markets as identified in the Tourism Framework for Change are identified overleaf. There is a very strong correlation between the potential sources of competitive advantage identified in East Lothian; and Scotland's key markets which VisitScotland focus their marketing activity on. In particular, East Lothian's strengths very strongly match the Touring and Golf markets. There are also areas of good fit with the Wildlife, Adventure (walking and watersports) and Culture markets

On top of this, East Lothian should seek to take advantage of its proximity to Edinburgh.

There are some areas of genuine strength in the areas of potential competitive advantage and the tourism industry in East Lothian needs to present a consistent message to capitalise on these strengths. Our aspiration needs to be to attract more overnight visitors and we need to package and present what we have to offer in a way that provides an appealing choice to potential visitors.

### Scotland's Key Markets (Tourism Framework for Change, 2006)



### **Is there capacity to enable sustainable volume growth?**

Accommodation occupancy figures suggest that there is significant spare capacity outside peak holiday season, particularly in non-serviced accommodation. To grow sustainably, we need to make best use of existing facilities in a way that allows businesses to prosper year round and provide year round employment opportunities. In order to achieve this, we need to develop and promote strong reasons to visit during the off-peak months. Current activity to date includes the East Lothian Food and Drink Festival in September and the walking Festival and Scotland's Tartan Day in April. Further opportunities lie in developing events in 2009, Year of Homecoming.

The Edinburgh and Lothians Tourism Accommodation Audit (2006) suggests opportunities for more accommodation in East Lothian and future provision of this may

help increase the number of overnight visitors to the area. Specifically the audit identifies potential need for smaller 3 and 4 star hotels to meet demand for leisure visitors, and the need for a golf-focus upmarket resort of a 4 or 5 star standard. The audit also suggests demand growth for heritage style properties.

**Is there sufficient choice and quality to enable growth in per capita visitor spend?**

From the key strengths identified above, East Lothian clearly offers great choice to visitors for golf and in its natural product (coastline, heritage etc.).

The Edinburgh and Lothians Tourism Accommodation Audit (2006) suggest that East Lothian lags behind the City Of Edinburgh for participation in the VisitScotland QA scheme. With proportionately fewer graded properties there are potential issues in consumer confidence and in business promotion. (The study highlighted that 59% of properties in East Lothian are graded or awaiting inspection against 77.3% for City of Edinburgh).

Green tourism presents a potential opportunity for East Lothian and at present there are some early adopters in the county including 5 businesses who have achieved Gold Awards. However, participation is still limited (a total of eight businesses) in the Green Tourism Business Scheme. The East Lothian Tourist Attractions Group have actively supported the scheme and are committed to all it's members being accredited by 2008 but wider participation throughout the county would reinforce East Lothian's credentials in this increasingly important area.

## **7. Core strategic objectives**

As a result of the external and internal audits, relevant strategic objectives have been identified. These have been grouped under the four main headings of the Tourism Framework for Change:

- Knowing your market
- Exceeding visitors' expectations
- Marketing your product
- Being sustainable

### ***Knowing Your Market***

Innovation in product and service development is key to the future competitiveness of the Scottish tourism industry. We operate in a fast changing consumer marketplace and it is essential to continually enhance our tourism product to keep pace with growing competition. Good market intelligence is a key driver of innovation and enterprise. To support the industry in this area, a new joint initiative, "Tourism Intelligence Scotland" has been developed by Scottish Enterprise, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and VisitScotland. It is important that East Lothian tourism businesses are aware of, and capitalise on, this resource.

There is concern that there is limited accommodation occupancy data at the East Lothian level and that to better inform strategic decision-making tourism businesses need to actively participate in occupancy surveys.

### ***Exceeding Visitors' Expectations***

We want to exceed our visitors' expectations in order that they want to return and personally recommend the area to others. All tourism and related businesses should be encouraged to become part of VisitScotland's Quality Assurance (QA) schemes, where they will be supported in raising their standards. Best practice should be shared within the industry to enable East Lothian businesses to collectively exceed visitors' expectations.

Both East Lothian Tourism Attractions Group and East Lothian Golf Tourism Alliance Group have made inroads in developing products, which will enhance a visitor's experience of East Lothian. Joint working and packaging of products has led to increased awareness of East Lothian and product offering to visitors.

To capitalise on the potential sources of competitive advantage for tourism in East Lothian, we must continue to focus on innovation and product developments in Golf; Active/Outdoors; Food and Drink; Wildlife and Touring (Castles/Heritage). There is a need to focus collaborative efforts and resources on development and promotion of common themes that bring competitive advantage to the county.

The tourism workforce is central to delivering and exceeding visitors' expectations and all tourism businesses must equip their workforce with the necessary skills. Businesses should be aware of, and utilise, available support such as the development of "100k Welcomes," a single portfolio of courses being developed by the Enterprise Agencies, which seeks to enhance tourism businesses' productivity and competitiveness. East Lothian Council is committed to improving a visitor's experience whilst in East Lothian and is working with Visitscotland in providing appropriate tourism facilities and services.

Customer-focussed information provision, be it through tourist information centres, the internet, or tourism businesses themselves, is crucial to enhancing the visitor experience and East Lothian tourism businesses and public sector partners need to continue to work in partnership to ensure we are all well equipped to promote the strengths of the area.

e-Technology provides countless opportunities for tourism businesses to change the way they work from on-line marketing or internet booking, to creating a customer feedback system or providing Podcasts to help guide visitors during their visit. Effective and innovative use of technology is essential if the tourism industry in East Lothian is to compete in a rapidly advancing market. Email Marketing will be undertaken regularly by ELGTA and ELTAG, and was successfully used to attract buyers to the East Lothian stand at Visitscotland Expo April 07. East Lothian Council's Museums Services has also developed an audio tour at Prestongrange open-air museum using mobile phones.

## ***Marketing Your Product***

For visitors to come to and stay in East Lothian, in addition to having quality products that will exceed their expectations, we need them to know about our product. Collectively, we need to market and provide information in a way that reinforces the key strengths of the area. Key strengths of the area that fit strongly with Scotland's Key Markets (as identified in the Tourism Framework for Change) are:

- Golf
- Watersports and Walking (fits Adventure market)
- Bird watching (fits Wildlife Market)
- Castles/Heritage (fits Touring market);
- Food and Drink (fits Cities and Culture market).

To take advantage of this existing potential for competitive advantage, we need to work collaboratively to package and promote what is on offer in order that potential visitors are aware of the strength and depth of product offering and are enticed to visit the area. Businesses should be encouraged to collaborate on marketing initiatives that reinforce the common strengths of the area and may, where appropriate, seek external funding to further strengthen their collaborative working.

Local businesses can promote themselves through a range of VisitScotland marketing opportunities and the more East Lothian businesses can participate, the stronger the collective representation will be. VisitScotland content on East Lothian should also reinforce the common themes identified in this document.

Where there are common strengths across geographic boundaries (e.g. Castles and Heritage across all the Lothians), we should seek to collaborate to compete. The joint working group of Lothian Local Authorities are looking at developing joint working under heritage and touring theme.

## ***Being Sustainable***

It is important that we achieve growth in tourism revenues in a way that is sustainable for our economy, our communities and our environment.

We should encourage off-peak growth in order that businesses can operate and succeed on a year round basis and provide year round employment for the benefit of local communities. To stimulate off-peak growth East Lothian needs to look to develop reasons to visit (e.g. packages and events) during the shoulder season of November to March. Further development of the walking festival and Tartan Day could help lengthen season at beginning of year and more could be made of the food festival developed primarily to extend the season into September.

Tourism businesses share a responsibility for protecting the environment, which in itself brings so many of our visitors. Businesses need to act sustainably both as a means of reducing costs (e.g. through reduced energy bills) and as a means of competitive

advantage as numbers of sustainably minded visitors grow. To this end more East Lothian businesses should participate in the Green Tourism Business Scheme.

## **8. Implementation and control**

This strategy will form the basis of The East Lothian Tourism Action Plans. Progress against these plans will be updated annually. Each action will be assigned an industry sector champion and will also have identified public sector support and timelines.

The chair and vice-chair of East Lothian Tourism Forum sit on the Edinburgh and Lothians Area Tourism Partnership, which will monitor delivery of local action plans in support of the delivering the targets set out in the Tourism Framework for Change.

It is proposed to generate a set of key indicators to measure progress in achieving the goal of increasing tourism revenue in East Lothian. Suggested indicators are:

- Accommodation occupancy figures by sector (from TNS Travel & Tourism at Edinburgh & Lothians level)
- Net annual change in bed stock
- Number of businesses e-enabled for bookings on [www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)
- [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com) booking figures
- Visitor Attractions Monitor produced by Moffat Centre, Glasgow Caledonian University
- North Berwick and Dunbar Tourist Information Centres visitor numbers
- Number of East Lothian businesses in VisitScotland QA scheme
- Number of East Lothian businesses in Green Tourism Business Scheme
- Website statistics from [www.golfeastlothian.com](http://www.golfeastlothian.com) and [www.visiteastlothian.org](http://www.visiteastlothian.org)
- Visitor numbers to East Lothian tourism attractions

## Appendix 1 – Action Plan 2007/08

### *Knowing Your Market*

<b>Project Title: TOURISM INTELLIGENCE SCOTLAND</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies: SEEL / VisitScotland</b>

<b>Project Title: PARTICIPATION IN TNS OCCUPANCY SURVEY</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>

<b>Project Title:</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>

### *Exceeding Visitors' Expectations*

<b>Project Title: RAISING STANDARDS</b>	
<b>Action: Increase participation of accommodation providers in VisitScotland QA Scheme</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>

<b>Project Title:</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>

<b>Project Title:</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>

### ***Marketing Your Product***

<b>Project Title: COLLABORATIVE MARKETING</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>

<b>Project Title: USE OF KEY MESSAGES</b>	
<b>Action:</b> VisitScotland messages to reinforce strengths of Golf and Touring (Castles/Heritage)	
<b>Measure:</b> Messages used in Discover East Lothian brochure, Accommodation Guide, Essential Guide, <a href="http://www.edinburgh.org">www.edinburgh.org</a> reinforce strengths.	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b> VisitScotland

<b>Project Title:</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>

<b>Project Title:</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>

### ***Being Sustainable***

<b>Project Title: GREEN TOURISM</b>	
<b>Action:</b> Increase number of East Lothian businesses participating in green Tourism Business Scheme from XX as at 1 <sup>st</sup> January to 2007 to XX by end 2007.	
<b>Measure:</b> XX East Lothian businesses in scheme by end 2007	
<b>Champion:</b> Existing GTBS Award Holder???	<b>Support Agencies:</b> VisitScotland

<b>Project Title:</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>

<b>Project Title: FOOD AND DRINK TRADE EXHIBITION??</b>	
<b>Action:</b>	
<b>Measure:</b>	
<b>Champion:</b>	<b>Support Agencies:</b>