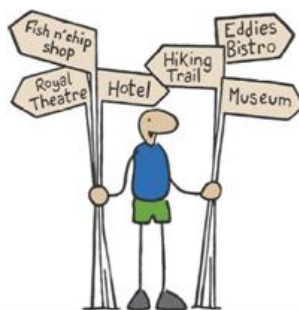


Pride of Passion

FOR SCOTLAND



'Community Challenges are set up to help communities understand how to make their tourism offering better, they will pay back time, money & effort invested and will be a hugely beneficial experience.'

Balloch

Balloch is located at the southern end of Loch Lomond and importantly is the Gateway to the National Park. The area is exceptionally well promoted and the Balloch Forum realised that although there was a reasonable mix of tourism business in Balloch village along with the Loch Lomond Shores development which includes indoor retail facilities, more could be done to offer visitors both in terms of things to do and the quality of the experience. Specifically it was suggested that a series of events could be run as a way to attract more visitors into the village in the shoulder and off season periods.

"As a gateway to the National Park the village has a key role to play in welcoming visitors and can benefit from economic activity generated through tourism if this is well managed and balanced with the needs of the local residents" **Balloch & Haldane Community Action Plan 2008-2011**

Initially a proposal was put forward to run a ten week winter festival on the Moss of Balloch close to the recently improved Balloch Castle Country Park. The main attraction would be a mix of retail and craft stalls and demonstrations showcasing iconic Scottish products, the retail element sought to compliment what was on offer at Loch Lomond Shores. The winter festival never came to fruition, mainly due to planning restrictions. In the summer months a series of events in the Balloch and Loch Lomond area already successfully attract people to the area.

What the 'Community Challenge' provided

A public meeting kicked off the Community Challenge in Balloch where local tourism people were warmed up to the benefits and approaches of working together and the potential financial gain that could come from new collaborative projects. A Director from a key attraction in Glasgow volunteered her time to take part sharing her experiences and approaches.

Thereafter, a visitor experience workshop was held at the Loch Lomond Shores Centre. As part of the day folk were challenged to mystery shop their local area by having lunch in their own 'back yard'. Seeing things from a visitor's perspective was a revelation and prompted ideas about what was missing or could be done better. Businesses particularly enjoyed the networking opportunities, learning from other people's experiences and understanding the relevance of cross-selling local services and activities.

Case Study

However it was not all plain sailing, many businesses over the past few years have been involved with numerous training events and so were already quite skeptical about what they thought they might get out of any workshop.

Sometimes there comes a point where training or workshop events have run their course and events can be made to be more palatable if they are offered up as experiences. Being given the opportunity to network with other businesses from other parts of Scotland and to hear how they have approached things is far more appealing.

From an outside perspective it was felt that there was potential to link business along the southern and western shores of Loch Lomond to inject more energy and momentum into projects.

So as it stands, there are still a small group of businesses progressing some key projects however as yet the magic formula to create more involvement from a greater number of people is still illusive. Most of the projects on the go at the moment are marketing led, for example a Loch Lomond portal is being developed for which funding is being sought from VisitScotland's Growth Fund.

What did we all learn?

- A number of goals, however small, agreed between a sectoral mix of local businesses will help to get things moving.
- Effective leadership is vital to maintain people's focus and bring out the best in those involved.
- Responsibility for driving projects rests with group members and ideally representatives from different sectors.
- A pool of ideas mixed with a good dose of energy produce the best projects and ultimately make for a more sustainable approach.
- A 'gatekeeper' will prevent the flow of ideas, activity and broader participation. It creates a barrier for new ideas reaching a broader audience.
- If things are not moving along as fast as you hoped ask yourself who else or what other local grouping could I work with and who could maybe give us a different perspective on what is already being done.

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