

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.'

Linlithgow rises to the COMMUNITY CHALLENGE

'There are many, many groups in this town, each doing things for the community, for businesses or other interest groups but until now, they've never spoken to each other or worked together to achieve things for the town or to make things better for visitors.' **Ronnie Bamberry, Linlithgow Tours**

Does that sound familiar? Possibly – because it's often the case in towns and villages across Scotland. Everyone is busy concentrating on their own area of interest, perhaps not realizing that getting together with other groups could be useful to all of them. Back to Ronnie again: *'Being selected as the first Community Challenge location gave all the Linlithgow interest groups the impetus to get round a table and work out how we could help each other, make things better for visitors and help the town at the same time. It's been so motivating to have everyone working towards the same goals for the good of the place as a whole.'*

After an open meeting for all the town's organizations, a common over-riding ambition was identified: to change the view of Linlithgow from a commuter town, to a place worth visiting; a 'tourism' town. All the local bodies and businesses got on board, the Council too, and all the town's visitor attractions were keen to be actively involved. A tourism and marketing consultant who lives in Linlithgow volunteered his services for free, to help get the strategy and action plan in place.

It's not about joint leaflets!

The first thing the volunteer steering group did was take a look at Linlithgow and what it had to offer through the eyes of people visiting the town. They also realized that in a lot of cases they didn't really know who was visiting, or why, so they decided to do some research to find out. Importantly, the group realized that the thing they needed to address to get more visitors and indeed business from *each* visitor was to look at what the town was offering to the visitors and how it was doing so. They wanted to get that into better shape before addressing the promotion of the town: they realized it was about more than just a joint leaflet.

A Town Centre Management Group was also set up to help bring the council, businesses and community interests together and help coordinate some of the work to make the high street environment and experience better for everyone.

Case Study

The group quickly realized that there needed to be an easy way for people to find out about Linlithgow, its attractions, events and businesses and that the web was the ideal way to bring this all together in one place. A local web design company's contribution to the project was to design and create a 'portal' or front end to seamlessly bring lots of existing websites and information sources together under the name www.linlithgow.com. It's had a huge amount of traffic and didn't involve any duplication of work or re-development of existing site.

'It's the economy, Stupid!'

Every organization or business that runs events or brings visitors to Linlithgow agreed to put improving the customer experience on its 'to do' list and to look at things from that perspective when planning and staging activities. With newly-made contacts across other businesses and groups in the town, they found this, useful, enjoyable and rewarding (financially and otherwise!). Local businesses have been more able to capitalize on commercial opportunities that have arisen from better planned, better delivered activities that they've been made aware of and able to offer extra services on the back of. New events have been added in the town, too, including a monthly Farmers' Market, a large Harley Davidson rally and Music At The Cross. Groups and businesses are coordinating efforts and extra services to give all of these extra 'fizz' and attract more day visitors – and their wallets - to Linlithgow.

What the 'Community Challenge' provided

'The Community Challenge really has been the catalyst for all this collaboration and development – it's given us the impetus, as well as access to expert input to help us' says **Alan Young, The Linlithgow Story Museum.**

Pride & Passion events such as the Discovery Tours tempted individual businesses into the spirit of the project, taking tourism people on a typical visitor's day out in their own back yard. The idea was to give them first-hand experience of the places they thought they knew about (but hadn't been to!) or didn't even know were there. Attractions benefit from this increased knowledge because the more tourism people know about what's out there, the more able and willing they are to tell visitors about it and recommend it. Other development opportunities such as 'Customer Experience Safaris' were offered to business and civic leaders, as well as customer care workshops delivered by a specialist theatre company. At these events, more connections were made and ideas and enthusiasms shared.

What did we all learn?

A few nuggets came to light through this pilot scheme in Linlithgow:

1. The enthusiasm and commitment of local champion (in this case Ronnie Bamberry) was picked up on by all the others involved, and it helped motivate them to take part and keep going.
2. A lot was achieved in the six months the Community Challenge lasted for, but it's not really long enough....so future ones will run for at least a year, maybe eighteen months.
3. People really enjoyed the 'esprit de corps' of working together, in some cases for the first time outside their own business. The Challenge was individually as well as collectively beneficial.
4. A sense of common purpose and focus helped to generate ideas to make things better and bring more business to Linlithgow: it provided another angle to think about, beyond the day-to-day.
5. The competition is not the business down the street – working together will boost everyone's situation. Don't be shy about opening your business up to show what you're doing well, or what you'd value some input on.

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