

**MINUTES OF THE TOURISM FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE
MARKETING IMPLEMENTATION GROUP MEETING,
THURSDAY, 16 JANUARY 2008, 10.00-12.00
NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND,
28 CHARLOTTE SQUARE, EDINBURGH**

Present:

Ian Gardner (Chair)	National Trust for Scotland
Isabella McNamara (IM)	VisitScotland
Marco Truffelli (MT)	visitscotland.com
Roger Edwards (RE)	HIE
Pierre Masson (PM)	Moray Council / SLAED
Linda Mellis (LM)	Diaggio
Stewart Ward (SW)	Scottish Development International
Chris Taylor (CT))
Kay Macfarlane (KM)) Scottish Government
Mary Ward (minute taker))

Apologies:

Eddie Brogan (EB)	Scottish Enterprise
Glen Bennett (GB)	EAE
Ian Limond (IL)	JAC Travel
John Strachan (JS)	Maximillion Events
Linda DalGLISH (LD)	Scottish Seabird Centre
Rebecca Hamilton (RH)	Historic Scotland

1. Welcome / Introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed the group and introductions were made. Apologies were made on those listed above.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

2.1 The Group was content that the minutes were a true reflection of the last meeting on 11 October 2007.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The meeting went straight into the business and the **Chair** introduced **IM** and **MT** to deliver their presentations.

4. Presentations

- 4.1 New Marketing Media – Isabella McNamara, Head of e-Marketing, VisitScotland.
- 4.2 Online Booking – Marco Truffelli, Chief Executive, visitscotland.com.

4.3 A Q&A session / discussion followed.

4.4 The Group looked at its objectives, firstly, an increase in businesses with e-capability by 2010. There is a need for introductory IT training packages for tourism businesses unfamiliar with IT. HIE, SE and Scottish Tourism Forum are already delivering a programme of workshops on low level web utilisation and middle level usage of existing webs. It is essential to make more effective use of e-business technology at all levels.

4.5 RE advised there is an interactive on-line package available which links to other business / organisations websites. As a result web resources are improved and increased and can be used anytime. This will however be very expensive to roll out (costs £1K to deliver to each organisation). On the plus side there has been positive feedback from organisations participating in the pilot.

Action: More information on the pilot to be made available at later date. (RE)

5. CT raised some points on behalf of EB who was unable to attend the meeting.

5.1 There are 3 levels of e-business: introductory, medium and high level intensity. The pilot in HIE is rolling out and developing materials which will involve the industry themselves in having an increasing role of developing e-business opportunities.

5.2 Regarding the workshops, it appear that the some sections of the industry are not maximising the opportunities available, i.e. the workshop in Dumfries and Galloway was poorly attended and it is essential that businesses take time to participate in such events. This is especially frustrating considering the excellent feedback already received.

5.3 Businesses also need to be aware of market failures and the onus is on them to invest in IT.

5.4 Annex A, provides a summary of issues and concerns raised by EB, was tabled for information and members were invited to provide feedback on any of the issues covered.

6. Discussion moved to the new Edinburgh Castle customer reception and website which went live yesterday. This links together the project and ticket systems using bar codes which can be used for Edinburgh Castle and other HS attractions. We need to look at how this can be developed further and how to use new media tools such as e-ticketing.

6.1 Historic Scotland aims to have 40% of customers book tickets on-line in advance. They will use location texting work across Scotland particularly exploring attractions, as this worked very well for free attractions last year. This system lets people know what is going on, where and is very up to date. They are looking to broaden text response via campaigns and have increased partnership working with VisitScotland.

7. Partnership working (and networking) via e-newsletters was the next theme discussed.

7.1 There are e-newsletters already circulating – VS, SE/HIE, TIG etc - which highlight good practice, promote events and workshops, and offer excellent opportunities to network across all sectors and areas of tourism. Businesses should be encouraged to contribute (where possible), read and participate in the various events aimed at improving partnership working, and increasing business.

7.2 VS Business Relationship Managers (BRMs) had been criticised for only contacting customers (businesses) when they wanted to sell them additional marketing opportunities and do not appear to have any other form of working relationship. This is causing considerable frustration amongst business customers who want to see the current role of BRMs clarified.

Action: VS to clarify role of BRM.

7.3 It is essential that partnership working is developed in order for businesses to be fully aware of the bigger picture i.e. “tourism growth ambition”. It can be overwhelming for smaller businesses and attractions to get involved in partnership working and the role of the BRM and other engagement teams, has a big impact on well this is developed. BRMs must have a full understanding on how best to deliver this to business and for businesses to have an awareness of what they actually need. (see EB paper) A new approach to partnership working ties in with the collaborative and participative Destination Development approach.

7.4 Area Tourist Partnerships (ATPs) are often involved in marketing activities. It was felt that they must take bigger advantage of online opportunities and effort is being made to build this up. There is a need for an industry champion to promote this and this could be explored at a future meeting.

Action: To be considered further.

7.5 A discussion on industry engagement and how best to implement and share good practice followed.

7.6 It was felt it would be useful to have case studies from those using the VS.com package “Web in a Box” in order to educate, inform and spread the word to other businesses about how WIAB has increased/improved their business. There are over 100,000 pages of content on VS.com and we should, all use this to maximum effect. There is an issue on how best to maintain the website for instance, how would VS.com get to know what and when the best events to feature on the Visitors Guide section are? For instance - it can be difficult trying to maintain information on events and everyone needs to understand that they have a role to play in helping keep information as up to date and relevant as possible.

7.7 It was also felt that communication and engagement with local authorities (LAs) tourism officers and VS.com could be better.

ACTION: PM to provide MT with a list of LA tourism contacts.

8. e-Messages alerts have shown to have a high conversion rate e.g. the recent Snow Alert (which helped attract approx 25,000 in one weekend). There is a need to closer work with VS and consider how best to disseminate examples of good practice e.g. via workshops / case studies / e-newsletters etc. VisitScotland will be looking closer at how to share good practice (like the Snow Alert) across the industry next year. A possible route is using Group Product Managers in areas although marketing would need to develop this further.

Action: VS to update at future meetings.

8.1 Quality Assurance was discussed and it was pointed out that all organisations listed on VS.com are part of the VS quality assurance scheme. This is significant as we aim to push up quality as far as possible. The partnership approach with LAs / marketing consortia is that there should be a level playing field for everyone –not just those that are quality assured -

only then can a fair on-line booking facility be introduced. While the QA scheme is not compulsory our target is to have 90% of accommodation businesses onboard by the end of 2008. It is important that those choosing to be QA are helping to improve the levels of service provided and see the benefits participation brings. There is no hidden agenda to discriminate or disadvantage those choosing not to join the VSQA scheme however we must focus on the above target and concentrate on QA accommodation providers.

Note: There are listings on the VS.com that are not part of the VSQA scheme. None of these are accommodation providers however.

9. AOB

9.1 TFFC and industry engagement - invite **EB** or some other representative to a meeting.

9.2 Communication from VisitScotland – a lot of the work that VS does is held in high regard. Communication is about knowing what is going on at the right time and more . efficient links are needed to provide this. This should be a two way link between industry and marketing organisations. It was noted that communication across the industry is a big issue for all of the TFFC implementation groups.

ACTION: Consider inviting people from other TFFC implementation groups to discuss communication. Add to next Monitoring Group meeting agenda

10. Summary / Forward Look

10.1 The **Chair** thanked the group for the insights and summarised the points discussed to help the Action Plan:

- Industry engaging with e-business.
- BRMS – insight into the BRM role and industry engagement.
- Vs.com – visit LAs, DMO industry groups and keep up to date.
- EB's workshop summary on the e-commerce road show.
- Developing niche – e-mails snow, ski – seem simple but effective.
- Best practice within VisitScotland.org.
- Using forum trade association utilise what is already there.
- Events – need to spread the word.

11. Date of Next Meeting

11.1 The date of the next meeting will be 13 March 2008, venue TBC.

Scottish Government Tourism Unit

**EDDIE BROGAN - Points for TFFC Marketing Implementaion Group Meeting
16 January 2008**

1. Range of benefits to be gained
 - Good marketing for individuals and areas
 - Very effective – for customer access, building travel packages etc
 - reduced print & distribution costs
 - quick and easy to update information (prices / availability, new products, attractions etc)
 - Focus on Internet as marketing but keep sight of wider benefits of IT/Internet
 - enhanced way of building:
 - customers relations
 - databases (not lists) inc. preferences, interests, holiday history etc

However

- Tendency to focus on Internet to reach customers
- Still underestimated by some

2. Customer Feedback
 - as a key driver of innovation/customer satisfaction
 - via email
 - Online questionnaires (Survey Monkey etc)
 - PDA technology (eg: units based at receptions for instant feedback)
3. Gather Market Intelligence
 - drives business development
 - easy access to a wide marketplace
 - use of search engines
 - public sector websites - VS, SE/HIE etc
4. Offers excellent Networking/Communications across industry
(collaboration is a key driver)
 - helps create lots of business contacts (often far afield)
 - e-Bulletins - eg: VS, TIG, Pride & Passion, STF etc
 - opportunity to share views, opinions, good examples etc
5. Better office systems
 - booking systems, yield management,
 - streamlined operating systems (= savings)
 - Remote comms (PDA)
 - MERCAT Tours – offers on-street bookings direct from street to head office

6. What is the Business Challenge if not fully utilising IT?
 - How do we overcome these key challenges?

7. Lack of Awareness (from businesses)
 - of the benefits available through better use of IT
 - of the pace of technology/ market demands for technology based information, booking facilities etc
 - still too many paper based businesses
 - not just tourism business that are guilty of this though

8. Businesses appreciate this but still not sure what they can do to improve
 - they need a structured way of developing their e-business capability
 - some say there is “No need for IT” !!
 - Some recognise there is a need - but not sure how to do it.
 - Difficult to isolate e-business when other business weaknesses identified
 - Some people still unclear of their Business Strategy:
 - What are their key drivers;
 - Who are their main customers;
 - type of information their customers want; etc
 - HIE e-business advisers always advise businesses to develop an easy to use customer focussed website

9. Lack of confidence/ability to buy from IT suppliers (ISP, Web Designers etc)
 - Reluctance to invest (why pay when cheap options available (ie teenage son, neighbour etc)
 - Still unsure how to deal with IT and what VFM is
 - IT skills is low
 - SEnt / HIE / STF recently ran e-business workshops
 - 130 businesses attended over 7 workshops (SEnt area only)
 - offered follow up 1:1 advisory session in the business
 - will run more in 2008

10. Scotland has opportunity to grow complementary IT
 - improvements to VS.com – due Spring 2008
 - Enterprise Agencies developing e-business
 - Organisational websites - ASVA, STF, HHA etc
 - Can be developed by sector, geographic area or individual business

11. The Onus is still on the business sector to improve
 - workshops had vacancies (D&G only 7 businesses attended) despite extensive marketing
 - why did more businesses not take up this offer?
 - summary of the events / case studies will be made available which may help persuade others of the benefits to be gained

Note: Make this available to group once available and identify possible action points

12. Not just about workshops

- business must invest themselves (out with Public Sector support)
- too much hand-holding from public sector
- realise IT capability is a business need as are solicitors, accounts etc.
- also need to understand the market failures

13. Misc

- TIG have set up a Technology Group (*which we must maintain close links with*)
- Enterprise Agencies need to protect objectivity and not show favouritism over internet/IT facilities – eg: suggesting VS.com or Expedia as the best online booking agent

January 2008