

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET- 20 MAY 2009

EAST AYRSHIRE TOURISM STRATEGY - THE WAY AHEAD: 2009-2015

Report by Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval for the adoption of the finalised East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan and accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Statement following a full public consultation as required by Section 16 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Preparation and development of the Tourism Strategy has been led by the Planning and Economic Development Service of the Department of Corporate Support, in consultation with Leisure Services of the Department of Neighbourhood Services.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 4 June 2008, Cabinet approved the document "Tourism: The Way Ahead in East Ayrshire 2008-2015" and the Draft Action Plan, in principle, subject to the outcome of the statutorily required Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- 2.3 Following a full and rigorous Strategic Environmental Assessment process, and the preparation of an Environmental Report, the strategy document received minor modifications.
- 2.4 On 4 February 2009, Cabinet approved the East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan and accompanying Environmental Report to be published in draft for full public consultation as required by Section 16 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

3 BACKGROUND OF THE TOURISM STRATEGY

- 3.1 In 2006, The Scottish Executive published 'A Tourism Framework for Change' its policy document for the development of the tourism industry in Scotland and set out its strategic ambition for growth in revenue from the industry of 50%, over a ten year period to 2015.
- 3.2 The tourism industry is important to the economy of East Ayrshire, generating around £56 million per year in tourism revenue and there is considerable potential to grow this contribution further.

3.3 The tourism product in East Ayrshire includes a range of cultural and visitor attractions, and opportunities for outdoor activities and recreation. East Ayrshire has much more to offer in terms developing tourism as a significant generator of wealth and employment in the local economy. These attributes include :

- Close proximity to highly populated areas within Scotland;
- Close proximity to Glasgow Prestwick and Glasgow International Airports;
- Good transport links;
- Easy accessibility from central Scotland and northern England;
- Scenic quality of rural areas;
- Strong associations with Robert Burns and other Scots of international renown;
- Strong cultural offer in arts and museums; and
- Emerging opportunities arising from Dumfries House and Estate being “saved for the nation” by a consortium led by HRH The Prince Charles, Duke of Rothesay and the associated proposal for the development of a “sustainable eco-village” on a site within the Estate, currently referred to as “Knockroon”.

4 THE VISION FOR TOURISM IN EAST AYRSHIRE

4.1 Aligning the policy objectives summarised in Section 11 and the positive aspects noted in section 3.3, the following **vision** for tourism in East Ayrshire is proposed:

“By 2015 East Ayrshire will be an immediately recognisable and even more attractive destination where our industry works together to provide a unique, authentic and accessible tourism experience which focuses on exceeding visitor expectations and delivers tangible benefits to the wealth and wellbeing of local communities.”

4.2 The **strategic ambition** is to *grow tourism revenue by 10% in real terms, in East Ayrshire by 2015*. While this may seem a relatively modest target in comparison to the national target of 50% real terms growth in tourism revenue, it is considered that this is a realistic target for sustainable growth, taking into account the fragility of the current economic climate and the level of tourism development required to achieve this growth.

5 AYRSHIRE & ARRAN VISITOR SURVEY 2008/09

5.1 A Visitor Survey undertaken during the year from April 2008 to March 2009 by an external consultant was commissioned jointly by VisitScotland and the three local authorities in Ayrshire.

5.2 The report on the Visitor Survey is currently in the course of preparation, but preliminary findings indicate the following encouraging positive aspects regarding tourism in East Ayrshire :

- 1 in 10 visitors to East Ayrshire come from the USA;
- Visiting castles, monuments and churches are the most popular with visitors interviewed in East Ayrshire (38% of all visitors) and within the age group 16-34 , this corresponding figure is 32%;
- 59% of short stay visitors in Glasgow are likely to extend their visit to include Ayrshire & Arran;
- 52% of visitors to East Ayrshire are in the 55+ age group; 32% in the 35 -54 age group and 16% in the 16-34 age group;
- 74% of visitors to East Ayrshire originate from Scotland;
- 60% of visitors to East Ayrshire are on a day trip;
- 20% of visitors to East Ayrshire came to visit Dumfries House;
- The expectations of 43% of visitors to East Ayrshire was exceeded;
- Total trip spend per party on visits to East Ayrshire was £661.

6 THE WAY AHEAD : 2009 to 2015

6.1 The East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy document sets out in considerable detail, the background to the tourism industry, the policy context and the challenges which the industry faces. It proposes a strategic framework for the achievement of East Ayrshire Council's ambition for the development of the tourism industry in the area, based on the following aims:

Aim 1 To establish and work towards a growth ambition and vision for tourism;

Aim 2 To develop an active, connected tourism community;

Aim 3 To develop a framework for research and information monitoring;

Aim 4 To enhance and expand the tourism product;

Aim 5 To improve tourism infrastructure to support the tourism product; and

Aim 6 To proactively market the area as an attractive destination

6.2 The full document which is available on the Members' Portal provides a detailed action plan for each aim, including projected outcomes, timescales and partner involvement.

7 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

7.1 At a strategic level, performance will be measured directly against the ambition of 10% growth in tourism revenues within East Ayrshire by 2015. This will be based on data provided by the Ayrshire and Arran STEAM Report, independently undertaken on an annual basis.

7.2 Information provided by STEAM has traditionally been on a VisitScotland area network basis (i.e. Ayrshire and Arran), however in future a more detailed analysis at local authority level will be prepared annually to provide baseline data and allow monitoring of key indicators as outlined in the strategy.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 As required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, the East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan and accompanying Environmental Report were subject to public consultation.

8.2 A full public consultation was undertaken for a period of 6 weeks, between 13th February and 27th March 2009.

8.3 A total of 6 representations were received by the Council in respect of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. Overall, the responses widely welcomed the development of the Tourism Strategy and were strongly supportive of the detailed proposals for the development of tourism in East Ayrshire.

Accordingly, the document has received only minor alterations as a result of the consultation feedback and Cabinet approval is now sought for the finalised document.

8.4 A total of 3 representations were received from statutory consultation authorities in respect of the Environmental Report. Representations received from statutory consultation authorities are detailed within the SEA Statement.

8.5 The final step in terms of meeting the legislative requirement in progressing the Strategic Environmental Assessment to its conclusion, as required by Sections 18(1)(c), (2)(b) and 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, is for the Council to produce an SEA Statement detailing how the SEA process has been taken into account in the preparation of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.

9 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) STATEMENT

9.1 The contents of the SEA Statement are specified by Section 18(3) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and has to include the following:

- a) how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
- b) how the environmental report has been taken into account;
- c) how the opinions expressed in response to the invitations mentioned in Section 16 have been taken into account;
- d) how the results of any relevant consultation under Regulation 14 of the Environmental Assessment of Plan and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633) have been taken into account;
- e) the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives considered; and
- f) the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

9.2 The East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy SEA Statement outlines the consultation responses and the environmental considerations which have been taken into account during the development of the Strategy.

9.3 Sections 18(1)(a), (b) and (c) and 18(2)(a) and (b) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 require the following steps to be undertaken after the Strategy has been adopted and the SEA Statement approved:

- To make a copy of the Strategy, Environmental Report and SEA Statement available for inspection by the public, free of charge, at the Council's principal office;
- To place an advertisement in the local newspaper detailing that the East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy has been adopted, the date of adoption, the address where the relevant documents may be inspected, the times at which inspection of the documents can be made, and that inspection may be made, free of charge;
- To display a copy of the relevant documents on the Council's website; and
- To inform the Consultation Authorities that the Strategy has been adopted and to send them a copy of the adopted Strategy and SEA Statement.

9.4 The East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy SEA Statement outlines the consultation responses and the environmental considerations which have been taken into account during the development of the Strategy.

9.5 The final stages of the process, required by Sections 19(1) and (2) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 are in relation to monitoring the significant environmental impacts of the implementation of the Strategy, specifically:

- Section 19(1) places a specific duty on the Council to monitor the significant environmental effects that potentially will occur due to implementation of the Strategy;
- Section 19(2) states that the Council will undertake monitoring measures in such a manner (which may comprise or include arrangements established otherwise than for the express purpose of compliance with Section 19(1)) which enables the Council to:

- (a) identify any unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage; and
- (b) undertake appropriate remedial action.

9.6 The SEA Statement contains the monitoring arrangements that will be undertaken to enable the Council to comply with the legislative requirements, the achievement of which will require the assistance of other Sections within the Council.

10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** On 17 December 2008, Cabinet approved a Service Level Agreement between East Ayrshire Council and VisitScotland for the financial year 2008/09, at a cost of £33,500. This represented a considerable reduction from the 2007/08 contribution of £70,000.
- 10.2** In order that the level of investment in tourism development and promotion was sustained at the 2007/08 level of £70,000, Cabinet authorised the balance of £36,500 to be ring-fenced from within existing resources to form the basis of a dedicated tourism budget within the current financial year.
- 10.3** It is proposed that in future the level of funding for VisitScotland will continue to be governed through a Service Level Agreement, with a separate dedicated budget to aid the delivery of the objectives of the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.
- 10.4** It is proposed that the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support be remitted to seek to achieve this from within existing resources, where possible. It should however be noted that as tourism continues to develop and grow within East Ayrshire increased resources are likely to be required in order to fully meet the actions outlined within the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.
- 10.5** Businesses operating in the tourism sector will continue to be eligible for loan funding assistance through the West of Scotland Loan Fund, subject to the normal criteria of the Fund, and for business development grants from East Ayrshire Council.
- 10.6** As a result of the legislative monitoring requirements, there may be a requirement for some financial and staffing resources, to ensure that the potential significant negative or negative environmental impacts are monitored effectively. These funding and staffing implications will require to be met from within existing resources.

11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** The Solicitor to the Council advised that in terms of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, it was necessary to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment on the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.
- 11.2** Following a formal consultation process, responses in relation to the Tourism Strategy and Environmental Report have been considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into the finalised Strategy.

11.3 Approval of the East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan will require:

- the production of an SEA Statement in accordance with the provisions of Sections 18(1)(c), (2)(b) and 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 (as detailed in paragraph 7.5 above); and
- the requirements to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Strategy, as required by Sections 19(1) and (2) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 (as detailed in paragraphs 8.5 and 8.6 above).

12 POLICY AND COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The importance and potential of tourism in East Ayrshire is identified in the East Ayrshire Community Plan, and in particular Thematic Aim 4 of the Delivering Community Regeneration Action Plan which is “to grow tourism and increase visits and participation in cultural and leisure activities”.

12.2 The specified target is to increase tourism revenue by 5% by 2011 and 10% by 2015.

12.3 The East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan as described in this report will support the achievement of the objectives of the East Ayrshire Community Plan, as expressed in the Delivering Regeneration Action Plan.

13 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no immediate personnel implications.

14 RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 That the Cabinet:

- (1) Approves adoption of the East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan;
- (2) Remits the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support to implement the Strategy from within existing resources where possible;
- (3) Requests the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support to bring forward performance monitoring reports on an annual basis;
- (4) Approves the SEA Statement and instructs the Head of Planning and Economic Development to undertake the publication and advertisement requirements outlined in paragraph 8.3; and

- (5) Instructs the required Services of the Council to assist with and undertake the monitoring arrangements contained in the SEA Statement in order to comply with Sections 19(1) and (2) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

ELIZABETH MORTON

Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Support

13 May 2009

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- 1) East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy: The Way Ahead: 2009 – 2015
[Available on Members Portal]
- 2) East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy - SEA Statement
[Available on Members Portal]

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