



**Argyll & the Isles Tourism Cooperative Ltd**

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## **AITC ACTIVITY REPORT 1 April to 30 June 2015**

### **Headlines**

- **Argyll & the Isles Route Planner software developed and 8 touch screen kiosks being installed across Argyll (one of only 12 projects supported by HE - £20k grant secured)**
- **Attended EXPO 2015 in Aberdeen – quieter than central belt EXPO events but good quality buyers and strong leads**
- **Argyll Cohort of 7 awarded executive certificates following completion of the Destination Leadership Programme at Napier University and project activity now being backed by HIE**
- **'Nature's Paradise' Get Wild about Argyll innovative workshop and mentoring programme delivered to 24 businesses and submitted for RSPB Nature in Tourism award - funding partners keen to roll out further activity**
- **Two new AITC branded leaflets developed with partners to add to the suite of 16 (Food & Drink and Glorious Gardens) – launched at EXPO 2015**
- **Joint Food & Drink Tourism industry summit being jointly planned with Food from Argyll for Nov 2015 in Oban – key event in national Year of Food & Drink programme**
- **AITC Barometer rolled out for Q1 with 133 responses from across Argyll & the Isles**

### **Tourism Argyll & the Isles 2020**

- The AITC rocket has now been developed by AITC working with David Adams McGilp of VS and will be reviewed by the AITSPG and then officially launched at the AITC AGM in September
- Development work is now underway to produce the action plan and responsibilities linked to a suite of measures and targets
- A strategic review of AITC to define its role in leading the delivery of TAI2020 has commenced

### **Development Agent Activity**

- AITC's seven freelance development agents are continuing to provide capacity building support to the eleven marketing group members of AITC based on the initial needs analysis
- Activity has been focusing on reviews of constitutions and the need to drive up membership in each area; improving local relationships with other groups in each area; developing local itineraries and better coordinating event activity
- The agent team have been an effective conduit for disseminating information and promoting events and meetings on behalf of strategic partners
- Agent activity has curtailed to some extent over the summer months as the businesses and

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groups focus on their core business but will pick up again in earnest in the Autumn

### Destination Leadership

- 7 AITC members received executive certificates from the Napier University Destination Leaders Programme in May 2015
- The 2 AITC projects developed as part of the programme have now both received formal HIE support to take forward – one focusing on making it much easier for businesses to collaborate in a disparate rural destination through software innovations and the other on a toolkit to help the host communities (local marketing groups) in Argyll & The Isles to develop
- HIE working with AITC to scope out next steps for DLP

### Industry Representation

- AITC continues to contribute to the STA as a official member of the STA Council
- AITC is now represented on the STA Destination Development working group
- AITC is directly participating in the Cross Party Working Group for Tourism chaired by Bruce Crawford MSP (2 meetings taken place)
- AITC represented on the Scottish Government's Ferry Tender working group on Economy, Business & Tourism (1 meeting taken place)
- AITC via I Jurgensen and C Craig participating in A&B Economic Forum – meeting with N Ferguson, G Dick, C Ross and I Jurgensen early August 2015
- AITC participating in A&B Transport Connectivity and Economy Study
- AITC attended the HIE Social Enterprise summit in Inverness and shared a trade show stand with Food from Argyll
- AITC providing quarterly updates for A&BC EDAP and engaged in recent EDAP roadshow

### Industry Engagement

- Electronic member surveys conducted with four DMOs; Ferry Survey conducted with HMI and now being rolled out to IJTMG and Colonsay Marketing Groups
- Workshop held at Tayinloan with Explore Kintyre & Gigha to secure new directors and agree forward activity

### Industry Updates & Advice

- AITC working closely with industry partners to provide updates and advice to local members
  - Regular updates from STA on various matters
  - Calmac Ferries Strike Action
  - Association of Scottish Self Caterers guidance on rates review

### Trade Activity

- Strategic presence at EXPO 2015 in Aberdeen in April (4 years at EXPO since 2012)
- Trade partner membership of AITC being developed

### PR & Social Media

- Fortnightly visitor e-newsletter being published over summer 2015 with tips on events activities and food & drink from across the region
- #argyll photo hour piloted on twitter in June
- ongoing social media activity on Facebook and Twitter

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## Press & Travel Writer Activity

- AITC fully hosted 5 day itinerary provided for Frommers Travel Guide writer
- AITC fully hosted 5 day West Highland food tour provided for Conde Nast Traveler travel writer
- AITC partly hosted 2 day Oban skate fishing experience for Sea Angler travel writer in partnership with OLTA
- AITC working with an acclaimed food photographer to produce a Argyll & The Isles food book featuring places and produce from across the region and local recipes

## Argyll Ambassadors Frontline Staff Training Programme

- Proposal in place with SDS for a pan Argyll customer care and product knowledge on line training programme (based on Glasgow Welcomes)
- £8k funding secured from SDS but currently on hold pending budget reviews; balance to be secured

## Digital Tourism

- AITC has now completed the digital tourism pilot programme provided via HIE along with 20 other businesses within Argyll
- AITC is now liaising with SE/HIE on a coordinated regional wide Digital Tourism Scotland programme across Argyll

## Scottish Food Tourism Summit

- AITC working in partnership with Food from Argyll to deliver a national Food Tourism summit planned for 3-5 Nov in Oban as a key event in the national year of Food & Drink diary
- HIE, Calmac, A&BC, VS funding secured and event manager appointed working to AITC/FFA steering group.
- Event will consist of a summit conference and dinner and study tours

## Food & Drink Tourism

- Joint working with OLTA on Food Tourism Growth Fund initiative including new AIT branded leaflet, TV ad and
- Food trails being developed for the different areas of Argyll on exploreargyll.co.uk and in partnership with Food from Argyll
- Joint working with Food from Argyll supporting the Loch Fyne Viking Festival trip to Norway in August/Sept to showcase Argyll & the isles – the place and produce

## Marine Tourism

- AITC review of potential activity following the launch of the national Marine Tourism Strategy in Mar 2015 – review of next steps for Malin Waters with A&BC
- AITC input at four Argyll Sea Kayak Trail events aimed at businesses and clubs/community groups in Oban. Lochgilphead, Dunoon & Helensburgh in June. Appetite from kayaking businesses for developing tour packages and to work with accommodation providers – capacity building initiative to be scoped out

## Nature's Paradise / Wildlife & Adventure Tourism

- Joint 'colouring in for adults' initiative with AITC, FCS and Artmap with a colouring-in book published with 8 original line drawings by professional Artmap artists of places and wildlife

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of Argyll. Booklet being made available for sale and at events.

- 'Get Wild About Argyll' wildlife and adventure tourism mentoring programme with 24 businesses from Oban & Lorn and Mid Argyll submitted for RSPB Nature in Tourism award 2015
- SNH and FCS working with AITC to develop Phase 2 'Get Wild About Argyll' programme
- Joint working with the Glorious Gardens of Argyll & Bute on their Growth Fund initiative, including AIT branded leaflet and pilot Argyll-wide Rhododendron Festival in 2015

### **AITC BAROMETER (JAN-MAR 2015)**

- AITC barometer launched after the AITC Summit at Ardgartan and circulated via the local DMOs.
- 133 responses for Q1 received by 30 June 2015.
- Q2 to be launched in July

### **Summary headlines from Q1 returns;**

- Good response from across Argyll – but lower responses than average from Bute (3) and Helensburgh/Lomond (6) (being reviewed with DMOs)
- Over 70% of respondees from the accommodation sector; rest from eateries, visitor attractions, activity providers, galleries and retailers
- Significant majority are either quite or very optimistic re the next 3 months (80%), 12 months (75%) and 24 months (70%) ; very low numbers stating they not very or not at all optimistic (c5%); balance taken up by those who are neutral.
- 70% of businesses stated their turnover was either similar or up for the same period a year ago
- 25% of respondees had accessed external marketing, financial or business advice during this quarter
- over 60% reported that their visitor numbers were similar or up on the same period last year; 23% stated they were down; 15% were closed for this quarter
- over 80% of customers were from Scotland with a significant proportion from the Central Belt

July 2015

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