

QUEENSFERRY AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Notes of a meeting held in Burgh Chambers on Tuesday, 9th January 2018

Present

QDCC - Keith Giblett, Graeme McKinley and Jennifer Garner

Cruise Forth – Peter Wilson

CEC - Dave Sinclair, Nick Langan

Objectives of meeting:

- To present to City of Edinburgh Council, QDCC's report on the current issues and suggested solutions to explore, surrounding the liner visits and general visitor experience in Queensferry.
- To bring Cruise Forth (PW) together with CEC representatives and share an understanding of the status quo and future plans.
- To establish an update from Jim Galloway (Nick standing in) on the CEC business plan proposed at the previous meeting.
- To discuss the engagement of local businesses in future discussions.

Background

There were a number of key issues arising from the current set up with the cruise liner visits to Queensferry which were negatively impacting some passengers, other visitors, residents and local businesses and Keith had circulated a paper summarizing these.

Keith and Graeme had previously met with Peter Wilson. As a result of this meeting Peter had drawn up an action list and Graeme & Keith a QDCC report on issues & suggested solutions. There were plans to meet with local businesses; establish a business network for SQ and the surrounding area; meet with CEC and local bus tour companies; improve signage, hold pre-season briefings with local volunteers; organise familiarisation visit for Royal Princess crew.

The previous Queensferry representatives who PW liaised with, Queensferry Ambition, no longer exist. QDCC are willing to help facilitate a new forum for supporting local businesses in Queensferry and to help improve the overall visitor experience for all interested parties. It had been reported by some Queensferry businesses that December trading had been one of the poorest for a long time.

25 liner visits to SQ this coming year and, of Leith, Newhaven, Rosyth and Queensferry, SQ is the only source Edinburgh Council receives liner passenger landing fees from.

Queensferry's liner growth is predominantly at the expense of the less popular Newhaven option which is owned and currently being invested in by Forth Ports. This investment poses a future threat to Queensferry and thus significant CEC revenue.

Widely recognised need to improve transport for visitors. PW was to meet with Lothian Buses on Friday 12th Jan.

A business engagement event is planned in Corstorphine to give all interested businesses an opportunity to find out what opportunities arise from the liner visits.

A more detailed and focused meeting for Queensferry is being planned for Mar/April by PW.

Discussion

The report tabled and circulated by QDCC facilitated an open discussion about the visitor experience and where improvements are desirable.

- Car parking spaces taken away during liner visits to accommodate coaches causing a negative impact on local businesses, residents and other visitors when there is no parking at the Hawes Pier.
- Queensferry is a tourist destination and there should be some investment to improve the facilities to at least a standard that reflects and sustains that.
- Could CEC give some of the money from mooring fees back to Queensferry to make improvements? DS said that if money came back to Queensferry other areas would also expect a share of the money raised in their own area. The point was made by GM that these developments to accommodate the liner visitors should be viewed as a directly associated cost against the revenue stream from the passenger landing fees.
- Toilets are in very poor condition and give a very bad first impression to visitors.
- Some coaches approach the Hawes Pier from the west, via the High Street, which causes congestion, especially in the early morning.
- Turning area at Hawes car park dangerous. A new purpose built turning circle at the east end of the car park or east of the Hawes Inn would improve matters. The refurbishment of the High Street will also impact on traffic flow and developments such as a turning circle will be integral to that project.
- Could part of the car park for the new Forth Bridge Experience be used?
- Suggested that once the buses have departed (say 10.30am) the car parking area could be re-opened to locals and other visitors. A small number of buses return at lunch time but a smaller parking area could be made available for them. DS said that this would cause problems because it would be difficult to get cars removed before the buses returned in the late afternoon. (KG said that this was a valid point as at the Queensferry Christmas lights switching on there had been problems with locals not removing their cars). TTROs are easier to implement if the car parks can be closed for the whole day rather than have them closed then open and then closed again.
GM suggested that the allocated area could be reduced after 10:30am only to a size adequate for the lesser volume of coaches later in the day without the need to expand the area back out.
A new entrance to the promenade car park further east to facilitate this was suggested by PW and DS will look at this.
- QA had arranged for a footfall counter to be installed to give an idea of how many people came through Queensferry. What had happened to this? NL and KG will attempt to find out.
- Lots of different teams involved in liner visits but not “joined up”. There is no one person with overall responsibility and it has also been identified that there is no visible all encompassing strategic plan for the liner visits.

- Suggested that the Forth Bridge Contact Centre would be ideal for parking buses. They could be brought down to the Hawes as and when required. This would avoid the “stacking” of buses at the Hawes car park and down the Hawes Brae.

Other matters

High Street refurbishment – DS said there would be consultation before the works began to try to resolve any problems which may arise.

Forth Bridges Forum had commissioned a tourism study.

What proportion of liner visitors actually go into Edinburgh. How many go on to other destinations? PW said that 50% of Caribbean and Royal Princess Visitors take on-board excursions; mainly into Edinburgh. Minority go elsewhere if they have visited Edinburgh before. Visitors arriving at the Hawes Pier DO NOT see the historic part of Queensferry. QA had started an application to get funding for signage which might encourage visitors to walk through the town. QDCC do not have anyone to take on signage although it would support any application for signage Suggested that Queensferry Heritage Trust might have some expertise in this area

Toilets badly in need of upgrading/renewing.

There is no shelter at the Hawes Pier for visitors queuing for transport.

At low tide there is a lengthy walk up the pier for those with mobility issues.

Transport links not easily accessible nor well publicised.

No tourist information centre; reliant on volunteer guides.

Shelter on pier – Liners visit only 29 days out of 365 so a temporary shelter would probably be sufficient. DS to take this forward

Business Plan – KG said it would be good to have some feedback from Tom Dougall on the progress of a business plan. NL said he would organise a meeting with Jim Galloway, Dave Sinclair and Peter Strong and thought it would be helpful for them to have a walkabout round Queensferry.

Actions

- **Nick Langan** and **Dave Sinclair** would arrange a follow up meeting with Jim Galloway to discuss how a business plan could be developed for Queensferry Visitor Experience improvements suggested by QDCC and Cruise Forth and discussed here.
- **Nick Langan** and **Keith Giblett** to check on the footfall counter.
- **Graeme McKinley** will promote the February Cruise Forth Corstorphine seminar through social media channels inviting local businesses as a precursor to the more detailed local meeting being planned.

Keith thanked everyone for attending.