

Edinburgh & Lothians Area Tourism Partnership (ATP)

Friday 14th March 2008

Sun Microsystems, Linlithgow, West Lothian

Present

Fergus Waters (Vice Chair)	Midlothian Tourism Forum
Cllr David Berry	East Lothian Council
Robert Conway	East Lothian Tourism Forum
Sue Stuart	Edinburgh Convention Bureau Ltd
Barbara Smith	Edinburgh Tourism Action Group
Quintin Young	Midlothian Tourism Forum
Cllr Martyn Day	West Lothian Council
Robin Chesters	West Lothian Tourism Forum
Geraldine Hamilton	West Lothian Tourism Forum
Graeme Rigg	City of Edinburgh Council
Susan Smith	East Lothian Council
Sandy MacMillan	Midlothian Council
Susan Watson	Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian
John Masson	West Lothian Council
Alistair Shaw	West Lothian Council
Ben Carter	VisitScotland
Sandi Hellowell	VisitScotland

In Attendance

Ronnie Bamberry	Linlithgow Pride and Passion
Sharon Watt	VisitScotland Edinburgh Network Office

Apologies

Cllr Jenny Dawe (Chair)	City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Steve Cardownie	City of Edinburgh Council
Provost Adam Montgomery	Midlothian Council
Bill McNair	East Lothian Tourism Forum
Simon Williams	Edinburgh Tourism Action Group
Raoul Barbier	City of Edinburgh Council
Kenneth Wardrop	City of Edinburgh Council
Claire Dutton	East Lothian Council
John Beveridge	Midlothian Council
Linda McPherson	Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian

1 Welcome and introductions

Fergus Waters chaired the meeting and commenced by welcoming everyone to the meeting of the Area Tourism Partnership (ATP). Fergus thanked Sun Microsystems for hosting the meeting.

Councillor Dawe submitted her apologies. Apologies were also received from those noted above.

Fergus welcomed the following in attendance:

- Graeme Rigg attended on behalf Raoul Barbier, City of Edinburgh Council.
- Ronnie Bamberry, presenting at the meeting on Linlithgow Pride and Passion.
- Barbara Smith, Chair of ETAG, attending her first Area Tourism Partnership Meeting.

It was also announced that Robert Conway, who has attended previous ATP meetings has been appointed Chair of East Lothian Tourism Forum.

2 Minutes of 7th December 2007

Matters Arising

Ben Carter noted that one of the future dates of the meetings was recorded incorrectly. It read as 5th August and should have been 5th September.

Fergus asked Ben for an update from the previous meeting on the proposed setting up of a short-life working group to review the partnership's mission and vision. Ben noted that there were no volunteers to take this forward at present, and suggested that it was still a worthwhile exercise to ensure partners can benefit from the Area Tourism Partnership.

Fergus asked that everyone in the group should provide input into how the ATP should operate and for any comments to be forwarded to Ben.

3 Linlithgow Pride and Passion

Ronnie Bamberry delivered a presentation to the group on the Pride and Passion initiative in Linlithgow. Ronnie highlighted the energy and enthusiasm of local people in delivering this bottom-up initiative. The group have identified the opportunity to move Linlithgow from being a commuter town to being a successful tourism town.

Ronnie provided several examples of the outputs from the initiative, and provided Linlithgow maps and calendars at the meeting. To find out more, visit their website at www.linlithgow.com.

Fergus thanked Ronnie for his presentation and his commitment to Pride and Passion.

4 VisitScotland Edinburgh & Lothians Network Office – report from Area Director

Ben Carter presented the report at the meeting and gave highlights including:

- **Visit Scotland Restructure** – Ben noted that a briefing was sent to all Edinburgh and Lothians ATP representatives and in addition the Chairman of VisitScotland has written to all local authority Leaders and Chief Executives across Scotland.

Ben added the core purpose of VisitScotland remains the same, which is to maximise the economic impact of tourism to Scotland through the core areas of activity:

- Marketing
 - Information provision
 - Quality Assurance
- **Tourist Information Centres** – Ben made reference to the following:
 - Year to date versus prior year visitor numbers
 - Linlithgow TIC (interim arrangements during refurbishment of Burgh Halls)
 - Improvements to Edinburgh Tourist Information Centre
 - **Recent Marketing Activity**
 - Accommodation and Essential Guides for 2008 launched in January
 - Visit Midlothian and Visit Midlothian publications (including on-line version) ready for Easter 2008
 - Mary, Queen of Scots Trail featuring attractions throughout Lothians going live for Easter 2008
 - London Underground marketing campaign
 - Joint marketing activity with EasyJet
 - Winter White campaign focused on extending the tourist season
 - **Industry Engagement:**
 - Successful Lothians Industry event held at Scottish Mining Museum in February. The event was tailored for small to medium sized Lothians based businesses.

The full report was circulated in advance to the group and will also be posted on:
http://www.visitscotland.org/about_us/local_network_offices/edinburgh_and_lothians/edinburgh_and_lothians-minutes_and_reports.htm

5 Round Table updates

The Chair invited each area's representatives to provide an update on their local activity. Full updates are shown as Appendix 1 of the minutes.

As noted previously some members have indicated an interest in sharing best practice. If there are activities raised in the round table update that anyone would like to find out more about, then you can either directly contact the organisation involved or liaise with VisitScotland Edinburgh and Lothians staff who will be happy to facilitate contact.

Full updates are shown as Appendix 1 of the minutes.

6 Any other competent business

- Fergus asked if anyone has suggestions or points to be raised at the next meeting then contact Ben Carter to have this put on the Agenda.
- Graeme Rigg shared with the group how impressed he was with the information from www.travelinescotland.com . It provided information on how to get from A to B using various modes of transport and walking distances.
- Fergus raised that Midlothian, West Lothian and East Lothian are all exhibiting at Expo 2008 and that they should investigate booking adjoining stand spaces for Expo 2009. Lothians forum chairs to follow up separately outwith meeting.

7 Dates of Future Meetings

Friday 13th June (venue to be confirmed)
Friday 5th September (venue to be confirmed)
Thursday 4th December (venue to be confirmed)

Appendix 1

Edinburgh and Lothian Area Tourism Partnership Meeting: 14th March 2008 - Area Updates Paper

EAST LOTHIAN

Tartan Day

Finalised programme for Tartan Day, information online at www.scotlandstartanday.com Highlights include:

- Celidh at Glenkinchie
- Tartan Trails
- 3 Walks leading to Athelstaneford for shortened reading of the declaration of Arbroath

Expo

Putting together the stand for Expo in Aberdeen.

Visiteastlothian

Developing the next stage of the visiteastlothian website including an online passport for visitors. If you visit more than 3 attractions you receive an on the spot prize.

East Lothian Tourism Forum

East Lothian Tourism Forum elected new chair - Robert Conway, from Arden Guest House in Musselburgh. He has lots of good new ideas for taking tourism forward.

Homecoming Scotland

Homecoming Scotland applications went in for a themed programme.

- Whisky and golf, Burns Supper at museum of flight
- Joint John Muir and seabird centre wildlife week.

East Lothian Golf Tourism Alliance (ELGTA)

- The East Lothian Golf Tourism Alliance (ELGTA) exhibited at Europe's largest consumer show, the Rheingolf Show in Cologne.
- ELGTA exhibited at North America's biggest consumer show, The Toronto Golf & Travel Show in partnership with Carnoustie Country and the East of Scotland Golf Alliance.
- In addition to a very successful show, ELGTA co-hosted a Scottish evening which was attended by just over 60 of Canada's leading golf writers, tour operators and Scottish society leaders. As a result of meeting held in Toronto several Canadian golf and travel writers will be visiting East Lothian in April and May to write golf travel features.
- A new edition of the East Lothian Golf Guide will be published at the beginning of April.
- ELGTA exhibited at the first Scottish Corporate Event show, The Main Event, held at the SECC in Glasgow.

Edinburgh Tourism Action Group

Edinburgh Inspiring Capital Website

The website launch was held on 8th February 2008 at the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh. It follows more than a year of development work led by the EICB team, with support and contributions from more than 150 public and private sector organisations across the region. For the first time, the city region is able to cross sell its benefits to a range of different audiences. For example, a tourist visiting the area may then decide they want to study here or move their business and family here. The information now available in the VISIT, STUDY, INVEST and LIVE sections will all be of interest. The site can be found at www.edinburgh-inspiringcapital.com

ETAG (Edinburgh Tourism Action Group) Conference

The event was held at Murrayfield Stadium on 19th February 2008 and entitled *Edinburgh International Destination - Learning from International Best Practice*. This was Edinburgh Tourism Action Group's (ETAG's) sixth annual conference and one hundred and eighty delegates attending from many of the leading hotels, attractions, tourism operators and facilities in the area. Discussion focused on examples of best practice from around the world, with emphasis on how successful cities benefit from business collaboration, strategic direction and customer focus.

Paul Vallee, the Executive Vice-President of Tourism Vancouver, delivered an impressive presentation showcasing Vancouver, the importance of their waterfront development and how a visitor levy has been used to benefit the city's tourism sector. Claes Bjerkne, Managing Director of Goteborg & Co, showed his passion for both his own city and Edinburgh. He highlighted the need for a clear vision and strong partnership when working to deliver world class results. Faith Liddell, Director of Festivals Edinburgh encouraged the audience to look at the many opportunities festivals provide.

A Sustainable Tourism Strategy

The production of a Sustainable Urban Tourism Strategy (SUTS) has begun and will be finalised this year. It will cover seasonality, transport impacts, resource allocation, natural/cultural heritage and quality of life/jobs.

Taste of Edinburgh 2008

This Channel 4 event returns to the Meadows from 29th May – 1st June 2008. Last year it attracted 25,000 visitors and chefs representing 15 local restaurants participated. This year, the event will be bigger with 22 local restaurants participating.

Chefs at the Market Place

This inaugural event will be held at the Atrium restaurant on 17th March 2008. It will bring together up to 90 local chefs and 13 local producer/suppliers. Food from the surrounding area will be cooked and served.

Edinburgh International Science Festival

The science festival has its 20th anniversary this year and will run from Tuesday 25th March to Saturday 5th April 2008. Information on events can be found at www.sciencefestival.co.uk or by calling 0131 524 9830

EDINBURGH CONVENTION BUREAU

Edinburgh Convention Bureau's Business Plan for 2008/09 has been drawn up to provide a strategic context for the Bureau's activities in the financial year 2008/09 and to deliver additional business for the business tourism industry in Edinburgh through a range of targeted marketing and sales programmes.

Objectives

The majority of the objectives and core activities contained in the Plan represent an extension of the 2008/09 programme, adjusted to take account of changing market forces, together with other relevant external and internal factors. These include the following key factors:

- reduction in public sector funding contributions (SEEL Ambassador programme funding concluded in 2007)
- no significant increase in venue space (completion date for EICC extension yet to be confirmed)
- decrease in city centre gala dinner space (temporary closure of Royal Museum)
- conference infrastructure currently incapable of supporting two or more simultaneous large events
- growth in competition from increasingly well-resourced and well-organised competitor destinations
- potential negative impact of predicted global recession on business tourism – particularly the corporate market sector.

The overall objective for Edinburgh Convention Bureau in 2008/09 is to achieve £71.74m of economic benefit in total from conferences confirmed through efforts of the Bureau – maintaining the economic revenue totals achieved for 2007/08. This will be achieved through a combination of the following actions:

- aim to increase Edinburgh's share of the international and national association conference market, by concentrating on events which generate high yield return for the destination. The conversion of association bids supplemented by reactive sales support provided to international and national association conference organisers will result in 85 association conferences being secured, comprising 46 international and 39 national association conferences.
- develop Edinburgh's share of the corporate market by securing conferences worth £8.2m to the economic benefit of the city
- focus on attracting high yield conference business to the city, measurable by a 2% increase in bed night figures secured for 2008 and beyond.
- by continuing to build on members' benefits and marketing opportunities, the ECB will seek to increase membership numbers to 146 and achieve membership income of £142,120.
- the Edinburgh Ambassador Programme influences over 70% of the city's association conference wins and thereby generates substantial economic benefit for the city. ECB will enhance the impact of this asset in 2008/09 by further developing the

Edinburgh Ambassador Programme recognising its critical role in securing bid opportunities to host conferences in the core market sectors of life sciences, technology and informatics.

- for the benefit of members, increase to £1.3m the economic benefit derived by ECB's Conference Accommodation Booking Service (CABS) – representing a 7.5% increase on actual income achieved in 2007-08.
- continue to investigate mechanisms for influencing pre and post conference stays, for the benefit of members, suppliers and customers.
- participate in Task Group to review options for how Edinburgh can best promote itself as an international destination for tourism, talent and trade.
- lead a conference-related infrastructure audit across the city to provide a comprehensive strategic overview of the conference infrastructure developments required to ensure city's competitiveness.
- Continue to develop the mid and long-term activities to support the ECB's five year business plan including the review of membership structure.

Outputs & impacts

To achieve these objectives, the Edinburgh Convention Bureau will carry out detailed action plans with specific and measurable targets, all of which are presented in the full Business Plan (available by contacting info@conventionedinburgh.com or tel: 0131-473 3666).

Confirmed Conferences

Edinburgh's international reputation as a world class centre for life sciences technology, informatics and financial services research has assisted the Bureau in attracting high value business tourists and confirming 25 conference wins for Edinburgh during January and February. The topics of these conferences range from gene therapy to wind energy and paediatric haematology and oncology to microelectronics – they will attract up to 7,900 delegates and be worth £7.4m to the economy. Recent wins include:

- Rotary International Great Britain and Ireland Conference 24-25 April 2009 with 2,000 delegates and valued at £2.1m to the local economy.
- 11th International Paediatric Haematology and Oncology Update Meeting 23-24 October 2008 at royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh valued at £182,000 to the local economy.

ECB participated in several sales and promotional events during the Winter these included:-

- **EIBTM – Barcelona**– ECB participated in this annual global meetings and incentives exhibition in Barcelona which brings together nearly 3,000 international suppliers with over 6,000 visitors, hosted buyers and press for 3 days.

The event generated a substantial number of leads for the Edinburgh with potential events ranging in size for 100 to 2000 delegates.

- **Burns Supper Familiarisation Visit** – This trip is part of a rolling programme of familiarisation visits the Bureau organises throughout the year. The aim of the Burns Supper visit was to
 - Advance bid development with key clients with whom the Bureau is working
 - Generate new business and raise awareness of Scotland's capital among newly identified conference organisers.
- **Site Inspections** – the Bureau organised 6 site inspections during December & January for clients considering Edinburgh as a potential destination for their forthcoming conferences and for clients whose event is confirmed for the city, and are looking for social programme venues. The potential worth of business for the city from these clients is £4.4m with conferences dates ranging from June 2008 to June 2010.

MIDLOTHIAN

Midlothian Tourism Action Plan 2008-10

Launch of Midlothian Tourism Action Plan by Provost Adam Montgomery at Dalhousie Castle and Spa on Wednesday 26 March 2008 (11.00 for 11.30am).

Scottish Mining Museum

The Scottish Mining Museum is now “the most treasured place” in Scotland. The Lady Victoria Colliery will be prominent in the celebration of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland Centenary exhibition. This major exhibition from the collections of RCAHMS is taking place at the City Art Centre, Edinburgh, 25 Oct 2008 – 17 Jan 2009.

Leader Funding

The bid lodged with the Scottish Government on 31 October 2007 was approved on the 10 March 2008. The Tyne Esk area will receive funding of £2.23 million under the LEADER programme over the period 2008 to 2013. The local development strategy can now be implemented with the Local Action Group opening for business by seeking applications from potential beneficiaries.

The themes selected by the LAG are:

- Revitalising Communities; and
- Progressive Rural Economy.

These themes will result in support for projects that support rural diversification, business creation and the development and the encouragement of tourism including support to events, small scale infrastructure, themed trails, renovation of historic buildings and encouraging local environmental schemes and green technologies.

Explore Midlothian @ VisitScotland expo 2008, 16 - 17 April 2008

- Midlothian Council is supporting the production of exhibition stands and the planning of the event by a working group comprising members of the Midlothian Tourism Forum.

www.visitmidlothian.com

The Meet in Midlothian website of Midlothian Tourism Forum is due to go live towards the end of March 2008.

Leaflets and websites

Midlothian Council has provided funding for the production of leaflets highlighting the heritage, wildlife, graveyards and ghosts of Midlothian. Along with a reworked Trails leaflet and a Discount Brochure an exciting and robust branded package will be available for expo.

www.midlothianheritage.com and www.midlothianwildlife.com will also go live in March 2008.

Visit Midlothian Guide

The Visit Midlothian guide is at the printers and will be ready for distribution from 20 March 2008. It will be distributed via TICs throughout Edinburgh & Lothians in addition to leaflet racking throughout the whole VS TIC network. EAE will distribute the guides throughout April in Edinburgh & Lothians, Borders, Stirling & Trossachs accommodation establishments, visitor attractions, restaurants, shops, cinemas/theatres with drop-offs along the A1 corridor.

The guides will be available through www.visitscotland.com and www.edinburgh.org both digitally and available for hard copy requests, and any potential direct mail activity in 2008/09.

PR next week for local media, in addition to VS April e-update bulletin.

Sheriffhall Park and Ride

The Sheriffhall Park and Ride opened on Sunday 3 February 2008. Located on the A7 between Danderhall and the Sheriffhall roundabout it is the latest in a series of planned park and ride facilities around Edinburgh being developed by SEStran in partnership with local government. It offers commuters a real alternative to taking their cars into the City and helps cut down on congestion as well as reducing our carbon footprint.

Work has commenced on the park and ride at Straiton and a Planning application has been submitted for the park and ride at Lothianburn.

Waverley Rail Project

The Scottish Government has given its backing to the Waverley Railway Project with an assurance that construction work on the rail link will start in the next three years.

Homecoming Scotland

Midlothian Council in partnership with Midlothian Tourism Forum commissioned the Market Specialists to prepare a funding bid for two themed events:

- Scottish Mining Mayfest; and

- Brass in the Park Festival.

Both are eligible for support from the £1million fund set aside for this category but with 180 applicants it is likely to be highly competitive, so fingers crossed.

Tourism Signs

Midlothian Council has ordered replacement signs resulting from the market failure of Edinburgh Crystal and new interpretation panels for 12 sites highlighting the Visitor Attractions available throughout the area.

Gore Glen Woodland Park

Project work completed at this site. Work involved the thinning of the woodland, upgrading of the path network and the creation of new routes with walkers now able to access spectacular views across Midlothian.

Rosslyn Chapel

Month on month data now shows that annual visitor numbers could drop by 20,000 a year now that the film and book hype is over. It is thought that numbers could dip to 155,000 in 2007/08. 176,000 visited in 2006/07. Restoration work is planned to start in October 2008. The plans include the removal of the canopy towards the end of 2009. The £1.3 million raised from the additional visitor numbers will fund the ongoing renovation and the extended visitor centre.

SCOTTISH ENTERPRISE EDINBURGH AND LOTHIAN

Edinburgh Tourism Action Group (ETAG)

The ETAG Action Group held its 6th annual conference at Murrayfield on 19 February. Approximately 195 delegates attended to learn more about International City Tourism Destination Best Practice – key themes covered on the day were Festivals and Events, Business Tourism, City Centres and Waterfronts. Keynote speakers from Gothenburg and Vancouver shared their experience with local businesses along with The Director of Festivals Edinburgh, Faith Liddell who gave an insight into Edinburgh's world leading position in this field. Delegates were also able to benefit from a range of interactive workshops which saw a number of leading businesses give an insight into the secrets of their success.

Edinburgh International Climbing Arena - Competition Wall

Edinburgh Leisure and SEE&L have appointed a leading climbing wall construction company (Entre-prises UK) to design and construct the world's largest articulated competition wall at EICA. Construction will be completed by summer 2008 and, working with EventScotland and CEC's Events Unit, work will begin to attract World Climbing Championships. EICA will be recognised as the leading venue within the world's climbing fraternity.

Waterfront Visitor Destination Development Plan

SEEL are leading on a piece of work to develop a Visitor Destination Development Plan for Edinburgh's Waterfront, the aim of which is to inform and guide future investment in tourism-led projects at Edinburgh's Waterfront.

The destination planning approach, endorsed in April last year by the key private sector stakeholders, including Forth Ports, WEL, National Grid, and a cross section of representatives from the tourism and hospitality sector, is very much focused on the bigger picture and aims to ensure adequate coordination and communication between all key stakeholders in Edinburgh's Waterfront (both private and public sector). A critical element of the destination plan approach is to ensure that any future investment is driven by a shared vision of Edinburgh's Waterfront, and that the overarching vision is jointly agreed and endorsed by all key players and stakeholders who have an active interest in developing tourism-led projects.

The ultimate aim of the destination plan is to ensure that visitors to Edinburgh's Waterfront benefit from a consistently high quality, integrated and seamless experience. Based on the longer term vision for the area, the destination plan will identify and agree a set of priority tourism-led projects that will not only capture existing and ongoing projects but will also identify development opportunities that will ensure Edinburgh is at the top of the league as a 'must see' Waterfront City.

The project, which is at a pivotal stage, is now focused on creating a long term vision for Edinburgh's Waterfront and defining the key target visitor markets and scope of the destination.

Visitor Levy

Industry engagement and influencing over a 2 year period has driven this project to the next important phase which was endorsed by a key group of Edinburgh Hoteliers in January. Following a range of work to identify innovative funding methods for the development and sustained growth of the tourism sector in Edinburgh (and Scotland), a key milestone was reached with agreement from hoteliers to move ahead with developing a statutory visitor levy in the city. This project has the ability to have far reaching effects – including the potential to deliver funding for a range of key strategic investments such as an Edinburgh Destination Management Organisation; leverage for infrastructure projects in the business tourism arena or sustainable development projects benefiting the visitor and environment.

The working group will now report back to Jim Mather, MSP, Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism who has indicated that he is keen to encourage and support the industry in their drive to develop strategic partnership initiatives.

The Gathering 2009

SEEL is providing funding towards the development of The Gathering – a new event concept designed to deliver a signature project under the ancestral tourism pillar of The Homecoming celebrations. The event vision is to “hold the greatest clan gathering the world has ever seen” through the staging of an international clan gathering and Highland Games in Edinburgh. The event programme will run over 3 days from 24-26 July 2009. The event aims to attract around 8,000 clan and Scottish society members, with 6,500 coming from out with Scotland. The estimated economic impact of the event and the additional expenditure generated through extended stays throughout the rest of Scotland is £5.9m.

Tourism Skills Passport

The Edinburgh Tourism Passport has been created to provide a standardised training benchmark for all frontline customer service employees working within the capital's Hospitality, Leisure, Travel and Tourism businesses. The ETP focuses on skills development in five key areas – communication, team working, customer care and personal appearance and product knowledge.

Following a successful pilot, the focus of the current phase of the project is to develop a business plan and action plan for the ETP's rollout from a successful pilot project to a sustainable, industry led skills project. Meanwhile, following a strong appetite from the industry, we continue to deliver the product throughout the Lothian region. The recent round of Train-the-Trainer sessions have been well received and have been attended by a wide range of tourism businesses across the Lothian's including Scottish Mining Museum, Historic Scotland (mainly venues out-with the city), Museum of Flight and Longniddry Golf Club.

Citta Slow Bid – Linlithgow

SEEL has supported Linlithgow private sector and WLC in its bid for Citta Slow status. One of the main drivers for Cittaslow has been the monthly Farmers' Markets which have now been running for almost a year. One of the next tasks for the Linlithgow Citta Slow Steering Group will be to broaden its base to include other businesses, voluntary organisations and interested individuals. Although, food and local produce are core elements in Cittaslow, the project will also cover areas such as hospitality (including accommodation providers), the environment and historic buildings - all of which are relevant to sustaining and developing Linlithgow in terms of tourism.

Edinburgh Military Tattoo – Infrastructure

SEEL has recently secured approval to support the Edinburgh Military Tattoo carry out detailed design and site investigation work required to develop new, innovative event infrastructure. The need to replace the stands has been an issue for a number of years and a number of alternative solutions have been investigated. Work is also underway to explore innovative funding solutions which will optimise private sector investment in the capital cost of the new infrastructure.

Midlothian – Tourism Action Plan and new website

SEEL will be attending the launch of the Midlothian Tourism Action Plan later in March as a public sector partner.

Business Development Support

SEEL continues to provide business manager support to two tourism groups - the East Lothian Golf Alliance and Festivals Edinburgh. Both groups are making steady progress against their business/action plans and, through the support of their business manager, have been able to benefit from the support of a range of Scottish Enterprise products and services.

WEST LOTHIAN

Review of Tourism Service Provision

In November 2007, West Lothian Council and West Lothian Tourism Forum appointed Tourism Leisure Solutions and the Glamis Consultancy to undertake a review of tourism service provision in West Lothian. Their final report has now been received and the Council, West Lothian Tourism Forum, VisitScotland and other key stakeholders are considering the recommendations contained in the report.

The key recommendation is that a public / private sector partnership organisation should be established to manage and develop tourism provision in West Lothian, using a Destination Management Organisation model with additional areas of responsibility such as product development included. Initially, it is proposed that a member of WLC Tourism & Town Centres staff should be seconded full-time to the new organisation.

Visitor Information

Over the winter, volunteers from Linlithgow Pride & Passion and Linlithgow Business Association operated the TIC as a Visitor Awareness Centre at weekends. This proved very successful and they will continue to use the premises for group tourist-related activities, including activities for schools, until the end of June, when the Burgh Halls close for extensive renovation. It also shown that there was a demand for visitor information at this time of the year.

Because of the closure of the Burgh Halls for 18 months, visitor information services will move to County Buildings (opposite the Burgh Halls) and open on Good Friday. This is a joint venture between the Council and VisitScotland, with Council Information Services staff providing the service during the week and VisitScotland staff coming in over the weekend. CIS staff have received VS training and all staff will continue to have local training and visits to operators.

This will be a year-round service, with longer opening hours, and will continue in this form until the opening of the renovated Burgh Halls at the end of 2009.

New West Lothian Leaflet

A new leaflet, 'Great Days Out in West Lothian', is currently being prepared and should be ready by the end of the month. It will replace the current VS 'Discovery West Lothian' leaflet and will have a print run of 100000. It is hoped that the leaflet will be more relevant to the West Lothian market and contain more detailed information for visitors on arrival.

Expo 2008

Visitors to Expo in Aberdeen will be confronted by West Lothian time-travellers, Mary Queen of Scots and James 'Paraffin' Young (replacing Scotty from last year). The theme of the stand will be 'Lighting the Way Home', linking Paraffin Young and Homecoming 2009. Since Mary Queen of Scots has to come into it somewhere, she will be carrying a candle.