

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Assistant Director - People
to Leadership Panel (Special)
of 1 March 2022**

Subject: Tourism and Events Strategy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress made with the implementation of the Interim Strategic Approach to Tourism and Events and to seek approval for the Tourism and Events Strategy.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Panel:

2.1.1 considers the progress made by officers in the implementation of the Interim Strategic Approach to Tourism and Events (as outlined in [Appendix 1](#)); and

2.1.2 approves the Tourism and Events Strategy attached in [Appendix 2](#).

3. Background

- 3.1 In June 2021, the Leadership Panel agreed, due to the ongoing uncertainty within the sector as a result of Coronavirus restrictions, to proposals for an Interim Strategic Approach to Tourism and Events, as outlined in [Appendix 3](#). Officers have been implementing this interim approach and an update on this is provided in [Appendix 1](#).

4. Proposals

- 4.1 The proposed vision for the new Tourism and Events Strategy is:

South Ayrshire will be a premier destination of choice, with an enhanced environment through social, cultural and economic activities.

- 4.2 The strategy aims to:

- proactively market South Ayrshire as a destination of choice;
- align events more closely with the region's tourism assets to build events with a legacy impact;

- develop the area as a destination for holding large scale outdoor events and festivals, which will attract high levels of footfall and visitor spend into the area;
- integrate town centres into our events and festivals to ensure we are driving footfall and increasing spend;
- encourage and facilitate collaboration among providers to overcome fragmentation and offer stronger, packaged experiences, tailored to distinctive market segments through the Destination South Ayrshire approach;
- maximise quality and focus on excellent service for our visitors; and
- enhance our tourism offers and capitalise on opportunities.

4.3 The strategy will be driven by a clear focus on the following eight key offers:

- Culture and heritage, including Burns;
- Parks, open spaces, outdoor activities and natural environment;
- Sport, leisure and golf;
- Food and drink;
- Weddings, civil partnerships and business tourism;
- Digital Tourism;
- Town Centres; and
- Event and festivals.

4.4 An associated action plan will be developed which will detail timescales, lead officers and indicators of success.

4.5 Updates on progress will be reported annually to the Service and Performance Panel.

4.6 It is also proposed that that Panel adopts, and agrees to the implementation of, the South Ayrshire Council Events and Tourism Strategy attached as [Appendix 2](#).

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The implementation of the strategy will be accommodated within existing tourism and events resources.

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Risk

8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations*

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations*

8.2.1 The risk associated with rejecting the recommendations is that the Council misses the opportunity to build a strategic approach to tourism and events.

9. Equalities

9.1 The proposals in this report have been assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment Scoping process. There are no significant potential positive or negative equality impacts of agreeing the recommendations and therefore an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required. A copy of the Equalities Scoping Assessment is attached as [Appendix 4](#).

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - An SEA has not been carried out.

11. Options Appraisal

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

12. Link to Council Plan

12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Commitments 4 and 6 of the Council Plan: South Ayrshire Works/ Make the most of the local economy; and A Better Place to Live/ Enhanced environment through social, cultural and economic activities.

13. Results of Consultation

13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.

13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Chris Cullen, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Culture, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking

14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Assistant Director – People will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Leadership Panel in the ‘Council and Leadership Panel Decision Log’ at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Managed by</i>
Provide a report on progress to the Service and Performance Panel regarding the implementation of the strategy	May 2023	Coordinator - Destination Promotion and Inclusive Participation

Background Papers **Report to Leadership Panel of 26 October 2021 – [Tourism and Events: Interim Strategic Approach](#)**

Person to Contact **Laura Kerr, Coordinator – Destination Promotion and Inclusive Participation**
Carnegie Library, 12 Main Street, Ayr, KA8 8EB
Phone 01292 616421
E-mail laura.kerr4@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Date: 23 February 2022

Interim Strategic Approach to Tourism and Events Implementation Update

- 1.1 The **Destination South Ayrshire** (DSA) website continues to be updated; there are now over 140 listings, and this will increase as more partners sign up. The site can be accessed here: www.destinationsouthayrshire.co.uk.
- 1.2 **A five towns approach to Christmas** was delivered over the festive period. Officers facilitated online partnership meetings with community representatives from all five towns to encourage collaboration and a joined up approach.
- 1.3 **A community festive lighting fund** was distributed to groups to allow them to purchase additional lighting for their communities.
- 1.4 **Winter wanderland installations** and signage were installed in all five towns, along with **shop scavenger hunts and free activity packs**. A **South Ayrshire wide winter wanderland booklet** was produced and 7,000 copies were distributed throughout South Ayrshire. Income was generated from advertising space, which offset the cost of print and distribution.
- 1.5 South Ayrshire Council were successful in their application to the highly competitive Year of Stories Open Events Fund from EventScotland. The funding will support the delivery of **Once Upon a Time in South Ayrshire**, which is a year-long programme of events as part of Scotland's Year of Stories 2022.
- 1.6 The programme of events launched with the **Robert Burns Humanitarian Award** (RBHA) in January. Next up in our tales of South Ayrshire will be the launch of a walking tour with a difference, running from 23 February until the end of the year. **Shadows of the past...Ayr's Myths, Legends & History** is a thought-provoking self-led tour which explores the story of Ayr, unearthing fascinating tales of heritage, the macabre and fun. Audiences will be encouraged to explore the landscapes and myths that inspired Robert Burns at iconic locations including Brig o' Doon and Alloway Auld Kirk.
- 1.7 Many more events across the year are still to be revealed, however **Once Upon a Time in South Ayrshire** will include events throughout South Ayrshire, including campfire stories; character trails; family fun days; and festive delights.
- 1.8 Officers are working with the **Girvan Folk Festival** committee to support the delivery of their in-person event this year.
- 1.9 Officers continue to work with the **Ayrshire Visitor Economy Strategic Group (AVESG)** to produce an **Ayrshire Visitor Economy Strategy** and supporting action plan for Ayrshire. This will set the direction for industry, agencies and stakeholders in the region and align with work being carried out in parallel to develop and finalise the Regional Economic Strategy and support the aims of the Scotland Outlook 2030 national tourism strategy.

Destination South Ayrshire Tourism and Events Strategy 2022 – 2025

INTRODUCTION

Nestled on the south-west coast of Scotland, with its sandy beaches, beautiful parks, green spaces and rolling hills as a backdrop, South Ayrshire covers 476 square miles, from Barassie in the north, to Ballantrae in the South. The area's splendid 45-mile-long coastline is home to enviable, award-winning beaches which afford impressive views out to the Firth of Clyde and Irish Sea. Our green spaces are plentiful and four of our parks recently achieved Keep Scotland Beautiful Green Flag awards.

Home to over 112,000 people, South Ayrshire is made up of five towns and their surrounding villages and hamlets. Ayr, located just 37 miles south-west of Glasgow, is the region's county town. A university and college town, and seat of South Ayrshire Council's headquarters, Ayr has a wide range of attractions for all ages including museums, galleries, Ayr Racecourse, leisure and cultural facilities and award-winning parks.

The region attracts people from all over the world to visit the birthplace of Robert Burns at Burns Cottage in Alloway. The award-winning Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, also in Alloway, won Scotland's Best Heritage Tourism Experience at the Thistle Awards in 2020. Rich in history is Maybole, the ancient capital of Carrick, with the impressive 16th century Maybole Castle standing proudly as a prominent feature in the town's main thoroughfare. Further south, the fishing port of Girvan is the 'Gateway to Ailsa Craig', a small island formed from a volcanic plug and famous for its granite quarry – a major source of granite for curling stones world-wide.

Prestwick is the oldest recorded baronial burgh in Scotland. Its bustling high street attracts locals and tourists from afar, with its quirky, independent shops and range of eateries and in 2020 was awarded Champion High Street of the Year by the Great British High Street Awards. With its gorgeous views to Arran, Lady Isle and Ailsa Craig, Troon boasts a bustling working harbour and is home to Ayrshire's fish market. The town is known worldwide for Royal Troon golf course, one of two Open Championship courses in the area – the other being at Turnberry.

To support a 21st century tourist market and our local communities, South Ayrshire will need to respond to the changing tastes of tourists, who are becoming more sophisticated in their search for experiences. As well as supporting our local communities who are demanding more, to ensure they have a sense of place and belonging and to be proud of where they live.

The outbreak of Coronavirus has presented an unprecedented challenge. Restrictions have meant that the tourism and events sector has largely been closed and travel restrictions have been in place for extended periods of time. As a result of the easing of restrictions we are now able to begin recovery. South Ayrshire is well placed to deliver a strong tourism offer which supports recovery and ensures we are a premier destination of choice. This strategy will be driven by a clear focus on the following eight key offers:

1. Culture and heritage, including Burns
2. Parks, open spaces, outdoor activities and natural environment
3. Sport, leisure and golf
4. Food and drink

5. Weddings, civil partnerships and business tourism
6. Digital Tourism
7. Town Centres
8. Event and festivals

Table of Contents

[Strategic Context](#)

[Vision, Aims and Objectives](#)

[Our Offers](#)

[Communities, People and Places](#)

[Sustainable Tourism](#)

[Destination Marketing](#)

[Delivering the Strategy](#)

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our Destination South Ayrshire Tourism and Events Strategy sets out a plan for South Ayrshire Council. It is informed by The Council Plan: Our People Our Place. It contributes to our vision to serve South Ayrshire by ‘making a difference every day’ and the following commitments:



This strategy does not sit in isolation; it integrates with other local, regional, and national plans and strategies. It supports and complements a range of activity and priorities such as:

- Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership
- South Ayrshire Strategic Economic Plan Vision 2030
- South Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan
- South Ayrshire Thriving Places

The following strategies are key priorities for alignment:

Scotland Outlook 2030

Scotland Outlook 2030 has been developed through an equal partnership between the Scottish Tourism Alliance, Scottish Government, VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Skills Development Scotland.

The Vision – We will be the world leader in 21st century tourism.

The Mission – Together we will grow the value and positively enhance the benefits of tourism across Scotland by delivering the very best for our visitors, our businesses, our people, our communities and our environment.

Key Priorities – Our passionate people, our thriving places, our diverse businesses, our memorable experiences.

Our Commitments – For each of our key priorities we have an agreed set of commitments. These commitments will ensure that we deliver on our vision to be the world leader in 21st century tourism.

Regional Visitor Economy Strategy

The Ayrshire Visitor Economy Sub Group was formed in July 2020 in response to the impact COVID-19 had on the tourism sector. It is chaired by the Chief Executive of VisitScotland its purpose is to take forward the visitor economy workstream of the Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership. It comprises a mix of industry leaders from a variety of sub sectors, Local Authorities, and national agencies. The group meets regularly to work on a series of priorities and work streams.

There is currently a significant piece of work underway to develop a Regional Visitor Economy Strategy which will be informed by local intelligence and national tourism thinking to ensure that Ayrshire can maximise its opportunity to secure investment to support recovery and longer-term ambitions. Strategy development has been commissioned and is overseen by the group to develop an evidence base from industry in the light of the Covid pandemic. The strategy work will set an overall framework that we can contribute to and align our individual efforts.

VISION, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Vision

South Ayrshire will be a premier destination of choice, with an enhanced environment through social, cultural and economic activities.

Aims

Our aims are to:

- proactively market South Ayrshire as a destination of choice;
- align events more closely with the region's tourism assets to build events with a legacy impact;
- develop the area as a destination for holding large scale outdoor events and festivals, which will attract high levels of footfall and visitor spend into the area;
- integrate town centres into our events and festivals to ensure we are driving footfall and increasing spend;
- encourage and facilitate collaboration among providers to overcome fragmentation and offer stronger, packaged experiences, tailored to distinctive market segments through the Destination South Ayrshire approach;
- maximise quality and focus on excellent service for our visitors; and
- enhance our tourism offers and capitalise on opportunities.

Objectives

There will be a range of actions and projects focused on achieving the following strategic objectives by the end of 2025 STEAM (Scottish Tourism Economic Activity):

- Increase the annual number of visitors to South Ayrshire by 5% to 1.59 million.
- Increase annual spend by visitors by 10% to £265.67 million.
- Increase employment supported by the sector by 5% to 3,730 jobs

OUR OFFERS

This strategy will be driven by a clear focus on eight key offers. These eight individual offers do not stand in isolation of each other; the visitor may experience a mixture of elements throughout a single visit. Collaboration and networking will play a vital part in bringing the private sector, third sector and communities together in the development and delivery of offers.

There will be a holistic approach to promoting the area, including all elements of Council activities, for example, leisure and sport facilities, events, museums and heritage sites, parks and open spaces, libraries, town centres, and golf. We will also capitalise on our unique Burns offering with the Birthplace of Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, our permanent Burns and Alexander Goudie Tam O' Shanter exhibitions at Rozelle House and the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum.

South Ayrshire has a fantastic range of assets and these are the foundation of an already strong and vibrant tourism sector.

1. CULTURE & HERITAGE, INCLUDING BURNS

South Ayrshire has a rich and diverse heritage that has many aspects of international renown, most obviously Burns. Although Burns is a key attractor for many tourists, there is much, much more on offer, spanning our social, religious, military and industrial past.

There is also a vibrant and varied cultural life for visitors to enjoy and participate in, including historic attractions, museums, galleries, the Ayr Gaiety Theatre and contemporary art. There is an extensive and growing range of archives, and opportunities for access to historical sites and materials that enable the visitor to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors.

In recent years, Rozelle House has been the only venue in Scotland to offer a range of high profile exhibitions such as the V&A Pirates, Tattoo: British Tattoo Art Revealed and Ladybird Books. These exhibitions brought in audiences from through Scotland and northern England. Additional support was provided to increase participation by local communities.

We will seek to raise the profile and the quality of presentation of our offerings in this category, making it easier for visitors to enjoy connected experiences in heritage, culture and ancestry, alongside complementary aspects such as food and drink.

Areas of action:

- Develop more joined-up offerings that will sell unique experiences.
- Continue to attract unique cultural exhibitions and widen access to the arts and culture for our communities.
- Improve product awareness and develop cross-selling practices.
- Develop the events/festivals offering, including a contemporary angle that strengthens the appeal of Burns and other areas of heritage to a younger consumer.
- Build and exploit links to appealing social and cultural themes.

- Undertake further assessment of the most significant culture and heritage offerings, from the perspective of market potential.
- Explore scope for improved packaging and promotion to niche customer groups.
- Identify the most important related offers, such as golf, for further integration with cultural or heritage offerings.

2. PARKS, OPEN SPACES, OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

South Ayrshire has a varied and accessible natural environment. The countryside, coastline and seas offer a rich variety of landscapes, wildlife, habitats and geology for the visitor to enjoy and experience. There are distinctive offerings and opportunities, such as the development of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, which is Scotland's first UNESCO Biosphere designation.

South Ayrshire boasts many beautiful parklands for residents and visitors alike to enjoy. Four of our parks, Belleisle; Rozelle, Fullarton Estate and Newton Park were presented with the prestigious Green Flag Award. This award celebrates well maintained parks and greenspaces and recognises their importance for exercise, play and mental wellbeing.

South Ayrshire also offers numerous walks for all abilities - from relaxing strolls in our parks, to more challenging trails through our beautiful countryside. Many of these walks also afford the option of delving into the history of the local area along the way, such as the Blue Bonnet Trails, which encompass two self-guided walks from Ayr Town Centre to Alloway. These interesting trails allow people to follow in the footsteps of Robert Burns' fictitious hero, Tam o'Shanter. Other notable walks include the Smugglers' Trail in Troon; the Green Knight's Trail in Prestwick; the Straiton Monument Trail near Maybole and the Devil's, Kirstie's and Fairy Knowe circular in the village of Barr by Girvan.

With one of the most memorable stretches of coastline in the UK, South Ayrshire is blessed with some of the country's best beaches. Our coastal communities are perfect for a variety of water pursuits, such as sailing, windsurfing, canoeing, wild swimming, paddle boarding and yachting.

There is great potential to develop infrastructure, facilities and build this offering in areas such as walking, cycling, horse-riding and water sports.

Areas of action:

- Product development for walking and cycling, to package products more effectively for particular customer profiles.
- Work in partnership with the Biosphere and associated Local Authorities to identify key priorities for delivery and support.
- Promote the Biosphere Proud Supporter and Certification schemes, which allow businesses to actively demonstrate their commitment to the Biosphere principles.
- Explore ways to attract more adventure and activity operators into the area.

3. SPORT, LEISURE & GOLF

Golf South Ayrshire operates eight superb courses throughout the region alongside the illustrious neighbours Royal Troon, Trump Turnberry and Old Prestwick, the birthplace of the Open.

With three fantastic links courses in Troon, three James Braid designed classics, and two family friendly parkland courses, we are confident there is a golf course that will perfectly suit everyone's needs, and budget. Each golf course boasts individual character and varying degrees of difficulty, whilst offering stunning vistas and often uninterrupted views of the Isle of Arran or even the famous Ailsa Craig.

The weather is better than the Scottish average which means our courses are often open when others are closed. We even play the courses at their full length in winter and without fairway restrictions. Visitors are welcome to make full use of the Clubhouse facilities before and after their round; all whilst sampling some of the region's finest local produce.

South Ayrshire Council's Sport and Leisure Service operates nine indoor sporting venues including leisure centres, swimming pools and activity centres. There are also a range of 3G/all-weather and grass pitches supporting the development of football, rugby and hockey. Sport and leisure provide economic benefits for South Ayrshire and hosting sporting events can attract income to South Ayrshire through additional spending, accommodation, and event fees.

South Ayrshire Council is investing South Ayrshire by developing and improving sports and leisure facilities. For example, the new £8.2m Craigie multi-sport facility, which will enable the area to host top-class national and international events. Work is ongoing with Ayrshire College and the University of the West of Scotland to provide a joined up approach to offering accommodation and access to facilities.

There are also many outdoor pursuits such as the development of the river Ayr to provide water sports and beach volleyball which attracts competitors and visitors from further afield.

This offer is already a core strength and attractor for large numbers of high-yield visitors. However, there is a growing level of competition from many other destinations and development activity is required to drive innovation in the way this offer is packaged and promoted to both domestic and international visitors.

Areas of action:

- Explore options to develop the linkages to other offers such as food and drink and culture and heritage and provide golf and sport based itineraries within the Destination South Ayrshire site.
- Develop golf and sport as thematic campaigns for Destination South Ayrshire marketing.
- Assess the potential to make more of golf and sports events and festivals using Destination South Ayrshire messaging to encourage return visitors.
- Increase integration of sports and golf offers to enhance our events and festivals offer.
- Raise visitor awareness of the accessibility of South Ayrshire's golf and sports experiences from Glasgow, Prestwick and Edinburgh airports.

4. FOOD & DRINK

South Ayrshire has a great food and drink offer, with the very best of produce available to the visitor through shops, markets and a diverse range of eating options, including some of Scotland's very best restaurants.

The food and drink offer complements other offers and plays a central role in delivering great experiences. Visitor expectations are centred on local, authentic, high quality produce, offered in ways that significantly reinforce a distinctive and enduring regional character. It is the second largest category of expenditure for the tourist and has become a key part of the 'entertainment' purchases visitors will make.

Areas of action:

- Harness the potential of the area's food and drink offer as a key component of the Destination South Ayrshire marketing and developing a sense of place.
- Improve the promotion of locally-produced quality products that extends through to both local retailers and restaurants.
- Further research and development of festivals and events activities relating to food and drink.
- Improved product knowledge, awareness and recommendations to visitors from hospitality staff and local people through social media campaigns and locally developed food and drink itineraries on the Destination South Ayrshire website.
- Encourage the development of hand-on experiences in food production and cuisine as an integral part of the visitor experiences on offer and promote this through Destination South Ayrshire.
- Wider development of associated products, such as farmers' markets, for the visitor.

5. WEDDINGS, CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS & BUSINESS TOURISM

South Ayrshire's offer performs very well, with a great range of award-winning venues for ceremonies and receptions in close proximity to Scotland's population centres. The area also has a good range of leisure, entertainment and retail options, which are important factors in selecting wedding and business locations.

Business tourism is a relatively small market for South Ayrshire, despite the high-yield profile of business tourists. We have some excellent facilities already and will encourage further development to broaden our offer to strengthen our overall appeal in this demanding market. There is scope to utilise spare capacity within Council facilities for community or commercial use either on a seasonal, activity or geographical basis.

Areas of action:

- Explore scope for further product innovations that will help ensure our offerings appeal strongly to all the key market segments and compete with alternative locations.
- Within the Destination South Ayrshire approach, explore options for promotional and packaged activities to identify opportunities to up-sell elements of the wedding packages, such as florists, photographers, and taxis, to improve the overall financial benefit to the locality.
- Exploit strengths in specialist and independent retailers, linked to wedding planning activities.
- Exploit the natural environment and heritage assets to promote South Ayrshire as a wedding destination.
- Develop promotional activity through the Destination South Ayrshire approach to attract more wedding and civil partnership tourists, as well as extending guest stays and overall spend.

- Develop a co-ordinated approach to targeting opportunities within the small conference market.
- Work with existing conference and meeting venues to identify and develop cross-selling and packaging opportunities through Destination South Ayrshire.

6. DIGITAL TOURISM

The internet is now an essential component of the experience that almost every tourist makes when they decide to travel. It is digital support provided to travellers before, during and after the travel activity. From researching to booking, experiencing the area, posting on social media and writing reviews.

Digital tourism represents a new approach to the kind of experience that the sector can offer tourists and it can provide recommendations such as finding the appropriate accommodation to help the traveller plan their itinerary.

The Destination South Ayrshire website provides a holistic approach to digital tourist information covering accommodation, hospitality, independent retail, events and activities. Businesses can feature on the site free of charge. Visitors are able to design their own itineraries or access suggested itineraries which they can then customise where required.

Social media accounts are linked to the website, as a means of reaching out and promoting our offer and also engaging with local communities and potential visitors. Instagram is one example of digital tourism that has been a huge growth area in recent years. Research commissioned by EasyJet of tourists between 18 and 68 years old found that 55% of respondents booked their trip based exclusively on images seen on Instagram (telegraph.co.uk).

Our 'Ayr Through the Ages' app is a location-aware trail through Ayr's rich and colourful past. This trail leads local communities and visitors from the 13th to the 21st century and can be used as a guide to key locations and points of interest around the auld town. Content includes Robert Burns' hometown and the stories associated with him and other historical figures such as William Wallace. The app offers:

- Historical sites and tours
- Great stories of Auld Ayr
- Take a souvenir photo
- Discover more about Ayr, its industries and people

Areas of action:

- Continue to add to the Destination South Ayrshire website which has the functionality to allow visitors to produce their own downloadable interactive itineraries or select a suggested itinerary.
- Engage with businesses and support them to provide a listing on the Destination South Ayrshire website.
- Develop and support the delivery of a monthly e-newsletter.
- Maximise use of social networking media and opportunities through regularly posting high quality images and video footage, making use of hashtags, working with influencers and utilising paid for advertising.
- Add additional themes to the Ayr Through the Ages app and market the app to local communities and potential visitors from further afield.

7. TOWN CENTRES

Historically, town centres have been a major asset for towns, both for locals and visitors alike. Over time, a number of town centre retail outlets have closed down and their role as a shopping destination has declined.

This is a situation that is being experienced in towns across the country. There is a realisation that this trend is not going to reverse, so towns should be looking at other ways to reinvent themselves to make people want to use them again.

The COVID-19 crisis has laid bare the fragilities and failings of our national and local economies and has placed new and significant pressures on our already struggling town centres. The Council has adopted the Strategic Economic Plan, Vision 2030. Vision 2030 recognises that there is an opportunity to make the aftermath of the pandemic and the economic recovery effort a reformative moment for a new kind of local economy. Community led local economic development and a place based economic strategy is a core driver in the Strategic Economic Plan. It seeks to create vibrant communities and economic growth that is inclusive, enabling as many people as possible to contribute to, and benefit from, economic growth.

We have committed to working with communities to improve 'placemaking' across South Ayrshire. Through our Thriving Places project, we aim to support our communities to identify local issues and develop plans to address these, ensuring our places are something we can all be proud of.

The Ayr Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan document looks to set out South Ayrshire Council's plan to address these issues in Ayr and bring about changes that will help improve social, cultural and economic activities that will boost the local economy, improve the visual appearance and attractiveness of Ayr as a destination and reinvigorate the historic borough town.

Ayr has much to offer people of all ages and interests through its history, culture and built heritage. It is proposed to create an area that could become the new civic and artistic heart of the town centre. An area for culture and heritage would be created at the lower end of the high street with an events/community space on the riverside site, a small museum at the Town Hall corner and a new archive/registration and community arts facilities in the old Ayr Academy. This will supplement the cultural attractions already available nearby in the Town Hall, Loudon Hall and Carnegie Library.

Areas of action:

- Support the development and implementation of Place Plans to support the regeneration of our town centres.
- Deliver a programme of events, tours, trails and activities from the new Ayr High Street Heritage Hub once it is open.
- Deliver a programme of events, festivals, markets and activities at the riverside site once it is open.
- Integrate all five town centres into our events and festivals to ensure we are driving footfall and increasing spend.
- Deliver an annual five towns approach to our Christmas offer to encourage people to visit all five towns and shop locally.

- Promote our five town centres through dedicated pages on the Destination South Ayrshire website and targeted marketing campaigns for each town. Ensure there is a shop local element within our messaging.
- Promote the South Ayrshire Loves Local gift cards to increase uptake from retailers and customers across all five towns.

8. EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Events and festivals have an important role to play as a means of showcasing the very best South Ayrshire has to offer across all areas, and as a way to encourage visits and increase visitor spend. Within the implementation of the strategy, there is a need to develop and assertively promote an annual programme of events and activities, structured to maximise spin-off benefits to the wider local economy, for example, clustering events over a weekend or several days to encourage visitors to stay in the area.

Events and activities will be designed with a 'something for everyone' focus to help establish South Ayrshire as, for example, a family friendly destination with events and activities that will suit a range of ages and interests. The activities and programme of events must be equally relevant to visitors and accessible to local individuals and families and inclusive participation is actively progressed. The Destination South Ayrshire branding emphasises the focus of 'something for everyone' through the marketing of events and activities and the wider visitor economy sector.

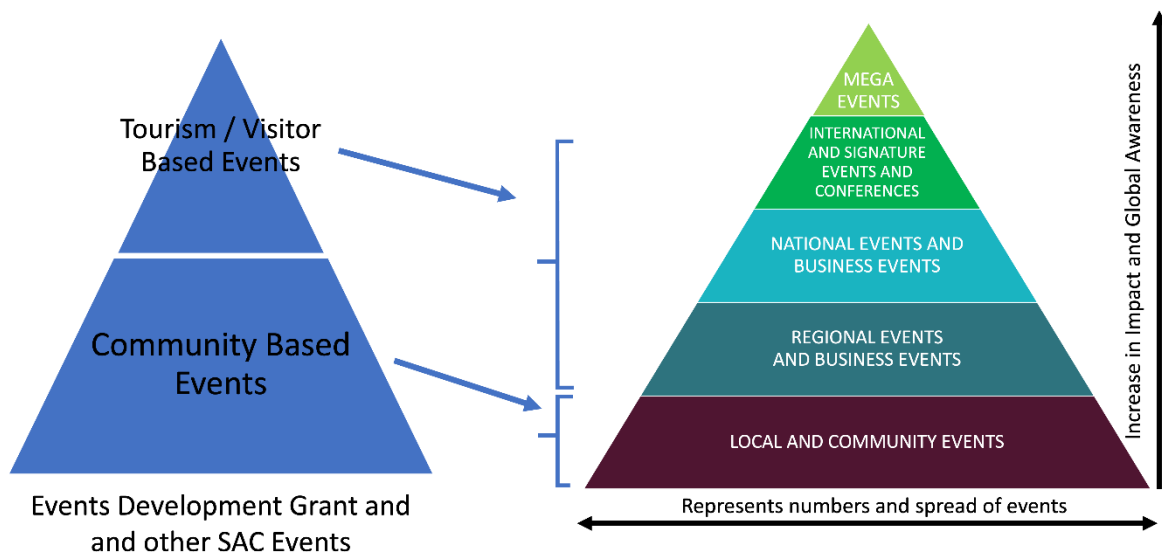
Events Development Grant

EKOS, an independent consultancy practice specialising in economic and social research, was commissioned in 2019 to carry out a study to evaluate and review the SAC Events Development Grant (EDG) funding scheme.

The evidence suggests that there are two types of events that have been supported through the EDG - smaller community based events that deliver primarily non-economic benefits to local populations and larger scale events that deliver economic benefits associated with events tourism.

Fundamentally, community based events and larger tourism based events will have different objectives and success looks different in each case. The report indicated that it was not appropriate to continue to support both types of events in the same way.

There was a recommendation that event support should be segmented into two levels: small local and community level events that deliver primarily non-economic benefits and larger regionally, nationally and internationally significant events that are drivers of economic activity within the region.



The figure above illustrates analogous segments between South Ayrshire’s segmentation and that of the national strategy.

Supporting Tourism/Visitor Based Events

The larger tourism based events in South Ayrshire are those with regional, national or international importance within EventScotland’s portfolio breakdown. These events should form the core of South Ayrshire’s events offer and form its brand and image as a destination for events. The support for large events that contribute to developing thematic areas where South Ayrshire has advantages will be a priority area.

South Ayrshire will be seen as a destination for holding large scale outdoor events and festivals, which will attract high levels of footfall and visitor spend into the area.

South Ayrshire is particularly strong in key thematic areas including culture and heritage, natural environment, sport, food and drink and family friendly activities. Promoting and developing events within these themes will create the basis for a complete year-round events programme with smaller local level events filling out the calendar.

Supporting Community Based Events

Community events are characterised by small visitor numbers, a high proportion of which are from South Ayrshire, and focus on activities such as education, history and children’s activities. While these events may not generate significant economic impacts, they do deliver intangible benefits and are valued by local residents.

They also help to increase awareness and build expectations and knowledge of the local events offer (so they can invite friends and family for example). SAC already has some of these support mechanisms in place, for example promotion of events on the Destination South Ayrshire website and associated social media pages, the publication of an annual events calendar and the events toolkit. Therefore, support to events may only require an increase in awareness of existing SAC resources.

These community and local level events can effectively be supported through two main channels: capacity support and marketing and promotional support.

Marketing and Promotional Support for Community Based Events	
Support Activity	Rationale
Access to SAC’s media resources	Small events do not have large media or online presence

Cross event advertising	Help to increase event awareness to target audiences, linking events together
Informing local people	Increasing awareness, building expectations for annual events schedule
Reaching out to local businesses	Increase economic benefits

Events, Tourism, Culture and Heritage Fund

Community led tourism, culture, and heritage initiatives have been areas of growth since the EKOS study was carried out. Therefore, a new fund will be offered to groups and organisations who are delivering events, tourism and heritage activities within the community. The existing EDG funding will be used for this purpose. This is in addition to capacity, marketing, and promotional support.

Areas of action:

- Develop and launch an application process for the Events, Tourism, Culture and Heritage Fund. Facilitate an assessment panel which will meet on a quarterly basis to assess and allocate funding.
- Develop, promote and implement a process for the marketing and promotional support for community based events.
- Align events more closely with the region's tourism assets to build events with a legacy impact rather than one-off single day or single weekend impacts.
- Improve co-ordination, including the development of a central events calendar within Destination South Ayrshire that assists a wide range of providers to exploit these as a means to attract more business, extend the season and improve yield for the sector as a whole.
- Develop a programme of significant events or festivals, by expanding existing localised events and developing and attracting new events to the area.
- Work with partners and promoters to deliver a range of large scale outdoor events and festivals in our open spaces.
- Refresh and relaunch the events toolkit.
- Work closely with key agencies, such as EventScotland and VisitScotland and make the most of themed years.
- Use key events to maximise consumer PR and opportunities for building sense of place and destination branding.
- Actively engage with businesses and shops, for example, offering pop-up stalls at our events which are not based in town centres.

- Identify links between Council activities, events and local businesses, for example through the Grain Exchange or during specific events such as Tamfest.

COMMUNITIES, PEOPLE AND PLACES

‘Destinations are about people, with locals being at the heart of these assets, delivering immersive experiences and communicating that unique sense of place to Scotland’s visitors.’

Scotland Outlook 2030

Authenticity is high on the list of visitor demands; however, it is also important that tourism brings benefits to our local communities. We will work with communities to influence and shape our tourism messaging and offer and how this evolves over time. We will ensure that tourism leads to improved community wellbeing and nurtures thriving places across Scotland. We will listen to, and address, any tourism related concerns. A Visitor Management Group will be held during busy periods to ensure plans are in place to manage an influx of visitors and address any ongoing issues.

Community Based Events

Many local events are driven by groups of volunteers and societies – for example, Girvan Folk Festival (a voluntary community group) demonstrates how, with some public funding, community groups can deliver a sustainable project, strengthening the tourism offer in South Ayrshire. The Events, Tourism, Culture and Heritage Fund and marketing and promotional support for community based events will provide support to facilitate these local events.

Placemaking in South Ayrshire

We recognise that ‘place’ is where people, location and resources come together to create a sense of identity and purpose. Placemaking is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities. Places are shaped by the way resources, services and assets are directed and used by the people who live and invest in them. As part of the strategic objective “A Better Place to Live” the Council Plan commits to working with partners and communities to develop thriving places that are positive, proud and ambitious. A more joined-up, collaborative, and participative approach to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place, enables better outcomes for everyone, and increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives.

It’s important for us to understand both the existing, and potential, strengths of our places. This can help us to make good decisions and allow us to target resources where they are needed most.

Ayrshire Regional Work

There has been a significant amount of work carried out with regional and national partners through the Ayrshire Visitor Economy Sub Group. The main focus is currently on working with consultants on the development of an Ayrshire Visitor Economy Strategy. Once this strategy is in place, we will work in partnership to contribute to the implementation of the strategy in alignment with the priorities outlined within this strategy.

Tourism Workforce

Tourism is an important employer in South Ayrshire, and we want to contribute to a strong, proud, and passionate tourism workforce. There can be a perception that the tourism industry offers poor conditions and low pay, and this must be challenged and addressed. For tourism to continue to grow it is imperative that the sector attracts, trains and retains quality staff.

Areas of action:

- Engage with communities to ensure that they influence the 'story' we are telling about their community through our Destination South Ayrshire marketing.
- Work with communities to develop authentic itineraries and experiences.
- Support the implementation of tourism and events elements within the Place Plans.
- Work in partnership with the Employability and Skills department and relevant partners to identify opportunities to provide support for people wanting to work within in the industry and for the sector to attract, train and retain quality staff.
- Encourage existing community/place development activities to integrate into wider developments linked to the tourism strategy.
- Continue to work in partnership on a regional basis and support the implementation of the Regional Visitor Economy Strategy when it is launched.
- Continue to facilitate a Visitor Management Group as and when required.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

'Scotland's tourism sector will make a full contribution to our national ambition to become a net-zero society by 2045.'

Scotland Outlook 2030

Scotland is transitioning to a net-zero emissions and the climate change legislation sets a target date for net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045.

Climate change presents the biggest threat to our society as we know it today. It is estimated that, globally, tourism contributes around 8 per cent of carbon emissions, coming from aviation, transport, accommodation, activities, the growing number of travellers, consumption and waste.

We are one of the first local authorities to produce a carbon budget to ensure we reach our environmental targets. Carbon budgets are monitored, and actions have been agreed to support the reduction in emissions produced by Council facilities and activities.

The sustainable tourism agenda filters through all of our offers and should be considered an integral part of our delivery.

Areas of action:

- Ensure the environmental impact is taken into consideration when delivering events and activities. For example, using alternatives to single use plastics and helium balloons.

- Managing our lets and venues to maximise the use of buildings and aim to cluster lets to save lighting and heating additional buildings.
- Including responsible tourism messaging in our campaigns.
- Encourage visitors to keep South Ayrshire clean and tidy and recycle any waste.
- Highlight more environmentally friendly transport options to get to our places and events.

DESTINATION MARKETING

‘A destination is a place where people want to be.’

Hayman

The delivery of destination marketing and communications will be focused on key market segments, highlighting the area’s product strengths, and reinforcing key messages and destination brands through a range of channels and mechanisms including:

- Seasonal campaigns
- Consumer PR and communications
- Thematic marketing campaigns
- Social media and new technologies
- Events and exhibitions

We have developed a consumer-focused destination brand to position South Ayrshire within the competitive marketplace. The Destination South Ayrshire logo is used on all South Ayrshire Council tourism materials online and in print. A range of iconic images and drone footage has been compiled to reflect the best of South Ayrshire and build a strong destination brand.

A marketing and communications plan will underpin delivery of the strategy and this will focus on marketing South Ayrshire as a distinctive destination.

It is noted that COVID protection levels can change quickly, and we must ensure our messaging and plans are in line with current Government guidelines.

Areas of Action:

- Continue to compile high quality images and footage of South Ayrshire for marketing purposes.
- Develop and implement a marketing and communications plan to promote South Ayrshire as a strong destination brand.

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

The following actions have been identified within this strategy. An associated action plan will be developed which will detail timescales, lead officers and indicators of success. An update on progress will be reported annually to the South Ayrshire Council Leadership Panel.

<p>Outlook 2030 alignment: Our passionate people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage with communities to ensure that they influence the 'story' we are telling about their community through our Destination South Ayrshire marketing.• Work with communities to develop authentic itineraries and experiences.• Support the implementation of tourism and events elements within the Place Plans.• Work in partnership with the Employability and Skills department and relevant partners to identify opportunities to provide support for people wanting to work within in the industry and to the sector to attract, train and retain quality staff.• Encourage existing community/place development activities to integrate into wider developments linked to the tourism strategy.
---	---

**Outlook 2030
alignment:**
Our thriving places

- Product development for walking and cycling, to package products more effectively for particular customer profiles.
- Work in partnership with the Biosphere and associated Local Authorities to identify key priorities for delivery and support.
- Promote the Biosphere Proud Supporter and Certification schemes, which allow businesses to actively demonstrate their commitment to the Biosphere principles.
- Through the Destination South Ayrshire approach, encourage and facilitate collaboration among providers to overcome fragmentation and offer stronger, packaged experiences, tailored to distinctive market segments.
- Explore ways to attract more adventure and activity operators into the area.
- Continue to add to the Destination South Ayrshire website which has the functionality to allow visitors to produce their own downloadable interactive itineraries or select a suggested itinerary.
- Engage with businesses and support them to provide a listing on the Destination South Ayrshire website.
- Develop and support the delivery of a monthly e-newsletter.
- Maximise use of social networking media and opportunities through regularly posting high quality images and video footage, making use of hashtags, working with influencers and utilising paid for advertising.
- Add additional themes to the Ayr Through the Ages app and market the app to local communities and potential visitors from further afield.

- Continue to add to the Destination South Ayrshire website which has the functionality to allow visitors to produce their own downloadable interactive itineraries or select a suggested itinerary.
- Engage with businesses and support them to provide a listing on the Destination South Ayrshire website.
- Develop and support the delivery of a monthly e-newsletter.
- Maximise use of social networking media and opportunities through regularly posting high quality images and video footage, making use of hashtags, working with influencers and utilising paid for advertising.
- Add additional themes to the Ayr Through the Ages app and market the app to local communities and potential visitors from further afield.
- Ensure the environmental impact is taken into consideration when delivering events and activities. For example, using alternatives to single use plastics and helium balloons.
- Managing our lets and venues to maximise the use of buildings and aim to cluster lets to save lighting and heating additional buildings.
- Including responsible tourism messaging in our campaigns.
- Encourage visitors to keep South Ayrshire clean and tidy and recycle any waste.
- Highlight more environmentally friendly transport options to get to our places and events.
- Continue to facilitate a Visitor Management Group as and when required.

**Outlook 2030
alignment:**

Our diverse businesses

- Harness the potential of the area's food and drink offer as a key component of the Destination South Ayrshire marketing and developing a sense of place.
- Improve the promotion of locally-produced quality products that extends through to both local retailers and restaurants.
- Further research and development of festivals and events activities relating to food and drink.
- Improved product knowledge, awareness and recommendations to visitors from hospitality staff and local people through social media campaigns and locally developed food and drink itineraries on the Destination South Ayrshire website.
- Encourage the development of hand-on experiences in food production and cuisine as an integral part of the visitor experiences on offer and promote this through Destination South Ayrshire.
- Wider development of associated products, such as farmers' markets for the visitor.
- Explore scope for further product innovations that will help ensure our offerings appeal strongly to all the key market segments and compete with alternative locations.
- Within the Destination South Ayrshire approach, explore options for promotional and packaged activities to identify opportunities to up-sell elements of the wedding packages, such as florists, photographers, and taxis, to improve the overall financial benefit to the locality.
- Exploit strengths in specialist and independent retailers, linked to wedding planning activities.
- Exploit the natural environment and heritage assets to promote South Ayrshire as a wedding destination.
- Develop promotional activity through the Destination South Ayrshire approach to attract more wedding and civil partnership tourists, as well as extending guest stays and overall spend.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a co-ordinated approach to targeting opportunities within the small conference market. • Work with existing conference and meeting venues to identify and develop cross-selling and packaging opportunities through Destination South Ayrshire. • Continue to compile high quality images and footage of South Ayrshire for marketing purposes. • Develop and implement a marketing and communications plan to promote South Ayrshire as a strong destination brand. • Continue to work in partnership on a regional basis and support the implementation of the Regional Visitor Economy Strategy when it is launched
--	--

<p>Outlook 2030 alignment: Our memorable experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more joined-up offerings that will sell unique experiences. • Continue to attract unique cultural exhibitions and widen access to the arts and culture for our communities. • Improve product awareness and develop cross-selling practices. • Develop the events/festivals offering, including a contemporary angle that strengthens the appeal of Burns and other areas of heritage to a younger consumer. • Build and exploit links to appealing social and cultural themes. • Undertake further assessment of the most significant culture and heritage offerings, from the perspective of market potential. • Explore scope for improved packaging and promotion to niche customer groups. • Identify the most important related offers, such as golf, for further integration with cultural or heritage offerings. • Explore options to develop the linkages to other offers such as food and drink and
---	---

culture and heritage and provide golf and sport based itineraries within the Destination South Ayrshire site.

- Develop golf and sport as thematic campaigns for Destination South Ayrshire marketing.
- Assess the potential to make more of golf and sports events and festivals using Destination South Ayrshire messaging to encourage return visitors.
- Increase integration of sports and golf offers to enhance our events and festivals offer.
- Raise visitor awareness of the accessibility of South Ayrshire's golf and sports experiences from Glasgow, Prestwick and Edinburgh airports.
- Develop and launch an application process for the Events, Tourism, Culture and Heritage Fund. Facilitate an assessment panel which will meet on a quarterly basis to assess and allocate funding.
- Develop, promote and implement a process for the marketing and promotional support for community based events.
- Align events more closely with the region's tourism assets to build events with a legacy impact rather than one-off single day or single weekend impacts.
- Improve co-ordination, including the development of a central events calendar within Destination South Ayrshire that assists a wide range of providers to exploit these as a means to attract more business, extend the season and improve yield for the sector as a whole.
- Develop a programme of significant events or festivals, by expanding existing localised events and developing and attracting new events to the area.
- Work with partners and promoters to deliver a range of large scale outdoor events and festivals in our open spaces.
- Refresh and relaunch the events toolkit.

- | | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work closely with key agencies, such as EventScotland and VisitScotland and make the most of themed years.• Use key events to maximise consumer PR and opportunities for building sense of place and destination branding.• Actively engage with businesses and shops, for example, offering pop-up stalls at our events which are not based in town centres.• Identify links between Council activities, events and local businesses, for example through the Grain Exchange or during specific events such as Tamfest. |
|--|---|

Interim Strategic Approach to Tourism and Events

- The focus for the next six months should be on exploring options for 'Destination South Ayrshire' branding with an associated online and social media presence;
- A holistic approach should be taken to promoting the area with a focus on attracting more local tourists and pushing our strong unique selling points in line with changing Government restrictions;
- We would continue to develop a comprehensive online visitor information platform for South Ayrshire;
- We would continue to work with the Regional Ayrshire Visitor Economy Group;
- We would support a collaborative campaign in partnership with VisitScotland to promote Ayrshire as a destination through a series of blog posts, a social media campaign, and coverage in national magazines and the Expedia website;
- We would explore options for the development of a Pan-Ayrshire Partnership or Destination Management Organisation, which would add value to what we have already;
- We would support the development of a Pan-Ayrshire Tourism Recovery and Renewal Plan which will be informed by national tourism thinking; and
- We would work with partners to deliver activities in a different way using online platforms.

South Ayrshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Scoping Template

Equality Impact Assessment is a legal requirement under the Public Sector Duty to promote equality of the Equality Act 2010. Separate guidance has been developed on Equality Impact Assessment's which will guide you through the process and is available to view here: <https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/equalities/impact-assessment.aspx>

Further guidance is available here: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/assessing-impact-and-public-sector-equality-duty-guide-public-authorities/>

The Fairer Scotland Duty ('the Duty'), Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in Scotland from 1 April 2018. It places a legal responsibility on Councils to actively consider ('pay due regard to') how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions. See information here: [Interim Guidance for Public Bodies](#) in respect of the Duty, was published by the Scottish Government in March 2018.

1. Policy details

Policy Title	Tourism and Events Strategy
Lead Officer (Name/Position/Email)	Laura Kerr, Coordinator – Destination Promotion and Inclusive Participation - laura.kerr4@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

2. Which communities, groups of people, employees or thematic groups do you think will be, or potentially could be, impacted upon by the implementation of this policy? Please indicate whether these would be positive or negative impacts

Community or Groups of People	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
Age – men and women, girls & boys	-	Yes
Disability	-	Yes
Gender Reassignment (Trans/Transgender Identity)	-	Yes
Marriage or Civil Partnership	-	Yes
Pregnancy and Maternity	-	Yes
Race – people from different racial groups, (BME) ethnic minorities and Gypsy/Travellers	-	Yes
Religion or Belief (including lack of belief)	-	Yes
Sex – gender identity (issues specific to women & men or girls & boys)	-	Yes
Sexual Orientation – person's sexual orientation i.e. LGBT+, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, heterosexual/straight	-	Yes
Thematic Groups: Health, Human Rights & Children's Rights	-	Yes

3. What likely impact will this policy have on people experiencing different kinds of social disadvantage? (Fairer Scotland Duty). Consideration must be given particularly to children and families.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
Low Income/Income Poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing	-	Yes
Low and/or no wealth – enough money to meet Basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	-	Yes
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies	-	Yes
Area Deprivation – where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)	-	Yes
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parent’s education, employment and income	-	Yes

4. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that the policy will support the Council to:

General Duty and other Equality Themes Consider the ‘Three Key Needs’ of the Equality Duty	Level of Negative and/or Positive Impact (High, Medium or Low)
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Low Impact
Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Low Impact
Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. (Does it tackle prejudice and promote a better understanding of equality issues?)	Low Impact
Increase participation of particular communities or groups in public life	Low Impact
Improve the health and wellbeing of particular communities or groups	Low Impact
Promote the human rights of particular communities or groups	Low Impact
Tackle deprivation faced by particular communities or groups	Low Impact

5. Summary Assessment

Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? (A full Equality Impact Assessment must be carried out if impacts identified as Medium and/or High)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO X <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rationale for decision: The tourism and events will have a positive impact, however it will be a low impact and it doesn't give rise to equality considerations related to a particular protected group.	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Laura Kew</i></p> Signed : Coordinator Date: 10/02/22	