

Tourism

An Introductory Guide for Community-Led Projects



OVERVIEW

Tourism is one of Scotland's largest growing industries. For communities, tourism can be a strong – albeit seasonal – source of income.

Community-led tourism is usually based around assets, such as heritage trails or campsites. Community-led tourism has the added benefit of safeguarding cultural and historical heritage through community investment and engagement,

as well as bringing local land management into line with community goals.

Responsible tourism is a concept that places emphasis on sustainability (environmental, cultural and economic), inclusion, and communities. It aims to ensure tourism creates better places to live in and visit, without damaging the environment.

STARTING POINTS

1. VisitScotland

VisitScotland is the national tourism organisation for Scotland and can provide many resources for community-led projects. Its main aim is to contribute to the advancement of Scottish tourism globally. It works with the tourism industry providing news, research and personalised business advice. Go to the Corporate pages of the website for details of a wide range of support on offer.

All tourism businesses can apply for a free listing on the visitor pages of the VisitScotland website.

2. Research potential obstacles

Consider any challenges or restrictions in the local area when planning a project. Business planning should take into account visitor numbers, seasonal variations in trade, other visitor attractions in the area, volunteer availability, location and public transport infrastructure. The [VisitScotland Research and insights](#) pages have the most recent statistics on visitor numbers and other data that can help with your business planning.

Due to the seasonal nature of tourism, consider the implications of using zero hours contracts. It is important that Fair Work is part of the project, more information on this can be found [Fair Work Convention Scotland](#).

3. Use regional organisations

Location specific organisations can be a great starting point for any community-led tourism project. [The South of Scotland Destination Alliance \(SSDA\)](#) is the strategic Destination Management and Marketing Organisation for the South of Scotland. Membership is open to all tourism related organisations across the region.

[Scotland Starts Here](#) is a tourism program designed to draw more tourists to the South of Scotland and promote its role as part of Scotland's heritage and history.

It has a directory of different tourism experiences, food and accommodation providers and an event listing. Run by the SSDA, it supports marketing, capacity building and product development.

3. Apply for certification

One way to increase legitimacy in this community tourism space is to apply for certification. There are a number of schemes that offer an independent assessment of your businesses environmental and sustainable practices. An award will demonstrate your credentials and commitment to good environmental practices such as reduced water or utilities wastage and a reduced carbon footprint.

[VisitScotland](#) has further information.

Tourism businesses that are accredited under the Visit Scotland Quality Assurance Scheme can apply to the local authority for a brown tourist sign. The local authority will then make and install the sign at the cost to the business or community group.

5. Consider local tourism trends

Tourism trends can have an impact on projects and may be important to tap into, including food and drink, or heritage tourism. Many towns or areas are also tied to dedicated tourism marketing initiatives, e.g. Wigtown has been marketed as 'Scotland's Book Town'. Locally managed assets that were previously provided by local authorities, such as arts, culture, heritage, or sport, can all create attractions for tourists.

6. Explore leadership training

[Scottish Tourism Leadership Programme](#) is a programme run by Scottish Enterprise. It provides accredited leadership training and ongoing professional development for new and experienced leaders. It can offer a great starting point on any community-led tourism project, equipping you or your team with the managerial and leadership skills required to ensure the project is successful.

FUNDING FOR TOURISM PROJECTS

Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (Delivered by VisitScotland) – aiming to improve provisions for rural tourism. This is capital funding. The criteria are very specific and must be delivered through the local authority. There are two rounds per year and the process starts with an expression of interest followed by full application.

VisitScotland Growth Fund – aiming to help support communities and businesses to grow and develop in attracting more tourists and further improving their capabilities. Funding is for marketing collaborations and requires 25% private, 25% public match funding for the 50% growth funding intervention.

EventScotland – can provide advice and support on funding

opportunities, as well as resources and guidance on events and development. They also run specific marketing campaigns around “Themed Years”.

Awards for All Scotland (The National Lottery Community Fund) – can help support community organisations and projects.

Heritage Lottery Fund – can help support projects related to or involving heritage or community histories.

Local authorities – Local authorities may be able to provide advice, guidance and funding depending on the project and local context. Small projects such as signage/interpretation boards are examples of this type of project.

CASE STUDY

Wigtown Bunk House

The Wigtown & Bladnoch Community Initiative purchased a former bank building in the town centre, aiming to turn it back into a useable space for the community.

Outcome: The project led to the creation of a bunkhouse to help provide increased accommodation capacity in the town, allowing higher tourist numbers to attend Wigtown’s events. The initiative also created additional affordable housing at rent rates in line with local social housing, and a community garden providing additional outdoor social space in the area.

Carsphairn Heritage Centre

The original building was purpose built to house and display community history and heritage artefacts from the local area. This was successful in bringing more tourists to the area. However, the local community felt that the centre could be better improved and used to serve the community. The community trust therefore started the process of Community Asset Transfer.

Outcome: The project is currently in process, aiming to transform the space into a community hub for local groups, as well as improve the educational provision. This would create a greater draw for tourism in addition to benefits provided for the community.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Organisation	Remit	Community Focus	Case Studies	Technical Information	Networking Opportunities	Funding Information
<u>VisitScotland</u>	Scotland's national tourist organisation. Able to provide support, guidance and resources for communities and potential projects aiming to increase their tourism draw.		✓		✓	✓
<u>South of Scotland Destination Alliance</u>	Membership organisation that manages destinations and marketing for the South of Scotland.		✓		✓	
<u>Scottish Tourism Alliance</u>	Member organisation for tourism businesses in Scotland. They can provide support and advice for businesses and may be of benefit to community groups.			✓	✓	
<u>Tourism Intelligence Scotland</u>	Collects and analyses tourism statistics in Scotland. May be beneficial for some communities as a tool to analyse where there are strong or weak draws with visitors.			✓		
<u>SCOTO</u>	SCOTO is a network of community tourism enterprises located throughout Scotland and led by a team of dynamic individuals who each have extensive and varied experience in community tourism.	✓	✓		✓	
<u>Scottish Rural Network</u>	Network organisation helping those in rural areas to develop their businesses, skills and assisting with the development of project.				✓	✓
<u>NatureScot</u>	Scotland's nature agency. Works on conservation and promotion of Scotland's natural spaces. Provides support and guidance on tourism and interacting with Scotland's natural environment.		✓	✓	✓	✓

South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) is the economic and community development agency for Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders. We offer support, funding and specialist knowledge to help community initiatives and social enterprises across the South of Scotland to grow and achieve their aspirations. To contact SOSE:

- Go to <https://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/contact-us> and fill in the enquiry form
- Call 0300 304 8888