

**Minutes Area Tourism Partnership Meeting held
Tuesday 19th February 2008
Venue: Gailes Hotel & Restaurant, Irvine**

Present:

Bob Leitch, Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry (Chair)
John Spooner, East Ayrshire Council
Cllr Jim Buchanan, East Ayrshire Council
Carolyn Elder, Largs Yacht Haven
Provost Winifred Sloan, South Ayrshire Council
Stuart Gibson, North Ayrshire Council
Lesley Cannon, South Ayrshire Council
Howard Wilkinson, Ayrshire Chamber Tourism Forum
Mark Rodwell, Prestwick International Airport
Sandi Hellowell, VisitScotland
Catriona Mackie, VisitScotland
Lorne Bruce, Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Apologies:

Apologies received from Cllr. Elisabeth Marshall, North Ayrshire Council;
Martin Hunter, Federation of Small Businesses; Alastair Dobson, Taste of Arran;
Michael Wright, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire; Stewart Selbie, Turnberry Hotel; Malcolm Simpson, Gailes Restaurant & Hotel

B Leitch chaired the meeting and welcomed guest speakers Michael McDaid from the Burns Festival and Vicky Russell from VR Management.

1. Burns an' a' that! Festival 2008

Michael McDaid: gave a presentation on Burns Festival 2008, 8days 17th-25th May. More involved community programme. Increase economic spend in the area. Festival Club will work as a HUB and focus. Recognisable branding used for marketing and PR with downloadable material available for individual venues and events to use for their promotion. Increase awareness of festival branding. An economic impact study for 2007 showed £1mill advertising equivalence to build on. 53,000 people attended with over £1mill spend in the area. Planning for Homecoming Scotland 2009, bringing home Scottish talent, engaging with local businesses and community. M McDaid willing to meet with any of the Partnership. Provost Sloan pointed out there were complaints in the past about lack of local advertising
M McDaid: agreed and advised there would be more presence this year with the use of branding and overall cohesion. They are tackling the problem of programme distribution and availability.
H Wilkinson: asked about the physical presence of the production company as they are based south of the border.
M McDaid: advised they have weekly updates, fortnightly visits and attend all board meetings. The Festival Company is the first point of contact, based in Ayr but contracting out to companies with level of expertise.
M Rodwell: asked where the 53,000 visitors had come from.

M McDaid: advised approx 35% from outside Ayrshire. Lots Central Belt and some further north. Captured International visitors already in the area.

The Chair thanked M McDaid, giving the full support of the Partnership.

2. Events Discussion

Vicky Russell, VR Management gave a presentation, ppt attached. Looking at ways of developing, securing and co-ordinating events across Ayrshire. Options given to group and opened for discussion.

H Wilkinson: commented that due to underlying changes and state of flux, with Homecoming already in the plan, the Pilot option would be best. Priorities of the 3 LA's would be different to others, so suggests each go with own priorities and test systems and dynamics.

L Cannon: volunteered the possibility of VisitScotland or South Ayrshire Council co-ordinating the approach for Ayrshire. Call a public meeting, look at the role of the Chamber to bring business on board. Ideal opportunity to use Homecoming as a pilot to see what can be achieved.

S Gibson: agreed Homecoming can form the basis of a model for future projects to build from and learn from.

J Spooner: stressed the importance of recognising the economic benefits and that the spread is pan Ayrshire, show attributes of all areas.

L Pringle: agreed that this would be more likely with a co-ordinated approach and focus

S Gibson: confirmed the need to take beyond local authorities.

V Russell: reiterated the importance of an independent monitor and private sector involvement.

C Elder: sees the Homecoming as a huge opportunity, but is concerned with timescale and what has been put in place for Jan 09 and how this is carried forward for subsequent years.

B Leitch: reported that the BIG BAND event includes the private sector and he has had positive feedback for more involvement from the sector.

M Rodwell: agreed this is the right way to go, with the need for a proactive proposition to engage.

B Leitch; suggested public sector partners get together some proposals to help sell to private sector.

S Gibson: agreed private sector need to see the benefits and ideas and proposals would help to promote.

V Russell: stipulated that what is achieved is not merely a "talking shop"

C Mackie: added that there is now a dedicated person for the Burns Festival and the ideas workshop had a great turnout of approx 70 people.

L Cannon: advised South Ayrshire Council are to employ a dedicated officer to co-ordinate activity around Homecoming, commencing 1st Apr 08

BL: thanked V Russell for presenting and ideas

Action:

- The group agreed to look at ways of building on existing events and coming back to the table with some tangible ideas to build upon and undertake some joined up marketing and ways to encourage participation.

Responsible – All

- B Leitch keen to develop joint working based towards 2009, formulating ideas and proposals for business involvement. Cannon and B Leitch to meet and progress.

Responsible - L Cannon /B Leitch

3. Previous Minutes and Actions

The Minutes of 06 December 2007 were taken as an accurate account of events and approved.

Euro Funding - S Gibson: advised that funding criteria is more limited with less opportunity for development. It is very difficult to obtain funding and it is very limited. S Gibson: is happy to progress any ideas for funding to see how they might fit the criteria.

B Leitch: advised the need is still there for a private sector meeting

S Gibson: advised the current round will be known by the end of Mar, a proportion will still be left for another round of applications later in the year.

J Spooner: suggested a batch of ideas that could be ready to go.

S Gibson: asked B Leitch for proposals at the next meeting or before.

C Mackie: wanted to clarify the size of projects

S Gibson: advised £200,000 gross expenditure and proposals should be focused on ATP priorities.

J Spooner: pointed out the need for support funding from the private sector

C Mackie: advised should have more info on Fund for Accelerated Growth by next meeting.

Action:

- Proposals to be sent to S Gibson by next meeting or before.

Responsible – B Leitch

4. Scottish Enterprise / VisitScotland Update

C Mackie and L Pringle spoke about the restructures for their respective organisations. The group discussed what knock on effect this might have for Ayrshire. More will unfold in the following weeks as appointments are made, but at present business as usual.

5. Homecoming 2009 Update

Initially discussed as follow on to Burns presentation earlier.

The group discussed the BIG BAND event progress and the possibility of Ayrshire securing the opening event, which looks like a strong possibility on 24th/25th in Ayr/Alloway, with ministerial presence.

6. Tourism Conference Update

BL: requested everyone register for Tourism Conference 26th Feb Park Hotel. Good response from delegates and thanks to SEA and VS for event sponsorship.

7. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

Next ATP Meeting - 22nd April 2008, 10.30am – at Largs Yacht Haven (TBC building work permitting) or East Ayrshire Council location as back up.

Responsible – L Boyle/E Sykes

8. AOB

EXPO – S Gibson advised that stand space has to be booked by April, a deposit will be required. The public sector willing to underwrite some of the initial costs, but considerable input will be needed from the private sector. Put Ayrshire on the National stage as a visitor destination with cohesive, professional display and products available for promotion.

Considering 4/5 stands of 3x2, £6000 initial booking.

B Leitch: confirmed require private sector partners before end Feb.

Action:

- Require private sector partners before end Feb

Responsible – B Leitch

The Chair thanked all for attending.