

Cross Party Group on Tourism
Tuesday, 23 June 2015
Meeting Note

The second meeting of the CPG focused on transport and the vital role it plays in delivering the tourism experience for visitors to Scotland each year.

Around 40 members of the group attended to hear a 10 minute presentation from Dr Alan Runcie, Transport Strategy Manager at Transport Scotland.

A panel Q&A session followed with the following senior figures:

- Cathy Craig, Commercial Director at Caledonian MacBrayne
- Brian McClean, Head of Communications and Public Affairs at Glasgow Airport
- Katharine Taylor, Head of Promotions, Cycle Tourism Forum
- James Ledgerwood, Head of Economic Development at Abellio ScotRail
- David Frenz, Operations Director, Scottish Citylink Coaches

Dr Alan Runcie's presentation on Transport and Tourism covered the following topics:

- Improving the tourist journey
 - Travelling to Scotland
 - Travelling around Scotland
 - Digital connectivity
 - Smart and Integrated Ticketing
- Providing tourists with authentic experiences
 - Active Travel
 - Scotland's Canals
 - Scotland's Railways
- Planning and delivering world class events
 - Experience of 2014
 - Planning and Delivering World Class events
 - Communication Co-ordination Group

A copy of Dr Runcie's slides and speaking note is attached for further information.

Following the presentation, questions opened with Lewis Macdonald MSP asking about integrated ticketing and whether this was an area that progress was being made in.

Dr Runcie responded, saying that one of the difficulties with achieving this is the fact that there is no compulsion for operators to be involved, but that it may be possible to improve the situation by reducing / eliminating costs through European funding and that this is being explored.

Upgrades on the road network were discussed, with a focus on the dualling of the A9. An area of concern that was raised related to the southern end of the A9, south of Perth, and whether this would be dualled?

No definitive answer was able to be given on this, and Dr Runcie agreed to follow this up.

The issue of the A83 was raised and the long-term plan to 'fix' the Rest and Be Thankful, which was set out as priority within the Transport Scotland presentation.

ACTION: Alan Runcie

The discussion moved on to cross-border transport connections between Scotland and England.

Concern was expressed about the reduction of APD in Scotland the impact this could have on flights heading in to Newcastle Airport with visitors who may be start their journey to southern Scotland from there.

Brian McClean of Glasgow Airport welcomed the move to reduce APD and explained that it was good for Scotland, giving airports here a competitive advantage.

The cycle network was another area cited where borderlands connections could be improved particularly around sign-positing.

The convener wondered if connectivity could be an area for MSPs and north of England MPs to discuss.

ACTION: Bruce Crawford

The timing of improvements and upgrades to rail and road was raised with reference to the Winchburgh Tunnel work. The concern expressed was that these works always seemed to be run during the summer time, impacting on visitors.

Dr Runcie responded by pointing out the importance of the Keep Scotland Moving initiative to make travelers were up-to-date on changes, and that off peak times of the year were the best times to undertake essential maintenance projects lessening disruption to regular travellers.

Ferries were also discussed in this context and a point was made that it would be beneficial for the local tourism industry to be represented at Board level of Calmac.

Cathy Craig of Calmac explained that applications to join the board would be welcome.

The importance of planning for all transport at airports and rails stations was raised. The examples of Edinburgh Airport and the lack of coach parking was highlighted, along with the ongoing challenges for taxis and coaches at the back of Waverley station.

The need for joined up transport was a theme explored across the meeting and covered bus service cancellations from Dundee to Oban; the need for neighbouring local authorities to work together to find solutions to ticketing and timetabling; integration across train services, with the view that the current situation is too complex and delivers a poor service for visitors.

On the latter point James Ledgerwood of Abellio responded that the company was bringing in a number of measures to improve the situation including tourist information points and having more bilingual staff and that these were franchise commitments.

Also, smart ticketing is expected to be introduced in 2019.

The Convener thanked the group for their contributions and explained that he would speak to the tourism minister to seek his attendance at a future meeting, where transport and other issues can be raised directly with him.

The topic for the next meeting was agreed as Destination Organisations, with the Scottish Tourism Alliance agreeing to contribute a presentation and survey material at the next meeting on Tuesday September 8, 1230 to 1330.

Transport and Tourism

Slide 1 – Transport and Tourism

- 120 million people pass through Scottish ports, stations and airports each year. 15 million of these people are tourists.
- So this presentation is based on updates to transport-related priority actions identified in Visit Scotland's National Tourism Development Framework. These are:
 - Improving the tourist journey
 - Providing the tourist with authentic experiences

Planning and delivering world-class events which attract tourists is also a key feature of successful transport, as we saw last year.

- A quick word on Transport Scotland – it is the national transport agency for Scotland, and it seeks to deliver a safe, efficient, cost-effective and sustainable transport system for the people of Scotland, and it plays a key role in helping to achieve the Scottish Government's Purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth

Slide 2 – Improving the tourist journey

- Improving the Tourist journey is the 1st transport-related priority action identified in Visit Scotland's National Tourism Development framework
- There's four sub-sections to this action which we'll come to in turn

Slide 3 – Travelling to Scotland

- There are currently direct flights from Scotland to over 30 countries.
- Team Scotland is a group of officials from Visit Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and Transport Scotland who come together to assist airports in their route development efforts.
- The aim is to improve both long-haul connections to Scotland and connectivity through world hubs. For example we have:
 - secured 3 new services from Edinburgh to Chicago, Philadelphia and Doha, launched over the summer of 2014

- welcomed the return of the Air Canada rouge summer service to Toronto which proved so successful in 2013
- helped to secure new services from Edinburgh to Abu Dhabi and Glasgow to Halifax, Nova Scotia which started this year

- Devolution of APD – recommended by the Smith Commission and now in the UK Government’s Scotland Bill – will help with this work. An Edinburgh Airport study estimates that a 50% reduction in APD would result in around 0.8 million additional passengers passing through Scotland’s airports in 2016, rising to 0.9 million by 2020
- In Rail: working with Transport Scotland, Regional Transport Partnerships, Network Rail , Scotrail and other stakeholders, Visit Scotland will encourage improvements to mainline stations.
- Some examples: Scotrail has a 9M fund available to provide improved facilities and passenger experience at Aberdeen, Inverness, Motherwell, Perth and Stirling stations.
- Dundee station is being redeveloped and should be ready for use when the Victoria and Albert museum opens as part of the city’s Waterfront development in 2017
- Edinburgh Waverley and Haymarket have been refurbished and remodelled, while Glasgow Queen Street will receive a new entrance during 2016/17, with better integration with the extended Buchanan Galleries shopping centre

Slide 4 – Travelling around Scotland

- We are taking forward proposals from the Ferries Plan, including lower Road Equivalent Tariff fares which have been shown to provide a boost for tourism on the islands.

(The Halcrow report, which evaluated the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree pilot, confirmed that car travel increased by nearly one third in the first two years of the pilot, and passenger journeys increased by 20%.)

- RET is in operation on services to Western Isles, Coll and Tiree, Islay, Gigha, Colonsay and Arran, to be rolled out to remaining Clyde and Hebrides Ferries Services routes in October this year.

- On the main Ardrrossan-Brodick route, car fares are over 50% cheaper compared to standard single for the previous winter, while passenger fares are almost 30% cheaper.
- On Rail, Scotland's rural routes have of course some of the most iconic scenery in the world. These routes include the West Highland Line from Glasgow to Fort William and Mallaig, which was voted Top Rail Journey in the world by the readers of Wanderlust magazine
- The franchisee will also establish the Great Scenic Railways of Scotland, involving West Highland, Kyle, Far North, Borders, Stranraer and Dumfries lines. Trains on these routes will be refurbished and, by December 2017, there will be dedicated tourism ambassadors trained to Visit Scotland standards to provide information
- On Roads: 31% of people visiting Scotland enjoy touring the country, with car the most used method of transport
- So well-managed and maintained roads are crucial – Transport Scotland sees the A9, A82, A83 and A75 as routes with a particular tourism focus. If we take the A9 as an example, it's Scotland's longest trunk road, passing through areas of outstanding natural beauty such as the Cairngorms National Park, which is of course the largest National Park in Britain
- The trunk road network: projects include the Queensferry Crossing; the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness by 2025; the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route now underway and the M8/M73/M74 Motorway Improvements Project also underway with completion planned by Spring 2017. Aim is to connect all 7 cities by dual carriageway by 2030.
- Cabinet Secretary for Rural affairs and the Environment launched the Scottish Scenic Routes Initiative in 2013 – supported by a wide range of stakeholders - aiming to capitalise on the fact that many of Scotland's roads, canals, rail lines and pathways offer ideal vantage points to view its scenery.
- To help with understanding Scotland's culture, bilingual road signage continues to be rolled out on trunk road routes leading to Western Isle ferry ports, and devolution of road signage will allow for bespoke Scottish tourist signing

Slide 5 – Digital connectivity

- Wi-fi access is already available at 52 ScotRail stations and on the Class 170, Class 158 and Class 380 trains. A commitment is in the Abellio ScotRail franchise for all ScotRail trains to be fitted with Wi-fi equipment by 2019.
- High quality travel information: Visit Scotland and Transport Scotland recognise the clear link between the tourism sector and the need to plan travel. We continue to use technology opportunities to deliver information on multiple platforms to service the demands of connected users, including the use of Social Media (Traveline app, for example). This has helped in the delivery of major events such as the Commonwealth Games, Ryder Cup and T in the Park.
- Traffic Scotland's website links to Visit Scotland's FoodieTrail ebook in this year of Food and Drink

Slide 6 – Smart and Integrated Ticketing

- Our published long term vision for smart ticketing is that “all journeys on Scotland's bus, rail, ferry, subway and tram networks can be accessed using some form of smart ticketing or payment
- The new rail franchisee has agreed to deliver a challenging set of smart ticketing take up targets, along with a requirement to integrate rail travel ticketing with other transport modes
- Work is ongoing to introduce smart ticketing for ferry passengers. Transport Scotland has launched a pilot project with CalMac Ferries and West Coast Motors which will see the introduction of a smart ticket serving visitors to Iona. The next Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services franchise will set out the requirement for widespread availability and take up of smart ticketing

Slide 7 – Providing tourists with authentic experiences

- Providing tourists with authentic experiences is the 2nd transport-related Priority action identified in Visit Scotland's National Tourism Development Framework
- 3 parts to this

Slide 8 – Active Travel

- More than £170 m invested in Cycling, Walking, Active Travel since 2007. The National Cycling and Walking Network comprises around 2,000 miles of cycling and walking routes (215 miles added since 2007) on which 62.5 m trips were made in 2012
- There's a commitment to new and well maintained pathways for visitors seeking active holidays

Slide 9 – Scotland's Canals

- Scottish Canals have worked with Glasgow City Council and other stakeholders to complete the Pinkston Watersports Centre in Glasgow. The Centre opened in May 2014 and hopes to attract around 25,000 visitors in 2016 to use canoeing, slalom and white water facilities
- The opening of Helix Park, including the Kelpies, has been a partnership between Scottish canals and Falkirk Council

Slide 10 – Scotland's Railways

- Abellio Scotrail will conduct a pilot in the first two years of its franchise to assess the sustainability of steam trains. Borders railway will deliver passenger services between Edinburgh and the Scottish Borders for the first time since the 1960's, and Scotrail will celebrate the launch in September with a programme of steam services for the first six weeks. They also have plans for five other steam journeys across the country this year.
- A £150 million fleet of new sleeper trains arrives in 2018, which – among other features - will aim to showcase the best of Scottish Food and Drink.

Slide 11 – Planning and delivering world class events

- 2 parts to this: experience of 2014 and post 2014

Slide 12 – Experience of 2014

- Between late July and early August there were over 600,000 unique visitors to the Commonwealth Games and Festival 2014 events, with three quarters of those being satisfied or very satisfied with their experience.
- Travel advice was clearly heeded as trunk road traffic flow was up just 7 percent!

- As you see, footfall through Glasgow Central station was 3.4 million people before the final weekend of the Games.
- There were around 700,000 journeys on Glasgow's subway, and over 190,000 spectator trips were made using the city centre shuttle service to Games venues.
- 250,000 fans from 96 different countries came to the Ryder Cup. Completion of the Gleneagles station refurbishment and the opening of the new link road connecting the station to the A9 were key to allowing visitors to attend.
- Shuttle bus operator Stagecoach transported over 182,000 staff, volunteers and spectators to and from Gleneagles.

Slide 13 – Planning and Delivering World Class events

- Drawing on its experience of 2014 Transport Scotland has contributed to the drafting of the latest National Events Strategy – Scotland, the perfect stage.
- Within this strategy there will be a greater emphasis on transport planning and infrastructure requirements to help promote and sustain events
- There will be an ongoing level of demand for travel information from the business sector and public. To address this, Transport Scotland has set up a standing Communication Co-ordination Group

Slide 14 – Communication Co-ordination Group

- The objectives of the group are:
 - to deliver better co-ordination of planned interventions on our strategic transport networks, across all modes
 - to better develop, manage and influence the complimentary communication strategies of these planned interventions and major events
- Output is the creation by Transport Scotland of an online information hub (keepsotlandmoving.com) which points passengers to the latest updates on major infrastructure works, traffic and public transport timetables.

I hope you found this presentation useful, and thank you for your time.

MSP Attendees;

Bruce Crawford

Lewis MacDonald

Cameron Buchanan