

EAST AYRSHIRE TOURISM

ACTION PLAN – 2017/2020

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM SECTOR IN EAST AYRSHIRE

In order to move forward on our priority to support the tourism sector in East Ayrshire and building on existing strengths, a redesigned model for supporting the sector is set out below:

Strengthening local authority links and reducing duplication – East Ayrshire Council employs its own tourism resource with the responsibility of developing links within its own area and according to its own priorities. The named tourism leads for each Ayrshire local authority will work together to develop the Ayrshire and Arran approach to marketing and branding and to identify events and projects where a pan Ayrshire approach would be most beneficial.

Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Strategy - East Ayrshire Council has developed an action plan pertinent to our area but aligned to the high level objectives of the existing Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Strategy, recognising the sovereignty of the jointly approved Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Strategy. This action plan includes establishing a local industry group, packaging attractions to encourage visitors to stay longer and visit multiple locations, providing and distributing information, promoting attractions and events, closer working with East Ayrshire Leisure and liaison with Visit Scotland.

Tourism Advisory Group – East Ayrshire Council has established its own industry group to engage more widely and effectively at a local level whilst also broadening the agenda to reflect national tourism initiatives considering the contribution of the tourism industry to sustainability, accessibility and information.

Budgets - The Ayrshire and Arran Tourism budget has been disaggregated back to individual local authorities for the provision of staff resource and associated budget. The East Ayrshire budget is, in its entirety, £109,000 including £25,000 for marketing with VisitScotland and the current arrangement allows better use of the overall tourism resource and reduces duplication of effort with other local authority services. While, it is the responsibility of East Ayrshire Council to determine how its tourism budget is allocated and spent, a proportion of any marketing and promotion resource is allocated on a collaborative basis to market the Ayrshire and Arran brand, and will complement the relationships and agreements that are currently developed with VisitScotland.

Governance – to ensure that the Ayrshire Councils retain a regional focus, tourism leads for each local authority meet as appropriate to agree marketing and promotional activity, Ayrshire and Arran Tourism branding, co-ordination of activity at national tourism events, and monitor marketing spend and effectiveness.

East Ayrshire's tourism initiatives have been developed and agreed through an action planning process and performance reporting in terms of local and regional activity will be reported through the Council's electronic performance management system and an annual update to Cabinet.

STRATEGIC ACTION FRAMEWORK

TURNING OUR ASSETS INTO EXPERIENCES

CULTURE AND HERITAGE

NATURE AND ACTIVITIES

EVENTS AND FESTIVALS

COMMUNITY TOURISM

IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY – PUTTING THE CUSTOMER AT THE HEART

FOOD AND DRINK

VISITOR INFORMATION PROVISION

ACCOMMODATION

DIGITAL

SIGNAGE STRATEGY

BUILDING OUR CAPABILITIES – TOURISM IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

SUSTAINABILITY

MARKETING

JOBS AND SKILLS

LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING

PAN AYRSHIRE ACTIVITY

DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING

DATA

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Abbreviations

AC	Ayrshire College
BG	Business Gateway (East Ayrshire Council)
CC	Corporate Communications (East Ayrshire Council)
CE	Corporate Events (East Ayrshire Council)
EAC	East Ayrshire Council
EAL	East Ayrshire Leisure
ED	Economic Development (East Ayrshire Council)
FDO	Food/Drink Development Officer (East Ayrshire Council)
PS	Private sector tourism businesses
SE	Scottish Enterprise
TDO	Tourism Development Officer (East Ayrshire Council)
VC	Vibrant Communities (East Ayrshire Council)
VS	Visit Scotland
HoPED	Head of Planning and Economic Development
EDM	Economic Development Manager
STEAM	Scarborough Economic Activity Monitor
CEWG	Corporate Events Working Group

TURNING OUR ASSETS INTO EXPERIENCES

Action	Outputs / Indicators ¹	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
CULTURE AND HERITAGE					
Promote programme of activities to raise the profile of local attractions and then improve visitor movement by building staff capacity to cross sell	Programme of activities for future years and trained knowledgeable staff able to cross sell East Ayrshire assets and opportunities.	EAL/TDO	EAC, EAL, VS, PRIVATE SECTOR, CC, CEWG	February 2017 and annually	In progress TDO and EAL working to collate information on cultural programme for 2017 to underpin promotional activities and information sharing with local attractions and tourism businesses.
Action	Outputs / Indicators ²	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
NATURE AND ACTIVITIES					
Encourage cycling journalists and bloggers to East Ayrshire	Increased number of positive press/BLOG articles.	TDO/CC	EAC, EAL, VS, PRIVATE SECTOR, FORESTRY COMMISSION, BIOSPHERE, EVENT-SCOTLAND	January 2017 to March 2018	Initial familiarisations trips organised and completed. Article expected in Cycling Plus featuring East Ayrshire routes/accommodation and food and drink offer– (biggest selling cycling magazine in the UK publication Jan 2017).

¹ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

² Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

					Expectation that the article will be featured on The Guardian Blog. Further promotional activity to be developed with VS and to coincide with 2017 cycling events in East Ayrshire.
Mapping the cycling tourism offer of east Ayrshire	A comprehensive guide to cycling in East Ayrshire including downloadable maps of trails; points of interest and services.	TDO		March 2017	Tender will be drafted to commission a full audit of trails in East Ayrshire, to identify gaps in infrastructure and information and to determine the key markets for our cycling and walking offers.
Dissemination of national cycling toolkit	Increased number of East Ayrshire businesses implementing this guide and attracting cyclists.	TDO		December 2016	TDO is a member of the Cycling Tourism forum and has been involved in developing this cycling toolkit which will be launched later this year and distributed to East Ayrshire tourism businesses. Plan will be developed to share information and best practice and to support local businesses implement appropriate aspects of the guide in 2017.
Explore options to attract more cycling events to East Ayrshire	New cycling events and mountain biking offer established	VC	TDO	April 2017 +	East Ayrshire has hosted cycling events in 2016 and more are scheduled for 2017 - continue to work in partnership to explore additional opportunities to attract further events of this nature, possibly linked to neighbouring local authorities.

Develop existing walking, cycling trails and promote points of interest such as the Ballochmyle Viaduct, the Barony A Frame	Investment in existing trails, development of new trails, improved interpretation and signage.	EAL/TDO		December 2017 +	Some initial discussions with the Forestry Commission regarding their infrastructure. A full audit of existing provision will be undertaken to underpin any future development work.
Work with tourism businesses to ensure they are able to promote themselves to walkers and cyclists and have the infrastructure to do so (vs welcome schemes will support this)	<p>Increase the number of businesses for example participating in Visit Scotland schemes.</p> <p>Increase number of East Ayrshire businesses who promote cycling and walking through their marketing and websites.</p>	VS/TDO		March 2017	<p>In progress</p> <p>Continue to promote schemes and record results</p> <p>Current figures for East Ayrshire are – Walkers Welcome 3 Cyclists Welcome 4 (Baseline April 2016)</p>
Maximise the tourism potential of the Marmotte Ecosse/Grand Fondo cycling event planned for April 2017 and yearly thereafter	Increase profile of East Ayrshire as cycling destination	CEWG/TDO		April 2017	Colleagues within Vibrant Communities supported by the CEWG are working with Golazo Cycling to deliver the Marmotte Ecosse/Grand Fondo event which has now been classified by the UCI as a licensed qualifying event for the 2017 World Championships. It is anticipated that a minimum of 3000 cyclists will participate in this event.

Action	Outputs / Indicators ³	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
EXPLOITING NEW OPPORTUNITIES					
Engage with Abellio and the Burns Line Community Rail Partnership to exploit the designation of the Kilmarnock to Carlisle rail line as one of six scenic routes in Scotland	Increase in visitor numbers to East Ayrshire travelling by rail.	HoPED	VS, private sector and neighbouring local authorities	January 2017 to March 2018	In progress Initial meeting with Abellio who have confirmed that investment in rolling stock will be completed in 2018. Currently exploring how we engage with local businesses to package offers together for visitors and developing a promotional campaign with VS to market the scenic route and the assets that can be accessed from each station. A toolkit to support local businesses will be developed. Discussion with neighbouring local authorities to maximise the opportunities of this new rail-line designation and to create links to the Biosphere.
Action	Outputs / Indicators ⁴	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT					
Explore/research potential tourism uses for former open	Redevelopment of derelict sites	HoPED	VS, private sector and SE	March 2017	Some initial research has been completed and Scottish Mines Restoration Trust has produced

³ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

⁴ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

cast site(s) and develop proposals for consultation and implementation					a proposal for one site to date. This aims to build on the industrial heritage unique geology and Shankly football connections.
Provide support to existing tourism businesses and potential investors to improve and create new product	Enhanced product offer in East Ayrshire	TDO		November 2016 – March 2020	In progress Existing tourism businesses can access support via SE, BG and the ED's beReady programme for business development and to support growth ambitions.
Explore the potential for new attractions in East Ayrshire aligned to famous people from the area	Increased tourism product in East Ayrshire	TDO		March 2018	

Action	Outputs / Indicators ⁵	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
EVENTS AND FESTIVALS			EAC, EAL, VS, PRIVATE SECTOR, CREATIVE SCOTLAND SCOTTISH ENTERPRISE, CYCLING TOURISM FORUM		
Create an accessible online calendar of tourism events in East Ayrshire	Annual publication Increase in number of events/exhibitions with listings on visitscotland.com	TDO/CC/CEWG		Annually	In progress Calendar created for 2016.
Explore options to attract more events to East Ayrshire building in particular on existing strengths	A year round programme of events in East Ayrshire	TDO/CC/CEWG		March 2017	In progress Support has been provided to a number of events in 2016 including the Cumnock Tryst, the Newmilns Food Festival and The Tour of Britain cycling events.
Work with Creative Scotland to attract more film companies to East Ayrshire and ensure that film locations are promoted to potential new visitors	An increase in East Ayrshire locations used for films and TV	TDO		January 2017 – March 2018	In progress Process in place to support enquiries from Events Scotland – a database of East Ayrshire images being created and participation in national network has been established. Promotion campaign will be devised to coincide with the screening of Outlander, filmed at the Dean Castle Country Park.

⁵ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

Action	Outputs / Indicators ⁶	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
COMMUNITY/RURAL TOURISM			EAC, EAL, LEADER, COMMUNITY GROUPS PRIVATE SECTOR		
Tourism toolkit/guide – distribution of the toolkit to communities to guide project development and implementation	Increase in number of communities developing/improving projects – aligned to community regeneration plans.	TDO		Complete	Complete Guides have been produced and distributed to partnership groups developing their community action plans and with a focus on tourism.
Work with community groups to build capacity to deliver common themes from community action plans	Increase in number of community run tourism projects/activities in East Ayrshire.	VC and TDO			In progress Capacity building initiatives will be developed following the outcomes of the Community Groups' Conference in Oct 2016. Communities will be supported to work together to maximise the potential of joint or complementary activities.
Promote funding opportunities to community groups e.g. Ayrshire LEADER Programme	Increased external funding attracted to support community led tourism activities/projects	VC and TDO		November 2016 – March 2018	In progress There has been significant promotion of the LEADER funding opportunity to community groups and organisations

⁶ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY – PUTTING THE CUSTOMER AT THE HEART

Action	Outputs / Indicators ⁷	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
FOOD AND DRINK TOURISM		EAC	EAC, TASTE AYRSHIRE, AYRSHIRE FOOD NETWORK, PRIVATE SECTOR		
Ensure a food and drink element to all tourism events in East Ayrshire	Increased number of quality local producers attending events	FDO and TDO		January 2017 – March 2018	In progress TDO and FDO supported Newmilns Food and Drink Festival, with planning and future funding advice. Ayrshire Food and Drink presence at the Open, the Scottish Air Show, the Ladies' Open. Updated Ayrshire Larder publication produced and distributed to tourism businesses in EA.
Develop sustainable tourism agenda with vs; encouraging use of local produce by attractions and accommodation providers	Use of quality local produce increased	FDO and TDO		November 2016 – March 2020	In progress Promotion of Ayrshire Food and Drink as part of Ayrshire's stand at Visit Scotland Expo 2017. Promoting the VS Taste Our Best scheme and recording results.
Build connections between food producers, restauranteurs, visitor attractions and accommodation providers	Increase in use of local produce.	FDO and TDO		Jan 2017 to March 2018	
Encourage restauranteurs to place listings with visitscotland.com	Increase the number of business listings and bolster the overall profile of East Ayrshire's tourism	TDO and VS		Jan 2017 to March 2018	

⁷ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

	offer.				
VISITOR INFORMATION PROVISION			EAC,VS, PRIVATE SECTOR		Update
I Know Scotland Programme - (customer service and cross selling) Work in partnership with VisitScotland to promote the I Know (Ayrshire and Arran) visitor information programme Develop a practical programme to support I Know Promote I Know toolkit/VIP materials for tourism businesses	Increase the number of VIP members in East Ayrshire	VS/TDO		March 2017	In progress Dick Institute, Dean Castle Country Park, Palace Theatre, Burns House Museum, Baird Institute, Doon Valley Museum have already registered for this scheme. Discussion continues with VS to extend roll out of this programme and to explore the development of a practical sense of place scheme underpinned by a programme of familiarisation visits.
ACCOMMODATION			EAC, VS, PRIVATE SECTOR, SE	Budget Staff Time Supporting partner priorities	Updates
Work with VisitScotland to increase participation in quality assurance grading scheme	Increase the number of QA accommodation businesses in East Ayrshire	VS		November 2016 – March 2020	In progress VisitScotland has completed an audit of QA holders in East Ayrshire and is promoting its quality schemes and providing support to individual businesses to achieve this accreditation.
Provide guidance and business support to develop new and existing accommodation within East Ayrshire	Increased number of bed nights in East Ayrshire	SE, HoPED		November 2016 – March 2020	

Action	Outputs / Indicators ⁸	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
DIGITAL TOURISM			EAC, EAL, VS, BUSINESS GATEWAY, DIGITAL TOURISM SCOTLAND, PRIVATE SECTOR		
Support a co-ordinated approach around initial digital health checks appropriate for tourism businesses	Increase number of tourism businesses in East Ayrshire using digital media	TDO		March 2018	In progress Digital Programme commenced April 2016. Additional support has been provided to individual businesses by business advisers and VS. a programme of workshops is being developed to continue to tackle this agenda over the next 18 months.
Support local tourism businesses to improve their listings on visitscotland.com	Increase number of businesses in East Ayrshire listed on VS website Increased visibility of East Ayrshire on the national website.	VS		April 2017	
Support more accommodation providers to move to online booking systems	Increase visitor numbers/bed nights in East Ayrshire	VS		June 2017	
Improve digital connectivity e.g. free wi-fi hot spots in visitor hubs and attractions and town centres	Improved digital connectivity for visitors	EAL/ HoPED		March 2017	In progress Connectivity is available in some of EAL venues - rolling programme to be implemented in more venues. EAC has committed additional resource for free wifi in town centres.

⁸ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

SIGNAGE STRATEGY			EAC, EAL , SCOTLAND TRANSERVE, AYRSHIRE ROADS ALLIANCE PRIVATE SECTOR		Updates
Implementation of cross selling signage within tourism businesses	Increase number of tourism businesses promoting East Ayrshire	TDO		June 2017	
Work with attractions and tourism businesses to improve their ratings and eligibility for brown signage	Implementation of new signage investment across East Ayrshire Increase in visitor numbers to key attractions	ARA/TDO		November 2016 to March 2018	In progress Full audit of existing brown signage underway.

BUILDING OUR CAPABILITIES – TOURISM IS EVERYONE’S BUSINESS

Action	Outputs / Indicators ⁹	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Update
SUSTAINABILITY			EAC, VS, PRIVATE SECTOR, GTBS, RESOURCE EFFICIENCY SCOTLAND		
Develop sustainable tourism agenda with vs; supporting businesses to tackle issues relating to energy efficiency; waste and seasonality		TDO		December 2018	
MARKETING OF EAST AYRSHIRE			VS, PRIVATE SECTOR, CC		
Work with VisitScotland to devise a range of marketing activities designed to raise the profile of East Ayrshire’s tourism offer to a wider audience, complementing activity with VisitScotland at a pan Ayrshire level	Increase number of visitors to East Ayrshire	TDO and VS		November 2016 to March 2018	In progress Seasonal campaigns for 2016 have been completed and new digital market activity is being developed for 2017.
Distribution of Ayrshire and Arran tourism stands and leaflets/development of new publications and wider distribution of leaflets outside Ayrshire.	Increase number of businesses in East Ayrshire providing up to date tourism information for visitors.	TDO and VS		November 2016 to March 2020	In progress Leaflets have been updated, reprinted and distributed across East Ayrshire. Need to continue to promote these information sources and monitor update and content.
Increase marketing efforts within the West/Central Belt of Scotland	Increased day visitors	TDO and VS		January 2017 to March 2018	

⁹ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

Action	Outputs / Indicators ¹⁰	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
JOBS AND SKILLS			ED, VS, PRIVATE SECTOR, CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, AYRSHIRE COLLEGE, UWS		
Work with agencies to promote tourism as a career	Increase number of people entering the sector Increase number of businesses upskilling existing staff	AC		January 2017 to March 2018	
Ayrshire Smiles Promote Ayrshire Smiles customer service programme	Increase in number of staff/businesses participating in Ayrshire Smiles	TDO/EAL	SAC (as they are the lead running the project)	November 2016 to March 2018	In progress Ayrshire Smiles website now operational and scheme being promoted to East Ayrshire businesses. TDO will continue to promote to all tourism businesses and record progress
Supporting businesses to improve their online presence with better and mobile optimised websites and appropriate use of social media	Increase profile of East Ayrshire's tourism offer	EDM		November 2016 to March 2020	In progress Support is available both from Business Gateway and ED business support mechanisms.

¹⁰ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Action	Outputs / Indicators ¹¹	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING			EAC, VS, PRIVATE SECTOR, NATIONAL AGENCIES		
Establish links to key tourism businesses in East Ayrshire – engaging on a one to one basis and through the TAG	Tourism businesses across all sectors engaged with during the tourism consultation	TDO			In progress
Draft a tourism action plan for 2017/2020 – undertake consultation with the industry	Draft Action Plan agreed	TDO			Review February 2018
Launch a new tourism action plan for 2017/2020	Action Plan launched	TDO			Launch plans under development
Establish an East Ayrshire tourism advisory group	East Ayrshire Tourism Group established	TDO			Complete
Strengthen links to national agencies to raise profile of East Ayrshire, its visitor economy and how that can contribute To Scotland's tourism sector	East Ayrshire profile raised (STEAM figures to capture any improvements)	TDO		January 2017 to March 2018	In progress
Action	Outputs / Indicators ¹²	Lead	Supporting Partners	Timeline	Updates
PAN AYRSHIRE ACTIVITY		SAC	EAC, NAC, SAC, VS, PRIVATE SECTOR		
Participate in pan Ayrshire promotional activities and	Attendance at trade shows and exhibitions	TDO			Planning for 2017 under way. Successful participation at Expo with

¹¹ Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

¹² Outputs and indicators will be agreed once the baseline has been established

attendance at trade shows and exhibitions to market Ayrshire as a destination.	with quality sectorial representation				an award for the Ayrshire and Arran stand for the 2016 Year of Innovation Design and Architecture
Work with South Ayrshire and North Ayrshire Councils to ensure promotional activity in advance of major events in Ayrshire eg The Tour of Britain; The Open at Troon; The Scottish Ladies Open at Dundonald and The Scottish Air Show	Region promoted at key events	CC and TDO			Completed at events listed in 2016. Planning for 2017 under way.

support the development of Ayrshire and Arran business to business website and resource to promote to East Ayrshire businesses	One stop shop tourism resource portal		3 Councils - Pan Ayrshire		January 2017	
Update of Ayrshire and Arran tourism strategy to 2020	Completion of an interim Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Strategy to 2020		SAC		June 2017	
Work with South Ayrshire and North Ayrshire Councils to devise projects and events linked to Scotland's theme years eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017 YEAR OF HISTORY HERITAGE AND ARCHEOLOGY • 2018 YEAR OF YOUNG PEOPLE 	Full participation in East Ayrshire (and PAN Ayrshire) to maximise the opportunities of the themed years		VS/TDO		January 2017 +	
Ensure that theme year projects are included in partner programmes	Increase the profile of Ayrshire's tourism offer		TDO		January 2017 +	

DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING			EAC, VS, GLOBAL TOURISM SOLUTIONS PRIVATE SECTOR		Updates
Create database of tourism businesses in East Ayrshire	Full sectoral tourism database generated	TDO		April 2016	In progress 300 businesses registered.
Continue to provide data to STEAM and to use the annual STEAM reports and analysis to identify opportunities and challenges for the sector and devise projects to address these	Accurate data collected to reflect tourism trends and opportunities	TDO		November 2016 +	
Encourage businesses to participate in the accommodation occupancy survey and visitor attraction monitor	More accurate data on East Ayrshire's tourism sector	VS and TDO		November 2016 +	
Collect key data from East Ayrshire tourism businesses to create a clear picture of current provision/product resulting in a tourism asset audit	A clearer understanding of the tourism sector in East Ayrshire.	TDO		April 2016 +	In progress Information being captured through one to one meetings and database creation.