

TOURISM UPDATE

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents an overview of developments in respect of tourism in Argyll and Bute and the key role the Council has undertaken in realising key actions within Council plans.

2. DETAIL

- 2.1 It is increasingly recognised that tourism is one of Argyll and Bute's most important sustainable economic assets where nearly 15% of all jobs are tourism related. There has been significant developments within Argyll and Bute in respect of tourism, all of which the Council plays a key role.
- 2.2 Whilst tourism is not a statutory function of local authorities, it is increasingly recognised that local authorities have an important role to play, particularly in facilitating partnership working between the tourism industry, the enterprise agency, local marketing groups and VisitScotland. The Council recognises this and formally appointed a Spokesperson, Councillor Neil Mackay, as a champion for tourism.
- 2.3 Within the Council's Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP) is an outcome to move the tourism industry up the value chain, extend the season and improve profile and propositions. The actions to deliver this outcome are i) work with local and national partners to stimulate tourism investment, and, ii) effective and targeted marketing with partners.
- 2.4 The Council is a key stakeholder in the Argyll and the Isles Strategic Tourism Partnership (AISTP), chaired by Provost Petrie and facilitated by VisitScotland. The Council's Spokesperson for Tourism is also a member. The AISTP is also attended by officers of the Economic Development Service.
- 2.5 At the request of Councillor Neil Mackay, the AISTP facilitated the Argyll and the Isles Tourism Summit 'Stronger Together' on the 31st March 2011. The event in Oban attracted over 120 delegates from the tourism industry and local tourism marketing groups. In addition to key national tourism industry representatives as speakers, there was a number of industry led thematic workshops which were essential to ensure two way communication to deliver the following objectives;
- Inspire collaboration
 - Demonstrate the work that has been undertaken to support tourism in the area
 - Identify clear actions to drive forward a joined up regional approach to tourism
- 2.6 Key actions developed were published in the Tourism Summit Report. The most significant action is for the AISTP to develop an 'Argyll and the Isles' Umbrella Identity under which local marketing groups and business collaborate on developing our regional identity as a marketing tool. This work is currently ongoing and a key outcome is for a strong, cohesive regional presence at the VisitScotland Exposition 2012. The primary aim will be to raise the tourism profile of Argyll and the Isles.

- 2.7 Elected members and council officers have been cultivating greater partnership working with VisitScotland resulting in a better understanding of our respective organisations. In respect of VisitScotland's area publications (where to stay and what to do), from the 01st April 2011, the former 'Argyll, the Isles, Stirling and the Trossachs' (AILLST) was broken up and our particular region is now 'Argyll and the Isles' which aims to resonate more directly with (potential) visitors who disregard local authority boundaries and explore 'regions'.
- 2.8 Other significant tourism activities involving the Council includes support for key events which are essential for attracting visitors, and the CHORD project, which is giving a boost to some of our most significant tourism infrastructure in our 5 main towns which are all waterfront tourism destinations.
- 2.9 Another significant development is the launch of 'MalinWaters', an exciting new sailing brand investing €750,000 of EU Interreg IVA funding in promoting our sailing waters and ports with our partners in the West of Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 There is no doubt as to the importance of the role that the Council has to play in growing the tourism sector for Argyll and Bute. As outlined above, there are a number of exciting developments within which the Council has a key role. The future role for the Council relates to influencing the strategic direction of tourism with our partners including the AISTP, and to build on the 'stronger together' joined up approach to developing tourism. Collectively this will raise the profile of tourism in Argyll and the Isles and deliver an outcome in the EDAP.

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14 September 2010

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