

## East Neuk Tourism Association Meeting, 21 May 2026

### Scottish Fisheries Museum

#### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome, Apologies and Minutes

- Apologies: Sandy McNaughton, Sandcastle Cottage; Peigi Muir, Crail Museum; Brad Eggleston, Umlungu Art; Michele Blakewood, Puffin Cottage; Bill Porteous, West Braes Project; Andrea Morris, Kingsbarns; Tim Findlay-Coulson, Treasurer and West End Bar; David Keen, VisitScotland; Bill Bruce, Vice Chair and Different Voices; Calais, Calie Tours.

#### Attendees:

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| • Gillian Maclaren, Chair     | Pittenweem Properties                   |
| • Manuela Calchini, Secretary |   |
| • Jen Gordon                  | Scottish Fisheries Museum               |
| • Gregor Bisset               | Welcome to Fife                         |
| • Thomas Innes                | Anstruther Fishbar                      |
| • Judith Dunlop               | Scottish Seaside Sauna                  |
| • Alex Nairn                  | Elie Leisure Company Ltd                |
| • Daryl Wilson                | Guide Us Breaks                         |
| • Julie Ireland               | Kilrenny Mill                           |
| • Diane Ireland               | Kilrenny Mill                           |
| • Linda Sneddon               | Honeypot Guesthouse, Crail              |
| • Nick Frost                  | The Shoregate, Crail                    |
| • Lisa Kennedy                | East Neuk Orchards                      |
| • Jamie Robertson             | Elie Select                             |
| • Hannah Gordon               | Abbeyford Leisure                       |
| • Dee Heare                   | Harbour Inn                             |
| • Deborah Brazendale          | The Scottish Countryman and B&B         |
| • Andrew Francis              | Wormistoun Estate/Coachhouse Guesthouse |
| • Emma Hamilton               | Bowhouse                                |
| • Tara Macdonald              | Madeira in Fife                         |
| • Evelyn Boyd                 | Anstruther Harbour Festival             |
| • Robbie Blyth                | Fife Coast & Countryside Trust          |
| • Marjory Wood                | Fife Coast & Countryside Trust          |
| • Fiona McLeod                | Tay Cities Region Deal                  |
- **Our guests from Levenmouth LTA:**  
Calum Mclachlan, Lomond Guest House in Leven  
Brett Coupar-Fleming, Cornerstone (antiques and Vintage), Leven
  - Outstanding action points from Minutes:  
There is currently no update with regard to East Neuk Signage and Brown Signs

Minutes proposed: Thomes Innes, Anstruther Fishbar

Minutes Seconded: Daryl Wilson, Guide Us Breaks

## 2. Welcome to Scottish Fisheries Museum

Thanks to Jen Gordon, Assistant Curator and the Team at the Scottish Fisheries Museum for hosting us.

The current exhibition is Pins and Needles, running until 18 August. The reaper is going up to Portsoy for the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival in mid-June and will be open on occasions once back in Anstruther. The Museum will also run its Kippere's Summer Club from 04 July – 16 August.

For more information: [Scottish Fisheries Museum - Events](#)

Jen has also teamed up with the Crail Museum to give a talk on 05 June on "**Come Awa' Ben - An Introduction to East Neuk Fisherfolk Homes**"

## 3. Fife Coastal Path - Robbie Blyth, Head of Operations, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust

AND

## 4. Tay Cities training grant – Fiona McLeod, Tay Cities Region Deal

You can find the presentations by Robbie and Fiona on Welcome to Fife's Industry website for ENTA under "Future Meetings:

[East Neuk - Welcome to Fife For Industry](#)

If you want to sign up to **the Hospitality Training**, please use this link:  
[New funding opportunity opens for North Fife hospitality businesses - Welcome to Fife For Industry](#)

Applications will close on 07 June 2026

- ## 5. A new East Neuk Tourism Association project for Welcome to Fife funding
- Grant applications for the next LTA project will have to be submitted by 31 July. Having looked at the potential costs and deadlines involved, we have narrowed it down to 3 ideas – can you please let us know your preference **by Thursday 11 June** either by email to [eastneuktourism@gmail.com](mailto:eastneuktourism@gmail.com) or via our FB poll on our East Neuk Tourism Association FB page
  - Accessibility Training programme
  - World Host Training, creating local business ambassadors for our area
  - Reprise of an updated version of the East Neuk Zcards

## 6. **Business Rates and potential increases in Domestic Rates** for second home owners

Info received from Gregor:

### **“Domestic Rates and Business Rates**

At a national level, the previous 200% cap on second home Council Tax has now been removed, which means councils have the option to go higher if they choose.

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Across Scotland, councils are now starting to take different approaches, and the direction of travel is clearer with numbers emerging. For example, Highland has introduced a 300% charge from April 2026, with plans to rise further to 350% and potentially 400% in later years, while Scottish Borders is now at 225% with proposals to move towards 300%. At the higher end, Midlothian has introduced a tiered approach rising up to 500% for longer-held second homes, which is the most significant increase currently in place. In contrast, some areas have taken a more measured approach — for example, Glasgow is applying a 200% premium (300% total charge), while Edinburgh has explored similar increases but paused to review further. Overall, most councils — including Fife — are still monitoring how these early changes play out before making longer-term decisions

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### **Short Term Lets – Assessment and Switching**

Whether a property falls under Council Tax or Business Rates really comes down to how it’s being used, and this is determined by the independent Assessor, not the owner.

To be treated as a Business Rates property, it needs to meet all of the following:

- It’s not anyone’s main residence
- It’s being run as a commercial short-term/self-catering let
- It’s available to let for 140 days or more per year
- It’s actually let for at least 70 days per year

If those thresholds are met and properly evidenced, the property is treated as a genuine letting business and moved onto Business Rates, where it may be eligible for reliefs such as the Small Business Bonus Scheme.

If the thresholds aren’t met — or the evidence isn’t there — the property simply stays under Council Tax, including any second home premium.

This isn’t a one-off decision either. It’s looked at each year, so properties can move between the two systems depending on how they’re being used:

- If the thresholds are met, it can move onto Business Rates
- If activity drops off, it can move back to Council Tax

In practice, it comes down to consistent letting and keeping clear records — that’s what determines where a property sits.”

- Daryl shared her insights into submitting a challenge to the Re-Evaluation notices. Here is an abstract of the main sections she used for her appeal. It is up to each affected member to work out how best to appeal, reflecting their particular circumstances. **Please note that the deadline for your appeal (online only) is 31 July 2026 and you only have one shot at this.**

**Thank you, Daryl, for your input!**

*1. Introduction - state your purpose and the basic reason why you don't agree – ie the revised Rateable Value is excessive*

*2. Summary of Grounds for Proposal*

*The revised valuation is challenged on the following grounds:*

- *The valuation exceeds the achievable rental income of the property*
- *Occupancy levels demonstrate a clear and consistent ceiling on demand*
- *The property exhibits strong seasonality, limiting annual income potential*
- *The valuation does not reflect material differences between locations, particularly when compared with higher-demand areas such as St Andrews*

*Please amend this accordingly for your own property*

*3. Trading Performance Evidence **over the past 3 years***

*The property's actual trading performance over the past three years is as follows:*

*4. Occupancy and Seasonality **over the past 3 years***

*5. Location and Market Position*

*If appropriate contrast with other locations such as St Andrews ( year-round demand, larger market etc)*

*6. Comparative Evidence*

*See if you can find a comparative property that is assessed at the same rateable value despite differences in size, location and rental performance*

*7. Conclusion*

*The revised Rateable Value significantly overstates the achievable rental income of the property.*

*Focus on slow growth in income*

*Little change in occupancy levels, demonstrating a ceiling*

*Seasonality*

*Lower rental value compared to other higher-demand locations*

*Taken together, this indicates that the current valuation is not supported by actual trading performance or market conditions.*

*With reference to Practice Note No 7 - Valuation of Self- Catering Accommodation, ask for for the following information in support of Fife Council valuations.*

1. *The Rental information used to determine the overall rental for Scotland.*
  2. *The Rental Information used to determine the level of value for Fife.*
  3. *The information used to determine the differential (if any) between prime areas in Fife such as St.Andrews and Elie, and areas of lower demand such as Anstruther.*
  4. *Proof that the increase in value for Self-Catering property between 2023 and 2026 is in excess of 100%*
- A revised Rateable Value closer to the previous assessment is considered appropriate.*

*Attachments:*

☒ *Appendix A – Occupancy Charts (2023–2024, 2024–2025, 2025-2026)*

- Nicholas suggested that we should lobby or support lobbying efforts around business rates evaluation and also VAT on hospitality

## **7. Accommodation provision for The Open 2027**

Info received from Gregor

“The Housing team are currently working through the approach for short-term lets during The Open. At this stage, it looks likely there will be a window for temporary exemptions, probably between June and November, to support homeowners who wouldn’t normally operate as short-term lets.

The detail is still being worked through, so we’ll share more on the process, requirements and any associated costs as soon as that’s confirmed.”

Around the table there was some feedback around the way that the Mike Burton Group (aka The Open Experiences) were working. Some had received no responses to their proposals.

## **8. Finances**

- Our bank balance as at 20 May 2026 is £3,268.51.
- 2025-26 social media training project: remaining 25% grant funding of £997.50 was received on 18 March 2026.
- 2026-27 admin grant of £500 was paid on 23 April 2026.
- No other amounts are owing or due at this time. Free balance is therefore as at bank.

## 9. Update from Welcome to Fife (Gregor)

### Short Term Lets

- Full Council meeting decided that area committees would have the powers to look at control areas for specific areas in Fife. Further details on how this will work to follow.

### Travel Trade

- 20 Fife businesses attending VisitScotland Connect 15th and 16th April in Glasgow with over 50 from Tay Country in total. Welcome to Fife will be representing Fife as a destination. All travel trade ready businesses are advised to ensure their listings on Welcome to Fife, Tay Country and VisitScotland are all up to date and accurate.
- Welcome to Fife attended UKinbound in Manchester with great feedback from the buyers
- Fam trips \ events in planning for later in the year during the research and development phase for the trade (Sept-April)

### Visitor Levy

- Early engagement consultation results are now being analysed and should be going to cabinet committee with recommendations in June.

### Welcome to Fife Events

- Fife Climate Friendly Tourism Forum/gathering/event - 19 May – details TBC

### • Tay Country Tourism Conference (follow up)

Overall feedback from delegates was strongly positive, with the vast majority saying the conference met or exceeded expectations and that they would attend a future regional tourism conference. Delegates particularly valued the quality and relevance of speakers, the breadth of topics, and the opportunity to connect with peers from across the region. There was clear appetite for more frequent events and for future conferences to place greater emphasis on practical learning, collaboration and structured networking, alongside continued focus on emerging themes such as AI, sustainability and visitor trends.

#### o Overall satisfaction and quality of speakers

Around 85–90% of delegates rated the conference overall, speaker line up and programme content as very satisfied or somewhat satisfied.

#### o Value of networking (and desire for more)

Around 70% highlighted networking as a key reason for attending, with over half calling for more time, different layouts or structured networking formats.

#### o Interest in AI and technology topics

Around 60% referenced AI, technology or data as either a highlight or a priority topic for future events, with many stressing the need for practical, entry level guidance.

#### o Strong appetite for case studies and real world examples

More than 60% positively mentioned business case studies, collaboration stories or international examples (notably Iceland) as particularly valuable.

- **Fife Food and Drink week (follow up)**

Survey still open: [FIFE FOOD & DRINK WEEK – BUSINESS FEEDBACK SURVEY](#)

Please take the time to complete the survey to help better future events. The current completed return is low and to get a full and wider picture more responses are needed, whether you participated or not.

- **Tourism & Hospitality Networking Morning 12th May**

Earlier in the year, a networking morning was held at Cambo Gardens, and this time the event will take place for businesses in Dunfermline & West Fife, Heartlands and Levenmouth on 12th May from 10am, at DoubleTree by Hilton, North Queensferry.

The session will begin with short showcase contributions from local businesses, including DoubleTree by Hilton and Deep Sea World, giving attendees a brief insight into their offer and helping set the context for discussion. This will be followed by timed networking sessions at mixed tables, ensuring all participants have the opportunity to introduce themselves, share what they do, and identify potential connections. The event will then move into informal networking, allowing businesses to build on the conversations started and explore opportunities in more depth. Overall, the format is designed to be welcoming, inclusive and practical, supporting meaningful connections and collaboration across Fife's visitor economy.

### **Fife Events Strategy \ Strategic Events Fund**

- First round of 2026 funding closed on the 1st March with 5 events being supported through the fund. Further support is also being offered to assist events to ensure they are more financially sustainable moving forward. This also forms part of our events action plan.
- The next round of funding for 2026 will open on the 1st May and close on the 30th June. Events looking to apply should email [strategic.events@fife.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.events@fife.gov.uk) for funding criteria and application form. This round of funding will be for events taking place between September 2026-31st March 2027.
- Fife Events Strategy being developed along with action plan

### **Marketing Activity**

We are currently scoring tender bids to appoint a creative agency to develop a fresh destination marketing campaign for Fife. It is likely a contractor will be appointed by late May.

- **Press Trips**

We recently supported a press trip for Ella Foote, Outdoor Swimmer who is writing a feature on Fife's tidal pools, due out next month.

We supported a trip late November 2025 for freelance writer Janice Hopper and the piece recently featured in Farming Scotland travel section showcasing a selection of local businesses.

- **Welcome to Fife website**

We have created a new Trails section which can be viewed here -

<https://www.welcometofife.com/fife-trails/> - and will be adding to this content over the next few weeks to include cycling, art, Forth Bridges and a selection of discovery trails.

Development is underway to create new content on the site around The Open 2027.

- Flickr

We are continually adding to our Flickr library, so check back regularly and any photo requests can be made here - [Welcome to Fife Photography Library](#) - [Welcome to Fife For Industry](#)

### **New Gaelic research survey launched**

VisitScotland is undertaking a business survey into using Gaelic in tourism which would be great to get as many businesses as possible to complete- link below  
Working in collaboration with key partners, we are encouraging tourism businesses, community groups, social enterprises and Gaelic led organisations across the country to take part in a significant new research project exploring the economic, social and cultural impact of the Gaelic language.

Why this matters for tourism

Scottish Gaelic continues to play an important role in shaping Scotland's identity, especially within the visitor experience. From place names and storytelling to festivals, community events and cultural attractions, the language provides a unique layer of authenticity that deepens visitors' connection to Scotland's landscapes and heritage.

[New Gaelic research survey launched - News | VisitScotland.org](#)

### **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 and Welcome to Fife: Posts | LinkedIn for the latest business update and opportunities
- Join our monthly newsletter
- Follow our Welcome to Fife destination socials, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn

## **10. Update from VisitScotland (received in writing from David Keen)**

### **VisitScotland Connect 2026**

VisitScotland Connect 2026 in numbers:

- 330 international travel buyers representing 20 countries
- 289 Scottish tourism businesses - including 68 new businesses
- 13 Fam Trips across Scotland's regions

Some news hot of the press – VisitScotland Connect 2027 will return to the SEC in Glasgow on Wednesday 14 and Thursday 15 April 2027, supported by Visit Glasgow. Registrations will open in early autumn 2026.

VisitScotland Connect 2028 and 2029 will return to the P&J live in Aberdeen, dates will be added to the VisitScotland Connect website in due course.

### **Pipeline events for new trade ready businesses**

[This year's Destination Management Company \(DMC\) event](#) will be 3 and 4 December this year in Edinburgh – this is for new to trade businesses and is a great introductory event (pricing to be confirmed)

London Business Development Missions (BDMs) will be 7 October for China & East Asia (approx. £300+VAT) and 8 October for North America and Australia (approx. £325+VAT) – businesses can have some experience but should be earlier in their trade journey.

These events are not ones you register for as with Connect, rather, it is via invite. Businesses can note their interest by either emailing VisitScotland's Business Enquiries Team ([business.support@visitscotland.com](mailto:business.support@visitscotland.com)) for the Note of Interest form or let me know.

### **Climate Accelerator Programme**

Lastly, cohorts for the previously discussed [Climate Accelerator Programme](#) are available to join now. A quick reminder on the programme: it is a free tool to support businesses kick-start their journey towards net zero; it is for businesses at the beginning of their journey or underway and in need of support; support will be provided by experts in helping develop a climate action plan; delivered online and in-person; next cohorts will be taking place in September and October. [Sign up is available by clicking here.](#)

## **11. AoB**

- FB page – Manuela is monitoring “inappropriate” use as this is not a Business2Consumer page
- Stock Kitchens at Bowhouse had their first demonstration event
- Dougi McMillan is the new Chair of the Pittenweem Arts Festival
- Bowhouse News:
  - The next Bowhouse Market is on 13/14 June
  - Bowhouse will be hosting summer exhibitions again under the “Space to Breathe” umbrella
  - The East Neuk Open Studios will run 07 & 08 Nov at Bowhouse
  - East Neuk Knits will be returning for its second year on Fri 27 Nov and Sat 28 Nov.

## **12. Next meeting**

Most likely at the end of September/early October.

In the meantime, we will communicate through emails and FB page, particularly around the potential project which needs to be completed by 01 March 2027.

We will also need to consider the future leadership team as Chair and Secretary will step down.