

Gatehouse Development Initiative

Meeting Wednesday 30 May 7.00pm Community Centre

The meeting was preceded by an update on the Tourist Information Centre attended by some 30 members of the community. D Steel welcomed Delia Holland once again to the meeting and Tony Fitzpatrick for D and G Council. He also welcomed councillor P Gilroy as the new Council convenor. In his introduction D Steel explained how the three month reprieve for the TIC would allow for proper community consultation on the way forward. Key questions to be answered are: What kind of information is required by visitors; what alternatives are there to the current provision including other locations; what funding options are available.

D Holland apologised for her handling of the situation re the closure but indicated that while a different approach would have been better, the decision might not have been any different. She confirmed that the building, including the section used by the police, belongs to Visit Scotland. The condition on which the land was made available for the centre stipulates that it must be used for tourist information purposes but that with the agreement of the Council, there could be some flexibility with this condition. She also outlined examples elsewhere of partnership arrangements with other organisations/businesses to provide tourist information.

T Fitzpatrick indicated that while the budget to keep the Centre open was set, there could be some flexibility in how the money was spent. It was agreed that it would not make sense to close it again just before Gala week.

Other points made in the discussion which followed. If the provision of information is to be opened up to others, all businesses/organisations must be invited to tender. The size limitations of the current building for running a business were noted. The library in Wigtown is currently acting as a TIC. Local authorities elsewhere in Scotland are providing service points for visitors. A workshop to look at alternative types of provision would be useful, perhaps with the involvement of representatives from others running different systems. Visit Scotland have taken legal advice and are not in breach of their contract with attractions who have paid for packages with them.

T Vaux reported that he had just received figures for TIC usage which showed that against the trend in the region, usage of Gatehouse TIC had actually increased. This contradicted the statement made by D Holland that it was a poor performer. M Hannay suggested the decision should have waited to be a part of the full review of TIC provision taking place. The view of the meeting was again very strongly that Visit Scotland should keep the TIC open for the season, but D Holland indicated that this was not an option and her decision had been made. Discussions within the community will therefore continue. The discussion concluded. The guests and some public left the meeting.

Present: D Steel (Chair); P Addison; I Burnie; D Cameron; N Coombey (Solway Heritage); R Dean; L Dent; W Finlay; R Forster; S Harris; J Jameson; M Laird; Pam ; Alex ; W McKie; J Morton; J Russell; K Smyth; T Vaux.

Apologies: F Bruno; T Burnie; J Davidson; D Finlay; M Hannay; A Johnson; A Mitchell;

2. Minutes of 31 January meeting. Accepted.

3. Matters arising

No matters arising.

4. TIC. Already covered.

5. Cally Management Plan. The Cally Park and Woods, which today surround the Cally Hotel are an important part of the heritage of the Gatehouse area. In order to conserve and enhance the Cally landscape the Gatehouse Development Initiative with the support of the landowners and with a grant from Scottish Natural Heritage commissioned Solway Heritage to prepare a management plan to help with future improvements. The report is now complete and Nic Coombey gave an excellent powerpoint presentation overview of the history of the estate, and of the proposed future approach to manage and preserve the landscape. The report was accepted by the meeting. Nic was congratulated on the report. A bid has been submitted to SNH to produce a booklet summarising the report. The report will be available in the library, and can be downloaded as a pdf file from the town website.

6. Current Projects (only key points due to length of meeting)

Country Market: No report.

Economic Development: The CADISPA survey is underway with some 250 forms already returned (about 25%). CADISPA are hoping for at least 30% return. CADISPA staff will be in Gatehouse in the first week of June to undertake interviews and train volunteers to carry out further local questioning. £3000 has been received from D and G Housing Partnership towards the survey costs. Funding is now almost all in place.

Garries Park: The Sensory Garden is complete. The path over the burn to the Wildflower Meadow is almost complete. The Council have unfortunately mowed over the wildflower meadow setting everything back.

New Town Hall: No report.

Port Macadam: No report.

Renewables: Wind Turbine: Now installed and generating electricity. It will be officially opened on Monday 11th June. An open invitation should be made to the community. W Finlay will contact the school to invite a school group to attend. The turbine project has also been shortlisted for the Leader+ awards.

Walks: No report.

Web Site: No report.

7. Any Other Business

Kirstie Peden of D and G Council introduced herself. She is the Principal Officer for the Stewartry and works with Adam Mitchell who she will stand in for when he is unavailable.

8. Dates of future meetings

25 July; 26 September; 28 November