



**COUNCIL EXECUTIVE**

**FORTH BRIDGES AREA TOURISM STRATEGY**

**REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION**

**A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to make the Council Executive aware of the tourism strategy developed by the Forth Bridges Forum (FBF); and for Council Executive to approve the council's continued participation in FBF.

**B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council Executive:

1. Agrees the content of the Forth Bridges Area Tourism Strategy; and
2. Approves the council's continued participation in FBF.

**C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I</b>	<b>Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
<b>II</b>	<b>Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been undertaken by Transport Scotland. The strategy does not raise any equality, health or risk issues for the council
<b>III</b>	<b>Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None.
<b>IV</b>	<b>Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	None.
<b>V</b>	<b>Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	Outcome 1 – We make West Lothian an attractive place to do business.
<b>VI</b>	<b>Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	The strategy and continued participation in the FBF does not have any financial or staffing implications for the council.

<b>VII</b>	<b>Consideration at PDSP</b>	The strategy was reported to the Development & Transport PDSP on 14 November. Panel members were supportive of the strategy and participation by the council given the potential for increased tourism activity in West Lothian
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Other consultations</b>	Partnership working with the Scottish Government, neighbouring Local Authorities and tourism/transport partners

## **D. TERMS OF REPORT**

### **D1 Introduction**

The council has been a member of the Forth Bridges Forum since 2011. Some of the Forum's other membership includes City of Edinburgh Council, Fife Council, Forth Bridges Unit Operating Company, Network Rail, Transport Scotland and Visit Scotland.

The Forum's aims include:

- Maintaining effective engagement with local communities
- Promoting the Bridges as a unique tourist destination
- Developing cross-Forth sustainable public transport

The Forum was involved in the successful nomination of the Forth Bridge for inscription as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in July 2015.

### **D2 Economic context**

West Lothian's tourism sector makes an important contribution to the local economy. Latest available statistics show:

- Visitor number were approximately 1.14 million in 2017.
- There were 2.17 million visitor days in 2017, a 3% increase since 2015.
- Tourism directly supports almost 3,000 FTE local jobs.

Visit West Lothian, our independent tourism forum, has identified a number of key insights to visitor profiles:

- 70% were from elsewhere in Scotland.
- 7% from rest of United Kingdom.
- 23% from overseas .

This information demonstrates the potential benefits to communities and business from developing place marketing of the Forth Bridges. The council can anticipate an increase in nearby tourist visits. In particular, improved transport connections will materially benefit West Lothian. For example, it is quicker to travel from the Forth Bridges to either Linlithgow or Livingston than in to Edinburgh city centre and there is an opportunity through the strategy to capitalise on this.

### **D3 Key strategic outcomes**

The Forth Bridges Area Tourism Strategy has three key outcomes:

- **Creating a visitor destination**  
In particular encouraging visitors to plan a longer stay and visit the surrounding areas. Given the longer-term timescale of the strategy to 2028, we could anticipate a 20% rise in visitor numbers from 1.14 Million per annum to 1.35 Million per annum.
- **Offering a warm welcome to all**  
The strategy calls for a “first class visitor experience” with the associated benefits of positive referrals and repeat visits.
- **Marketing the destination**  
The development of a Forth Bridges brand will build understanding and loyalty. There also exists the potential for cross-promotion with other World Heritage Sites.

West Lothian can benefit from continued involvement in the Forth Bridges Forum. The strategy outlines a series of long-term actions to deliver the key outcomes.

### **E. CONCLUSION**

The action plan within the strategy is comprehensive and inclusive. This will help with the successful delivery of the Forth Bridges Area Tourism Strategy. Council should be optimistic about the potential economic and cultural benefits for communities and business across West Lothian.

### **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None

Appendices/Attachments:

Transport Scotland letter 21 June 2018

Forth Bridges Area Tourism Strategy 2018 - 2028

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