

UNITED KINGDOM

RURAL TOURISM

Location
Scotland

Programming period
n/a

Funding (EUR)
n/a

Duration
2014 – 2014

Implemented by
National tourism agency and
by Scotland Food & Drink

Contact
clients@highlandchocolatier.com

Website
<https://food.list.co.uk/guide/s/chocolate-larder/>

Producers in Scotland saw the opportunity to link together their activities to encourage greater visitor numbers to rural destinations by creating a network of artisan chocolatiers.

The challenge

A small group of chocolate makers across Scotland saw the opportunity to raise their profile and activities by working together more effectively. They decided that by collaborating, they could work at developing greater visitor numbers to their often very rural premises.



Scotland is not necessarily well known for chocolate, but over the past few years a number of small scale producers have been able to use Scottish ingredients and to source fairly traded, good quality cocoa beans to create a Scottish final product, including ingredients such as Scottish cream, butter, foraged berries, herbs, whisky and other liquors (including Scottish-made gin) all go into the final product.

Main steps and features

The original objective was to bring together a group of approximately 20 artisan chocolatiers across Scotland to create a trail, and the producers spoke with the Think Local project to consider how to approach the project. They then sought to widen the scope, to look to develop a trail which would incorporate all Scottish businesses, together with 'The Larder' a publication which had been identifying regional food trails in Scotland.

Broader objectives were to grow visitor spend in regions and directly with Scottish producers during the tourism themed years in Scotland of Homecoming 2014 and the Year of Food and Drink 2015 and provide authentic visitor experiences Scotland wide, improving the customer journey through top quality food and drink.

The project sought to join together as many of the artisan chocolate makers who had become established in Scotland, with experience in making chocolate to improve visitor numbers through demonstrations, matching with wine and whisky, chocolate tours and classes for children. The project was devised by Julie Collier of Iain Burnett, the Highland Chocolatier, a business located in Grandtully, a rural part of Perthshire looking to demonstrate high quality artisan production to a wider audience.

The method employed was to look to produce a Scottish Chocolate Trail marketed through a food map and an online resource, with research, design and production and then a media launch prior to Easter 2014. As many links with possible with tourism providers were sought, with the Scottish Tourism organisation Visit Scotland agreeing to host the trail on their own website and promote the trail in their own publications.

With support from project partners 'The Larder' and guidance from the Think Local project, the project expanded in scale, and further producers were identified prior to a launch event.

Results

From an original base of around 20 producers, over 65 businesses and 75 outlets were identified in both rural and urban areas across the mainland and islands of Scotland. The launch of the trail produced a leaflet highlighting the details and the profiles of all the businesses, with a map indicating their location.

There were two events to promote the creation of the trail – one for media and a further event for consumers. The network created a logo to be used at participating premises, and have built on their success with further joint activities.

The project received funding from the Scottish Government's Community Food Fund, a fund specifically set up to benefit groups of SME producers looking to enhance food tourism, events and local and community food development.

Challenges and lessons

- ❑ The creation of the Chocolate Trail followed on from other more traditional and long standing food trails in Scotland, such as the whisky trail and seafood trails, but captured the imagination of both consumers and the media as an alternative for visitors based both in Scotland and from abroad with different tastes.
- ❑ Following the success of the Chocolate Trail, further less conventional trails have followed, including a cheese trail, real ale trail, berry trail and ice cream trail. These have been included on the overall promotion of food tourism to visitors to Scotland by the national tourism agency and by Scotland Food & Drink, the umbrella organisation for food and drink in Scotland. The food and drink tourism industry in Scotland is worth an estimated £2.5 million per day to the economy
- ❑ "Scotland's Chocolate Trail is an ingenious and delicious project which involves local producers in every region of our country. It is a great example of the creativity and progress of our food and drink businesses and is sure to be a draw for tourists from across Scotland and the world" Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Scottish Government
- ❑ "The Chocolate Trail is a very exciting project and not something you would normally associate Scotland with. The chocolatiers are very pleased to be helping drive visitors to our shores, and to introduce their products to a bigger audience", says Julie Collier, Commercial Director of Iain Burnett The Highland Chocolatier.

Additional information

www.visitscotland.com/see-do/itineraries/food-drink/chocolate-trail

www.visitscotland.com/about/food-drink/food-trails