

Ride Scotland's Horse Country
EQUESTRIAN BUSINESS PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR
Job Description

This is a two year project to work with a number of local equestrian businesses (mostly accommodation providers, but also stables and service providers) to help them work together to market themselves and each other. You will help them make the Borders a destination of choice for riders, building on the existing trail network, the wealth of horse handling skills and the rich horse culture of the region.

You will:

- Provide out-reach link to rural equestrian & farm-based businesses
- Undertake data gathering / assembly, assessment and precis, using written, statistical and graphic presentation techniques
- Carry out spatial analysis of geographic location of services and facilities
- Create a database of relevant businesses
- Promote the project via social media
- Prepare quarterly progress reports and provide oral presentations to a Steering Group of partner organisations
- Liaise between partner agencies including Scottish Borders Council, (especially the Access Team) and Scottish Enterprise, (including Planning to Succeed staff)
- Identify and analyse sources of grant aid and complete grant applications where agreed with line management
- Design and support new customer services and customer packages for equestrian and other local businesses
- Create new marketing packages, including use of social media
- Identify complementary links to non-equestrian business and leisure / tourism services, including food & drink / creative industries
- Carry out other tasks as agreed by the project steering group

PERSON SPECIFICATION
EQUESTRIAN BUSINESS PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR

Essential

- Sound equestrian knowledge
- Understanding of issues facing rural communities, residents and businesses
- Own motorised transport
- Self – starter, organised, thorough, honest, reliable / timely
- Good person-person skills to engage business owners and for successfully leading micro business interviews
- Ability to write concise, structured written final-copy reports
- Experience of social media and database management
- Ability to present concise verbal reports to Steering Group partners and to answer questions clearly and justify viewpoints
- Ability to present statistics in table and graphic form
- Ability to think creatively about new business development opportunities, including links between businesses and wholly new service options
- Ability to package new and existing optional business services to better serve customer needs
- Enthusiasm for the project and commitment to its successful completion
- Ability to access and map-read to remote locations.

Desirable

- Basic knowledge of GIS so as to plot businesses and trail networks
- Experience of equestrian businesses such as accommodation providers
- Experience of working with other micro businesses in the food & drink / creative industries / tourism sectors

SUMMARY OF RIDE SCOTLAND'S HORSE COUNTRY PROJECT

The Potential

The Scottish Borders has a good network of safe and off-road rides which remains little known and is under used. Research for British Horse Society (BHS) / Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP) / Scottish Borders Council (SBC) / Scottish Enterprise (SE) et al (Wood-Gee 2004), found an un-tapped custom base of horse-owners and riders within a 2-3 hour drive time that could be attracted to the Borders to enjoy a wide range of rides and other all-family attractions to suit short or longer stay vacations.

Of the 81% of horse owners that expressed interest in riding southern Scotland, 67% were interested in self-guided routes but were deterred by lack of knowledge of the region, its rides and accommodation offer (for horse and rider). In addition, inexperience of rural riding; concern over access for horse boxes between overnight stops and around car parking during longer rides; fear of managing emergencies (for horse or rider) in an unknown context; complexity of booking multiple accommodation stops with rest days and for seeking back up advice / route directions between stops; and lack of knowledge of how to link other visitor attractions, (for riders and accompanying friends/family) within a riding vacation all act to deter visitors.

Existing equestrian accommodation businesses have variable marketing skills and arrangements. Many have spare room capacity within the riding season (May-September) and have under-developed customer hand-on arrangements for riders seeking longer rides. Others are fully booked but wish to grow the market through offering longer-distance rides, but are thwarted by lack of customer sharing / data handling between equestrian businesses. In 2004, Wood-Gee predicted that despite a network of suitable rides, usage would remain subdued unless focus was given to coordinated marketing which, in the event was left with individual equestrian micro-businesses. Rides have not been the focus of national or regional promotion unlike cycling and walking and network usage has not substantially increased in the intervening 12 years.

Our Vision of Success

We want potential customers to be able to see the range of accommodation available (for horse and rider) before they leave home, by price, quality, proximity to grazing, and for add-on services. This should be presented so that neighbouring accommodation can be simply booked, for those seeking linked mid-longer-distance rides. It should be clear where horse boxes and cars can be left and how riders can be supported for the duration of their stay with different accommodation-providers. It should be clear what routes and skill-levels and ride challenges are available for return or cross country rides, and how network gaps can be worked around by taxi / luggage / horse transfer between rest stops, as part of a booked package. Opportunities to visit attractions, events and creative industries for family and friends should be evident with taxi / minibus links from accommodation for rest days during the rides. Catering options, (including pre-booked packages) during rides, and at destinations should be clear. The overall high quality of the rural context, its culture and attractions should provide an overarching context.

Our pre-project consultation with equestrian businesses has demonstrated their enthusiasm for the potential of joint working between businesses to grow the range of rides offered, to enable customer hand-on and support, to coordinate bookings and improve the marketing range and quality. Some see opportunities to grow and expand capacity, some to improve occupancy and quality of accommodation provided, others to safeguard existing jobs. All see the potential to better market the Borders and to grow the customer numbers and hence local spend. Opportunities to develop add-on customer products such as hot tubs, stabling, grooming, meet-greet services can grow on such success. Few have experience of joint working and there is little experience of packaging other services. Discussions with the local tourism partnership and the Council have highlighted opportunities to link the development of collaboration between equestrian businesses with similar approaches being taken in other sectors (particularly mountain biking, cycling and arts) and by other local tourism initiatives (such as the DSB and Tweed Valley consortium). This project would actively develop such links. BHS(S) are not aware of such arrangements in Scotland, but elements of all the above exist across other UK centres for excellence for equestrian destinations, including the Pennines and *Ride Yorkshire*. Our proposal is to combine the best examples of marketing and customer coordination with our unique rides and Borders attractions, to establish the Borders as the exemplar rural horse-riding destination for the UK. Such arrangements will also benefit walkers and cyclists. Working with existing equestrian businesses, the project will, over 2 years:

- Establish information sharing and joint working between equestrian accommodation providers, (horse and rider);

- Provide a framework for joint customer marketing, customer support and hand-over between equestrian accommodation and support businesses;
- Promote coordinated customer packages;
- Enable a wider range of local rides and the development of longer distance rides across the Borders;
- Establish an association of Borders equestrian businesses to continue and further develop joint marketing and product / service development.

Improved promotion of Border attractions will more effectively expand the latent customer market (and the range of accommodation), improve occupancy levels, better explain the range of rides available (by length, skill level, etc.), the accommodation choice and visitor attractions. The project strengthens links with equestrian support businesses, (saddlers / farriers / vets, etc.), customer services, (catering, food & drink), and visitor attractions including the creative industries and:

- Raises awareness of Borders equestrian tourism, (including local & UK 2-3 hr drive time and for foreign-national customers).
- Enables cost reduction and increased market penetration via more effective and coordinated joint marketing of total offer.
- Increases use of existing equestrian rides network.
- Raises profile of and links with other Borders visitor-offers to broaden custom base to all-family markets.
- Supports improved choice of circuit and longer-stay rides with rest day variety.
- Increases visitor numbers and spend in direct equestrian accommodation, equestrian support businesses, customer support services, (such as food & drink) and for other creative industries.
- Improves ability of equestrian businesses to invest in new capacity & quality and to widen the range of services provided.
- Supports the broadening of rider profile from experienced return custom to first time visitors including those with little / no experience of rural riding.
- Improves capacity of businesses to offer bespoke and individual needs-related services, to better meet needs of a wider range of (dis)abilities.
- Identifies opportunities for new jobs in equestrian and equestrian support services, (inc customer care, farriers, saddlers, vets, clothing, horse transport, horse management, riding skills, business management etc).
- Supports provision of new training through increasing demand for experienced / young / new entrants to the equestrian jobs market.
- Supports and helps to diversify income for existing farm and equestrian businesses.
- Highlights opportunities to develop new added value services in customer support, (meet-greet, all-in activity packages).

Application requirements

Please apply by letter with a copy of your CV (max 2 sides A4). Your letter should outline how your skills and experience match our requirements.

You should provide the names and contacts of two referees who can comment on your honesty, time keeping, self start / motivation / organisational skills, team work & person to person skills, IT capability, quality of work, suitability for the role with specific reference to the Job Description and Person Specification and any other comments in confidence that need to be considered by the Interview Panel.

Please email your application to piptabor@sup.org.uk. We will acknowledge receipt.

Please email any questions but not after 3pm on the 9th October.

Closing date is midnight on the 10th October 2017.