

SMART THINKING FOR BETTER BUSINESS SERIES

VOLUME

7

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Every tourism business is part of the community it operates in, contributing to the local economy and benefitting from a strong local appeal. Sustainable tourism owes much to local businesses working in partnership to improve the community and add value for the customer.



A close knit community is a key staple of any warm visitor welcome – businesses keen to recommend one another’s services and supporting a strong social fabric, can be proud of their collective offering and will also make an impression and help to ensure customers return to the area.

Fostering that level of engagement with your local community requires good communication.



Benefiting the community

Be active in supporting other local businesses and initiatives and in keeping the community clean and safe. A vibrant and healthy community results in an attractive destination for visitors.

There are some simple actions you can take to benefit and support your local area, which in turn can benefit your business.

- Support projects that improve the local environment such as conservation work, litter picks and graffiti removal
- Support social community projects such as those providing facilities for local youth groups
- Offer any meeting spaces you might have to local groups to use at cost or free of charge
- Provide work experience for young and under privileged people in your community

- Choose a local charity or good cause to support. Organise fundraising events or activities, get staff involved in fundraising and volunteering
- Get your customers involved. Provide customers with the opportunity to contribute, either through a direct donation or as part of a visitor payback programme, for example 10p of every cup of coffee sold gets donated. Where relevant, promote any local volunteering opportunities they can participate in during their stay.

Make sure you shout about it!

Tell customers, staff and the community about the work you are doing. Have information on your website or even get a story in the local paper on any activities or achievements. This not only benefits your business, but also the cause you are supporting.

Supporting local environmental and social projects is not just a 'nice' thing to do; there are also a number of benefits for your business, such as:

- Raise the profile of your business and strengthen positive reputation in the community, as well as with customers and staff;
- Generate more business through referrals from the community and from customers who want to support the work you deliver;
- Development of skilled young people and nurture local, Scottish talent to pursue a career in the tourism industry.



Useful links

[Scottish Business in the Community: Employee Volunteering Services](#)

[Hospitality Industry Trust \(HIT\) Scotland](#)

[Springboard](#)

[Scottish Environment Link](#): a wide selection of environment related organisations operating in Scotland which you could support, such as RSPB, Scottish Wildlife Trust, and the Hebridean Whales and Dolphins Trust.

Share the story – get customers involved

Customers are increasingly looking for businesses that are acting responsibly and are looking to increase the positive impact they have. Many businesses are already making invaluable contributions to their local environment and local community, but are not telling anybody about it.

Don't be shy! Let your customers know about the efforts you are making to be more sustainable. Share your successes, but also be honest – share those stories where you tried something new or different but it didn't work out as expected. Once you let customers know what you are looking to achieve, it is also easier to get them involved as well.

- **Share your business' 'green' story:** what you have been doing and why. Include information on your website for example. Make it fun and interesting.
- Display a responsible visitor charter to encourage customers to play their part during their visit and to help enjoy and conserve our natural heritage while supporting our communities.
- If you are an accommodation provider you can have a towel and linen policy in place; clearly promote the policy, giving guests the choice to reuse their sheets and towels. Make sure to stick to the guest's choice.





Through positive and engaging information you can achieve a number of business benefits:

- Stand apart from competition as a sustainable business; which can lead to new and repeat customers
- Give your customers the feel good factor that they are supporting a sustainable business
- Achieve cost savings by getting customers involved in supporting your sustainability actions.

Help us keep Scotland special!

You can use and promote VisitScotland's '[Help us keep Scotland special!](#)' visitor charter to get guests involved. It contains five top tips on how visitors can help to protect Scotland's environment and support its communities.

Example of Visitor Charter





Making holidays enjoyable for all

Everyone is entitled to a good quality, enjoyable holiday. Disabled people, the elderly, families with young children and lower income groups all make up Scotland's tourism market and a sustainable business should be aware of obstacles that may prevent these groups from enjoying their visit.

The accessible tourism market is a fast growing and sizable market opportunity for businesses. Accessible Tourism spend in Scotland alone was £172m during the first six months of 2013, which is 42% higher than in 2010.

Accessible Tourism refers to tourism that caters to the needs of a full range of consumers.

The accessible market not only encompasses people with permanent physical disabilities, but also families with young children and senior travellers.

Many businesses who cater for this market are seeing higher occupancy rates and development of a loyal customer base who keep returning.

Practical tools to help you tap into the Accessible Tourism market: For simple low-cost changes to benefit you and your visitors see [VisitScotland's AdviceLink Guide Easy Does it!](#) and case studies on the website.

Online training programme

A free online Accessible Tourism Training Programme is now available, designed for managers and front line staff of tourist accommodation, attractions/events, eating and drinking establishments.

The training takes approximately 90 minutes to complete and can be done at your own pace over several days or weeks. Once you complete the course successfully you will be awarded an Accessible Tourism Training Certificate.

Get more information at www.visitscotland.org/accessible-tourism-training.

Access statement tool

An access statement is a detailed description of your business facilities and services, as well as information about the surrounding area and travel advice.

You can create your own access statement using the VisitScotland Access Statement tool builder. scotland.tourismtools.co.uk

Holidays can be expensive, especially for large families or lower income groups. Follow these tips to help these groups access enjoyable holidays:

- Promote and advertise on your website any discounted offers or attractions in the area
- Provide information on public transport, because not everyone has access to a car
- Support and encourage local schemes that actively provide disadvantaged people with the opportunity of a holiday
- Work with schemes that provide vocational holidays or work camps for youths.

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www.visitscotland.org/sustainable-business-series.aspx

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