

UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF ARGYLL & THE ISLES TOURISM CO-OPERATIVE

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the Environment, Development and Infrastructure (EDI) Committee with an update on the activities and achievements of the Argyll and the Isles Tourism Co-operative Ltd (AITC) over the 30 month period April 2014 to end of October 2016.
- 1.2 The overarching vision of the AITC is that “AITC will be the body that ensures tourism activity in Argyll & the Isles has a significant impact on key economic drivers and the sustainability of the region and will do this through strength, vision, leadership and collaboration – we will be recognised as the single voice of the tourism industry in Argyll and Isles and the driver of growth and excellence.” In turn this is contributing to the vision outlined in the Tourism Argyll and the Isles 2020 rocket where by 2020 “Argyll and the Isles will be one of Scotland’s first-choice destinations for discerning travellers of all ages. Seven thousand years of history and culture, world famous food and drink, accessible and vibrant maritime communities – tranquil, dramatic, creative, authentic, welcoming.”
- 1.3 The report focuses on the 30 month activity report document provided by AITC as outlined in **Appendix 1** and compares these activities with the agreed outcomes as outlined in the grant agreement (**Appendix 2**).
- 1.4 The report presented in **Appendix 1** demonstrates there has been a significant amount of concerted and co-ordinated activity over the 30 month period from April 2014 to October 2016 between AITC, the various tourism agencies/attractions and the public sector. AITC has been a significant catalyst in driving forward such activity with the Argyll and the Isles tourism industry through a sound knowledge of the sector and the geographical area.
- 1.5 Further work will be undertaken over the next couple of months to:
  - gather a robust tourism evidence base and profile for Argyll and the Isles; and
  - assess the economic impact that has been realised by the tourism industry resulting from the activity and achievements of AITC since its inception in 2011.
- 1.6 Members are asked to:
  - Note the content of this paper.
  - Agree that a further report is presented to the Committee in January 2017 which will quantify the economic impact of AITC activity and achievements in terms of industry turnover, employment, international trade and gross value added.

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**UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF ARGYLL & THE ISLES TOURISM CO-OPERATIVE**

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

2.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the Environment, Development and Infrastructure (EDI) Committee with an update on the activities and achievements of the Argyll and the Isles Tourism Co-operative Ltd (AITC) over the 30 month period April 2014 to end of October 2016.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the content of this paper.
- Agree that a further report is presented to the Committee in January 2017 which will quantify the economic impact of AITC activity and achievements in terms of industry turnover, employment, international trade and gross value added.

**4.0 DETAIL****AITC Activity, Achievement and Impact**

- 4.1 The report presented in **Appendix 1** demonstrates there has been a significant amount of concerted and co-ordinated activity over the 30 month period from April 2014 to October 2016 between AITC, the various tourism agencies/attractions and the public sector. AITC has been a significant catalyst in driving forward such activity with the Argyll and the Isles tourism industry through a sound knowledge of the sector and the geographical area. AITC has been nominated and shortlisted for the 'Working Together for Tourism' category in the Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards (HITA) regional level, 2016.
- 4.2 **Table 1** of **Appendix 1** reports against the business case for 2014-17 and indicates a high degree of involvement in each of the sectors as outlined in the original business case (**Appendix 2**). The achievements within **Table 1** broadly meet the requirements for the original Grant offer and in many cases go beyond what has been agreed. However, there is a requirement for some of the information to be quantified to provide further detail to allow assessment of the economic impact of the work of AITC.
- 4.3 It is encouraging that visitor attractions across the Argyll and the Isles area have seen a substantial increase in tourism footfall during July and August 2016, compared with the national average. Recent figures published by the Moffat Centre in Glasgow based on visitor numbers to 592 tourist attractions throughout Scotland in 2016 compared with the same month in 2015, highlighted that visitors to attractions in Argyll and the Isles in July 2016 had increased by 12.8% against a national average of 6.6%. In August the Scottish increase was 3.4% compared with a rise of 8.9% in Argyll and the Isles – more than twice the national average.

- 4.4 However, it has been recognised by the overarching Argyll and the Isles Strategic Tourism Partnership (AISTP) Steering Group that there is a requirement to consolidate the tourism data produced for the Argyll and the Isles region and the Argyll and Bute Council area (i.e. Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor data is based on the local authority area). It is envisaged that the data will be aligned to the strategic priorities identified in the Tourism Argyll and the Isles 2020 rocket approach as follows:
- leadership and collaboration;
  - turning our assets into experiences;
  - improving the customer journey; and
  - building our capabilities.
- 4.5 To take this forward a sub-group of the AISTP Steering Group with representatives from AITC, Argyll and Bute Council, HIE, VisitScotland and Calmac are meeting on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> November to share and consolidate tourism data for Argyll. In turn it is anticipated that a clear tourism evidence base will inform partnership actions and performance indicators for the area in order to demonstrate how current and planned activity is contributing towards meeting the agreed strategic objectives for the Argyll and the Isles tourism industry by 2020.
- 4.6 Leading on from gathering a robust tourism evidence base and profile for Argyll and the Isles there needs to be a greater understanding of the economic impact of the activity and achievements of AITC since its inception in 2011.
- 4.7 Market research will be undertaken to quantify the economic impact of AITC's activity and achievements from 2011 to 2016. It is envisaged that the market research will focus on impacts in terms of industry turnover, employment, international trade opportunities realised and gross value added. HIE hopes to commission this market research through a call-off contract with an appropriate consultancy on their current supplier framework agreement. It is anticipated that the geographical coverage of this research, although funded by HIE, will include the whole of the Argyll and Bute Council area.
- 4.8 It is hoped that this research will be concluded in advance of the next EDI Committee meeting in January 2017 to enable members to gain an appreciation of the economic impact that has been realised by the tourism industry across the Argyll and the Isles area over last 30 months. Specifically such impact analysis will provide evidence for consideration with regard to the ongoing financial support to AITC from Argyll and Bute Council post March 2017.

#### **AITC Activity with Argyll and Bute Council**

- 4.9 The creation of two Economic Growth officer posts, one with a remit for Tourism, Forestry and Defence and the other with a Food & Drink and Marine Science focus has allowed the Council to work with and complement the activities and achievements of AITC. The partnership actions and performance indicators going forward will be captured within the Council's revised Strategic Economic Development Action Plan, 2016-2021 which in turn fits and contributes to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan's long-term objective (2023) captured under Outcome 1 that "Argyll and Bute has a thriving economy especially within the key sectors of tourism, maritime and food and drink."

4.10 As identified in **Appendix 1** some recent activities being delivered in partnership by AITC and Argyll and Bute Council are as follows:

- AITC has signed up to the World Host destinations programme which will target 200 Argyll businesses to enable 50% of their front of house staff to undertake the accredited Principle of Customer Care training workshop. The Council's Business Gateway team has been instrumental in taking this forward with AITC. In particular the Business Gateway team's trained advisers will be delivering 16 World Host workshops to small/micro businesses throughout Argyll and Bute, while one of AITC delivery agents, newly qualified as a World Host trainer, will focus on training for the larger businesses.
- Argyll and Bute Council's Economic Development and Strategic Transportation Service (EDST) provided additional funding to support the Mark Beaumont 'Wild About Argyll' event from 24<sup>th</sup> July to 4<sup>th</sup> August 2016 and assisted in the awareness raising and promotion of the event through the Economic Growth (Tourism) Officer and the service's Marketing and Promotions Officer.
- AITC is working with the Social Enterprise Team and the Culture and Library Development Officer, Argyll and Bute Council, along with Creative Scotland and support from HIE to assist the Culture & Heritage and the Arts (CHArts) network to explore how to support the recently awarded Creative Scotland Place Partnership. AITC is particularly interested in cultivating closer relationships between both the culture & heritage and the arts sectors.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 This report provides the EDI Area Committee with an update of AITC's activities and achievements over the 30 month period from April 2014 to October 2016.

5.2 However, on the back of these activities and achievements, it is important to gain a better understanding of the economic impact on the Argyll and the Isles tourism industry as a result of the activities and achievements of AITC since 2011. This will require a market research exercise and it is hoped that the results of this research will be available to present to the EDI Committee in January 2017.

## 6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- |     |           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6.1 | Policy    | The partnership working between Argyll and Bute Council and AITC aligns to the Council's revised Strategic Economic Development Action Plan, 2016-2021 and the Local Outcome Improvement Plan's long-term objective (2023) captured under Outcome 1 that "Argyll and Bute has a thriving economy especially within the key sectors of tourism, maritime and food and drink." |
| 6.2 | Financial | For future consideration further to the results of the economic impact assessment research.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 6.3 | Legal     | All appropriate legal implications will be taken into consideration.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

- |     |                   |                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6.4 | HR                | Current and future partnership working with AITC will be taken forward by existing staff in the EDST service and other council departments as appropriate. |
| 6.5 | Equalities        | None.                                                                                                                                                      |
| 6.6 | Risk              | None.                                                                                                                                                      |
| 6.7 | Customer Services | None.                                                                                                                                                      |

**Pippa Milne, Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure**

31<sup>st</sup> October 2016

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## **ARGYLL & THE ISLES TOURISM COOPERATIVE 2014/17 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - 30 MONTH ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT**

Argyll & The Isles Tourism Cooperative has received core funding from Argyll Bute Council for the period 2014-17 which has allowed a further £50k per annum to be provided by HIE for development agent activity and also attracted funding from the AITC Members, Calmac, SNH and other partners to cover project activity and marketing. This report sets out the key achievements to date both since AITC's inception in 2011 and specifically through the current 2014-17 programme which concludes in March 2017.

The report structure initially presents a summary of the key AITC achievements and provides an overview of AITC's digital activity, which was not originally a core part of the business case to Argyll & Bute Council for the 3-year funding package - but has become a primary focus for AITC during the currency of the 3 year programme. The report then articulates what AITC has achieved in relation to the vision established for the three year programme and sets out progress against the agreed outcomes in the business case and the targets specifically set by HIE.

## CORE FUNDING HAS CREATED A PAN ARGYLL HUB FOR TOURISM WITH PROVEN CAPABILITY FOR DELIVERY

- AITC has access to a network of **1300 tourism interests** across Argyll and the isles
- AITC is working in partnership with **7 national agencies** and collaborating with **4 external tourism organisations**
- AITC's investment in tourism since 2012 will have exceeded **£860k** by March 2017
- AITC has secured a minimum **ROI of 3.88** on A&BC'S investment in core funding between 2014-17
- AITC is active daily on social media with **5567 Twitter** followers **3709 Facebook** likes and **511 Instagram** followers.
- AITC's website Exploreargyll.co.uk has experienced **67% YOY increase** in users for the period Jan – Sept – ref to WAA
- AITC has been shortlisted for a Highlands & Islands Tourism Award in 2016 – with over **30% (16 out of 50)** tourism businesses and individuals from Argyll & the Isles also **shortlisted**
- AITC has conducted over **500 1-2-1 business appointments with the travel trade** at EXPO between 2012 and 2016 and Explore GB in 2015 and 16 with **268 rated as strong leads** which are already resulting in new business
- AITC has been held up as an **exemplary model for regional tourism development** in Scotland by the STA and VisitScotland, and an example of best practice by Cooperative Development Scotland
- AITC has organised a series of **pan Argyll multi-day itineraries** for Frommers, Rough Guide and Conde Nast travel writers and supported **television and film production** for programmes that are profiling the region on mainstream television

## AITC AND TOURISM IN ARGYLL & THE ISLES – THE ACHIEVEMENTS

### **BUSINESS NETWORK & REACH**

- AITC has access to a network of **1300 tourism interests** across Argyll and the isles
- AITC has **11 DMO** and **5 sectoral** group members
- AITC is developing strategic partnerships with ACT and CHArts

- AITC's business reach provides the Council and other partners with a very effective **conduit for business engagement**
- AITC has hosted a **tourism summit** each year in 2014, 2015 and 2016 and attracted **140-150 delegates** each year

### **FUNDING & RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

- AITC's turnover since 2012 will have exceeded **£860k** by March 2017
- Expenditure exceeding **£580k** is expected under the current 2014-17 development programme.
- This was only achievable by **A&BC** committing the **£50k per annum core budget** to AITC
- A&BC's investment has delivered a **3.88 ROI** (return on investment) for the Council

### **LEADERSHIP**

- AITC has a volunteer board with **10 directors** from across the region and representing major tourism interests and enterprises.
- The AITC board dedicate in excess of **120 days of tourism expertise** to the endeavours of AITC and partners – with an in kind value of c£42,000
- 5 (50%) of the board completed the 12 day Napier University **Destination Leaders** executive certificate in 2015.
- AITC has a **strategic voice** on the boards of Visit Scotland, the Scottish Tourism Alliance, the British Hospitality Association Scotland, the Institute of Hospitality Scotland and the Association of Scottish Self Caterers

### **GROWTH**

- AITC'S **barometer** was introduced in 2015 and has profiled **steady growth and increasing business confidence** on a quarter by quarter basis.
- More **robust data** from formal surveys substantiate this.
- Recent stats from the Moffat Centre's barometer **for visitor attractions** across Scotland has confirmed the region is enjoying stronger growth in **July (12.8%) and August (8.9%)** than the national average in July (6.6%) and August (3.4%)

- Key accommodation providers are reporting very strong occupancy rates in 2016 with **98-100% bed occupancy** in July, August and September 2016
- For example, Portavadie has reported a **33% YOY** increase in **accommodation** spend and **47.3% YOY** increase in **Food and beverage** spend and Loch Melfort Hotel has experienced **9% YOY** in room nights sold between April to Sept 2016 and by 10 October 2016 had exceeded occupancy for the full month of October in 2015.
- Argyll & the Isles is witnessing tangible shoulder season growth in occupancy notably in April and October. For example LMH is up **20% growth in room nights** sold in the months of April and October 2016.
- Argyll Self Catering has seen a **7% YOY increase on turnover**

#### DELIVERING EXCELLENCE

- In 2015 9 Argyll & The Isles tourism businesses and individuals were shortlisted for Highlands & Islands Tourism Awards (out of 46) and seven won in their category. Calum Ross, Vice Chair of AITC was awarded the Highlands & Islands Tourism Ambassador 2015 award.
- In 2016 over **30% (16 out of 50)** tourism businesses and individuals from Argyll & the Isles have been **shortlisted** for the **Highlands & Islands Tourism Awards** with Argyll securing more than double any other region in the Highlands

#### INTERNATIONAL REACH

- through AITC's annual attendance at VS EXPO for five consecutive years the region has been exposed to over 2000 international travel trade buyers from over 300 countries, and when combined with attendance at Explore GB in 2015 and 2016, has conducted over **500 1-2-1 business appointments with the travel trade**, with **268 rated as strong leads** likely to result in new international business for the region.
- EXPO leads are seen as slow burn but AITC businesses have reported increased international business directly from EXPO activity. Major players include DFDS and Wilderness Scotland.

#### SERVICE DELIVERY & FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY

- AITC has secured a **service delivery contract** from HIE amounting to £55k to support the roll out of Digital Tourism Scotland to June 2018.
- AITC has been a core partner in the **STA's Destination Working Group** on future sustainability of DMOs and participated in the Cross Party Working Group

#### PROFILE

- AITC published and distributed over **1 million leaflets** (8 area, 10 sectoral titles) across Scotland in 2014
- AITC hosted **four multi-day** fully complimentary pan Argyll **fam trips** for travel journalists and writers including Frommers, the Rough Guide, Conde Nast Traveler and Oxfordshire Limited Edition and has hosted local trips for numerous newspaper and specialist interest magazines.
- AITC secured an **18 page feature** in the Scotland Outdoors magazine and a **six page** feature in The Cyclist magazine.

#### DIGITAL PRESENCE

- exploreargyll.co.uk was launched in 2014
- Total users between Jan and Sept in 2016 was **51,608 – a 67% YOY increase**
- AITC is active daily on social media with **5567 Twitter** followers **3709 Facebook** likes and **511 Instagram** followers.
- AITC has published over **70 blogs** (minimum 2 a week) in 2016
- The Nature's Paradise paid for campaign achieved an average of **213 website sessions** per blog – the best performing delivered **558 sessions** – 432 of these were new users to the website
- **Digital tourism survey** undertaken by AITC across Argyll & The Isles and Arran with **372 responses** secured proving invaluable insights into the current level of digital activity and sense of ambition

#### COLLABORATION



- AITC has actively developed **strategic collaborations** with neighbouring regions with initiatives progressing with **People Make Glasgow (GCMB), Visit Arran, Ardnamurchan Tourist Association, Love Loch Lomond** and **Outer Hebrides Tourism**

### CUSTOMER CARE

- AITC has signed up for the **World Host destinations programme** which will **target 200 businesses and 50% of their front of house staff** to undertake the accredited Principle of Customer care training workshop
- AITC development agent formally trained as a **World Host trainer** and a programme of training is being coordinated with Business Gateway for SMEs with the AITC trainer focusing on larger businesses

### SKILLS & TRAINING

- An **executive certificate in rural tourism** has been scoped out with the University of West of Scotland with a pilot being scoped out for Jan – June 2017
- An **AITC tourism skills and learning steering group** is being created to explore tourism as a career of choice in Argyll & the Isles

### DIGITAL STRATEGY & ACTIVITY

Digital activity was built into the AITC development programme for 2014/17 building on the new website and social media accounts established under the 'Stronger Together initiative' but was not highlighted as a specific outcome within the business case at that time. Given the pace of change in general but very specifically within the tourism sector this has become a core area of activity for AITC. A marketing agency was appointed in 2015 utilising the funding support enjoyed from Calmac and our member fees and a digital strategy was produced highlighting the very urgent need to raise awareness of Argyll as a destination on line as it has a very low presence compared to other destinations offering similar experiences.

### AITC'S DIGITAL STRATEGY

- To significantly raise awareness of Brand Argyll on line initially through focused organic activity and seeking to attract significant partnership funding for a strategic marketing campaign
- Effectively position the area as a 'bucket list' destination, not to be missed whether you are a domestic or international tourist;
- Educate visitors about the beauty, accessibility and versatility of Argyll & the isles in terms of destinations, activity types, nature, heritage and culture;
- Promote local provenance via content around arts, crafts, food & drink;
- Address barriers such as accessibility, connectivity and the weather and educate the audience that there are things to see and do whatever the weather;
- Ensure that all messaging appeals to a broad demographic audience of visitors with varied interest types;
- Ultimately, to increase visitor frequency, duration and spend across the territory.

### RESULTS SO FAR

#### [www.exploreargyll.co.uk](http://www.exploreargyll.co.uk)

- AITC has made good head-way in increasing the organic search visibility of Argyll and ExploreArgyll.co.uk through our overall content strategy and ensuring core content is being supported via regular blogs and AITC social channels.
- Addition of event content has helped drive **266%** increase in web traffic.
- Website session driven from Facebook increased by **45%** due to all the blog related posts in 2016.

### Examples of Campaigns

#### a) Natures Paradise Campaign 2016

- Paid budget behind the posts on average almost tripled the reach of each post
- By targeting specific audiences (geographically, age, sex, specific interests including wildlife,

- nature, walking, and scenery) this exposed the content to a specific audience who may not previously have been aware of the Nature & Wildlife in Argyll & The Isles.
- This campaign helped to drive an additional **1,062** likes to the AITC Facebook page – these people are now exposed to all AITC organic posts.
- In total all 12 NP blogs resulted in **2,776** website sessions – an average of 213 sessions per blog.
- The best performing blog from the campaign was '12 Argyll & Isles Gardens you need to visit' which delivered **558** sessions – 432 of these were new users to the website.

#### **b) Mark Beaumont Adventure & Film**

(in essence only reciting the story of the filming of content for use in future marketing campaigns)

Wild About Argyll - 24th July to 4th August. Across the 12 days Mark followed a trail across every corner of Argyll & the Isles undertaking a wide range of activities including sailing, swimming, kayaking, running, mountain-biking, horse riding, quad biking and many more.

This journey showcased the beauty of Argyll & the Isles and all the activities and things to do that it has to offer. Each day of activities was filmed and @ExploreArgyll and @MrMarkBeaumont posted daily updates and photos to their social channels for everyone to follow the adventure.

- Overall, YOY comparison Jul 24th – Aug 4<sup>th</sup>, web page views were up **47.3%** from 45,947 to 67,683. Sessions were up **96%** from 2,692 to 5,302.
- Social referral sessions were up year on year **598%** from Facebook and **82%** from Twitter
- Mark's tracker on the website received **848 page-views** across the 12 days with the average time spent on this page being 5mins 40 secs
- Total Reach from key social accounts pushing content: **519,607+ people**
- Total Engagement from key social accounts pushing content: **93,356+ engagements**

## **ARGYLL & THE ISLES TOURISM COOPERATIVE A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT 2014-17**

### **Introduction**

Argyll & The Isles Tourism Cooperative was set up following the first ever pan Argyll & The Isles Tourism Summit in Oban in 2011 and has since delivered a series of important benefits for the region through two key funding packages. The primary purpose of this report is to provide an overview of AITC's activity and achievements to date under the current 2014/17.

### **Background & Context**

The Argyll & The Isles Strategic Tourism Partnership had reached out to the industry in 2009 and secured some key industry players around the table. An early decision was to bring the industry together to consider next steps for AISTP and, supported by Argyll & Bute Council and Visit Scotland, the first ever pan Argyll Tourism Summit took place in the Corran Halls in Oban in 2011. The Summit covered wide ranging presentations and workshops and reached 3 core conclusions.

- That a strategic 'umbrella' brand for Argyll & the Isles was required building on the early work undertaken by A&BC with Food from Argyll
- To establish a framework for communication with the industry
- To have a strategic presence at Visit Scotland's EXPO travel trade event

Immediately following this the AISTP set up a series of working groups to progress each of these objectives with a fourth group considering funding and what would be the best delivery mechanism. This latter group concluded that funding could readily be secured but a delivery vehicle that represented the industry and was properly constituted was required. With specialist input from HIE and Cooperative Development Scotland a strategic cooperative representing the local marketing groups was considered the best way forward. It was recognised at an early stage that with the

disparate geography of Argyll & The Isles it would not be appropriate to set up a business member cooperative, which would cut across the activities of the existing marketing groups – some of which were enjoying considerable success in their local marketing endeavours. Argyll & The Isles Tourism Cooperative was set up in 2011 with three founding members – Holiday Mull & Iona, Oban & Lorn Tourism Association and Inveraray Marketing Group. AITC registered with Companies House in March 2012 as a company limited by guarantee. Funding packages were secured by AITC from Argyll and the Islands LEADER, Visit Scotland Growth Fund, Argyll & Bute Council and HIE for a 'Stronger Together' campaign and was delivered over 2012-14. On completion of this a three year funding package was secured with core funding from Argyll & Bute Council, capacity building funding from HIE and project and marketing funding from SNH, FCS and Calmac.

### **AITC - Who we are?**

AITC was officially registered as a cooperative with Companies House in March 2012. It has been set up as Co-operative and Company Limited by Guarantee, registered with Companies House and VAT registered. The Cooperative's membership is the destination marketing groups that operate across the region (11 at present) and also from 2015 AITC also has associate membership for sectoral interests.

AITC governance is provided by a board and under the Mem and Arts can have up to 8 directly elected Directors and four co-opted.

The directly elected Directors represent the members and therefore have a geographic spread across the region. To gain a directorship they need to be firstly nominated by a Member group, and then approved by the Board. Co-opted directors are appointed by the board and typically are brought on because of a specific skill requirement or sectoral interest.

The directors are all volunteers and receive no remuneration other than out of pocket expenses for travel and accommodation. The 10

current directors are tourism experts within their own field with each owning and operating their own businesses and/or fulfilling senior positions within successful tourism enterprises in Argyll & The Isles, plus holding board positions on other local, regional and national organisations. The time devoted by the volunteer directors equates to a minimum of 1 full day meeting every 2 months plus representation at public events such as national conferences and major events (3 days per annum minimum). In addition they engage in AITC business activity on a weekly basis through email dialogue and telephone conversations. The Chair and Vice Chair dedicate 2 days per month minimum to AITC activity. This totals a minimum of 120 days high calibre tourism expertise dedicated to AITC activity and growing tourism in Argyll & The Isles per annum. If a daily rate of £350 is applied this equates to £42,000 worth of free consultancy input to driving forward the tourism agenda across the region.

As at the 2016 AGM the directors are:

#### ELECTED

Chrissie Fleming	Visit Cowal
Neal Goldsmith	Holiday Mull and Iona
Brian Keating	Visit Helensburgh
Niall Macalister Hall	Kintyre and Gigha Marketing Group
Fiona McPhail	Kyles Marketing Group
Calum Ross	Oban and Lorn Tourism Alliance
Andrew Wilson	Heart of Argyll Tourism Alliance

#### CO-OPTED

Cathy Craig	Commercial Director at Abellio ScotRail
Gavin Dick	Prison Governor at Inveraray Jail & Chair of Inveraray Marketing Group

Iain Jurgensen

General Manager at Portavadie, Loch Fyne and Tourism Adviser on Argyll & Bute Economic Forum

AITC currently operates with a freelance development team consisting of a development manager, PR & Media Manager, web editor and up to nine development agents – six currently supporting the local DMO members.

Marketing group/area	Current business network
Bute	67
Coll*	9
Colonsay	38
Cowal	81
Heart of Argyll	76
Helensburgh	68
Inveraray	42
Islay & Jura	242
Kintyre & Gigha	123
Kyles	36
Mull & Iona	119
Oban & Lorn	170
Tiree*	94
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>1165</b>
Sectoral Group	Current Business Network
Food from Argyll	28
Artmap Argyll	48
A&B Museums and Heritage Forum	35
A&I Long Distance Routes Forum	12
Glorious Gardens of Argyll & Bute	20
CHArts	TBC
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1309</b>

\* Not current members of AITC but engaging with AITC via DTS and other initiatives

AITC's members are the local marketing groups and, as of 2015 also includes pan Argyll sectoral groups. AITC delivers key benefits to member organisations but also has a network of contacts in the wider industry in each area for the delivery of Digital Tourism Scotland and other initiatives. These provide valuable platforms for engaging with the wider sector and recruiting new members. The current reach of AITC is in excess of 1300 tourism enterprises.

## **FOUNDATIONS**

The foundations for the 2014/17 development programme were the key outputs from the Stronger Together campaign in 2012/14;

- *Creation of the AIT Brand building on the Argyll & Bute Council initiative with Food from Argyll*
- *8 area sub- identities, exhibition stand and area-wide booklet and promotional folders*
- *A strategic presence at EXPO 2012, 2013 and 2014*
- *Participation in VS Autumn 2012 and Spring 2013 campaigns in partnership with Calmac*
- *Delivery of the Argyll & The isles Tourism Summit 2013 at Mount Stuart in partnership with Calmac, West Coast Motors and Mount Stuart*
- *Development of a new consumer facing website ([www.exploreargyll.co.uk](http://www.exploreargyll.co.uk)) and a mobile version (just launched)*
- *A programme of industry workshops in each of the eight sub regions of Argyll in Sept and Oct 2013\**
- *Sectoral Group workshops – including food and drink, wildlife, marine, heritage and culture*
- *Design of eight regional leaflets and eight sectoral leaflets with electronic versions available for download – with over 1m printed and distributed throughout Scotland at the start of the 2014-17 programme*
- *Strategic presence at the Scottish Boat Show at Inverkip in October 2013 (stand partners with RYAS)*
- *Strategic presence at BOWfest in September 2013*

- *Becoming an active member of the Scottish Tourism Alliance and pro-actively contributing to the Tourism Scotland 2020 strategy, action planning and delivery processes*
- *Trade Communications and media liaison*
- *Organisation of fam trips and travel writer itineraries*
- *Social media networking – industry and consumer facing*

## **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2014-17**

As part of the business case presented in 2014, AITC set out their vision for 2014-17 as;

***AITC will be the body that ensures tourism activity in Argyll & the Isles has a significant impact on key economic drivers and the sustainability of the region and will do this through strength, vision, leadership and collaboration – we will be recognised as the single voice of the tourism industry in Argyll and Isles and the driver of growth and excellence.***

AITC has made significant progress towards turning this vision into reality as follows;

### **IMPACT ON ECONOMIC DRIVERS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE REGION**

- AITC were directly involved in the Economic Summit staged by the CPP in Dunoon in 2014 with a presentation from AITC's Vice Chair Calum Ross. When the Economic Forum was established under the chairmanship of Nicholas Ferguson through Iain Jurgensen has had a direct involvement in the Forum's deliberations and data used in the Forum's report and recommendations. AITC is specifically highlighted in the report as a shovel ready delivery partner to progress the tourism related actions and specifically progress the strategic marketing of Argyll & The Isles as a must visit destination

**STRENGTH** – AITC's first programme of activity was known as the 'Stronger Together' campaign and was aimed at bringing a very disparate region together under an umbrella identity for mutual benefit and strength in numbers. AITC's core membership has grown

and its reputation outwith the region has been recognised with case studies produced by Cooperative Development Scotland and AITC recently being shortlisted for a HITA.

**VISION** – AITC has set itself a simple ambition of continually punching above its weight and setting clear vision for the destination. The local DMOs and public sector partners articulate this in the TAI2020 rocket which was developed by AITC in partnership with VS in 2015, and has been adopted. This sense of 'shared' vision has been the catalyst for engagement and collaboration, and is now the basis for all reporting by the AITSPG partners.

**LEADERSHIP** – AITC has stood the test of time having been in operation for 5 years, operating on a pan Argyll basis and maintaining a strong representational board. Gavin Dick and Calum Ross were founding directors in 2012 and are Chair and Vice Chair respectively. Two of AITC's directors are on the board of Visit Scotland, one is a director of the Scottish Tourism Alliance and another is on the STA Council. One is currently chair of the British Hospitality Association Scotland and one is Chair of the Scottish Institute of Hospitality. One is the Commercial Director of ScotRail Abellio and one is on the board of the Kintyre Way and Machrihanish Space Port. Each of the representational directors is also a director of their local marketing group – and all either run their own tourism enterprise or are in very senior positions in larger tourism enterprises.

Five of the AITC directors plus the development manager successfully undertook the 1 year Napier University Destination Leaders Executive Certificate in 2014/15 – in their own time and with funding support from HIE.

**COLLABORATION** – AITC'S cooperative model is unique in Scotland with the local marketing and sectoral groups being the members. This has proven to be an excellent foundation for grass roots collaboration and engagement within a disparate region wherein the individual businesses work at a local level through their local

DMOs and the DMOs collaborate across the region. 2016 has seen some unprecedented collaborative activity with neighbouring DMOs actively working together (having previously seen each other as direct competitors). As a direct consequence of AITC's development agent activity Cowal & Bute have an active collaboration programme of fam trips for local businesses and Mull and Oban are exploring joint marketing possibilities.

AITC has now delivered a number of significant pan Argyll travel writer itineraries wherein the full tour has been delivered on a complimentary basis and

AITC's Wild About Argyll adventure and film initiative with Mark Beaumont during summer 2016 has been recognised at a national level by Visit Scotland and the Scottish Tourism Alliance as an excellent example of collaboration in action. The 12 day epic adventure across the region engaged with over 115 tourism enterprises with 63 providing services free of charge or seriously discounted. Ten funding partners contributed to the programme at a total exceeding £64,000. AITC's member DMOs has commissioned 13 additional local edits at a value of £16250.

#### **THE SINGLE VOICE OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN ARGYLL & THE ISLES –**

Given AITC's roots as the delivery partner for the AITSP, and its membership model representing a network of AITC has, from an early stage been recognised as the voice of the industry across the region and with a pan Argyll perspective. AITC represents the tourism industry on the CPP, provides input on various [partner led initiatives such as the Council's EDAP, and also represents the industry on the Scottish Tourism Alliance Council.

**THE DRIVER OF GROWTH AND EXCELLENCE** – AITC has witnessed significant growth levels in the last 5 years with stats available to demonstrate the business confidence and impact from AITC's endeavours. Business contacts secured at EXPO and Explore GB are now delivering new business to the region – For example new products have been developed by Wilderness Scotland and DFDS as

a direct consequence of AITC business at EXPO.

The visitor attractions in Argyll and the Isles region have seen a substantial increase in tourism footfall during July and August, compared with the national average, according to figures released recently. The figures, issued by the Moffat Centre in Glasgow, are the results of the contributions from 592 tourist attractions across Scotland. They show that in July Scotland's visitor attractions had an increase of 6.6%, while in Argyll and the Isles this was a whopping 12.8% rise. In August the Scottish increase was 3.4%, compared with the rise in Argyll and the Isles, which at 8.9%, was more than twice the national average.

Business confidence and excellence can also be demonstrated in

the recently announced Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards 2016. Argyll & The Isles has secured 16 of the 50 shortlisted places – more than 30% of the total and significantly more than any other region – and with AITC itself being one of these. An example of growth and excellence is Jamie Duncan of Argyll Cruising. Jamie engaged with AITC at a Get Wild About Argyll workshop and received 1-2-1 mentoring support at his premises. He then felt confident to venture into wildlife boat trips, which has helped his business grow. Jamie subsequently engaged with AITC as part of their presence at the Cowal Gathering donating a 3 day cruise prize worth over £1300 for the promotional prize draw. He was nominated for and has been shortlisted as a 'Highlands Rising Star' finalist in HITA2016 and is a strong ambassador for AITC.

**Table 1: REPORTING AGAINST THE BUSINESS CASE FOR 2014-17**

PROPOSED OUTCOME	ACHIEVEMENTS AT END OF SEPT 2016
<p>Argyll &amp; The Isles is known as a prime Scottish destination for wildlife, adventure, heritage and food tourism</p>	<p>AITC has made significant progress in positioning the region as a prime Scottish destination for wildlife, adventure, heritage and food tourism, and is currently exploring a significant dedicated sectoral development resource with HIE to grow these 3 sectors and sectoral events and festivals across the region.</p> <p>Individual areas of Argyll have been recognised for some time as prime destinations for wildlife, adventure heritage and food tourism – e.g. Mull for Wildlife, Oban for Seafood, and Islay for Whisky and Kilmartin for heritage. However other areas of Argyll enjoy similar attributes and AITC's aim has been to raise awareness of the rich offer we have across the region.</p> <p>Evidence of the positioning has come through close working with the VS marketing and content teams on Nature's Paradise, and Taste for Tourism - and the three differentiating attributes listed on the new Visitscotland.com website for Argyll &amp; the Isles relate to the wildlife and adventure, and food and drink – with the region ranking as 'one of the best places in Scotland to see iconic wildlife'. The current Wild About Argyll adventure and film activity will specifically focus on repositioning the region as Scotland's Adventure Coast with a major campaign planned in 2017 utilising A&amp;BC and Growth Fund support – application submitted and decision due in November 2016.</p> <p>Specific achievements are;</p> <p><b>WILDLIFE</b></p> <p>Working directly in partnership with FCS and SNH at a pan Argyll level AITC has developed the Nature's Paradise initiative with an information leaflet, a programme of art in nature events with Artmap Argyll, a dedicated area on <a href="http://exploreargyll.co.uk">exploreargyll.co.uk</a>, regular blog content and a six week social media campaign. This was initially developed as a core part of AITC's Year of Natural Scotland activity in 2013 and has been sustained with on-going funding from FCS. The current focus is to develop accessibility itineraries for the less able bodied market (linked to the AITC 2016 Summit presentation by Chris McCoy).</p> <p>In 2015 FCS and SNH funded AITC to pilot a business mentoring scheme 'Get Wild About Argyll' to raise awareness of the potential wildlife tourism offers and to mentor business on an individualised action plan. The outputs have been significant with 44 businesses participating and testimonials highlighting the unique opportunities for like-minded businesses to network and collaborate and build their confidence in promoting the wildlife offer. One business credits the AITC opportunity as growing his network and enabled him to build his business to a level he is now employing local staff to meet his demand. The Get Wild About Argyll programme was shortlisted for a RSPB Nature in Tourism award in 2015.</p> <p><b>ADVENTURE</b></p> <p>AITC has recently embarked on a very ambitious Wild About Argyll adventure tourism initiative to re-profile the region as</p>



	<p>Scotland's Adventure Coast and to appeal to a much younger (18-44) market in the central belt and north of England. Significant content has been collected during a 12 day epic adventure with Mark Beaumont during summer 2016 and which had significant impact on line at the time. The content is being developed and will be at the heart of a 12 month campaign over 2017 with a very high level of digital activity.</p> <p>Marine Tourism has been seen as priority and a working group is being established under AISTPG to explore next steps linked to potential support from HIE and SDI.</p> <p><b>HERITAGE (&amp; CULTURE)</b></p> <p>AITC has been involved from the outset in the work of the Argyll &amp; Bute Cultural Assembly and more recently is supporting the CHArts network as it is exploring means to support the recently awarded Place Partnership. AITC's specific interest is in cultivating closer relationships between both sectors. AITC is also working closely with the Argyll &amp; Bute Museums &amp; Heritage Forum on joint activity in 2017 – the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology</p> <p><b>FOOD TOURISM</b></p> <p>In 2015, the year of Food &amp; Drink, AITC worked directly with Food from Argyll to deliver the national Taste for Tourism conference in Oban, which attracted over 130 delegates from across Scotland, and with international speakers. The conference posed the question 'has Scotland got what it takes to be a global food tourism destination?' and has been the catalyst for Food from Argyll to open a café at the Pier in Oban. Discussions are now underway with HIE on developing the regions food and drink tourism offer and a potential partnership with the Outer Hebrides. AITC developed a suite of foodie itineraries for each area of Argyll and supported the Mull &amp; Iona Food Trail initiative, which has since won various awards.</p>
<p>Argyll &amp; The Isles is an active participant in 'themed year' activity and consistently provides high impact activity within the region</p>	<p>AITC has been an active participant in each themed year with the current year possibly being the least active due to its less strategic fit at a pan Argyll level and with agreed TAI2020 priorities.</p> <p>2013 – Year of Natural Scotland</p> <p>In 2013 AITC progressed a major programme of activity with Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and SNH linked to the Nature's Paradise initiative, which had been launched by FCS the year before. This included a re-launch and wider distribution of the leaflet, increased activity on the exploreargyll.co.uk web site, a programme of art in nature workshops across the region with Artmap Argyll.</p> <p>As a legacy in 2014 AITC piloted Get Wild About Argyll business mentoring workshops and rolled out a second phase in 2015. 44 businesses took part and a new collaboration has been established in Heart of Argyll, which is now delivering, nature walks and took a stand at the RSPB national festival in 2016.</p> <p>2014 - Year of Homecoming</p> <p>In 2014 AITC directly supported a number of events and festivals across the region including the Cowal Gathering, Best of the West and the Loch Fyne Viking Festival. AITC through the web portal and events listings on exploreargyll.co.uk</p>

	<p>and its social media activity promoted all local events including the Highland Gatherings.</p> <p>2015 – Year of Food &amp; Drink</p> <p>AITC worked with its local DMOs to create dedicated Food itineraries in each area and was very active on social media showcasing all the area has to offer. A significant achievement in the Year of Food and Drink was the successful delivery of the Taste for Tourism national conference in Oban in partnership with Food from Argyll.</p> <p>2016 - Year of Architecture, Innovation and Design</p> <p>AITC recognised the importance of the NVA event in Cardross in March 2016 and was a key partner in the planning and delivery of the event and local promotion. The AITC Development Manager and local Development Agent sat on the event steering group and worked with A&amp;BC and the Helensburgh Chamber of Commerce on seeking to optimise the local impact from the event through business collaborations.</p>
<p>AITC continues to have a strategic presence at EXPO and other relevant trade events, which is demonstrably leading to enhanced visitor and tourism activity in the region.</p>	<p>AITC has now attended VS EXPO every year from 2012 when the first Argyll Aisle was successfully delivered following the summit in 2011. AITC has attended each year and has witnessed steady growth from year 1 where very few travel trade buyers were aware of the region to this year when virtually all appointments were from buyers keen to develop specific packages in Argyll. AITC has conducted over 400 formal appointments with the travel trade with a further 100+ at Explore GB in 2015 and 2016.</p> <p>An average of 400 buyers from over 30 countries attend EXPO each year and with AITC having a strategic presence now each year for 5 years the region has been exposed to over 2000 international travel trade buyers and has had formal appointments with over 400 buyers and 184 of these being rated as strong leads likely to secure new business for the region.</p> <p>In 2016 VS reported the average number of appointments typically secured by a stand holder as 36. AITC secured 82 formal appointments this year plus 52 'drop-ins'.</p>
<p>AITC will have a more sustainable funding base for its core activities</p>	<p>The core funding provided by A&amp;BC for 2014-17 at £50k per annum has been a catalyst for £50k match funding from HIE plus £20k from Calmac and £5-10k per annum from SNH. Each year AITC has successfully attracted additional funding for projects and campaigns from both public sector partners and the private sector.</p> <p>Since being set up in 2012 AITC has developed a strong reputation as a pan Argyll delivery body and secured notable funding packages to deliver project activity on behalf of partners. Partners investing in AITC's project activity include A&amp;BC, SNH, FCS, Calmac, Sustrans, Scottish Canals, VisitScotland and ScotRail,</p> <p>AITC turnover since it was formed in 2012 and projected to the end of March 2017 is £869,000. For the period of the current 3 year development funding from 2014-2017 turnover is projected to be £582k giving the council a ROI of 3.88 on their investment of £150k.</p> <p>AITC has now positioned itself as a dependable delivery agent securing a number of contracts and acting as an agent allowing it to derive income from its activity. The key example is the Digital Tourism Scotland contract with HIE worth</p>

	<p>£55k over 2 years and from which AITC will derive an income over and above the delivery of service.</p> <p>Bruce Crawford MSP has directly involved AITC in national discussions on DMO funding as a core partner on the Destinations Working Group that reporting into the Cross Party Working Group on Tourism which he chairs. This group has concluded that funding can be sourced but a core budget is essential to support the basic activity of any DMO ensure mainstream activity is not jeopardised and continuity is achieved as project and marketing campaign funding is secured and delivered.</p> <p>AITC has developed a partners and patrons proposal and will look to secure a business development resource to roll this out in 2017 allowing pan Argyll businesses and other interests to support AITC's activities.</p> <p>Looking to the future AITC has a minimum of £10k per annum from membership fees based on the current core membership – the Partners &amp; patron proposal will seek to increase this. In addition with AITC's impact and membership benefits now much more tangible the Board intend to review members' subs at the next AGM.</p> <p>AITC has a contract with HIE for DTS delivery, which extends to June 2018 and brings a small % of income. There are other service delivery possibilities that could be explored with partners including A&amp;BC.</p> <p>AITC has also submitted an application to VS Growth Fund for a total spend of £100k (incl match funding of £40k from A&amp;BC) for a 12-month campaign throughout 2017.</p> <p>AITC has been identified as a delivery partner within the Creative Places funding secured by A&amp;BC. The full detail has yet to be scoped out as Argyll and the Islands LEADER and other funding sources are pursued to match the Creative Scotland award.</p> <p>AITC has been in direct discussions with Argyll and the Islands LEADER regarding potential funding proposals and has been advised that the proposed development activity would be eligible. As match funding needs to be secured in advance and discussions are not yet concluded with HIE and others this has not at this stage been progressed.</p>
<p>Argyll &amp; The Isles secures growth in line with the TS2020 targets and is recognised as a key player in the national tourism economy</p>	<p>AITC led the production of Tourism Argyll &amp; the Isles 2020, which is the local response to the national strategy. This was officially launched in October 2015 at a mini summit with partners and is now the reporting base for AITC and the AISTPG activity. The target is based on VS stats and progress will be tracked when the equivalent stats are next published to ensure growth is in line with the stated target in TAI2020 and the target refreshed as appropriate.</p> <p>The original target set has been increased based on the VS stats provided for 2014 suggesting the original target had already been met. The target was refreshed seeking growth from £270m in 2014 to £300m in 2020. This target is more than 4 times higher than the target set for the Outer Hebrides demonstrating Argyll &amp; The Isles role in delivering against the national target.</p> <p>This rocket was produced based on a 10 venue road show conducted by AITC across the region engaging businesses across the area and in partnership with VS, Argyll and Bute Council's Business Gateway and Calmac and supplemented by input at the breakout sessions at the AITC Summit events.</p>

	<p>AITC has been directly involved with the Scottish Tourism Alliance as a member since it was set up and in 2014 joined the Council as one of only a few DMO group representatives. AITC's vice chair is a board member of the STA.</p> <p>AITC has recently been nominated for and then shortlisted for a Highlands &amp; Island Tourism Award in the Working Together for Tourism Category. This helps demonstrate that AITC and the region are seen as key players in the national tourism economy and that its activity is being recognised.</p>
<p>Every area of Argyll has an active local marketing group that is a member of AITC and membership remains stable if not increasing</p>	<p>In 2014 AITC identified 14 local marketing groups and organisations. Three of these were founder members of AITC in 2012 to get it established and a further five came on board immediately as members during the Stronger Together programme 2012-14. During the current 3 year programme a further 3 groups have joined AITC. Following the 2015 AGM AITC introduced an associate member category for pan Argyll sectoral interests. Seven sectoral interests are now directly engaging with AITC with five being formal members. The groups that have not yet joined AITC are Explore Campbeltown (where there has been on-going discussions with Explore Kintyre &amp; Gigha) Tiree (which was focused on a single project initiative) and Love Loch Lomond who has an interest that extends beyond AITC's area of interest.</p> <p>During the current programme a number of the DMOs have grown in membership with the support of our development agent activity.</p> <p>Three groups have or are in the process of re-establishing themselves in a new format to better meet local business needs (Oban &amp; Lorn Tourism Alliance is now a cooperative, Marketing Mull &amp; Iona is taking over from Holiday Mull &amp; Iona and will extend its membership beyond the accommodation sector, and Explore Kintyre and Gigha is reinventing itself following tensions with Explore Campbeltown). Visit Helensburgh has ceased to operate as a membership organisation and a new collaboration is being explored now the submarine museum and other new attractions are opening in the town.</p>
<p>Argyll &amp; The Isles continues to provide an annual Summit event – format and location to vary to meet preferences – which helps set the agenda for the next 12 months activity</p>	<p>AITC has delivered an annual summit event in 2014, 15 and 16. The decision was taken at an early stage to develop the Portavadie model from 2012 where the summit showcased one of Argyll's attractions and had a theme relevant to the national tourism agenda.</p> <p>2014 – the Summit was held at Mount Stuart in partnership with Mount Stuart Trust, Calmac and West Coast Motors plus funding from VS. Theme was linked directly to the recently launched national strategy with the Chair and CEO of the Scottish Tourism Alliance presenting at the event and four breakout sessions on the TS2020 asset blocks specifically looking at priority actions for Argyll &amp; the Isles</p> <p>2015 – the Summit was held at Ardgartan Hotel in partnership with Lochs &amp; Glens, a national coach tour operator with several properties in Argyll who had successfully built a £multi-million hotel at Ardgartan during the recession and to a very high standard. The summit theme was on knowing our customers and had a combination of talks and workshops.</p> <p>2016 – the summit was held at the Tower Digital Arts Centre in Helensburgh showcasing this new facility and with a focus on collaboration with internal to Argyll and also with external partners.</p> <p>As part of considering AITC's longer-term sustainability the decision was taken to introduce a small charge for the summit event in 2014. This was known to be a risk with the summit event being on an island but with the keen support of</p>

	<p>both Calmac and West Coast Motors for transport and the growing reputation of AITC as a deliverer the event was fully booked and the Great Hall was packed out. Each event has subsequently had a fee charge and has attracted similar attendee numbers (c140-150) irrespective of location. Feedback following each event has been very positive (formal surveys undertaken) and specifically referring to the quality of speakers and opportunities for networking. Since 2015 AITC has combined the summit with a HIT Oyster Club tasting dinner the evening before to provide support to this important charity which has and continues to support personal development within the hospitality sector.</p>
<p>The objectives set out in the current A&amp;BC EDAP are fully met and refreshed more ambitious targets set</p>	<p>AITC was identified as a delivery partner in the Council's EDAP and the primary actions set out in the previous EDAP have been progressed in partnership with A&amp;BC.</p> <p>The AITC team had a direct involvement in each of the more recent area-based EDAP workshops, with the plans currently being adopted by each of the Council's Area Committees. The Strategic EDAP (also developed from the workshop discussions) will be considered at the Council's EDI Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016.</p>

Having secured the core funding from Argyll & Bute Council for 2014-17, AITC agreed a set of Measures for the £50k per annum development agent funding package from HIE. These targets are on track for delivery by March 2017 with interim reporting below.

Activities	Outcomes	Indicative measure (cumulative)	Impact	AITC ACTIVITY TO DATE
Support for sectoral network activities	Number of collaborative development projects initiated	Year 1: 2 Year 2: 4 Year 3: 6	Increased economic activity in the tourism sector	<p>AITC has supported a series of collaborative development projects since 2014 including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Art in Nature Workshops with Artmap Argyll</li> <li>• Get Wild About Argyll business training and mentoring with SNH and FCS – 44 businesses participated</li> <li>• Taste for Tourism national food tourism conference with Food from Argyll</li> <li>• Nature’s Paradise social media campaign with the Glorious Gardens of Argyll &amp; Bute and FCS</li> <li>• Wild About Argyll Film and Adventure with Mark Beaumont engaging more than 115 local businesses</li> <li>• World Host destination programme with People 1<sup>st</sup> and Business Gateway</li> <li>• Joint Wild About Argyll urban adventure online film edit with Glasgow City Marketing Bureau and Scottish Canals</li> </ul>
Co-ordinated support for DMOs and sectoral groups	Increased membership of DMOs and sectoral groups	Year 1: 10% Year 2: 20% Year 3: 30%	Sustainable collaborative model	<p>This will be measured in March 2017.</p> <p>COMMENTARY - Some DMOs are achieving growth in line with the targets set but others are not. The DMO membership context is radically changing as online booking grows. The original model wherein DMOs created destination websites and businesses got direct leads is being eroded and AITC is proactively looking at a different member benefit model which focuses more on networking and collaboration – and growing the size of the overall cake. This is under review with HIE.</p>
Capacity support for 1000 SMEs	Increased industry leadership and 20 HIE clients delivering growth aspirations	Feedback from DMO and sectoral group members,	Long term commitment to increasing quality of tourism in Argyll	<p>AITC has sustained 10 volunteer directors for 5 years and 5 undertook the 12 day Destination Leaders programme in 2014/15 in their own time with funding support from HIE.</p> <p>AITC decision to pursue World Host destination programme across Argyll to increase quality through customer care</p> <p>More than 20 HIE clients who are engaged in AITC activity are delivering growth aspirations. A full list will be generated in March 2017 – this will include AITC itself and Food from Argyll.</p>

Co-ordinated training for DMOs and sectoral groups around use of branding	Collective approach to branding and marketing	Evidence of collective branding materials	Cohesive Argyll brand	<p>Argyll &amp; The Isles brand now utilised on all AITC marketing and promotional literature and digital activity – includes suite of 18 leaflets, EXPO stand, exploreargyll.co.uk, and on all AITC's online social media accounts. DMO members and strategic partners utilising the logo to provide a direct link from own websites to exploreargyll.co.uk and on email sign off (e.g. Portavadie) with a direct link to Explore Argyll.</p> <p>Following publication of the A&amp;B Economic Forum report a series of strategic marketing meetings have been hosted jointly by A&amp;BC and AITC. First meeting in April 2016 and attended by all Argyll key partners. There was unanimous agreement on the need for a concerted effort by all parties to market and promote Argyll. All agreed that there was a clear appetite around the table to support significantly enhanced marketing activity focussed on the existing brand and there was a consensus that this needed immediate attention to allow an ambitious partnership approach to be developed in early course.</p>
Support and information re quality and growth provided to all AITC members	5% increase in turnover and employment in tourism sector	Feedback from AITC members	Growth in tourism sector	<p>AITC Barometer developed and utilised throughout 2015. Numbers participating dropped off and the barometer is currently under review with the proposal being to issue an end of season barometer in 2016. Individual stats being gathered from key tourism operators (including AITC directors) and correlated with robust data from Calmac, ASVA. KPI working group now set up for TAI2020 with A&amp;BC, HIE and Calmac.</p>

**The specific tasks to be delivered by AITC through the 3-year HIE funded project have been progressed as follows:**

TASKS AGREED	ACTIVITY TO DATE
1. Empower and build capacity within DMOs and sectoral groups	Freelance Development Agent team appointed in 2014 and working directly with 11 DMO members Support provided for joint activity with Glorious Gardens of Argyll & Bute, Food from Argyll, Artmap Argyll, the Argyll & Bute Museums and Heritage Forum, the Argyll & Bute Long Distance Route Forum Joint working with ACT and CHArts
2. Support DMOs and sectoral groups to develop and implement their own action plans	Development agents working with individuals DMOs to consolidate yearly business plans. HIE project scoped out for online destination action plan toolkit as part of Destination Leaders Programme executive certificate.
3. Communicate regularly with all DMOs and sectoral groups	Development agents providing regular communications to local DMO and sectoral groups via newsletters and email communications. Periodic update provided from AITC on regional and national activity.
4. Identify training and skills needs and signpost / encourage participation	DTS survey issued across Argyll & the Isles with 372 responses – specific questions on training and skills – programme of training being rolled out SDS presentation on modern apprenticeships in tourism provided in Campbeltown via Explore Kintyre & Gigha World Host customer care training being delivered across Argyll & The `Isles in partnership with Business Gateway and People 1 <sup>st</sup> . Targeting 200 tourism businesses in 2017 and 18. Local member surveys undertaken in Bute, Cowal, Colonsay, Oban & Lorn, Inveraray, Kintyre & Gigha, Islay & Jura, Mull & Iona seeking feedback on member benefits including skills and training
5. Provide networking opportunities for DMOs and sectoral groups	Annual summit delivered in March each year and mini summit event in October 2015 to launch the TAI2020 rocket to AITC DMO and sectoral members. Local networking opportunities being delivered via agents in each DMO including local fam trips and networking events, expanded AGM events, DMO collaboration fam trips.
6. Prepare and regularly disseminate an Argyll and the Isles tourism barometer	Developed in 2014 and launched in 2015 with quarterly returns. Good early input but tapered off. Under review. Full season barometer being prepared for issue at end of 2016 season
7. Support DMOs and sectoral groups to deliver internal member benefits	Full review of member's benefits undertaken with each DMO including confidential member surveys. New benefit statements created for each DMO and roll out of actual benefits underway (eg networking events, training)
8. Address employment and training issues within tourism, e.g. summer/winter employment links	Seasonality issues being explored on an area by area basis - no specific action taken as yet. Specific focus been given to training outwith the main season when rolling out DTS and World Host to optimise uptake. Early consideration being given to living wage impacts ion the hospitality sector in partnership with BHA, STA and others
9. Highlight career opportunities within the	Executive certificate in Rural Tourism scoped out with the University of West of Scotland and Portavadie. Pilot being considered for 2017 with possible funding support from HIE.



tourism sector	Modern Apprenticeship presentation delivered by SDS to Explore Kintyre & Gigha in 2015 – good attendance and interest.
10. Support DMOs and sectoral groups with database and membership management	Agents team working with DMO partners on standard database and membership management systems. Scoping out centralised services to allow local DMOs to concentrate on local marketing and project activity and address volunteer fatigue
11. Be proactive in encouraging relevant operators to establish sectoral groups where none exist	Local wildlife tourism group set up in Heart of Argyll following AITC Get Wild About Argyll business training and mentoring programme. Similar group being considered in Cowal. Heart of Argyll Group is offering wildlife walks and events for visitors and had a stall at the RSPB Scottish Nature Festival in 2016.
12. Identify funding sources / resources for DMO support activities and collaborative work	Agents signposting and providing support for funding applications – e.g. MMI submitting an Argyll and the Islands LEADER application for new marketing activity; support provided in Cowal for funding bid for food tourism in schools initiative.

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## Appendix 2 – Agreed Outcomes between Argyll and Bute Council and AITC 2014 - 2017

Outcome	Narrative	Measurement
<p><b>Argyll and the Isles recognised as a prime Scottish destination for wildlife, adventure, heritage, and food and drink tourism.</b></p>	<p>The region has exceptional products in relation to wildlife, adventure, heritage and food tourism but this is not widely appreciated by visitors from outwith the region and especially those who have never visited.</p> <p>Currently there is poor region wide awareness of the extent of the offer. There is scope to drive much more tourism activity through wider awareness out with the region.</p> <p>AITC, during the 2014-17 Programme will set up a base line audit working for example with Scottish Canals at the Falkirk Wheel. Visitors at that and other locations will be asked to rate several areas of Scotland in relation to these factors. Through time we anticipate a marked change in the perception of Argyll and the Isles. The branded suite of leaflets will be a significant boost in brand awareness and the extent of our offer.</p>	<p><i>Argyll and the Isles will be recognised as being in the top 5 regional destinations in Scotland for wildlife, adventure, heritage, and food and drink.</i></p>
<p><b>Argyll &amp; The Isles secures growth in line with the Tourism Strategy 2020 Vision targets and is recognised as a key player in the national tourism economy.</b></p>	<p>AITC is developing a tourism barometer working with members of the local marketing groups and key attractions to collate monthly performance data and combine this with which will be collated.</p> <p>This will assist the AITC who will play a key role in customising the Council's tourism data measurements contract being managed by VisitScotland.</p>	<p><i>Argyll and the Isles tourism barometer data will confirm that the region is performing in line with the national average as a minimum and is 'spiking' in relation to our key products and offers.</i></p>
<p><b>Argyll &amp; The Isles is an active participant in 'themed year' activity and consistently provides high impact activity within the</b></p>	<p>Historically Argyll and the Isles have not actively participated at a strategic level and when this has happened it has been at a very local level (e.g. individual events).</p> <p>During the Year of Natural Scotland, more was achieved with key events being within Argyll (e.g. the Scottish Series). Looking to the future, activity will be coordinated but also encouraged through</p>	<p><i>Argyll and the Isles will have extensive local activity on national focus year programmes and will host at least 1 signature event/programme of activity in 2015 and 2017 in</i></p>

Outcome	Narrative	Measurement
<p><b>region</b></p>	<p>AITC's strategic relations with VS and Event Scotland.</p> <p>An early example of AITC's reach and impact - through AITC intervention, the Coll of the Sharks Festival and Loch Fyne Viking Festival are both now on the partner programme for Homecoming 2014 and will secure national promotion and media coverage at no cost to the event itself. This will be measured in future years through analysis of activity in Argyll and the Isles relative to the rest of Scotland.</p> <p>The next four focus years are as follows;</p> <p>2015 – food and drink  2016 – architecture and design  2017 – archaeology and heritage  2018 – young people</p> <p>2015 and 17 fall within the scope of the 2014-17 AITC programme and are 'tailor made' for enhanced activity in this region through AITC coordination.</p>	<p><i>particular.</i></p>
<p><b>Every area of Argyll has an active local marketing group that is a member of the AITC and membership remains stable if not increasing</b></p>	<p>There are 15 marketing groups within the region and AITC is in regular contact with each. A number have been struggling with membership levels dropping and volunteer fatigue from directors.</p> <p>Through AITC activity (roadshow events, suite of leaflets etc.) the AITC is seeking to reverse this and demonstrate benefits in local group membership etc. The HIE funding package for 2014-17 is specifically for AITC to support capacity building in the local area and sectoral groups which should stabilize and grow local group activity. AITC has had direct involvement in recent 'refresh' activity with Islay and Jura Marketing Group and at their recent AGM they secured additional new members who had not previously been involved. AITC will collate membership information from each group on an annual basis and provide direct support where required.</p>	<p><i>AITC will have annual statistics demonstrating consolidation and growth in membership within each of the existing marketing groups with these all either continuing or joining together in new sub regional collaborations. Overall business nos. engaging in tourism association/local DMO activity will increase incrementally year on year.</i></p>

Outcome	Narrative	Measurement
	<p>As Helensburgh and Lomond are out with the HIE region, this will be a priority area for AITC linked to the promotion of CHORD tourism infrastructure. The AITC along with representatives from the Council will be approaching Scottish Enterprise to request support in this regard.</p>	
<p><b>AITC continues to have a strategic presence at EXPO and other relevant trade events which is demonstrably leading to enhanced visitor and tourism activity in the region.</b></p>	<p>EXPO and other trade events are recognised as long lead activity where the full benefit is not realised within 1-2 years but much longer. However there are some examples already available of the impact of AITC attending EXPO – e.g. the SDMA AGM/speed dating – and through ongoing monitoring of contacts made and follow up activity AITC will seek to demonstrate the extent of impact through time.</p>	<p><i>AITC will have annual EXPO and other trade event data demonstrating extent of contacts made and local impact and benefit from follow up activity in both quantitative (e.g. new tours and bookings) and qualitative (e.g. new strategic partnerships and business relationships created) as a direct consequence of attendance at these events. Annual targets will be set and monitoring put in place.</i></p>
<p><b>Argyll &amp; The Isles continues to provide an annual Summit event – format and location to vary to meet preferences – which helps set the agenda for the next 12 months activity</b></p>	<p>Three tourism summit events have been held, 2011 and 2012 were led by the Council and 2013 being directly delivered by AITC.</p> <p>Through the 2014-17 programme AITC will continue to hold an annual summit and to move the venue around the region (2014 will be in Helensburgh) with a refreshed approach at each annual event. The summit will focus on exploring what has been achieved over the past year, new and emerging opportunities for the region and securing agreement on renewed priorities for the industry for the next 12 months.</p> <p>The Summit in 2013 forged new partnership with Mount Stuart, Calmac and West Coast Motors and this model will continue to be developed for future Summit events.</p>	<p><i>AITC will have annual summit reports demonstrating region wide attendance and interest, and setting out delegate lists, delivery partnerships and delegate feedback, including suggestions for future activity.</i></p>

Outcome	Narrative	Measurement
<p><b>AITC will have a more sustainable funding base for its core activities</b></p>	<p>AITC is wholly reliant on external funding from members, partners and sponsors and consequently has had a project based focus rather than strategic drive during the ‘Stronger Together’ foundation period, albeit this strategic focus has developed through volunteer input from the Directors. With a 3 year funding package in place AITC will be able to drive forward much more strategic activity with sustainable impacts and also secure a funding basis which allows this to continue. Success will readily be measured by determining what longer term funding has been secured beyond 2017.</p>	<p><i>Prior to the conclusion of the 2014-17 programme AITC will have a sustainable funding model in place guaranteeing on going activity for 2017-2020.</i></p>
<p><b>The relevant outcomes set out in the current A&amp;BC EDAP are fully met and refreshed ambitious targets set</b></p>	<p>The EDAP 2013 - 2018 identifies AITC as a key organisation to action the primary tourism outcome within the ‘Competitive’ measures, presently there is no other organisation or mechanism in place to deliver this.</p> <p>In addition, the AITC will be placed to assist with realising an outcome within the ‘Compelling’ measure for greater exposure for Argyll and Bute by increasing visitor volumes.</p> <p>AITC believes that with a focused programme of activity over 3 years the outcomes described above can readily be achieved.</p>	<p>AITC will demonstrate, through annual reporting, progress against the EDAP outcomes and will reset targets year on year based on past performance.</p>