



# ***Taking Tourism Forward...***

# Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Team....

## The story so far

Across Ayrshire & Arran, virtually everyone gets something from tourism and everyone has a role to play in making the region more successful. This mini guide captures some of our activities and summarises our achievements against the plan set in place by the Tourism Leadership Group in 2012.

Working across the three council areas, we have brought the industry closer together, to improve communication and to share skills and resources. Within a short time, the Team established the Ayrshire Smiles training programme, coordinated the installation of new signposting at attractions; created numerous travel itineraries and arranged trips for group and coach travel markets. We have also hosted journalists and presented the area at key national exhibitions.

In addition, an online one-stop shop for business communication was created, a new volunteer coordinator programme established, a new golf company was formed and a new watersports website launched. A new photo-bank and text bank have also been designed, cycle routes identified, Community Learning Journeys and a new Tourism Toolkit have been put in place. All of these resources are in place to ensure that Ayrshire & Arran makes the most of the opportunities available.

With a joined up approach to tourism development I believe that Ayrshire & Arran has potential to grow market share, capture new markets and extend the season. This year I have been particularly pleased at the way our partners both locally and nationally have captured the spirit of collaborative working and the way that the Team have continued to push for change.

But I want us to do even better.

With visitor expectations changing fast, I want us to be creative; embrace digital technology and make sure that we can stand out from the crowd. Going forward, the Team will play its role in shaping new ideas, new partnerships and developing a new kind of relationship with our visitors via Facebook.

The challenges are significant but with support from the three local authorities, partner organisations and local businesses I am confident that Ayrshire & Arran can be a significant player in Scottish Tourism.



**Ros Halley**  
Tourism Manager, Ayrshire & Arran

## Partnership and Communication

One of the first things that the Team set about doing back in 2013 was the setting up of a communications platform for the tourism industry. The business portal, includes a news feed, resources section and business directory. Registration has continued to increase and now the site is used by 450 businesses.

Partnerships have been created with Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, Visit Arran, Forestry Commission, Ayrshire Bed & Breakfast Association, Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce, Glasgow Prestwick Airport, P&O, SNH, The List, Ayrshire College, VisitScotland, Taste Ayrshire, Royal Yachting Association, Scottish Land & Estates and Trinity Group to name a few.

Key resources have been created for use by local businesses including 10 online itineraries, a series of printed leaflets, branded promotional stands and a new bespoke regional food and drink guide. All of these resources, alongside access to a professional Photo Bank and Text Bank mean that local businesses can improve their own online performance at the click of a button.

[www.ayrshire-arran.org](http://www.ayrshire-arran.org)

## Watersports

Coastal watersports provide opportunities to grow tourism and are economically beneficial to mainland Ayrshire, and the islands of Arran and Cumbrae.

A new website was created by the Team as a one-stop source of detailed information about 12 different watersport activities including yachting, dinghy sailing, kite surfing and sea kayaking. The website provides information about over 60 key coastal access points, beaches, slipways, marinas and moorings. Tide times, weather forecasts, nautical charts, nautical mile plotting, and interactive mapping are available on the website.

This level of watersports mapping is the first of its kind for a Scottish region and was made possible as a result of the joined up approach of the Team, working with the Firth of Clyde Forum and Royal Yachting Association Scotland.

[www.watersportscoast.com](http://www.watersportscoast.com)





## Ayrshire Smiles

The Ayrshire Smiles training initiative was developed by the Team with a wide variety of industry partners. The initiative supports the aims and ambitions of the Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Strategy 2012-2017 and recognises the importance that the people of Ayrshire and the service they deliver makes to the overall visitor experience.

Ayrshire Smiles online course mixes customer service training with destination knowledge and is designed to inspire people involved in tourism and hospitality to share their passion for the area and give a genuine warm welcome to visitors. So far, 125 people have completed the training and many more are registered to take part.

This online training is currently available free of charge.

[www.ayrshire-smiles.com](http://www.ayrshire-smiles.com)

## Golf

Since 2012, the Team has led on the establishment of a new industry-led regional golf group for Ayrshire & Arran. 65 business members, including all the Championship courses are now part of the new partnership, which has already made Ayrshire Golf Scotland one of largest golf development groups in Scotland. With a full time manager in place, the group has already set up a new vibrant website which will be used to drive enquiries, stemming from collaborative marketing, press trips and attending national and international exhibitions.

Over the next 12 months Ayrshire Golf Scotland will attend, Scottish Golf Show, VisitScotland Expo, The British Open, Ricoh Women's Open and International Golf Travel Market to represent the golfing industry.

[www.ayrshiregolfscotland.com](http://www.ayrshiregolfscotland.com)

## Culture & Heritage

An early initiative of the Team involved encouraging visitor attractions to 'sell on' each other to encourage longer stays and repeat visits. In total 25 visitor attractions are participating in the signposting initiative. In 2014, this project was presented to Scottish Ministers as an exemplar tourism case study.

Successful familiarisation trips to the region for over 40 group travel organisers and 50 coach tour operators have also been organised over the past two years.

Now the Team is facilitating and assisting with the formation of a new Culture & Heritage Attractions Group, who will work together on marketing initiatives to promote attractions and to increase sustainability.

[www.ayrshire-arran.org/our-work/culture-heritage](http://www.ayrshire-arran.org/our-work/culture-heritage)

## Cycling

The Team are working in partnership with VisitScotland to roll out the expansion of the Cyclists Welcome Scheme across the region. The scheme has been expanded to cover non-accommodation businesses e.g. visitor attractions, cafes, restaurants, cycle hire and repair shops. The aim is - to promote the region as a welcoming cyclist destination catering for all requirements.

The Team has also been working with cycling journalists to secure coverage in various cycling magazines including an excellent article on the Ayrshire Alps published in the Cyclist Magazine (March 2015) which showcases the fantastic scenery, cycling opportunities and the local area. The Team is developing new partnerships with other publications and plans to host more journalists from key publications in the future.

The Team is also in early discussions with Cycle Tour Operators with an aim to feature Ayrshire and Arran in cycling holiday brochures for 2016.

[www.ayrshire-arran.org/our-work/cycling-tourism](http://www.ayrshire-arran.org/our-work/cycling-tourism)





## Community Engagement

Since the Team has been in place five learning journeys have taken place and three more are being organised. These journeys have involved 18 communities visiting best practice tourism projects throughout Scotland and the North of England.

Participating community groups were able to see different tourism projects, learn what has worked and identify what actions could be implemented in their own community to enhance the tourism offering.

A Tourism Toolkit publication was also developed. It is a practical resource to assist and support community groups looking to take forward tourism projects. The toolkit covers topics such as organising tourism events, developing heritage trails, potential sources of funding and developing a local marketing and PR campaign.

In conjunction with the Ayrshire LEADER Programme, a Meet the Funder event was also organised to ensure that representatives of 123 groups such as village hall management committees, craft groups, heritage groups and all types of not-for-profit organisations were able to speak face to face with funders and find out how their projects can be supported.

[www.ayrshire-arran.org/our-work/community-engagement](http://www.ayrshire-arran.org/our-work/community-engagement)

## Marketing

Although VisitScotland have key responsibility for marketing the region, the Team has successfully showcased and promoted the region at several major events; including arranging the region's stand at the annual VisitScotland Expo, which attracts over 800 national and international buyers and at the Ricoh Women's British Open, which is attended by 20,000-40,000 visitors each year.

The Team has also taken on responsibility for the creation and management of the Ayrshire & Arran stand at The British Open 2015 in St. Andrews (in partnership with Ayrshire Golf Scotland, Fife Council and VisitScotland) and will play a key part at The British Open 2016 in Troon. In the future the Team will explore ways to create easy to access mobile information points with partners such as Glasgow Prestwick Airport, Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, Stagecoach and P&O Ferries.



## Volunteers

In 2014, the Team set up a brand new tourism volunteer programme. This involves enthusiastic, passionate and knowledgeable local people volunteering locally in order to promote the region to visitors. The local volunteers offer a warm and friendly welcome and provide useful information which will enhance visitors stays in the area, including providing directions, where to stay, where to eat and what to see and do. Full training is provided as well as branded tourism kit. Volunteers have already been present at a variety of key events and locations in Ayrshire and a full programme of locations for volunteers will be coordinated in 2015 and beyond.

[www.ayrshire-arran.org/our-work/volunteers](http://www.ayrshire-arran.org/our-work/volunteers)

This is an insight into what has been achieved by The Ayrshire & Arran Tourism Team. The Team looks forward to working with the industry in the future.

Ayrshire & Arran Tourism is funded by:

