

CAIRNGORMS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ADVISORY FORUM

DRAFT NOTE

Date: 26 February 2013
Time: 10.30
Venue: Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore

Present

1	Bill Lobban	Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) Board (Chair)
2	Alan Rankin	Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP)
3	Sally Dowden	CBP
4	Keith Legge	CBP
5	Louise Mackie	Aberdeenshire Council
6	Nick Mardall	Deeside / Donside Development Officer
7	Jeremy Roberts	Scottish Environment LINK
8	Kevin Roach	Tourism Businesses (CBP)
9	Rita Marks	Association of Cairngorms Communities
10	Scott Armstrong	VisitScotland
11	Colin Simpson	Highland Council
12	Keith Legge	Scottish Youth Hostel Association

In attendance

1	Francoise van Buuren	CNPA
2	Pete Crane	CNPA
3	Heather Trench	CNPA
4	Chris Taylor	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
5	Marc Crothall	Scottish Tourism Alliance
6	Kevin Bazely	Scottish Enterprise
7	Phillipa Grant	CBP
8	Julia Prattinger	Napier University student

Apologies

1	Johnny Grant	National Farmer's Union Scotland
2	Debbie Greene	Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
3	Jamie Williamson	Alvie Estate
4	Hillary Tasker	Angus Council

Welcome and Introductions

1. BL welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introductions were made.

Apologies

2. As noted above.

Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

3. As a point of accuracy, it was noted that Frances Thin's name had been spelt incorrectly. With this amendment the note was agreed as accurate.
4. All the action points had been discharged, bar two. The training research referred to in API has been completed but the summary has not yet been circulated. AP8 referred to future work on Visitor Payback to be carried out by CNPA and CBP but this is a fairly large piece of work that has not yet been progressed.

AP 1: CNPA to circulate summary of training in the CNP.

AP2: CBP and CNPA to work with partners to look at specific options to take forward visitor payback and investment schemes, and to present options to the forum.

5. As an example of visitor payback work on the ground, SD and JR gave an update on how Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Speyside Wildlife (SW) are working together with SW's carbon donations going to support RSPB's tree nursery at Abernethy and all SW guides spending a day at Abernethy to help them explain the project to guests.

National Tourism Strategy

6. Marc Croathall gave a [presentation](#) about the new national tourism strategy, Tourism Scotland 2020, developed by the Scottish Tourism Alliance. Key to the strategy are a focus on growth markets, turning assets into experiences and trying to improve the customer journey through collaboration and a focus on quality at all levels of the market.
7. Alan Rankin gave more information on the Destination element of the strategy, making 5 key points:
 - The customer is key, and doesn't necessarily recognise traditional boundaries so a seamless experience through destinations is important.
 - Destinations are currently fragmented but a common framework would allow consistency in projects and measurements. The SE / HIE destination toolkit will be refreshed.
 - Measurements are not currently good enough. Need to have a focus on 2 key indicators – spend and visitor satisfaction. Customer journeys will be key research.

- Destination funding needs to focus on winners – those areas where there is the energy and capacity to deliver, as well as small destinations with an excellent product.
- There will be a destination convention later in the year, which may become an annual event.

8. Chris Taylor gave a [presentation](#) about HIE's Strategy Plan for Tourism.

AP 3: CT to send link to digital HIE website and Journey Genie.

9. Scott Armstrong gave an update on VisitScotland's Tourism Development Plan. The consultation deadline for the plan is 1st of March but this may be extended. John Swinney has asked that VisitScotland take a lead on tourism-related economic development, but delivery will be in partnership with other agencies.

10. Kevin Bazely gave an update on Scottish Enterprise's tourism work. Their focus remains on key growth opportunities. They have a longstanding commitment to promoting key destinations, including Deeside. A recent performance report on their destination work highlighted the difficulty of measuring progress.

11. In discussion of the above, the following key points were made:

- There was concern from quite a few of the forum that the sustainability element of Tourism Scotland 2020 was not given enough priority, and risked being overly concerned with what is perceived by visitors as 'green tourism' rather than true sustainability.
- It was noted that the key growth indicator was focused on the accommodation sector and that this risked overlooking the importance of the day trip market.
- There is an increasing tendency to 'back the winners' in destination terms with support focused on areas with high growth potential, but this risks sucking visitors out of other smaller rural destinations.
- The industry have the knowledge and experience to market their product, and there were concerns that centralising websites such as Wild Scotland into VisitScotland would lead to a poorer service for visitors.
- Quality and consistency are key to the visitor experience, and quality is important at every level of the market. There remain gaps in a quality experience in many areas, notably around food and drink, and accommodation.
- The landscape of tourism bodies in Scotland is overly complex with 400 different groups for a country of 5 million people, and a variety of different strategies from different groups. The strategies are fundamentally good but there needs to be clarity of leadership and a mechanism for putting them into action.
- There was some confusion over VisitScotland's role in economic development, and their relationship with the enterprise network, but it was stressed that all

the agencies work very closely together, with frequent meetings and liaison with the private sector.

- The Cairngorms has an excellent local strategy and a mechanism for delivery on the ground. If anywhere should be able to deliver the national strategy at a local level, it's here.

Action Plan Update

12. PC and AR explained that there had been some recent work on TIC provision in Grantown. The lease on the current premises had been due to expire, but has been extended for 9 months while a new model is investigated. It is likely that a partnership TIC will be set up, probably at the museum, with digital information also available to visitors to guide them to that location. This is likely to be a model that will be rolled out to other areas as public sector support for VICs declines and visitors increasingly seek information digitally.
13. KH explained that in Blair Atholl the local tourist association had run vacant shop premises as an information centre for a year. A new info hub for the village will be opened on the 22nd March and will be staffed by local tourist association members and rangers, providing an authentic local experience.
14. PC gave an update on cycling work. A new meta-study has found that 50% of cycling is done by occasional users. An electric bike project has been set-up by Sustrans and a project officer for the Cairngorms has been appointed.
15. CNP STEAM figures have been released for the first 9 months of 2012 and show a 5% decline in numbers and a 4% decline in spend. This was no surprise to the industry representatives, and seems to be a general pattern across Scotland, although KL said that the picture varies across Scotland, and some of SYHA's more expensive island destinations are doing surprisingly well.
16. CS gave an update on work by local authorities, enterprise companies and VisitScotland on a £200k project to replace STEAM. The new system will produce volume and value reports for Scotland as a whole with an opportunity for others to buy in at a local level.

Future Agenda Items

17. FvB suggested that future meeting could look at the implications of the STA strategy for us at a more local level, and what the CNP could do to help deliver the strategy. KL agreed, saying that CNP was a model of good practice nationally.
18. AR asked that the 'Make It Yours' project was discussed at the next meeting.
19. KH asked that help for very rural areas such as Laggan, and broadband provision were discussed.

AOB

20. RM reminded the group that it's the little things that make a big difference to the visitor with an anecdote about a family visiting the Glenfiddich Distillery. They liked the tour and the food but reserved particular praise for the toilets.

Date of Next Meeting

21. It has been difficult to find a suitable date for the next meeting. Some options will be circulated via doodle.

Heather Trench
Sustainable Tourism Officer
CNPA