

Scottish Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme

October Virtual Meetings Report

**Meeting 1 - Search Engine Optimisation & Being
Found on the Web
Thursday 8th October 2020**

**Meeting 2 - Business Health Check
Thursday 22nd October 2020**





Due to the current Covid-19 restrictions the Scottish Enterprise Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme is being delivered virtually to continue to allow support to be provided to Agritourism businesses across Scotland.

MEETING ONE SUMMARY – 8TH OCTOBER 2020

During the virtual meeting on Thursday 8th October Lesley Cameron from [LMW Consulting](#) focused on the importance of search engine optimisation (SEO) and your business being found on the web.

On the surface, the goal of SEO is to improve your website's rankings in the search results. By achieving a high ranking on engines such as Google, it will create more traffic to your sight, and ideally that traffic will convert into customers and leads.

SEO can help improve your website in ways that help it rank in search results when users (potential customers) search for specific words and phrases.

For example, if you were thinking about booking a holiday in Scotland you might search 'Holidays in Scotland' or, 'The best places to visit in Scotland' in Google. Google will bring up results based on what it thinks will be the most helpful information to you, based on the key words you entered.

The 'top ranking' sites that appear on the first page of Google are often not there by chance and the businesses will have utilised SEO to help Google understand what their content is about.

Benefits of SEO for small businesses

- **User-friendly websites**
 - o SEO helps create faster, smoother, and more user-friendly websites.
 - o Well-structured, clean, and uncluttered websites encourage a casual visitor to stay longer therefore decreasing bounce rate and increasing page views.
- **Organic & can bring in more customers**
 - o One of the main reasons to have a website is to stand out from your competition and increase customer base. SEO will allow you to reach out to more customers and grow twice as fast compared to a business that does not utilise it.
 - o SEO is efficient and affordable (free) and will only bring customers who are actively seeking to find your product or service.
- **Better conversion rates**
 - o SEO websites tend to load faster and are easier to read/browse
 - o Display will be correct on all devices (desktop, mobile, tablet) and therefore you are more likely to grab and hold attention from your browser.
- **Brand awareness**
 - o By using SEO your business is more likely to appear on the first page of major search engines such as Google and therefore your potential customers are more likely to trust your brand.



[Click here to access the presentation given by Lesley Wood on the 8th October about utilising SEO.](#)

MEETING TWO SUMMARY – 22ND OCTOBER 2020

The meeting on 22nd October 2020 focused on sharing information about suppliers from different areas of an agritourism business and rating them. The meeting was an informal discussion between attendees who exchanged information on costs/rates and systems they have in place.

This was a closed, confidential meeting however some general take home messages are detailed below.

How much does it cost to run an Agritourism business?

Running an agritourism business, whether it be self-catering, a farm shop or offering farm tour experiences can be an enjoyable and very satisfying business, but it is important to consider the running costs and rates that will accumulate, and set your prices accordingly.

What are your key costs out with staff?

- Utilities – your offering needs to be fully-functional whether that be running water, electricity, broadband or ensuring the hot tub is always available to be used.
- Accountancy fees – This is crucial for your business in order to see if you are making money. It might be worth you investing in getting a bookkeeper to ensure you are keeping up to date with records.
- Marketing – What do you pay out in terms on marketing for your business?
 - PR agency
 - Website
 - Advertising
 - Merchandise
- Consumables
 - Welcome packs – do you supply these? If so, what do you need to purchase to go in them?
 - Logs etc. for wood burners
 - Toiletries
 - Cleaning good etc.
 - Crockery
- Online booking systems
 - Is there an extra you have to pay per month on your website to host online bookings?
 - Do you pay for your business to be shared via sites such as Booking.com etc.? Remember that these types of agents will typically charge on a commission basis (can be up to 20% but will vary) of the booking amount.
- Laundry/cleaning services
 - How much time does it take if you are doing this inhouse? What could you be spending your time doing if this was outsources?

- Insurance/Legalities
 - Ensuring you have cover to suit your business. E.g. if you are doing farm tours, does your farm insurance cover this?

Key thoughts/messages from meeting

Laundry – Most of the businesses on the call used an agency to do the laundry for any sheets, towels etc. that are used in their accommodation

- There were a small number of businesses that did their own laundry and discussions were had around how cost effective this was.
- Colour themes – a number of businesses carry out their own laundry cleaning due to having specific colour themes. Again, discussions were had round this and whether colour schemes were really a thing that guests picked up on.

Cleaning service – There were a number of businesses who use agency cleaners

- Costs – These costs varied in different locations for different companies/agencies used.
- Some businesses highlighted that they quite often have to check/redo some of the cleaning etc. after the agencies have gone. The feedback on this was they are paying for a service to be done so it should be done correctly. They should start informing the agency and getting them to come back and carry out the service to the standard that is required or look for a different alternative. **The key to using an agency is to take pressure/workload off you.**

Electricity/broadband costs

- Electric heaters were highlighted as a big cost for some of the businesses along with broadband. Suggested to regularly shop around and look for packages/deals to help reduce these costs.

Dog friendly and charging extra

- Many businesses charge around £10-20 extra for a stay which includes a pet. It was suggested that people would pay that per night in order to be able to take their pets.
- Pets are a big part of people's reasons for staying. Highlighted most places were dog friendly and that people that come with dogs tend to be cleaner and more respectful than guests without.
- Some businesses don't charge for pets but charge slightly more as an overall price to cover a pet charge along with any other extra charges like wood etc.

Hot tubs

- There were some concerns around hot tubs which were not run from electrics and some health and safety concerns around these tubs. Caroline Millar picked up directly with those concerns and can offer more advice/guidance on this if required.

MEETING ATTENDEES

First Name	Surname	Business	Website	8 th October	22 nd October
Ailsa	Currie	Bellevue Farm Holiday Cottages & Farm Tours	www.bellevue-arran.co.uk	✓	
Anna	Black	Lindores	https://www.lindoresxc.co.uk/	✓	
Anne	Lennox	Lennox of Lomond	www.shemoreonlochlomond.com	✓	
Andrew	Donaldson	Comrie Croft	www.comriecroft.com		✓
Bobby	Lennox	Lennox of Lomond	www.shemoreonlochlomond.com	✓	✓
Chris	Scott-Park	Portnellan Farm LLP	www.portnellanfarm.co.uk	✓	
David	Scott-Park	Portnellan Farm LLP	www.portnellanfarm.co.uk		✓
Eric	Balfour	The Bus Stop	Home The Bus Stop		✓
Elaine	Lamont	The Bus Stop	Home The Bus Stop		✓
Fiona	Scott	The Mill at Fearn Farm	www.fearnfarm.com	✓	
Freda	Scott-Park	Portnellan Farm LLP	www.portnellanfarm.co.uk		✓
Geraldine	Hamilton	??	??	✓	
Gordon	Murray	??	??		✓
Helen	Smith	Byres Farm	www.byresfarm.co.uk	✓	
Hugh	??	Darrach Croft		✓	
Jasmine	Jackson	Jacksons at Jedburgh	www.jacksonsatjedburgh.co.uk		✓
John	Auld	??	??		✓
Jo	McNicol	DRIFT.	www.castletonevents.weebly.com	✓	✓
Kay	Wilson	Lennox of Lomond	www.shemoreonlochlomond.com	✓	✓
Louise	Nicol	Newtown Farm	https://newtonfarmholidays.co.uk/		✓
Liz	Phillips	Cowden Farm	N/A	✓	✓
Lucy	Tile	Bairnkine	www.bairnkinecottages.co.uk	✓	
Maggie	Dalgleish	Balgownie Mains Farm	www.balgowniemainsfarm.co.uk		
Moira	Henderson	The Rings	www.therings.co.uk		
Nikki	Storrar	Ardross Farm Shop	www.ardrossfarm.co.uk		
Niall	Bowser	Argaty Red Kites	https://argatyredkites.co.uk/index		✓
Rhona	Neil	Smahame	https://www.smahame.com/	✓	
Sarah	Restall	E M Farming	N/A	✓	
Sascha	Grierson	Grierson Organics	Hugh Grierson Organic High quality organic meats delivered to your door	✓	
Sheila	Bannerman	Old Manse Farm	N/A	✓	✓
Sophie	Thompson	Newton Farm Holidays	https://newtonfarmholidays.co.uk	✓	
Trudi	Cueto	Carfrae Farm	www.carfraefarm.com	✓	✓
			TOTAL	19	16