

MINUTES OF TFFC MONITORING GROUP MEETING VICTORIA QUAY, EDINBURGH 30 APRIL 2008

Present:

Gavin Ellis (Chair)	
Ian Gardner (IG)	National Trust for Scotland
Robin Worsnop (RW)	Rabbie's Trail Burners
Riddell Graham (RG)	VisitScotland
Fiona Colley (FC)	Glasgow Science Centre
Eddie Brogan (EB)	Scottish Enterprise
Sue Crossman (SC)	Tourism Innovation Group
Tom Brock (TB)	Scottish Seabird Centre
Alan Rankin (AR)	Aviemore Destination Management Organisation
Iain Herbert (IH)	Scottish Tourism Forum
Jane Clark (JC)	Scottish Natural Heritage
Joanne Deponio (JD)	EventScotland
Iain Cameron (IC)	Springboard Scotland
Richard Arnott (RA)	Scottish Government
Chris Taylor (CT)	Scottish Government
Mairi Caldwell	Scottish Government (part of meeting)
Kay Macfarlane	Scottish Government (minutes)

Apologies

Raoul Barbier	SLAED
John Ward	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Audrey MacLennan	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
David McHattie	People 1 st
John Brown	SG: Tourism & Whisky Legislation

WELCOME / MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

1. The Chair welcomed the group and apologies were noted. The Chair introduced IC and members of the group briefly introduced themselves. JD had a minor amendment to the minutes of the last meeting - RB represented SLAED and not CoEC – otherwise it was agreed that the minutes were a true reflection of the meeting held on 19 November 2007.

MATTERS ARISING

2. SC asked about progress on introducing a National Box Office. It was disappointing that there was no funding identified in the spending review. A meeting has been arranged for 13 May and the group would be updated of developments at the next meeting (**Action: SG**).

UPDATE FROM SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

3. RA reported on the Parliament's EET Committee's Inquiry into Tourism, with the report due in June. RA indicated that transport had been raised several times. RW advised he had appeared twice on the subject of (i) transport and (ii) infrastructure. One of the sessions had been a very lively meeting at which the dependence of rural tourism on good transport

infrastructure was highlighted. Other members who had appeared inc SC, IH, and AR. IH said that the planning message has got across. It was suggested that prominent developers / investors such as Donald Macdonald and Sandy Orr ought be called to give evidence to the Committee. CT advised that as there was only one further session planned it was probably too late. The report would list those who gave evidence.

4. The realignment and restructuring of the Enterprise Agencies and VisitScotland has now mainly been completed.

5. The Homecoming Scotland team are assessing Themed Events Funding applications and expect to announce the programme on 16 June.

6. The revised visitScotland.com website was launched by the Tourism Minister on 22 April. AR agreed the site has improved but it could be improved further; some operators are disappointed their details are not as visible as they expected; and the visitor attraction search facility could be better. SC said that festivals attract many visitors to Scotland and that the site had a long way to go to effectively promote these. The TIG Arts & Culture Team were working with VS.com on the Events Listing. It was noted that Event Scotland already has a comprehensive Events Listing and duplication should be avoided. RG offered to feed comments back to visitScotland.com (**Action: RG**)

7. It was noted that the Minister has attended a number of tourism engagements, remains keen to engage with the industry, but often repeats similar themes. While initial expectations among stakeholders were high, more substance needs to evolve from the sessions he hosts if he is to keep the industry onside. As far as the renewable energy sector was concerned, the message is coming across about the connections between climate change, renewable energy and tourism. One example of this is the booklet highlighting examples of tourism businesses using renewable energy which was recently published by Renewables Scotland.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE AND INNOVATION GROUP (ROBIN WORSNOP)

8. The last meeting was in November 2007. TIG had held a well attended Tourism Innovation Day looking at tourism and technology. Feedback had been positive and a summary was being prepared and would be circulated. (**Action: SC**).

9. Tourism Intelligence Scotland (TIS) is progressing with its third publication on Marketing Segmentation. TIS has submitted a revised business plan to SEn / HIE and VS to get approval from all 3 funding partners to establish TIS in the longer term.

10. EB wanted to highlight the work of the SEnt Industry Leadership Group in taking things forward. RW expressed concern if the budgets were not made available but he was reassured that once funding was confirmed this would be a substantive step forward for TFFC.

11. It was noted that Area Tourism Partnerships (ATPs) seem to vary in their effectiveness and there is confusion over their role in relation to various local Destination groups and the restructuring of VS. It was also suggested that Destination Development or Management Organisations are not necessarily well linked-in to ATPs. CT planned to meet Ben Carter of VS who had assumed responsibility for VS involvement with ATPs in the recent reorganisation, to consider their future role. There are 17 ATPs covering most of Scotland.

CT suggested it would be useful to map these for easy reference (**Action: CT**). RG advised that there was a misconception that VS had responsibility for ATPs. The VisitScotland view on local tourism groups such as ATPs is that we should learn from good examples. It is not up to VS to manage or drive ATPs (or any other local partnership / group). VS has no control over ATPs; VS are members tasked with providing secretariat support as part of the public sector contribution. In order to address confusion over ATPs, RG offered to provide a summary paper of the VS position and plans which will address various current issues and concerns surrounding ATPs (**Action: RG**)

MARKETING IMPLEMENTATION GROUP (IAN GARDNER)

12. This group had met a couple of times since the last Monitoring Group meeting and the last one in March had looked at Business Marketing. Caroline Packman (VS Business Tourism) delivered an excellent presentation. Unfortunately attendance at the meeting was low and there is still difficulty in getting industry engagement – it was suggested that this may be a communications issue as low attendance was not uncommon on other implementation groups. Generally the Chair was happy with work of the group, other than attendance.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE GROUP (FIONA COLLEY)

13. FC reported that this Group had met twice since the last Monitoring Group meeting. She was very disappointed that the Training Action Plan (TAP) has been watered down and has still not been signed off. EB felt the plan needed better structures for measurement and this is one area of concern for the public sector. RA agreed with FC that the actions in the TAP were not sufficiently measurable. After further discussion EB and IH offered to meet FC to resolve this delay and help to finalise the TAP. IH has offered that Scottish Tourism Forum would arrange another Skills Summit. (**Action: FC, EB/IH to meet re TAP**).

14. The Modern Apprenticeships Scheme for adult Hospitality Sector people has been removed due to low take-up (although still available for younger people). The Group expressed disappointment that this change had been announced without any consultation.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PARTNERSHIP GROUP (TOM BROCK)

15. TB said that the last meeting was held in March. The continuing issue is lack of dedicated resources to support the group despite sustainability having moved up the Government's agenda. The Climate Change Scotland carbon off-set scheme is now active. VisitScotland are working on a Sustainable Development strategy and RG offered to meet TB to discuss this in more detail. There needs to be better PR / Communications around green issues for both business and visitors. TIG are working on a Code of Practice for visitors. The launch of the Going Green (entry-level into GTBS) has been delayed - as VS were still waiting confirmation of ERDF funding bids which supports this. RG would liaise with colleagues and report back on expected launch date (**Action: RG**).

16. There is a TFFC target that 'Scotland should become the most sustainable tourism destination in Europe', but there is no clarity on what this means or how it will be measured. Members felt this target may have to be revisited or at least clarified in light of concerns (**Action SG**). RG agreed there should be bench-marking against other countries if we are to measure this properly (**Action: VS**).

17. Increasing the take-up of the GTBS scheme is a TFFC target (Target 13). There are 935 members now and the aim is to get 2,700 by 2010. This is a huge aim and there are concerns about GBUK (the scheme operators) being under-resourced to deliver the required number of assessments within this timeframe. This needs to be addressed or businesses may become disillusioned. SC asked if it was possible to see a break-down of the marketing plan for GTBS along with targets. We should highlight good case studies to show the benefits of GTBS membership and encourage use of it as a promotional tool. The Chair said that the subject seemed to be an easy one to measure but targets may have to be amended (**Action: RG to update on Going Green / GTBS marketing plans**). SC wondered what Government policy was for staff booking accommodation. RA advised that the booking agency used by SG staff recommend GTBS accommodation where available and subject to value for money. At the moment there is only around a 6% take up but it is not clear whether this is because of the lack of availability in the necessary areas or lack of understanding of the opportunity.

CORPORATE SCOTLAND AND INFRASTRUCTURE (IAIN HERBERT)

18. The Group has been looking at new alcohol licensing legislation and IH had a meeting with the Justice Minister particularly around the subject of tourism premises with limited alcohol sales and those in rural areas. Concerns were also raised with the Minister about the cost of the preparation of plans for licence applications. The Justice Minister said he would contact Licensing Boards to encourage them to take a commonsense approach, and had indicated he would be willing to visit tourism premises that had experienced over-zealous application difficulties to highlight these. STF were preparing a visit. The group had received a presentation on development planning and the modernisation of the planning system, and had highlighted the plans for changes to the appeals process - which was still under consultation. Overall this had been a constructive meeting and the group felt good progress was being made in keeping abreast of Corporate developments.

19. It was noted that a EU consultation paper on reducing VAT rates on certain areas of hospitality has been sent out for consultation. On transport; there is a pilot on Road Equivalent Tariffs (RET) for ferry fares in operation. A meeting at VisitScotland is scheduled for 2 May to discuss signage for tourism attractions etc.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY / WEBSITE UPDATE

20. The Chair mentioned that RG had recently circulated the VisitScotland Delivery Plan which was a comprehensive document stating what VS were doing in relation to TFFC targets. He suggested that Chairs might use a similar layout for their Progress Report – which were due now. The SG had already contacted Chairs to discuss the format of these reports

21. AR said that as far as communications to industry are concerned, resources have not been forthcoming to deliver these. The groups have a frustration that the minutes of meetings take so long to produce and they have been asking for a website for a long time now. RA apologized for these delays and reported that the website should be ready in the next few weeks. RW noted that he had been assured when he took on the chair of his group that he would be given administrative support. RA expressed his appreciation to all members of the groups for their commitment.

22. CT gave the meeting an update on the TFFC website. There had been a possibility of producing an independent website at an estimated cost of £10,000 which had not been financially viable. Instead the SG will host and maintain the TFFC website (having secured several TFFC related domain names). STF had offered to host a TFFC forum and contact email address which would be linked on the website (**Action: Website to be finalised asap.**)

23. There was a discussion about the Communications Strategy and whether the wider industry is aware of the work of the TFFC groups and the strategy. Most of the industry seemed aware of the growth ambition but not the work of the groups or the specific targets. IC indicated that as a new member of the group he had not seen or heard anything from people he has been meeting about what the groups are doing. It was agreed that we needed to be clear about how we can get the industry to make step changes in the way they act. We needed to pick out the challenges for business, and use exemplars to encourage businesses can make these changes. EB felt we should give businesses specific figures about what 50% would mean for them (i.e. another £xx per day, visitors staying one more night etc).

24. EB also noted that SE was planning to establish a tourism industry advisory group to oversee its work and that industry leadership is very important. He did not want duplication with other groups and suggested that there may be scope for groups to merge / share roles. STF indicated they are happy to be utilized more in order to promote TFFC and the work of the implementation groups and agreed that overall industry leadership is key to the strategy.

ACTION PLANS

25. TB indicated that we need now to deliver the plans and make things happen. RG asked whether the targets in TFFC are still fully relevant; if they were reached; would we achieve the 50% growth? The Chair pointed that there has been change in the public sector, change of government and fundamental changes in the economic climate which affected the position of tourism. Rather than wait until it was too late, there was a need to review the TFFC strategy to see if it remains fit for purpose. It was expected that overall the strategy should be continued, but that a review was needed to look again at targets and actions. IH said that as STF had been strongly involved in preparing the TFFC, it was willing to take on the role of the reviewing it quickly. It is important that industry shows leadership. It was suggested that a group should concentrate on the main issues as well as adding new ideas and possible new targets. However, it was agreed that the good efforts the groups are making should not be stopped. (**Action IH to provide brief review paper**)

ANY OTHER BUSINESS NEXT MEETING

26. **Succession Planning:** GE asked the Chairs of the implementation groups to give thought who might succeed them as Chairs after the initially agreed period of 2 or 3 years. **VS Expo** in Aberdeen: RG informed the meeting that VisitScotland had received feedback that some people were not happy with the accommodation/ service quality in Aberdeen, with complaints about value for money. This was a concern considering the Expo hosted leading tourism operators from around the world.

27. The next meeting will be arranged around September 2008.

Tourism Team
Scottish Government

July 2008