



Activity Report: January – June 2015

2014 was a standout year for tourism in Scotland. The events and festivals that made up the year of Homecoming touched every corner of Scotland and Argyll and The Isles was no exception. From dedicated marketing campaigns to Homecoming-funded festivals and press trips to industry events, VisitScotland helped to deliver an exceptional year. Now, in 2015 The Year of Food & Drink, Argyll & the Isles is showcasing its outstanding natural larder and wealth of great places to eat and drink.

Public Relations

Consumer PR Report October 14 – March 2015

VisitScotland delivers economic success by showcasing Scotland on a global stage as a place to visit and invest in. Our consumer PR teams play an important role in this by working closely with travel and lifestyle media to ensure consistent, positive media coverage for our regions across Scotland, including Argyll and the Isles.

Over the six months between October 2014 and March 2015 VisitScotland facilitated 71 pieces of coverage over UK & Ireland and international publications. All PR activity sought to promote key themes for 2014/15 including Homecoming Scotland, The XX Commonwealth Games legacy, The 2014 Ryder Cup and 2015's Year of Food & Drink. This gave a total potential reach of over 57 million. Here are some examples of this extensive coverage:

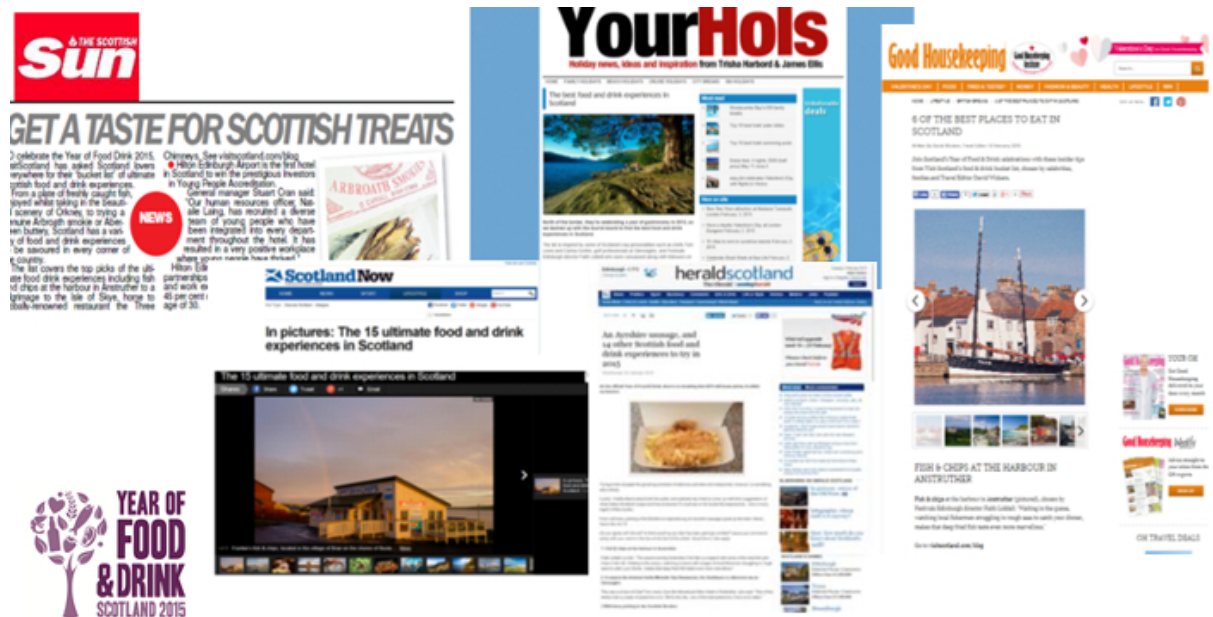
To showcase the Year of Food and Drink 2015, the Consumer PR Team launched a "15 for 2015" campaign, which included a press release detailing 15 unique Scottish foodie experiences around the country. The release featured two wonderful Argyll and the Isles culinary destinations - the Temple Café on Harris and the wonderful seafood available on the Isle of Mull. The release was pitched out to international and local media resulting in some fantastic coverage, including features in The Sun, The Herald, Scotland Now, Good Housekeeping, and US trade publication TravelPulse.com.

The Consumer PR team worked in direct partnership with Morrison Bowmore on a group press trip to Islay in November 2014 to focus on the Year of Food & Drink. Six media outlets were secured – The Independent, Stylist, The Herald, The Scotsman, About.com and Scottish Field. The trip included a visit to the Bowmore distillery, to cut peat, to the Islay woollen mill and a special dinner in Bowmore's distillery vaults.

In a round-up of Britain's best drives, Oban and Loch Lomond feature in one of Canada's top publications, the Globe and Mail. The west coast's fantastic seafood offerings are discussed, along with the Michelin starred Isle of Eriska Hotel and the Oban Distillery. This was followed by an excellent piece in the Herald online, detailing Islay's seafood, scenery and whisky offerings.

The region has been equally highlighted in European media outlets with LA Voix du Nord compiling an excellent piece about the Isle of Jura, and Guido Magazine featuring Kilmartin

Glen. In the Long Haul markets, Loch Awe, Iona, and Mull are all featured in the popular Australian online publication Age Weekend Traveller; which is as result of a VisitScotland organised press visit earlier in the year.



Argyll features in Daily Mail's 'It's Friday!'

We have continued our successful partnership with the Daily Mail (Scotland) on a regular 'It's Friday! What's On' feature to showcase things to see and do in Scotland's regions, particularly highlighting things to do over the upcoming weekend.

Argyll & the Isles has achieved excellent coverage in these with Argyll Forest Park and Tarbert Sea Food Festival being featured and Loch Fyne Viking Festival and ButeFest included in the 'If you only do one thing...' section.

The activity has also been encouraging visitors to share their **#brilliantmoments** through social media, helping to inspire others to take a trip to Scotland's regions.

This is on top of our dedicated regional marketing so is fantastic additional exposure for the area to the Daily Mail's weekly circulation of 83,600.

Marketing

Brilliant Island Moments

After the overwhelming success of Brilliant Island Moments in 2013 and 2014, VisitScotland once again teamed up with Caledonian MacBrayne and Serco NorthLink Ferries to encourage people to either discover for the first time, or reacquaint themselves with Scotland's islands.

Islay, Gigha, Mull, Lismore, Colonsay, Coll and Tiree are all to feature in the campaign which will see all the visitors travel through Oban providing the area with an opportunity to target them before and after their trip.

In the 2015 campaign, 55,000 people from the UK entered the Brilliant Island Moments prize draw which created 18,000 contactable visitors and 2400 referrals to businesses on the islands.

Brilliant Moments in Argyll & the Isles

Brilliant Moments in Argyll & the Isles were promoted as part of VisitScotland's spring and summer marketing campaign activity.

The campaign, using the strapline 'Argyll & the Isles. Full of Brilliant Moments.' focused on the main reasons to visit the area in 2015, The Year of Food and Drink.

Using a mix of activity including press and digital advertising, this campaign raised awareness of Argyll & The Isles and encouraged visits to the area in spring and summer. Sponsored Facebook posts and a dedicated A2 pull-out in the The Herald encouraged visitors to enter a competition to win a 2 night stay for four people at Portavadie Marina.

The campaign generated 439 total contactable visitors and 30 new referrals to local businesses.

The ads drove consumers to visit the Argyll & the Isles regional site on visitscotland.com which has seen a 24% between 2014 and 2015, thanks in part to the campaign.

Recent value-added marketing activity provided by VisitScotland for the region includes an Argyll and The Isles poster situated in the Oak Mall Shopping Centre in Greenock, Inverclyde from Spring 2015 until the Autumn 2015. Plus, a UK Travel Trade e-newsletter in January, sent to a database of 2500, featured a hero image of Loch Fyne Oyster Bar and two hyperlinked events, Cowal Highland Gathering and Feis Isle.

Argyll & The Isles in foodie ebook

January saw VisitScotland kick-start the Year of Food & Drink 2015 with the launch of a food and drink e-book. With figures revealing that almost half of people (49%) visiting Scotland want to try local food, the e-book encouraged visitors to undertake a culinary tour of the country.

Available on visitscotland.com along with a selection of other ebooks, 'A Taste of Scotland's Foodie Trails' combines details of Scotland's food trails with information about relevant local businesses and interesting facts about each product.

Loch Fyne Oyster Bar, Creggans Inn in Strachur and Pierhouse Inn in Port Appin are all mentioned as part of the trail with a host of Argyll events in the 'Taste of what else to do' section including, **Best of the West Festival, Tarbert Seafood Festival and the Cowal Highland Gathering.**

The Whisky Coast Trail section features many of Argyll & The Isles' distilleries such as **Springbank, Oban, Caol Ila and Ardbeg** following up with a recommendation to visit **Feis Ile – The Islay Festival of Music and Malt.**

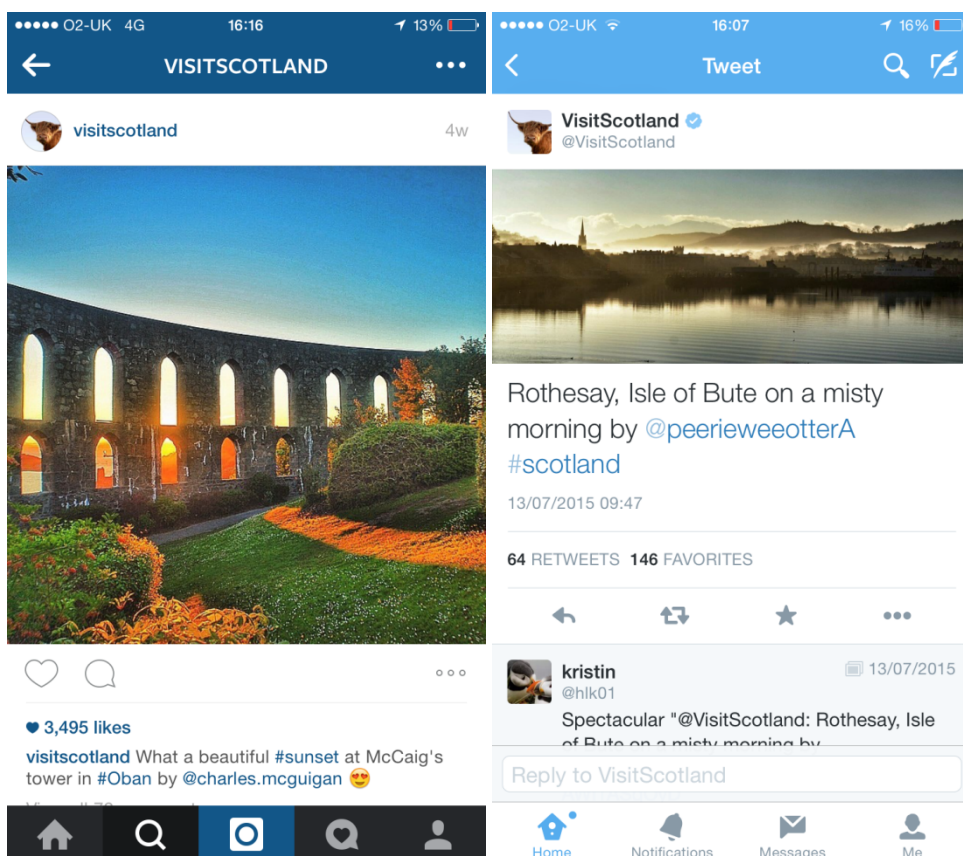


VisitScotland's Year of Food and Drink toolkit also provides a one-stop shop for tourism businesses and industry partners to help them make the most of 2015 and help to promote Scotland's natural larder. **You can still download the toolkit at visitscotland.org.**

Social Media

VisitScotland reaches thousands of potential visitors with things to see and do across Argyll & the Isles through our online social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Our consumer Twitter account currently has 142,000 followers, Facebook has over 540,000 and Instagram is up to 59,000. Users are encouraged to Tweet us @visitscotland (or @visitscotnews for industry facing communications) if they would like their post potentially retweeted. We also repost visitors images on Instagram when they use the handle @VisitScotland or hashtag #brilliantmoments.

Examples of local coverage below include an Instagram post 'liked' by almost 3500 users and a photo tweeted to us from a visitor to Bute which when tweeted by us gained 64 retweets and 146 favourites.



Growth Fund, Events Fund and in-kind events support

Event support

Four Argyll & the Isles events were awarded Year of Food & Drink 2015 funding this year to help support: Loch Fyne Food Fair (£6000), Best of the West (£3500), ButeFest (£3000) and Tarbert Sea Food Festival (£2500).

Other events in the region to receive support through VisitScotland events directorate include: Mull Rally, Cowal Highland Gathering, Scottish Hydro Camanachd Cup Final in Oban, Royal National Mod in Oban, International Clan MacCaulay Gathering in Oban

Glorious Gardens of Argyll & Bute Growth Fund

The Glorious Gardens of Argyll and Bute was awarded £12,202 through the Growth Fund to help highlight the stunning range of flowers and plants that thrive in the region's exotic micro climate.

Members of the group range from An Cala on the Isle of Seil to Benmore Botanic Garden.

The marketing campaign includes a revamp of the group's website, www.gardens-of-argyll.co.uk, the design and printing of special leaflets with itineraries and attendance at a number of trade shows, including Best of Britain and Ireland in Birmingham (11-12 March) and VisitScotland expo in Aberdeen (22 and 23 April).

OLTA Oban Morsels – Toast our Coast Growth Fund Award

£15,000 was awarded to Oban & Lorn Tourism Association to further promote Oban as the 'Seafood Capital of Scotland' but also highlight 'pasture to plate' and other locally produced foods. The campaign aims to support VisitScotland's Taste our Best campaign by signing up OLTA members, encourage collaborative working between members, drive traffic to the website www.oban.org.uk and build on existing social media interactions.

The campaign will be supported by editorial, advertising, and an on pack promotion with Inverawe Smoked Salmon.

Industry events

AITC Tourism Summit

VisitScotland continue to dedicate its support to this event in the form of partner funding. AITC does an excellent job of rallying the industry in Argyll and the Tourism Summit is a great opportunity for everyone to come together and look forward to the coming season and find out how we can all continue to work in partnership.

This year's Tourism Summit had some focused discussion on visitors and how the Argyll & the Isles experience meets their expectations and demands.

Listening to the industry

Malcolm Roughead, CEO of VisitScotland, joined industry representatives at the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Head Office in July as part of a 'Listening Tour'. Representatives came from across Argyll & The Isles and Loch Lomond, The Trossachs, Stirling & Forth Valley to speak to Malcolm, along with our Marketing Director, Charlie Smith, Regional Partnerships Director, Liz Buchanan and Regional Director, David Adams McGilp.

The event, as part of a larger tour, was designed to give industry representatives and tourism organisations access to, and opportunities to speak directly with the VisitScotland Chief Executive and air concerns, issues and feedback about the tourism industry and visitor economy in the region.

Malcolm met with representatives from groups such as Argyll & the Isles Tourism Cooperative.

Food Tourism event in Oban

VisitScotland is financially supporting the Taste for Tourism food tourism industry conference in Oban in November as well as offering key speakers and press and industry support.

Strategic Alignment, Visitor Economy Development & Stakeholder Engagement

VisitScotland's Regional Director continues to support the interests of the tourism, recreation and leisure sectors at regional, national and international levels, and to identify investment opportunities to grow Argyll & Bute's visitor economy. The diverse nature of VisitScotland's regional role is demonstrated by the following summary of activity for the year to date:

- contributions to the national Marine Tourism Strategy consultation
- membership of Argyll & the Isles Tourism Steering Group
- advisor to the Board of Love Loch Lomond
- engagement with Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park
- contributions to A82 improvement and Argyll & Bute Council connectivity consultations
- contributions to Oban CHORD & Oban Bay Marine transit facility proposals
- membership of the Ferry Users Group and the Clyde and Hebridean Ferry Services Economy, Business & Tourism Working Group
- membership of the Scottish Government Marine Strategy Forum
- membership of the Scottish Parliament Cross-party Group on Marine Tourism
- membership of the Marine Tourism Development Group
- engagement with Interface (government-supported scheme to provide academic and research-based assistance to businesses, presenting Argyll & Bute as the pilot region for tourism projects)
- engagement with business and community ventures (Glenfinart Walled Garden, Rest and be Thankful Heritage Group, VisitHelensburgh, The Tower Digital Arts Centre, Helensburgh Submarine Museum, BID4Oban, Argyll Holidays/British Holiday Parks Association, Mount Stuart, Bute Alliance)
- engagement with European Commission Directorate General – Marine Regions (cruise market dialogue)
- contact with Michael Russell MSP and Fergus Ewing MSP
- contributions to the Cold Water Islands Conference
- contributions to Scottish Government Economic Geography project
- contributions to Argyll & Bute Council Economic Forum (Tourism Sub-group)
- attendance at Connect G Gaelic Culture conference, Kintyre Way re-launch, St Columba Trail project conference, West College Scotland Industry Advisory Conference
- membership of Argyll & the Islands LEADER/Argyll & Bute and South Ayrshire FLAG
- delivery of Helensburgh & Lomond Industry Engagement event
- attendance at industry investment opportunity meetings with Bank of Scotland and RBS.

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