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Yearly Progress Report (2010-2011) from Destination Dumfries & Galloway 21.05.11**

Management: After the Destination Dumfries & Galloway (DD&G) Chair resigned November 2010, an Interim Chair was appointed, then the DD&G Board voted Wilma Finlay (Cream o' Galloway) as Chair, and Duncan McConchie (Laggan Outdoor) and Fiona Colley (Springboard Training) as Vice Chairs, in January 2011. Additional Board recruitment process (press advertising; email newsletters; partner communications; and networking; with Expressions of Interests from individuals submitted to DD&G; followed by formal interviews) led to Janet Butterworth (Whithorn Trust), Tim Stephenson (Gemrock Museum) and Wolf Richthofen (South Rhins Web Design) joining the Board March 2011. Other Board members: Fred Findlay (Rickwood House); Chris Walker (Selkirk Arms Hotel); Jim Walker (Raring2Go Dumfries & Galloway); Emily Stair (Castle Kennedy and Gardens); and Ian McAndrew (Blackaddie House Hotel). The Board is aware that there are gaps in representation at Board level of some areas within the region (including Gretna Green, Dumfries and Moffat), and is proactively seeking to encourage expressions of interest from leading industry individuals.

Match funding from Dumfries & Galloway Council confirmed September 2010. DD&G Workplan and Delivery Schedule created March 2011.

Milestone: 3 year Business Plan agreed by Board. Date to be achieved by: March 2012.

Date Achieved: On track; the Board is undertaking sustainability/exit strategy workshops July 2011

Research Assistant: recruitment process August 2010. 38 applications received. Alison Bell in post end September 2010.

Project Officer: recruitment process August 2010. 20 applications received. October-December 2010, job share Stacey Paul and Inga McVicar (as agreed with LEADER). Inga McVicar full-time officer January 2011.

Milestone: Recruitment of DD&G team. Date to be achieved by: August 2010.

Date Achieved: Research Assistant September 2010. Project Officer October 2010/January 2011

Research: Research Proposal January 2011. Delayed due to delay in Research Officer being appointed, then DD&G Chair resignation November 2010 (the Chair had been leading on research activities). Research Plan presented to Board December 2010, approved January 2011. Audit of already available related research completed February 2011.

First level of Audit complete March 2011 (list of businesses and contact information). In-depth audit of Accommodation to tender 24 May (to be completed Aug 2011) Research Officer focusing on in-depth audit of all other sectors (research to be complete end of June 2011).. Audit delayed due to delay at start of project in securing Research Officer; scale of information required, and resources to deliver, which outstripped expectations. An assumption that data from partners could be shared with DD&G has largely proved to be incorrect (due to data protection). These issues have been addressed through refocusing of Research Officer's remit and through identifying key areas of the audit to form part of DD&G's spend on research consultants (for example accommodation).

Industry Database being developed as part of Industry Website, to function as a full database of the region's tourism industry; to drive data on the industry website; and to provide data for other related tourism niche regional websites. Industry website tender process completed, and supplier appointed 23rd May.

Continuous flow of information, ideas and issues for database and all other aspects of DD&G delivery informed by Research Officer collating information, issues and opinion from industry at events and workshops.

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Milestone: Research brief agreed by Board. Date to be achieved by: November 2010.

Date Achieved: January 2011.

Milestone: First wave results of research study. Date to be achieved by: February 2011.

Date Achieved: March 2011.

Milestone: Economic evaluation of creative tourism product. Date to be achieved by: June 2012.

Date Achieved: on track

Industry Workshops/Seminars: DD&G partnered VisitScotland at industry events on 22nd & 23rd November. The event of the 23rd was attended by over 100 tourism operators. The new chairman of VS Mike Cantlay & Duncan McConchie provided key note speeches.

DD&G hosted a series of industry road show events:

- 25/01 Cream o' Galloway, Gatehouse of Fleet (47 attended)
- 27/01 North West Castle, Stranraer (28 attended)
- 01/02 Aston Hotel, Dumfries (21 attended)
- 02/02 Drumlanrig Castle, Thornhill (15 attended)
- and 03/02 Smiths at Gretna Green (28 attended)

The events were an opportunity for DD&G and other organisations to promote tourism and the growth agenda, and to provide industry with opportunities to raise issues, ideas, ask questions and to network.

DD&G created and hosted a Dumfries & Galloway Tourism Industry Conference on March 7th 2011, with 109 attending. The Conference was the formal launch of the Dumfries & Galloway Regional Tourism Strategy. It featured presentations from DD&G, VisitScotland, and Stephen Leckie of Crieff Hydro; workshops on Quality/Visitor Experience; Product Development and current regional tourism products; and provided networking opportunities.

DD&G partnered with Scottish Enterprise to deliver and promote Listening to Our Visitor workshops 24th and 29th Mar '11.

DD&G partnered with Springboard Training to deliver and promote Tourism Ambassador Training (2nd and 3rd of March) at which tourism industry individuals were trained to be Ambassadors for Dumfries & Galloway's tourism industry.

DD&G's team have continued to network with key groups, businesses and public agencies, attending over 38 meeting and events with individual tourism industry business and related partners/agencies.

Milestone: 6 workshops/events delivered. Date to be achieved by: November 2011. Date Achieved: March '11.

Industry Communications: Monthly newsletters, and ad hoc/urgent sharing of information/feedback requests, have been circulated to industry. The monthly newsletters provide a strong link with industry, providing both relevant information about events; news; funding opportunities etc, and functioning as a central hub from information from partners and related organisations/agencies to reach the tourism industry. A total of 23 email newsletters have been sent to date, to an average of 908 recipients, with an average of 32% unique opens (which excludes any newsletters viewed but not clicked upon).

Media coverage of DD&G activities has included interviews on BBC Radio Solway; BBC News (online) and articles in Dumfries & Galloway Life magazine, Galloway News, Moffat News, Wigtownshire Free Press and Dumfries & Galloway Standard. DD&G has advertised in Dumfries & Galloway Standard, Galloway News

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(Chair/Vice Chair Recruitment); DD&G was sponsor of Dumfries & Galloway Life magazine's Tourism Champion award (two adverts in D&G Life Magazine, attendance at the awards ceremony and name checks throughout ceremony); and Gaelforce Magazine

Consumer Website Development: Prior to January 2011, DD&G's consumer website workgroup had been researching and preparing to invite tenders for the development of a consumer facing tourism website. This process included researching competitive sites, best practise amongst other DDOs, consumer expectations. A tender document was produced, outlining the requirements and functionality of the proposed website, in December 2010 which was prepared with the support of Scottish Enterprise.

Following VisitScotland's announcement that it would be extensively redeveloping the VisitScotland regional consumer website for Dumfries and Galloway, DD&G entered discussions regarding a collaborative approach. In January 2011, the Board of DD&G voted to partner with VisitScotland in creating one regional visitor-facing website, in order to avoid duplication, fragmentation, competition and a confusion of messages and information to both potential visitors and the region's tourism industry. DD&G and VisitScotland agreed a Mandate for collaborative working on this website in March 2011, with the first stage of the website due to be live August 2011. DD&G has inputted into the design and functionality of the website; attended VisitScotland led website workshops; attends a weekly meeting with VisitScotland and Dumfries & Galloway Council to create content for this website (during which DD&G will also co-ordinate wider industry input); and will utilise its consumer website budget to commission new imagery (potentially moving, as well as still) to address gaps and refresh images used to promote the region on the website.

DD&G is the first Destination Development Organisation to have achieved this collaborative approach with VisitScotland, and Dumfries & Galloway will be the first region to have a redeveloped consumer website.

Industry Website Development: DD&G is in the process of creating an Industry Website, which will be a central hub for D&G's tourism industry

Timeline: Industry Website tender process April/May. Supplier appointed 23 May. Website live July/August '11

It had been intended that this Industry website would form part of DD&G's consumer website, so development was delayed due to discussions with; Board decision making; and Mandate agreements with VS.

DD&G has investigated whether there is a need and appetite for a central tourism related web service database, which could maintain niche tourism related websites (in order to ensure a depth of information for specialist visitors; product development - including sustainability of niche related websites – for example the Mountain Bike Business Network www.eat-sleep-ride.com). This is potentially a wider project than DD&G's current remit allows, so this concept will be trialled through the new DD&G Industry Website's database (focusing on widgets of information to be fed to and placed on other websites, rather than entire website feeds).

Consumer Marketing: Due to the delay in the Board appointing a Project Officer and Research Assistant, the DD&G Board opted to take a low key approach to autumn 2010 marketing. www.createscape.co.uk (a consumer facing website created as part of a VisitScotland Growth Fund project, April 2010-July 2010) was refreshed with a set of new autumn images; a pay-per-click Google Adword campaign was undertaken; and new seasonal events and accommodation provider offers were added.

First draft of DD&G Marketing Strategy November 2010, which had been intended to inform consumer marketing campaigns for the duration of this project (the process for which included consultation with

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industry at the DD&G Tourism Conference March 2011. However, this Strategy was delayed during discussions and decision making with VisitScotland regarding the Consumer website.

DD&G Marketing Strategy (final) created May 2011. This will inform DD&G's approach to marketing. DD&G has participated in partnership marketing planning sessions (led by Dumfries & Galloway Council and VisitScotland), from which a Regional Marketing Strategy is being created (to be delivered by VisitScotland). VisitScotland and Dumfries & Galloway Council are to provide DD&G with a final Regional Marketing plan, in order for DD&G to create and deliver a complimentary Marketing Plan. This plan will be DD&G's implementation of the DD&G Marketing Strategy, adding value to the Regional Marketing Plan.

DD&G has provided a central point for seeking and collating industry involvement and engagement with regional marketing, for example, feedback on VS Winter White; feedback on VS 2011 Guides; and industry ideas for VS Surprise Yourself (Autumn/Winter 2011)

DD&G is undertaking Visitor Research to identify product and quality gaps; and to test and develop a regional Tourism Brand. This research will gather visitor perceptions and expectations of the region in order to inform Product Development and Consumer Marketing (including the Tourism Brand). The aim is for research to take place June-December 2011. Within that a tourism brand will be created and launched August/September 2011. The tender process is now underway with a company to be appointed 1 July 2011. This, combined with baseline figures, will inform DD&G's marketing implementation.

DD&G is partnering with VS on a consumer website (see Consumer Website Development above).

*Milestone: Consumer autumn campaign planned / launched. Date to be achieved by: September 2011.
Date Achieved: on track*

Product Development: Initial plan was to develop pilot programmes, to then inform an Annual Product Development Strategy, after the Research Audit had identified gaps had to be re-addressed. However the depth of the Audit required longer time to complete than envisaged. The new focus is to identify gaps in visitor expectations and perceptions to inform Product Development (and Marketing). DD&G undertaking Visitor Research to identify product and quality gaps; and to test Tourism Brand. Tender process May/June 2011. Product Development Strategy to be developed post Visitor Research (completes December 2011). Launch at March 2012 Tourism Conference.

*Milestone: Product Development pilot programme framework established. Date to be achieved by: May 2011.
Date Achieved: not achieved by Milestone Date. Alternative date March 2012.*

Regional Tourism Strategy: DD&G worked closely with the consultants Tourism Resources Company in the development of a five year regional tourism strategy, attending consultation workshops and feedback comments on the drafts. A refreshed Regional Tourism Strategy was presented in December 2010, with the Regional Tourism Strategy formally launched at the DD&G Tourism Conference March 2011. DD&G, VisitScotland and D&G Council have adopted a tripartite approach to delivery of the strategy.

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