

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 3 MAY 2005

AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN TOURIST BOARD NATIONAL RESTRUCTURING OF AREA TOURIST BOARDS

Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To update the Committee on the recent restructuring of the national mechanisms for the support of the tourism industry in Scotland, since a previous report was considered by the Committee at its meeting on 29 June 2004.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1** At its meeting held on 29 June 2004, the Committee considered a report on the funding of the Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board and which indicated that announcements had been made by the Scottish Executive regarding the outcome of a review into public sector funding and support provided to the tourism industry.

3 THE NEW NATIONAL STRUCTURE

- 3.1** The review undertaken during 2004 of the public sector support structures for the tourism industry in Scotland was aimed at increasing the contribution which tourism makes to the Scottish economy, developing and enhancing the Scottish tourism product and ensuring that support of the industry is integrated. The outcome of the review was the establishment of a new structure of a single tourism promotion organisation called VisitScotland, with a series of locally based “hubs” (based on the areas of the exiting Area Tourist Boards).
- 3.2** The new structure, known as the Tourism Network Scotland became effective on 1 April 2005, at which time the existing Area Tourist Boards ceased to exist as legal entities and staff were transferred to VisitScotland. At 1 April 2005, the assets and liabilities of the current Area Tourist Boards transferred to VisitScotland.
- 3.3** VisitScotland, through its chairman and board are accountable to the Scottish Executive and the management structure for the organisation has now been published. In Ayrshire, the local hub will be known as Area Office – Prestwick, led by Catriona Mackie whose appointment as Area Director took effective from 1 April 2005. Other staff will be “matched in” to available posts or will undergo a recruitment process if there are no immediately available “matched

posts available in the structure. At the date of this report, 4 members of staff have their positions confirmed .

3.4 The key functions of the new area hubs will be to :

- Deliver the VisitScotland business objectives within the defined geographical area;
- Develop local industry engagement and partnerships with tourism businesses;
- Build key local stakeholder relationships, particular with the local authorities, the local enterprise companies and community planning groups;
- Support the development of area tourism strategies and the formulation of area tourism plans, linked to national strategies and plans.

4 PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

4.1 The Scottish Executive has emphasised that it considers continuing partnership with local authorities to be essential in securing the success of the new approach to supporting the tourism industry.

4.2 Meetings involving the Scottish Executive and VisitScotland have been held with the Leaders of Councils, Chief Executives and other appropriate Elected Members and officers to secure the commitment of the local authorities to continued involvement in supporting the tourist industry.

4.3 In particular, although VisitScotland will receive its core funding centrally through the Scottish Executive for the delivery of the national support programmes, the importance of retaining local authority funding for supporting locally based tourism initiatives has been stressed.

4.4 To facilitate this partnership with local authorities, it is proposed that “Area Tourism Partnerships” be formed, to include the tourism industry, local authorities, other public bodies and VisitScotland. The remit of the partnerships will be to agree and set priorities, within the national framework, for the development and marketing of tourism in their areas.

4.5 The Area Tourism Partnership for Ayrshire and Arran will hold its first meeting on 3 May 2005 and the representative of East Ayrshire Council will be Councillor Eric Ross, supported by an officer.

4.6 VisitScotland has recently issued a framework document for a Partnership Agreement between the Tourism Network Scotland and individual local authorities.

4.7 The Partnership Agreement anticipates that each local authority and the local area office of VisitScotland will work together, and where appropriate across local authority area boundaries and with other parts of the Tourism Network, to maximise the impact of the tourism product in the area, to generate additional economic impact.

4.8 It is anticipated that the direct role of the local authority partners will be to :

- Provide funding to enable the Tourism Network to develop, deliver, administer and evaluate a range of tourism services which are consistent with the local authority's economic, environmental and social objectives and which meet the needs of local businesses;
- Contribute to the development and implementation of the Tourism Framework for Action, the existing Area Tourism Strategy and in due course, the Area Tourism Partnership Plan; and
- Work with the Tourism Network and other partners on joint projects to maximise opportunities through developing and sustaining tourism in the area.

5 PARTNERSHIP IN FINANCIAL YEAR 2005/06

5.1 Discussions are being held to facilitate the completion of an Agreement between East Ayrshire Council and VisitScotland, in respect of the financial year 2005/2006. Part of this process was a seminar involving staff of VisitScotland – Prestwick and representatives of the EAC services which have a direct impact on the tourism industry was held on 11 April 2005. The seminar was opened by a key-note address by the Council's Chief Executive. It was agreed that the output of the seminar should be agreement on several key outcomes to be delivered during 2005/06 by the partnership working between VisitScotland – Prestwick and East Ayrshire Council.

5.2 On the basis of the commitment of funding from the Council to VisitScotland, it is proposed that the agreement for 2005/06 should include commitment by VisitScotland to the following elements :

- The provision of marketing services to support the growth of the tourism industry in the area;
- Working with the Council to ensure the development and delivery of quality, sustainable visitor services, including visitor information and the promotion of local attraction and events;
- Working with the Council on the joint development of projects to develop and sustain tourism in the area, particularly the "Burns An' A' That Festival" and the events within it which take place within East Ayrshire;
- Provision of tourism services to businesses in the Council area and ensuring that the industry is fully engaged in the promotion and development of tourism.

5.3 In addition, the following specific proposals were agreed with the representatives of VisitScotland - Prestwick :

- (1) to enhance partnership working, there should be an exchange of information between the two organisations on the roles of key staff members;

- (2) to promote facilities and events, there should be increased joint marketing of projects and facilities, particularly through web-sites;
- (3) to enhance visitor information, the “brown tourism signs” should be reviewed and any gaps in provision identified in order that they can be addressed;
- (4) the economic benefits tourism related to “family history” should be examined with a view to promotion of this market;
- (5) the economic benefits of the “cultural offer” in terms of exhibitions etc. should be examined with a view to product development. To this end, advanced programming of exhibitions in the visual arts will be notified to VisitScotland in the planning phase of up to 2 years in advance of taking place;
- (6) the Council and VisitScotland should work closely towards the development and marketing of a range of festivals, which would provide benefit to local residents and attract visitors to the area;
- (7) visitor attractions should be promoted in a more targeted manner to the education sector as a complementary educational experience for young people.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Subject to Committee approval, it is proposed that the Council should commit funds at a similar level to 2004/05 of £69,150 to VisitScotland to support the work of the VisitScotland - Prestwick Office, subject to conclusion of a satisfactory Agreement with VisitScotland. These funds will be drawn from the Grants to External Bodies Budget 2005/06, provision for which will be made in the budget preparation.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The tourism industry is an important element of the East Ayrshire economy and support for it will assist in achieving the policy objectives of the East Ayrshire Community Plan (Improving Opportunities Theme; Improving the Environment and Improving Health themes) and the Ayrshire Economic Forum.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Once negotiated and approved, the Agreement with VisitScotland will be concluded to the satisfaction of the Head of Administrative and Legal Services.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications for the Council.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That the Committee :

- (1) notes the current position regarding the development of the Tourism Network Scotland; and
- (2) approves the proposed payment of £69,150 for the year 2005/06.

JAMES LAVERY

Executive Director of Development and Property Services

19/04/2005-jrs

BACKGROUND PAPERS

For further information please contact ROBERT PATON, Head of Economic Development and Property on Extension 6142.

Implementation Officer : JOHN SPOONER (Extension 6143)