

Cairngorms Tourism Emergency Response Group
Monday 4th May 2020
Note of Meeting

1. Welcome and introductions

Present: Murray, Janet, Heather, Alistair, Chris F, Pete, Rhona, Mark, Chris T
Apolo: Laurie, Colin, Grant

2: Business Support updates:

HIE: The launch of the new Pivotal Enterprise and Creative, Tourism & Hospitality Industry Hardship Funds on Thurs has been very challenging. The funds have been inundated with applications, IT systems could not cope and many applications were wrongly rejected as not eligible for support. There were complications and issues with the online application, but this has been worked on all weekend, and businesses are now encouraged to re-apply. Funding will no longer be allocated on a first come, first served, and applications will now start to be considered this afternoon or tomorrow. Enterprise agency staff will do eligibility checks and appraisal of support. It was noted that the form was difficult to complete and lots of businesses are still struggling with it. There was concern about whether funds would be sufficient to meet demand and the management of business expectations.

Aberdeenshire Council: As of Friday, over 2500 of the grant applications had been processed, and the newly self-employed grant launched with 100 applications so far. There are lots of ineligible applications, some still falling between the gaps, or based in other LA areas. A report on plans for the council's own Aberdeenshire business scheme will be going to committee next week, and it will hopefully launch in next few weeks. The property department is dealing with rent deferrals for business units etc.

Highland Council (update by email): Planning to launch the new scheme for multiple property owners tomorrow. The other grant schemes are largely going well– all the backlog is cleared with the exception of some applications where we are still awaiting information from the applicant. The numbers coming in each day are essentially the same as the number we process each day. For the newly self-employed scheme that launched on Thursday, the first hundred or so applications are in. The first payments should go out today.

- Key issues from DMOs

CBP: Nothing new to report not covered elsewhere on agenda.

VMS (update by email): 1) Moray Council are making good progress with payment of business support grants, including to self-caterers – many have reported that the cash is now in their accounts. Despite this, uptake overall (all sectors) is only around 26%. 2) The requirement of the Tourism Emergency funds, as announced last week for applicants to have a Business Bank Account, means that many B&B / Guest House operators can't apply. 3) VMS are working on recovery / relaunch activity and will share in due course.

VA: An initial recovery plan will be available next week.

- VisitScotland Overview – The latest insights paper was published on Wednesday and shows a slightly more positive picture with consumer mood improving slightly. The average lead time in planning trips is 5 months so looking at Sept / Oct at the moment. Looking at international examples of restriction easing – [for example](#), in France travel is permitted up to 100km. Germany & Austria have agreed bilateral arrangements, but Germany has seen the reproduction 'R' rate of virus spread increase as restrictions eased, which may suggest that cyclical opening may be more likely.

CBP / CNPA / CTP open letter response. The feedback to the letter was generally positive, with a few isolated negative comments on social media. In press coverage, some articles picked up on key worker harassment in headlines, but also included the wider positive messages from the letter. We should continue to encourage any concerns to be reported to trading standards / police / CNPA as appropriate. It was agreed that messaging will be a challenge as we move from simple to more complex messages around restrictions easing.

- **Countryside management issues.** There have been a few access issues raised, but no more than normal. Liason continues with other agencies through eg. ENFOR group meetings (Pete) and National Parks UK (Heather) to positive consistent and clear messaging about appropriate access behaviour *Update: Grant is also attending regular meetings with key agency and NGO CEOs.* CNPA have identified 40 key visitor sites that may have management issues as restrictions ease. It was agreed that visitor management issues must be based on the best scientific evidence about transmission rates and issues specific to the countryside, but it's difficult to find this information at the moment.

- **[STERG national action plan](#) & new countryside sub-group** – Murray. A new STERG subgroup is being setup to advice on countryside and access issues and CNPA will attend. More information will be circulated when available.

3.Reset:

- **Overview of consumer insights and other research.** Heather ran through some of the recent consumer research and flagged up the weekly BVA-BRDC attitude tracker as a useful bit of wider research.

-[VS marketing intelligence 29/4](#)

-[ALVA Attractions Recovery Tracker](#)

-Domestic Covid19 tracker VE/VB

- **Current communication priorities.** A key priority will be to engage resident audiences about access but also importance of tourism to economy, to reduce conflict within and between communities as lockdown eases. This needs proactive PR & marketing around keeping communities, staff and visitors safe and will need to happen quickly. 'Visitors' could be from the next village, as movement restrictions slowly ease. Pete is pulling together a meeting with land and visitor managers to discuss Comms messages and will include Mark.

- **CBP 'prepare to open' workshops and virtual round table ministerial meeting on 7/5** – The first workshop took place last Friday & the next is tomorrow (Tues) looking at how businesses open and instill confidence in staff, visitors and communities, and collaborate to encourage visitor spend and a positive customer experience. An Ipsos Mori poll found that 60% of folk don't want to visit and 30% don't want to work. On Thursday a Q&A session is planned for 60 CBP members with Kate Forbes and Fergus Ewing.

The next CBP Business Barometer closed in mid-April and will be published soon. Initial results are also in from the Prepare to Open survey, and Mark will share full results ahead of next week, but availability of working capital is a real challenge for many businesses as they look to re-open.

4.Restart

- SG framework for decision making and further discussions. Nothing to report at this stage.

5.Recover

- CNP recovery plan. CNPA recovery plan will go to the board in June, but a draft will be shared with the group next week after informal discussion with board on Friday this week. Last Friday saw a discussion on it with key public partners.

6.Any Other Updates

-Promotional flyer for the Cairngorms Nature 10 day event has been circulated to the group.

- Janet thanked everyone for participating. Let Janet, Murray or Heather know if you have any suggestions to make the meetings more useful.

7.Date of next meeting.

Next Monday 11th May.

RESPOND (March 2020 – May 2020) Immediate provision of information and support to businesses

RESET (June 2020 – September 2020) Support, planning and preparation for restart

RESTART (June 2020 – February 2021) Support and guidance for safe re-opening

RECOVER (September 2020 – December 2022) Guidance and support for operating in a new post COVID-19 environment

Remit of Group: The group has been set up to provide consistent and comprehensive analysis of the implications of Covid-19 for tourism, to coordinate communications with the tourism industry, ensure close working between key agencies and the private sector, to gather, share, facilitate, interpret and disseminate information and agree relevant actions and delivery plans.

Membership: The Group consists of representatives from Cairngorms Business Partnership, VisitAberdeenshire, MoraySpeyside, VisitScotland, Aberdeenshire Council, The Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and CNPA (Chair).