

Locally-Led Destination Development Meeting
Eyemouth, 22nd August, 6-8pm
Summary of meeting

Attendees:

- Morag Sallabanks, Braeview Glamping
- J Sallabanks, Braeview Glamping
- Neen Kelly, Bluebell Scotland
- Ian Tod, Eyemouth Hippodrome
- Carol Hallows, Radical Film
- Helen Laing, Sea the Change
- Mick Pawley , Eyemouth Development Trust
- Jennie Sutton , Enabling Success Ltd
- Angus Miller, Edinburgh Geological Society
- Hermione Hoffmann , Paxton House
- Carol Hamilton, Scottish Borders Council
- Tracy Drysdale, Tower Farm Holidays self catering
- Christine Bell, Eyemouth Harbour Trust
- Danielle McKinnon, Eat Sleep Ride CIC
- Hazel Smith, ReTweed/International Tartans
- Mark Hibbert, Shepherd's Rest Campsite
- Lee Elliott, Pease Bay Caravan Park
- Mark Rowley, SOSE
- David Hope-Jones, SSDA
- Gowan Miller, SSDA

Lead SSDA business contact in the Berwickshire Coast area:

Gowan Miller, gowan@ssdalliance.com, 07815 316 365

Purpose of meeting:

This meeting, hosted by the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), was one of 14 in-person and 13 digital meetings taking place across the South of Scotland. Full details can be found at: www.ssdalliance.com/destination-development/

The meetings have been arranged to allow local tourism organisations to be able to:

- Feed into the development of the South of Scotland **Responsible Tourism Strategy** which will underpin the work of all related agencies, including SOSE, Visit Scotland, D&G Council, Scottish Borders Council and SSDA.
- Feed into a local and regional plan for **extending the visitor season**.
- Decide **how the local area should be marketed** – specifically, what content should be on the ‘Scotland Starts Here’ website and what should go into the commissioning brief of a new promotional film about the local area.
- Agree how to **raise awareness locally of the ‘Scotland Starts Here’** brand and assets, so it supports local businesses.
- Agree **actionable points** which the SSDA can advance in the next six months to **meaningfully support local businesses**.



- Great local produce, try to encourage guests to buy local food and cook locally i.e fish.
- It is a challenge to get to pubs and restaurants – drink driving
- Workforce can be a challenge as well – getting and retaining
- The SUW D&G side is great, especially the equestrian access.

Next steps/actions:

Every single word shared by attendees through this system has been passed to an independent company which is collating all findings and will make recommendations on what should be in the strategy based on what was said through all the consultations. We will make public all the Menti data from all the meetings, so you can see what the 13 other in-person meetings said across the region, as well as what came up in the 13 digital meetings and the one-to-one meetings.

In the autumn, we will share the draft strategy, alongside all the results from the consultations, so those who took part can directly see how their views fed into the draft. We will invite input to the draft as it continues to develop in the autumn and will only proceed if we feel we have broad-based support from not just the public agencies involved but also the businesses, key organisations and communities. If there is consensus, we plan to launch the strategy at the start of 2024.

In the spring, when we next meet the local businesses in the Berwickshire coast area, we will formally present the final Responsible Tourism Strategy, highlighting which key points from their local input went into the strategy and discuss opportunities as to how local businesses and communities can be involved in its delivery.

How to Market and Represent the Berwickshire coast area:

Intro:

The SSDA is active in marketing all of the South of Scotland and uses the economies of scale of a ‘pan-south’ approach to ensure we are able to have the punch-through the region needs to be heard. This involves, for example:

- bringing in journalists, influencers and other media to secure national and international coverage for the region, at least every month;
- working with the Travel Trade to represent the South of Scotland at all relevant international travel expos;
- running the consumer-facing ‘Scotland Starts Here’ [website](#), [app](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and other social media channels;
- running the ‘South-West Coast 300’ route, including its [webpages](#), social media and developing and distributing printed maps (as requested by local businesses);
- securing significant global accolades for the region, including having the South of Scotland named [Lonely Planet’s ‘Best in Travel 2023’](#) and a [prestigious UCI Bike Destination](#).

However, we recognise that in addition to this ‘pan-south’ work, we also want to remain true to the *local*. We want to tell an authentic local story of place within the ‘Scotland Starts Here’ website, so we are creating landing webpages for 14 different parts of the destination and giving a high degree of local autonomy as to how each of these areas are represented. This approach has come from specific requests for a greater degree of local identity within the ‘Scotland Starts Here’ brand.

Local input:

We asked how businesses and the community wanted the Berwickshire coast area represented. The following points came up in the discussion:

- **Rugged coastline**
- **Marine life**

- Arts
- Heritage and houses: Paxton House, Eyemouth museum, Marchmont House,
- Diving
- History: David Hume (Chirnside), James Hutton, Reivers, Burns kissed the bridge at Coldingham
- Idiosyncratic pubs
- Opportunities to interact with local communities
- Eat. Sleep. Ride.
- Endangered birds (three on the red list)
- Accessibility – e.g. beach wheelchairs at Coldingham and accessible caravan that's affordable
- Walks – coastal and inland
- Horses and the legacy of animals
- All the different bridges

Ideas and opportunities:

- Connect with digital story-telling work being done at Coldingham
- Need a large visitor attraction that could go to on a rainy day. Could we do something similar to the bird centre at North Berwick? Some kind of maritime attraction?
- Could we do something like Monterey in the USA – they have a small coastline but diverse nature; they built links with academia and a world renowned aquarium.
- Natural swimming pools offering a safe place to swim

Challenges:

- Having everything in one place with clear information about what is open and what facilities are available on beaches etc – what to do on a rainy day.
- Lack of bed-stock in the area for larger numbers
- Lack of public transport
- Length of coast is short and inland is very arable

Tracey Drysdale and Helen Laing volunteered to look over the webpage/content/video we develop informed by the above.

Next steps/actions:

Within the next few weeks, the SSDA will commission a 60-90 second marketing video for the Berwickshire coast area area, based around the above local input we received. This video will be produced within the next year (depending on the season local businesses want represented) by a professional videographer.

By the time we next meet in Berwickshire coast area, we will have the Berwickshire coast area webpage live on the 'Scotland Starts Here' website and local businesses can review this and feed into the content and layout, to ensure it accurately reflects how they feel the local area should be represented.

Extending the Season:

Intro:

The SSDA has been asked by businesses and communities across the South of Scotland to help extend the visitor season. Too many tell us that they have a thriving business for eight weeks a year, a slow business in the shoulder seasons, and then have to close in the winter. We currently have one of the shortest visitor seasons anywhere in Scotland and this has various knock-on effects, including making it harder to recruit and retain staff if we cannot offer year-round employment.

This is a complex and multi-faceted challenge. It is an incredibly hard nut to crack but we passionately believe that, by working collaboratively together, and by strategically focusing a proportionate amount of destination marketing spend on the promoting the region out of season, we can begin to make progress.

But there is little value in unthinkingly promoting the region out of season, only for visitors to find that businesses aren't open and product aren't there. This is why we are having these in-person meetings across the region: to ask organisations what is open when, what appetite there is to change this, what products could bring in more visitors at quieter times, and how we could better facilitate collaboration to ensure businesses that choose to stay open longer do so without making a loss.

In support of this, the SSDA is committing £60k this year to a seasonality campaign and we will ensure that its design and implementation is informed by what local businesses have told us.

Local Input:

This is the input we had from the Berwickshire coast area meeting, with regards how we should market the region in the off-season and how we could work collaboratively to extend the season:

- **Image: having a whisky by a roaring fire (but are there these sort of pubs/attractions)?**
- **Idea: basic winter offer of soup and cake, give guests three options**
- **The café at Coldingham beach is only open in the summer but it would be a real asset if open year round. It has parking and is managed by Scottish Borders Council.**
- **Coldingham Beach huts used to spread across the bay but now far fewer with very long waiting list. Could they be extended again? (May be due to erosion)**

Next steps/actions:

Informed by the above local information, input and priorities, the SSDA will move quickly to agree a marketing strategy for a Seasonality Campaign which we will run between now and the Spring. We will have a digital meeting on the 19th September (10am) to share information and plans for the campaign, seek further input, and explain how businesses can get involved. It will be a collaborative campaign which we invite any and all to get involved with. We will then have monthly digital meetings to continue to keep businesses engaged, informed and feeding back.

In the spring, when we next meet the local businesses at Berwickshire coast area we will present on how the campaign was run, what evidence of impact there was, and we will start planning for the 2024/25 off-season.

'Scotland Starts Here' Branding

Intro:

Over the last three years the SSDA has created a strong, award-winning consumer-facing brand, 'Scotland Starts Here', with a website, app and social media presence. The social media channels raise awareness and sell the region; the website helps people plan visits; and the app is a brilliant tool to help guide and inform visitors when they are in the region.

These assets can only help power the visitor economy if people know about them, especially when they arrive in the region. 'Scotland Starts Here' needs to be a collective and collaborative endeavour: it needs to be owned by all businesses and every community in the region.

If we all shout “Scotland Starts Here” loud enough and if everyone knows to steer visitors with questions to the website and app, we can really use these tools to support businesses and improve the visitor experience.

Having agreed how we want Berwickshire coast area represented on ‘Scotland Starts Here’, the meeting discussed how best to raise awareness of the ‘Scotland Starts Here’ brand and assets locally in the area, to ensure it’s really working for local businesses.

Next steps/actions:

Everyone attending was encouraged to take the free collateral available (A4 posters, A3 posters and freestanding ‘table talkers’) which had QR codes directing visitors to the ‘Scotland Starts Here’ website, as well as branded lapel badges. The SSDA can offer as much of such collateral as is useful to build awareness and engagement locally – this is probably best done by having a local hub where we can store items, for local collection. Everyone was asked to put these posters up wherever they think is most visible for visitors.

Over the coming six months, the SSDA is keen to work with the businesses and communities to get the ‘Scotland Starts Here’ brand visible in Berwickshire coast area, and across the South of Scotland, as well as giving increased ownership locally of the information about Berwickshire coast area which appears on the website and app. The SSDA is keen to also have permanent, physical signs, including on roads and railways, to ensure our shared ‘Scotland Starts Here’ brand and assets, really are supporting the visitor economy.

Local Priorities:

Intro:

The SSDA is keen to be honest about the amount of capacity it has: a total of five staff members, with a huge area to cover and over a dozen different areas of responsibility relating to tourism. While much of our work is focused on ‘pan-south’ benefits, we are keen to also dedicate some capacity to responding to local priorities in the 14 different areas within the South of Scotland. We therefore asked all 14 areas if there were local priorities (beyond the strategy, seasonality work and local promotion already discussed) they would like the SSDA to support in the coming six months in each of these series of in-person meetings.

Local Input:

The following local priorities were identified through discussion:

- 1) Change people’s mindsets in the community re tourism – help them see the benefits of tourism such as employment and training. Communities need to embrace it.**
- 2) Get young people engaged, they need a voice and a safe opportunity for them to share their views**
- 3) We will engage Scottish Borders Council in conversation to represent local views around core path and access – specifically the Berwickshire Coastal Path**

Next steps/actions:

With just a small fraction of one staff member able to respond to each of the 14 areas’ priorities, we need to manage expectations as to what is possible but we absolutely hope to be able to report tangible progress against the locally identified priorities in the next meeting at Berwickshire coast area which will take place in February 2024.