**Update Perth & Kinross Council**

**Perthshire Tourism Partnership Update**

**30 March 2021**

**Economic Wellbeing Plan**

The Plan is being finessed to take account of the revenue budget position and some final amendments following input from elected members, with particular reference to budget and outputs. The Council will then consider the plan on 30th March. Work does of course continue across short- and medium-term actions within the plan and further refinement may be needed in relation to the Place theme once the Council’s overall capital budget position is agreed in September.

**Budget 2021/22**

PKC approved its 2021/22 budget on 10 March 2021. The core budget for economic development remains as is and in addition there have been uplifts in a number of areas as “budget motions” which are non-recurring and for one financial year only and with the intention of supporting economic recovery. (Hence the current work to refine the Economic Wellbeing Plan). Of particular pertinence in relation to tourism is funding in 2021/22 for the following areas:

* Marketing of Perth and Kinross: £250K
	+ promotion of Perth and Kinross as a must visit destination
	+ promotion of a local goods and services campaign
	+ creation of a Visitor Management Fund to assist rural communities

Work is now underway to develop the details and specific budget allocations across these areas. Promotional activity can clearly only be developed and implemented in line with the prevailing Covid-19 rules at any given time but it is envisaged that the Council will collaborate with VisitScotland in this regard to upweight and extend promotional campaigns as it has done previously. Specific proposals for the visitor management fund are to be developed and in conjunction with colleagues and partner agencies to support the work being undertaken through the Council’s Visitor Management Group which was established to address a number of issues which have emerged in recent times – from littering and anti-social camping, to motorhome/campervan overnight parking areas, and waste disposal.

* Adapt Your Property: £350K
	+ 50% grants to a maximum of £50,000 to convert underused/vacant town and city centre commercial space for new commercial/residential uses
* Open For Business Fund: £200K
	+ 50% grants to encourage small town business to ensure that the frontages of their premises are updated, resources to support grants for a town and city centre empty property initiative, pop-up shops and a general freshening up of our high streets

In relation to Adapt Your Property it is intended that this will allow the Commercial Property Regeneration Fund, which was launched in 2020 as a one-off grant scheme, to continue through 21/22. The details and terms for the Open for Business Fund are to be developed but it is anticipated will be along similar lines to previous façade improvement schemes and community and business placemaking schemes.

Further new areas of economic development support for 21/22 include:

* Support for Businesses: £200K
	+ To provide microgrants to small businesses for start-up or expansion costs, such as the purchase of equipment or website development
* Perth and Kinross Skills Passport: £125,000 investment in 2021/22 with a further £125,000 commitment towards 2022/23.
	+ This funding will provide grants of up to £2,000 to assist 125 people back into work through the provision of financial assistance for help such as training courses or equipment

In relation to visitor management, there is also budget provision as follows:

* Ranger Service: £240K in 2021/22 (with a commitment of a further £240K in 2022/23) for the introduction of a Ranger Service for two years on a pilot basis.

The terms of these will also be developed in the near future.

**Covid 19 Business Grants**

A major focus of activity since the beginning of 2020 and indeed since autumn 2020 has been the management of the various Scottish Government grants schemes. This has required significant staff resources to be deployed to administer the schemes and handle the very large number of enquiries, many of which have been extremely complex. At this point in time, the number of applications received across the main schemes being administered by the Council are as follows:

Strategic Framework Business Fund: 2,761

Discretionary Fund: 456

Large Self Catering and Exclusive Use Venues Fund: 192 (eligible properties)

Small Accommodation Providers Paying Council Tax Fund: 60

In addition, the Council has been managing a scheme for taxi and private hire drivers. Due cognisance has had to be given to the range of other grant schemes, many of them tourism sector specific, and including the Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund (phase two) and Mobile and Home Based Close Contact Services Fund, and with enquiries directed appropriately.

At this point in time, Scottish Government schemes have closed to new applications and only the Discretionary Fund remains open. This fund is intended as a fund of last resort to those businesses that have otherwise been ineligible for other schemes or have somehow “fallen through the cracks”. Businesses supported through SFBF should also be in line for a further recovery “top up” in April.

**Consumer Communications**

As previously intimated the destination marketing activity undertaken with VisitScotland based on the “live life well” message was paused in late 2020 when travel restrictions came into effect. It is intended that this is resumed in line with national guidance and taking account the need to reinforce messages about responsible tourism. Consumer facing communications have therefore been relatively curtailed in recent months and the emphasis has had to shift to addressing a local market through social media channels and website with the creation of content which highlights the online offer of retail, events, activities etc across the area. The theme “love local in lockdown” has been used and with the purpose of maintaining a connection between the public and local independent businesses and to drive sales at this time. As restrictions ease the content will be adapted to reflect the general re-opening of premises. The website (perthcity.co.uk) has recently been redeveloped and comprises a business directory to which businesses can add their details. This will be particularly useful for attractions etc as they re-open in spring and summer and wish to highlight their opening times and conditions etc.