

**Subject: TOURISM STRATEGY UPDATE**  
**Meeting: EXECUTIVE**  
**Date: 2 DECEMBER 2014**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** Following its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2014, the Executive agreed that a tourism strategy be prepared, that a policy development panel be established, that the panel should consist of 5 Members (3 nominated by the Administration and 2 by the Opposition) and that the Director of Development Services should prepare a draft strategy for the Executive's approval by November 2014.
- 1.2** This report provides an update and asks Members to approve further consultation on the strategy and an extension of the timetable.

## **2.0 UPDATE**

- 2.1** The following Members were nominated to the Policy Development Panel: Councillor Mahoney (Chair), Councillor Paterson and Councillor G Goldie. The Opposition did not make any nominations.
- 2.2** The activities of the Policy Development Panel in 2014 to date are as follows.
- (i) 5<sup>th</sup> August – meeting to establish the scope of activities and a timeframe for meetings.  
27<sup>th</sup> August – meeting to examine existing research and information and to agree a survey of local tourism businesses and operators.
  - (ii) 23<sup>rd</sup> September - a Tourism Workshop with key external partners and agencies to consider results of the survey and identify tourism priorities for the period to 2020.
  - (iii) 7<sup>th</sup> October – meeting to pull together the key findings of the survey / workshop and to set out the structure of the strategy.
  - (iv) 27<sup>th</sup> October – meeting with a wide range of local tourism businesses and operators to discuss their priorities for a tourism strategy. All Members of the Council received an invitation to this meeting.
- 2.3** There has been significant interest from the tourism business sector in the consultation events and the business survey. VisitScotland and the Scottish Tourism Alliance have been part of the process and have given advice on developing a tourism strategy. It is of prime importance to engage the wider trade in implementing this strategy therefore the strategy needs to meet the aspirations of local businesses and organisations.
- 2.4** The preparation of the strategy has reached the stage where a draft document has been produced which consists of the principal chapters of the strategy. This document incorporates ideas which have come forward in the course of the consultation. It is suggested that there should be a further opportunity for consultation on the draft document and Members are asked to extend the original deadline to incorporate this. From feedback to date, it is clear that this element of consultation would be appreciated, particularly by many in the tourism trade.

**2.5** The draft strategy document is appended to this report. Members are asked to agree this as a consultative draft, after incorporating any amendments Committee wishes. The document would then be distributed to the tourism trade and the wider public for comment and responses. A final draft strategy would then be prepared for the Executive's consideration and approval early in 2014.

### **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**3.1 The Executive is asked to:**

- (i) extend the timetable for agreeing a Tourism Strategy;**
- (ii) approve a consultative draft strategy based on Appendix 1 and**
  
- (iii) authorise the Director of Development Services to undertake further consultation and update the strategy for the Executive's consideration and approval in February / March 2015.**

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**Director of Development Services**

**Date: 11 November 2014**

**Contact Officer: Ian White ext 0965**

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

# **Falkirk Area Tourism Strategy 2015 – 2020**

## **Consultative Draft**

### **Contents**

Section A – Foreword

Section B – Tourism Now

Section C – Tourism by 2020 – Vision and Strategic Priorities

Section D – Delivering the Vision

Section E – Monitoring and Review

## **Section A – Foreword**

The Foreword will be written after the consultation responses are incorporated in the final draft strategy.

## Section B – Tourism Now

### Context

In the past 20 years, Falkirk has seen dramatic developments which have transformed its landscape and economy. These include the Falkirk Wheel, Callendar House, Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway, The Hippodrome and The Helix, all of which have had major impact on the social, cultural and economic future of the area and which continue to bring a wealth of opportunities to increase tourism. Falkirk's central location, transport connections, major attractions and diverse business base make for a strong platform on which to build a tourism strategy.

### Strategies

Tourism in the Falkirk area is already guided by a wide range of existing strategies and policies which support economic development and tourism in the Falkirk area. These include:

#### National strategies

- Tourism Scotland 2020 (The Scottish Tourism Alliance)  
*This suggests that tourism players should be aligning with the Tourism Scotland 2020 strategy to ensure “each and every one of us within the industry rallies round the strategy, embracing the common agenda it sets out, giving it our full support and taking the initiative in our own areas”.*
- National Tourism Development Framework (VisitScotland)

#### Falkirk area policies / strategies

- Strategic Community Plan (Falkirk Community Planning Partnership)
- Single Outcome Agreement (Falkirk Community Planning Partnership and Scottish Government)
- My Future's in Falkirk, The Way Forward
- Falkirk Council, Tourism Action Plan 2014
- Falkirk Council, Tourist Signposting Policy
- Towards 2020, Falkirk Council's European Strategy
- Culture and Sports Strategy 2014 -2024 (Falkirk Community Trust)
- LEADER European Funding Programme 2014 – 2020 (under development)
- Development Plans (Structure Plan, Local Plan and Local Development Plan)
- Antonine Wall Action Plan
- Kinneil Estate Masterplan
- Sustainable Falkirk
- Open Space Strategy and Parks Development Plan (in process)

In order to ensure opportunities are maximised in the Falkirk area, there is a need to develop and harness plans which facilitate continuing growth and development. The Falkirk Tourism Strategy should articulate a vision for tourism for the period to 2020

and should create the basis for more partnership and collaborative working which will maximise visitor numbers and spend and future business investment in tourism.

## Performance

### Volume and Value of Tourism in the Falkirk area

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012
Visitor Numbers (000s)	620.48	628.04	621.58	627.67
Visitor Expenditure	£72.70m	£76.23m	£79.33m	£81.20m

**Source: Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM)**

Figures are not yet available for 2013 but are expected to be available by the time a final draft strategy is produced.

There is already evidence of tourism in Falkirk taking a significant leap in 2014. With over half a million visits to Helix Park, the ‘Kelpie effect’ has helped other sites such as the Falkirk Wheel and the VisitScotland Information Centre which have seen a significant rise in numbers.

## Research and information

Information from surveys of visitors has been gathered by various tourism operators and much of this has been considered in writing the draft strategy. The Council conducted visitor research in 2012 at the Falkirk Wheel and the findings included:

- 57% of visitors were from Scotland and lived out with the Falkirk area, 26% were from England and 17% were foreign visitors;
- 78% visited with friends and family, 15% as part of an organised group and 7% were there by themselves;
- 40% were aged 45-64, 36% were aged 24-44, 5% were 16-24 and 16% were over 65;
- 60% of the visitors were staying in hotels, 30% were staying with friends and family and 10% were in self-catering accommodation;
- 45% were day trip visitors, 11% were away from home 1-3 nights, 31% were away from home 4-7 nights and 13% were staying away for more than 7 nights;
- 84% gave the attraction either enjoyable or very enjoyable ratings;
- Foreign visitors were the least satisfied group

Some further insights from other visitor studies / feedback is given below.

- 95% of visitors to the Helix thought the park was either “amazing” or “quite good”;

- 50% of visitors to Bo’ness & Kinneil railway heard about it by word of mouth and 37% through social media/internet; 98% said it was good value for money.
- Only 8% of disabled people use a wheelchair, so it’s not always about door widths, ramps and lifts. Far more people are partially sighted than blind. Far more people have a hearing impairment than are deaf. Tourism businesses with improved accessibility appeal to a wider range of visitors.
- Peer-to-peer reviews have become increasingly important in recent years, to the extent that half of travellers will not book a stay before consulting an online review site. A study claimed that up to 87% of the 2,000 hotel review readers questioned said the reviews had a ‘significant influence on their purchase decisions’. (Zhang, Ye, Law & Li, 2012)

## SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis below has been compiled from a discussions and suggestions made at consultation events and in other discussions.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major and fresh attractions and events</li> <li>• Heritage, including WHS</li> <li>• Family activities</li> <li>• Recent growth in outdoor activities and facilities</li> <li>• Countryside and landscape and outdoor activities (though not always perceived)</li> <li>• Events (though some aimed at local audience)</li> <li>• Strong retail offer at Central Retail Park</li> <li>• Traditional High Street / historic town centres</li> <li>• Stock of affordable accommodation</li> <li>• Key attractions have collaborated on major marketing projects using VisitFalkirk brand</li> <li>• Business engagement and support services</li> <li>• Developer interest in self-catering (though yet to materialise)</li> <li>• Central location / rail access from Glasgow and Edinburgh</li> </ul>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative perceptions of industrial area</li> <li>• Lack of awareness in key markets</li> <li>• Inconsistencies in quality of service</li> <li>• Connections between visitor locations, including town centres and railway stations</li> <li>• Lack of tourism trade association or destination marketing / management organisation (DMO)</li> <li>• No recent hotel development</li> <li>• No bespoke tourism website for Falkirk</li> <li>• Lack of major investment in town centre shopping</li> <li>• Lack of clarity on target markets</li> <li>• Lack of comprehensive tourism trade group</li> </ul>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in facilities which tie in with Helix and other attractions – e.g. hotels, self-catering including caravan and camping sites , food and beverage service</li> <li>• Relatively untapped aspects of heritage (eg Roman, industrial)</li> <li>• Arts</li> <li>• Outdoor activities</li> </ul>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism is vulnerable to economic shocks</li> <li>• Fragmented industry may fail to seize collective opportunities</li> <li>• Reduced resources (public sector)</li> <li>• The pace of private sector development may not keep up with the area’s aspirations</li> <li>• Other areas may shout louder</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First choice family destination for days out</li><li>• Destination for groups and leisure breaks</li><li>• Business buy-in to tourism group</li><li>• Online marketing including tourism website and social media</li><li>• Improving the built environment (eg THI)</li><li>• Raising awareness of local food and drink producers</li><li>• Raising awareness of greenspace</li><li>• Improved public transport</li><li>• Digital connectivity and wi-fi at attractions and other locations</li><li>• Improved visitor information, including digital displays, at key visitor sites and town centres</li><li>• Improved customer service – eg Glasgow Games model, including volunteer ambassadors</li><li>• Better research to inform tourism activities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leakage of retail spend to other centres and online</li></ul>
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## Section C – Tourism by 2020 – Vision and Strategic Priorities

### Vision

*To make Falkirk a destination of first choice for high quality, value for money and world-class attractions offering memorable customer experience, delivered by skilled and passionate people*

### Strategic Priorities

#### Priority 1 – Targeting key markets

The key markets for Falkirk area are those of the actual and potential tourism operators in the area. As existing tourism operations cover a wide spectrum – e.g. accommodation, food and beverage, visitor attractions, events, conferences, retail and transport – it follows that key markets will vary between sectors. Markets will also vary within sectors, for example a large hotel and a self catering operation are likely to target different sets of customers.

The use of the Visit Falkirk brand and its further development are seen as key in future marketing activities. This includes developing and promoting clear brand values and differentiation from other areas.

Despite this breadth of provision, recent consultation has shown that most local operators concentrate on one or more of the following broad markets.

- (a) Family days out
- (b) Older people days out
- (c) Leisure breaks for couples and families
- (d) Activity seekers
- (e) Group travel
- (f) Business tourism

The purpose of targeting markets for the area as a whole is to show where collaborative arrangements and pan-area organisations such as the Council and VisitScotland can best direct their effort for local impact.

Each of the identified markets is considered below.

#### Family days out

This audience is drawn to key attractions such as Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway, the Falkirk Wheel, Helix Park and the Kelpies. The Falkirk area also has events and amenities such as Callendar Park, Muiravonside Country Park, commercial children's play centres, a dry ski slope, indoor karting, swimming, cycling, riding and museums which attract different segments of the family audience from outside the area as well as catering for the local population. All these are particularly valuable in having potential to attract repeat visitors.

This powerful set of assets sits within easy reach of most of Scotland's central belt

population so there is a ready market on the doorstep. The family audience also comprises people who are staying in or travelling through the central belt area and seeking family activities.

In short, Falkirk is a great family day out and, with The Kelpies and the Falkirk Wheel in particular drawing families from a considerable distance, has the opportunity to build this audience further and become a pre-eminent destination for families.

Key actions for growing the family days out market are:

- promoting the scale and breadth of family attractions and events to local and nearby audiences to encourage visits and frequent repeat visits
- promoting the ‘power attractions’ and other specialised amenities to families throughout central Scotland and building the area’s reputation for attracting regular repeat visits

The promotional effort should go hand-in-hand with continuing to refresh the product and developing new family experiences in the area.

#### Older people days out

- Those in this sector have time to make more frequent day trips and, like families, can generate return visits on a regular basis
- They tend to have a significant disposable income
- Existing attractions have experienced significant numbers from this sector
- Ageing population therefore this sector will grow
- Increasing number of grandparents are now key carers for preschool children

Key actions include ensuring a high level of accessibility as referred to below.

#### Leisure breaks for couples and families

- Overnight stays generate greater return as opposed to day visits
- The range of products on offer now make a Falkirk overnight visit more viable
- The central location of Falkirk makes it an ideal base to tour Scotland from
- The area has hotel capacity especially at weekends to accommodate hotel breaks
- The area now has Internationally recognised Must See Attractions - the Kelpies and the Falkirk Wheel

Visitor accommodation is the backbone of the tourism industry and the accommodation operators are essential marketeers for the area. The partnership elements of the strategy should assist accommodation operators to market packages which are attractive to the market.

### Activity seekers

- Development of amenities and facilities within the area means that we can now accommodate those looking for a more active break.
- Activity seekers are a growing market
- This market can include families, young couples and retired couples.
- Central location means we can be a base for activity seekers looking for activities within the Falkirk area and the rest of Scotland
- The area now has the John Muir Way which has the potential to pull in overseas visitors e.g. American and German

Geographically, this market is both local in central Scotland, where people appreciate the short travel time to facilities, and much wider spread as people can be attracted to the area as part of a larger trip – e.g. walking the John Muir Way. The marketing approach should reach both audiences.

### Group travel

- A proven sector for key attractions such as The Falkirk Wheel and Callendar House
- This sector should be a target for the Helix and other attractions such as Boness & Kinneil Railway, which already has a group travel base
- Group travel can be local and international and the strategy has to reach both ends of the spectrum
- Working with neighbouring local authorities develop cross boundary packages for group operators
- Visit Scotland Expo provides one important channel to target the group travel sector

There should be co-operation between the main sites receiving groups of visitors to help reach this market more effectively and to help tour operators to package several Falkirk elements in an itinerary.

### Business tourism

- Falkirk is an important business base with many international connections
- Local accommodation providers rely heavily on the number of business visitors to the area i.e. non discretionary business travel.
- There are significant facilities for discretionary business travel i.e. conferences/meetings and events
- There is an opportunity to capture more discretionary spend available particularly as the area has become known at an international level due to the attractions such as Falkirk Wheel and The Kelpies.
- Business tourism can lead to subsequent leisure visits

The landmark attractions and can be used to help engage conference organisers at an international level. It is also important that more local conference organisers (including in-house) have full area information at their fingertips.

## Priority 2 – Providing enjoyable and marketable experiences

In recent years, businesses and organisations have shown great creativity in developing new experiences which attract visitors to Falkirk. New assets such as the Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies have been created and older features like the canal network and the Hippodrome have been restored and are now important tourism generators.

The Falkirk tourism experience is based not only on a growing portfolio of visitor attractions, events and activities but equally importantly on accommodation, food and other services, which along with the quality of the environment (place), form an integral part of the visitor experience. The business tourism experience also relies on most of these features.

It is a priority of the Tourism Strategy to continue to improve and expand the Falkirk tourism experience. The main opportunities to do so include the following.

### Development at major attractions

The most significant visitor sites in the Falkirk area are the Falkirk Wheel and Helix Park. Especially in the latter case there is the need to complete the facilities with the visitor centre and address parking pressures. Furthermore, as both the wheel and the Helix already have large visitor numbers on site, they should be attractive locations for the development of further visitor facilities and services by both the private and public sectors.

There is development land within and / or adjacent to both sites, making it possible to pursue the development of, for example:

- visitor attractions and experiences which are complementary to and compatible with the existing main attractions
- the staging of events on existing event space, and the improvement of events infrastructure, including facilities for conferences and meetings
- hotel and self-catering including caravan and camping accommodation
- food and beverage service

The existing visitor numbers at key sites should provide a ready clientele for many prospective developers. New developments themselves should extend the appeal of the sites and bring more visitors to the core attraction.

There are other sites at which the same principal of nodal development can be followed, where additional visitor facilities can make a location more marketable and viable. These include:

- Callendar House and Park
- Kinneil House and Estate
- Falkirk and Bo'ness town centres

A nodal development policy was pursued for the restored canals under the Canal Corridor Development Framework. A similar nodal approach would be appropriate for the other linear features in the area – the Antonine Wall and the John Muir Way.

## Place-making and enhancing the environment

A sense of place and the quality of the environment are key to the enjoyment of any visit. People generally make a trip to somewhere they feel is distinctive in some way. They certainly notice the surroundings when they get there.

The Falkirk area has seen a lot of place-making and regeneration in recent years. The Falkirk Wheel and canal corridor, the Helix and Bo'ness town centre are among the most notable in scale to date but there are other examples including the Faw Kirk graveyard, nature reserves and paths networks.

At present, work is progressing on the Falkirk THI initiative and Denny town centre. These are vital for maximising the value of intrinsic assets and giving the visitor a quality experience as they travel in the area. Improved town centres will be better placed to attract retail investment and support the wide range of independent retailers which can draw significant visitors.

Further environmental initiatives will be pursued at other sites including:

- Portdownie
- Rosebank
- Nature reserves and core paths network

Such work will help continue the transformation of disused industrial areas to viable uses which contribute to the quality of the visitor experience.

## Cultural and heritage tourism

Much of the area's tourism product is based on culture and heritage. Without the dramatic scenery and large rural spaces found in the north and south of Scotland, the Falkirk area has had to create its tourism based on its people and their works past and present. Fortunately the area has seen more than sufficient human activity and drama to leave a rich heritage and to make a compelling story. Re-telling these stories and re-living the experiences is the basis of much of Falkirk's tourism product at sites such as the Antonine Wall, Callendar House, Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway, Blackness Castle Kinneil Estate and the canals.

In recent years, Falkirk has added greatly to its tourism product through contemporary art and culture, including the innovative engineering of the Falkirk Wheel, the landmark art of the Kelpies and the Park Gallery at Callendar House.

Culture and heritage will continue to be the bedrock of the Falkirk tourism product. Key opportunities include:

- The Antonine Wall – the action plan should create a range of new visitor experiences and improve the marketability of this World Heritage Site.
- Callendar House & Park – there is a variety of opportunities based on previous studies, including strengthening of the visitor product within the house and re-using redundant buildings in the park.
- Kinneil House and Estate – recent studies have identified ways in which the

house and estate can be brought into greater use by residents and visitors.

- Two THI zones and town-centre conservation areas

These and many other opportunities are likely to come up against very constrained public sector budgets. Progress is likely to be speedier if private developers / capital can be attracted to elements within a future cultural and heritage tourism development project.

#### Activity tourism

- Development of Tourism Related Businesses along the route of the John Muir Way and at key locations adjacent to the Antonine Wall and Canals.
- Completion of facilities and infrastructure including cycle trails and related developments within Callendar Estate
- Extending the season through the provision of activities on a 'turn up and play' basis
- Encourage more activity operators through the Business Gateway and other support agencies

#### Accessible tourism

- The UK market is ageing and it is estimated by 2025 more than a third of the UK's population will be over 55. There is a correlation between ageing and disability in its widest sense.
- The Falkirk area should become known for its level of accessibility at its attractions and accommodation.

#### Sustainable tourism

- Sustainability is important within the decision making process for an increasing number of visitors.
- Sustainability has been identified as essential within Council policies.
- Falkirk should have a USP in that the majority of businesses should meet the Green Tourism Initiative award criteria.

#### Events and Festivals

- Facilities within the Falkirk area exist for major events and festivals and these can be improved upon to ensure the level of events attracted within the area matches the potential.
- The success of events such as summer comedy festival and the autumn Roman Week may be a model for a winter / spring traditional music festival. This opportunity could be explored with a range of partners including Falkirk and District Arts and Civic Council.
- The collaboration of events organisers in a combined events calendar will help not only the promotion of these events but the planning of other events to avoid major events clashing and ensure a good spread of events throughout the year

### Priority 3 – Improving the customer journey

#### **Pre-arrival information**

- Refine the first point of engagement with the customer and develop an approach to web and social media
- Launch and manage a high quality Visit Falkirk website which portays the contemporary and innovative elements of the Falkirk experience as well as the area's historical features
- Maximise the Falkirk area's representation on VisitScotland website
- Maximise the Falkirk area's representation at VisitFalkirk Information centres outside the area
- Encourage cross-marketing by local operators, transport companies and businesses so that they give information on the wider Falkirk area as a matter of course and provide a Visit Falkirk link in their promotional channels
- Communicate with potential visitors through print, email, print, other marketing and PR
- Use sample itineraries to inspire and motivate visitors

#### **On arrival information, orientation and signage**

- Provide information at key sites including:
  - VisitScotland Information Centre
  - VisitScotland Information points, including Bo'ness station
  - An upgraded information service at libraries
  - Local tourism businesses and operators
  - Use of Visit Falkirk branded leaflet stands
- Ensure area orientation information at key points of entry and key visitor locations
- Implement and maintain an enhanced scheme for white on brown tourist signage to *and between* key tourism sites and facilities
- Ensure finger posts and other pedestrian signage encourage visitors to make the most of their visit
- Wi-fi zones

#### **Road and rail infrastructure, public transport and sustainable travel**

- Work with road and rail authorities to ensure the capacity and quality of infrastructure encourages additional visitors
- Promote and enhance public transport as a sustainable way to get to the area
- Improve the public transport links between visitor attractions, hotels, town centres and stations, including the provision of a regular hop-on visitor tour bus

#### **Outstanding customer service**

Customer service is a way in which a facility can distinguish itself and generate a

virtuous circle of free PR. To do the same for a whole area is a bigger ask but it could produce a corresponding scale of benefit. It would not happen overnight, but it is considered viable for the Falkirk area as a whole to aim to deliver an outstanding level of customer service by 2020. This would differentiate Falkirk from other areas and ensure that the world-class attractions were matched by an equivalent level of service which would only enhance the customer experience.

There should be a partnership approach to the long-term development of outstanding customer service. Among the tools which can be used to support this aim are:

- World Host type accreditation for customer service and local knowledge – e.g. Visit Falkirk accreditation / badge of honour for businesses and others
- Local ambassadors from business and the community – demonstrating that *Tourism is Everyone's Business*
- Reaching the workforce of the future in schools and colleges and emphasising the importance of hospitality and good service.
- Business Gateway and other business support initiatives for promoting good business practices including customer service to new and existing businesses. In a recent study by the Federation of Small Businesses, 46% of tourism businesses look to Business Gateway / councils as the first port for advice and support, which shows that the Council is in an influential position.
- Employment & Training Unit for training and upskilling the workforce
- Fam trips for the tourism trade and others, including local ambassadors, to ensure that a wide range of people who come in contact with visitors have good product knowledge

#### Other

- Website with comprehensive and up-to-date information with partner participation
- Cleanliness of the environment, litter free
- Ease of parking, including parking in town centres and other key sites for coaches
- A continuous cycle of visitor feedback and research to check that the Falkirk proposition is delivering its promise and to feed into the further development of marketing, visitor experiences and the customer journey.

## Section D – Delivering the Vision

### Partnership Working

Elevating the opportunities for partnership working will be fundamental to the success of this strategy. There is an opportunity to create an effective tourism community which connects local businesses and aids working together for the benefit of all. The success of the tourism strategy depends greatly on the support and leadership of a wide range of partners including, public sector agencies, private sector tourism operators, transport, retail, the volunteer sector and local communities. Creating a structured plan for the area as a group will be far more effective than stand-alone projects. Clear communication of the vision to partners and wider audiences, both locally and nationally are key drivers of success. The allocation of resources, time and staff are required to undertake development work to ensure the objectives are met.

Joint promotional activity and attendance at events as “one body” will contribute to the increased awareness of Falkirk as a whole. Maintaining the uptake of local businesses to the EXPO stand and delivering collaborative marketing campaigns will help to ensure Falkirk is perceived as having joined up offers which ease the visitor journey. Increased exposure in the travel trade, funded jointly, will have a greater impact than single organisations alone. Shared market intelligence will allow for better monitoring and evaluation purposes and creates a sense of community through better linkages with the sector and exploration of possible tourism focussed BID opportunities to secure funding for the future.

The benefits of ‘Team Tourism for Falkirk’ are widespread. The visitor can access joined up information and services, the town will have a more effective focus on key markets and customers which will boost the local economy and the individual businesses will have an increased demand for local produce. Working together with a shared vision to create and develop what visitors want should be the first step in making Falkirk successful.

The future of tourism is all about ‘superservice’, meaning the services we offer need to save people time, money and energy. Taking the hard work away from the visitor will ensure they don’t find accessing information too difficult and move on. Business owners, communities and volunteers in the area need to be convinced of this and should be trained or training accordingly. Aiming to bring local organisations together to build confidence, knowledge and to offer training such as World Host to deliver exceptional experiences every time.

In order to turn our opportunities into reality we need to build on our local and national networks ensuring we work with partners and businesses that have the same aspirations around the customer experience as we have. We have to use market intelligence to get to know our target markets, understand who our customers are and will be to enhance the journey they take with us.

Creating this new level of joint working doesn’t happen in isolation. It involves a range of sectors, stakeholder groups and delivery partners such as government agencies, communities and business group, working collaboratively to deliver their part of the picture.

A strengthened Falkirk Tourism Partnership should work towards an overall destination marketing approach and, ultimately, destination management that includes planning, implementation, regular reviews and assessment. We need to consider and manage the unique natural environments, the cultural attributes and the community of interest at the heart of our tourism destination.

It is an action of this strategy to deliver a Tourism Partnership model which works for the Falkirk area. The strategy does not prescribe that model, it will be a matter for the trade to work out. However many businesses are already engaged in VisitFalkirk activities and more have come forward in the strategy consultation process. Together with the VisitFalkirk marketing group of key attractions (whose activities include exhibiting at VisitScotland Expo and running a six figure Growth Fund campaign) there is a good platform for developing a wider partnership.

### **Promoting the *Visit Falkirk* message**

#### Resources

We will endeavour to work more closely with key partners including Visit Scotland, Falkirk Community Trust, Falkirk Delivers, Scottish Canals and Boness & Kinneil Railway to ensure a consistent message is being delivered from all partners.

It is a clear aim of the Tourism Strategy to act as a facilitator to engage the private sector attractions, accommodation providers and cafes & restaurants within the area to assist them with the establishment of a local area Tourism Partnership or Forum.

Once this is established an effective local partnership will ensure we can allocate resources to focus our attention on areas where we can seek the greatest economic return.

There will be strong pressure on public sector budgets, especially Falkirk Council and Scottish Canals and there will be a need to attract resources from wider sources such as LEADER and including the private sector. It is fully appreciated that each funder must receive an appropriate return on investment.

#### Channels

<b>Key Objectives</b>			<b>Measurements</b>
Development of Visit Falkirk tourism and social media portal	<p><a href="http://www.visitfalkirk.com">www.visitfalkirk.com</a> will be the call to action on all future promotional tourism activity in relation to the facilities and key attractions. The website will be the One stop shop for info on all tourism products and events.</p> <p>We will continue to develop the Visit Falkirk facebook page, develop a twitter feed and continue our monthly eshots to trade and develop these for</p>		<p>Google Analytics</p> <p>Number of hits to Visit Falkirk.com</p> <p>Number of likes to Visit Falkirk Facebook page and level of engagement</p> <p>Number of followers on twitter</p> <p>Open and click through rates on ezines</p>

	consumers			
Ongoing development and distribution of Visitor Information & orientation & signage about the Falkirk area	<p>Their has been a substantial increase in demand(almost 100% increase) for the Visit Falkirk area leaflet.</p> <p>Develop and implement a framework for the continued distribution (locally and nationally) and production of area literature</p>			<p>Number of leaflets distributed % Increase in local coverage %Increase in national coverage</p> <p>Number of Visit Falkirk Information points throughout the area</p> <p>Implementation and upgrading of Brown Signage</p>
Marketing and PR campaign development to continue to raise awareness and improve perception of the Falkirk offering	<p>Maximise on the Marketing activity taken place to date to continue to promote the Falkirk area as a perfect day out and build on this to promote the area for Short Breaks.</p> <p>Focussing on key target markets</p> <p>Family Days out 50 plus Days Out Leisure Breaks Group Travel Business Tourism</p> <p>Optimise all Marketing &amp; PR opportunities for the area and working with key partners including Visit Scotland</p>			<p>Opportunities to be seen Voucher redemption Google Analytics Trade Exhibition attendance and level of enquiries</p>
Conducting on going Market Research with existing visitors to the Falkirk area.	<p>Establish benchmark research to provide a baseline for all marketing and pr campaign development</p> <p>Collate visitor research from key partners to provide an overall picture of the visitor experience</p>			<p>Perception research to be commissioned</p> <p>Centralise partners research and improve information sharing</p>

### Promoting the *Invest in Falkirk* message

Inward	Promotion of the Falkirk			Production of Invest In
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Investment activities	area to attract investment in to the area in terms of additional accommodation providers, self catering including caravan and camping sites and food and beverage operators			Falkirk Promotional Materials Number of companies targeted Trade events attended
Business Engagement & Support	Promotion of Business Gateway Falkirk services to Falkirk Tourism Businesses to encourage increased take up of services			Number of Tourism Businesses who are clients of Business Gateway Falkirk

## **Section E – Monitoring and Review**

The purpose of this document is to identify the high level strategic priorities and delivery mechanisms for developing the tourism industry in the Falkirk area over the next 6 years. These priorities will be addressed in many stages and by many organisations and partnerships over this period.

To help co-ordinate this activity, it is proposed that an Action Plan be drawn up annually, incorporating activities planned for the year ahead by the Council, other organisations and partnership activities. The first annual Action Plan will be presented in February 2015 to Falkirk Council Executive along with the final draft strategy for approval.

An annual report on the tourism strategy will be prepared and this will report on progress against the annual action plan.

While the strategy will be monitored by Falkirk Council initially, there will continue to be engagement with the tourism trade to capture its needs and reflect these in the annual plan. As a more fully fledged tourism partnership body develops, it is suggested that this body should take ownership of the tourism strategy and be the monitoring body for reporting and review.

With this in mind, it would be appropriate to build in a mid-term review of the strategy around 2017 so that the partnership has the opportunity to revise the strategy to its needs at that point in time, prior to taking over ownership. It is expected that the Council would continue to play a significant role in tourism policy and development as a key partner in the partnership.

