

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Director of Strategic Change and Communities
to Service and Partnerships Performance Panel
of 13 June 2023**

Subject: Tourism and Events Strategy Update

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Panel regarding the implementation of the Tourism and Events Strategy.

2. Recommendation

2.1 **It is recommended that the Panel considers the progress made by officers in the implementation of the Tourism and Events Strategy (a full update report is outlined in [Appendix 1](#)).**

3. Background

3.1 On 1 March 2022, the Leadership Panel approved the Tourism and Events Strategy. The vision for the strategy is:

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

3.2 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.

3.3 The strategy is 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. Proposals

- 4.1 The focus of the next six months will be launching and promoting the new Destination South Ayrshire (DSA) mobile app. The existing trails within the current Ayr Through the Ages app (blue bonnet trail, shadows of the past and crime and punishment auld Ayr) will all be available in the new app, which allows GPS location. Substantial work is ongoing with regards to improving the user experience of the DSA website and developing our search engine optimisation.
- 4.2 We will be attending the R&A Royal Liverpool Open with Visit Scotland in July 2023 and working alongside Golf South Ayrshire to identify key offers. This will be a great opportunity to showcase what South Ayrshire has to offer to golfers from across the world in terms of council golf courses, food, drink and accommodation in advance of the Open coming to Troon in July 2024.
- 4.3 The Cutty Sark will host a range of partnership events such as the upcoming Chamber of Commerce conference and an engagement session regarding the Culzean way, which is a proposed pathway between Ayr and Girvan for walking, biking and riding. The promotion of the DSA approach will be embedded into all activities within the Cutty Sark.
- 4.4 We are currently planning the upcoming Ayr Show – Festival of Flight, scheduled for 8 to 10 September 2023 on the Low Green in Ayr, which will provide a fantastic opportunity to showcase South Ayrshire and generate an economic impact for the area.
- 4.5 The Sunday of the Ayr Show weekend will not have any aeronautical displays; however, the festival village will be kept open, and we will work with Sports and Leisure, Golf and Thriving Communities to promote our leisure facilities, golf courses, local clubs and classes.
- 4.6 We are also working to include an element of funding within the Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) to continue to support local community events and festivals. This

will provide key funding support for local groups across our villages and towns and will link with colleagues within the Localities and Thriving Communities teams.

4.7 The Ayrshire & Our Islands Visitor Economy Strategy and draft action plan were approved by the Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership. It is supported by Visit Scotland, the Ayrshire and Arran Destination Alliance, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils and Scottish Enterprise. The strategy was launched at an Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Conference held in South Ayrshire in March 2023.

4.8 The aims of the regional strategy are to help to deliver economic recovery following the pandemic but with an emphasis on the natural environment, to benefit visitors' well-being and aid social regeneration. There are four regional strategic priorities which align with the national tourism strategy Scotland Outlook 2030 based on great visitor experiences, business growth, our talented people and looking after the environment.

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 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

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 There is a risk that rejecting the recommendations will mean that the Council misses the opportunity to scrutinise performance.

9. Equalities

9.1 The proposals in this report allow scrutiny of performance. The report does not involve proposals for policies, strategies, procedures, processes, financial decisions and activities (including service delivery), both new and at review, that affect the Council's communities and employees, therefore an equality impact assessment is not required.

10. Sustainable Development Implications

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

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 Priority 2 of the Council Plan: Live, Work, Learn (Outcome 2: Work and economy – Everyone benefits from a local economy that provides opportunities for people and helps our businesses flourish) and Priority 3 of the Council Plan: Civic and Community Pride (Outcome 1: Pride in South Ayrshire – Everyone (residents, visitors and tourists) can enjoy attractive destinations and people are proud to live in our towns and villages and celebrate our culture and heritage).

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 Alec Clark, Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Culture and Rural Affairs, and Councillor Brian Connolly, Portfolio Holder for Sport and Leisure and the contents of this report reflects any feedback provided.

Background Papers **Report to Leadership Panel (Special) of 1 March 2022 – [Tourism and Events Strategy](#)**

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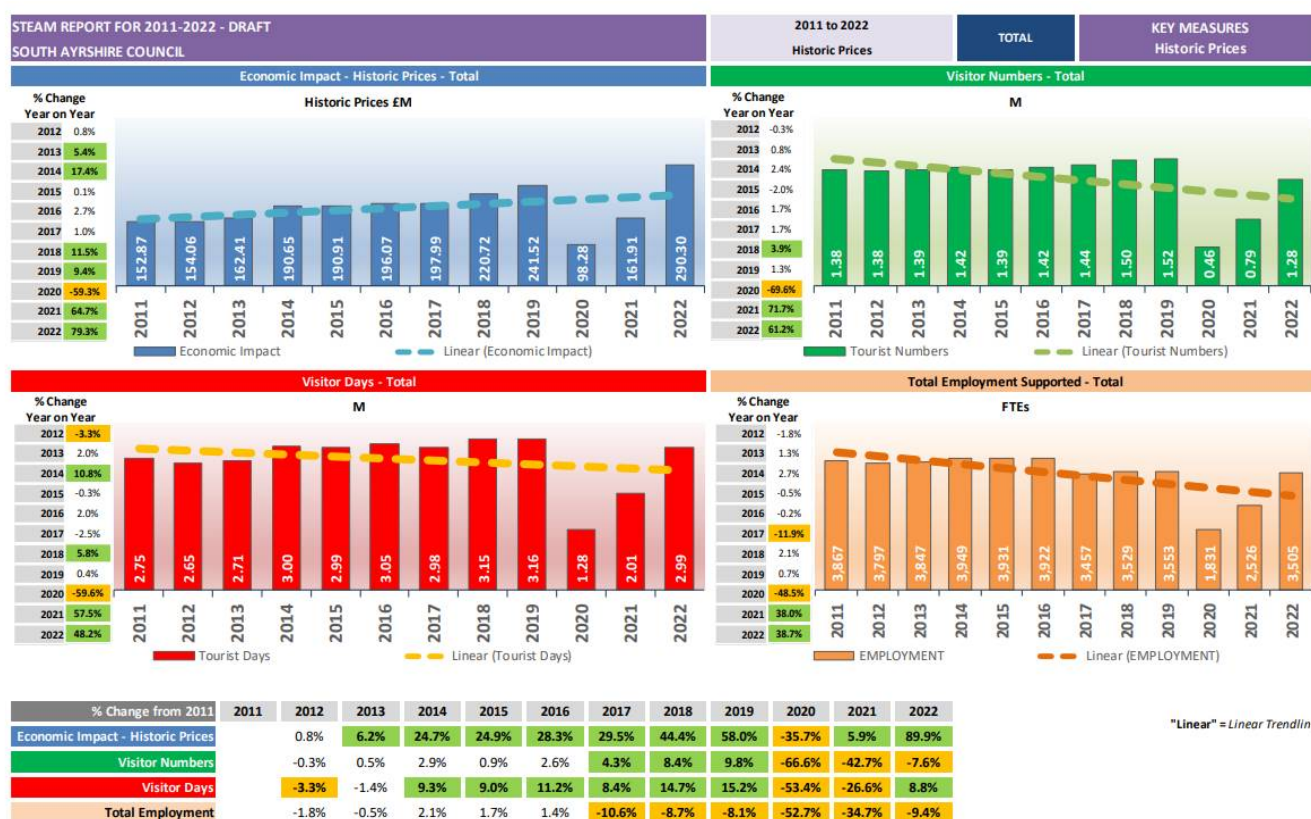
TOURISM AND EVENTS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

The following strategic objectives are set out to be met 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

The 2022 STEAM Report reports:

- The annual number of visitors to South Ayrshire was 1.28 million
- The annual spend by visitors was £290million - **£24.33million above the 2025 target**
- Employment supported by the sector is currently 3,505 jobs



Our Memorable Experiences

The Destination South Ayrshire (DSA) Grant was successfully delivered throughout the 22/23 financial year. The fund supported over 52 events with £80,000 of distributed funds. The panel have reviewed over 60 applications, assessing the applications and awarding to nearly 75% of the applicants. Moreover, we have recently been able to support an additional 15 Coronation events across South Ayrshire with nearly £15,000 worth of grants, ensuring celebrations across South Ayrshire.

Our Memorable Experiences
Spanning the Centuries: Sir William Arrol's legacy in Steel, Stone and Culture at Rozelle House was delivered in association with local group Friends of Seafield house.
We supported the successful delivery of Tamfest in 2022 with the return of the extremely popular outdoor experience within Rozelle Estate, and the new haunted houses in Rozelle House and the McKechnie Institute.
The Heritage Hub is now open at 1-3 High Street, Ayr. The Hub hosts a range of items from South Ayrshire Council's Collection, and a series of tours and activities are currently being developed by the newly appointed Heritage Outreach Officer.
While we continue to deliver a range of events delivered by South Ayrshire Council, we are also working with external organisations to support a range of events such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fresh Ayr Folk Fest - The Pavilion Festival and StreetRAVE - The R&A Golf Open <p>The DSA website and social media accounts list a wide range of events and activities happening throughout South Ayrshire.</p>
We are working in partnership with Remembering the Accused Witches of Scotland to commission a memorial statue and trail.
We have been identifying key holidays and hashtag on social media to promote existing assets - such as World Book Day post with Story Stroll, Mother's Day options and Burns Night posts.
We have been working with Golf South Ayrshire and Leisure to produce marketing leaflets and information to be added to the DSA stand at all events. Golf and sport are also represented on the DSA website and the upcoming app.

Our Passionate People
Our DSA social media continues to grow in followers and reach: <p>Facebook page has 18.3K followers and an additional 1,437 on Instagram. This quarter it reached 2,155,027 people engaging 69,536 to click on links for more information. With followers from South Ayrshire, across Scotland and international followers from the USA, Australia, Ireland and India.</p>
We have regular meetings with the North Carrick Community Benefit Company and Go Girvan and are working closely with them to promote events, trails and sharing social media posts.
We are working collaboratively with Place Making to help procure a town centre footfall data capture resource. As part of this, we will help identify the polygons map in the five town centres ensuring that it covers key event locations, which will allow us to access data on event footfall and how the town centre benefits.
We continue to advertise and promote events held by colleagues in Thriving Communities and Scottish Enterprise.

Our Thriving Places

We successfully secured Event Scotland Year of Stories funding to develop Shadows of the past, which was a historic walk with an audio component focussing on Ayr's incredible history. We were also able to create the exceptionally popular Story Stroll, which is a sculpture-based character trail within Rozelle Estate.

Working with Community Wealth Building, we are developing promotional materials for free business listings on DSA through the Love Local approach.

We have been developing our content calendar for our DSA newsletter and we now have an email list of almost 500 people.

There are communications plans in place for all our key areas of work. The plans are evaluated, and the results shared with management and Members.

We are working with the University West of Scotland on a pan Ayrshire Creative Carbon Conversation in June looking at how we can impact carbon emissions in the Arts and Culture sector including events.

Our Diverse Businesses

We currently have 160 businesses registered on the DSA website.

We are continuing to support the pan Ayrshire Food and Drink Officers based in East Ayrshire Council.

We are currently working with procurement to ensure local businesses will benefit from the upcoming Ayr Show.

We have been working with Community Wealth Building to develop workshops on how local agencies can bid for SAC events.

The Ayr Farmers Market has moved to the Cutty Sark, and we are supporting promotion through the DSA web and social media.