

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: TOURISM ACTION PLAN 2014
Meeting: EXECUTIVE
Date: 14TH JANUARY 2014
Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A Tourism Action Plan was developed in 2009 and has been updated annually. This report highlights the key achievements for 2013 and planned activities for 2014.
- 1.2 Next year will be an extremely important year for tourism. With the Ryder Cup and Commonwealth Games taking place, Scotland will become a major focus and it is important that Falkirk maximises the potential of these events. Lonely Planet has named Scotland as one of the top three countries in the world to visit in 2014. More locally the official opening of the Helix and the John Muir Way from April 2014 will focus attention at a national and international level on Falkirk and the attractions in and around the area.
- 1.3 The Tourism Action Plan for 2014 includes activities which will further promote the Falkirk area as a tourism destination. The range and breadth of these activities is illustrated by the fact that they are undertaken by many different parts of the Council and by other partners and organisations with which the Council works closely.
- 1.4 The Tourism Action Plan has been updated in close collaboration with those responsible for tourism related activities, both within and outwith the Council. Key achievements in 2013 and plans for 2014 are summarised below. Further detail on the planned activities within the Tourism Action Plan and achievements in 2013 are provided in Appendix 1 & 2.

2.0 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2013

2.1 Marketing

VisitScotland Growth Fund

Visit Falkirk was awarded £51,000 from VisitScotland's growth fund, providing a total fund of £102,000 for a new marketing campaign aimed at attracting more visitors to the Falkirk area.

The partners in the project are Falkirk Delivers (Falkirk Towns Ltd), Falkirk Council, The Falkirk Wheel (Scottish Canals), Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway (S.R.P.S) and Falkirk Community Trust. These agencies pooled resources to develop a marketing plan for the area.

The plan included the development of a range of itineraries, leaflets, outdoor advertising, online and offline adverts, a radio campaign as well as newspaper and bloggers' editorial activity. The focus for this activity was the Visitfalkirk.com web address, held within the Falkirk Council website. The Visitfalkirk branding and imagery developed in 2011 was utilised throughout this campaign and continues to provide a clear and recognisable

identity for the Falkirk tourism experience. An overall impact report will be issued to VisitScotland at the end of February 2014.

VisitScotland Agreement

The Council's financial contribution to VisitScotland in 2013/14 was £43,500. This supported to the operating costs of the tourist information centres based at the Falkirk Wheel and the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway. In addition, the Council's contribution enabled VisitScotland to carry out a Falkirk 'Summer into Autumn' campaign which complemented the activity taking place through the VisitScotland growth fund. Key messages reflected local strengths with a focus on attractions including – The Falkirk Wheel, Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway and Callendar House. The results of this campaign are detailed below:

- Over 2.7 million "Opportunities to See" the Falkirk messages
- 294 unique entries to prize draw
- Post campaign analysis with STV Digital revealed that 24% of those surveyed after the campaign had visited the Falkirk area within the last 3 months.

A final element of the 2013/14 VisitScotland campaign will be carried out in early spring which will allow promotion of the area for tourism at the beginning of the important 2014 season.

Communications with Tourism Trade

A meeting with a wide number of tourism businesses took place in March 2013 and this has been followed up with regular updates and communications from the Growth & Investment Unit. The Business Gateway services and financial support in the Falkirk area are available for tourism businesses and the opportunity to support more tourism businesses is being progressed.

2.2 Visitor Attractions

Progress has been made in the development of a number of visitor attractions in the area during this year:-

Helix - A significant achievement in 2013 was the opening of the Helix Park in September 2013. In excess of 15,000 visitors attended on Helix Day. Ongoing activity took place around the construction of the Kelpies. This and the maquettes touring throughout the UK and overseas generated significant media coverage for the area at a national and international level.

John Muir Way – Work took place for the planned opening of the John Muir Way from April 2014 which will significantly enhance the offering the Falkirk area has in relation to the walking and cycling tourism markets.

Callendar House - was awarded the Green Tourism Award in 2013 and visitor numbers have been steadily increasing over the last three years as seen by the visitor numbers table in section 3.1 of this report. The tea-room within Callendar House was successfully relocated, and as a result the visitor numbers to the tea room and the ratings on trip advisor have increased.

The Milk Barn – Glenfarm, Glenvillage opened within Callendar Estate in 2013 with huge success and a mix of events has been co-ordinated, including du-athlons, fireworks and night cycle rides.

The Hippodrome - The Hippodrome Festival of Silent Cinema took place in March and is Scotland's only silent film festival. A recent evaluation indicated increased visitor numbers to the venue/the town from local, neighbouring districts, Scotland and UK. 40% of survey respondents visited cafes or restaurants in the area, 17% combined their visit with another attraction in the area, and 8% combined an overnight stay with their visit.

2.3 Infrastructure and Environment

The Council was successful in securing £2 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards a Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) in Falkirk town centre. This is supported by a £1.6 million grant previously awarded to the Falkirk Town Centre Conservation area by Historic Scotland as part of their Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme.

2.4 More detailed information re the key achievements are provided within Appendix 2

3.0 VISITOR NUMBERS

3.1 The following table shows the number of visitors at local visitor attractions within the Falkirk Area.

Attraction	2013 Apr - Oct	2012/2013	2011/2012	2010/2011
Callendar House	27,385	30,893	30,356	28,201
The Park Gallery	15,091	24,415	27,245	17,531
Kinneil Museum	2,094	4,505	5,239	4,803
The Hippodrome		28557	25843	24936
Average capacity			59%	67%
The Falkirk Wheel		385,000	390,000	405,000
Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway	54,023	64,647	66,332	66,734

4.0 2014 TOURISM ACTION PLAN

4.1 It is important to build on the momentum of this activity in 2014 as this will be a significant year for tourism for the Falkirk area. The Tourism Action Plan for 2014 attached identifies the actions proposed by the Council and its partners to exploit these opportunities. Key amongst these actions are the following:-

- The international launch of the Kelpies in April 2014 with a formal opening of the Helix later in the year.
- The Launch of the John Muir Way from April 2014
- Falkirk Rocks event (Rod Stewart Concert) at the Community Stadium in June 2014
- Application for additional VisitScotland Growth funding to further build on the activity undertaken in 2013.

These are expected to significantly boost the area's profile and resultant visitors numbers. Full detail of the Tourism Action Plan and proposed events schedule is contained in Appendix 1.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy: The work relating to the Tourism Action Plan accords with the Community Plan, Corporate Plan and My Future's in Falkirk.

Legal: None

Financial: The action plan will be progressed within the available budgets for 2014/15, supplemented where possible through contributions from partners.

Personnel: None

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 **It is recommended that Committee:**

(i) Notes the progress on key areas of activity in 2013 and (ii) agrees the Tourism Action Plan for 2014.

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 Date: 18 December 2013
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None