

Scottish Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme

Meeting Six Report – WEST CENTRAL

EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING

Kilmarnock Millennium Hall –
Tuesday 10th March 2020





The sixth West Central Agritourism Monitor Farm meeting took place on Tuesday 10th March 2020 at Kilmarnock Millennium Hall, Gartocharn.

The meeting, which focused on effective storytelling included guest speaker Stuart Delves - a [writer and storytelling trainer](#), who gave support and advice to the 37 attendees on how to develop critical skills and confidence in this area.

Stuart has worked with a wide range of businesses from whisky companies to salmon exporters, as well as Visit Scotland.

[LEAF Open Farm Sunday's](#) Scottish Coordinator, Rebecca Dawes joined the meeting to discuss how to get involved with the 2020 event on Sunday 7th June. West Central Community Group member Shona Duncan spoke alongside Rebecca, about her family's experience of opening for Open Farm Sunday for the first time in 2019.

SUCCESSFUL STORYTELLING

Storytelling is a strong business skill and when implemented effectively, it can boost a business in several ways - such as improving customer loyalty, creating a strong marketing strategy or increasing profit.

Consumers have more choices than ever before and increasingly, stories are becoming the difference between good and great marketing.

Stuart focused on getting attendees to look at the first steps of storytelling, by finding the essence/core of their story.

Name of your business

The name of your business should be a sense of character/personality to your business.

Your name defines who are. For example – there could be lots of people called John Smith, but each one will have a unique story about why they are called John Smith.

When coming up with a name for your business make sure you consider:

- What is memorable about it?
 - o Why have you chosen that name specifically? Is there a link to the farm, family, area?
- What does it link to?
 - o e.g. Harris Tweed links to the island of Harris where it originates from;
- What does it tell you about your business?
 - o Does it give you an idea of what your business does? e.g. United Auctions tells us in the name that the business has a link to auction sales;
- Can it be shortened?
 - o Is the name easy to shorten? Will shortening it still mean people still make that connection?
- What does it mean?
 - o Is there a specific meaning to your business?
- Pronunciation;
 - o Always consider how easy your business name is to pronounce. If you are in a bar or restaurant, you are unlikely to buy something off the menu that you cannot pronounce;
- Misspelling;
 - o Having a name that is easy to spell will also help customers sell your story. If they are recommending your business to a friend, you want to make sure they can search/find your name easily without any issues. E.g. is it Sean or Shaun?

What makes your business different from others?



Agritourism businesses tend to attract a small scale of followers compared to large businesses such as Tesco or Famous Grouse. However, this is a great advantage for small businesses to find their voice and sell their unique stories.

What is your story and why is it different?

How can you attract people to YOUR place?

Often farmers underestimate their story and think that what they do is uninteresting. However, many people will find what farmers do fascinating. Agritourism businesses often take what they have for granted.

Sell your unique story;

- Why is your business unique?
 - o E.g. don't compare yourself to a similar business in the Western Isles if you are in Edinburgh. Your location will be the **UNIQUE** selling point of your story;
 - o You must put your own twist/opinion on your story;
 - If you do farm tours, what makes yours different to the farmer doing them 30 miles away?
- Build a profile;
 - o It's a process of elimination to find something you feel comfortable selling. If you are not comfortable, you will not sell your story to its full ability;
- Put yourself in someone else's shoes;
 - o Remember you might have the knowledge and background about lambing season, but members of the public will find it fascinating and have no knowledge. Don't undersell yourself or your business;
 - o You must believe that your business is of interest and look at what other people might find interesting;
 - E.g. is it the family history? Location? Do you have a special animal/family member who is key to the story?
- Do different;
 - o Once you have distinguished your story, don't forget to update it/keep it fresh;
 - Work out what your audience is interested in. E.g. if you do farm tours and have farmers from a different country coming to visit, they will want to hear a different story compared to members of the public who might be visiting from the local town;
 - o Don't do the same thing continuously. Remember you want people to come back. They will want to come back because they enjoyed the experience/story you told but they will look to take something different away the next time;
 - o Try new ideas;
 - Work with your visitors to try new ideas so they feel they have been part of it. E.g. offer discount on their next visit if they fill out a survey about developing the business;
 - o Mix the content;
 - Some visitors may prefer to read a menu off a large board, and some may prefer menus on the tables. Mix up and trial things to see how they work;
 - Farm tours – it might be worth writing a couple of scripts to help keep you on track and talking about the relevant areas, according to the audience. This doesn't mean you need to read the script word for word, but it can help guide the angle you want to go down.

Give your business a voice

Giving your business a voice doesn't mean the voice of the people running it – it's the way you will draw people back to your business and make it different to competitors;

- Give yourself a slogan/standard that people associate with, e.g. Macallan's whisky describe themselves as the 'Rolls Royce of Whisky';



- Was the tone of voice for the business welcoming?
- Was the attitude/personality/behaviour of staff/family members involved reflective of the businesses story?

Having a distinctive tone of voice will help mould your story and your business voice can be portrayed through various ways including;

- In person;
 - o How does your staff come across?
 - o Are they polite? Funny? Unique? Utilise each member of staff appropriately;
- Print;
 - o How do you want your story to be described/shown in magazines, publications, posters etc.
- Website;
 - o Is your website selling the right story? Can customers get enough information about your business? Is it portrayed correctly?
- Social media;
 - o Do you have good engagement on social media? Are you using the correct channels for your business?

It is important to get the tone correct. Companies that have a good tone/story will have good brand loyalty.

- Humour;
 - o People love humour, but it must be done correctly. Humour needs to be natural and not forced. If you naturally can't portray humour but a colleague/other family member can, use their skills;
- Seriousness;
 - o It's important to show the fun/attractive side of your business but it is equally important to make sure people know the rules;
 - E.g. if you do trailer rides, make sure they know the correct behaviour/safety procedures required to make sure its enjoyable and fun for all;
- Fun;
 - o Visitors who have fun will remember your story and share it with others;
- Personality;
 - o Give your story some personality. Utilise members of staff/family who engage well and have a good sense of humour;
- Knowledge;
 - o Share your knowledge. Your knowledge contributes towards the unique selling point of your story. If your family have farmed at your home for generations, people will find this interesting;
 - o Too much knowledge is sometimes not effective. Try get a good balance and implement the fun!

TOP TIPS FOR STORYTELLING

Storytelling isn't something you can grasp in one sitting, after one course. It's a trial-and-error process which requires creativity, vision, skill, and practice.

Stories make us human, and the same goes for brands. When brands get transparent and authentic, it brings them down to earth and helps consumers connect with them and the people behind them.

- The business name/brand is key. This will be the first thing people will see before they arrive and what they will name/recommend to other people – so make it eye-catching, sharp and memorable;
- Your story is unlikely to be based on one person. Tell the WHOLE story - who are we?
- Voice is one of the more distinctive things about humans. This should be the same for your brand/business. What makes your business voice different?



- Be unique. Don't base yourself on Jo Blogs who lives 30 miles away and carries out farm tours. Make yourself different and give the visitors a reason/purpose to support your story;
- Make it personal and don't shy away from sharing the real story.

STORYTELLING EXERCISES

During the meeting, attendees were given various exercises to work on, in groups, pairs and individually, to help understand the importance of storytelling and what makes each story unique.

Exercise one – Working in pairs, each attendee had to tell the story behind their own Christian name e.g. “I am Joe Blogs and I was named after my grandfather who was the first man on the moon.” Once they told their partner their story, the group joined back together and each person took it in turns to tell their partner's story.

Exercise two – Attendees worked in pairs and described each other's businesses. They wrote down one word that summarised their partner's business and fed back the larger group.

Exercise three – Each attendee was asked to individually write 200 words describing their business.

Exercise four – Each attendee was then asked to individually write 50 words describing their business.

Exercise five – Each attendee wrote 12 words (in a sentence) that described their business and fed back to the wider group.

Exercise six – Attendees wrote down one word to describe their business and shared with the wider group.

Exercises like these help businesses and individuals identify the key selling points to their business. By starting with 200 words and eventually writing just one word, it allows individuals to really think about the unique selling point they want their business to be remembered by.

Videos from the meeting held on the 11th March will be available on our website and YouTube channel.

BUSINESS FEEDBACK FROM THE EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING MEETING

At the end of the meeting, attendees were asked to complete feedback forms about what they had learnt during the session.

As a result of storytelling session are you more aware of how important it is to tell your business/family/farming story?

- Yes – x13 no comments
- Yes, we have a huge story to tell. The challenge is trying to confine it to a short, snappy story;
- I think we always knew, but as always, so much to be considered to add and improve;
- Yes – it's important to help non-farming people have a greater understanding;
- Yes - We are about to update our website, so can now build on the words;
- Yes - I feel we need to communicate clearly about who we are and why we do what we do;
- Yes - It helped to emphasise how important the people behind the business are;
- Yes – it's made me realise how much we know but found difficult to put into words;
- Yes – the storytelling session ties in with the branding day last summer (there's overlaps);
- Yes – our business must stand out from others;
- Yes – a lot to absorb and talk about! I didn't think it was important but after the meeting I think it is;
- Yes – crucial to portray your unique selling point;
- Still lacking clarity on storytelling and its relevance in differing businesses/situations. The day lacked structure and clear outcomes from my point of view;
- Yes – as it draws in the customers;
- Yes – important to convey you and the business in an engaging way. Be informative to let customers know more;

- Yes – people need to understand where the business came from and what’s been involved in making it that way;
- Yes – each business is unique because of its story, which is why it’s important to tell;
- Yes – tell our story and attract customers;
- Yes – lots of ideas on how to tell your story.

As a result of the storytelling session, do you feel more confident to write down your story?

- Yes x12 no comments;
- Yes – I have seen aspects which we are currently not stressing enough;
- Yes - Need to refresh and find balance between soft welcoming and informative/scientific;
- Yes – Stuart’s writing exercises were so valuable, helping define our message;
- Yes – It’ll take a few attempts, but I feel more confident that I’ll get there;
- No – but I have some good ideas to help;
- Yes – it’s been very helpful;
- Yes – We are more confident, and I think the details should be compared;
- Yes – will go home and tweak website;
- Unfortunately, not;
- More confident yes, but not overly confident;
- Yes – it’s a starting point to perfect;
- Yes - but I would need to do research;
- Yes – a lot of pointers and ideas to follow;
- Yes – very useful workshop;
- Yes – good refresher;
- Yes – knowing how to go about it give you confidence.

Where will you use it? How will you tell it?

- Website x15;
- Farm tours x5;
- Social media x15;
- Welcome documents x3;
- Guest information package in accommodation;
- Will tell our information in a more fun way;
- Wildlife talks;
- Press releases – wherever possible;
- Developing my agritourism idea;
- Leaflets;
- We will create a short concise story to people who want to listen;
- Poultry and holiday cottage business;
- Spoken and written word;
- School visits;
- Blogging (once I’ve learnt how!);
- Future farm tours;
- All communication with customers.

What will you change as a result of what you have learned?

- Look at website wording x2;
- Agree our story with the whole family;
- Communicate our story to staff/volunteers;
- Break down the story, don’t need to tell the story of the old days in a boring/old fashioned way;
- Be more aware of what our voice should be;
- Find different ways to present a message to different audiences – i.e. brief message for an audience, longer for other audiences;
- The business hasn’t started yet, but I shall certainly be mindful of all the points discussed;
- Not to overdo the knowledge in our farm tours;
- Might get help to write my/our story;
- Will have to think more deeply about our story x2;
- Need to be more creative;
- Take more time to think about content;
- Update website;

- Build on relationships with guests;
- Listening to other ideas;
- Looking at the business from different eyes;
- Look at how the business is described on social media, website etc.
- Will review website and welcome document;
- Not sure that I have the ability to access the storytelling part of my brain that others may have;
- Short messages for social media;
- Broaden story;
- Depth on family;
- Look more into farm tours;
- Pay more attention to the tone of the story;
- Important use of words to grab attention;
- Focus on what to put in, then paint the picture;
- Tone;
- Target audience;
- Less words on website description;
- To concentrate more on the voice of words;
- Do something unexpected;
- What you project as your values must reflect in all contact with customers;
- Fresh content;
- Rethink about tone of voice;
- Rethink about who our audience is;
- Check all channels use the same voice;
- Introduce the unexpected;
- Improve how to present our story;
- Being more informative;
- Enhance story (content).

What is your story in 3-5 sentences?

- "We run a sheep and cattle farm with a strong emphasis on sustainable farming, with a story based towards environmental enhancement. We have excellent facilities for visitors to learn about food production and to enjoy the wildlife."
- "A family run farm on the shores of Loch Lomond, producing top quality organic beef. We've diversified and offer boat moorings, four-star self-catering in the old farmhouse, fun to be had in the glamping tent, speedboat trips and water sports."
- "Join us for a fun filled tour at LTL learning and sampling our land made goodies. Find out why our chocolates and ice cream taste so good and how we make them."
- "LOL, a family run farm since the 1750's, traditionally farming in the Scottish Glen on the banks of Loch Lomond. You can come and stay, learn or play – from farm tours, cottages or glamping barns."
- "If you've tasted CW vegetables, then you'll probably know they are the tastiest you've ever had. That's because Gordon and his hard-working team really know their onions, and their soil. They know it's as important to care for the biodiversity living under the soil as healthy soil equals healthy plant, equals healthy people."
- "We believe that the countryside should be bursting with biodiversity. At A, our aim is to showcase the very best of Scottish wildlife, from the kite to the stag, to the red squirrel in the tree."
- "C Holiday Lets will be a bolthole from the frantic place of modern life. A beautiful, warm and comfortable farmhouse enjoying an idyllically scenic location, a short drive from Stonehaven."

- “A welcoming, fun and inclusive family beginning a journey to share our authentic farm. Third generation to be innovative thinkers.”
- “Lone lady farmer, tending her plot in a beautiful corner of the Scottish Border. Far-reaching views steeped in history and abundant in wildlife make a fascinating backdrop to the farming endeavour at E Middle. This project is in it’s infancy to add pick your own veg and flowers to accommodation, to utilise the old farm steading and diversify my farming to enable others to experience my world and business.”
- “S & S farms form the basis of our enterprise which has grown from beef and sheep to self-catering and B&B and now glamping pods. We also do lambing experiences and farm tours and hope to expand on each in 2020.”
- “We are steeped in our climate, soil type and landscape, to produce the best tasting food with a light footprint on our land. It’s a cycle that connects our ecology, natural resources and our organic farm with a sustainable way of life.”
- “D Family Farms are a traditional, family run beef and sheep farm offering luxury accommodation on the edge of the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park. Alongside our accommodation we produce top quality meats naturally in a sustainable manner. The Duncan’s are passionate about our farming and aim to produce a genuine experience to remember.”
- “Family friendly glamping – accommodation on the east side of Loch Lomond, based on a traditional hill farm. Meet three generations who live on Old M Farm and look after the highland cattle and blackface sheep. Stay in our homely ensuite pods which are fully equipped with all that you need for a comfortable stay.”
- “Welcome to the B Stop, our luxury, hand-crafted accommodation. ‘Live your dream’.”
- “Hill farm situated beside the banks of Loch Awe in Argyll. We run 40 pedigree Highland cows, 350 Cheviot ewes and strive to produce show winning pedigree stock that goes back to 1882. Our main part is exporting Highland Cattle across the globe. We aim to share our love and passion for the breed and the beautiful areas by hosting farm tours.”
- “First generation family farmers keeping cows and sheep in a stunning location, diversified into agritourism with beautiful accommodation offering a luxury romantic stay in a unique and natural woodland.”
- “C Holiday Cottage is situated in the heart of a busy beef, sheep, poultry and pig farm. A well-equipped home from home, sleeps eight, surrounded by a large enclosed garden which hosts the cottage’s chickens, supplying eggs daily. Central to Loch Lomond & Trossachs, Stirlingshire and Glasgow.”
- “Adding spice to your life, we grow a range of chillies from the mild to the wild. These little bombshells of flavour are the key ingredients in the range of fabulously tasty preserves that we produce. A cheeseboard would be naked without them.”
- “P is a small family farm specialising in producing high quality organic beef. We have a unique location on the southern shores of Loch Lomond with stunning views of the loch, its islands and the mountains beyond. We have diversified into holiday accommodation with the Old Farmhouse and glamping offering the opportunity to experience luxury accommodation in a unique setting. P offers moorings for 25 boats along with activities which include speedboat tours, stand-up paddle boarding and kayak hire.”

- "We are a family run business who focus on customer care, guest experiences and enjoyment in our relaxing countryside location."
- "Hear about life on the wonky hill sheep farm. The family have farmed S & S Farms since the 1750's, we are the 10th generation to live here. Learn about the history and changes that have taken place here and see some of the farm activities, depending on season – lambing, shearing, gathering the hills. See a working sheepdog in action, working several hundred sheep."
- "A family run farm run by the fourth generation at 850ft about sea level in picturesque Avon valley. The high input, high output run dairy unit strives to produce the highest quality produce, sustainably with an overwhelming emphasis on animal welfare and the environment."
- "D, a farm diversification, 10 years in its development having explored farm shops and different locations on the farm. Plumping for a cliff edge with inviting views across the Firth of Forth to Fife, five shipping containers were converted to form a coffee house. Starting out with coffee and cake baked fresh each day, we now offer brunch and light lunch. It most certainly has become a destination to eat, drink and relax."
- "D coffee house, built from recycled shipping containers, built on the land of an arable farm as a diversification. It is famous for the panoramic views out over the Forth and the Bass. Specialising in home baking and delicious tea and coffee."
- "D Lodge is a luxury off grid retreat in the heart of our 5,000-acre farm, home to our Herdwick sheep. The lodge is located on a site of special scientific interest thanks to its unique peatland, which is inhabited by rare bird species, waiting for you to discover."
- "B is a special place chosen by the tribes of Galloway to build a fort on top of the hill from where they could see and be seen. Around this vantage point are opportunities to walk, ride horses, cycle and fish. Places to stay and loads to purchase. This is now the home of the A family who use this land to farm dairy cows, producing milk for cheese and rear Aberdeen Angus cattle for beef. We would like to invite you to experience the space, beauty and wildlife diversity and to enjoy."
- "Family run mixed dairy farm and encourage people to come to stay and experience all aspects. Enjoy showing people round the farm."
- "We offer eco-friendly accommodation on a family farm on the Isle of Mull. We won the Nature of Farming Award a good few years ago but have continued to manage the land to increase biodiversity and encourage wildlife whilst producing excellent lamb and mutton."
- "A small 300-acre family farm - proud to care sustainably for our animals and environment so that we can grow the very best in fresh local produce."
- "Third generation family farm, stock rearing upland farm, natural grass-fed systems (lamb & beef)."

What makes your farm business/agritourism business different from others?

- Intimate encounters with wildlife, a wide range of interests catered for, opportunity to capture quality imagery;
- Location, organic, water sports x2;
- Simply sell what we make and don't buy other goods in;
- Bespoke glamping barn, farm tours with views over Loch Lomond, 250 years of farming family history;
- All home-grown produce;

- We are Scotland's first independent red kite centre and the only place in Scotland where people can photograph red kites and red squirrels;
- The feeling of remote privacy, whilst only being 10 minutes' drive from the main A90 road;
- Location x4;
- Farming style, welcome, the proactive creativity of accessibility we are developing;
- Picking your own veg and flowers in a beautifully set out garden;
- Our family x2;
- We are organic, well diversified – you can see a lot;
- Passion;
- Location of site, no others in close proximity, large customer base passing door;
- Unique bus accommodation experiences;
- Highland cattle;
- Mainly beef and sheep but also run a growing poultry business, pig racing at events, selling pork, holiday cottages. 'Funny farm'!
- Unusual product – chillies;
- People and customer focus;
- Telling the story of a more intensive high input/output system;
- The views x2;
- Offer a remote off-grid retreat;
- Eco friendly accommodation;
- A wildlife friendly island farm.

What did you enjoy about the storytelling meeting?

- Honesty of participants;
- Deep insights in how everyone sees things;
- Meeting new people x4;
- Learning from others x2;
- The speakers x2;
- Challenging us to write, think and relate to our businesses;
- Good open culture;
- Really great presentation. Gave me lots to think about;
- Hearing what people had to say;
- The hidden potential;
- Group discussion x2;
- Networking x7;
- The sharing of insecurities as well as successes;
- Finding out more about what can be done to make ourselves more personal to our customers;
- Made me think more about our story;
- Quite challenging but very thought provoking;
- Sharing of information;
- One to one chat;
- Food and company;
- Sharing ideas, it's been thought provoking;
- Really enjoyed the storytelling practice, trying to write 200 words then 12, then one;
- Learning more about writing;
- The workshop leader was excellent;
- Interesting attendees;
- Historical structuring.

WEST MEETING FIVE ATTENDEES

37 individuals from farming/agritourism enterprises attended the event from all over Scotland with people travelling from as far north as Aberdeenshire and as far south as Dumfries.

A full list is detailed along with links to their websites/social media channels (where appropriate).



No.	First Name	Surname	Ticket Type	Company	Website
1	Jo	McNicol	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	DRIFT./Castleton Events	https://www.facebook.com/DRIFTeatdrinkrelax/
2	Lauren	MacAlea	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	DRIFT./Castleton Events	https://www.facebook.com/DRIFTeatdrinkrelax/
3	Bobby	Lennox	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	Lennox of Lomond	https://www.shemoreonlochlomond.com/
4	Anne	Lennox	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	Lennox of Lomond	https://www.shemoreonlochlomond.com/
5	Kay	Wilson	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	Lennox of Lomond	https://www.shemoreonlochlomond.com/
6	Carolyn	Charrington	Agritourism/Monitor	Treshmish, Mull	www.treshnish.co.uk
7	Robin	Austin	Agritourism business	Barstobrick and Fellend Farm	https://www.barstobrick.co.uk/
8	Sacha	Grierson	Agritourism business	Grierson Organics	http://www.hughgrierson.co.uk/
9	Jane	Harrower	Agritourism business		
10	Chris	Scott-Park	Agritourism business	Portnellan Farm LLP	http://portnellanfarm.co.uk/
11	Freda	Scott-Park	Agritourism business	Portnellan Farm LLP	http://portnellanfarm.co.uk/
12	David	Scott-Park	Agritourism business	Portnellan Farm LLP	http://portnellanfarm.co.uk/
13	Grant	Turnbull	Agritourism business	Carr's Hill	http://www.carrshill.co.uk/
14	Alison	Younger	Agritourism business	F&A younger	http://www.oldleckie.co.uk/index.php/farm-tours/
15	Shona	Duncan	Agritourism business	Duncan Family Farms	https://www.facebook.com/Duncan-Family-Farms-330252160999100/
16	Niall	Bowser	Agritourism business	Argaty Red Kite	http://www.argatyredkites.co.uk/index
17	Tom	Bowser	Agritourism business	Argaty Red Kite	http://www.argatyredkites.co.uk/index
18	Sheena	Horner	Agritourism business	Galloway Chillies	http://gallowaychillies.co.uk/
19	Jasmine	Jackson	Agritourism business	Jackson's of Jedburgh	https://www.jacksonsatjedburgh.co.uk/n
20	Bill	Smith	Agritourism business	Byres Farm	https://byresfarm.co.uk/
21	Balfour	Stewart	Agritourism business	The Bus Stop	https://www.thebusstop.scot/
22	Elaine	Lamont	Agritourism business	The Bus Stop	https://www.thebusstop.scot/
23	Jean	Wilson	Agritourism business	Lime Tree Larder	www.limetreelarder.co.uk
24	Gordon	Murray	Agritourism business	Craigmaddie Muir Farm	www.craigmaddiemuir.co.uk
25	Selina	Cairns	Agritourism business	Errington Cheese	www.erringtoncheese.co.uk
26	Stuart	Campbell	Farmer looking to diversify		
27	Jon	Strickland	Farmer looking to diversify		
28	Cora	Cooper	Farmer looking to diversify		
29	Maggie	Dalgleish	Farmer looking to diversify		
30	Stanley	Dalgleish	Farmer looking to diversify		
31	Sheila	Bannerman	Farmer looking to diversify	The Old Manse Farm	
32	James	MacDougall	Farmer looking to diversify		
33	Andrew	Neilson	Farmer looking to diversify		
34	Liz	Phillips	Farmer looking to diversify		
35	Sarah	Restall	Farmer looking to diversify		
36	Jan	Welsh	Farmer looking to diversify		
37	Gordon	Cauldwell	Farmer looking to diversify	Cauldwells Veg	