

Report

To:	Community and Enterprise Resources
Date of meeting:	13 December 2022
Prepared by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	South Lanarkshire Draft Tourism Strategy
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the paper is to: -

- ◆ provide an overview of the work undertaken to create a new draft South Lanarkshire Tourism Strategy
- ◆ seek approval of the South Lanarkshire Tourism Strategy

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the draft South Lanarkshire Tourism Strategy and Action Plan be approved.

3. Background

- 3.1. As part of the 2021/2022 Revenue Budget, members approved a sum of £3 million towards economic recovery under the heading “Get South Lanarkshire Working”. Members’ high-level ambitions for the £3 million were broken down into three headings – “Social Enterprise and Business Support”, “Locate in South Lanarkshire” and “Tourism Cooperative and Strategy”.
- 3.2. As a key business sector in South Lanarkshire, it is important to support and nurture growth in the Tourism sector, taking advantage of South Lanarkshire’s natural environment, heritage, and culture, not only to attract tourists from Scotland/UK and abroad but also to encourage local people to spend their recreational time and money closer to home. £0.5m of the funding was allocated to a South Lanarkshire Tourism Strategy and potential creation of a Tourism Cooperative body.
- 3.3. The new Tourism Strategy and associated Action Plan has been drafted to take account of a rapidly changing sector at international, national, and local levels.
- 3.4. The draft Tourism Strategy has been shared with partners, stakeholders and members of the public within and outwith the Council as part of a consultation process and the comments received have helped define the current document.
- 3.5. In addition, a symposium event entitled “Shaping the future for South Lanarkshire tourism” was held as an online webinar event on 1 February 2022 with 45 attendees from both the public and private sector, with presentations from VisitScotland, Scottish Tourism Alliance, Business Gateway, Elevator, Rural Dimensions and South Lanarkshire Council Officers.

- 3.6. Tourism has been identified as a key sector in South Lanarkshire and has been supported on a pan-Lanarkshire basis in partnership with VisitScotland and North Lanarkshire Council. One of the principal themes of the first-ever Lanarkshire Tourism Action Plan, launched in 2005, was to develop a tourism network structure in Lanarkshire. The Lanarkshire Area Tourism Partnership was created to oversee the action plan and agree strategic ambitions.
- 3.7. Two independent associations were also created – the Lanarkshire Visitor Attractions Association and the Lanarkshire Accommodation Association. To obtain better synergies and organisation efficiencies, these groups were later merged to create the Lanarkshire Tourism Association (LTA). Interest and membership in the LTA tailed off in its latter years and, when the longstanding chair stepped down in 2020, the LTA struggled to find volunteers willing to become office bearers and the decision was made by its members to wind down the group. This coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant shut down of the economy as a preventative measure has had a particularly adverse effect on the tourism sector. Consequently, there is currently no active tourism membership group that represents the South Lanarkshire tourism sector as a whole.
- 3.8. The allocated funding has been used to recruit an Economic Development Officer with responsibility for the Tourism sector. An initial appointee left the Council's employment in February 2022 and, following a further recruitment process, a new officer was been appointed in May. The £0.5m funding is intended to cover staff costs and technical support and advice needed to set up a new Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) as well as promoting and marketing it to the industry to maximise numbers of local tourism businesses signing up. A further member of staff may be recruited, when appropriate, to undertake administration functions as a new tourism body for Lanarkshire comes to fruition.
- 3.9. Tourism is a key employer in South Lanarkshire and pre-COVID (2019-20) was responsible for employing 3,013 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs (Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor STEAM). The re-purposing of land and property to create new tourism assets not only offers the potential to create new attractions to entice visitors to visit the region and spend money, but it can also create facilities that local communities can use and benefit from and can make facilities more viable than if they were just relying on local custom, protecting, and enhancing jobs and communities. Tourism, therefore, makes a significant contribution towards the Community Wealth Building agenda as well as to the economy of South Lanarkshire.

4. Draft Tourism Strategy 2022-2025

- 4.1. The proposed draft Tourism Strategy is attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.2. In the new strategy 'Our Vision' for South Lanarkshire is:-
- ◆ to cultivate a vibrant, successful visitor economy in South Lanarkshire which promotes responsible growth and creates jobs and opportunities for communities throughout the region
- 4.3. The desire is for this to be a shared strategy which evolves to ensure that all sectors of the South Lanarkshire tourism sector have their say in shaping the Strategy and the associated action plan. In keeping with this collaborative approach, other public agencies have been invited to feed in actions that will have a positive effect on South Lanarkshire's visitor economy. Actions that have been fed in are included in the associated action plan (included in Appendix 1).

- 4.4. The Strategy is intended to help the sector recover, increase the value of the tourism sector, and positively enhance the benefits of tourism across South Lanarkshire by delivering the very best for our visitors, our businesses, our people, our communities, and our environment.
- 4.5. It is important to note that this Strategy and action plan is not set in stone. The economy is currently operating in a very fast moving, uncertain environment and it is important to adopt a flexible approach to respond effectively to change. Should a new tourism membership group be created in South Lanarkshire, it is recognised that tourism businesses and wider stakeholders who form the membership of any new group may wish to make changes to this Strategy and action plan.

4.6. In summary, the strategy includes the following sections:-

- ◆ *Foreword* – This briefly sets out the background and the focus of our proposed activity around the six priority areas identified – People, Place, Business, Marketing, Responsible Tourism and Partnership Working.
- ◆ *The Strategy in Context* – South Lanarkshire is refreshing and launching a suite of key strategies and plans including our Council Plan ‘Connect’, our Community Plan, our Community Wealth Building Strategy, our Economic Strategy, Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy and our Tourism Strategy, all of which are inherently linked and informed by our communities. Council Plan priorities are:-
 - ◆ **People** – we need to put people first and reduce inequality
 - ◆ **Progress** – we need to recover, progress and improve
 - ◆ **Planet** – we need to work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places

The Tourism Strategy dovetails with these priorities and seeks to promote inclusive growth and maximise opportunities across all our communities as we intensify our activity on the journey to net zero.

- ◆ *Consumer Trends* – This sets out the consumer trends that have been identified since the pandemic. At the time of writing this Strategy, various consumer trends were being forecast and have been taken into account to maximise the Tourism Strategy’s impact.
- ◆ *Strategic Priorities* – We set out the key priorities of **People, Place, Business, Marketing, Responsible Tourism, Partnership Working (and the creation of a new collaboration model)**. Further details on the priority areas, commitments, actions and leading organisations can be found in the action plan contained in Appendix 1.
- ◆ *Measuring Success* - progress in delivering the action plan is measured through the data sources currently available – the Council subscribes to two sources of data on the sector - the regional Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) data and Visitor Attraction data from the Moffat centre. VisitScotland are also leading on the Scottish Tourism Observatory project which aims to create a resource for Scotland’s tourism industry which would make necessary, relevant, and valuable data, analysis, and insight easily accessible. The Strategy refers to other associated strategies and action plans. Existing monitoring and reporting arrangements to monitor those action plans will remain in place to avoid duplication and ensure consistency.

- ◆ *Delivering on our Ambitions* - The key actions and areas of activity are set out in the Strategy's Action Plan (attached in Appendix 2) which defines our priorities, outcomes, actions and how we will measure success. The Council cannot, by itself, direct all of the activities set out in the Strategy and will rely on partners and stakeholders to lead on some aspects of its delivery. Nonetheless, the objective is to show that the Council, as the democratic institution covering the area, has a pivotal role – not only as a direct provider and deliverer of economic development activity but also as a co-ordinator, influencer and facilitator of activity led by others. The action plan is a dynamic document, designed to be agile and updated using an evidence and data driven approach to recognise and meet changing economic circumstances.

5. Next Steps and Timescales

- 5.1. On the basis this Strategy is approved, it is intended to communicate it via publication on the Council's website. Officers will continue to engage with partners and businesses providing support and advocating the creation of a sustainable, collaborative industry body to coordinate actions and deliver the Strategy.
- 5.2. During the implementation phase, annual updates on measuring the success of the Strategy and Action Plan will be provided to relevant Committee. Officers recognise that we will require to respond to ever changing economic challenges that are influenced by national and international factors and consider how we can enhance the level of activity in any of the key thematic areas to mitigate negative economic impacts to our local economy.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. The Council has recruited a full time Tourism Officer to finalise and assist with delivering this Strategy's action plan and measure its success going forward. Existing resources within Enterprise and Sustainable Development that have already been approved via the 2022/23 budget will also contribute to deliver actions where necessary.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. Community and Enterprise Resources have a budget of £0.094m for year 2022/2023 and £0.131m for year 2023/2024 to support the Tourism Strategy. External funding will also be sought from UK Government and Scottish Government funding streams to maximise the impacts of activity across the sector.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. Following a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening and with the agreement of the statutory Consultation Authorities, the Council made a formal determination in May 2022 that a full SEA is not required for the Tourism Strategy. This is because it is considered unlikely that new significant environmental effects would be identified from implementing the Strategy which have not been identified, assessed and reported within the South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan, the Council Plan and the Community Plan.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. The key risk associated with the finalisation, delivery and monitoring of the Strategy is the potential for further national and/or international economic shocks. This could constrain recovery and economic growth in the tourism sector both locally and nationally.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. The requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is currently being reviewed.
- 10.2. Council Resources and external partners have been consulted as part of the consultation process. An online public consultation exercise has also taken place. Responses have been considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into the strategy and action plan.

David Booth

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

24 November 2022

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

Values

- ◆ Focused on people and their needs

Priorities

- ◆ We will work towards a sustainable future in sustainable places
- ◆ We will work to recover, progress and improve

Outcomes

- ◆ Good quality, suitable and sustainable places to live
- ◆ Thriving business, fair jobs and vibrant town centres

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Draft South Lanarkshire Tourism Strategy 2022-2025

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact: -

Stephen Keating, Economic Development Manager, Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services

Email: Stephen.Keating@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Laura Sprowl, Enterprise and Sustainable Development Services

Email: Laura.Sprowl@southlanarkshire.gov.uk