



Discover Scottish Gardens Growth Fund Case Study

DSG Launch Campaign

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Project Overview

Discover Scottish Gardens (DSG), developed by the group Scottish Gardens Network Ltd, is a network of gardens, plant nurseries and related businesses that promote the rich diversity of gardens to Scotland's many visitors. The strategic objectives of the group are to increase the number of visitors to members' gardens resulting in financial benefits through secondary spend, raise the profile of Scottish gardens, and create a national network operating as a collective voice.

DSG provides a platform for members to share the wonderful horticultural array that Scotland has on offer all year round, as well as launching new festivals and events to celebrate the seasons. DSG is a not-for-profit co-operative and is financed through membership subscriptions, sponsorship and successful funding bids.

In March 2015, DSG began a 12 month launch campaign project. This £60,000 launch campaign included a £30,000 Growth Fund grant. The launch campaign project focused primarily

on the development of a new national brand for Scottish Gardens, and the cascading of that brand through various channels including website, email, leaflet, advertising, events and exhibitions. The project also included the creation of four virtual seasonal festivals for Scottish Gardens to celebrate. The project's target market comprised of garden lovers, plant enthusiasts, outdoor types and holiday makers from Scotland, the rest of the UK and overseas.



Activity Impact & Learning

Overall DSG believed that the project worked well and was delivered as expected. Key activities of the project included:

- Working with a marketing agency to develop the new logo and establish a brand identity and values.
- An official launch at the Gardening Scotland event in May 2015, where DSG had an exhibition stand. This was a quick win for creating contacts as 300 names were acquired for database creation. Also competition offers on the website generated a further 600 new contacts.
- Website launched in July 2015 and in the months that followed the website underwent a series of redevelopments and refinements. Over 2016 traffic to website has shown monthly increases of 37%. Linked to this, DSG have developed a social media base on Facebook (over 900 likes) and Twitter (1,000 followers)
- Other campaign activity included 150,000 leaflets, made available for

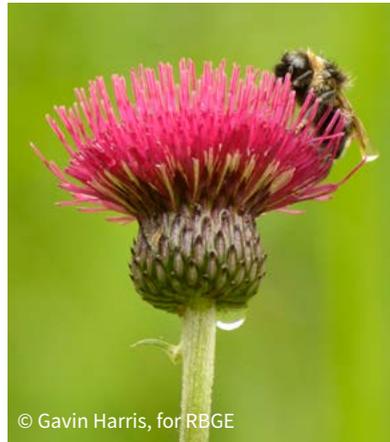
tourists at visitor information centres and the main gateways into Scotland; PR pushes linked to virtual seasonal festivals e.g. a social media advert calendar in winter; editorial features in print media; and bespoke emails to members to request engagement with seasonal festivals.

As this was a launch project, it is challenging to form learning perspectives in terms of activities and group progression, as there is little baseline activity to form a comparison. Nonetheless, some wider strategic learning points were noted by DSG.

- Continue to build external knowledge and awareness of DSG's aims, objectives and remit.
- Much of the work of DSG is based on the voluntary hours of members with only one paid part-time staff member (who focuses on administration and the digital channels). Everyone else gives a lot of voluntary hours – to increase the future sustainability of the group there will need to be more paid staff hours.

Wider Benefits

The Growth Fund project has had positive engagement benefits for DSG. Originally the group started out with 70 members and by the end of the Growth Fund project delivery there were 145 members. Raising £16,500 in sponsorship from local businesses was also an engagement success, as these businesses were keen to see the organisation launch. Furthermore, the successful delivery of the Growth Fund project has assisted DSG to approach the Scottish Tourism Alliance regarding joining their council and explore LEADER funding.



DSG would still have had a launch campaign without the Growth Fund award. However, it would have been delivered but on a much smaller scale and would have struggled to deliver the same outcomes. Growth Fund provided momentum in Year 1 that could not have been created from elsewhere.



Growth Fund Experience

DSG devised a monitoring plan based on the KPIs agreed with VisitScotland. The greatest challenge with monitoring was that the original website wasn't fit for purpose – these issues were resolved. Generally, DSG found reporting to VisitScotland very straightforward. DSG were “fortunate that they had steering group members used to working with public sector funding applications and VisitScotland”.

Since DSG formation, there was an awareness of Growth Fund, as it was highlighted as a means of generating income. The group is essentially a marketing body for gardens, so Growth Fund is an ideal match. In terms of DSG's relationship with VisitScotland, it was useful to be exposed to a wide range of contacts across the organisation and contact with STA. DSG was aware of the themed years and the ScotSpirit campaign. DSG stated that there “was no way that we could have delivered £60,000 worth of marketing without the Growth Fund and the support from VisitScotland”.

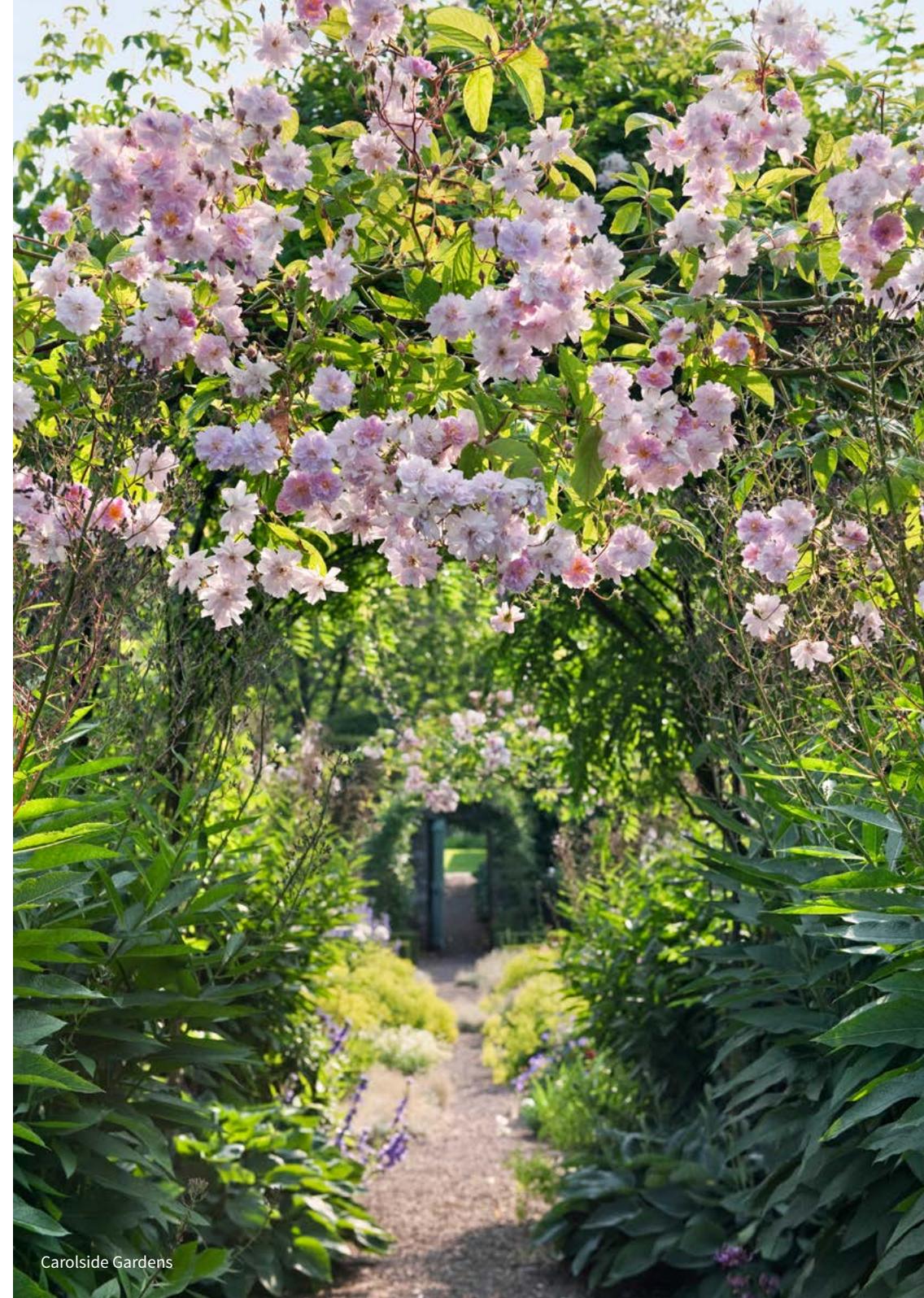


Looking Forward

Maintaining existing and attracting new members is a key objective for the group to be sustainable. It was acknowledged that there needs to be strong and viable activity to ensure members renew. Plus it was highlighted that “there is still a job to do in terms of helping members to understand what the group is trying to achieve for the sector”.

DSG now have a second Growth Fund campaign that will run during 2016 and 2017. The campaign focuses on growing their digital channels and by attending the Chelsea Flower Show - extending from the Garden Scotland Show to more large scale international shows. Creation of video is also a key part of the campaign. Within the campaign there will still be a focus on

increasing brand awareness, raising DSG’s profile as a collective for garden owners and related businesses, and developing some sort of emblem as a note of quality.





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