

Sustainable Tourism Partnership

Tuesday 13 February 2007

Keep Scotland Beautiful offices, Stirling

Present

Tom Brock, Scottish Seabird Centre (Chair)
Steve Hunt, Scottish Natural Heritage
Jane Clark, Scottish Natural Heritage
Penny George, Scottish Executive
Sandy Dear, VisitScotland
Richard Pinn, VisitScotland
Katrina Morrison, Scottish Enterprise
Mike Greig, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park
Deborah Murray, Stirling Council (representing SLAED)
Bob Aitken, Scottish Environment Link
John Summers, Keep Scotland Beautiful
Heather Galbraith, Cairngorm National Park
Paul Tetlaw, TransFORM Scotland

Apologies

Alan Rankin, Scottish Tourism Forum
John Ward, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Terry Levinthal, Scottish Civic Trust
Jenny Hess, Historic Scotland
Paul Jennings, Sensation Science Centre (representing ASVA)
Ian Gardner, National Trust for Scotland
Chris Taylor, Cairngorms National Park
Bob Kinnaird, Cairngorm Mountain

| 1. Welcome and introductions | Action |
|---|--------------------|
| Tom Brock (TB) welcomed everyone to the meeting, and gave apologies for those who were unable to attend. | |
| 2. Minutes of last meeting | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">. The minutes of 29 November 2006 were accepted as a true record, with Penny to check on whether the action point under point 3 was carried forward by Alan Rankin and Fiona Johnstone. | PG to check |
| Additional agenda items | |
| TB took this opportunity to raise some items that were not on the circulated agenda. | |
| <i>Sustainable Tourism Unit</i> In an update on the STU, Sandy informed the group that his work has involved | |

ensuring that principles of sustainable tourism have been incorporated into VisitScotland's business plan for 2007/8. He has also assisted VS in completing their environmental policy, which has now been cleared by the Board, and includes around 30 environmental targets to be implemented. He said that VS has been measuring their energy use and levels of waste produced since 1 January this year.

STP Remit

TB circulated the latest draft of the STP remit. It was agreed that the wording of point no. 8 on the draft should be expanded to 'minimising the *negative* impacts and *maximising the positive impacts* of tourism on Scotland's communities'.

Overall, the draft was accepted as a good basis for the STP's remit, although Bob Aitken asked if he could have a little more time for his members to feed in comments.

Concern was expressed that the STP may have actually gone backwards in terms of progress, by comparison to the pre-existing Tourism and Environment Forum which had dedicated staff able to commit time to engaging with the wider tourism industry through newsletters, events etc. Sandy was asked to clarify whether his role as manager of the STU was for both internal and external projects, and Sandy assured the group that it was indeed for both, although most of his time has been taken up with internal VS activity. He commented that it is important for VS to have fully addressed issues of sustainability within their own organisation before they can turn their focus outwards, but that he hopes to be able to allocate more of his time in the future to external activity, supporting the work of the STP.

LINK Scottish Environment Week – opening event

LINK's Scottish Environment Week ran from February 5-11, with a launch event on 1 February based around the theme of tourism and the environment. The Minister for Tourism, Patricia Ferguson, attended the event and her speech seems to have been well received by all. It was felt that the event was very effective in raising some of the key issues around sustainable tourism, although there is clearly still some confusion amongst the general public as to the definitions and uses of terms such as 'eco', 'environmental', 'green' and 'sustainable tourism'. TB pointed out that in fact even the First Minister had referred to the GTBS as an 'eco-tourism accreditation scheme' at a later Environment Week event. This highlights the need for increased communication awareness of the issues.

Green Tourism Business Scheme

One issue that was raised at the LINK event was the GTBS, and why take-up of the scheme is still so low. PG updated the group on progress with the scheme's new entry level, the creation of which was one of the key action points in the Tourism Framework for Change. VS and GBUK are progressing

**BA to
submit
comments
to PG by
end Feb.**

well with designing this new level, and it will be formally launched by the Minister on 27 March in Edinburgh. It is intended that the creation of the entry level will make it significantly easier and cheaper for businesses to join the scheme, and that we will hopefully therefore see membership numbers rise in the coming months. It is also important that businesses are encouraged and assisted to move up the gradings.

A recent parliamentary question referred to the GTBS and how many Executive staff had actually stayed in GTBS properties following the Ministerial commitment to do so for business travel whenever possible. It was established that between June and November last year, Expotel, the Executive's booking agency, recorded that nearly 11% of bookings made for Scottish-based staff travelling in Scotland were in GTBS accommodation. It was agreed that this is relatively high, given the low numbers of GTBS members. (The full response provided by the Minister can be viewed at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/pqa/wa-07/wa0125.htm>)

It was suggested that Expotel may be able to provide further information on specific geographical locations in Scotland where GTBS accommodation is lacking, and this may help inform future targeting activity for the scheme.

Tourism Innovation Group

TB told the group about a recent TIG sustainability sub-group meeting, which Philip Riddle, CE of VS, had attended and given an update on VS activity. He had been questioned on whether VS & Scotland can really claim to be adopting sustainable principles when continuing to target overseas emerging markets such as China and India, which of course necessitates huge amounts of air travel. TB intends to follow up by writing to him on this issue as it contradicts our sustainability objectives and aspirations within TFFC.

Scottish Tourism Week

The Scottish Tourism Forum is organising a week of high profile tourism-related events from 12-16 March. An industry conference is planned for 14 March, at which the 5 champions of the TFFC implementation groups will feed back directly to industry on progress that has been made with the strategy since its launch last year.

European Sustainable Tourism Working Group

PG told the group about this body, which meets quarterly in Brussels. They recently produced a sustainable tourism report (to be circulated with these minutes), which discusses in some detail many of the same issues facing the STP. It was agreed that there was no need to 'reinvent the wheel' and that we should refer to this document for ideas and guidance for our group – many will be similar and will just need adapted to a Scottish-scenario.

3. STP Action Plan – determine key actions to achieve TFFC targets

PG to follow up with Expotel colleagues

PG to circulate European report with minutes

TB has agreed that the STP will function as the implementation group responsible for taking forward the TFFC actions and targets relating to sustainability. There are 5 implementation groups altogether, each responsible for a different theme within the strategy. A monitoring group has been established to oversee the activities of these 5 groups, and at the last monitoring group meeting, it was agreed that each group should commit to drawing up an action plan of how they will achieve these targets.

TB asked everyone present to break into smaller discussion groups to come up with ideas on what this action plan should incorporate. The ideas that were fed back to the full group included:

- a definite need for **communication** to the wider industry
- need to promote actual business benefits of adopting sustainable tourism principles
- must be industry led
- need for dedicated staff to engage with industry
- must focus on the core issues – not on carbon offsetting
- initiating ‘demonstrator’ projects in specific geographical locations around Scotland, which could be communicated as best practice examples of sustainable tourism development/implementation (the 2 National Parks and Stirling given as suggested places)
- referring more to European environmental charter, and following NPs’ lead in signing up to this charter
- electrification of the main transport routes around Scotland
- a commitment from all STP members to encourage their own organisations to start using GTBS accommodation whenever possible when travelling on official business
- tying in the tourism agenda to the health agenda – promoting health benefits of tourism-related activity to local people
- linking into other agendas such as youth, disability and volunteering
- involve community councils more in tourism planning
- involve LECs more

It was agreed around the table that the Partnership should look at the possibility of employing somebody to co-ordinate and manage projects (probably primarily based around communicating messages to industry). The suggestion was made that this person should be employed through the Scottish Tourism Forum as this would highlight that the initiative is private sector led. TB agreed to speak to Alan Rankin and the various project funders for the STP about this proposal.

4. Update on Transport and Tourism – National Transport Strategy and Current Research

Penny George gave a brief update on the NTS and on current research into transport and tourism. A paper was circulated which pulled out the key references to tourism in the NTS. The group agreed that commitments and actions relating specifically to tourism are few and far between, but PG assured

TB to speak to Alan Rankin and funders

them that the Executive tourism team would continue to work closely with transport colleagues to ensure that tourism is high on their agenda as the strategy is implemented.

Some research is currently being undertaken (or soon to be commissioned) into transport and tourism. VisitScotland are commissioning research into the flow of visitors around Scotland once they are here, as little is currently known about this. Ian Yeoman's scenario planning team are also working with Stephen Page of Stirling University on some research into tourism and transport in 2025. PG is attending a seminar on this research on 21 Feb and can feed back to the group what will be covered and whether it will be relevant or useful for STP purposes.

Historic Scotland is to commission a large visitor survey this year, which will include a number of transport-related questions. Jenny Hess has said that they will be happy to share the findings of this with the STP.

PG expressed the view that while our knowledge and understanding of 'tourism transport' is increasing, it might be useful to have a bigger overview of how the tourism industry sits within the overall transport picture. She referred to a figure in the European Sustainable Tourism report which states that 'it is estimated that tourism transport currently accounts for 8% of CO2-equivalent emissions in the EU' (p.7) and suggested that it would be valuable to have a comparable figure/estimate (or something similar) reflecting how much of all travel undertaken in Scotland is attributable to tourism activity, and consequently what level of CO2 emissions our industry creates through travel. PG to speak to Executive transport colleagues on how this might be advanced.

Steve Hunt asked whether the recent research into the travel behaviour of visitors to Scotland commissioned by the Executive's transport department had been published. PG informed the group that it hasn't yet, but the final report is in the final drafting stages and she will let the group know as soon as a publication date is settled. Steve suggested that some of the findings of this report could be useful to the STP.

6. Dates of Next Meetings

Meetings for the rest of 2007 will take place on:

- Tuesday 15 May
- Tuesday 14 August
- Tuesday 13 November

TB volunteered to ask Alan Rankin if the STF could host the meeting in May.

PG to speak to Exec colleagues on tourism and transport research

PG to let group know of publication date for Exec research

TB to check with AR if STF can host May mtg