

Business Group Big Ideas Meeting 16th January 2020

Big Ideas Meeting 16th January 2020 at Royal Dornoch Golf Club 7-9pm

Attendees

Embo House – Jim & Ginny Knox

RDGC – Neil Hampton

Heartseed House B & B - Nigel & Dee Hart

Burgh Gardens – Holiday Home - Morven Urquhart

Dornoch Stores – Genevieve & John Duhigg

Castle Hotel – Matt Logie

Carnegie Whisky Cellars – Michael Hanratty

Eagle – Eric deVenny

Links House – Phil Scott (briefly)

Lesley Strang Events Production – Lesley Strang

DTCL – Maggie Holmes

Dornoch Bike Hire - David Macbeath

Royal Golf Hotel – Iain Watson & Robert Ratcliffe

Historylinks – Alison Davies

Courthouse Café – Carol Mackay (also DADCA)

Ultimuttly Groomed – Viki Mackenzie (also DADCA)

Embo Trust/DADCA/DACIC – Jim McGillivray

DADCA/DACIC - Paddy Murray

Evelix Pods – Mary & Fergus Macleod, Donald Munro

DACIC – Joan Bishop, Lou Rollason, Lucy Williams

Agenda:

Review of 2019 season (see separate document)

SWOT Analysis

Group Sessions

Report back

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Beach,
golf,
wildlife,
history & heritage,
people,
weather (one of driest in UK)

Note: RDGC to see if their weather station can be used to get the message out that we are one of the driest parts of the UK and are not 'snowed under' all winter!

Weaknesses

Public transport e.g. for staff.
Lack of taxis.
Difficulty in finding staff, linked to transport & accommodation.
Lack of restaurants for dinner (plus cheaper food for families although Eagle & Coach House good).
Co-ordination of events, especially in shoulder months. **Public Toilets are poor**

Note: The Dornoch Calendar is designed to address co-ordination of events and avoid clashes. Contact Joan Bishop to add events <https://calendar.visitdornoch.com/>

Opportunities

Golf – world renowned course,
NC500,
Climate (dry),
whisky,
heritage & history,
outdoor sports,
beach,
water sports,
location

Note: 2020 is year of coast & waters. Suggest work with BRIG for events.

Threats

Bedrooms on Air B n B,
Climate change (less flying?),
Brexit,
affordable housing,
seasonal staff accommodation,
coach trips (low spenders – pressure on business toilets),
lack of parking,
short stays,
poor public toilets

Group 1 Marketing

Ginny Knox
John Duhigg
Lucy Williams
Mary Macleod
Fergus Macleod
Donald Munro
Michael Hanratty

Who are we trying to attract (target audience)?

Everyone! Encourage NC500 visitors off route. Scottish people to venture to Dornoch. Local (Highland) to visit /stay weekend. Worldwide (e.g. Chicago good transport links), Scandinavia, USA golf links

Is the audience changing?

Yes – Brexit effect on European visitors. Climate Change might restrict long haul. More UK. One night rather than one week. But more traffic in general.

What are we wanting to achieve?

More long stays. More website interaction, More SM interaction. Reach new audiences.

How do we measure success?

Survey Business Group, SM figures, Website figures, Visitor Centre figures. Informal business group discussion

Resources required (personnel & finance)?

Confirmed funding for staff

Marketing mix

- Social Media
- Website
- Mobile App
- Leaflets & Distribution
- Advertising
- Exhibitions (we have a stand at VisitScotland Expo 1-2 April, Aberdeen)
- Monthly Mailchimp Newsletter (from competition entrants)

Note: Ginny Knox, John Duhigg and Maggie Holmes interested in ‘manning the VisitDornoch stand’ at VS Expo 1-2 April

What works well?

Social Media – good presence & following. Directing people to website. Facebook Page, Branding, Newsletters, Leaflets.
Support for Exhibiting at VS Expo 2020

What could we do better?

App not as popular as it should be. Promote more. More offers
Business group members provide Lucy (dacicmdo@outlook.com) with more information, photos & videos

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Too many Facebook posts

Remove business of the week **Note: This will upset a lot of members who do not have their own SM presence. It is also the main way of directing visitors to the website.**

New photos

Instagram & Facebook need more narrative – less posts but more of a story.

Fewer repeats. Keep shares local

Books of vouchers for shops/restaurants in accommodation providers?

Instagram is preferred platform

Facebook events co-hosting

Facebook posts shared with other businesses (Carol Mackay) – have to do for each post though

Next Steps

Viki Mackenzie to take photos – budget to be set by DACIC

Update website & SM with new photos & videos

SM meeting, Instagram upheaval

Group Champion(s)

Ginny Knox, John Duhigg

Group 2 Events

Jim Knox
Genevieve Duhigg
Lesley Strang
Alison Davies
Paddy Murray
Jim McGillivray
Lesley Strang
Eric deVenny

What do we do well?

Show, Games, Festival Week, Fibre Fest, Markets, Hogmanay, Whisky Festival

What could we do better?

Use beach more – wind surfing, kite surfing, dingy sailing (work with BRIG)
Use other activities – fishing (trout & salmon), shooting (good for shoulder months)

Where are the Gaps?

Games Night Dance
Extended Christmas – Enchanted forest, extended St Andrews Fair, Christmas Market

Donegal to Dornoch is good, but expensive to put on. September better time for it?
(but sharing marquee/costs??)

Other Music?

Food & Drink – May/June 2021. Local food & seafood festival. All restaurants, cafes & food stores. Could NHC Young Highland Chef change date from October?
Genevieve Duhigg will lead on this.

Next Steps

Food & Drink Festival May 2021
Contact BRIG re Coast & Waters

Group Champion(s)

Genevieve Duhigg - Food & Drink
Eric deVenny - Music

Group 3 Welcome Service

Lou Rollason
Morven Urquhart
Matt Logie
Viki Mackenzie
Carol Mackay
David Macbeath
Maggie Holmes

What do we do well?

Lorraine as Dornoch Ambassador – engages with cruise liner passengers and directs them so freeing up Visitor Centre for others.

Note: General feeling that large coaches coming for toilet stop are not welcome. However there is potential to tap into growing business for private tours in minibuses and likely scheduled service from Invergordon to Dornoch by independent provider on cruise ship days.

Personable staff in our businesses
Good information available in Visitor Centre

What could we do better?

Public Toilets, Parking, Businesses collaborating, Businesses to send more information to VisitDornoch

What do visitors want?

Golf, eateries, activities in surrounding areas

Has this changed in recent years?

Expect more for less
More businesses open year round
NC500

What do visitors take away from their holiday?

Personable service
Involved with locals
Well kept & pretty town
Instagramming

How can we improve their experience?

Public toilets

Next Steps

Follow up scheduled Invergordon bus service for Dornoch Ambassador to meet buses

Group Champion(s)

Maggie Holmes (VS Expo)
Viki Mackenzie (new photos)

Group 4 BID Pros & Cons

Iain Watson
Robert Ratcliffe
Neil Hampton
Nigel Hart
Dee Hart
Joan Bishop

Why:

More structured version of the existing business group
Bigger pot of money tied to 5 year business plan
Business led
All businesses with a rateable value pay (with exemptions for public bodies & charities) – whether they voted for the BID/SID or not

Pros:

Business led, but consultant until BID established then staff doing the work
Government seed corn grant to pay the consultant
All businesses not just tourism would be included
Business levy paid to THC non-domestic rates dept, then drawn down by BID/SID
Agreed 5 year plan to take forward for both community & visitors e.g. **Public Toilets**, events

Cons:

Need 25% of businesses and 25% of rateable value for minimum turnout
Can restrict the area of the BID/SID e.g. could ignore Clashmore if Skibo not on-board and similarly Embo if Grannie's not in support
Needs a lot of one to one to sell the case especially to trades (but they have benefitted greatly from work from tourism businesses in recent years!)
Meadows Nursing Home is one of major rvs – what is in it for them?

Process:

Steering committee to sound out businesses & spread the word
Database of IV25 businesses (Gordon Sutherland has prepared this)
Current Business Group members represent £1m of £2.8m rv
Current Business Group members represent 78 of
As we have 95 BG members some are missing from the current list so it needs refining with extra post codes!
To get to BID/SID status takes about 3 years – then 5 year cycle to next vote
To get to the vote takes about 18 months

Next Steps

Form Steering Group - this needs non tourism businesses too!
(suggestions Gareth Dixon, Gareth Porteous, Stuart Grant)

Group Champion(s)

Iain Watson, Neil Hampton, John Duhigg, Carol Mackay, Eric deVenny