

East Neuk Tourism Association – January Meeting

22 January 2026, The Ship Inn’s Cabin, Elie

Please note our new, dedicated email address – eastneuktourism@gmail.com.

1. Welcome, Apologies and Minutes

- Thank you to Rachel and her team for hosting us at the Ship Inn’s Cabin.

Attendees

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Gillian Maclaren, Chair | Pittenweem Properties |
| • Bill Bruce, Vice Chair | Different Voice |
| • Tim Findlay-Coulson, Treasurer | The West End Bar |
| • Manuela Calchini, Secretary | |
| • Cllr Alycia Hayes | Fife Council |
| • Gregor Bisset | Welcome to Fife |
| • David Keen | VisitScotland |
| • Rachel Bucknell | The Ship Inn |
| • Thomas Innes | Anstruther Fishbar |
| • Judith Dunlop | Elie Seaside Sauna |
| • Kate Butler | Scottish Seaside Saunas |
| • David Chalmers | Strathvithie |
| • Bill Porteous | Pittenweem West Braes |
| • Alex Nairn | Elie Leisure |
| • Sandy McNaughton | Sandcastle Cottage |
| • Evelyn Boyd | Anstruther Harbour Festival |
| • Brad Eggleston | Umlungu Art |
| • Daryl Wilson | Guide Us Breaks |
| • Elizabeth Tobin | Dos Mundos |

- **Apologies:**

Andrea, Kingsbarns Distillery; Jayson, East Neuk Seaweed; Michele, Puffin Cottage; Sandy & Helen, Sandcastle Cottage; Damon & Nick, The Shoregate; Sophie, The Cocoa Tree; Ruth, The Dory; Lisa, East Neuk Orchard; Peigi, Crail Museum; Bea & Chris, Harbour Burger; Chris, The Wee Chippie

- **Minutes**

Proposed by Tim F-C

Seconded by Daryl W

2. The Ship Inn

The Cabin was opened in 2019, and it serves as a private space and as the Cricket Pavilion on match days.

Cricket will resume this summer and there are plans for a polo match on the beach, either in May or September. There are also a number of music events.

Information on the Ship Inn’s events calendar can be found here:

[What’s On – The Ship Inn | Elie](#)

Hogmanay and New Years Day as well as 2nd Jan went very well. Winter business is supported by various promotions – beer promo for Scotland Rugby matches, Sunday night stay overs for free when spending a min of £ 150 on food and drink.

The Ship Inn also offers a loyalty card scheme across TBCPUB Company sister venues such as The Crueso in Lower Largo and The Ratho Inn near Edinburgh
[LOYALTY CARD – The Ship Inn | Elie](#)

3. Finances

We currently have £ 6479 in the bank, which includes 75% of our Welcome to Fife project grant, with remaining 25% still to be received. We still have to pay £ 3600 to Scunnered Digital for the training courses and £ 180 for venue hire at Bowhouse. The Crail map costs are ringfenced at £ 1500. This leaves us with a net position of £ 2268 of unrestricted funds.

4. Update, Welcome to Fife

- **WtF Annual Review Available**

- [Welcome to Fife 2025 Review - Welcome to Fife For Industry](#)

- **Flickr –**

Site is now live and businesses can request images for use. Where possible we will respond to requests that day, but we would advise planning ahead for use of images. Please use the [request form](#) as this allows us to monitor who is using images and feedback on the results of the project. We will set this up as an initial trial over the next couple of months, we welcome feedback on how it is working for businesses and where we can make changes we will do. Please note images are still being added, so please check back regularly for new photography.

- Please visit [Photography Library](#) for toolkit and request form
- Welcome to Fife Flickr - [About Welcome to Fife | Flickr](#)

- **Visitor Levy**

- Consultation on a potential Visitor Levy in Fife extended to allow further consideration of flat-rate option. Fife Council has extended its public consultation on a potential visitor levy to 31st January 2026, allowing additional time for feedback on further options around how a levy could be structured. The extension follows a recent Scottish Government announcement confirming that there is an intention to introduce legislation to allow councils to explore a fixed flat-rate levy option, alongside a percentage-based model. This legislation is expected to be taken forward by Government early in the new year, and Fife Council wants to ensure local communities, businesses, residents and visitors have the opportunity to comment on this option as part of the consultation process.
- [Fife Visitor Levy - Welcome to Fife For Industry](#)
- [Fife Visitor Levy – Online Information Session - Welcome to Fife For Industry](#)
 - 15th January: 11:30 – 12:30
 - 20th January: 18:00 – 19:00

- **Non Domestic Revaluation**

Fife's business community will soon be affected by the Scottish Government's non-domestic property revaluation, which takes effect on 1 April 2026. This is a national regulatory process, where The Scottish Government sets the level of non-domestic rates on each commercial property and Councils, including Fife Council, administer the collection of those rates on behalf of Scottish Government.

Engage directly with the Assessor's office before 20 February 2026 if you have concerns or wish to discuss pre-agreement options. Taking early action can help secure certainty and reduce the need for later appeals. For queries or to arrange discussions, please contact the local Assessor team at Fife.Assessor@fife.gov.uk.

[Non-Domestic Revaluation 2026 – Draft Valuation Roll - Welcome to Fife For Industry](#)

Short Term Lets

- Control areas - a paper on short term let control areas went to Cabinet Committee on 8th January recommending that no control area be introduced in Fife. An amendment was tabled to allow this to be considered at a local level, and for the potential of a control area for St Andrews/East Neuk be considered at North East area committee in the future.
- Renewal process – please ensure your licence is fully renewed before the expiration date. Failure to do so will result in you not being able to trade until a new licence is granted. The STL team are in the process of contacting operators

Travel Trade

- 19 Fife business will be attending VisitScotland Connect this year along with Welcome to Fife Team.
- Welcome to Fife will attend UK inbound event for the first time in February
- Travel Trade and Tay Country activity for 2026/27 in progress and will update ASAP
- Those engaged in Travel Trade please ensure your VisitScotland and Tay Country listings are updated. Please also advise Linn of any new experiences you are planning so she can highlight at events.
- **Welcome to Fife Events**

Visit our [Welcome to Fife Events](#) pages to explore upcoming industry events and opportunities. Please see the March events listed below, which may be helpful for your business.

- **Tay Country Tourism Conference 3rd March 2025**

Join tourism and hospitality professionals from across Tayside and Fife for the Tay Country Tourism Conference 2026 taking place on Tuesday 3 March at the Apex City Quay Hotel in Dundee. This is a key event designed to inspire collaboration, share insights, and drive sustainable growth across our regional tourism industry. Early bird tickets £25+booking fee (available until 11th Jan) £30+booking fee standard price. Tay Country Tourism Conference -

[Tay Country Tourism Conference - Welcome to Fife For Industry](#)

- **Fife Food and Drink week** will take place for the third year from the 7th March –15th March 2026. Food and Drink businesses can now sign up to be included in the week and in the pre event marketing campaign.

[Fife Food & Drink Week - Welcome to Fife For Industry](https://industry.welcometofife.com/ftp-events/fife-food-drink-week/?eventstart=1772841600&eventend=1773619200&timezone=Europe%2FLondon)

<https://industry.welcometofife.com/ftp-events/fife-food-drink-week/?eventstart=1772841600&eventend=1773619200&timezone=Europe%2FLondon>

- **Fife College Hospitality Skills Project Launch** Tuesday 3rd February 2026
Fife College is proud to be the lead partner of the £2m Hospitality Skills Project within the Tay Cities Region Deal (TCRD). Part of this project is to design a clear and inclusive route into and through the hospitality sector. This has the potential to make a lasting impact on one of Scotland's most important industries and can ensure people from all backgrounds can access rewarding and sustainable careers.

This launch event brings together leaders, employers and partners from across the hospitality and skills sectors to introduce the objectives of this project and demonstrate how your involvement and support will be integral to its success. Featuring keynote speakers from industry, education, and local council, this is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the launch of a project designed to help bring hospitality the success and economic growth it deserves.

The project offers grant funding to help hospitality businesses and organisations in the Tay Cities Region invest in training and skills development. Attendees will learn about the funding available, the application process, and the opportunities this will bring to your business to invest in and develop your people.

[Click Here to Register](#) by 27th January 2026

Fife Events Strategy \ Strategic Events Fund

- New Fife events strategy is being worked on and will be available later this year
- Fife Strategic events fund there will be 2 rounds of funding up to June 2026 based on the current criteria. Deadline dates for applications 1st March and 30th June 2026. After this date criteria for strategic events fund will be changing. Any events applying are reminded that they must submit applications 3 months prior to their event to be considered.

LoveFife Points

- Working with Newburgh Community Council to develop their phone box into an information point. This is in progress now
- 4 new locations are in being explored
- Further points will be developed next financial year
- Anyone looking to distribute leaflets to other areas please contact promoting.fife@fife.gov.uk
- Form coming out to understand how the LoveFife Points are going, whether well or otherwise

Training

- Check our Business Gateway and VisitScotland for online training sessions

- Green Tourism Sustainability Support Programme - 4 of 5 sessions have been completed, 3 are recorded and on website. There are only 3 available funded memberships left, and all resources are available on our website.

Marketing Activity

- The Kingdom. Where it all Begins campaign continues to run until end Feb. A content partnership with BBC Good Food and Olive magazine went live in December. Expedia, TripAdvisor and social media campaign continues to run until end Feb.
- Campaign toolkit, including video can be accessed [here](#). Please feel free to make use of this across your channels.
- We are currently working with Procurement on tendering to appoint a new creative agency for the next 2 years to develop and build on our marketing destination campaign.

The-Kingdom-Campaign-Toolkit-2025-FINAL.pdf

- We are continuing to develop our social media channels to reach a growing audience. Remember to tag us on Instagram so we can share on stories (@welcometofife) and if your business has something new, interesting, unusual or unique which we could feature get in touch - promoting.fife@fife.gov.uk
- VisitScotland will be moving away from business listings in 2026 instead using google listings. Businesses are advised to ensure google listings are up to date so that they pull through making it easier for visitors to find out about your business and book
 - [How to create business listings | VisitScotland Business Support](#)

Have Your Say

Let's talk about council spending

[Let's talk about council spending - Fife Council - Citizen Space](#)

Like all councils, Fife is experiencing a rising demand for services, particularly as the cost of living continues to impact people and families across Fife. Tackling poverty and inequality is a priority and the council focusses on support to help people increase their income, meet rising fuel bills and access quality food and housing.

Without any other action we'd need a 7.5% council tax rise to cover costs next year. But there are options as to how we spend or save, and we would like your input to help develop these - for next year and beyond.

[Let's talk about council spending - Page 1 of 6 - Fife Council - Citizen Space](#)

Reminder

- **There may be a number of opportunities available to you please respond to opportunities ASAP to avoid disappointment**
- **Check, add and update your [FREE Welcome to Fife business listing](#)**
- **Follow [Welcome to Fife for Industry on Facebook](#) for the latest business update and opportunities**
- **[Join our monthly newsletter](#)**
- **Follow our Welcome to Fife destination socials, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn**

5. Industry Challenges

Following Gregor's report and emails from Lisa and Ruth, a discussion ensued around a number of topics which are challenging for the Self-catering sector and will affect either directly or indirectly other types of businesses.

- **Transient Visitor Levy** – the consultation is still ongoing until the end of January.
- **Short Term Let Control Areas** – at the moment the committee has decided not to introduce control areas on a Fife wide-basis. However, it is possible that more local control areas can be introduced in future and the nature of these might be very local indeed as even within the East Neuk the levels to STL provision vary significantly. According to Cllr Hayes, councillors would collectively take the decision, but considerably more investigation into the matter is required. Any changes will not be applied retrospectively, but would likely apply to change of ownership properties.
- **Short Term Let Licences** – the renewal process is now underway and businesses are encouraged to apply early, up to 6 months in advance. There will be no loss of the initially granted duration. Concern was expressed that the process is currently taking too long for new applicants who are then unable to start trading. Cllr Hayes suggested that on average the turn around for applications is 3 months.
- **Rateable Value – Re-evaluation** – this issue affects a wider group of businesses and can have potentially devastating impact on individual businesses, as high re-evaluations are leading to considerably higher business rates payable – this is not a minor increase but can amount to 200% and more. Furthermore, the low threshold of £ 12,000 for rates relief for small business no longer applies to many. There is no discount for sustainable development, geographic lines are arbitrary and the criteria for the rateable value is unclear. There was also some concern about the transparency of the process and potential appeals and we received two written submission in advance of the meeting:

“One issue I was keen to raise under AOB was the re-valuation of business rateable values in April 2026 and enquire if there were concerns amongst the group and also if there was a transparent process in place to challenge the rateable value if it disadvantages businesses financially.”

“We have been affected by the business rates re-evaluation and are looking at our options. In the Scottish Parliament Willie Rennie used our situation as an example of the unsustainable impact these assessments are having on local tourism businesses. The response from Ivan McKee (Minister for Public Finance) was predictable. He took no responsibility for the situation instead directing attention to the Scottish Assessor's office. I would be grateful if you could read this out at the meeting and record it in the meeting minutes.”

While the other issues are still to be considered, it was decided that the Re-evaluation of the Rateable Value is pressing, as the new business rates will kick in from April. Therefore a small subgroup has been set up, which will look at this matter with a view to raising the profile of the significant negative impact this will have on our industry. Gillian, Daryl, Alex and Cllr Hayes have agreed to sit on this group. If you would like to participate, please let us know via eastneuktourism@gmail.com

6. VisitScotland update 22/01/2026

- **Climate Accelerator Programme - [Free Climate Action Accelerator programme launch - News | VisitScotland.org](#)**

The Climate Accelerator Programme is a new support tool for businesses to reduce emissions and take practical climate action. It is being delivered in partnership with [Edinburgh Climate Change Institute](#) (ECCI). The aim of the programme is to accelerate climate action within tourism and events businesses as part of national goals. Businesses will receive expert guidance to help break down jargon, support in navigating legislative changes, green grant applications and funding barriers, and a benchmark of business carbon emissions and a climate action plan.

This programme is completely free. The equivalent consultancy support would cost thousands of pounds and hundreds of hours. Instead, this accessible solution requires a few hours per week over five to six weeks during the off-season.

Upon full completion of the programme, businesses will receive a certificate and online badge for use on websites, marketing and social media. Businesses simply complete a short expression of interest form and will then be allocated to an appropriate cohort. If interested, use the following link: [Climate Accelerator Note of Interest](#)

- **New map feature now available on VS.com - [Map of Scotland | VisitScotland](#)**

VisitScotland has soft-launched the new map feature of the consumer website ([visitscotland.com](#)) and it is available to view (and provide feedback on!) now. The new map utilises Google Places UI Kit, which provides users with a well-known and intuitive interface to discover individual experiences, accommodation and points of interest. The feature supports text-based search and category filters, making it easy for users to find relevant businesses.

From 21 January, access to the extranet for updating current business listings on [visitscotland.com](#) was removed. In early February, a new site search feature on the website will be introduced and the existing product search functionality will be retired. The site will connect visitors to businesses via external sources like Google and Data Thistle. To provide feedback on the new map feature, please use the following link: [VisitScotland maps feedback](#)

- **VisitScotland Business Support Hub - [VisitScotland Business Support Hub | VisitScotland Business Support](#)**

New content is continuing to be added to VisitScotland's Business Support Hub, including new training opportunities, events and webinars. The Business Support Hub is free to use and open to all. You will find tailored digital advice and support, networking and peer-to-peer opportunities, marketing opportunities, climate action planning and advice on other responsible practices.

- **Tay Country Tourism Conference 2026 (3rd March) - [Tay Country Tourism Conference | Dundee City Region Convention Bureau](#)**

The Tay Country Tourism Conference, a regional gathering covering the local authority areas of Angus, Dundee, Fife, and Perth and Kinross, will be held at the Apex City Quay in Dundee on the 3rd of March. Join fellow tourism and hospitality professionals from across Tayside and Fife and hear from industry experts, local businesses, and national and international speakers. This is a key event designed to inspire collaboration, share insights, and drive sustainable growth across our regional tourism industry. This event is suitable and open to all - whether you're new to the tourism sector or an established operator, this is your chance to connect, learn, and shape the future of Tay Country tourism.

To book your slot, use the following link: [Tay Country Tourism Conference | Perthshire Box Office](#)

7. Social Media Training

- Uptake in January has been good, but the two sessions in February still have a number of available places:

Thu 05 Feb - 12.45hrs set up, 13.00hrs start of session, finish at 17.30hrs

Fri 06 Feb - 08.45hrs set up, 09.00 hrs start of session, finish at 13.30hrs

The training was engaging, looking at main platforms to use, their respective audiences, your own objectives and how to plan your content. After the first session, it has been decided to move away from individually looking at practical working of the platforms to providing a slide-driven overview. These slides as well as a selection of the other slides will be shared with the attendees in due course once the training has been completed.

8. Future Projects and Speakers

- Fife Coast and Country Trust – to discuss the erosion threatening the Fife Coastal Path
- Visit Fife Golf Group
- Leaflet Swap
- More business events such as the one at Cambo
- Introduction of new businesses
- Can we look at being part of future influencer trips?

ACTION: Gregor to look into that

- We are currently unable to look at future projects until we know if project grants will be made available by Welcome to Fife/Fife Council

ACTION: Bill suggested setting up a steering group for future topics/invitees

9. Upcoming Events

- January

Cambo Snowdrop Festival – now until 12 March

[What's On: | Cambo Gardens](#)

- February

Scottish Festival of Real Bread, 28 February, Bowhouse

[Scottish Festival of Real Bread 2026 - Scotland The Bread](#)

- July

East Neuk Festival, 01 – 05 July, in venues across the East Neuk – main programme has now been launched and tickets will be on sale shortly, [ENF 2026 EVENTS - East Neuk Festival](#)

Crail Festival, a family friendly festival with a varied programme. Some tickets are already on sale, 22 July – 01 August, [Crail Festival 2026 – Arts & Music in East Neuk](#)

Crail Fest, a community festival, 24 & 25 July, see FB for further information

- August

Pittenweem Arts Festival, 01 – 08 August, full programme will be released in June, [Home page](#)

Anstruther Harbour Festival, 28 – 30 August, [Home | Anstruther Harbour Festival](#)

- November

East Neuk Knit, 28 and 29 November, Bowhouse, everything wool and hopefully some lamas! [EAST NEUK KNITS](#)

Venues with events:

The Ship Inn, Elie [What's On – The Ship Inn | Elie](#)

Ardross Farm [Events | Ardross](#)

Bowhouse [Events Archive - Bowhouse](#)

The Shoregate, traditional music, sessions nights: [Session nights - The Shoregate](#)

ACTION: If your business/event is not on that list, please drop us a line at eastneuktourism@gmail.com

10. AoB

- Gillian McLaren (Chair) was appointed as an additional approved signatory. Tim Findlay-Coulson (Treasurer) will now work with RBS to update account signatories.
- East Neuk Signage – issues were raised around positioning of signs and also signs that had fallen over. Gregor is to look into what can be done with regard to the fallen over sign (picture has now been provided). Original site outside Kingsbarns is no longer suitable, so we would have to find a new site.
- Brown signs – a lot seem to be lying on the ground. Cllr Hayes will look at a way how we can report them. In terms of new Brown Signs, there is quite a bit of uncertainty as visitors use sat nav rather than directional signs.
ACTION: Gregor to continue dialogue with Fife Road Department
- Love Fife Information Points – in discussions with Pittenweem Library, Crail Museum and potentially Cambo .
ACTION: Gillian to look at number of East Neuk maps that are still available.

11. Next meeting

- Date and venue to be confirmed