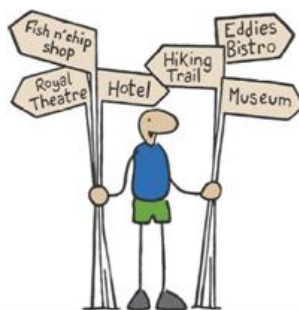


Pride of Passion

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.'

Peebles

Peebles is recognised as an independent retailing town which offers a unique shopping experience in the Borders. The Peebles Retailers Association realised that although they had a strong day visitor market, largely from the Edinburgh area, they needed to look at ways of reaching other markets and attracting more overnight and short break visitors.

During 2007 the Peebles Retailers Association, which is supported by 50 businesses, carried out an evaluation of their visitors, the report showed that there was a huge amount of untapped potential in the mountain bike and golf market. Accommodation providers were already tapping into the golf market however the report backed up the view of the PRA that they needed to do more to attract the large and growing mountain bikers which were by passing the town to go to facilities at Glentress.

It was becoming apparent that working with a more diverse range of businesses could help them develop Peebles offering. The report identified that there would be advantages for considering joint activities with local groups in the area such as Tweed Valley Tourist Consortia. Also to enable them to increase their membership, the association renamed itself the Peebles Traders Association. It was felt that new blood would encourage more participation in driving forward activities.

"There should be a greater spread of responsibility and ownership of roles within the committee and wider membership to avoid reliance on a small number of people" **Peebles Retailers Association Evaluation Report 2008.**

The report revealed that visitor numbers were up on previous years and that visitors enjoyed the experience of the independent shopping on offer, the local people, the relaxed and friendly atmosphere and the small/quaint town atmosphere.

"This report confirms our ongoing campaign to firmly establish Peebles as a unique visitor destination both locally and nationally is paying off in real, measurable terms. The increase in visitors and in spending in the local economy is extremely encouraging, but we can't afford to stand still and this is only a fraction of what can be achieved if the town's retailers, visitor attractions, civic authorities and politicians work together" **Bob Corsie, Chairman, Peebles traders Association.**

Case Study

During 2007 the association undertook a number of initiatives, one of which included collecting information about visitors to the town by placing short questionnaires in shops, hotels and cafes. The questions find out about the type, length and purpose of people's visit, what they did while in the area, what they liked and so on. Building up a picture of the types and interests of visitors is essential so that Peebles can better respond to what their visitors want.

What the 'Community Challenge' provided

Involvement with the community challenge provided new perspectives for the association. In particular of the potential benefits gained, if the PTA looked at ways of working closer with the Tweed Valley Tourist Consortia. Although the two groups met, it was felt from the point of view of securing future funding the groups would operate better separately. A great opportunity was missed as this collaboration could offer a broader service to potential visitors to Peebles and the surrounding area, and could encourage visitors to have a more fulsome experience, by offering more to do, provide reasons to stay for long weekends and spend more. The PTA's ambition to generate more economic benefit from the mountain bike traffic heading through town is only likely to be realised if there is more to offer the mountain biking fraternity than independent retail: For instance had the PTA asked themselves if the bikers knew of the array of eating options in the town, Peebles offers a wide variety of eating options after their day's exertions.

What did we all learn?

Peebles Community Challenge experience showed us:

- Different sectors working together e.g. retail and accommodation can provide a greater range of things to do thereby attracting new markets.
- New products and ideas are totally reliant upon businesses getting fully involved.
- Securing funding from VisitScotland's Growth Fund at the same time meant that maybe the main focus of the group was concentrated more on marketing activities. Consequently the opportunities of the Community Challenge were not fully embraced.
- In these challenging economic times particularly, no business can afford to 'rest on its laurels'. An increase in visitor numbers and revenue does not mean that what is being offered by the town will be just as appealing in years to come.
- One does not necessarily need funding to drive initiatives to a higher level. Without any cost, just time, businesses can collectively agree a way ahead and take small steps to achieve these goals.

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