

# CASE STUDY

## VISITARRAN - BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE

Funding Amount: £4,304.82

Community Led local Development - Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition (ARIA) Main Fund Grant (2022/23)

### BACKGROUND

VisitArran is Arran's main business association. In terms of Destination Management Organisations, VisitArran is quite unique in that our partners cover all aspects of Arran business, not just primary tourism in terms of hospitality and food & drink, but also retail, activity, farming, and services such as haulage, garages, estate agents etc. It also encompasses community groups and local charities such as COAST, Arran Heritage Museum etc, reflecting that on Arran, tourism is everyone's business.

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

We had identified through a survey that many businesses would like to be more 'green' but are unsure where to start. There was a gap in respect of where to go for support and guidance and so the idea of a dedicated Business Sustainability & Resilience Advisor (BSRA) role came about.

The role aimed to offer signposting directly to businesses that would save them money and reduce their carbon footprints in ways which would support their specific business model. It also aimed to build resilience in the form of potential buying groups with like-minded businesses (e.g. card merchants), at a time of year when many were worrying about ongoing operational costs.

### HOW DID YOU FIND THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

Initially the application process seemed very complex but once we were able to get our heads around it, it was fairly straight forward and simple to complete. The support we received from ARIA was very helpful and any queries we had were answered in detail.



### AT A GLANCE

#### CHALLENGES

- Timescale for final delivery
- Separation of duties

#### BENEFITS

- Short supply chains
- Benefits to wider local economy
- Environmental improvement



### KATIE MURCHIE

VisitArran

"We have seen collaboration amongst businesses improve. More local businesses are using Arran suppliers"

## WHAT DID THE PROJECT SET OUT TO ACHIEVE?

The BSRA highlighted to Arran businesses how they could work together and collaborate to save money whilst encouraging resilience, business growth and development.

The role made an effort to ensure that both rural and isolated businesses were using digital as much as possible through their website, social media and digital marketing.

Adding on to the digital aspect, the BSRA also diverted businesses to funding on digital and green initiatives to encourage these practices even more. The role supported businesses through green initiatives by collating a list of suppliers and contacts of businesses who offer installation of green products such as solar panels and electric charging points. This made it simpler for them to take another step in becoming green.

The BSRA highlighted to businesses how they could make an impact with small changes and also recognise those who are already doing a great deal with limited resources.

Where possible they supported local businesses to use local suppliers, strengthening the Arran offering and offer an inter-dependency between agencies. To help achieve this, the BSRA hosted a suppliers' event.

This event had the sole purpose of connecting Arran based local businesses, allowing them to build relationships with each other and to explore trading opportunities.

The event involved roughly 20 supplier businesses with a further 40 separate businesses attending alongside the local primary school, and local councillor

The BSRA embraced the 'Island in Balance' ethos, which is supported by VisitArran's aims of Community: Environment: Economy. Value over volume.

Regenerative tourism such as the Arran Trust, or voluntourism opportunities (such as tree planting/peatbog restoration) were encouraged

## WHO WILL THE PROJECT BENEFIT AND HOW?

The main beneficiaries from this project were local producers, suppliers and businesses on the Isle of Arran.

Another benefit of the project was that it allowed the BSRA build strong relationships with businesses, develop an understanding of the issues and test out solutions.

This created an initial talking point and connection, which allowed the offer of a wider support system.

## WHAT STAGE IS THE PROJECT AT NOW?

The project created a starting point, which VisitArran have built on, tailoring support to fast changing business needs.

Overall, the project kick started a new era for VisitArran in deepening our support for local businesses.

## WHAT BENEFITS HAVE YOU SEEN AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT?

The overall benefit of this project is that we have seen improved collaboration among Arran businesses.

The baseline conversation at the suppliers' event has resulted in businesses realising the abundance of what can be sourced locally, with more businesses now using local suppliers in their hotels, restaurants, bars, etc.



## FINALLY, WHAT ADVICE COULD YOU OFFER FOR ANYONE LOOKING TO TAKE ON A SIMILAR PROJECT?

My advice for anyone looking at taking on a similar project would be to make sure your project ticks all the criteria and be prepared to be flexible with your goals.

## WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED DURING THIS PROJECT AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THEM?

The main challenge encountered during the project was the overall timescale of it!

Time was a very limiting factor and required the funding to be spent within a relatively short window.

Although the suppliers' event was a success, the event could have had a larger impact and involved a wider range of businesses had it been advertised at least a month before the actual date in order to increase the attendance.

However, with these challenges the BSRA was still able to assist around 70 businesses.

## ON REFLECTION, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

As the appointed BSRA I was still engaged in my day-to-day work with VisitArran.

Sometimes the roles overlapped, and although I developed a plan I still had to prioritise certain tasks on certain days.

I would have created a stricter plan for myself during the week and included weekly goals rather than the goals from the project as a whole.

'Community Led Local Development' or 'CLLD' gives local communities the power to tackle their own, local challenges.

By building knowledge and skills, supporting new ideas and encouraging cooperation, CLLD helps to create viable and resilient communities.

CLLD activity can support Community Wealth Building initiatives and opportunities to help enable Just Transition priorities.

£8.6 million was allocated to Local Action Groups (LAG) to support CLLD within their areas through the Rural Community Led Fund (RCLF) in 2022-23.

Ayrshire LAG used their funding to establish the Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition (ARIA) Fund

You can find further information about current funding availability at the Scottish Rural Network Website including a free online [funding search tool](#) for your charity, community group or social enterprise.

From small grants to funding for big capital projects, we can help you track down the funding you need to make a difference in your community. The Scottish Rural Network is a one-stop-shop for news and information about rural development.

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