

## Clim-ATIC WP4 S2 (Cairngorms Tourism) Project Plan

### I: Project title & description

#### **Stay & Play - selling alternative activities to the wintersports market**

The project will use technology to aid last-minute cross-selling of a variety of tourism products when winter sports are not available at Cairngorm Mountain due to lack of snow or poor weather conditions.

The tourism industry in the Badenoch & Strathspey region of the Cairngorms National Park makes up an estimated 80% of the local economy, attracting 1.16 million visitors and contributing over £137million in 2007. A local skiing industry means that tourist numbers are less seasonal than many other rural areas of Scotland. However, a series of unreliable winters in terms of snow cover and weather conditions, together with increased availability of low-cost flights to other destinations, threatens the local winter tourist economy.

Each winter there are an average of 20 days when Cairngorm Mountain ski centre is unable to run uplift, either due to lack of snow or often due to high winds and stormy conditions. Additionally there are days where limited snow cover means ticket sales must be limited. On these days, inevitably there are disappointed customers, many of whom have travelled a significant distance to ski or snowboard. These visitors have money in their pockets (a day ticket in 2007/08 was £28) and currently the majority of them make their way home disappointed.

This project will use Bluetooth technology to get up-to-date information on alternative visitor activities and other tourism offers to visitors at key points - at Cairngorm Mountain itself, at Rothiemurchus Estate where electronic signage updates on ski lift status, and at the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in the village of Aviemore.

Local activity providers, retailers, attractions and other tourism dependent businesses, will be encouraged to have a flexible 'bank' of special offers that can be rolled out at short notice and promoted to frustrated snowsports visitors via Bluetooth to their mobile phone handsets.

This main aims of the project are to:

- a) Bolster the local economy by encouraging visitors to remain in the area and spend money even when their chosen activity is not available.
- b) Mitigate against visitor disappointment and resentment by offering alternative activities.

In terms of timescale, it is hoped that a pilot project will be up and running by February 2009. The project can then be tweaked for a wider roll-out in winter 2009/10. Much of the investment will be in developing the necessary software for the system and undertaking initial publicity to promote the scheme to businesses and

to visitors, so the system could run in perpetuity with a small amount of advertising revenue from the tourism businesses using the system.

The system could also have a number of other uses throughout the year. For example, accommodation providers could use it to display availability during the peak season, so visitors arriving after the TIC had closed could still access information.

Initially the demonstration project would focus on Cairngorm Mountain and the Aviemore area, as it has a high proportion of activity providers and a visitor demographic who are likely to be comfortable with the technology. However there would be an opportunity to roll it out to the rest of the Cairngorms National Park at a later stage.

## 2. Relationship to main project

- Specific climatic modelling information from WP2 will be sought, specifically for the local snowsports industry but also for other activities ie. effect of rainfall patterns on watersports.
- Would like to arrange learning journeys for some of the local activity providers particularly to the proposed projects in Are and Rovaniemi.

## 3. Project Funding Partners

The project will be fully funded through NPP Clim-ATIC budget WP4 S2.

## 4. Project Management Structure / steering group

Project Co-ordinator	Heather Trench, CNPA	01479 870545	heathertrench@cairngorms.co.uk
CNPA Board liaison	Bob Kinnaird, Cairngorm Mountain	01479 861306	bob@cairngormmountain.com
Technical administration	Alan Rankin, Aviemore & the Cairngorms Destination Ltd (ACDMO)	01479 810200	<a href="mailto:Alan.rankin@visitaviemore.com">Alan.rankin@visitaviemore.com</a>
	VisitScotland Contact TBC	01463 244100	
	Outdoor activity business Contact TBC	TBC	

## 5. Project Activities & Deliverables

Activities:

- Development of MiniGIST software to allow visitors to access information and offers to their mobile phone via Bluetooth transmission points.
- Integration of supply-side information with existing ACDMO website database to simplify data input for businesses.
- Installation of Bluetooth transmission points at key visitor locations. Three initial priority sites have been identified (see map), but this technology is relatively inexpensive and it would be straightforward for other locations, eg. accommodation providers, to also install transmission technology.

- Marketing & promotion of the service including clear demarcation of transmission sites.
- Training for businesses on use and promotion of the technology.

Deliverables:

- Flexible and dynamic visitor information, available to the visitor free of charge.
- Outlet for local businesses to promote products, services and offers, particularly when weather & snow conditions currently lead to visitor disappointment.
- A destination that is perceived as 'multi-activity', and is less reliant on reliable snowfall in the winter season.
- A destination that is perceived as catering for the needs of, and communication with, its key customer segments in a manner that is congruent to their life styles.
- A project that majors on cross selling between tourism businesses - a key aspect of the national strategy for tourism growth. (TFFC 2005-2010 )

The success of the project can be monitored by measuring:

- The number of handsets logging in to the transmission points.
- The number of customers who subsequently take advantage of an alternative activity or other offer (can be measured by transmitting 'special offer' codes)
- The number of businesses using the system.
- The number of offers and updates transmitted by businesses.
- Customer satisfaction survey feedback reporting.

Initially the service will be free to local businesses, as they become comfortable with the technology and begin to see the system working. After Clim-ATIC funding ceases, the project should be self-sustaining through affordable advertising charges for transmission, either on a set charge for annual use or a small fee per transmission.

## **6. Risk Analysis and Mitigation**

The project essentially develops a method of communication between businesses and visitors. It thus relies on both groups to be engaged in the project and comfortable with the technology. In a trial of Bluetooth software elsewhere in Scotland, the technology is working, but the scheme is poorly promoted, businesses are not engaged and the customer demographic are not currently comfortable with the technology.

- **Business engagement.** Business buy-in is critical to the success of the project, as the software will need to be regularly updated with up to date information and offers from local businesses.

Outdoor activity businesses have been contacted with details of the project, and, with only one exception, are very supportive, and keen to get involved in the project. Businesses can already upload offers onto the ACDMO website and information updates for the Bluetooth software will be uploaded in the same way, and at the same time, making the system user-friendly.

- Visitor engagement. As with any technology project, success will rely on users having a) appropriate equipment and b) the knowledge, understanding and confidence to use the equipment.

The vast majority of mobile telephones sold today are Bluetooth-enabled, and the technology is generally used to transfer data to hands-free headsets, or by young people to communicate with each other free of charge. While the application of the technology to transfer tourist information is at a relatively early stage, it is expected to grow and thus customers will be coming increasingly as a result of the technology.

Promotion, and explanation, of the scheme will be critical and a total of £9.5k has been budgeted to allow staff training and visitor promotion of the project. The initial snowsports audience are generally technology-savvy, and currently seek weather and conditions information through recognised channels, largely e-mail and web-based. Information about the project can thus be communicated through these channels and the inclusion of snow conditions and weather information on the bluetooth system should attract them to try the technology.

## 7. Project reporting

The key points for reporting to the WP leader would be:

- On issuing a contract for the software development (Sept/Oct 08)
- When software has been developed and the system is being trialled (Feb 09)
- After the end of first winter season when success can be monitored (May 09)
- When software has been revised based on initial monitoring (Oct 09)
- After end of second winter season when success can be monitored (May 10)

## 7. Dissemination

The project will be available for interested parties to view from Feb 09. We anticipate that there will be interest in the project from other destinations within Scotland and the UK, as well as Clim-ATIC partner regions.

As this is an innovative use of new technology in Scotland, we would expect to see PR interest in the project.

## 8. Links to other projects

Could be potential links to GIS demonstration project in Norway.

## 9. Project finance

The total budget of £25k is broken down on the attached spreadsheet.

## 10. Summary Project Programme

Date	Activity
Sept 08	Project approval
Sept 08 – Jan 09	Software development
Nov 08 – Jan 09	Hardware installation and trialling
Feb 09 – April 09	Winter season 09 trial
May 09	Analysis of winter 09 trial
May 09 – Nov 09	Software revision based on trial outcomes

	Trialling of other Bluetooth application summer 09
Dec 09 – April 10	Winter 10 trial Exchange visits
Autumn 10	Transnational conference - presentations
Jan - Feb 11	Demonstration project report prepared