



Cairngorms Business Partnership Growth Fund Case Study

2016-17 Cairngorms National
Park Marketing Project

 Visit
Scotland | Alba™

Project Overview

The campaign was a partnership approach between Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP), Serco and VisitScotland. The CBP is a not for profit private sector led organisation, which seeks to promote economic development within the Cairngorms National Park (CNP) and support the interests of local businesses. CBP works with 358 member businesses as well as the wider business community across several sectors. Amongst the activities carried out by CBP is the promotion of the CNP as a must visit quality destination. Serco operates the Caledonian Sleeper which provides overnight sleeper services between London and Scotland.

It was a £60,000 campaign, supported by a £30,000 Growth Fund grant and match funding from CBP and Serco. The campaign was targeted at London and the South East of England. It highlighted the excellent transport links with the message that it is easy to travel to the CNP for short breaks, where the journey is part of the experience. The campaign included a digital guide, short videos, online marketing, familiarisation trips, competitions and blog content.

The CNP attracts a high level of repeat visitors, with 51% having visited before. The key economic aims of the campaign were to attract new, high spending visitors who would become the repeat visitors of the future. It was targeted at attracting visitors outwith the main season.



Activity Impact & Learning

There was a significant increase in social media indicators including: reaching the target of 50,000 Facebook likes, an increase in Facebook reach of 155% (target: 30%), Twitter followers of 22% (target: 20%) and Instagram followers of 228% (target: 50%). The number of referrals from visitcairngorms.com to the Caledonian Sleeper booking page was 2,644 (target: 2,000). The membership of the CBP increased from 339 to 358 (target: 355) and there was an increase in business listings on visitcairngorms.com to 688 (target: 640).

The business page views on visitcairngorms.com were up year on year by 2%. Whilst page views for the accommodation sector decreased slightly, views for the attractions and food & drink sector had increased providing an indication that the campaign was spreading the awareness of the range of activities on offer.

The flexibility to be allowed to change what they were doing as the campaign progressed, particularly around digital activity, was particularly beneficial. For example, they initially spent a lot on Google AdWords but found that Facebook Adverts worked better so adjusted their approach accordingly.

A key aspect of this project was the internal upskilling of staff and they now have a greater understanding of different aspects, particularly digital marketing. Whilst agencies have the technical skills, CBP have a better understanding of their target markets. So internalising some of these skills will allow them to further develop and refine future campaigns, and will be more cost effective by reducing their reliance on external agencies.

A key lesson from the project was the need to plan and post content in a timely manner. As part of the project they have acquired a Content Calendar which they are now working from on an ongoing basis.

They spent a lot of money getting people to the website but would have benefited from developing the website to keep them there for longer when they did visit. They were limited in this respect due to what can be considered as new work.

They suggested having a grant period that extended beyond 12 months to allow them to develop a longer and more sustained campaign.

Wider Benefits

The marketing work of CBP relies on the support of member businesses and they engaged with this project through sharing content, tagging online, hosting journalists, competition prizes and keeping CBP up to date with their news. Businesses were also featured in the video content, imagery, paid adverts and blog posts.

The partnership nature of the project with Caledonian Sleeper has proved a successful working relationship which has continued beyond the project. Caledonian Sleeper has become a corporate partner of the CBP.

Identifying the economic impacts is the most difficult aspect of assessing the project. Whilst there are STEAM figures for visitor numbers and expenditure (which were up for the first six months of 2016 by 10% and 8%, respectively), these show the changes in the overall performance of the visitor economy rather than what is attributable to the specific campaign. However, something that does act as a proxy indicator is the fact that, of those businesses that had visitors from England the proportion that had visitors from London and the South East had increased from 49% to 60% (target: 52%) during the campaign.

The Growth Fund allowed them to make investment in a campaign of a scale that wouldn't be achievable otherwise and to develop a new partnership with the Caledonian Sleeper. It allowed for innovation in CBP's approach to marketing with their first entirely online campaign. It also allowed them to upskill staff, particularly in relation to digital advertising. It encouraged inclusion through engaging with community groups, businesses and individuals to identify stories and great locations for film footage.

The level of additionality from the Growth Fund support is high, as without this support they would only have had a third of the budget. They would still have run a campaign but at a much lower scale, as they would only have had access to their own internal funds. They would not have been able to partner with the Caledonian Sleeper nor secured their contribution.

Growth Fund Experience

There is effectively a monitoring and evaluation plan built into the process as they had KPIs that they needed to report back to VisitScotland and KPIs of their own. The requirement to report back on a regular basis influenced what they did during the campaign. They had a lot of analytics from the digital activity which gave them a clear and timely indication of which aspects were or were not working well and allowed them to adjust their approach accordingly.

Whilst they had data that showed they were driving a lot of awareness, it was difficult to get information to

demonstrate the effect further down the line. Unfortunately, the Caledonian Sleeper could not measure the change in passenger numbers (as when they took over its operation they did not have access to historical data).

Working closely with VisitScotland on the project has provided a wealth of knowledge and understanding of key areas, including how to create video and image briefs, assessing blogger requests and pushing out content. This included advising on how best to assess bloggers and what to expect in return for a hosted trip.



Future/Looking Forward

The project has created good content and videos that they can use in the future, as to a certain extent they are 'evergreen'. They also have additional film footage that they could not afford to get edited but this could be done in the future.

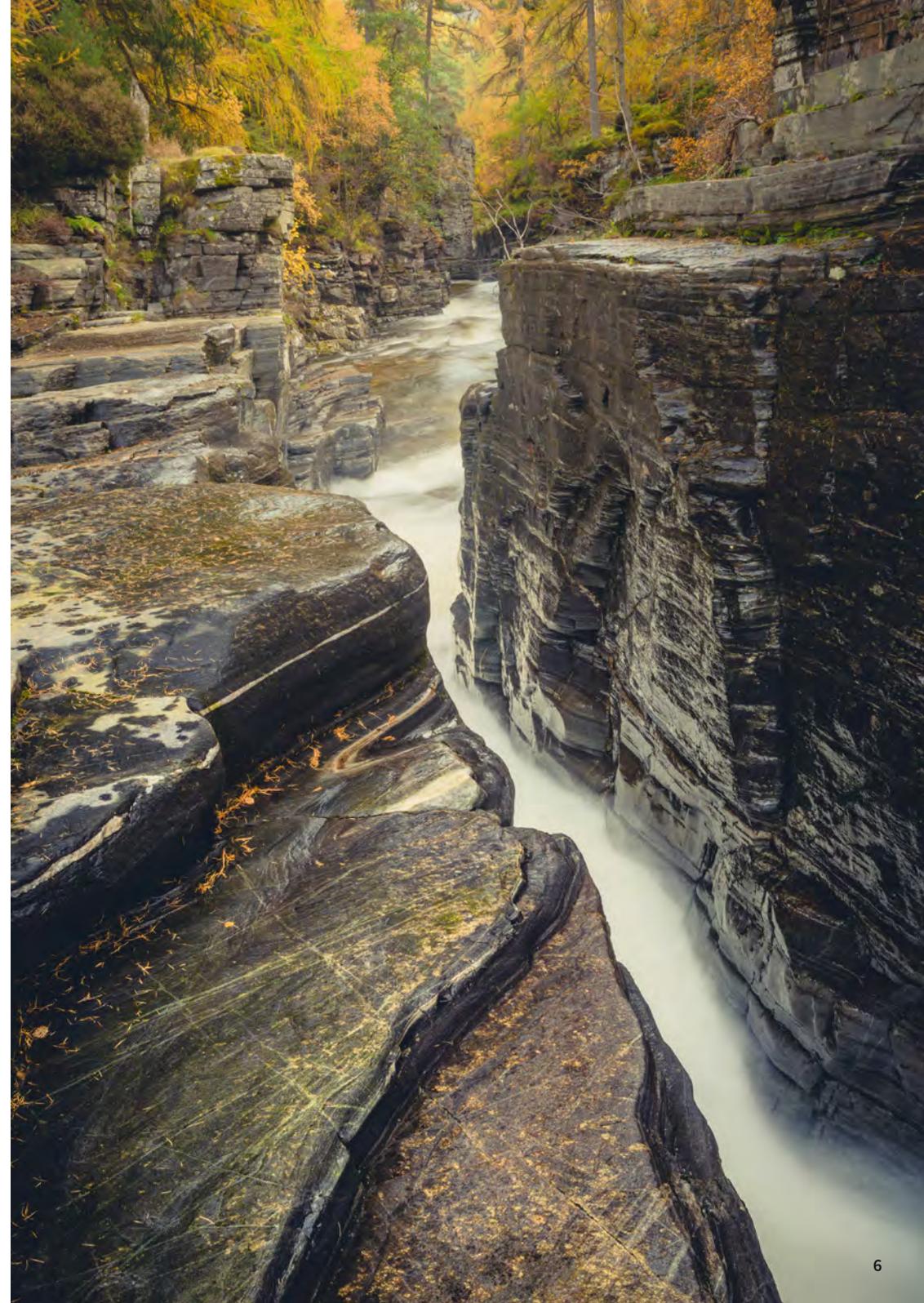
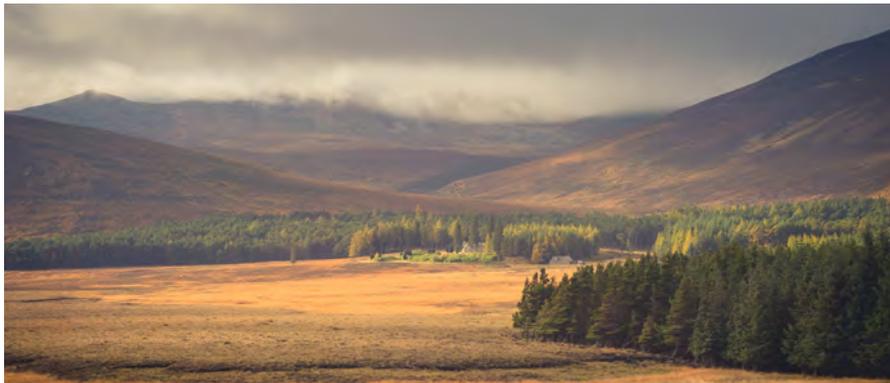
Subsequent to project completion, four local businesses have bought into the concept of the campaign and made their own videos (investing over £1,000 of their own money). There is scope to do more in the future based around the concept behind the videos '100 things to do in the Cairngorms'.

The project has led to a significant increase in followers across various channels and CBP feel that if they

focus on delivering authentic, engaging content they will be able to retain the interest of these new audiences and attract more.

The upskilling of staff is also a key legacy from the project, which provides them with a much greater degree of understanding and control for future campaigns.

The working relationship between CBP and the Caledonian Sleeper has continued beyond the project. There are plans for greater activity in 2018, when the Caledonian Sleeper's new rolling stock comes into operation.





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