



Forest Tourism Business Support Factsheet

Introduction

This fact sheet has been developed as an aid to businesses involved in the forest tourism sector, or looking to develop new forest tourism products. It has been designed to signpost you to the most relevant sources of help and information available in Scotland.

For further assistance, please contact the Forest Tourism Initiative Manager, Fiona Murray, on Tel. 0131 314 6140 or email: fiona.murray@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

For additional useful tourism contacts, please refer to Appendix 1 & 2. For a snapshot of the project to date, download the 'Forest Tourism: What's in it for you?' document from www.visitscotland.org/businessdevelopment_newideas/foresttourism

Background

In both the Tourism Framework for Change and the Scottish Forestry Strategy, tourism in Scotland's forests was identified as a product area in need of further development to maximise its potential as a driver for Scotland's tourism economy. For over a year Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, VisitScotland and Highlands & Islands Enterprise have been working together and with industry to identify opportunities for the development of tourism using activities in Scotland's forests as a driver. While the Forest Tourism Initiative is working on developments in Scotland's national forest estate (the woodlands managed on your behalf by Forestry Commission Scotland), our aim is that our learning and opportunities can often be applied to other land and landowners.

Over 3 years (Jan 2005 – Dec 2007 inclusive), there is a significant public sector core investment into this initiative, to fund the project manager's post and a number of research and development projects (for information on projects to day, ask for the 'what's in it for you?' document)

Who visits Scotland's forests?

While there are many sources of information about visitors to Scotland's forests, such as the GB Day Visitor Survey or the Scottish Recreation Survey, both of which assure us that there are around 18 – 20 million visits to the forests per year, there has never been a detailed national study. Forestry Commission Scotland is now halfway through a visitor monitoring study (All Forest Survey 2004 - 2007), which will provide the first comprehensive snapshot of visitors' activities, numbers and spend across the national forest estate. For a Year One summary, see the research section on www.forestry.gov.uk.

In addition, there is research about the cycling visitor, the walking visitor and many other relevant research topics available on www.visitscotland.org.

Enterprise Company Support

For business start-ups

Business Start Up Services are there to help you complete your business plan and start your business at your own pace.

Who qualifies for help?

Anyone considering setting up a business in Scotland or resident in Scotland. In the Scottish Enterprise area, contact your nearest Business Gateway. In the Highlands & Islands of Scotland contact your Local Enterprise Company – contact details in Appendix 2. It doesn't matter what kind of business you're thinking about or how far you've got with your plans.

What help can I get?

A mixture of:

- * Information
- Advice

Learning opportunities
Support, and
Where appropriate, funding

Part of the service is working out what you need. Staff at your local Business Gateway or Local Enterprise Company can 'pick and mix' a package of support specifically for you, made up of:

- Awareness seminars and motivation workshops
- Idea generation/development workshops
- Business information
- Self-help workbooks
- E-Business awareness seminars and workshops
- Business planning material
- Business adviser sessions, if appropriate

For existing businesses

Business Gateways/HIE Local Enterprise Companies don't just help people start businesses. They also offer a wide range of services to support the growth of existing businesses

Who qualifies for help?

It doesn't matter what kind of business you're running, or how large or small. There are expert teams to help you.

What help can I get?

A mixture of:

- Information
- Advice
- Learning opportunities
- Support, and
- Where appropriate, funding

The service is designed to respond to your immediate needs as well as point you in the direction of help you might not be aware of.

Staff at your local Gateway/Enterprise Company can put together a package of support specifically for you, referring you to specialist teams where appropriate.

This might include:

- Market research
- Information and advice on Europe and internationalisation
- E-business seminars and advice
- Help to become investment-ready
- Business health checks
- Skills and workforce development
- Business adviser sessions, if appropriate

Support delivery

Whether for existing or new businesses, these services can be delivered face-to-face, on the phone, by email, via the SBG/HIE website, on video, at seminars and workshops, and at networking events.

Scottish Enterprise Area - Just call 0845 609 6611 and speak to one of the Business Information Officers (BIOs), or go to <http://www.bgateway.com/>

Highlands & Islands Enterprise – www.hie.co.uk/start-a-business, www.hie.co.uk or contact an advisor directly using the numbers in appendix 2.

For detailed information on a range of topics including legislation and funding, plus top tips for starting or improving your business go to <http://www.scotexchange.net/businessdevelopment.html>

Forest Tourism Product Development

The Forest Tourism Initiative is specifically seeking to stimulate development of new forest tourism products across Scotland, which makes it easier for visitors to Scotland to explore and discover the variety available and for tourism businesses to maximise their proximity to or use of Scotland's forests.

If you have a development idea relating to your own business, and are seeking help to take it forward, you should speak to the tourism contact at your Local Enterprise Company in the first instance. They will be able to give guidance on further sources of help and information available, as well as any potential sources of funding and business support. Alternatively contact your local Business Gateway.

LEC tourism contacts are listed in Appendix 2.

Marketing

Scotland brand portfolio

As the forest tourism and recreation resources are extensive, they fit into many of VisitScotland's marketing activities, targeting touring, city or active visitors. For many opportunities to become involved in UK or international marketing campaigns, go to, or contact Fiona Murray for more information.

Quality Assurance Scheme

More information on VisitScotland's Quality Assurance Schemes is available at http://www.scotexchange.net/business_development/qa_home.htm

This section of VisitScotland's website will guide you through the content and processes of the Quality Assurance schemes operated by VisitScotland. A team of Quality Advisors carries out the day-to-day running of the schemes.

The information covers the Star schemes for visitor attractions and all accommodation sectors, including hostels and caravan and camping parks. In addition, there are full details of the Walkers and Cyclists Welcome schemes and criteria for provision of facilities for visitors with disabilities. Criteria, conditions, fees and on-line application forms are included for each scheme.

Training

While there is no specific forest tourism training available, this course may be of interest to you, as it includes a forest element.

Wildlife Tourism Training Course

This one-day course, organised by Tourist Board Training Ltd, aims to give participants an introduction to Scotland's wildlife tourism product and how they can best use it to maximise their own business.

By the end of the course, participants will:

- Understand the nature and variety of wildlife tourism
- Be aware of national and local wildlife resources
- Know how to get further information on aspects of wildlife tourism
- Feel confident about giving accurate information to visitors
- Feel enthusiastic about helping to develop this aspect of tourism in their area

On completion of the course, you will be invited to fill in and return a questionnaire in your own time. Once the questionnaire has been successfully completed and assessed, you will be awarded an accreditation certificate

For full details of courses in your area, go to www.visitscotland.org

Other Training Courses

For details of other training courses which may be relevant to your business, go to www.visitscotland.org/events-and-training

Monitoring Your Business

It is extremely important when developing any business idea or product, that you have a good knowledge of the likely market, and the expectations of consumers who will be buying your product or services.

VisitScotland has created a section on www.visitscotland.org to help small and medium size businesses carry out small scale research studies.

Follow this link:

http://www.scotexchange.net/business_development/customer_satisfaction_survey.htm

As well as giving advice on how to create a survey and collect customer feedback, the site also gives some best practice examples and contacts for more help. It also provides templates for both accommodation and visitor attractions in the form of user guides, customer feedback survey templates and an Excel analysis tool.

The user guides are particularly helpful and provide some invaluable tips to conducting the right kind of survey and asking the right questions. The guide also acts as a trouble-shooting aid to help businesses use the questionnaire templates, and get the results using the analysis tool.

More detailed advice on market research can be found at www.mrs.org.uk or www.bmra.org.uk

VisitScotland Challenge Fund

The VisitScotland Challenge Fund is designed to assist collaborative group marketing projects that attract more visitors to Scotland and make it easier for them to book their visit. The Fund enables groups of tourism businesses to extend current marketing activity or test a new market or activity, which could bring additional visitors, but is not designed to be long term or core funding for major initiatives. Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate what is new or different from previous activity.

In this, the second year of the Challenge Fund there is an annual budget of £1,000,000 to support group marketing activity. This Fund is distributed between two competitive application rounds. Applicants can apply for between £2,500 and £50,000 as appropriate.

The VisitScotland Challenge Fund is designed to complement the VisitScotland national marketing strategy by supporting groups of businesses to promote unique and quality visitor experiences to identified consumer groups. The VisitScotland Challenge Fund covers the whole area of Scotland and is open to all sectors of tourism businesses.

The objectives of the VisitScotland Challenge Fund are to support well researched, collaborative marketing activities from groups of businesses operating at national or local level that will:

- Develop and underpin the Scotland brand in key markets
- Increase the number of visitors to Scotland and the overall spend
- Encourage visitors to travel throughout the whole year.

Further information on application criteria and eligibility, along with a downloadable application form, is available at www.visitscotland.org/challenge_fund

For more information on tourism innovation - doing things differently, exploring new avenues, working more effectively with others and taking risks – go to

http://www.scotexchange.net/businessdevelopment/innovation_2004-2.htm

Keeping up-to-date

Contact Fiona Murray or log on to www.visitscotland.org/businessdevelopment_newideas/foresttourism;

Tel. 0131 314 6140 or email: fiona.murray@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Key Forest Tourism Contacts

Project Manager

Businesses seeking advice on forest tourism product development issues are encouraged to contact the Project Manager:

Fiona Murray
Forest Tourism Initiative Manager
Forestry Commission Scotland
Silvan House
231 Corstorphine Road
Edinburgh EH12 7AT
Tel: 0131 314 6140
Fiona.murray@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Steering Group

Members of the Steering Group will be pleased to receive any general feedback on the Forest Tourism Initiative:

Katrina Morrison (Scottish Enterprise) Tel. 0141 228 2126,
E: Katrina.Morrison@scotent.co.uk

Alan Stevenson (Forestry Commission Scotland) Tel: 01463
E: alan.stevenson@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Emma Campbell (VisitScotland) Tel: 0131 472 23
E: emma.campbell@visitscotland.com

Roger Edwards (Highlands & Islands Enterprise)
E: roger.edwards@hient.co.uk

Appendix 2

LEC Tourism Contacts (Highlands & Islands Enterprise)

<http://www.hie.co.uk/hie-contacts.html>