

**02 November 2010**

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Free Tourism Networking Event For Local Businesses**

TOURISM businesses in Falkirk district are being invited to a free networking event this month.

Firms will hear about a multi-million pound project to attract more visitors to the area, and meet the new chief executive of Visit Scotland, who originally comes from Stenhousemuir.

The event will take place in historic Stirling Castle on November 16 and will start at 6.30 p.m. It has been organised the new Forth Valley Tourism Partnership - which includes Falkirk Council - in conjunction with VisitScotland and Historic Scotland.

The Council's tourism convener, Cllr Adrian Mahoney, said: "Tourism plays a vital part in our local economy and we would encourage any tourism related business to attend this event.

"There will be a great opportunity to hear about the £12 million restoration of the Palace section of Stirling Castle. This new attraction is set to be unveiled next Easter, and should bring even more visitors to the whole of the Forth Valley area.

"In addition there will be a chance to hear from the new chief executive of VisitScotland, Malcolm Roughead - and to network with other local businesses."

He added: "This is a free event. However, places are limited and are being allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. RSVP no later than Wednesday, November 10, to Audrey Morgan on 0131 472 2100 or email: [Audrey.morgan@visitscotland.com](mailto:Audrey.morgan@visitscotland.com)."

The evening will consist of networking opportunities, followed by presentations and a Q&A session.

Malcolm Roughead will discuss his ambition for the local visitor economy and outline the changes required to grow local tourism.

Mr Roughead was previously Director of Marketing at VisitScotland for the last nine years, and will focus on three key themes during the evening: sustainability, partnerships and opportunities for tourism. He said: "I am delighted to invite tourism industry representatives to this special evening in one of Scotland's most prestigious and historically important venues, Stirling Castle.

"In the current climate it is essential we work closer than ever before with our partners in the industry to create sustainable opportunities for growing tourism in the local area and for Scotland as a whole. I look forward to meeting and listening to as many businesses as possible on the night."

From Easter 2011, visitors will be able to step back into the sumptuous world of Stirling Castle's royal court. The £12 million project will return the six ground floor apartments in the castle's Renaissance Palace to how they might have looked in the mid-16th century.

The castle's executive manager, Gillian MacDonald, said: "It will be a pleasure to welcome local businesses to the castle for an update on the progress of the Palace project. I hope that in these difficult economic times the opening of a new and exciting world-class attraction will benefit the entire area."

This event is the latest for the tourism industry in the area instigated by the Forth Valley Tourism Partnership.

The Partnership brings together local players from both public and private sectors in Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannanshire, including the three local authorities, with the aim of driving forward local tourism priorities, exploiting common strengths and developing an action-based approach to local tourism strategy.

The partnership launched last year under the chairmanship of Falkirk's Cllr Mahoney.

Cllr Tony Ffinch of Stirling Council has now taken over the chair's role (which rotates annually around the member councils).

Cllr Ffinch said: "The Forth Valley provides a wide range of attractions and experiences for visitors from young to mature and the young at heart. We especially welcome hospitality business representatives to this event to enhance, consolidate and fulfil the visitors' expectations."

- Falkirk Council (02/11/2010 )