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North Sea Commission Food Event 2006

Dundee 31 August – 1 September 2006

Report and Suggestions for Executive Committee

The second North Sea Commission Food Event was held in Dundee 31 August – 1 September 2006.

The conference had been co-organised by the co-ordinators of the three thematic groups Education & Research, Economic Development and Culture & Tourism, along with the four East of Scotland councils of Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth & Kinross, and with Dundee College as the host and responsible for technical arrangements.

Lunches were provided by Dundee College and Perth & Kinross Council gave the conference dinner. The four parallel study tours were co-financed by each of the four Councils of Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth & Kinross.

It was a highly successful conference and event, although attendance could have been much higher.

Programme

The keynote speakers were excellent and addressed a number of issues that should interest all member regions of the North Sea Commission.

The themes of the conference were

Food & Health (mainly looking into food safety and school meals)

Food & Innovation (defining innovation in a broad sense that should be relevant to all NSC member regions, and that would include the introduction of traditional products to new markets/new ways of marketing)

Food & Sustainability (including subjects like food miles)

Food & Tourism

Except for the first theme, there were keynote speakers for each of these, two British and one Norwegian. In addition, there were four parallel working sessions, each based on one of the four themes, and here there were also at least two speakers from different countries to spark off the discussions.

A Keynote Speech to stimulate thoughts for the second day was provided by Professor Hugh Pennington, emeritus professor of the University of Aberdeen.



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NSC Vice-President Audrey Findlay and NSC Culture & Tourism Group Vice-Chair Alan Livingstone chaired the sessions. Vice-President Findlay was also responsible for the concluding remarks of the conference.

The conference was outcome focused, and the sessions were meant as networking meetings, trying to define future projects. The networking was continued during the four parallel study tours after lunch the second day of the conference.

The Culture & Tourism Group had a debriefing meeting immediately following the event, and the following evaluation was decided there:

Reflections on the NSC Food Event 2006 from the Culture & Tourism Group

Acting Chair Alan D Livingstone presented six points for discussion:

1. Numbers attending, which he found disappointing
2. Keynote speakers, which he found very good
3. Discussions/workshop, which he again found Ok
4. Looking for outcomes, which he felt was very good, as the conference indeed produced tangible outcomes, a thing often lacking at such conferences
5. Study tours, these were varied and highly applauded
6. Hospitality – again this was indeed very good.

One might think that the themes of the conference were too broad, but the good thing about this was the excellent interaction between people presenting different approaches to the food theme and this helped produce good outcomes.

The organisation of the conference was also felt to be perfect.

Commenting on Alan's points, other members seconded his views in general, and specially commented that the keynote speakers were very good. In the workshops, there appeared to have been too many presentations in the Food & Health session, and unfortunately, this session also lacked the trans-regional perspective, as only Scottish delegates attended.

The focus on outcomes was felt to be a good approach, but these must also be communicated to the outside world.

A problem with the networking tours ('study tours') was that a number of delegates withdrew in the last minute, but those participating felt that it was a good networking exercise. In any future conference, it was recommended that the discussions could be integrated into these tours.

It was recommended that there be a review conference in about 2 years time.

Concluding, it was agreed that

1. East of Scotland partners take the Objective 3 project proposal forward
2. A follow-up conference should be organised

The Culture & Tourism Group can take up a number of the issues discussed at the conference



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The Dundee challenges for NSC member regions

The conference raised a few issues that the NSC member regions ought take up. These relate to all four themes, but some of them relates to corporate behaviour, whereas others would require policy actions.

The challenges relating to corporate behaviour relates to issues similar to the Porsgrunn Challenge.

For Food & Innovation, the keynote speaker presented some challenges:

1. Local purchase of food – this relates both to local producers, the reduction of food miles
2. Support local innovative products

For Food & Health the main challenges are

3. Buy healthy food
4. Provide healthy school meals – promote healthy eating (habits) among pupils and students

Food & Tourism challenge No.1

5. Prepare a Food and Tourism plan for the region

And also

6. Produce a plan for local distinctness, products and marketing

Food & Sustainability

7. Buy Fair Trade products
8. Buy local products and reduce food miles