

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 24 OCTOBER 2000

AYRSHIRE AND ARRAN TOURIST BOARD

Report by Director of Development Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** For Committee to agree to changes in the Board structure of the Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board (AATB) and note further development work being carried out into the Tourism Information Strategy for the next five years and how this relates to the local situation within East Ayrshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Committee agreed on 11 April 2000 to the service level agreement for the AATB for the year to 31st March 2001. Within the targets set for the year a specific note was made of the need to secure a better balance of board representation than is the case at present. The need for wider membership of the board is supported by North Ayrshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, and is outlined further in section 3 below.
- 2.2** In addition to the above, it is widely acknowledged that the information needs of the modern day tourist is changing rapidly with greater use of the Internet for information and bookings. This has led to the AATB commissioning an important study in this area in order to look at trends in the tourist market generally and make recommendations with regard to the efficient provision of information in a fast changing and competitive environment. This is dealt with in section 4 below.
- 2.3** The context of these changes take account of the major review of the Scottish Tourist Board generally by the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Minister with a back drop of falling tourist numbers generally and the need for better marketing and the targeting of resources in a vastly competitive international market.
- 2.3** In this respect Committee agreed on 27 January 1998 that the Director of Development Services would continue to review with the AATB options on an improved tourism information service for East Ayrshire.
- 2.4** The officers of the four public sector agencies, i.e. three councils and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire (SEA) have worked closely with the AATB's new Chief Executive over the last ten months to assist with the redevelopment of the organisation in view of the importance of the Tourism sector to Ayrshire as a whole.
- 2.5** It is widely recognised that Ayrshire has a number of major 'tourism assets', ranging from, Burns to golf, or popular family visitor attractions such as Culzean Castle, Loudoun Castle, etc., however, the exploitation and marketing of these to date has been poor and unco-ordinated resulting in the area not reaping the awards it has the

potential to do. A further report on this is currently underway which will be a subject of a separate report to Committee within the next 2/3 months.

- 2.6** Changes in consumer behaviour has also been taken into account, e.g. we will not compete with the 'two weeks in the sun', but all current analysis indicate that there is an increasing market for short-break visits and given the potential of inward visits for Ryanair flights from London, Germany, France and Ireland, this too represents a considerable opportunity for Ayrshire.

3. BOARD REPRESENTATION

- 3.1** As noted above, there is wide recognition of the need to improve board representation of the AATB in order to ensure membership of the various sectors operating within Ayrshire. This will also reflect the changing opportunities and threats that exist in this highly competitive sector of the local economy.

- 3.2** The present board structure is as follows:

South Ayrshire Council	1
East Ayrshire Council	1
North Ayrshire Council	1
Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire	1
Argyll and Island Enterprise	1
Scottish Tourist Board	1
	6
Trade Directors	6
TOTAL	12

- 3.3** Options for change are briefly summarised below:

Option I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Status quo, invite other representations, as and when required.
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does not deal with the over-riding perception of the need for change <input type="checkbox"/> Invitees seen as powerless <input type="checkbox"/> Provides continuity.
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Option II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Representatives of local trade groups invited to put forward their own nomination, e.g. Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Industry Forum, Ayrshire Hoteliers Association etc.
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Disenfranchising members by not electing all the board <input type="checkbox"/> Representatives having to consult their own organisations before taking

decisions.

Option III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Trade Directors taken from AATB membership categories (as noted below).
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Encourages wider representation ❑ External perception of change ❑ Broadens board experience.

3.4 The board of the AATB agreed to support in principal Option III above as it offers the opportunities to get a better and more dynamic representation than is the case at present. The following sectors have been identified for representation:

- ❑ Serviced accommodation, more than 20 bedrooms
- ❑ Serviced accommodation, less than 20 bedrooms
- ❑ Self catering/camping (unserviced accommodation)
- ❑ Activity/Leisure
- ❑ Visitor attractions
- ❑ Transport/tour sector
- ❑ Arran destination

3.5 In view of the above, advertisements will be placed in the press-seeking individuals from these sectors, which will be the subject of selection and interview.

3.6 It is further proposed that in the spirit of the need for change the public sector agencies will become a minority on the board with 6 places and the private sector with 7 places. This is in line with other partnership organisation such as East Ayrshire Business Partnership and the East Ayrshire Employment Initiative, where the public sector agencies are in the minority to private sector involvement.

3.7 Whilst the public sector will be in the minority at the board, a considerable degree of influence will still be exercised through each of the local authorities service level agreements, which are approved by each Council every year as a condition of funding.

3.8 The proposals will still require, if agreed by the Council, to be confirmed at the AATB's Special General Meeting for consideration at the Annual General Meeting. Legal advice will be taken on these constitutional issues.

3.9 It is believed that these proposals are within the spirit of the recommendations of the review of Tourism currently being carried out at present, with particular regard to the relationship and participation of Local Authorities in local tourist boards.

4. TOURISM INFORMATION STRATEGY

4.1 As noted above, with the support of the public sector agencies, an innovative study was commenced by the AATB into the 'Delivery of Information Services To Visitors To Ayrshire and Arran'. This was carried out by the highly respected Moffat Centre at

Glasgow Caledonian University, which is achieving national and international recognition in the tourism sector.

4.2 The reviews covered a number of key areas:

- AATB performance currently
- Key Trends Analysis:
 - Mobile Phones Growth
 - Call centre development
 - Internet access
 - Analogous information provision in USA, South East Asia
 - Economic significance of tourism provision
- What are the information needs for the future
- How do we fulfil the service requirements.

4.3 Detailed below are some of the key statistical information that has been drawn from the research which reflects an analysis of visitors to the current Tourism Information Centres in Ayrshire.

		%
Frequency of Visits	- First time	30
	- Live here	26
	- Few times	22
	- Many times	22
Length of visit	- Day visit	34
	- 2-3 days	20
	- 4-6 days	19
	- 1 week	19
	- 2-3 weeks	12
	- 1 month	2
	- More than one month	4
Main reason for visit	- Habit	41
	- History Culture	17
	- Walkers	11
	- Coast	10
	- Activity	9
	- Passing through	4
	- Other	8
Purpose of Visit	- Visiting Friends and Relatives	14
	- Holiday	81
	- Business	3
	- Business/Leisure	2
Transport Used	-	
	- Private Car	64
	- Hire Car	4
	- Train	13
	- Boat	4

- Train/Car + Boat	3
- Scheduled Bus	4
- Tour Bus	4
- Plane	3
- Other	1

Most Frequent Information Needs	Nos
- Visitor Attractions	80
- Events	47
- Accommodation	44
- Activities	27
- Transport	24
- Maps	17
- Retail	14
- Tours	10
- Other parts of Scotland	8
- Public facilities	5
- Boat trips	2
(sample 212)	

4.4 A key recommendation from the Moffat Centre is that there requires to be a radical rethink of how information is provided to visitors in that a large amount of resources is currently being deployed in supporting 'churn visitors', i.e. visitors who are probably from the surrounding West of Scotland area who would probably visit the area anyway. In addition, there are site specific issues in that a high number of visitors use their own cars which has caused particular problems in Largs, Kilmarnock and Ayr where parking close to the TIC is an issue.

4.5 An analysis of visitors to the TICs in Ayrshire is highlighted below:

	<u>Visitors 000's</u>
Kilmarnock	35
Irvine	18
Ayr	80
Troon	9
Largs	55
Millport	21
Arran	101
Girvan	19

Analysis of the visitors to Kilmarnock TIC however shows that 2 out of 3 visits are from local people, a large number of which is to purchase gifts from the souvenir stock that is held on the premises.

4.6 In order to maximise the use of the resources for information, i.e. targeting this on potential new visitors to the area with increase spending power, and given the wider changes in how information is now provided, it is now proposed that the following takes place:

- There is a mini 'call centre' facility at AATB's Prestwick Head Office, this would cover the whole of Ayrshire and Arran, and would be manned by existing staff. This would avoid potential visitors having to have a 'phone round' of existing numbers of local offices.
- There would be a new TIC facility at Glasgow Prestwick Airport which would provide access to the increasing numbers of French, German and Irish visitors through Ryanair flights.
- There would be a rationalisation of TIC's offices based on analysis of visitors, location and future trends.
- There would be a mixture of 'TIC's and Tourist Information Point', (TIPs), e.g.

TIC's

- Largs
- Ayr
- Brodick
- Seacat (New, and on Ferry)
- Glasgow Prestwick Airport
- Bellfield Interchange (being assessed)

TIP's

- Kilmarnock (Dick Institute, Dean Castle)
(Local Offices, elsewhere in east Ayrshire)
- Girvan
- Culzean
- Irvine (Big Idea)
- Troon

(TIPs would generally be unmanned)

Serious consideration will now be given a TIP at a location within the facilities at the Bellfield Interchange. It is expected that since this is a traditional stop-off point for tourists at the junction, i.e. A77 (soon to be M77), A71 and A73 tourist route to Dumfries, this would be an ideal main stopping point for car travellers in Ayrshire. This will be the subject of further investigation and may involve a private sector partnership with the existing operators on the site.

- 4.7** It is further proposed that with the relocation of the Kilmarnock TIC in January/February next year, the lease expires on 28 January 2001, (both staff will be re-deployed, i.e. there will be no redundancies.)
- 4.8** Location issues of TIP's will be the subject of discussion with the Director of Community Services and the Director of Corporate Services, with regard to certain local offices. This will be the subject of a separate report to Committee in due course.

5. GENERAL COMMENTS

- 5.1** It is widely recognised that tourism in Ayrshire and Scotland generally has been falling which requires immediate action on a wide range of fronts. This is being tackled head on by the current review at National level and by the AATB at the local level with the support of the three Councils and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, the Scottish Tourist Board and Argyll and Island Enterprise.

- 5.2** As noted above, Ayrshire has a number of international attractions such as Burns, Golf, Culzean Castle and at the local level major assets, e.g. within East Ayrshire, Dean Castle, Dick Institute, Loudoun Castle, Doon Valley Heritage attractions, etc. It is considered on a national level these assets are not promoted as efficiently as possible, and given international competition for the tourist pound, much work requires to be done to improve our performance.
- 5.3** The above changes on the board structure and how information is sold to visitors is an important first step in addressing these issues. Further reports will follow to Committee in due course in this respect.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Nil

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That Committee agree to note:

- (i) the restructuring of the board, as outlined in 3 above;
- (ii) the changes proposed on the provision of tourism information, with particular reference to East Ayrshire; and
- (iii) that further reports will follow in due course.

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RP/CF
17/10/00

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

For further information please contact Robert Paton, Head of Economic Development Ext 6142.

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