



WILD SEASONS

WILDLIFE TOURISM IN DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

PROJECT REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

The following is a report by the Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP) on the progress made by the Wild Seasons project in 2013. It is intended to accompany the final claims made to the principal project sponsors, the Dumfries and Galloway LEADER Programme and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). The report details the project experience for those involved, including:

- the activities undertaken
- the outputs and outcomes delivered
- an analysis of both
- the lessons learnt, and
- recommendations for the way forward and projected costs.

2. BACKGROUND

Phase 1

Wild Seasons arose from a previous SUP project, known as 'Nith Estuary Nature Based Tourism', that brought together a loose amalgam of private, public and third sector nature-based bodies seeking to promote the region for its wildlife importance. Under the Wild Seasons banner, and with assistance from LEADER and SNH, this joint group developed a central resource offering information and advice to businesses wishing to make nature-based tourism an integral part of their operation.

Through the development of a website, promotional materials, an exemplar nature-based trail within the Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve and, crucially, close partnership working between the nature-based bodies and the industry-based Destination Dumfries & Galloway (DD&G), 'Wild Seasons Phase 1' put in place the platform on which this current project ('Phase 2') sought to build.

Project Management

Wild Seasons is delivered by the SUP through local project-based staff and managed by a steering group representing the principal contributors to the day-to-day running of the project, ie. SUP, Dumfries & Galloway Council (D&GC) Ranger Service, DD&G and the Local Biodiversity Action Partnership (LBAP – represented by the Council's biodiversity officer).

Supporting the delivery are the members of the Working Group, representing each of the nature-based bodies affiliated to Wild Seasons (eg. the RSPB, Wildlife & Wetland Trust, National Trust for Scotland, Cream o'Galloway, the Forestry Commission for Scotland, and individual D&GC Rangers).

Phase 2

Hot on the success of Phase 1 of the project, SUP submitted successful applications to the D&G LEADER Programme and SNH for Phase 2 funding, the aims of which were to:

- engage a wider representation of the private sector in the Wild Seasons initiative and seek their investment in it
- take the nature based product to a wider market, specifically to increase visitor numbers to the region
- continue efforts to further develop the nature based product of the region, focussing on the delivery of high quality 'exemplar' projects
- support approaches to accessing and enjoying the nature based product, especially through the development and support of collaborative effort and projects
- develop links to relevant initiatives (e.g. the UNESCO Biosphere) to promote the potential of nature based tourism within them, and to use them as platform for the promotion of Wild Seasons.

A number of objectives and activities were linked with these aims and these are described in section 3.

Project Inception

Initial progress with Phase 2 was hampered by difficulties in recruiting a project officer which resulted in a delayed start and – due to funding deadlines – a shortened project life of just 10 months (from the envisaged 15 months), ie. from March to December 2013. The recruited project officer, though experienced, was also only available to the project on a part-time basis as a result of which the steering group decided to recruit consultants, under the supervision of the project officer, to address specific elements of Phase 2.

This did not affect the momentum of the project as the partnership representatives were able to continue to attend relevant tourism events, maintain and promote the website, use social media and generally continue to engage with the industry. However, it did require a radical rethinking of what could be achieved in the time available.

3. STRATEGY

Rationale

The activities originally proposed to fulfil the aims of Phase 2 were intended to enhance the capacity of businesses and nature-based bodies in the region to identify, synthesize and promote its wildlife attractions to the wider public over the longer term but otherwise lacked coherence, eg. a theme or structure around which they could coalesce in order to give the project more impetus, while still retaining the associated project outputs. Given the time and resources available to the project, it was agreed to address this through a more focused strategy.

The Strategy

The Wild Seasons website www.wildseasons.co.uk already featured natural sites, trails and individual walks in Dumfries and Galloway with the greatest potential for viewing wildlife. The strategy drawn up for Phase 2 aimed to develop a great deal more information on the wildlife sites (or 'Wild Locations') and to link them to a series of self-guided visitor itineraries ('Wild Routes') which contain information on the range of local accommodation, visitor attractions and other facilities, plus wildlife events that may be happening, in order to retain visitors in each area. This would create the structure required by the project, through which a coherent visitor 'product' would be developed that could be marketed more widely.

For each route, Wild Seasons would attempt to get a good representation of accommodation / facility types and standards and to link with community initiatives where possible. Businesses engaging with Wild Seasons in order to benefit from joint promotion would be expected to demonstrate a commitment to nature-based tourism in various ways including:

- promoting themselves as 'wild friendly', eg. by linking to the Wild Seasons website and other local initiatives on their websites or leaflets;
- demonstrating a good knowledge of their local nature-based attractions and/or wildlife;
- being accredited as walker / cyclist-friendly; and
- having due regard for the sustainability of the environment, eg. by having a Green Tourism Business Award or similar.

To ensure that all businesses involved were knowledgeable about the local opportunities for enjoying wildlife, the aim was to work with Destination D&G and other partners to:

- run workshops offering advice on how to be 'wild friendly' for their customers;
- organise familiarisation trips to local sites and trails;
- offer individual advice, as appropriate, on marketing, the use of social media and even tailoring their businesses / land to cater for wildlife visitors; and
- make available a series of publications on the wildlife of the region (and where to see it) and a step-by-step guide to marketing for wildlife visitors.

For those wishing to understand in more depth the local product and how to communicate it to visitors – and possibly to establish a new venture – the project would organise a guide training event.

Finally, and in order to support this initiative, Wild Seasons planned to:

- link the website and key industry websites to promote joint work;
- provide regular, direct social media updates to the industry through existing Wild Seasons Facebook and Twitter accounts;
- continue to develop the seasonal events programmes, such as the Wild Spring Festival; and, in the process,
- promote the nature based product to potential visitors outside the region in order to boost the numbers coming to Dumfries and Galloway.

As Phase 2 progressed, the opportunity also presented itself to:

- run the region's first Wild Autumn Festival;

- update and make more comprehensive the existing events website; and
- rebrand the initiative and produce a number of new promotional products for use by partners and businesses at future events.

The full strategy is enclosed with this report as **Annex 1**.

Proposed Activities

Table 1 below, summarises the range of activities proposed for Phase 2, as revised to accommodate the above strategy.

Original Objectives	Original Activities	As Revised
A business resource & reference centre		
Develop & maintain reference material on wildlife for visitors and businesses - mainly through development of website (www.wildseasons.co.uk), including access, information, promotion and branding. The website also to act as a co-ordinated 'shop front' for wildlife activities for the benefit of residents, visitors and businesses	<p>Increase availability of downloadable information on walks, wildlife and events, etc.</p> <p>Create still and video library for use by the industry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an interactive event map / calendar at www.wildseasons.co.uk • Create an interactive section (a 'blackboard') for site locations, sightings 	<p>All retained with addition of publication of new, standalone publications on where to see wildlife & step-by-step guide to marketing</p> <p>All retained</p>
Industry Engagement		
Host showcase events to promote the regions' NBT offer and signpost nature-based bodies and businesses to resources, including the website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 familiarisation visits / talks for industry regarding the regional nature based offer • 6 active links to key industry websites to promote 'working together to better present the natural product' • Run 2 events offering the industry advice on how to be 'wild friendly' for its customers, including the use of nature in promotional materials and on web sites • Provide regular (at least weekly) social media updates to the industry through existing Wild Seasons Facebook and Twitter accounts. 	<p>Retained</p> <p>Retained</p> <p>Increased to 4 workshops</p> <p>Retained</p>
Original Objectives	Original Activities	As Revised
Nature based product development		
Further develop the nature based product of the region, focussing on the delivery of high quality 'exemplar' projects, such as the Flooders Trail.	Develop 2 more self-guided 'wild tours'	Increased to minimum 6 routes based on linking existing locations

Accessibility of the product

Work with the wider tourism industry, including various individuals who presently act as guides / instructors

- Work with the existing guides group to develop a stronger and clearer product
- Establish a stronger web presence
- Research and advise the group on key issues including corporate forms / insurance and bonding.

Retained

Promotion and Marketing

Complementary work with Destination D&G as well as wider tourism activity to 'cross-promote / cross-reference' existing and proposed activities, eg. the Wild Spring and Wild Autumn festivals and so market the wildlife product outside the region and increase visitor numbers to the region

- Attend 2 tourism 'fairs' outwith the region to promote nature based tourism in Dumfries and Galloway
- Make links to wider initiatives (e.g. the UNESCO Biosphere, Dark Skies, etc)
- Work with industry representatives, particularly through DD&G, to promote the seasonal event programme

Dropped (needs undue resources and at odds with consumer-facing nature of new initiative)

Retained

Exit Strategy / Sustainability

Aim in total is to **engage the private sector** in taking better advantage of the economic opportunities on offer, especially through collaborative efforts, and to give them the confidence to invest.

- Develop a clear 'succession' for the project to become an integral part of Destination D&G's future functioning, if / as appropriate.
- Develop an on-going funding package for the post, possibly located within one of the partner organisations.
- Develop a Business Plan for the next stage of the project.

Retained

Retained

Retained

Other / Cross-cutting Themes

Embedded within this are cross-cutting themes such as ensuring a sustainable approach (eg. through use of **Green Tourism Business Scheme**), disability issues, learning / training, etc.

Apply as appropriate in all of the above

Retained

Table 1, Proposed Activities

4. THE PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Procurement of Consultants

Bowles Green Consultants of Yorkshire were commissioned through public competitive tender in April to support the development of the website and social media, to run the 'Wild Friendly' workshops and familiarisation trips and generally to engage with businesses to encourage work with Wild Seasons.

Red Kite Tours of Inverness were commissioned through competitive tender in May to provide the guide training programme.

Bright Signals of Edinburgh were commissioned by public competitive tender in July to stage and promote the Wild Autumn Festival (they had already been commissioned by DD&G to run the Wild Spring Festival) and by a simple competitive tender to provide advice on the re-branding exercise.

Wirefly Design of Dumfries were commissioned by public competitive tender in August to develop a new events website and booking facility.

Bluebell Scotland of Edinburgh were commissioned by public competitive tender in September to write and design a step-by-step guide to marketing to wildlife visitors.

Website

Through the Bowles Green contract, Creative Station of Dalry were given a brief to redevelop the Wild Seasons website. The project officer was instrumental in liaising with nature-based bodies and businesses, visiting wildlife locations and testing routes in order to develop the new content.

The website was consequently re-launched in August with a new, fresher look and lots more information for visitors. A comprehensive guide to the wildlife of Dumfries & Galloway remains at its core but new features include:

- Details of nearly 50 wildlife viewing locations linked to an interactive map;
- Accommodation and other service listings and promotions;
- A series of visitor itineraries linking local wildlife sites with route maps, places to stay and other facilities plus other things to see and do;
- Up to date news, Tweets and Facebook posts about local wildlife events;
- Many more walks and leaflets to download.



Figure 1- Home Page of New Wild Seasons Website

Social Media

A workshop was held in September for project partners who were interested in developing and implementing a social media marketing strategy for Wild Seasons. A pilot social media campaign was developed and individuals volunteered to take a lead on adding content to the Wild Seasons Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest feeds. These were also linked to the website. Key elements of the pilot social media activity were:

- Targeting two tweets and one Facebook post per day
- Using the nature calendar as a basis for subject matter

- Promoting events in advance and on the day
- Increasing the numbers of followers, etc.

A summary of the social media workshop and our social media strategy is attached at **Annex 2**.

Workshops

Three training workshops were held to help tourism businesses understand the nature tourism market and to provide information and guidance on product development and marketing. The courses took place at NTS Threave (24th September), WWT Caerlaverock (7th November) and at Machars Action in Wigtown (22nd November). They were promoted widely to tourism businesses in the region through DD&G, ADGAP and by direct e-mail and telephone calls to businesses identified as being interested in nature tourism.

The workshops were designed to provide information on:

- *The region's nature tourism product* – delivered by nature tourism managers (Carl Munday, NTS, at Threave, Brian Morrell, WWT, at Caerlaverock and Andrew Belinski, RSPB, at Wigtown)
- *The nature tourism market and how to reach it* – delivered by Steve Green (Bowles Green Limited)
- *Experience from businesses in the region* – delivered variously by Anne Anderson from Barend Holiday Village, Robin Hogg from Galloway Holidays, Michael Clark from Williamwood farm, Shonagh Wright from the Aston Hotel, Ronnie Bradford from Brookford B&B and Tim Stephenson from the Creetown Gem Rock Museum
- *How businesses can benefit from working with the Wild Seasons project* – delivered by Iain Wilson (Wild Seasons).

Additional contributions were made to individual courses by Callum Murray (RSPB) and Karen Morley and Elizabeth Tindall (both Dumfries & Galloway Ranger Service).

In total 36 people participated in the training courses (14 at Threave, 12 at Caerlaverock and 10 at Wigtown). Feedback from participants was very positive, as illustrated by comments received following the NTS Threave workshop which are set out in **Annex 3**.



Figure 2 - Tweets posted on Wild Seasons website



Figure 3 - Brian Morrell of WWT at Caerlaverock Workshop

Familiarisation Trips

A pilot familiarisation visit was organised and promoted at short notice before the onset of the visitor season, in June. Four tourism sector representatives participated. The trip visited Lochmaben, Eskriggs Local Nature Reserve, Moffat Community Nature Reserve and the Grey Mare's Tail in Moffat Glen. Feedback was used to refine the fam trip model and four familiarisation trips were organised in the Autumn, as follows:



Figure 4 - Threave Estate Fam Trip, Oct 2013

- 7th October – *Loch Ken and the Galloway Kite Trail* (visits to the Galloway Forest Red Deer Range, Clatteringshaws Visitor Centre, Red Kite Feeding Station and Threave Osprey and Bat Reserve)
- 16th October – *The Fleet Valley* (Visits to Cream O' Galloway, Cairnsmore of Fleet National Nature Reserve, Carstrammon Woods and Carrick Bay)
- 21st November – *Wigtown Bay and Cree Woods* (Wigtown Hall Osprey Feed, Wigtown Bay Nature Reserve, RSPB Wood Of Cree, Cree Valley Community Woodlands and the Creetown Gem Rock Museum)
- 27th November – *Nith Estuary* (visits to WWT Caerlaverock, Glencaple, Mabie Forest and RSPB Mersehead)

The trips were aimed at tourism businesses and their staff. Like the courses, trips were organised across the region and were run shortly after the training courses, so that they could also be promoted at those events. Trips started at 11am and ended at 3.30 pm, so that accommodation providers could return to greet arriving guests. Each trip visited several sites where participants were met by the site managers for a short tour and talk. Transport was by minibus and lunches were provided.

Feedback from participants was positive with the main benefits being: learning about new places, learning about the nature of places they were already aware of and making personal contact with the managers of sites, all of which help to address a key business need – learning about the nature of the region. Overall, 33 people took part, including 4 on the June pilot, 9 to Loch Ken and the Galloway Kite Trail, 7 to the Fleet Valley, 7 to Wigtown Bay and Wood of Cree, and 6 to the Nith Estuary).



Figure 5 - Guide Training at RSPB Mersehead

Descriptions of each of the fam trips and feedback received are provided at **Annex 4**.

Guide Training

A group of individuals experienced in various aspects of the region's natural and cultural heritage had already come together in Phase 1 of the project to form a nucleus of 'wild guides'. The objective of Phase 2 was to identify more, existing guides and offer the opportunity to be trained to other individuals and businesses so as to enlarge this core group and give potential visitors greater opportunities to access the countryside and wildlife of Dumfries & Galloway. The intention was also to 'professionalise' the guides by ensuring that they were aware of the health & safety, insurance and other regulations relating to the industry and to provide advice on business planning where necessary. Finally, as so far as possible, guides were encouraged to promote themselves to potential visitors with specific information on their geographical and subject specialisms, availability and prices.

A guide training course covering all these aspects was held at RSPB Mersehead over three days in November. It was attended by 12 delegates of varying backgrounds and levels of experience, ranging from three businesses already in operation but looking to hone their guiding skills, to B&B and self-catering accommodation owners looking to offer their guests an additional service. A copy of the guide training programme is enclosed at **Annex 5**.

A copy of the electronic flyer used to promote the range of courses described above is enclosed at **Annex 6**.

Publications

Two specific publications were produced by the project to develop the capacity of businesses to market themselves to and cater for wildlife visitors.

The first, 'Places to Enjoy Wildlife in Dumfries & Galloway', had been previously published by the RSPB as part of their LEADER-funded project 'Connecting Communities'. This 48-page, spiral-bound, laminated booklet illustrates and describes the most likely locations for viewing all the most significant species of flora and fauna present in the region and is an extremely useful publication to help business owners inform their guests accordingly. 100 copies of the publication were reprinted for distribution to businesses attending workshops and familiarisation trips or committing themselves to the Wild Seasons brand in similar fashion.

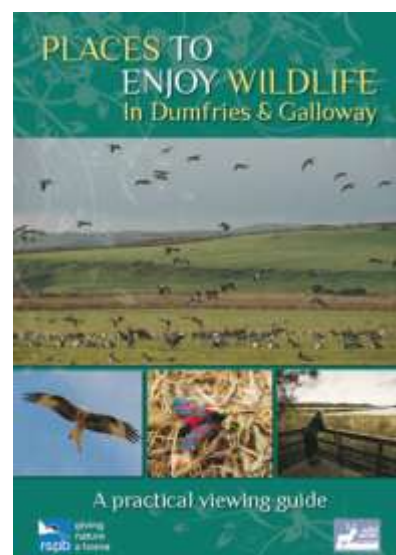


Figure 6 - Cover of Places to Enjoy Wildlife'



Figure 7 - example page from Interactive marketing guide

The second, 'A Marketing Guide for Nature-Based Tourist Businesses in Dumfries & Galloway', is a practical guide, produced as an interactive PDF, which offers specific help and

advice on marketing to businesses wishing to attract nature-based visitors to the region. It is tailored to the Dumfries & Galloway market but borrows from Tourism Intelligence Scotland's publication 'Wildlife Tourism in Scotland' and supplements the range of advice available to tourism businesses through DD&G's industry-facing website. The publication also includes 6 case studies of businesses already demonstrating good practice in the region.

Events Database

Towards the end of Phase 2, savings in the budget resulting from the delays already mentioned allowed the steering group to commission the development of an enhanced and more comprehensive events management website, linked to the main Wild Seasons website and building on a framework already developed at the outset of the project. New features included maps and an on-line booking facility so that Wild Seasons project managers and partners could start to capture visitor information and improve future marketing. The new website went live in November 2013 and already contains over 160 nature-based events being run by some 20 partners during 2014, the majority focused on the Wild Spring Festival planned by DD&G.

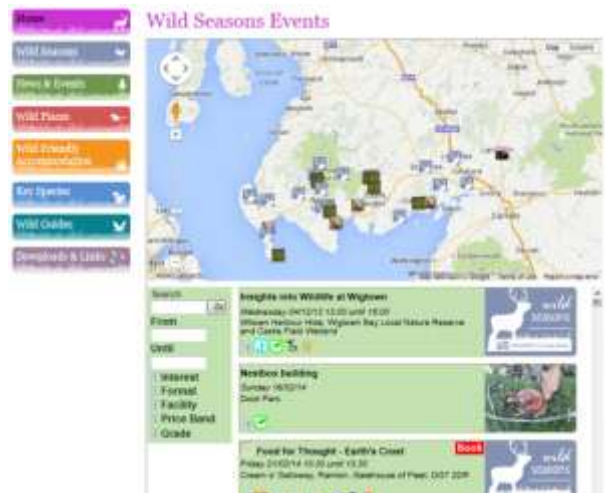


Figure 8 - Screenshot of new Events Management Webpage

Input to Wildlife Festivals

During April and May this year DD&G hosted the region's largest and most successful wildlife festival to date. The separately-funded Wild Spring Festival contained over 140 family events which were advertised on the Wild Seasons events website, attracted 18 joint offers from accommodation providers and other businesses and received some 4,700 visitors eager to get up close to animals, birds, fish and plants. It is estimated¹ that 50% of visitors were from outside the region and this activity resulted in over £200,000 of spend in the local economy.

Building on this success, and anxious to maintain the momentum being generated by this and the other Wild Seasons initiatives already described, the Steering Group hosted the inaugural Dumfries & Galloway Wild Autumn Festival in October and early November.

This was launched with a blitz of of national and regional publicity including features on BBC Scotland TV and Radio news, ITV Borders and articles in 'The Herald', 'D&G Life' and several other magazines as well as Facebook.



Figure 9 - Some of the publicity generated for WAF 2013

¹ DD&G Festival Report 2013, May 2013

The Festival contained over 100 family-friendly events involving some 20 different organisations across the region such as Galloway Activity Centre's very popular Wilderness kayaking and mountain biking events. These are illustrated in a special pull-out supplement produced for the festival and attached as **Annex 7**.

Wild Seasons Phase 2 has also contributed financially to the roll-out of Wild Spring 2014 through support for the hard copy brochure and associated promotional flyers.

Branding & Promotion

Although the development of the new Wild Seasons website had involved a fresher look and new iconography for the initiative, the overall branding had remained the same, was inconsistent with other promotional materials which had been produced by Wild Seasons or its partner bodies and needed an overhaul. The offer, by FCS officer Lucy Hadley, to help design new logos and branding guidance provided the opportunity to undertake this exercise on a value-for-money basis with professional input from Bright Signals.



Figure 10 - Detail of new WS branding

The new branding has now been incorporated into the marketing guide already described, will feature on a range of new promotional materials – such as banners and posters – being produced for use at events and by businesses themselves, and will be used for promoting the Wild Spring Festival in 2014.

Business Engagement

The majority of the business engagement undertaken was through the initiatives already described, ie. workshops, guide training and familiarisation trips and the promotion, discussions and provision of information leading up to them. However, a similar level of engagement resulted from becoming involved in 3rd party conferences and joint business marketing initiatives, such as the DD&G Annual Tourism Conference at Easterbrook Hall, Dumfries in April 2013 and Destination Langholm's initial conference in September. In all cases, the events were promoted through existing business channels such as the regular newsletters disseminated by DD&G and ADGAP.

Other opportunities for engaging with businesses were gained through discussions arising from 'ad hoc' requests for listings on the website, special offers and joint promotions with events festivals and similar requests for information. In several instances these were followed up by visits to the businesses concerned and/or included the provision of advice on marketing, wildlife or the use of social media by the project officer, the marketing consultants or other partners.

Altogether some 65 businesses and community enterprises engaged directly with Wild Seasons in one form or another and this is described in more detail in sections 5 and 6. Due to the criteria used by funders, this number differs from the outputs reported.

Community Engagement

The project has actively engaged with community-based initiatives in a number of ways – the degree of success is evaluated in section 5. These include:

- Promotion of community-run wildlife sites such as at:
 - Aldouran Glen, Leswalt;
 - Moffat Community Nature Reserve;
 - Eskrigg Nature Reserve, Lockerbie;
 - the bird-viewing sites promoted by Making the Most of Moorlands, Langholm;
 - Balloch Woods, run by the Creetown Initiative; and
 - a number of sites managed by Cree Valley Community Woods.
 Such sites have also been incorporated into 'Wild Routes' wherever possible and host events which are promoted on the website as well;
- Promotion of community assets such as the former lighthouse-keepers' cottages at the Mull of Galloway, now run by the Mull of Galloway Community Trust; and the Joseph Thomson Local Heritage Centre at Penpont;
- Direct engagement with community tourism initiatives such as Destination Langholm and an emerging group of businesses in Gretna and Gretna Green who are seeking to diversify from the wedding trade;
- Use of community-based resources such as Glenkens Community Transport for two of the familiarisation trips and Machars Action offices for the Wigtown workshop.

5. OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

Achievements

The following is an objective summary of the project achievements. Tables reporting on performance against the revised objectives generally and specific LEADER and SNH Output and Outcome targets are attached at **Annex 8**.

Website

The project has a greatly enhanced, colourful and engaging website. Its functions reflect and contribute to the strategy objective of developing a more coherent nature-based tourism 'product' in the region which:

- facilitates greater linkages between natural attractions, events and businesses;
- offers opportunities for joint promotions; and
- provides greater and more up to date information to businesses & consumers alike.

The website has been well-received by a number of individuals and agencies, including SNH advisers. **Annex 9** contains a selection of comments received.

Social Media

The project has encouraged, focused and demonstrated the effectiveness of the use of social media for promoting up-to-date nature-based tourism opportunities to a much greater extent than previously.

During the pilot project, the number of Twitter followers has been increased from 413 to 646 and the level of activity has increased

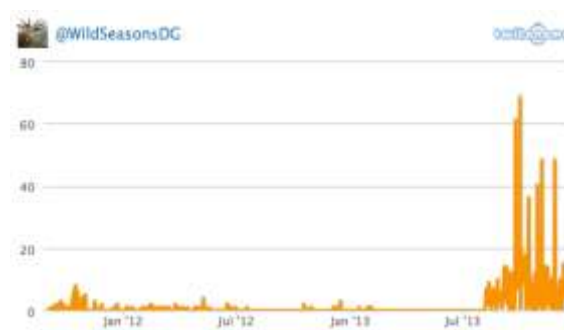


Figure 11 - Twitter Usage pre-Phase 2 and now

considerably, as shown in the graph in figure 11 of Tweet history from July 2011 to December 2013. The Facebook page has 459 'likes' and is achieving a growth rate of 2.7%. 37% of posts are images and 8% are videos, with a high rate of calls to action (for example clicking through to a website for further information). Pinterest, however, has been slower to take off, chiefly because locally, people have been slower to embrace it.

Annex 10 contains more detailed analysis of Twitter usage and the types of messages posted.

Business Engagement

The project has so far engaged with 48 individual businesses or community initiatives in actual joint work and promotion or with the definite potential for the same in the very near future. The table attached as **Annex 11** lists all the businesses concerned, together with a commentary on the nature of the engagement or involvement with Wild Seasons.

The list includes:

- over 40 businesses (using a slightly broader definition than LEADER) that attended workshops, fam trips, social media and/or guide training.
- 26 that are currently being promoted on the Wild Seasons website.

These numbers will increase over the coming weeks and months as the opportunities arising from recent engagement activity are followed up.

The table attached as **Annex 12** is a consolidated list of those individuals and businesses that attended workshops, fam trips, social media and/or guide training events, showing those that meet LEADER output criteria.

Given the positive nature of comments from participants at all events, the numbers actually participating and especially the number of people who either cancelled at short notice, or simply didn't turn up (to workshops and fam trips in particular) was disappointing and raises a wider issue (discussed below) of engaging tourism businesses.

Joint Work

The project has been notable for the amount of goodwill and joint working that has been evident between project organisers, nature-based bodies and community initiatives to enable it to work coherently for the benefit of all.

Such work has included:

- free use of venues for events and other meetings;
- organisation representatives present at or even facilitating workshops or guiding fam trips;
- website content and images;
- organisation and input of events to the new events database;
- joint working at festivals; and
- provision of advice and assistance to businesses engaging with Wild Seasons;

to list just a few examples. This degree of cooperation has positive implications for the future direction of the project.

Guides

A further pleasing aspect of the project has been the ability to enhance the core group of 'Wild Guides' from the previous 6 to the current 10, including our first guide offering boat trips. Other individuals offering tours or guiding, including two further boat trip companies, have engaged with the initiative and their closer involvement will be pursued. A number of businesses attending the guide training course currently run hotels/B&Bs, self-catering accommodation or visitor attractions and simply wanted to develop a new service that they could offer their guests.



Figure 12 – New guides on Wild Seasons website

The guide training course arranged as part of the project was fully subscribed and feedback on the course was very positive – see **Annex 13** – with lots of networking, positive ideas for joint working and enthusiasm for further training in the future. The training course also addressed generic business management issues such as regulation, insurance, health and safety and marketing and it is noticeable that businesses requested more such information, which has implications for partners such as the Council and DD&G.

Publications

The project produced two publications that will help local tourism businesses to become 'wild friendly' and increase their capacity to attract and cater for nature-based visitors. The RSPB publication 'Places to Enjoy Wildlife in D&G' had been previously printed but Wild Seasons has been able to give it greater circulation and, significantly, a number of larger businesses have indicated that they would be willing to contribute financially to a reprint in the future.

The new marketing guide is an interactive pdf which features on the DD&G website as a further aid to 'wild-friendly' businesses or those seeking to become so. It will be launched at a separate, nature-based tourism summit on 26th February 2014.

Events Management Website

The project resulted in the creation of a new, comprehensive events management website to which over 20 nature-based bodies and businesses contribute. This gives national and even international access to the range of events happening in the region, compared to the hard copy programme that was previously produced. It also allows visitors to book and pay for events and provides the events contributors collectively to develop a database of 'wild-friendly' visitors to whom they can promote initiatives in the future and market the wildlife potential of the region as a whole.

Festivals and Promotion

The project contributed to the most successful Wild Spring Festival to date and was responsible for the first ever Wild Autumn Festival, together with the national and international publicity that those initiatives engendered for the region. As well as encouraging new visitors to the region, the additional promotional activity associated with

the initiatives made more people aware of Wild Seasons and of the wildlife potential of Dumfries & Galloway, thus building up potential for the future.

New promotional materials produced by the project will allow it to give Wild Seasons greater prominence at a larger number of wildlife attractions in 2014 and beyond.

Community Engagement

One of the most pleasing aspects of the project was the extent to which it was able to engage with community-based initiatives, support for which has a potentially wider impact than work with individual businesses in isolation. This engagement took a myriad different forms, as already described, and the potential created also has implications for the future direction of Wild Seasons.

6. ANALYSIS & CONCLUSIONS

Overall Achievement

We believe Wild Seasons Phase 2 has successfully addressed its revised strategic objective of establishing a coherent framework for the continued development and promotion of the nature-based tourism product in Dumfries & Galloway. The experience and achievements described above suggest that this type of tourism product has a receptive national market and that, properly promoted, it can generate additional visitor numbers to the region.

Equally significant, however, is the fact that a structure has been created with new communication channels, management tools, an enhanced knowledge and resource base, links to community initiatives and a distinctive brand and more elevated awareness of the product nationally. All of this should enhance the capacity of tourism businesses themselves to make nature-based tourism a more integral part of their operation and attract new visitors accordingly.

With the continued input of minimal resources and careful management this should allow the initiative to grow organically in the medium to long term with the distinct potential for joint business initiatives, including joint marketing initiatives, economic and social benefits for local communities and environmental benefits arising from a new type of tourism.

It is in this overall context that we now look at the lessons learnt from the running of Phase 2 and their implications for the continued management of Wild Seasons, the type and level of resources to be devoted to it and the focus of future activities.

Model vs Brand

At a basic level, the *working model* that has been established for the development of nature-based tourism in Dumfries & Galloway has the potential to be replicated elsewhere. As demonstrated, it relies on creating positive links between, on the one hand, the people and organisations that manage, are knowledgeable about and can best showcase the countryside and wildlife and, on the other, the businesses that cater for the visitors coming to enjoy them in order to promote the product effectively and enhance the visitor experience.

This translates into the *product brand* because visitors see their experience as part and parcel of the relationship between tourist businesses, nature-based organisations and guides, etc. and the greater access and understanding that this affords to wildlife sites and nature-based attractions. Carefully managed, this can become a quality brand, enhancing the region's reputation and attracting more visitors.

In Dumfries & Galloway, the product brand has the potential to develop this quality and reputation because of:

- the strength of the product – the undoubted quality of its countryside, coast and wildlife;
- its distinctiveness – the remote, unspoilt and 'wild' nature of the local environment (as exemplified by the existence of the Biosphere Reserve and the Dark Skies initiative); and
- the network of countryside agencies and organisations that exist to manage it.

In seeking to broaden the Wild Seasons initiative or replicate the model elsewhere, the SUP or other organisations will have to be mindful of this recipe for success and develop their strategies accordingly. Wild Seasons Dumfries and Galloway can include and promote nature-based attractions on its northern and eastern fringes without dilution of the core product but the product brand does not necessarily translate wholesale to other regions.

Continued Business Engagement

Although the project has largely achieved its objectives and targets for engaging with businesses in the current phase, it has proven difficult to encourage them to take part in the training courses and fam trips, despite widespread and direct promotion of the opportunity. One possible reason is the high proportion of 'lifestyle' businesses in the region with little incentive to diversity. Another is the low awareness of the potential of nature-based businesses.

It is clear that engaging businesses effectively in nature tourism marketing of the region will be a long term project which will grow as businesses see their competitors succeeding in the market. Addressing this issue will mean persuading businesses of the size of the nature-based tourism market, continuing to advise and support them in promoting the local product to, and catering for, wildlife visitors, and encouraging more contact between tourism businesses and local nature managers.

Project Ownership

The branding of the initiative as 'Wild Seasons Dumfries & Galloway', and the need to coalesce regional partners and players to make the project effective, argues for a greater and more coherent *local* management structure based on an agreed strategy and working parameters.

The project relies on a great deal of goodwill, as already described, and informal working arrangements backed by the enthusiasm and commitment of local managers. By their nature, however, such arrangements have a low priority compared to local, organisational objectives and cannot be relied upon which reduces the ability to plan effectively or manage efficiently.

Much of the business support required is generic, relating to such issues as social media, website and marketing training. Much of the training provided by Wild Seasons, though geared to nature-based tourism and set in the context of the regional wildlife offer, was similarly generic. We have no doubt that this is the experience of other tourism initiatives in the region dealing, for example, with the arts or food.

In establishing the future framework for Wild Seasons, this argues for:

- a) agreement at a senior level amongst the key partner organisations in Dumfries & Galloway on the framework to be adopted, its aims / objectives, collaborative arrangements and, if possible, funding, etc;
- b) vesting of the future management of Wild Seasons under the formal auspices of a local organisation with a regional identity; and
- c) vesting of the future management within an organisation with a wider business or at least tourism remit.

SUP is such an organisation but it should be noted that there are other candidates.

Project Management

The time input required of the project officer and principal consultants together on this project leave us in no doubt that it deserved full-time project management. However, stripped of the need for establishing the initial strategy and ground rules for the project, including elements of the new structure (such as website layout or the events management system), briefs for consultants and administrative procedures, etc., we believe that the next phase of the project can be managed by a part-time officer, say on around 2-3 days / week.

This assumes the project officer:

- can work within the formal framework already described;
- will inevitably need to travel extensively (at least 1 day/week) around the region.

Use of Consultants

The use of consultants is often necessary to provide technical advice and services not otherwise available to the project staff or partners or, in the case of Wild Seasons Phase 2, due to time constraints. The project made extensive use of consultants for both these reasons but with mixed results.

In addition to monitoring their individual performances, the effectiveness and efficiency of using consultants depends on a clear brief, good project management and constant, consistent communications. The time spent on this can detract from the ability to address specific project objectives. Financial resources spent on consultants not resident in the region (usually the case because of procurement rules) are also a lost local economic benefit.

With hindsight, we believe that the resources spent on consultants in this project could have been reduced. Lessons learnt include:

- reviewed early enough, there is usually more time than you think to do things differently and/or look for other people (including partners) to do it;
- the administrative / project management elements of a brief should not be handled by consultants;

- tightly control the consultant performance and draw up specific payment schedules and deliverables in advance;
- consider the additional cost implications of sub-consultants who are not VAT registered and negotiate accordingly.

Future Work Areas

Experience and feedback gleaned from the project suggest that the following work areas and themes should be the focus for the next phase of Wild Seasons:

Continued business engagement

- Organic development of businesses engaging with the project: the project officer should develop specific leads, meet individual businesses and use opportunities to network through larger gatherings, regular mailings by other organisations, etc. The emphasis should be on the commitment and quality of the businesses concerned in order to develop 'centres of excellence' in the medium to long term.
- Continue to hold regular training workshops and familiarisation trips: those held in Phase 2 were of a high quality and well-received. They get lots of information and messages across quickly and provide an opportunity to network.

Training and Capacity Building

- Develop business capacity generally: work with partners, especially in the Council and through Business Gateway, to offer more training in such areas as the use of social media, marketing (based around the new marketing guide) and website development.
- Through partner organisations, offer specific advice to businesses on becoming wild-friendly: Council Rangers can offer some of this advice but tight resources require this responsibility to be spread amongst others where possible.
- Consider also the potential for peer-to-peer support: several business owners gave well-received presentations at workshops and/or were the subject of case studies in the marketing guide. Armed with a standard project brief and presentation materials, such businesses could become Wild Seasons ambassadors.

Joint Marketing and Promotions

- Strengthen links with national organisations such as Visit Scotland, Wild Scotland and the Tourism Alliance: this will give the Wild Seasons initiative a greater national presence while enabling local businesses to get access to specialist advice, tour agency contacts and other joint marketing opportunities.
- Encourage local, joint marketing and promotional initiatives, especially through community initiatives where appropriate: a limited number of the most likely initiatives should be planned in advance and be the focus of annual work programmes. There is great potential for engaging with community transport initiatives in particular to run local tours for visitors and more familiarisation trips for businesses.
- Continue to arrange and host bi-annual wildlife festivals as resources allow: they are an invaluable means of coalescing events and visitor promotions as well as maintaining momentum for the project as a whole.

Access to Wildlife

- Continue to identify and engage with existing guides and promote them through Wild Seasons: they not only offer visitors an invaluable service in interpreting and making the local countryside and wildlife more accessible, they can also help other businesses, especially accommodation providers, to enhance the product they offer.
- Involve existing and new guides in the development of joint marketing and promotional initiatives where appropriate: wildlife weekend packages run by hotels or tours promoted by community groups welcome help and advice in making such contacts, and *vice versa*.
- Develop training opportunities for new, recently trained and existing guides: there was clear demand for a refresher course among those attending the recent guide training course but equally a suggestion that this could be done through peer-to-peer support, shadowing existing guides and / or linking them with low-key events as a way of gaining experience.

Website

- The website should continue to be the focus for news, information, events and joint promotions, etc. and should be kept up to date and 'fresh'.
- The website has been developed to be consumer-facing (although the wildlife and site-based information it contains is of equal benefit to businesses) with business-specific information placed on the DD&G website. A priority should be to develop a specific and easily understood web link between the two, similar to the relationship between visitscotland.com and visitscotland.org.
- Similar consideration should be given to links with other tourism product-based initiatives such as 'Spring Fling' and 'Savour the Flavours'.
- Medium-term, depending on resources, the website should be reconfigured to be more mobile and tablet-friendly.

Social Media

While some staff within nature-based organisations have been enthusiastic about tweeting and posting, others have been slow to contribute. As a result, social media content depends on the continued involvement of a small number of individuals. Businesses have also been slow to take up social media marketing and to benefit from re-tweeting and re-posting the material generated by Wild Seasons. Bowles Green held one-to-one social media training sessions with Lockerbie Local Nature Reserve, Williamwood Farm and Creetown Gem Rock Museum but there is latent demand for more.

- Based on the strategic and practical lessons learnt social media activity in Phase 2, update the social media marketing strategy and promote the Wild Seasons social media material to local tourism businesses.
- Arrange further, joint training in the use of social media to partner organisations and businesses.

Other Networking and Communications

- Engagement with and cooperation from partners in order to support the above work areas will be greatly facilitated by the formal agreement described earlier. However, at

an individual level, this process will require regular, face to face contact and up to date briefings on practical and policy developments. This could be done through *ad hoc* partner meetings or through invitations to the planned business workshops (see also 'Resources' below).

- A regular but simple partners' newsletter should also continue to be disseminated.

Resources

Key to enabling the above to happen will be the level of resources that the project can command. This could be mitigated in a number of ways, most of which are implicit in the conclusions above, ie:

- Formal agreement on the project framework and collaborative arrangements, etc.;
- The need for a part-time project officer only;
- Avoidance of consultants where possible;
- Use of partners, partner organisations, peer-to-peer support and even 'ambassadors' where possible to deliver training and capacity building, signposting where appropriate;
- Work through central / national organisations and/or existing business networks and community initiatives, as appropriate, to develop further joint marketing and promotion.

7. THE WAY FORWARD

Our recommendations for the way forward for Wild Seasons flow naturally from the above but can be summarised as follows:

- There is a proven value to and structure for the Wild Seasons initiative which should continue to be supported;
- Extension of the Wild Seasons working model to border areas would be feasible but wholesale translation of the initiative to other regions will require further consultation and careful management;
- The framework for the next phase should be formally agreed amongst as wide as possible a network of partner organisations to establish aims / objectives, a work programme, collaborative arrangements and financial or in-kind contributions as appropriate;
- This should include Visit Scotland and the Southern Uplands Partnership to help link with wider initiatives, as described, but also to help access funding;
- This group – which could potentially number 20 organisations - should form the basis for the over-arching ownership and management of the initiative;
- The SUP is the organisation best placed to act as the accountable body for the next phase of the project and to lead and steer the above framework but, for day-to-day management and presentational purposes, the project should sit with Destination Dumfries & Galloway;
- A project management team should be established, to meet monthly, comprising those from all relevant partner organisations with day-to-day responsibility for the principal tools, contacts and communication channels required of the project, eg. website, social media, events management, on the ground wild-friendly and business support – this could comprise a maximum of 5 or 6 people;

- A job description and work programme for the new project officer should be developed based on the foregoing 'Areas of Work';
- This 'package' of agreement, management structure, job description and work programme should form the basis for applications for additional funding to allow the next phase to be implemented.

8. PROJECTED COSTS

A suggested budget for implementing the above is set out in Table 2, below.

Item	Estimated Cost (£s)	Commentary
Project Officer salary	15,000	Annual salary @ £26,000 <i>pro rata</i> for 2.5 days / week + 15% NI & pension
Travel, Hospitality & Office Expenses	3000	Travel up to 500 miles / month @ 0.45p / mile plus occasional expenses
Recruitment	1500	Estimated based on current project
IT & Office Accommodation	2500	New laptop / mobile & package
Management Charge & Overheads	2000	10% of foregoing package
Website maintenance & updating	3000	Based on quote received for work described in section 7 plus annual domain name & hosting costs
Festival promotion	5000	2 X £2500 professional promotion, spring & autumn festivals
Guide training	1000	3 X £350 / day refresher training or guide shadowing
Catering / hospitality & minibuss hire for training events	1000	Based on current project experience
Total	34,000	

Table 2 – Project Phase 3 Project Costs

ANNEX 1 - WILD SEASONS PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Background

The diversity and accessibility of wildlife in Dumfries & Galloway make it an ideal holiday location for those interested in wildlife watching. 2013 is the Year of Natural Scotland and will offer many national and regional promotional opportunities for wildlife and nature-based tourism generally. The Wild Seasons initiative seeks to work in partnership with wildlife agencies and the tourist industry to develop such opportunities, enhance the capacity of businesses to attract and cater for wildlife tourists and so demonstrate the economic potential of wildlife tourism to the region.

Project Aim

The aim of the current project is to develop a series of wildlife itineraries – including information on individual sites, self-guided routes and trails - linking opportunities for visitors to enjoy the wildlife and natural environment of Dumfries and Galloway with local accommodation and other facilities and to market the product accordingly. The routes will include or link to information on species, habitats and seasonality, access arrangements, knowledgeable local guides (if required), other things to see and do in the area plus events and festivals.

The Strategy

The itineraries with the greatest potential for viewing wildlife will be promoted alongside information on a range of other visitor attractions and facilities in order to retain visitors in each area or in the region generally. The routes will also link one to another as the series develops,

- a) to create longer, regional or themed routes (eg. the Wild Goose Chase or Red Squirrel sites) and
- b) to promote the nature-based tourism potential of the region as whole.

Practicalities

Each itinerary will be promoted on the 'Wild Seasons' website as a separate link with an appropriate title. Each will have:

- a downloadable map of the relevant area with a suggested route linking local sites and trails; plus
- 'package' information concerning local accommodation and other facilities, the wildlife and access arrangements as described above.

There will be internal links to other information already on the website such as the list of guides offering tours of the local area, the events database and downloadable leaflets of the sites or walks involved as well as external links to the websites of the facility providers and agencies concerned.

The routes should have a wide geographical spread, from west to east and north-south within the region, and involve a good representation of agencies, wildlife habitats, species and seasonality, etc.

Where possible, it would be useful to identify a 'champion' (a Council Ranger, community group or private individual) local to each route to be loosely responsible for keeping information on opportunities up to date, and identifying new opportunities for promotion, etc.

Accommodation and Other Visitor Facilities

Along each route, and for the initiative as a whole, we should attempt to get a good representation of accommodation / facility types and standards and to link with community initiatives where possible. *Being near a route will be less important than commitment to catering for wildlife visitors as visitors will usually be travelling independently by car.*

Providers should have a strong 'affiliation' with nature-based tourism, eg. by promoting local wildlife attractions on their websites or leaflets, being accredited as walker / cyclist-friendly and demonstrating a commitment to learn more about the service that wildlife tourists require. We should also seek to ensure that they have 'green credentials' such as a Green Tourism Business Award or can demonstrate good practice in sustainability.

Other than the above, there will be no geographical or specific quality assurance restrictions on those businesses seeking to join.

Each will be asked to include the Wild Seasons logo on their promotional materials and to link to the Wild Seasons website. In return the initiative will supply them with:

- a visitor information pack to help them become more 'wild friendly' in their approach to marketing and catering for wildlife visitors;
- opportunities to attend workshops to learn more about wildlife tourism and even to be trained as guides for their local area; and
- a Wild Seasons 'charter' to demonstrate their commitment to the principles of the initiative.

Visitor Information Pack

Ideas for the contents of the visitor information pack are tentative at this stage but could include:

- a window sticker featuring the Wild Seasons logo;
- a wildlife video, to be supplied by D&G Council;
- a copy of the RSPB publication 'Places to Enjoy Wildlife in Dumfries and Galloway' (produced as part of the 'Connecting Communities...' initiative)
- and a reference manual, based on workshop material, telling them how they can generally become more 'wild friendly' as a tourism business.

The packs will be initially free, paid for by Wild Seasons out of the existing promotional budget. In due course this could be a (small) source of income.

The Knowledge

To ensure that the providers involved are knowledgeable about the local opportunities for enjoying wildlife, we will work with Destination D&G and local agencies / rangers to organise familiarisation trips to local sites and trails. (See 'Industry engagement' below.)

For those wishing to understand in more depth the local product and how to communicate it to visitors, we will organise a guide training event with a suitably qualified trainer, eg. the Scottish Tour Guiding Association (STGA) or similar. Subject to cost and logistics, this could be organised for the late autumn and is likely to involve a 2-3 day course dealing with:

- guiding skills, route selection, regulations and business aspects (the indoor element)
- practical guiding and interpretation of attractions (outdoor element)
- and detailed 'homework' on the trails, wildlife and habitats local to each attendee.

Local wildlife agencies and rangers would need to input to this.

Longer-term, depending on the success of this initiative, there will be a need to develop local business opportunities to exploit the pool of trained guides which could result.

The Format

The format for each itinerary would be similar to that developed for the Flooders Trail, which is already on the Wild Seasons website, but probably more concise, making use of links to existing websites where possible such as the Galloway Kite Trail, the Mull of Galloway Experience or individual SNH reserve pages. If time and the budget allows, each itinerary will be overlaid on an interactive map of wildlife sites for the whole region. However, they would still link to separate web pages, as described above, (see 'practicalities') which would include:

- A downloadable map or maps of the local route and/or walking trails;
- A summary of the local wildlife interest, seasons and species plus other local heritage;
- Brief descriptions of the provision of local accommodation and other visitor facilities, their locations and website links;
- Access in the widest sense, ie.
 - Transport
 - Disabled access
 - Guides / tours / Interpretation / technological aids such as CCTV
- Practicalities (parking / conditions underfoot / clothes, etc)
- Other (eg. built heritage) attractions;
- Links to the agencies represented locally and other sources of information.

The main difference from the Flooders Trail format would be the link to accommodation providers and perhaps greater emphasis on internal linkages to guides, leaflets and other things to see and do.

A separate, region-wide leaflet, or series of leaflets, could also be produced illustrating each itinerary (similar to the recently produced SNH leaflet, 'Explore for a Day').

Industry Engagement

There will be a need to talk to private businesses generally in Dumfries and Galloway in order to raise awareness and develop understanding and knowledge of the nature based

product of the region. Discussion will focus on the merits of working with the project and of the ongoing commitment involved.

To support this initiative, a number of activities are planned, ie.:

- making active links between the Wild Seasons website and key industry websites to promote 'working together to better present the natural product';
- running at least 2 events offering local tourism businesses advice on how to be 'wild friendly' for their customers, including the use of nature in promotional materials and on websites;
- providing regular social media updates to the industry through existing Wild Seasons Facebook and Twitter accounts;
- running familiarisation visits / talks for local tourism businesses regarding the regional nature based tourism offer, focused where possible on the proposed routes.

Marketing And Promotion

Underlying this activity will be a need to promote the nature based product to potential visitors outside the region in order to boost the numbers coming to Dumfries and Galloway. In the short term, the focus for this will be the continued development of the Wild Seasons website as the prime tool for the coordinated promotion of the region's wildlife and landscapes. In tandem with this will be the development of seasonal events programmes which will also address the issue of guaranteeing visitor access to wildlife. A range of social media and other methods will be used as appropriate.

Longer term the aim is to better understand the potential visitor market for nature based tourism outside Dumfries and Galloway, who they are, where they live and how they can be reached and how the nature-based tourism offer in the region needs to be promoted as a consequence. The lessons arising from the rest of this initiative will be used to address these aspects but the option exists of a separately commissioned study to recommend a way forward..

Candidate Routes

The table provided on the following pages lists a small number of candidate itineraries intended to be rolled out in 2013. It is merely illustrative of the approach proposed and, if successful, will be enhanced with further routes in due course.

Potential Wild Seasons Self-Guided Routes

Issue	Candidate Route / Area				
	Flooders Trail, Caerlaverock	Mull of Galloway Experience, the Rhins	Wigtown Bay, Creetown and Wigtown	Moffat to St Mary's Loch / Moffat Water	Glenkens / Queen's Way & Red Kite Trail
	Attraction				
Existing offer / structure	Flooders Trail / WWT Centre, Caerlaverock / Caerlaverock Castle (HS) & associated visitor facilities	Scotland's 'Land's End': headland trail, RSPB visitor centre, lighthouse (access in summer), café on spectacular location	Wigtown Bay LNR (adjacent Wigtown Booktown) / Balloch Community Woods & Ponds Creetown	Southern Upland Way, Craigieburn Woods (FCS), Carrifran Wildwood (Borders Forest Trust), Grey Mare's Tale (NTS) and Loch of the Lowes / St Mary's Loch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queen's Way (A712) past Clatteringshaw's Loch & Visitor Ctre, Deer Range and Wild Goat Park Raiders' Road Forest Drive Red Kite Trail around Loch Ken Ken-Dee Nature Reserve Southern Upland Way
Examples of good / best practice	Coordinated management of sites under different management with single trail linking all	Combination of local private, community / voluntary and public agencies market the site as the 'Mull of Galloway Experience'. Community buy-out of headland is mooted to protect site.	Martyrs' Stake to Harbour walk & hides at Wigtown / Balloch Woods link oak woods, moorland, social history, public sculpture, ancient stone circles & industrial archaeology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NTS website for Grey Mare's Tail, interpretation and CCTV on site. Moffat & District Community Nature Reserve (Dyke's Farm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Kite Trail & links with local businesses RSPB Countryside in the Community Initiative Range of activities around Loch Ken Feeding station at Bellymack Farm
Private business involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aston Hotel, Dumfries Nith Hotel, Glencaple Hutton Lodge, Bankend Eastpark farmhouse accommodation (on site) Priestlands Cottage s/c, Dumfries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gallie Craig Café s/c cottages on site (NTS) and as listed on www.mull-of-galloway.co.uk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive range of accommodation in Wigtown Ellangowan Hotel, Creetown Cherrytrees B&B, Creetown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive range of accommodation in Moffat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive range of accommodation linked to Red Kite Trail around Loch Ken
Community involvement	Tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Rhins Community Development Trust Mull of Galloway Company The Stranraer to Ayr Line Support Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wigtown Festival Company Balloch Wood Community Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Nature Reserve Moffat & District Community Initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glenkens Community Business Association Glenkens Transport Initiative Dalry Bird Town?

Visitor market(s)	National & out-of-season due to importance of wetland site	Varied – local (for café), coach tours & traditional D&G visitors & families	International & national around time of festival, traditional D&G visitors, families	Traditional D&G visitors, families, walkers	Traditional D&G visitors, families, walkers, birdwatchers
Other heritage interest	Historic (eg. Roman & Iron Age) sites incorporated into Flooders trail, Bankend Churchyard & Tower, attractive local villages and nearby Ruthwell Cross / Savings Bank Museum, etc.	Extensive, small scale heritage sites, churches and gardens including Logan Botanical Gardens & Logan Fish Pond, beaches and other walks	On Wigtown side, the town itself plus historic villages & monuments of the Machars (eg. Garlies-ton, Whithorn, Craggie-ton Castle and Church, etc). Around Creetown, Gem Rock Museum, industrial archaeology, stone circles, Kirrough-tree, Cairnsmore of Fleet, etc.	The town itself & architecture, Craigieburn Gardens, Frenchland Tower, Devil's Beeftub, copper and sulphur springs, Annandale Way and hill walking generally. Ancient oak woods at Lochwood, 5 miles south	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Villages of the Glenkens, churches & churchyards, CATStrand Community Centre, Loch Ken Activity Centre & short walks Otherwise mainly nature-based activity
Scope for improvement (route or environment)	Extend trail to / from Glencaple	Mull of Galloway Company plans to buy site including lighthouse & s/c cottages and has identified new viewpoints for disabled visitors	tbc	tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donald Watson Bird Centre is proposed in Dalry Clatteringshaws Loch Visitor Centre reopening late summer 2013
Scale of development required / likely costs	Would require wooden bridges, boardwalks and waymarkers	Small scale	tbc	tbc	High – capital development
Scope for widening / narrowing focus area	Limited by Nith estuary to the west and restricted access / more developed coastline to the east but is part of 'Wild Goose Chase' sites across region	Remoteness of area & lack of nearby accommodation requires site to be marketed as part of the south - if not the whole of the -Rhins	The combination of the two areas on either side of the Cree Estuary already brings in a wide area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driven tour could incorporate Megget & Talla Reservoirs, returning via Tweedmuir and Devil's Beeftub as a circular route 	The Glenkens is already a wide area with several small communities. The Red Kite Trail is supported by over 30 accommodation providers
Wildlife					
Habitat / biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saltmarsh & mudflats with broadleaved woodland Migratory waterbirds (geese, swans & species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal headland and sea cliffs / coastal heath Nesting seabirds: guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes, fulmars and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidal mudflats and saltmarsh Broadleaved woodland Coastal heath and moorland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moorland bird species including peregrine falcon at Grey Mare's Tail, Ring Ouzels & Red Grouse Mammals include 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freshwater lochs & rivers / marshland Mixture of coniferous, broadleaved and scrub woodland and upland

	of duck) • Natterjack Toads, badgers & other marshland & woodland birds	puffins • Coastal heath bird species and plants • Possibility of spotting whales and dolphins	• Overwintering wildfowl and geese • Woodland bird species, red squirrel & Roe deer	mountain hares and wild goats. Possibility of otters at Loch Skeen • Alpine flower varieties	grazing • Species of ducks, waders and over-wintering geese • Red Kite • Broadleaf woodland birds • Red Deer & Feral Goats
Designations / LBAP targets	NNR / National Scenic Area	SSSI	Largest LNR in the UK	SSSI	• Loch Ken / Dee Marshes: SSSI, Ramsar Site, Nature Conservation Area
Seasonality	Autumn / Winter (late Oct to end Mar)	Spring / Summer (nesting season, Mar-Jul)	Year round: • Wigtown Nov-Mar • Creetown Apr-Oct	Spring / early Summer for Peregrine Otherwise year round	Year round, depending on habitat (eg. Red Deer in autumn, red kite feeding in winter, Raiders' Road in summer, etc)
Survey / training potential	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Access					
Access issues – legal	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Access issues – physical	See scope for improvement	See scope for improvement	Disabled access to much of Wigtown LNR viewing areas / all-ability sections within Balloch Woods paths	Wheelchair access to waterfall view at Grey Mare's Tail and from car park over St Mary's Loch / all ability paths at Dyke's Farm / as a driven tour, the whole route is scenic.	Wheelchair / disabled access to several viewpoints Views from car parks & access to visitor centre (once open) Much of route is driven and scenic
Interpretation	In place	In place	In place	In place	In place
Learning / education potential	WWT & HS encourage school visits	RSPB Visitor centre & Lighthouse Museum	Wigtown Bay Visitor Centre in the County Buildings	School visits can be arranged to Grey Mare's Tail	?
Virtual access	?	CCTV on clifftop nesting sites	Potential for linking of cameras from Wigtown Ospreys, Creetown Peregrines and Mull of Galloway cameras	CCTV on Peregrine Falcon's nest (Apr-Jul)	• Clatteringshaws Loch Visitor Centre (once open) • Audio Trail Guide on Red Kite website

Other technology	Hides, viewing platforms, telescopes and binoculars available	Viewing platforms, telescopes and binoculars available	Hides at Wigtown. Cameras on wetland and Osprey nest	Hides at Dyke's Farm Community Nature Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hides at Bellymack Farm & Ken-Dee Marshes Reserve • Viewing platforms at various locations
Transport arrangements	tbc	Good, including community transport option	Tbc – both towns are on main bus routes and the trails are accessible from them on foot.	Tbc – Moffat itself is accessible but the route to St Mary's Loch probably requires a car or bike	Reasonable public transport from Castle Douglas to main villages / less so west-east or for convenient touring Glenkens Transport Initiative runs some tours
Tours / guides	Walks & talks on site	Guided walks on site / tours of lighthouse SRCDT would be willing to extend these	Council and RSPB rangers based nearby	Guided tours of Grey Mare's Tail available	?

Timescale And Milestones

The timescale for the above activity is extremely tight but, tentatively, could be as follows:

Timescale (2013)	Product Development	Industry Engagement	Marketing and Promotion
March	Strategy Development	'Wild Friendly' Industry Workshop – Cream O'Galloway, 4 th March	Events Database Launched
April-June	<p>Consultation on Strategy & Route selection / contents with Working Group / Rangers / Stakeholders</p> <p>Discussions & agreement with website developer re: practicalities, designs and costs of proposals</p> <p>Agree and develop guide training programme with STGA / others</p> <p>Revise budgets for whole initiative</p>	<p>Visits to individual agencies, businesses and sites / trails</p> <p>Industry Workshop 23rd April</p> <p>Engagement with existing 'guides' to improve website presence and gauge views on training</p> <p>Costing and production of wildlife packs: videos, stickers, 'wild friendly' advice, etc.</p>	<p>Wild Spring Festival</p> <p>Evaluation of Wild Spring Festival / Decision on Wild Autumn Festival</p> <p>Commission study of potential NBT external markets</p> <p>Ongoing links to key websites & social media campaign</p> <p>Initial redevelopment of website</p>
July-September	<p>Agree Route / Content selection, Strategy & Budget implications</p> <p>Coordination of website content for routes from agencies, businesses & Rangers</p>	<p>Ongoing visits to agencies, businesses and sites / trails</p> <p>Dissemination of wildlife packs: videos, stickers, 'wild friendly' advice, etc.</p>	<p>Ongoing links to key websites & social media campaign</p> <p>Development of website route-by-route</p>
October-December	<p>Guide Training Event – homework and accreditation over the winter</p> <p>Evaluation of project, lessons learnt & way forward with costs and business plan, etc.</p>	Familiarisation Trips	<p>Wild Autumn Festival?</p> <p>Report on external NBT markets</p> <p>Production of leaflets for 2014</p>

Exit Strategy

As indicated in the table above, the success of the project relative to its aim will be evaluated towards the end of the year. The report will assess the feasibility of the aim and strategy, lessons learnt and a forward strategy, as appropriate, with estimated costs and a business case for application to potential funders.

At this stage, the relative success factors would appear to be the extent to which the project can demonstrate:

- a sufficiently wide range of actual and potential opportunities for the enjoyment of the wildlife and the natural environment in the region, including a number of viable visitor itineraries;
- a nucleus of willing partners, or the potential for such, to work with the initiative and offer a basis for its sustainability;
- a workable strategy and themes (including marketing strategy & themes) for the development of the above, including a good mix of:
 - wildlife tourism with a strong commercial / visitor focus;
 - broader, nature-based tourism with benefits for local communities and biodiversity;
 - activities for existing visitor profile versus product development for new markets;
- the role and effectiveness of events promotions within this mix;
- the issues / themes and obstacles to be addressed and resources necessary to develop the above.

IW/ 02 May 2013

ANNEX 2 - SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

This Annex contains:

- a) A Summary of the Social Media Marketing Workshop
- b) The draft Social Media Marketing Plan
- c) An analysis of Twitter usage.

SUMMARY OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING WORKSHOP

How Do We See Ourselves?

A collective of countryside professionals and enthusiasts. Working together to promote the fantastic wildlife of Dumfries and Galloway to visitors and local people in all seasons

An umbrella organisation

Strengths

Depth of knowledge - years of experience
Credibility of the partnership
Diversity of opportunities to see wildlife
Accessibility (transport) (wildlife experts) (managed sites) (big 5)
Agencies and businesses working together
Year round offer
Willingness and enthusiasm of partners
Undiscovered region
Not too busy
Space to enjoy

Weaknesses

Lack of a leader
Low market awareness
Inconsistency of funding
Lack of time, our people are overstretched
Lack of social media marketing skills
Lack of smartphones
Lack of broadband connectivity
Distance - it's a big region
Lack of communication/not joined up yet
Poor public transport
Weak brand - lack of brand promotion
Confusion with previous brands (amongst local people)
Confusion - proliferation of nature and festival brands
Low visitor numbers
Series of festivals makes Wild Seasons disjointed

Opportunities

Consolidate the brand
Local appetite for nature/nature tourism,
Promote quiet, unspoilt nature of the region
Accommodation providers - interested not sure what to do, need help, signpost to marketing and conservation help
Help and educate businesses - size of market, year round business, winter business. (Provide evidence - facts and figures, examples)
Work with business champions - start with self-catering for better market fit

Video training sessions - one for each season
Shorter fam trips focusing on local nature experiences
Longer lead in times for trade events
Develop packages for more engagement
Bring together businesses and operators - there's a gap at the moment
Personalise the business offer
Promote events more strongly to businesses
Wild seasons marketing toolkit for businesses - based on existing festival toolkit
Identify and promote new nature tourism business opportunities
More cross marketing

Threats

Competitors become better-known
Failure to promote our message
National focus on the Highlands (Visit Scotland, etc)
Loss of momentum and continuity
Poor weather, negative weather forecasting
No core funding
Failure to champion Wild Seasons amongst influencers and decision-makers
Possible negative impacts of tourism on wildlife (if managed inadequately/over promoted)
Wildlife is unpredictable - might not meet visitor expectations
Not enough guides/experts

Who Is Talking?

(Generating messages)

Social media sub-group of working party
Becky - for Facebook
Elisabeth - for twitter
Lucy and Jim as back up

Keith - for images
Tom - for events
Keith - for nature news
Karen/Bowles Green - for monitoring SMM activity
Stacey - for business support
Elizabeth (?) - for who to follow
Iain (?) - for crisis management

Need images for our people
We can give you the best chance of seeing the best wildlife
Who will deal with media responses - these will come. A competitor will deal with them if we don't

When Will We Talk?

Talk on an on-going basis to let people know what is happening with nature and what is coming up
Also source of information on nature/conservation

Use the nature calendar (the wild seasons) as the basis for talking
(Elements can be re-used each year and new things will happen)

July:

Dragon and Damsellefly
Banded demoiselle
Osprey

Grills (how to see?)butterflies and moths
Baby/young deer
Bats
Rock pooling
Children's and family activities

August:
Heather
Sea watching
Adders
Pondlife
seals
Golden Eagle

September:
Red squirrel
Swallows leaving (generally a transition month - comings and goings)
Goosander (on the Nith)
Sunsets

October:
Fungi
Geese return
Waterfowl
Stags roaring
Dark skies
Autumn colour
Wild food
Bewick and whooper swans return

November:
Fungi
Geese
Starling roost (Gretna)
Waxwings (?)
Brent geese (loch Ryan)
Sea ducks
Grebes
Seals
Winter garden birds and feeding

December:
Red kites
Geese
Wader roosts
Spawning salmon
Red squirrel

Promote wildlife in the vicinity of festivals
Tour of Britain at Drumlanrig in September
Bio Blitz 10-12 July
Autumn Watch (you can also see x in Dumfries and Galloway)

Who Do We Want To Talk To?

Families

- active families
- local and visiting families
- staying in self catering and camping and caravan accommodation

Local people

- also influence visiting friends and relatives

Older People

- empty nesters
- visiting outside the school holidays (September onwards)

Nature Enthusiasts

- photographers

People staying in self catering, camping and caravan accommodation

Press and media

Local businesses

Other markets to consider later:

- people looking for something to do
- other activities, mountain bikers, walkers, anglers, cyclists
- shooters and stalkers
- festival goers
- challenge seekers

What Is Our Tone of Voice?

Friendly

Expert (but not arrogant - more modest, approachable and sharing)

Passionate (about nature)

Also:

- fast talkers
- quirky/bohemian
- Diverse (english and italian) (4 districts)
- content
- individual
- scottish
- good quality of life
- hidden
- Gordon Buchanan/Doug Allen

WILD SEASONS SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLAN (DRAFT 2)

Introduction

This second draft incorporates comments received on the first draft and sets out what we hope will be the plan we can start to implement from Monday 29th July.

Objectives

To increase awareness of nature tourism opportunities in Dumfries & Galloway and specifically to:

- Provide regular communications highlighting nature in the region
- Provide information on forthcoming nature highlights as reasons to visit the region
- Provide content that tourism businesses in the region can promote to their customers and potential customers

Wild Seasons 'accounts' will provide a focus for social media activity about nature in Dumfries and Galloway, in time becoming the 'go-to' locations for this information.

We will deliver, monitor and evaluate a *pilot social media marketing campaign* from the end of July until the end of October, with a view to planning a full year campaign for 2014 towards the end of 2013.

Concept

The primary target market for the campaign should be 'Eco-awares', with 'eco-extremes' and 'eco-unawares' as secondary markets (see Appendix). The primary market is based outside of Dumfries & Galloway, though a secondary market is local residents and their visiting friends and relatives.

A campaign that communicates the Dumfries & Galloway Nature Calendar, but also provides a simple outlet for the passion of those involved with nature in the region, and that also provides visitors and tourism businesses with an opportunity to generate content.

We will use the 'Wild Seasons' name to generate interest in the seasons and their changing nature. The specifics, showing what people can see, when and where, will be very much 'Dumfries & Galloway' (including events, itineraries and places to visit).

We will manage three areas, as follows:

- *Twitter* – change the name of the existing Twitter account to WildSeasons (@Wild Seasons) and use #wild... as the basis for conversations (e.g. #WildAutumn, #WildOsprey, etc.). Target 2 Tweets per day.
- *Facebook* – continue to use existing Facebook account and name. Target 1 post per day.
- *Pinterest* – set up new WildSeasons Pinterest Page. Target 1 image per day.

Information specifically for tourism businesses – i.e. about training events, advice and guidance, etc. will be directed through Destination Dumfries & Galloway's existing electronic and social media activity. We will provide content for this.

The 'tone of voice' for social media messages will reflect the 'identify' devised at the Social Media Workshop, i.e.: 'We want to project ourselves as: A collective of countryside professionals and enthusiasts. Working together to promote the fantastic wildlife of Dumfries and Galloway to visitors and local people in all seasons. We are knowledgeable, welcoming, helpful and friendly'. We will provide specific guidance on how to achieve this.

Content

During the pilot campaign, content will focus on:

- The nature calendar (current and forthcoming highlights)
- The Wild Autumn Festival
- Wild seasons developments (new itineraries, website information, etc.)
- Re-tweets of information significant to the area or its wildlife

It will also include offers from tourism businesses, comment on wider nature news if relevant

Targets

Current performance is as follows:

Twitter - 418 followers

Facebook – 352 likes

Pinterest - 0 followers/0 re-pins

It is difficult to predict the likely impact of our increased activity. However, in the first instance, we intend to double the number of Twitter followers and Facebook likes and attract 300 followers on Pinterest. Once these targets have been achieved, we will set further targets based on analysis of performance.

We will also conduct more detailed analysis of the profile of followers and set 'demographic' targets for these.

Management

In the first instance, Becky and Elizabeth will continue to post material on Facebook and Twitter respectively. Bowles Green Ltd. will post additional material to ensure we meet the message targets.

We will do this by consulting with nature managers and project partners to obtain content and images. We will also encourage nature managers and project partners to send us information in the first instance, then to make their own posts.

We will achieve this by:

- Distributing a guide to social media marketing, explaining in detail how to tweet, post and pin (we intend doing this by the end of July)
- Holding a webinar training event on social media marketing (we intend doing this by the end of August; this will enable us to incorporate lessons learnt from the first month of the pilot campaign)
- Being available for phone/skype calls or visits to help individuals with generating social media messages

It is hoped that project partners/nature site managers will add content on an ad hoc basis as it arises.

We will also liaise with others who are working to promote Wild Seasons, in particular Destination Dumfries & Galloway, BrightSignals and the partner organisations.

In the first instance, Bowles Green Ltd will work to identify followers and keep abreast of nature news (hopefully with assistance from project partners). However, we plan to appoint project partners to take on these roles during the course of the pilot project.

Monitoring

Bowles Green will undertake monitoring in the first instance and provide monitoring reports for the review meetings and during the end of pilot review. At this point we will devise a system for long term monitoring to continue after the end of our contract.

ANNEX 3 - WILD SEASONS NATURE TOURISM TRAINING COURSE FEEDBACK

THREAVE, 24TH SEPTEMBER 2013

Description

The course had 13 participants, as follows:

Anne Anderson, Barend Holiday Village
Barbara Harrison, Ettrick & Yarrow Tourism
Callum Murray, RSPB Scotland
Christine Johnson, Meiklebob Holidays
Caroline McKean, Isla Cottage B&B
Karl Munday, National Trust for Scotland
Linda Birdsall, Millbrae House B&B
Mandy Wilson, Airds Farm B&B
Martin Gould, The Waterhouse
Morag Patterson, Leaming & Patterson Photography
Robin Hogg, Galloway Holidays
Sharon O'Rourke, The Waterhouse
Stacey Paul, Destination Dumfries & Galloway

Contributions were made by Karl Munday (nature in Dumfries & Galloway), Steve Green (nature tourists and marketing to them), Callum Murray (partnership working), Robin Hogg (business experience), Anne Anderson (business experience) and Iain Wilson (working with Wild Seasons).

Feedback

All participants were asked for feedback and the following comments were received. Participants were asked to comment specifically on what was particularly useful, what was less useful, anything that was missing and suggestions for improving the course:

What was particularly useful?

'Confirmation from other contributors that the D&G product is excellent. The Wild Seasons calendar. The practical viewing guide.'

'It was great to hear how existing businesses have interacted with nature sites'

'The mix of information was about right I'd say'

'It was good to learn that I can advertise on the Wild Seasons Website'

'I really enjoyed the course and found it all useful'

'The most useful session was nature tourists and how to reach them'

'The sessions on wildlife and the Kite trail were useful'

'I already know about the Wild Seasons Website, but the session made me think again about improving our own website'

What was less useful?

'Nothing'

'The venue was a bit cold and the chairs hard, but this is a minor comment'

Was anything missing that you have expected/hoped to learn?

'More participation from other wildlife sites'

Any suggestions for improving the course?

'No, apart from comments above'

'It would be good to incorporate one to one sessions with nature experts to advise on nature watching close to my location'

General Comments

'I thought it an excellent day yesterday. The speakers were so enthusiastic and interesting to listen to and all of the content I felt was appropriate'

'I would just like to say a big thank you for the training course yesterday. Really enjoyed it and came away with lots of food for thought. Just got to get the thinking cap on now and try and turn it into reality!!!'

2nd October 2013

Bowles Green Limited

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ANNEX 4 - WILD SEASONS FAM TRIPS

1. BTS THREAVE & LOCH KEN - 7th OCTOBER 2013



Participants from local businesses turned tourists yesterday to enjoy a taster of the autumn wildlife offer in the region.



The day kicked off with a scenic drive along the side of Loch Ken to rutting territory where Ben, from FCS, was on hand to explain how the Red Deer range in Galloway Forest Park, is managed. He rounded his talk off with an amusing anecdote about his brush with Spike the Stag, who having been his best friend all year knocked him flat during the rutting season when Ben got too close to the females.



The journey from the Red Deer Range past the Raiders' Route and through to Clatteringshaws Visitor Centre was punctuated with snippets of local wildlife knowledge by Bob, the driver.



We were met at the visitor centre by Marion (FCS) who took us along to the view point and told us all about what the visitor could expect from a visit to the area and about the darks skies at this time of year. Leaflets were distributed before exploring the refurbished centre and enjoying some very good hot coffee.



At 2pm each day on Bellymack Farm, Laurieston, the Red Kites stop in for lunch; we joined them and watched the spectacular swooping and calling before enjoying a brief talk from George (RSPB). The goats, not to be out done, trooped by in a long line during a lull in the feeding.



On to Threave Castle Estate and the entertaining and enthusiastic Judy (NTS) in her Batmobile. Participants were treated to a whistle stop tour of the centre at Kelton Mains, the bat walk and then on to the Osprey viewing point and a couple of bird hides before returning via the circular path to enjoy the views of the castle from the information points.



The fam trip was thoroughly enjoyed by all and each and everyone we met inspired us with their knowledge of the wildlife, the seasonal information and the local facts and folklore. Those on the fam trip are now armed with a host of ideas of where to send their visitors and full of first hand experience which will give them confidence to recommend and encourage their cliental to get to grips with wild D&G.



2. FLEET VALLEY, 16TH OCTOBER 2013



This interesting trip took in a great range of habitats representative of the entire length of the River Fleet, from high mountains to the rocky Carrick Coast.

The trip started at Cream O' Galloway, essentially a dairy farm that sells ice cream and other dairy products and welcomes visitors to enjoy the rich nature of the farm. The owners have made a significant contribution to nature, planting trees and hedges and managing parts of the farm just for wildlife. Nature trails and a series of events give people access to it throughout the year and we watched a group of families on a mammal day, exploring the contents of mammal traps.

A drive up the valley took us up towards the source of the Fleet and into the mountains, to the Cairnsmore of Fleet National Nature Reserve. We were met at Dromore Farm by Pedda O'Connell, Reserves Manager for Scottish Natural Heritage. Pedda explained how Dromore continues as a working farm. Several trails let visitors explore this wild upland and we took a short one along a stream, through in-by fields and by the heather moor. The views were spectacular. After a quick look round the recently developed visitor centre, which has interesting interpretation of the local wildlife, we headed back down the valley.

The Fleet Valley is one of Scotland's National Scenic Areas and rightly so and evidenced by the great landscapes we saw on the way south.

We were met at Carstramon Woods by Brian Smith, a volunteer who helps manage the woods. Brian explained that the wood is now a nature reserve run by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. And took us on a short tour. We passed through different areas of coppiced and pollarded beech woodland and up to 'The Dome of Silence' a new, temporary artwork installed by a Japanese artist.

The trip ended with a short visit to Carrick Bay. The high tide and poor weather prevented a walk out to one of the Fleet Islands. Now uninhabited, these were given to the National Trust for Scotland by Lady Fleet and are managed by the Trust for nature conservation.

3. WIGTOWN BAY, 21ST NOVEMBER 2013



November is a good time to visit Wigtown Bay and the Cree Valley as wintering geese are back at the coast and there is still some colour in the trees – or at least there was this year!



The visit started with a presentation by Elizabeth Tindall, D&G Council Ranger who told participants about the wildlife of Wigtown Bay – the largest Local Nature Reserve in Britain (and probably the world). There are great views from the town hall looking out across the reserve and over to the Cairnsmore Hills. We were lucky enough to see the Town Hall's resident Peregrine Falcon fly back up to the roof from the Merse with a kill – a special moment!



We then drove down to Wigtown harbour and walked the short distance to the hide. One of the volunteers who staff the hide a weekends to explain the reserve to visitors was on the trip and helped. RSPB Crook of Baldoon lies just across the river from the hide, making this a real wildlife centre.



Heading off northwards and through Newtown Stewart took us up the Cree Valley and to RSPB Wood of Cree. There, Andrew Belinski, Reserves Manager for the RSPB met the group and led a short tour of the wood. Andrew explained about RSPB's management of the woods on a short walk through the woods and to a viewing platform overlooking the Otter Pond, pointing out the glories of the wood in all seasons – bluebells and other wildflowers in the spring, interesting birds including wood warblers, pied flycatchers and redstart in the summer, as well as butterflies like the rare green hairstreak, then fungi and stunning colours in the autumn. Peter Robinson and Linda Moorhouse then led a short walk around the adjacent Cree Valley Community Woodlands.



The visit ended at the Creetown Gem Rock Museum. Over coffee and cake, owner Tim Stephenson explained the origins of the museum, a family business started by his father over 30 years ago, based around his father's gem and geology collection. The museum is located in the old school, a large building for the current village population, harking back to a time when 3,000 people – quarry men and their families – lived here, earning a living from granite quarrying. Participants then looked round the interesting collection of minerals, fossils, etc.



4. MERSE MAGIC / NITH ESTUARY, 27 NOVEMBER 2013



The last familiarisation trip of the season was to the Nith Estuary. November is a great time to visit since all of the winter migrant birds are back on the Solway from their breeding grounds in the Arctic and in this cast, the weather was especially kind.



The trip started at Caerlaverock, which is run by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. We attended the 11 am swan feed, which participants watched from the comfortable, newly-built Peter Scott Hide. WWT staff provide a running commentary as the birds are fed, pointing out the different birds and giving information about their lives. We also got a great view of the whole reserve from the top of the Farmhouse Tower.



A short trip up the Nith Estuary took us to Glencaple, passing several viewpoints that look across the Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve and the start of the Flooders Trail. The Community Café at Glencaple provided soup and sandwiches with fine views across the estuary to RSPB's Kirkconnell reserve.



A short drive took us across the Nith at Dumfries and southwards along the western bank to Mabie Forest. Here, we were met by Mark Tomlinson, Recreation ranger for Forestry Commission Scotland. Mark took us on a short tour of the forest pointing out how it is being managed for recreation, including an easy access trail, sculptures in the forest, a sensory garden, attractive picnic sites and a dipping pond. No Red Squirrels today, but they can be seen there. More interesting was some grubbed up grass, possibly the work of wild boar???



The final stop of the day was at RSPB Mersehead, where Kirsty Griffiths was our guide. Kirsty took us first to the visitor centre, where comfortable seating looks across a pond with great views behind to the hills. The pond had plenty of interest and Barnacle Geese were flying in to the field beyond. We then walked down onto the reserve and looked in at the wild life garden, Sulewath Farm training centre and one of the hides, with more barnacle geese flying in for the evening.



Back at Caerlaverock, the rising volume showed that the Barnacle Geese were flying in in the gathering gloom there too.





A 3-day Wildlife Guide Training Course in Dumfries and Galloway. November 2013.

Who for?

- New and existing Guides.

Number.

- Upto 12

When

- 14th, 15th and 28th of November 2013.

Where?

- Mersehead RSPB for directions see <http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/m/mersehead/directions.aspx>

Why?

- To ensure that those attending the course are familiar with the standards expected to be an excellent Wildlife Guide and be able to fulfil these.
- To give confidence to guides through training and practice that their guiding is of a high standard or they know what they need to do to reach that high standard.
- To ensure they have the correct knowledge to an appropriate level of detail to be a Wildlife Guide in D&G.
- To ensure that the background to Wildlife Guiding is known and participants are fully aware of the resources available to them.
- To ensure that Wildlife Guides are aware of the organisations that can help them market themselves and represent their interested and support them. WildScotland, NAI etc.
- To ensure that guides are fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to wildlife and their clients both for sustainability of the market and legally. Plus awareness of any guidance available for particular species/ activities.



The Course.

Participants Requirements.

- Outdoor Clothes.
- Binoculars.
- Notebook and pen/ pencil.
- Some fascinating facts about their favourite Scottish Species.
- OS Map of the area they are guiding in or will guide in.

Timings.

- 9am to 4pm (5pm on last day). Lunch Noon until 1pm plus tea breaks.

Day One.

Introductions. The trainer's background and experience. Favourite Species.
How to Guide.

- Presentation on how to guide using the book, "The Art of Guiding". The basic principles of Tour Guiding will be discussed and debated. As not all may be appropriate for Wildlife Guiding.

Rules and Regulations.

- Codes of Conduct, Sustainability, Legal issues. SNH, WildScotland etc.

Equipment.

- What you need and how to use it.

Top 5 Birds.

- Presentation on the commonest birds you are likely to see with a group from a road.

Lunch

Fieldcraft.

- How to spot things, tracks and signs, creeping up on things, minimising disturbance.
- Pointing things out, making them obvious.

Planning a Walking Trail.

- Developing a walking trail at the venue with a stop for each participant

Group Management.

- Practical exercise of Group Management on the walking trail.

Top 5 Mammals.

- Presentation on the commonest mammals you are likely to see with a group from a road.



Day Two.

Managing Knowledge

- Looking at the knowledge required for your tours and the walking trail.
- Where can you find out the things you don't know?
- Extra non-wildlife related knowledge do you need it?
- What extra do you need to know?

Top 5 Insects.

Lunch

Tour Plan

- Brainstorming the Walking Tour - collectively
- Plan and brainstorm a Driving Tour locally – collectively or in two groups.

Top 5 Trees

Walking Trail – finding something different to talk about.

Day Three (two weeks after the first two days)

Tour Guiding Business Essentials – brief history of wildlife tourism in Scotland, expansion of the market, marketing, building your business, insurance, regulations, best practice guidance, health & safety, etc.

Walking Trail Tour assessment.

Lunch

Top 5 flowers

Top 5 Invasive Species

Interpretation – a brief introduction based on the NAI training programme.

Developing Interpretive Themes and delivering short programmes on them.

- Work in groups on key wildlife guiding interpretive themes for D&G.

Presentation of Certificates.

Feedback forms circulated and filled in

Departure 5pm.

Each day will have a strong interactive and practical element. We will get outdoors as much as possible using the Walking Trail that the participants have developed to demonstrate the key guiding skills required to be an excellent guide and the specific knowledge required. This will be done at least once a day so there will be plenty of opportunity for those attending to practice in front of a friendly audience. This is a key part of the training as a guide



needs to be comfortable with groups of strangers who they can manage and engage with so that they see as much as possible and have an enjoyable time. Making them want to come back again.

Jonathan Willet
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ANNEX 8 - WILD SEASONS PHASE 2 : OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

Original Objectives	Revised Activities	Achieved
A business resource & reference centre		
Develop & maintain reference material on wildlife for visitors and businesses - mainly through development of website (www.wildseasons.co.uk), including access, information, promotion and branding.	<p>Increase availability of downloadable information on walks, wildlife and events, etc.</p> <p>Create still and video library for use by the industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional leaflets uploaded plus complete collection of D&GC walks • New events website created • Additional images added to DD&G website
The website also to act as a co-ordinated 'shop front' for wildlife activities for the benefit of residents, visitors and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an interactive event map / calendar at www.wildseasons.co.uk • Create an interactive section (a 'blackboard') for site locations, sightings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New events website created with map, calendar & geographical search facility • New Wild Locations web pages created with interactive map
Industry Engagement		
Host showcase events to promote the regions' NBT offer and signpost nature-based bodies and businesses to resources, including the website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 familiarisation visits / talks for industry regarding the regional nature based offer • 6 active links to key industry web-sites to promote 'working together to better present the natural product' • Run 4 events offering the industry advice on how to be 'wild friendly' for its customers, including the use of nature in promotional materials and on web sites • Provide regular (at least weekly) social media updates to the industry through existing Wild Seasons Facebook and Twitter accounts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 run (1 cancelled due to poor takeup in early summer) • Several dozen new links created from WS website to other organisations & attractions but WS website is consumer facing • 5 workshops run – 3 general, one specifically on social media & one in association with DD&G conference • Undertaken successfully from beginning August to date
Nature based product development		
Further develop the nature based product of the region, focussing on the delivery of high quality 'exemplar' projects, such as the Flooders Trail.	Develop 6 more self-guided 'wild tours'	10 'Wild Routes' developed on website & promoted elsewhere, linking existing wildlife locations

Original Objectives	Original Activities	As Revised
Accessibility of the product		
Work with the wider tourism industry, including various individuals who presently act as guides / instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the existing guides group to develop a stronger and clearer product • Establish a stronger web presence • Research and advise the group on key issues including corporate forms / insurance and bonding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of guides on website increased to 10 (from 6) • 3-day guide training course run which dealt with corporate issues. Business advice issued as follow-up
Promotion and Marketing		
Complementary work with Destination D&G as well as wider tourism activity to 'cross-promote / cross-reference' existing and proposed activities, eg. the Wild Spring and Wild Autumn festivals and so market the wildlife product outside the region and increase visitor numbers to the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make links to wider initiatives (e.g. the UNESCO Biosphere, Dark Skies, etc) • Work with industry representatives, particularly through DD&G, to promote the seasonal event programme 	<p>These initiatives addressed in new website & separate new publications</p> <p>Worked with DD&G on Wild Spring Festival & established and promoted Wild Autumn Festival as well</p>
Exit Strategy / Sustainability		
Aim in total is to engage the private sector in taking better advantage of the economic opportunities on offer, especially through collaborative efforts, and to give them the confidence to invest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a clear 'succession' for the project to become an integral part of Destination D&G's future functioning, if / as appropriate. • Develop an on-going funding package for the post, possibly located within one of the partner organisations. • Develop a Business Plan for the next stage of the project. 	<p>Clear implication of how a number of project initiatives were set up & recommendation of final report</p> <p>Basic project management package & costings produced as part of final report</p> <p>As above</p>
Other / Cross-cutting Themes		
Embedded within this are cross-cutting themes such as ensuring a sustainable approach (eg. through use of Green Tourism Business Scheme), disability issues, learning / training, etc.	Apply as appropriate in all of the above	Green credentials & commitment to becoming knowledgeable, 'wild-friendly' businesses required as part of Wild Seasons Charter

LEADER TARGETS

LEADER target groups		
	Targets	Achieved
Male age under 25	5	1
Female age under 25	5	1
Male age 25 and over	15	34
Female age 25 and over	15	31
Micro businesses	35	36

Project Outputs	Target	Achieved
No of communities participating	15	11 links established with communities through promotion and/or use of community based attractions, assets and businesses, development of visitor itineraries involving the same and support for new community initiatives (see list in final report, section 4).
No of Community led projects	1	As above
No. of FTE jobs created	0.4	Delivery shared by 0.4 FTE project officer and a consultancy
No of jobs in tourist sector	0.4	As above
No of projects that primarily address Economic Growth	1	Both Wild Spring and Wild Autumn Festivals were successful. No. of links being forged with businesses as described in final report.
No of promotions undertaken	3	Numerous - Wild Spring and Wild Autumn Festivals, Workshops and Familiarisation Trips plus WS website is promoting various events and business initiatives.
Marketing activity undertaken	60	67 eligible individuals / 36 micro businesses attended workshops dealing with marketing aspects of wildlife tourism
No of new/innovative methods of adding value to local products	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website itineraries (Wild Routes) Special promotions on website Cross promotion with 2 Festivals New services (eg. guiding as ancillary to existing business).
Development Plan	1	Strategy in place

Milestones	Date achieved	Comments
Project Officer employed	02/13	Delayed by unsuccessful recruitment.
Interactive map and 'blackboard' on Wild Seasons site	08/13	New website launched with these features

Increased availability of leaflets, etc. on Wild Seasons site	08/13	All Dumfries and Galloway Council walk leaflets are on website as well as others.
Attendance at tourism fairs complete	n/a	Reviewed and dropped as not offering value for money for time needed.
Wild tour developments completed	5 held in period	1 in June, 2 in October & 2 in November 2013
Established and functioning Guides group	Ongoing	Guide training course held with 12 participants – all additional to original group – of whom 4 have now joined
Still / video library available to industry	Ongoing	Added through course of project & available through DD&G website as well as promotional videos available on WS website

SNH TARGETS

Approved Project Activity – with targets	SNH Output Measure	Phase 2 Target	Achieved	Additional Information
Programme of training to assist region's tourism businesses in understanding and supporting the potential of nature based tourism - revised – 2 courses involving 60 businesses	Number of courses, events or opportunities delivered	2	2	First event held as part of DD&G Conference at Easterbrook in April 2013. The second event is scheduled for 26 February 2014. It will focus on the new marketing guide as well as presenting the results of Wild Seasons Phase 2.
	Number of people trained	60	26 (1 event)	We expect the balance of trainees to attend the above event in February.
Training in 'being wild friendly for your customer' - revised – 8 workshops and familiarisation events involving 80 businesses	Number of courses, events or opportunities delivered	8	10	5 fam trips & 5 workshops (including social media & guide training workshops), as described in final report
	Number of people trained	80	53	ie. additional to above programme of training

Approved Project Activity – no targets	Achievement
Establish a minimum of 6 active links to key regional tourism web-sites (e.g Visit Scotland, SNH, D&G Rangers, FCS / Dark Skies)	Several dozen new links created from WS website to other organisations & attractions but WS website is consumer facing

On-going support and updates to existing web-site including provision of increased number of printable resources	Enhanced website launched at beginning of August with new, downloadable route maps and a range of walks.
Creation of inter-active map / calendar of regional nature based events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New events website created with map, calendar & geographical search facility • New Wild Locations web pages created with interactive map
Develop a minimum of 2 exemplar nature based travel itineraries (foot, car, cycle, public transport)	10 'Wild Routes' developed on website & promoted elsewhere, linking existing wildlife locations
UK wide promotion of D&G regional nature based offer	This was done through promotion of the Spring and Autumn festivals with significant success.
Still and video library for industry to use	Additional images added to DD&G website

IW / December 2013

ANNEX 9 - SELECTION OF WEBSITE FEEDBACK

Maren Ebeling, SNH Tourism Officer

Excellent first impression, very clear and fresh design which feels easy to navigate and is very inviting (i.e. one does not feel overwhelmed and/or confused). Overall I personally agree this is a very good website!!

By the top of my head I don't know of any other Scottish area having something comparable which solely covers nature, so that approach in itself is innovative. Next thing close to it is the Wild Scotland website I would say, but you can't really compare the two ...

Some more detailed thoughts (ignore if not of interest – I guess part of the side might still be developed further in future):

- Events page:
 - excellent idea to incorporate a map
 - customer gets opportunity to book some events straight away - very good
 - would be helpful to have a map reference on each event listing entry (an outsider does not know where 'Doch Park' is, if the listing entry had a number/letter which also appears on the map that would be easier)
- Wild Routes section could do with a map to support them
- Good mix across the side of written info, photos, audio and video (although video did not play for me easily, but that's our SNH set up not the websites fault I think)
- Would add reference to region covered to the 'Wild Season' header design just to remind people that this page only covers a specific region of Scotland (especially as all maps are google based and extend to the whole of Scotland)
- All menu topics relevant and useful to customer, very clear layout

Fred Findlay, Rickwood House Hotel, Portpatrick

Hi Iain

Great to see things are moving along and the new website is great.
Are we still ok to get a mention on the site?

Elaine Boyd, Moffat Community Project Officer

Hi Iain

Looks great!

The bird hide haven wild route could also include Moffat Community Nature Reserve as this is only another 13 miles or so up the road from Lockerbie.

Otherwise I will post things on facebook as and when they come up.

We are hosting a Mammal Identification course in September - is this something you might be able to help promote too please?

Thanks, website looks great!!

Michael & Shirley Clarke, Williamwood Farm

Hi Iain

Thank you so much for putting us so much in the spotlight on your great website. We couldn't have asked for better!

Dorothy Scherrer, Creetown Initiative

Hi Iain,

Have had really good feed-back about the website and as you can see I have the Balloch info link at the bottom of all my emails...

Alison Smith, Portpatrick Holiday Cottages & Marketing for Mull of Galloway Cottages

Hi Iain,

Wow! They look brilliant. Lots of great information, fabulous photographs and links. I'm going to start Tweeting those and posting on Facebook too. They are excellent.

Do you mind if I add the links to my website blog for Kirklauchline and the Mull Cottages?

Caroline & Stewart McKean, Isla Cottage B&B, Springholm Castle Douglas

That is great, thanks Iain. I will be referring my clients to your website and have done so in fact. It is almost a one stop shop on wildlife for this area and you can learn so much from it. Definitely will be using it at various times of the year - a wildlife bible! I like the title used on the one you have just done - a Wild Goose Chase, very clever.

Kind regards and thanks again.

Lynne & Kevin Watson, Hutton Lodge B&B, Bankend, Dumfries

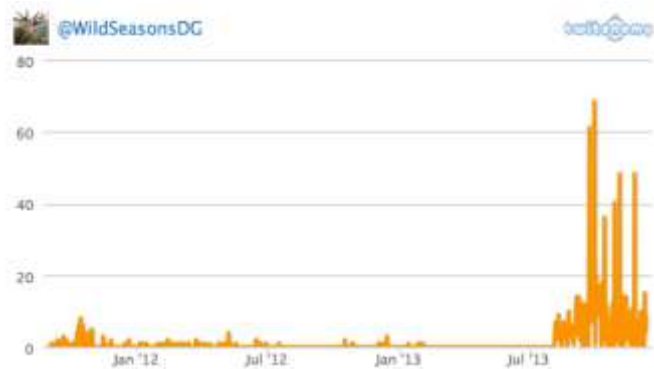
Many thanks for this Iain.

One of our past guests that has kept in touch with us from California has already responded to our insert of your site on our Facebook page saying she will definitely be returning to D&G to see some of the wildlife locations.

ANNEX 10 - TWITTER ANALYSIS

Further analysis shows that:

- 1,179 tweets were made between 02 September and 13 December
- 667 re-tweets were made
- 121 tweets were 'favourited'
- Wednesday is the most popular day for tweeting
- Most people were tweeting/re-tweeting from a computer (78%) or a smartphone (17%)



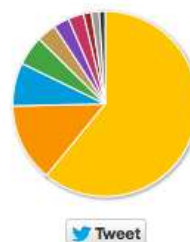
People who tweeted were mostly from Scotland (78%), with 15% from England and the remainder based overseas



Users most retweeted



Hashtags most used



🔄 Tweets most retweeted


WildSeasons D&G @WildSeasonsDG

October 4, 2013, 12:42 pm via web
 🔄 11
★ 5

#dghour it is such a colourful time of the year, great for photographs as the #autumn light is fantastic too E <http://t.co/WYYstqGUXL>


WildSeasons D&G @WildSeasonsDG

May 12, 2012, 10:51 am via web
 🔄 11
★ 0

Female Osprey back at Threave today! The pair were spotted mating on the nest! Not certain if its the original female, but still great news!


WildSeasons D&G @WildSeasonsDG

August 19, 2013, 10:26 am via web
 🔄 9
★ 2

New look Wild Seasons web sitenow on line, let us know what you think wildseasons.co.uk, better?


WildSeasons D&G @WildSeasonsDG

October 30, 2013, 11:45 am via web
 🔄 7
★ 0

#Scotlandhour theme museums & other indoor visitor attractions let's tell them what we have here in D&G #dghour especially @DumfriesMuseum


WildSeasons D&G @WildSeasonsDG

October 8, 2011, 9:45 am via web
 🔄 7
★ 1

Only a week to go until the start of Wild Autumn events in Dumfries and Galloway to find out more go to www.wildseasons.co.uk

★ Tweets most favorited


WildSeasons D&G @WildSeasonsDG

October 4, 2013, 12:42 pm via web
 🔄 11
★ 5

#dghour it is such a colourful time of the year, great for photographs as the #autumn light is fantastic too E <http://t.co/WYYstqGUXL>


WildSeasons D&G @WildSeasonsDG

December 11, 2013, 11:48 am via web
 🔄 1
★ 4

Just dropped in to say hello to #dghour, think everyone is busy. Need to get a calendar of hosts & topics set up for next year, volunteers?


WildSeasons D&G @WildSeasonsDG

October 4, 2013, 12:34 pm via web
 🔄 4
★ 3

#dghour beautiful autumn colours at Loch Ken, will it be as good again this year? <http://t.co/EE7TE1xuFU>


WildSeasons D&G @WildSeasonsDG

October 16, 2013, 11:41 am via web
 🔄 2
★ 2

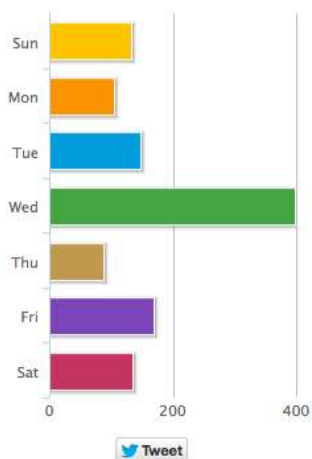
@MullofGalloway @WigtownBookFest @RickwoodPortpat #dghour I have DGaccommodation list to retweet & encourage people to come & stay for events


WildSeasons D&G

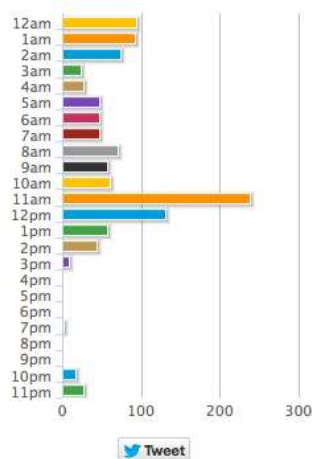
Quote Retweet Reply ★ Favorite Open

@Idlehourhols @Frugaldom @DGCRangers good news @GallowayChilli has offered to host #dghour, she knows lots about social media marketing

📅 Days of the week



🕒 Hours of the day (UTC-10)



📱 Platforms most tweeted from





Wildseasons Wildlife Training Course. November 2013.

Summary of Feedback

If you are asked for a score please use 1 to 5. 1 being poor and 5 being excellent.

Timing.

1. Is this a good time of year to hold such a course? 12 yes's.
2. Is there a better time? Please state when. If another time then spring or Jan/Feb.

Venue suitability.

3. How would you rate the indoor space used for the training? 4.75
4. How would you rate the outdoor space used for the training? 4.75

Any comments?

The Course

5. Was the information you received before the course suitable? 11 yes's
6. How would you rate the overall course? 4.75
7. How would you rate the teaching/ presentations? 4.6
8. How would you rate the knowledge and experience of the training provider? 5
9. How would you rate the information imparted? 4.7
10. What was the most useful part of the course?
 - Guided walks.
 - General info.
 - Legislation practical aspects of guiding.
 - Learning to look carefully.
 - Researching a topic and articulating the findings.
 - Insurance, driver guiding.
 - Risk assessment.
 - Networking (3 people highlighted this).
 - Refining group management skills.

Thanks for your comments.

- Wealth and depth of knowledge of the trainer and trainees.
- Practical tips of giving talks.
- Presentation techniques.
- Looking at the style of presentations.
- The chance to discuss issues within class.

11. What was the least useful part of the course?

- Nothing (5 folk).
- Whole course was valid.
- Whole course useful.
- Can't think – all good.
- Tour guiding exercise.
- Habitat and species lists.
- Interpretation section.
- PowerPoint was very basic, could have been used as a tool.
- Marketing/ legislation.

12. Is there anything that would improve the course?

- 3 folk said no.
- Extra business info.
- It should be over 4 days.
- More pizzazz with the slides.
- Longer course to allow the development of tour plans in class.
- Extra day allowing study of key D&G wildlife.
- Tracks and signs study.
- More on business structures.
- It seemed an ideal introduction to the whole subject.
- Maybe more on how to research and a bit more on the scale of costs of guiding, eg. insurance.

The Future.

If you already guide groups go to Q15.

13. As a result of the course do you feel confident enough to start guiding? **One no, 7 yes's.**

14. If the answer to 11 was no, what further help/ training do you need to start guiding?

- A further course.

15. Is there any further training related to Wildlife Guiding that you require?

- More advanced training but not quite sure on what.
- Interpretation training.
- Any specific wildlife training would be good kept up to date with courses.
- A refresher day next year would be good.

16. Is there any further assistance you require to start/ build your guiding business?

- Confidence
- Web site and business info business support.
- Social media training.
- Marketing and IT website.
- Marketing.
- Explore working as a wildlife collective.

Thanks for your comments.

- More networking, observing guided walks.
- Developing an “exchange” set up to see other guides at work i.e. new knowledge and getting the customer experience.
- Networking with other guides.
- Some peer-to-peer collaboration might help. Will ask for comments on this through Wild Seasons.

Any other comments?

- Lots of info
- Great, especially as it was free
- 3 very enjoyable days
- Excellent. Very professional and accessible teacher.
- Thanks to Wildseasons for organising it.
- I have had a thoroughly enjoyable and enriching experience
- Some great tips imparted in an excellent atmosphere, great use of indoor outdoor.
- Really interesting day. I picked up some good ideas and ideas for resources.
- Nice balance between fun/ learning/ social.

Thanks for your comments.