

Scottish Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme

Meeting Three Report – WEST CENTRAL

‘Making Money from Farm Tours’

Bellfield Brewery, Edinburgh – Thursday 5th
September 2019





The third West Central meeting of the three-year Scottish Enterprise Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme took place on Thursday 5th September 2019.

The all-day meeting focused on the theme 'making money from farm tours' and was held at [Bellfield Brewery](#), Edinburgh, the venue giving access to several high-quality speakers based within the city.

49 individuals from farming/agritourism enterprises attended the event from all over Scotland with people travelling from as far north as Morayshire and as far south as Dumfries. Speakers included;

- Keith Paterson, Trade Marketing Manager from [Visit Scotland](#)
- Alan Chalmers, founder of [Eat Walk Edinburgh](#)
- Thayanne Scardini from [Abbey Tours](#)
- Louise Nicol from award winning [Newton Farm Tours](#), Angus
- Sara Robertson, founder of [Scotbeer Tours](#), Edinburgh

The event also included an update from West Central Monitor farmers, the Lennox family and their progress with developing farm tours on [Shantron and Shemore farms](#), alongside their self-catering businesses.

MAKING MONEY FROM FARM TOURS

Carrying out farm tours provides a unique opportunity for the general public and tourists to discover more about the huge diversity of the farming industry in Scotland. It reaches out to people who would not normally have the opportunity of visiting a farm and provides the public with new insights into the agricultural sector and what it delivers beyond food production, as well as its relevance to their everyday lives.

GUEST SPEAKERS SUMMARY

Visit Scotland – Keith Paterson, Trade Marketing Manager

[Click here](#) to access the full video of Keith's talk.

Keith Paterson provided an overview of the tour sector in Scotland, what international, UK and local visitors are looking for in a quality tour experience, particularly related to farming, rural Scotland and the food and drink industry.

Overview

- 21% of domestic trips in Scotland are to rural areas – this equates to £633 million of visitor spend
- 52% of international visitors are interested in rural/coastal areas
- There is a big opportunity to develop new products/services for visitors looking for a holiday within rural Scotland

Markets

America

- US is the largest market for international visitors (in terms of value, volume and number of trips)
- They visit on average around 5.9 regions
- Motivation to visit -> history, culture, landscapes
- High end market -> they have disposable cash to spend

Canada

- Fourth largest market
- They look for value, so cost is more critical, but willing to spend for good quality activities
- Younger market



- Motivation to visit -> scenery, history, historic landmarks

Germany

- Top European market
- Love immersion into local communities and being involved in Scottish culture
- Motivation to visit -> food, drink, landscape, authenticity

France

- Similar to Germany
- French school visits asking for more Farm Tours in Scotland
- French visitors – farm stays becoming very popular

Netherlands

- Highest proportion of repeat visitors
- Motivation to visit -> walking, food & drink, landscape, culture

Travel Trade

Over 55% of international travellers to Scotland rely on travel trade for booking their experience

Who is Travel Trade?

- Destination Management Companies (e.g. Abbey Tours). Worldwide access to international travel markets and arrange tours via their contacts
- Online Travel Markets
- Travel Agents
- Niche Tour Operators

All travel trade options work on specific timelines (e.g. some may plan/book a year in advance)

Its not a quick win but long term.

Why Scotland?

- Screen tourism. Films/documentaries such as Outlander, Fast and Furious drawing tourists in to visit the 'scenes'
- Scenery and landscapes
- Touring
- Slow travel
- Well-being tourism. A big market opportunity for this in Scotland
 - o Wild camping
 - o Scotland is one of the quietest areas to visit

Abbey Tours - Thayanne Scardini

[Click here](#) to access the full video from Thayanne's talk.

Abbey tours deal with over 200,000 visitors to the UK each year. The core business is selling destinations to Ireland and the UK to worldwide travel trade and have business form over 52 countries including Germany, America, Canada, Australia, France and Italy.

What makes a good international farm tour?

- Fruit farms – apple (cider making), soft fruit (pick your own berries)
- Beef/Dairy (Highland/native cattle to Scotland/UK)
- Sheep (sheepdog trials, hill gathers)
- Organic

Inclusions Options



- Tour only
- Tour/tasting experience (tour round a beef herd with a tasting experience of steak/burgers afterwards)
- Interactive experience (getting hands on/seeing demonstrations of machinery working, cattle showing etc.)

Costs, Times & Location

- Tour costs vary depending on the type of tour, but a basic tour will cost around £10-15 per person.
- Duration of tours should be around 1 ½ - 2 hours.
- Anywhere in Scotland as long as the farm is close to a main travel route and the farm track is accessible for a large coach

'Little Touches' for the tour

- Warm welcome – farmer and the team behind the farm
- Engaging tour with demos etc.
- Tasting experience? Doesn't have to be big! Nip of whisky, sample of Scottish yogurt etc.
- Meet the locals. Invite the local vet, feed company along to do a brief intro
- Compare UK agriculture to their country. Ask them questions.
- Q&A session

What Abbey Tour requires from the Farmer

- Credit facilities. Invoice monthly and they pay within 30 days of receiving the invoice
 - o Booking arrangements are done between Abbey Tours and the farmer via email
 - o A voucher will be sent for each tour. Farmer to keep all vouchers and then invoice the total amount of vouchers monthly (so 1 voucher per visit)
 - o Discounted rates. They will expect the farm to give a rate slightly lower than public rates (varying on the type of tour)
 - o Quick turnaround on bookings

Newton Farm Tours – Louise Nicol, founder.

[Click here](#) to access the full video from Louise's talk.

Louise Nicol along with her husband Graeme run a tour business on their farm near Angus, which recently won a Scottish Thistle Award for "Best Outdoor Experience."

Getting Started

It doesn't need to cost much!

- Re-homed some animals such as alpacas, goats and a micro pig
- No staff – just Louise that carries out the tours
- Get a plan together. Don't rush into it.
 - o Get in touch with the right people and don't be afraid to ask questions
 - o Environmental Health/Health & Safety, NFUS/insurance companies to make sure all health, safety and hygiene implications are in place before opening your gates
- Social media...KEY!! Use it as a free advertising tool.

Expectations

Louise thought most of her visitors would be tourists, but she was wrong. Over 90% of the visitors to the farm are from the local area with many returning numerous times throughout the year. The tours were launched in 2017 and have continued to grow ever since.

- Out of school clubs
- School visits
- Family visits



- Older generation

Spring through to June is the busiest period for Louise and Graeme. They allow some downtime during the summer months but still carry out tours.

In the first year of launching the tours they family had over 2,000 locals visit the farm in six months. Louise predicts that she makes around £20,000 per annum and now gets over 3,000 visitors annually.

Tours

- 20-25 people max. Louise find this is the max number to ensure the experience feels personal to the visitors
- Farmer/Farm worker tours. Visitors want to see the real thing. So, make sure someone that works on the farm and knows the ins and outs are willing to do the tours
- Start basic and build on it. Tell the farms story;
 - o Fun history (how many generations, does Grandad, Dad and Son have the same names?)
 - o Animals.... back to basics with the mummy sheep, daddy sheep etc. REMEMBER the public may not know what a bull, tup etc. are!
- Make it personal. If you have any people with disabilities offer them a one to one visit.... make they feel you are going that extra mile.
 - o Cater for any age etc.
- Keep it real. Visitors want to see the good, bad and ugly
 - o Be honest, but professional
- PRE BOOK – keep control of your workload and make sure you have a booking system.
 - o Always get the money up front (don't allow to pay on the day)
 - o This covers you if the visitors don't turn up
 - o Be realistic. If someone phones to cancel because a child is ill, offer them a new date

Eat Walk Edinburgh & Scotbeer Tours

Alan Chalmers from Eat Walk Edinburgh and Sara Robertson from Scotbeer Tours also spoke to attendees at the meeting about their experiences of starting up their businesses, which target the tourism and domestic markets in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

For the full video of Alan Chalmers talk, [click here](#).

For the full video of Sara Robertson's talk, [click here](#).



LENNOX FAMILY UPDATE

Bobby and Kay gave a brief update to the attendees about their progress with developing paid farm tours at Shantron and Shemore.



To access the full video of Bobby & Kay's update, [click here](#).

- The Lennox family have been doing farm tours since 1935 (Bobby started helping his father with tours when he returned from college);
- Regularly carry out school tours for RHET
- SAC tours for farmers/scientists
- Food bloggers

All the above used to be free of charge with the Lennox family starting to develop their business and look at ways of making an income from farm tours earlier this year (2019).

- They have carried out three farm tours so far through Abbey Tours
- Introduced 'Lambing on Loch Lomond' which was very popular
 - o Weekend slots (1 ½ hours) for £10-15 pp
 - o Half day slots
 - o Full day slots (£95 pp from 10am-4pm). These did not go as well as initially thought, however the family think that full day experiences will be more popular in 2020 with visitors wanting to stay longer after visiting for a smaller duration during 2019 lambing
 - o Created after school club for children during lambing season

TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FARM TOURS

During the event attendees were asked to split into groups and summarise the feedback from the meeting, highlighting the main top tips for getting started in farm tours;

- ✓ First impressions – breaking the ice when visitors arrive, good engagement, read your audience and know who you're dealing with;
- ✓ Make visitors feel they are getting something special. Go that extra mile, let them see behind the scenes, meet the farmer etc.;
- ✓ Break the tour up into different elements. Welcome talk, walk/tour of the farm, fun activity to finish, offer refreshments;
- ✓ You don't want customers, you want fans – visitors who will go and 'sing your praises' to their friends/family;
- ✓ You are the tour guide – make them feel welcome, be flexible, passionate, fun and have a sense of humour;
- ✓ Facilities – make sure you have options for if the weather is not suitable to go outside, handwashing area, toilets, disabled access (or adjust your tour depends on the needs of the visitors)
- ✓ Education – make it fun and simple. Remember you might know what a bull or tup is, but the general public probably won't;
- ✓ Reality – a working farm will always have the good, bad and ugly. Be honest and share these areas. People will connect better with you if you are honest and show the real passion and hard work;
- ✓ Keep it interesting
- ✓ Health & Safety!! Do your homework and have all health, safety and hygiene protocols in place;
- ✓ Make them feel like the farmer. Have wellies/boiler suits for children to wear for example, so they can dress and feel like the farmer;
- ✓ Stick to your timetable. Remember people will have places to go after your tour and you may have more visitors arriving;
- ✓ Be prepared for people arriving early. Have a safe area where they can wait.

BUSINESS FEEDBACK

What are the main issues/challenges/barriers you have around offering tours (if any)

- Getting bookings;

- Extremists;
- Poor location;
- Weather;
- Fitting around family/farm jobs;
- Advertising;
- Facilities (handwashing and toilets);
- Putting structure into place for tours;
- Time;
- Charging money and price to charge;
- Staffing;
- Out with comfort zone;
- Seasonality;
- Making tours interesting;
- Arable farm;
- Health & safety;
- Contacting coach companies.

What is the main thing you have learned?

- Immersion of experience;
- Keep it simple;
- Work with Visit Scotland Relationship Manager;
- Give it a go;
- Booking system;
- What the tour industry is looking for;
- Target market;
- Contact Visit Scotland;
- Contact booking companies;
- Commission prices;
- Lots of resources to help;
- Possibility to work with local businesses;
- How to introduce tours;
- Different approaches for farm tours;
- Overcoming issues, they believed would put public off;
- Story of the farm is important
- Time lag between contacting tour company and getting visitors
- Start small and let it grow
- No need to spend a lot of money to set up tours

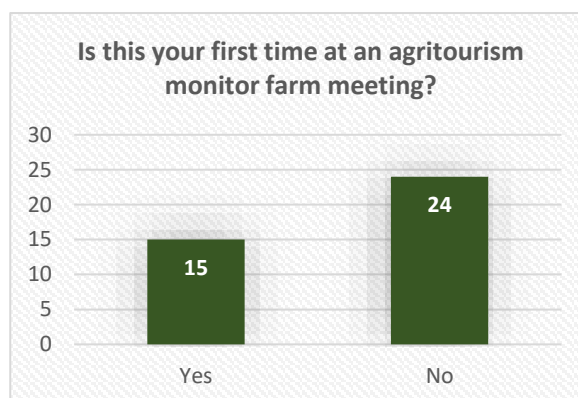
What three things will you change/do as a result of what you have learned?

- Contact booking agents;
- Contact tour companies;
- Increase type of tours;
- Split large tours into two groups;
- Commission on bookings;
- Overseas marketing;
- Consider price;
- Focus on who is our customer;
- Keep it fun;
- Contact Visit Scotland
- Speak with Scotland Food and Drink;
- Look at digital marketing;
- What is our product;
- Contact Abbey Tours;
- Get travel trade sorted;
- Buy more animals;
- Trailer rides;
- Introduce lambing experiences;
- Produce story of the farm;
- Attitude;
- Visit those already doing tours;
- Research;
- Go for it;

- Come to next meeting;
- Find other businesses you can work with;
- Highlight positive offers;
- Trial a tour on friends;
- Speak to local council;
- Make a plan;
- Consider adding tour on to accommodation guests;
- Consider what is already there;
- Educational/business/leisure purpose.

What did you enjoy about the meeting?

- Excellent speakers;
- Good atmosphere;
- Learning what tour companies are wanting;
- Networking/meeting Rural Leaders;
- Openness of everyone;
- Hearing how others are making farm tours a success;
- Variation of speakers;
- Mixed group;
- Venue;
- Ideas on how to expand;
- Practical advice from people with experience;
- Visit Scotland links and information;
- In a brewer.



WEST MEETING THREE ATTENDEES

There were 49 attendees at the main meeting from 10pm to 4pm, including speakers, industry leaders/organisations.

No.	First Name	Surname	Ticket Type	Company	Website
1	Kay	Wilson	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	Shemore/Shantron Self-Catering	http://www.shemoreonlochlomond.com
2	Bobby	Lennox	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	Shemore/Shantron Self-Catering	http://www.shemoreonlochlomond.com
3	Anne	Lennox	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	Shemore/Shantron Self-Catering	http://www.shemoreonlochlomond.com
4	Stuart	McNicol	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	DRIFT./Castleton Events	
5	Jo	McNicol	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	DRIFT./Castleton Events	
6	Robin	Austin	Agritourism business	Barstobrick and Fellend Farm	https://www.barstobrick.co.uk/
7	Alisa	Currie	Agritourism business	D & A Currie	
8	Alison	Younger	Agritourism business	F & A Younger	https://www.thebusstop.scot/



9	Robert	Wilson	Agritourism business	JRB Wilson & Sons	http://www.fluffymoos.com/
10	Lucy	Wilson	Agritourism business	JRB Wilson & Sons	http://www.fluffymoos.com/
11	Chris	Scott-Park	Agritourism business	Portnellan Farm LLP	http://portnellanfarm.co.uk/
12	Maggie	Dalglish	Agritourism business	Balgownie Mains	
13	Andrew	Gauldie	Agritourism business	Free-lance	
14	Barnaby	Dunn	Agritourism business	roradairy	https://www.roradairy.co.uk/
15	Helen	Smith	Agritourism business	Byres Farm	https://byresfarm.co.uk
16	Cameron	Aitchison	Agritourism business	Craigies Farm Shpe	https://craigies.co.uk/
17	Carole	Short	Agritourism business	Down on the Farm	http://downonthefarm.net/about-us/
18	Claire	Rennie	Agritourism business	Summerhouse Drinks	https://summerhousedrinks.com/
19	Eric	Linklater	Agritourism business	G Gibsons & sons	
20	Graeme	Jarron	Agritourism business	Ogilvy Spirits	https://ogilvyspirits.com/
21	Jean	Wilson	Agritourism business	Lime Tree Larder	http://www.limetreelarder.co.uk/
22	Katie	Roberts	Agritourism business	Craigduckie Shepherds Huts	https://www.craigduckie.co.uk/
23	Louise	Urquhart	Agritourism business	Louise's Farm Kitchen	https://www.louisesfarmkitchen.com/
24	Malcolm	Smith	Agritourism business	I G Smith & Partners	
25	Niall	Bowser	Agritourism business	Argaty Red Kites	http://www.argatyredkites.co.uk/index
26	Samantha	Smith	Agritourism business	I G Smith & Partners	
27	Sharon	McGill	Agritourism business	Craigies Farm Shop	https://craigies.co.uk/
28	Tom	Bowser	Agritourism business	N M Bowser	http://www.argatyredkites.co.uk/index
29	Trudi	Cueto	Agritourism business	G Gibson & Son	
30	Jasmine	Jackson	Farmer looking to diversify	Kersheugh	
31	Ellen	Scambler	Farmer looking to diversify	Fenwick G Jackson	
32	Sally	Williams	Farmer looking to diversify	R & A Wilson Ltd	
33	Ruth	Wilson	Farmer looking to diversify	R & A Wilson Ltd	
34	Jonathan	Sloan	Farmer looking to diversify	JA Sloan Ltd	
35	Andrew	Cairns	Farmer looking to diversify	Errington Cheese Ltd	http://www.erringtoncheese.co.uk/
36	Selina	Cairns	Farmer looking to diversify	Errington Cheese Ltd	http://www.erringtoncheese.co.uk/
37	Shona	Duncan	Farmer looking to diversify	HJ & IM Duncan	http://corstanewoodchip.com
38	Kelvin	Pate	Farmer looking to diversify	Aikeyside Farm	
39	Nicola	Smith	Farmer looking to diversify	J & F Smith	
40	Ciara	O'Hallohan	Young Farmers, Rural Youth, Student	Nuffield Scholar	
41	Sharon	Flanigan	Industry Leader/Organisation	James Hutton Institute	https://www.hutton.ac.uk
42	Fiona	Richmond	Industry Leader/Organisation	Scotland Food & Drink	
43	Jackie	Green	Industry Leader/Organisation	Scottish Enterprise	
44	Joan	MacDonald	Industry Leader/Organisation	Scottish Enterprise	
45	Keith	Paterson	Speaker/Industry Leader/Organisation	Visit Scotland	
46	Alan	Chalmers	Speaker	Eat Walk Edinburgh	
47	Louise	Nicol	Speaker/Agritourism business	Newton Farm Tours	https://newtonfarmholidays.co.uk/
48	Sara	Robertson	Speaker	Scotbeer	
49	Thayanne	Scardini	Speaker	Abbey Tours	