

Area Tourism Partnership Meeting

MINUTE of MEETING of the SCOTTISH BORDERS TOURISM PARTNERSHIP held at Scottish Enterprise Borders, Bridge Street, Galashiels on Wednesday 10 October at 2pm.

PRESENT:

Pamela McMahon, VisitScotland Borders
Mrs Sue Beck, Self Catering Representative (Chair)
John Henderson, Activities Representative
Cllr Ron Smith
Alan Elliott, Scottish Enterprise Borders
Anne Borthwick, B&B Representative
Marion Oates, Scottish Borders Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Sandi Hellowell, Strategy & Partnership Executive, VisitScotland Borders
Helene Sinclair, Business Relationship Marketing Manager, VisitScotland Borders
Anne Rutherford, VisitScotland Borders

APOLOGIES:

Jim Renwick
Colin Chisholm
Catherine Maxwell-Stuart, Attractions Representative
Cllr Vicky Davidson
Chris Winson, Eating & Drinking Representative

1. Welcome and Introductions

Sue Beck welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jim Renwick, Colin Chisholm, Catherine Maxwell-Stuart, Cllr Vicky Davidson, Chris Winson

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 August were approved.

Matters Arising

- a. **Visitor Attraction Winter Opening Times** – A leaflet was circulated which was produced by Catherine Maxwell-Stuart which shows businesses open during October November. Copies will be available from Catherine or from information centres.
- b. **Travel Expenses** – Pamela reported that whilst VisitScotland are very appreciative of the trade giving up their time to attend meetings they already made a significant contribution in terms of admin support and won't be able to pay expenses for members of the Partnership. It was reported that, where possible, room hire for meetings should be obtained free of charge. Pamela asked if maybe this was something which could

be raised through the Council. It was felt that there should be a fund to pay expenses and to show value of their attendance.

Sandi agreed to find out what happens in other areas and report back to a future meeting.

- c. **Communication** - John Henderson to be contacted to find out whether he had set up the URLs for scottishborderstourismpartnership.org and scottishborderstourismpartnership.com.

4. ATP Trade/Group Representation

- a. John Henderson has resigned as the Leisure and Recreation representative. Helene will send out to all trade from that category to try to get someone to replace him on the Partnership.
- b. At the moment there is no group representation on the Partnership and it was agreed that it is important that there are some groups represented. A few were identified who may be interested and it was agreed to contact them.
- c. It was reported that Jeanette Thomson had resigned from the Chamber of Commerce and there was discussion as to whether there should be a representative from the Chamber on the Partnership. It was agreed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Partnership to establish if the Chamber still want to be involved in the ATP and if they did wish to continue what their role would be.
- d. Ron Smith said that he had obtained a list of all hotels in the Borders. The list included those who do not currently engage with VisitScotland. He felt that nominations for a trade rep from hotels should be open to all hotels and this would encourage other businesses to get involved. It was felt that there might be problems if the hotel wasn't Quality Assured.

There had been one nomination received from Billy Hamilton of the Buccleuch Arms Hotel for the vacant hotel and guest house representative position. It was agreed that he should be appointed.

Sandi to put something together as an induction to new members and Sue and Ron to meet with Billy to go over what will be expected of him.

5. Verbal Updates

Area Director – Pamela McMahon

- 15,500 Borders specific brochures requested by phone or via website April to September 2007.
- 107,091 unique visitors to VisitScotland Borders website from January to September 07
- 3,955 Freedom of the Fairways Golf passes sold by end of September – 11.5% increase of last year – generating over £1m for the local economy.

- 211,361 visits to Scottish Borders Tourist Information Centres between April and September 07.
- 4634 accommodation introductory bednights sold via Tourist Information Centres between April and September 07.
- 515 local businesses are advertising with VisitScotland (496 of which appear on visitscotland.com)
- 378 local businesses participating in VisitScotland Quality Assurance schemes.
- 295 local businesses participating in VisitScotland Welcome Schemes.
- 33 local businesses participating in VisitScotland Green tourism Business Schemes.
- Occupancy levels in guest houses and B&Bs in the Borders in May improved by 8% on 06 figures and are now on a par with the national measure of 60% occupancy.
- Self catering unit occupancy figures in May rose by 9% on 06 figures and were 10% higher than the national average.
- Visitor attraction figures for the Scottish Borders from January to April indicated a fall of 2.9% on 06 figures, but Glentworth figures had fallen as uplift was not operational.

Marion Oates – Scottish Borders Council

Events

- **Melrose Sevens** – local development team including SEB, SBC & VSB commissioned development plan by Vantage Events. Assisted application to EventScotland Regional Programme.
- **Border Vintage Automobile Extravaganza** - By encouraging the committee to look at a wider market, made the Vintage Car Rally have broader appeal than in previous years. This was achieved through press and family friendly activities on the day. Achieved ca £75k's worth of press coverage both nationally and locally.
- **Borders Book Festival, Melrose** - Assisting in creation of business plan. Assisted in successful application to EventScotland Regional Programme.
- **Borders Chinese Cultural Association** - Fieldworker assisting development of Feb 08 event.
- **Jim Clark Rally** - Partnership project with SE Borders, EventScotland, VisitScotland & SBC to assist in business planning for future security of the event.
- **Model T Centenary World Meeting** - Assisting in fundraising & increasing impact in Borders

- **Event Scotland** - Two applications for Regional Programme as above. Project ongoing on National Programme with Jim Clark Rally
- **Event Strategy Review** - Partnership group has been reformed and Workshop is scheduled for 25th October with key agency, event & venue reps to revisit Strategy.
- **Events Fieldworkers – Objective 2 funded** - Achievements include assisting 73 event organisers, delivering two workshops via the Event Forum on Drug & Alcohol Awareness and PR/Marketing/Fundraising.
- **Homecoming 2009** - Close liaison with the changes in the Homecoming team who are unable to make the Event Forum meeting in November but have been invited for early 2008. Homecoming opportunities being developed with local event organisers.
- **Walking**
 - Meeting held with SBC officials, VSB staff and trade. Key routes for promotion identified and plan developed to include these in Essential Guide, VSB and VS web-sites. Other opportunities being developed into a plan for on-going web promotion.
 - Audit of walking print underway.
 - Activities, including walks around Harestanes as per Harestanes leaflet
- **Cycling**
 - 7stanes**
 - On-going support to ERDF funded South of Scotland project
 - Glentress – 2.75km Green Trail
 - Innerleithen – contract in place for 3k extension to Xc route
 - Newcastleton – Contract in place for new 2k Blue Trail – work commences October.
 - New Business Group – 7stanes Advisory Group established (mix of public/private sector) Met in August & Sept in Peebles and Newcastleton. Remit to improve communications; increase co-operation and develop new concepts.
 - New Signage being put in place developed for all 7stanes trails
 - Recreational Cycling Inter Agency Group** (SBC (TS, PED); SEB; VSB)
 - Met in July to take forward actions in TRC report
 - SBC looking at improving information (web 7 print) on Border Loop, Tweed Cycleway and 4 Abbeys Way
 - Tender being prepared for increased marketing activity
 - Peebles to Innerleithen off road route**
 - A bid has now been submitted to Sustrans to progress this scheme with a start in financial year 2008/9 with 2 year funding.
- **Food and Bars**
 - 'Flavour of Borders' Food Fair at Border Union Show (SEB, SBC, BC joint project) – 27th & 28th July 2007. A record number of local food

providers attended a very successful show. 25 businesses attended trade evening on Friday. Discussions underway for 2008.

- **Eating Out competition.**
 - Regular stories and nomination form in the Southern Reporter throughout the period. Record number of nominations (400) and establishments nominated 92 in total. Judging underway with Awards ceremony on 5th November.
 - Discussions with Food & Drink Guides to develop new Guide for Scottish Borders linked to web site and monitoring system.
- **Branding**
On-going discussion with SEB re the positioning of key Food & Drink activities including re-branding to fit with Our Scottish Borders brand.
- **Beanscene** opened in Tower Mill on 13 September. It was reported by the company that the Hawick launch was the most successful in the company's history . There were over 6000 visitors to Tower Mill within the first ten days.

Genealogy

- **Heart of Hawick** - Visitors September 621, a 409% increase on 2006-7. Evening openings are still quiet but archive busier on Saturdays. The enquiries by email, letter, phone have exceeded the numbers from last year at St Mary's Mill. The Scottish Society of Archivists held their regional meeting in Heart of Hawick in September. 20+ archivists from all over Scotland were shown round the Hub with very positive feedback.
- **Drumlanrig's Tower** - Proposal for registrar occupancy of two rooms has been prepared. The proposals for the redisplay using the Textile Tower House theme discussed at open meeting - over 40 people attended. The proposals were favourably received and the design brief is virtually ready to be issued. The timescale is ground floor, including Registrar by 31 March 2008. Upper floors by 31 March 2009. (the later date needs to be approved by lottery).
- **Tower Mill**
 - Film partnership agreed with Edinburgh Filmhouse
 - October live events and film brochure now produced and issued
 - Preview week for first films in Hawick since 1984 arranged and publicised for 8 October – screening two films per day for 7 days
 - Commercial film opening – based on 6 screenings/ week, from 1 Nov.
 - First live and commercial theatre performance happened on Sunday 16 September (Catherine Wheels – Cyrano de Bergerac)
 - Marketing Strategy for HoH campus approach being developed and will be available around December.

Retail

- **Shop Local initiative 2007** - Campaign focuses on raising profile of local food produce as well as encouraging shopping locally at Christmas.
 - Eat Local / Shop local - 6 interviews with local food producers on Radio Borders based on Christmas dinner themes. Complemented with weekly on air you're your Xmas dinner' competition
 - Shop local element includes
 - Radio jingle to remind locals to support local retailers
 - On-line Children's Xmas card competition.
 - Till receipt campaign

Weddings

- **The Coldstream Marriage Room**
 - Re-furbishment of the Coldstream Marriage Room in Old Town Hall/Gateway Centre complete.
 - Marketing project underway with website up and running and information folder about to be printed.
 - Official launch on 16th October Room to be opened by Lord Home.
 - 39 business partners involved in the initiative.
 - All accommodation establishments, which are not in QA scheme have been offered a free visit.
 - 2 weddings already booked including the marriage of a Coldstream Guard.

Film Tourism

- Edinburgh and Borders Film Focus - The Borders proved popular with photoshoots. Photolink shot stills for five days at a private house in Kelso with a Littlewoods Christmas catalogue shot for 5 days between Manderston and a private house called Newton Don.
 - Local company, Lochcarron shot their Autumn/Winter Catalogue using several Borders mansions.
 - French TV shot parts of their documentary on Mary Queen of Scots at various Borders locations including Dryburgh Abbey.
- BBC Scotland spent 23 days over the summer filming at Floors Castle and its estate for the daytime show *Castles in the Country*. Gloria Hunniford and John Craven present this show.
- Work on Film Crews Welcome Scheme continues. The Borders seminar was postponed due to lack of interest. It will now be held on November 29th, 2007.

Watersports, Diving & Berwickshire Coastline

- Diving study commissioned by SEB - final report published. The study examined the current size and value of the market and the potential for growth.
- The report recognises there is an opportunity to grow the diving market mid week in St Abbs and all week in Eyemouth. Both areas need some infrastructure improvements and, especially for St Abbs, visitor management.
- SEB and SBC have held further discussions to look at whether improvement works can be undertaken (SBC leading on this). Further meeting also held with Dive Group

Rail Development

- On-going discussions at Connected Place Theme Team re working with local tourism businesses to maximise opportunities.

New Business Opportunities

- **Abbotsford** - Officers from SBC, SEB, VSB working with Trustees of Abbotsford House to assist in development of HLF bid. Meeting held in August.
- **Mountain Biking** – ongoing discussions between Planning Department and private operators seeking new site in Tweeddale.

Marion to feedback to the Council that tourism matters should be included in the Council newsletter which goes out to all households in the Borders. There would also be a press release from the ATP and an annual report on what has been achieved during the year.

Ron Smith reported that on the Newcastleton leg of the 7 Stanes event the area was very busy with caravans and cyclists.

He also reported that the Lidalia Caravan park is closing on 8th January 2008 and the park will not be sold so there will be an absence of provision for caravans in the Newcastleton area.

SEB Update – Alan Elliott

- Food – working on a range of things nationally and locally.
- Baxters is scheduled to open in Selkirk in March with café/restaurant. They aim to have major play on local food.
- The European Golf Challenge was held at Cardrona and will come back there next year.
- Working with Tweeddale Consortium to promote Tweed Valley as a tourist destination.
- Alan updated the Partnership on the review announcement and the amalgamation of SE Borders with Dumfries and Galloway. There are a range of projects which are in place and are working already and it is a good opportunity to have projects which cover the whole of the South of Scotland. The issues regarding the Borders Gateway are less clear.

Pamela stated that the implications for VisitScotland would be more sharing of functions, staff, office space and working closer with other agencies. She is meeting with Delia from VS Dumfries and Galloway soon. There will be indications of changes to staffing structure in early November but there will be no compulsory redundancies and no immediate change.

6. Scottish Borders Tourism Market Place Event

The sub group set up to look at the format of this event met. They were unable to identify a centrepiece for the event and asked the Partnership for ideas.

After discussion it was agreed to contact Alan Dickson from Baxters and find out through Pride and Passion if Muriel Gray could be one of the speakers. Marion agreed to contact Scottish Tourism Forum and find out if they would like to contribute to the event.

It was also agreed that the event would be held on March 4th and businesses would have to have leaflets ready by then. Once the basics of the event are known then another meeting of the sub group would be held to finalise the arrangements.

7. Skills/Training – Joint Initiative

Liz McIntyre from Borders College had stated that the college was keen to become more involved in skills tourism for training. The remit would be for businesses to be skilled and trained to give the visitor a better experience. Colleges need to know what the industry wants.

8. Any other business

Sue Beck said that she thought it was important that the trade subscribe to Scottish Tourism Forum and Pride and Passion e-updates as they had some very useful information.

9. Meetings Dates and Presentations 2008

5 th December 2007	Traquair
6 th February 2008	Buccleuch Arms Hotel
7 th May 2008	Homecoming?
3 rd September 2008	
3 rd December 2008	

The meeting closed at 4.50 pm