

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET- 26 OCTOBER 2011

AYRSHIRE & ARRAN TOURISM STRATEGY 2012 - 2017

**Report by Depute Chief Executive /
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend approval of the Tourism Strategy for Ayrshire and Arran 2012-2017.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 15 June 2011 Cabinet approved a draft Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Strategy. Consultations have taken place with the tourism industry and stakeholders throughout July and August 2011 in order to produce the completed Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Strategy 2012-2017. Public consultation events were held in Irvine, Kilmarnock, Ayr, Seamill, Cumnock, Brodick and Girvan; 7 industry groupings were consulted; a forum of young people involved in tourism was held and an online questionnaire was widely distributed.
- 2.2 The consultation phase was designed to get feedback on the overall strategy direction, setting of priorities under the headings of Offers and Opportunities and Enablers and how we can work together to grow the sector. In general the feedback on the general direction was favourable. Changes were suggested to the vision and some concerns raised on increasing employment by 10%. With regards to priorities, the top three Offers and Opportunities were Activities, Heritage and Golf with Signage, Public realm and Cleanliness, Collaboration and Networking and Skills the top three priorities for the enablers.
- 2.3 Following on from the consultation, comments have been included in a final strategy document. The strategy has as its key aims to increase visitor numbers and revenue, general opportunities for employment and reinforce our drive to enhance the built and natural environment. In addition the strategy aims to improve the lives and vitality of our local communities through better partnership working and the creation of a dedicated Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Team.
- 2.4 The Strategy was initiated by a private sector call for action for better leadership in tourism and has been developed by the Ayrshire Economic Partnership with the tourism industry and North and South Ayrshire Councils.

3 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 Tourism in Ayrshire & Arran employs 8,900 FTEs, brings some £348 million into the local economy with 3.50 million tourists visiting the area (Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor, 2010).
- 3.2 However it must be noted that tourism revenue in Ayrshire & Arran has experienced only very modest growth from £330 million in 2003 to £348 million in 2010 and a concerted effort must be made to address this down turn and grow the sector through the new focused Ayrshire & Arran Strategy and joint working.

4 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The completed Tourism Strategy for Ayrshire & Arran 2012-2017 has now been produced and is available on the members portal. The Strategy proposes the adoption of a clear vision, and sets out strategic aims and objectives with targets.

- 4.2 Our Vision:

“Ayrshire & Arran will be a premier destination of choice, where visitors receive a fantastic welcome and enjoy outstanding experiences of our coastline, countryside, culture and hospitality.”

- 4.3 Our Aims: the aims of the Strategy are:

- To secure industry leadership that guides strategic direction.
- To proactively market Ayrshire & Arran as a destination of choice.
- To maximise quality and focus on excellent service to our visitors.
- To enhance our tourism offers and capitalise on opportunities.
- To improve tourism infrastructure to support our offers and opportunities.

- 4.4 Our Objectives:

- Increase the annual number of visitors coming to Ayrshire & Arran annually by 10% from 3.50 million to 3.85 million.
- Increase annual spend by visitors by 20% from £348 million to £418 million.
- Increase employment supported by the sector by 10% from 8,900 to 9,800.
- Enhance and conserve the region's natural, heritage and cultural assets.

- 4.5 It is clear from consultations and the call for action from the tourism industry that a mechanism to drive the new strategy forward is required.

- 4.6 It is proposed to establish an Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Leadership Group.

The Group will comprise approximately 12 members, the majority of which will be from the industry including the Chair of the Group. It is proposed that the Council will be represented on this Group at officer level.

- 4.7 In addition it is proposed that the Leadership Group is supported by an Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Team jointly resourced by the 3 Ayrshire Councils and led by a Tourism Manager. The remit of the Team will be the delivery of specific pan-Ayrshire projects, milestones and targets and raising any emerging issues, challenges and opportunities. A detailed proposal will be developed as a further stage to the strategy process.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 There has been wide input from the members of the Ayrshire Economic Partnership, North, East and South Ayrshire Councils, stakeholders, industry workshops and individuals.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The Tourism Strategy for Ayrshire & Arran 2012-2017 sets out a clear and focused vision for tourism over the next five years. A strategic approach, led through the establishment of an Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Leadership Group and supported by a Tourism Team will be introduced to deliver the strategy. Development of an action and marketing plans in partnership with all stakeholders will provide effective tourism growth.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Strategy is for the tourism industry as a whole to take forward but will require significant support from public sector agencies, including the three Ayrshire Local Authorities, to catalyse activity and facilitate projects. A detailed proposal for Cabinet support for the Strategy is expected to be considered by Council before the end of the calendar year.

8 HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Human Resource implications will be considered as part of the detailed proposal for Council support for the strategy and is expected to be considered by Cabinet before the end of the calendar year.

9 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Strategy will meet the Single Outcome Agreement priorities in East, North and South Ayrshire Councils.
- 9.2 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”.

9.3 The specified target is to increase tourism revenue by 5% by 2011 and 10% by 2015. East Ayrshire is currently on course to meet the specified targets, and implementation of this new strategic approach will assist further in meeting these targets.

9.4 Currently, the East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan supports the achievement of these objectives of the East Ayrshire Community Plan, as expressed in the Delivering Regeneration Action Plan. Adoption of the Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Strategy 2012-2017 would replace the East Ayrshire Council Tourism Strategy.

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 In terms of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, it will be necessary to carry out a Strategic Environmental Assessment on the Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Strategy.

10.2 A Strategic Environmental Assessment process is being undertaken by South Ayrshire Council, on behalf of the partner organisations, in parallel with development of the strategy. Any required amendments to the strategy, which may emerge during this process, will be brought forward for approval and integration into the finalised strategy.

10.3 The legal basis of the shared team proposal for Council support for the Strategy is expected to be considered by Council before the end of the calendar year.

11 RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 That the Cabinet:

(i) adopts the final version of the Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Strategy 2012-2017 thereby replacing the existing East Ayrshire Tourism Strategy (2009 – 2015);

(ii) asks the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services to bring forward proposals for a shared tourism team.

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Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

19 October 2011

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- 1) Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Strategy 2012-2017**
[Available on Members Portal]

- 2) Draft Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Strategy 2011-2016**
Cabinet Report: 15 June 2011
[Available on Members Portal]

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