Hidden treasure: Releasing the potential of our sea and shore
MAXIMISING
on our coastline

Majestic cliffs, long sandy beaches, a compelling natural heritage and amazing sunsets – our mainland and island coastline is one of the very best things about North Ayrshire and we think there is so much more to explore and share.

With a fantastic food and drink offer, our major investment plans for the region will further build on key strengths such as our ports and harbours, maritime attractions and visitor facilities.

That’s why at North Ayrshire Council we’ve been working closely with tourism industry partners to develop Marine and Coastal Tourism over the next five years.

We’re developing a vision for Marine and Coastal Tourism, identifying investment needs and an action plan for implementation.

Together we all want to set North Ayrshire on a new course, to create a real sea change. This will see our region deliver brilliant visitor and resident experiences and on the journey strengthen local businesses, improve the wellbeing, life chances and employment prospects of all our communities. It will also put our places and people firmly on the national and international map.

The Ayrshire Growth Deal

The Ayrshire Growth Deal is set to make a step change in Ayrshire’s economic performance, enabling us to significantly enhance the area’s contribution to the Scottish and UK economies and to ensure that our communities are participants in and benefit from the growth opportunities we have set out.

Ayrshire has many strengths, its people, its businesses and its wonderful natural assets.

Our proposals are to harness these strengths and inspire a future that is more innovative, productive, smart and an economy that is inclusive.

Full steam ahead!

The North Ayrshire Tourism Industry Group and North Ayrshire Council are working towards the 2020 year of “Coast and Waters”, encouraging partnership and collaboration: together we’ll take immediate action to deliver all our ambitions by 2022.

Here’s who we have been talking to so far...

Scottish Government
North Ayrshire Council
North Ayrshire Tourism (Industry Group)
South Ayrshire Council
East Ayrshire Council
Argyll and Bute Council
Inverclyde Council
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Tourism Alliance
Visit Scotland
Third Sector partners
Local people in North Ayrshire

Our Partners
TOURISM MATTERS

We all know that visitors are important to Scotland as a whole – but did you know that tourism has real potential to make a massive difference to local economic revival?

In real terms, tourism currently brings in a staggering £11.5 billion a year to Scotland’s economy. What’s more, this flourishing, home-grown industry is already a serious provider of jobs: it’s estimated that some 220,000 people are employed in tourism right now.

The National Strategy – Tourism 2020 – produced by the Scottish Tourism Alliance identifies four main tourism strengths:

- Nature, heritage and activities
- Destination towns and cities
- Events and festivals
- Business tourism

North Ayrshire and Arran tourism performance in 2016 saw over 1.7m visits and spend of over £186m (up by over 6% on 2015)

Marine and Coastal Tourism activity is absolutely key to North Ayrshire, already directly supporting local jobs, encouraging visitors and helping promote the area as a great place to work, live and play. We believe it can play an even bigger role.

Our coastline is unique, and a powerful part of our profile, both in tourism and economic terms. Within 5 kilometres of our coastline you’ll find it’s:

- Home to 55% of the population of North Ayrshire;
- The location for 89% of our towns (of over 10,000 population);
- The destination for 80%+ of international visitors.

The Firth of Clyde is one of the largest areas of deep sheltered water in the UK.

Increase in international visitors to Scotland.

Growth in international visitors spending.

Tourism currently generates to Scotland’s economy.

Around £3.7 billion is spent around marine tourism in Scotland every year.

The other estimated £1.4 billion is spent on general recreation and tourism like beach days out, walks and coastal cycling.

£2.3 billion is spent on water-based activities like wildlife watching, sailing, kayaking, surfing and angling.

Big ships and small boats are, and have been, an essential characteristic of the Firth of Clyde.
OUR AIM

“The next five years will see North Ayrshire and the islands come together to deliver unique and memorable coastal and island experiences for the community and the visitor.”

OUR INSPIRATIONAL COAST & SHORE

Our coastline can be a place of quiet beauty, calming cloudscapes and a rich, natural haven for birds, plants and animals.

It’s also a place of bustling waterways and vibrant seaside communities. And there can be no denying the magical stories and deep-seated heritage that resonate throughout North Ayrshire, from the landing of the Viking ships to the Victorian heyday of going “Doon the Watter” on a Sunday outing from Glasgow.

The coastal theme is strong and forms connections between our natural and cultural heritage through to modern maritime activities and events. We want to explore those connections and develop our coastal story even further, deepening both visitor enjoyment and civic pride by encouraging our towns and villages to work together.

By effective collaboration we can all help to attract more visitors and encourage them to stay longer and spend more in our unique environment.

OUR PRIORITIES

Heading towards the 2020 year of “Coast and Waters” our priorities are to promote and develop the key natural assets to attract visitors, generate new enterprise and build on our links with the islands, Inverclyde and Argyll.

Our existing harbours and ports are ideal for the development of an exciting cluster of sailing, tourist and commercial activities linked to the potential expansion of marina infrastructure and the regeneration of local communities.

By setting in motion our plan of action, we aim to increase the economic and social benefits from the visitor economy. We believe passionately that investment in our coastal projects will significantly enhance the perception of North Ayrshire as a fantastic place to visit.

THE ACTION PLAN

DOWN BY THE SEA

Our destination development and marketing priorities will focus on:

- Destination experiences and telling the story - with a commitment to game-changing projects and critical infrastructure
- A joined-up approach (this applies to both the industry and to the products and experiences)
- A compelling market presence and position.

SHIP TO SHORE

Our infrastructure priorities are:

- Guiding, influencing and supporting investment in key tourism infrastructure and facilities and creating a World Class Marine and Leisure Infrastructure
- Supporting key opportunities allied to the Ayrshire Growth Deal, including Irvine Harbourside-Ardeer and Ardrossan
- Investment will support linking the islands with the mainland in creating World Class Marine & Leisure Infrastructure

DRIVING GROWTH

Our business development priorities are:

- Supporting tourism businesses innovate and improve productivity and work together to deliver growth for their business, great visitor experiences and support skills and training across the sector

THE PERFECT STAGE

Our events and festivals priorities are:

- To identify and develop events, particularly on a thematic basis where the underlying theme strengthens the positioning of the destination experience, addresses seasonality, attracts new markets and injects new energy into local community festivals
Central to our vision of embracing our maritime legacy and releasing the potential of our unique coastline is a pioneering and ambitious plan: to develop our coast into a powerful brand and compelling destination in its own right for local, national and international visitors.

Echoing the success of routes such as the Wild Atlantic Way and the North Coast 500 this will be a large-scale new tourism initiative, engaging with industry, local communities and potentially beyond. Strengthening the competitiveness of North Ayrshire and its destination experiences will require an industry led approach, supporting recreational and infrastructure opportunities that support the growth of tourism within North Ayrshire.

We will work to deliver a ‘joined-up’ approach to marketing and promotion, product development, infrastructure, leadership and collaboration.

A priority is to attract more visitors to North Ayrshire and we will support and encourage the development of outstanding products and experiences that draws out what makes North Ayrshire different from other destinations. This will be a cornerstone of building a compelling market position.

We will also:

- Engage private and community tourism operators
- Be a focal point that links key destinations, activities and communities
- Define how the coastal proposition integrates with marketing of the whole area
- Ensure events and festivals (which stimulate visitation) are a major part of the marketing

Our coast will be the magnet that gets people to come to North Ayrshire. Once here, visitors will want to experience everything the coastline has to offer them and their friends and families, encouraging them to eat, drink, shop, play and stay.

“We want to raise recognition and motivate visitors”
SHIP TO SHORE

Investment in North Ayrshire’s coastal environment, tourism infrastructure, visitor attractions and events is absolutely essential for us to meet our ambitious but entirely achievable goals.

We need to raise our game ever higher in terms of the overall visitor experience, through spending wisely on specific projects to help local businesses contribute to, and profit from, our transformed coastal destination.

We will work in partnership to develop our coastal assets for the benefit of our communities and businesses. This will specifically consider the upgrade of existing infrastructure and where needed the provision of new marine facilities, supporting commercial opportunities and employment.

This work will support the Scottish Governments “Awakening The Giant” marine strategy, putting North Ayrshire on the map as a marine destination of choice.

Where do we need to invest?

Creating a World Class Marine and Leisure Infrastructure.

WE WILL SCOPE PROPOSITIONS AND THE BUSINESS INVESTMENT CASE FOR:

- Ardrossan Harbourside
- Irvine Harbourside – Ardeer
- Irvine Contemporary Arts – a new iconic attraction
- The Harbourside River Mile
- Improved access to the water - slipways and “step a shore” programme
- Support the development of Growth Deal priorities
- Additional infrastructure requirements will also be developed supporting the coastal journeys and experiences these will recognise the scale of our ambition and provide improved shore facilities, whilst promoting the key gateways to our islands
Team North Ayrshire will develop a growth led approach to working with Tourism Sector businesses. Considered on a sectoral basis, against other key growth areas, Tourism ranks 5th in regional importance.

Key work being advanced includes:

- Encourage new business formation to meet the needs of visitors and offer new employment prospects locally
- The development of an account management approach to manage and support a portfolio of tourism growth potential companies
- To be the one stop shop for targeted tourism businesses when navigating Council services making access to Council services easier
- Work with strategic partners to deliver a collaborative approach to the promotion and uptake of digital skills (including helping to ensure tourism businesses use digital technology to be more efficient, reduce costs and increase profits)
- Help enhance the skills base of workers - including digital skills – to contribute to the quality of visitor experiences and local regeneration
- To develop extensive stakeholder relationships with local and national bodies to help drive the effectiveness of business support in North Ayrshire
THE PERFECT STAGE

Events, festivals and themed years play a central role in Scottish tourism, galvanising partners to work across boundaries and creating a strong collaborative platform to promote Scotland and its people.

North Ayrshire will be exceptionally well positioned to capitalise on the upcoming Scotland’s Year of Coast and Waters 2020 which will support the marine and coastal tourism sector throughout Scotland and the marine tourism strategy ‘Awakening the Giant’.

We also want to create our own distinct events programme during this most timely of themed years. The Ayrshire coastline, the Clyde and the Islands provide a superb opportunity to create a celebration of coast and water and a legacy of activity which will go beyond not just 2020 but also beyond 2022 – the period of this plan.

We want to identify and develop events that address seasonality, attract new markets and inject new energy into local community festivals to align with Scotland’s Year of Coast and Waters in 2020. We’ll continue to support and invest in golf events.

Make sure we compete for and win ‘mobile’ events and encourage local events to grow.

Marketing events and festivals digitally will integrate with overall plans for promoting the area and its attributes.

We will also:

•  Build on our existing events
•  Consider opportunities for regional “Signature Events”
•  Support our communities to promote and grow local events
•  Develop our events infrastructure and facilities

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS - OUR AMBITIONS

Sailing and Watersports
•  Support the Irvine Harbourside Festival
•  Support the development of the Ayrshire Series Rowing Regatta
•  Explore hosting the Coastal Rowing World Championships

Heritage
•  Test the feasibility of a Clyde Maritime Festival

Golf
•  Promote golf including the return of the AAM Scottish Open events
“Ayrshire, through the Clyde Islands and Coast, and with the creation and development of its coastline, has the potential to offer a tourism destination of choice for a high quality, value for money and memorable customer experience delivered by skilled and passionate people.”

North Ayrshire Council invite you to be a part of this exciting approach. For more details on how you can get involved contact:

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