The Committee will meet at 2 pm in Committee Room 1, Committee Chambers

1. Area Tourist Board Review: the Committee will take evidence from:

Panel 1 – Scottish Tourism Forum

Simon Williams, Chief Executive, Edinburgh Principle Hotels Association;

Ian Gardner, Chairman, the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions and Director, Scottish Tourism Forum

Douglas Logan, Managing Director, Speciality Scotland Travel and Director and Company Secretary – Scottish Tourism Forum

Panel 2 – COSLA

Councillor Willie Dunn, Economic Development and Planning Spokesperson

James Fowlie, Team Leader – Environment and Regeneration, COSLA

Catriona MacLean, Area Development Manager, Highland Council

Panel 3 – Area Tourist Board Chairs

Robin Shedden, Chair, Kingdom of Fife Tourist Board and Scotland’s Area Tourist Board Network;

Councillor Donald Wilson, Chair, Edinburgh and Lothians Tourist Board;

Carolyn Baird, Chair, Perthshire Tourist Board;

on the Area Tourist Board Review

2. Public Petition: the Committee will consider its final response to Public Petition PE694.
The following meeting papers are enclosed:

**Agenda Item 1**

Submission from Scottish Tourism Forum
Submission from COSLA
Submission from Area Tourist Board Chairs
Area Tourist Boards SPICE Briefing

**Agenda Item 2**

Clerk’s note
Comments on Scottish Executive Tourism review.

Review of Tourism

The minister for Tourism Media Culture and Sport Frank McAveety MSP announced in the Scottish parliament on 11th March 2004 the outcome of the review of tourism. The following is a summary and comment on that review. Full details of the announcement can be seen on www.scotexchange.net

£17m Additional Marketing Spend
STF welcomes the £17m of new money brought into marketing between now and March 2006. The increase represents a 28% lift in the marketing budget of VS. The announcement detailed that ‘most of the money would be spent on UK marketing and overseas markets that have not yet been exploited.’ £5m will be added to marketing budgets in 2003/4, 2004/5 and £7m in 2005/6.

- STF welcome this investment in our industry and signifies recognition by the executive as to the importance of tourism to the Scottish economy. Whilst this strengthens the marketing possibilities for VisitScotland we must recognise the ever increasing competitive international marketplace and the need to further support VisitScotland budgets in future years.

- Since the ATB network has attracted £14m of European funding to support marketing activities. STF will seek clarification regarding the continuance of the funds through to the end of the current programme in 2006.

- STF look forward to better understanding the tactical uses that the new money will be directed towards and how this will link in with local marketing initiatives. How will the ‘hubs’ access and make a meaningful impact on marketing direction?

£3m boost for Q&A improvements
£3m will be injected into the further strengthening of the QA scheme and support the very real need for improvements to training and development of skills, training and staff retention within the sector. It is understood that the QA assessment will flag training needs which will in turn be taken up by ‘tourism training’ follow through. It is understood that the £3m will be spread over 2004/05 and 2005/06

- STF welcome this initiative and look forward to better targeted training delivery within the industry. It is assumed that businesses will be required to match fund training costs. If the initiative levers more money into training form both the public and private sector the initiative should be highly recommended and supported by STF and the industry.
• Major concerns remain as to how VS will manage to deliver through a registration led QA scheme. Will we end up with a beurocatic increase and ‘QA police’ monitoring Scotland?

• It is clear that significant detail is required before detailed comment can be made on this particular initiative.

**Abolition of ATBs**
The 14 ATBs will be phased out over the between now and April 2005. Immediately, to satisfy statutory requirements, two new ATBs will be formed which will be in line with HIE and LEC boundaries. The existing 14 ATBs will in turn be converted to regional hubs. The 14 hubs will integrate with and be accountable to VisitScotland. They will retain wide-ranging powers to respond to local circumstances and continue to engage with local businesses in order to deliver the national strategy and concentrate on serving the local needs of visitors. It is understood that as an initial phase three project management co-ordinators are to be established to tackle and manage issues that emanate from the ATBs as they enter into the phases of integration to final abolition.

• The removal of ATB boundaries is welcomed. The feature of boundary dictated marketing has been highly criticised within the industry for some time and the removal of this obstacle so delivering seamless customer information is good news both for the industry and the visitor. Hopefully the many good local initiatives brought forward by several ATBs to overcome boundary restrictions will be allowed to continue and be developed further. The executive are looking for increased local business participation with the hubs- how will this be achieved and how will the private sector activity level targets set to each hub?

• STF remain keen to better understand what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that high levels of local collaboration is maintained and developed.

• The present unworkable financial arrangements that have plagued the ATB network since their creation in 1996 have been swept away. For some time it has been very apparent to many involved in the industry that present system did not support the efficient and seamless delivery of customer service to tourists and visitors.

• This initiative will result in cost rationalisation within the network. STF sincerely hope that any savings made are redirected to marketing initiatives and not into higher centralised office costs. What are the likely impacts on trained ATB staff who have local knowledge and are our face to face contact with the visitor?
• What are the key issue and impacts surrounding the key gateway city ATBs in Glasgow and Edinburgh and how does this link with dispersal of visitors out to the rest of the country?

**Stronger linkages to Enterprise Networks LECs and Local Authorities**

• STF welcome the strengthening of local and national links with the economic development agencies across Scotland. Effective marketing supported by effective industry development and training initiatives will further strengthen the potential for businesses to take full advantage of national support mechanisms. It is hoped that closer partnership led local projects will enhance local tourism products and service levels.

• STF seek further clarity on the roles of the Enterprise networks and the non-marketing activities within VisitScotland?

**Scraping of membership scheme**

ATB membership will be phased out by March 2006. The new VisitScotland will not be a membership based organisation with businesses buying services from VisitScotland as and when required. This move is likely to be welcomed within the industry and allow for a more direct business to business relationship to develop between the industry and VisitScotland.

• STF does hold a concern that during the transition period ATBs may lose vital subscription revenue during the coming year as businesses may elect to ‘leave’ early.

• Every effort should be made to ensure this vital source of income is not lost to ATBs which may harm their short term ability to carry on with vital local support functions.

• As a subscription based organisation STF should recognise the opportunity that exists to increase membership once ATB membership is scrapped.

**Changing relationship with Local Authorities**

The current funding relationship with local authorise will cease on the removal of statutory ATBs. This is very much welcomed by STF. Local Service Level Agreements will be entered into between VisitScotland and Las. The success of such agreements will be critical to the success of the sweeping change to our industry. LAs are now faced with making a clear decision as to the level of tourism delivery services that will be made available at a local level. Whilst this is in the whole a positive step there remains the potential of inconsistent service delivery between regions within Scotland.

• Local Authorities contributed £8m to ATBs. It is vital that through the service level agreements and through local initiative that such monies are
retained within the industry, if not the £17 m marketing increase will be diluted. The test will be if there the £8m investment can be maintained if not grown over the coming two years.

- A major challenge exists to keep the £8m investment form LAs within the industry and that sums are not diverted to other areas of LA budgets.

**Comment**

- STF believe that the changes announced will allow the industry to move forward. There is every likelihood however that the proposed marketing budgets will prove to be under resourced as the emerging eastern European countries develop effective tourism strategies and enter the very competitive European short break markets.

- STF would urge ministers to remain open to the idea of further increases in the funding of VisitScotland marketing as global competition increases and as individual opportunities arise.

- The changes very much put the onus on VisitScotland to deliver a wide range of marketing and operational deliveries across the tourism network. The role of operational provider is one that will require a great amount of detail to be made available before full consideration can be made of the review in this a vital aspect.

- There is a very real need for VS to engage with the industry better than has been in the past. VS carry out a great deal of very good work but the communication of such development work is not always best communicated to the industry. This fact is accepted within VS and is one that STF should assist.

- The effective linkage between VisitScotland and vistscotland.com is essential and every effort should continue to be made to link the primary national e-portal with continued dynamic and well researched marketing campaigns. It is essential that marketing campaigns continue to have strong ‘call to action’ messages so as to ensure interests created in Scotland are converted to hard enquiries that can in turn be converted to new business through the contact centre and linkage to individual businesses.

- The review has offered some fundamental changes to the way our industry will promote and deliver key services on the ground. It is clear that a huge amount of detail as to the delivery mechanisms remains to be advised to industry partners.

- Some quarters view the review as not having gone far enough and that the core local delivery problems have not been addressed.
The Executive have set the target of increasing revenue spend on tourism within Scotland from its present level of £4.4bn to £6bn by 2015. This represents an annual growth of 4% per annum. This in itself is not an overly ambitious figure as the world tourism market is set to grow by 4% pa over the same period. In effect the policy adopted by the executive is for Scotland to hold its share of the growing world market.

It is clear that many aspects of the review require further detail and explanation. Close liaison will be kept with personnel at VS and the executive to ensure STF are in a position to answer pertinent questions from the industry.

STF
March 2004
FUTURE OF SCOTLAND’S TOURISM – COSLA COMMENTS

Introduction

The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Enterprise and Culture Committee’s consideration of the Scottish Executive’s proposals for the future of tourism in Scotland.

This written response will be complemented by evidence that will be presented to the Committee by COSLA’s Economic Development and Planning Spokesperson, Councillor Willie Dunn on Tuesday 25 May 2004.

Background

COSLA contributed to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee’s previous report on the Future of Tourism in Scotland, which was debated in the Scottish Parliament on 13 February 2003.

At that time, we were disappointed that the report made little mention of local authorities’ considerable contribution to tourism. This was despite COSLA giving detailed evidence to the Committee, including a report prepared on COSLA’s behalf by SLAED (the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development Group), which clearly demonstrated that the role of Scottish councils, as direct providers of visitor products, had not been given the recognition it deserved. It showed that, while there was general acknowledgement of the role of councils in supporting the Scottish tourism sector through responsibilities for licensing, planning, trading standards, roads, transport and other services, Scottish councils role as a major stakeholder in tourism was far greater than this.

As well as having the lead role in community planning partnerships, Local Government is a major provider of tourism – it is the largest provider of visitor attractions nationally, and is responsible for the largest share of visitors to attractions throughout Scotland. We know from first hand experience how much money and employment tourism can generate locally.

Add to this the fact that funding from local authorities has been crucial to the operation of Area Tourist Boards (ATBs). 33% of ATB funding comes directly from Local Government, and 10 of the ATBs have local authorities as their greatest revenue funder, providing up to 60% of revenue funding.

There can be no doubting that Local Government has been and remains committed to tourism in Scotland.

The Future

The Scottish Executive’s sudden announcement on the future of tourism in Scotland earlier this year was welcomed by Local Government. If nothing else, it brought to an end a long period of uncertainty in the tourism industry.

We welcome the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport’s explicit identification of Local Government as a key stakeholder. However, much remains unclear from the Minister’s initial announcement in terms of how the new hub structure will look and operate across the country.
We are certainly not opposed to change and have long argued for a more joined up approach to tourism. We therefore welcome the opportunity to be directly involved in the project teams charged with developing the future structure for the tourism industry across Scotland. We are committed to delivering with the Scottish Executive, VisitScotland and others on that.

We acknowledge, however, that this won't be easy and below we identify a number of issues that we will be seeking to resolve over the coming months.

**Local Democratic Accountability**

Local authorities are more than substantial funders of the existing ATB network. Across the country we also provide services, staff and property that supplement the work done by ATBs. We are also community leaders, heading up Community Planning Partnerships and promoting community well-being. Tourism and the benefits it brings are integral to this.

The future hubs must retain strong links with Local Government. Obviously, if local authorities are funding hubs, they will want a guarantee that these funds are benefiting their area and responsive to local opportunities. No-one is better placed at the local level than elected representatives to identify the local priorities that will contribute most effectively to the well-being of the area.

We are very concerned that the new structure, as described so far, removes this local accountability. Instead, it appears to encourage working with private sector led Tourism Action Groups to formulate local priorities. How the priorities identified by such a structure would relate to the local community plan(s) is unclear.

**Funding**

Related to local accountability is funding. With less direct impact in identifying the priorities for local tourism spend, local authorities cannot be expected to continue providing existing levels of funding.

Further, there is a suggestion that funds may be held centrally by VisitScotland and allocated as appropriate to hubs. We would have serious concerns if this were to be the case, as it moves accountability for funds raised locally even further from the tier of government closest to the public in that area.

Local Government is best placed to identify local needs and the money required to meet them. Further, through the development of community planning partnership working, spending is increasingly being ‘joined up’ at a local level to meet local needs. The benefits of this must not be lost.

There is talk of “partnership agreements” but how these might work in practice is unclear. Will such agreements exist between hub and individual local authority; or, where appropriate, hub and group of local authorities; or VisitScotland and (group of) local authority(ies)? Could hubs provide different services, resulting in the need for authorities to set up an agreement with more than one?

If it is a group of local authorities engaging the hub in a partnership agreement, then they will seek to work together either formally or informally to ensure the agreement is for the benefit of the area as a whole. This could mean them individually and collectively developing their own tourism strategies to inform the partnership agreement. The existence of such a grouping, Tourism Action Groups and other stakeholders all contributing to the development of tourism locally seems to run counter to the intention of the new structure – namely that it should be less bureaucratic.
A Way Forward?

COSLA is not arguing for the retention of ATBs as they currently exist. We want an integrated approach that delivers locally, as well as linking effectively to the national strategy for tourism. One possible innovative option is to use Section 19 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which allows Scottish Ministers to establish, by order, a corporate body on application by a local authority and community planning partners. Section 19 is not prescriptive about the constitution and functions of the body and these are determined by the order to establish them. We believe that, because these can best reflect local circumstances and potentially allow community planning partners and other relevant stakeholders to work effectively in partnership, this might be a model worthy of consideration.

Other Issues

A number of other issues remain to be resolved.

ATBs were set up with local authorities and, as now called, VisitScotland as founder members. There is an argument therefore that any assets should not simply transfer to VisitScotland when ATBs cease to exist, but should be shared between founders.

Existing legislation allows local authorities only to promote their own attractions. Promoting the local area must be done through the local Area Tourist Board. Once Area Tourist Boards cease, the legislation requires to be amended. COSLA would argue, to better reflect the reality of community planning, it should be removed completely.

COSLA acknowledges the key role that cities can play in developing Scotland’s tourism. Any new structure must strengthen the links between urban and rural areas to allow all of Scotland to benefit.

The future for Tourist Information Centres remains unclear. Again, they must not be seen in isolation, but as an integral part of the development of Scotland’s tourism product.

While marketing is clearly to be the core activity for the future, training and visitor attraction management must not be forgotten as both are key to attracting and retaining tourists in Scotland.

Conclusion

While we have set out a number of concerns above, particularly regarding the retention of local democratic accountability and funding for Local Government, COSLA is keen that this submission not be interpreted as negative. We believe the above highlight real issues that require to be resolved if the Scottish Executive’s proposals are to be deliverable and effective.

COSLA is fully committed to working with other key stakeholders to address these issues over the next few months. We believe that outcomes acceptable to all can be achieved and, as a result, the tourism sector can be improved, visitor numbers can increase and even more money can be generated for the Scottish economy.

For further information please contact:

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18 May 2004
The following is a bullet-point summary of the consensus views of Area Tourist Boards following the Scottish Executive’s ATB Review announcement on 11 March 2004. Further detail will be provided orally during the Committee’s evidence session on 25 May.

Our immediate reaction on 11 March was to say that:

- We were pleased that an announcement about our future had at last been made after a Review lasting some 2½ years.

- We supported the announcement’s broad vision for a more integrated tourism support structure throughout Scotland.

- We also welcomed the additional investment announced for tourism marketing and the emphasis on quality, skills and training.

- However, we noted that, other than briefly mentioning a structure of 14 new area “hubs” of VisitScotland, the announcement contained very little detail about the proposed new structure, and that some major questions and concerns remained (see below).

Since the announcement was made:

- We have been pleased that the Executive itself is leading the transition process and has adopted a very participative approach. All ATBs, local authorities, the Enterprise networks and business representatives have been invited to play an integral part in developing the operational detail which will determine the ultimate effectiveness of the proposed new structure.

- We have been encouraged by the Executive’s apparent willingness to adopt a flexible approach to the structure at local level, so that local partnerships and working practices which are currently effective are not abandoned in the name of “one size fits all” centralisation.

- Communications between all those involved have, by and large, been effective and inclusive.

- Almost all ATBs have already seconded senior staff, or given substantial staff resources, to the transition project and its many working groups.
However, despite these encouraging signs, it also must be reported that none of our major questions and concerns have yet been answered satisfactorily. Briefly, these are:

- Under the proposed system, there will no longer be membership of tourist boards or democratic accountability at the local level to either tourism businesses or funding partners - this is a matter of particular concern for local authorities. We are concerned that, as they come to realise they will no longer have control or much influence on the way in which money is spent and decisions are taken locally, (a) businesses will disengage from the structure (with implications for quality assurance) and (b) tourism will slip down the public sector’s agenda.

- Whilst the Executive has said that the new tourism hubs will have local flexibility of operation and delegated powers (albeit working within a national framework) the extent of these powers is unclear. In particular, it remains to be clarified whether local areas will continue to be promoted by the hubs as tourist destinations, as is done by ATBs at present.

- Crucially, there has as yet been no clarification about whether the hubs will be budget holders with powers to spend money on locally-identified priorities, and/or whether they will have local fundraising responsibilities. We feel that delegation of meaningful financial powers to the hubs is essential for many reasons, not least to stop the risk of “drift” towards centralisation.

- The Executive envisages that local authorities will continue to be the main funders of tourism, via “partnership agreements” with their local VisitScotland hub. But it is unclear how such arrangements would work, particularly with respect to the future provision of Tourist Information Centres.

- Although the Executive has said that “most” of the 800+ ATB staff will transfer to become employees of VisitScotland in April 2005, VisitScotland has given no indication of how it will fund these large costs, nor given longer-term guarantees to staff.

In short, although some progress has been made and ATBs welcome that fact that they are being fully involved in shaping the future, we also feel that there needs to be heightened awareness of the substantial risks being taken – principally the risk of alienating and disengaging tourism businesses and funding partners.

My colleagues and I look forward to expanding upon these points further during our evidence session on 25 May, and in the meantime we hope this document has been helpful.

ROBIN SHEDDEN
CHAIR, SCOTTISH ATB NETWORK

19 May 2004
AREA TOURIST BOARDS

JIM DEWAR

The Minister for Tourism has announced that the Area Tourist Boards (ATBs) are to be replaced by an integrated VisitScotland network. The announcement follows extensive consultation and review.

This briefing describes the role of the existing ATBs and summarises the response of stakeholders to the consultation exercise. The Minister’s proposals for the new integrated network and how this is to be implemented are outlined. Legislation will be required.

SPICe briefings 02/50 Tourism Scoping Paper (Burnside 2002a) and 02/97 The Economics of Tourism (Burnside 2002b) give further information on tourism in Scotland.
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................................................... 3
ROLE OF AREA TOURIST BOARDS ......................................................................................................................... 3
REVIEW OF AREA TOURIST BOARDS .................................................................................................................... 3
  Summary of Responses ...................................................................................................................................... 4
  Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee .................................................................................................. 4
AN INTEGRATED NETWORK .................................................................................................................................... 5
SOURCES .................................................................................................................................................................... 6
INTRODUCTION

Following extensive consultation and a review of the Area Tourist Boards the Tourism Minister, Frank McAveety, announced on 11 March 2004 that

“Area Tourist Boards will be replaced by an integrated VisitScotland network, with 14 local tourism hubs corresponding to the ATB boundaries. Primary legislation will be brought forward as soon as possible to make this change, and a transitional period will see the present ATBs reduced to two.” (Scottish Executive 2004a)

Tourism is important to Scotland. It generated £4.5b of gross revenue in 2002 and supports over 200,000 jobs (Scottish Parliament 2004). Many of these jobs are in rural areas but although tourism as a generator of jobs is more significant to the rural economy than the urban economy, the biggest concentrations of tourism related jobs are in Glasgow and Edinburgh. (Burnside 2002b)

Tourism is a growth industry. Spending on tourism world wide is forecast to grow at 4% per annum through to 2020. Although spending on tourism in Scotland grew by 6.5% in 2002 this followed several years of decline. (Scottish Parliament 2004)

At a Scottish level, VisitScotland takes the lead in marketing tourism in Scotland while Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise have a role in developing and supporting tourism businesses.

ROLE OF AREA TOURIST BOARDS

There are currently 14 Area Tourist Boards (ATBs) in Scotland. They were established in 1996 as part of the then Secretary of State for Scotland's Review of Scottish Tourism. Each ATB is constituted as a statutory body and provides the focus for tourism activity at a local level. They are responsible for:

- providing customer information services (primarily through Tourist Information Centres)
- marketing the local area
- enlisting the support of the local commercial tourism sector and providing opportunities for local trade partners through membership development
- developing and implementing Area Tourism Strategies

The ATBs bring together the public and private sector at a local level and provide a link between tourism interests at national and area level. Funding comes from the relevant local authorities, local enterprise companies, VisitScotland and from commercial members which pay membership fees. Local tourism businesses which decide to join as members benefit from marketing, accommodation booking and other promotional activities and services (Scotexchange 2004).

REVIEW OF AREA TOURIST BOARDS

In September 2002, the then Minister for Tourism Culture and Sport, Mike Watson, initiated a period of consultation on whether changes required to be made in the Area Tourist Board
arrangements (Scottish Executive 2002). No specific proposals for change were put forward but views were invited on

- the future role of the Boards and their relationship to VisitScotland
- the structure of the 14 Boards
- the importance of cities as gateways for tourists
- the role of local authorities
- the ATBs relationship with Local Enterprise Companies and with businesses
- the ways in which information is provided to visitors

Summary of Responses

A summary of the responses was published in March 2004 grouped under three headings by type of respondent –local authorities, ATBs and tourism businesses (Scottish Executive 2004b):

Views of Local Authorities

- there needs to be a much more coherent way of integrating support for tourism businesses at the area level with the VisitScotland national tourism strategy
- the issue of adequate and equitable funding for the area tourism support mechanism was seen as crucially important
- there needs to be more clarity of public sector roles and responsibilities
- particular gateway locations (especially Glasgow and Edinburgh) are of vital importance to tourism across Scotland
- despite the increased use of the internet, there is a continuing role for local provision of information to visitors through some form of Tourist Information Centre network
- ATB boundaries are less relevant than before, or even irrelevant; local authority input is vitally important, and LAs should maintain their involvement with tourism in their areas, as should the Local Enterprise Companies

Views of Area Tourist Boards

- some in favour of structural status quo, but greater co-operation between ATBs
- ATB central services transferred to VisitScotland
- maintain/secure LA role in core -funding ATBs
- LA representation on VisitScotland Board

Views of Tourism Businesses

- abolish or reduce number of ATBs
- replace with some kind of centralised network under VisitScotland
- all marketing should be carried out at national level by VisitScotland
- businesses should be able to have all-Scotland membership of the network.

Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee

The Scottish Parliament Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee (2003) published a Report on the Future of Tourism in Scotland. Because the Minister's ATB Review was still underway during the inquiry the Committee opted not to take direct evidence on the ATB structure and to focus its attention elsewhere but the Committee made the following comments and recommendations:
the link between ATBs and VisitScotland needs to be strengthened. ATBs should be more closely linked to VisitScotland by contributing to the delivery of a Scottish tourism strategy

irrespective of the outcome of the ATB review and the view taken of ATBs as membership organisations, there will continue to be a need for representation of local tourism businesses

the Committee recommends that any future ATB structure should be flexible to accommodate the different roles and strengths that ATBs have in different regions. In particular, in the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow the ATBs have a distinct role in acting as gateways to Scotland in leisure tourism and in dispersing tourists elsewhere. Edinburgh and Glasgow also play a vital role in attracting business tourism, which is orientated to cities. Given their past role in indirectly driving tourism in Scotland, it is important that Edinburgh and Glasgow continue to be supported to maintain this drive

the Committee recommends that the future pattern of local tourism information provision be reviewed given the changing ways in which tourists access information (e.g. websites)

AN INTEGRATED NETWORK

Ministers have concluded that Scottish tourism will be best served by replacing the 14 ATBs with an integrated VisitScotland network, similar to the Enterprise Networks. It is intended that the new structure will

- consist of 14 local tourism hubs responsible for the delivery of the national tourism strategy in their area while able to respond to local circumstances
- charge for services to local tourism businesses
- work closely with the Enterprise Networks and LECs to integrate tourism business support
- receive funding from local authorities on the basis of service level agreements
- be given specific targets to increase jobs and the value of tourism in rural areas and proactively use the major cities as gateways to the rest of the country
- develop new products and services in conjunction with businesses

The proposed new network will require primary legislation and the intention is to bring this forward as soon as the parliamentary timetable allows. However, in order that the new network can build on the skills and expertise of the current ATBs and to minimise disruption to the tourism industry and ATB staff, transitional arrangements will be put in place to allow the new network to be established by April 2005.

The Scottish Executive plans to lay a statutory instrument before the Scottish Parliament in the autumn which will wind up the existing ATBs in April 2005 and replace them two new Boards under the control of VisitScotland. It is planned that these new Boards (one for the north of Scotland and one for the south) will not be prominent to visitors or the industry. Instead they would act as a stepping stone to enable the new network to be up and running by April 2005. It is planned that most of the present staff of the ATBs will move to the new structure on that date.
SOURCES


*scotexchange.net* [Online]. Available at: http://www.scotexchange.net


*VisitScotland* [Online]. Available at: http://www.scotexchange.net/tourism_organisations/visitscotland_-_introduction_-_tourismorganisations_-_tourism-vs.htm
Enterprise and Culture Committee
Meeting 25 May 2004
Public Petition PE694

Introduction

The Committee took evidence on 23 March 2004 from Mr Alan Kennedy on behalf of the Machars Broadband Action Group, on the e-petition PE694.

The petition called for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure provision of broadband facilities to all communities throughout Scotland by mid-2005.

Mr Kennedy has been provided with a copy of the Committee’s Report on Broadband, published on 20 May 2004. The report covers the issues raised by Mr Kennedy, and concludes that:

‘The Committee believes that the Executive should now follow the example of Northern Ireland and other regions and commit itself to take the necessary steps to secure near 100% coverage by summer 2005 by the most appropriate means. This would address the concerns of people in these residual areas who currently have little confidence that this will happen.’¹

Recommendation

Members are invited to agree formally to close consideration of this petition.

Simon Watkins
Clerk

¹ Enterprise and Culture Committee, 4th Report, 2004 (Session 2) Report on Broadband in Scotland