

ARIA - Community Led Tourism

“PRESS PAUSE”

GARNOCK VALLEY

Report and Recommendations

March 2024

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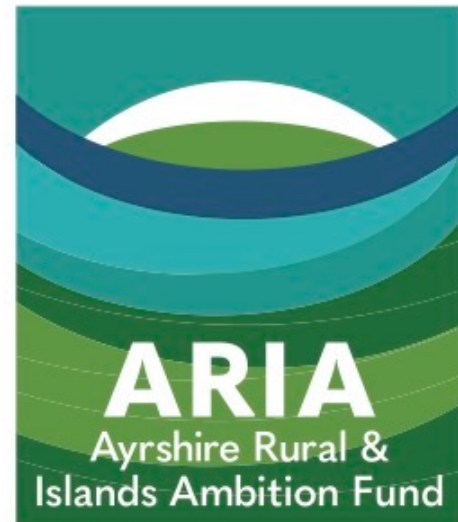
PRESS PAUSE

This Press Pause initiative has been funded by ARIA – The Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition Fund which is supported by the Scottish Government.

SCOTO were commissioned in 2023 to undertake an audit of community led tourism across Ayrshire, produce 6 case studies and deliver 'Press Pause' in three Ayrshire Valleys.



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PRESS PAUSE

COMMUNITY LED TOURISM IN GARNOCK VALLEY

REPORT STRUCTURE



SCOTO visited GARNOCK VALLEY (Beith, Dalry and Kilbirnie) and facilitated a Press Pause Community Led Tourism workshop on 15 FEBRUARY 2024 in the Eglinton Inn, Beith. We met with various local interests – business and community. Time was taken to experience the area and explore local sites and features of interest prior to the workshop.

This report provides context and sets out the key findings, and then offers a number of recommendations for the short and longer term.

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What is Community Led Tourism (CLT) ?



Historically many communities have felt that tourism happens to them - rather than with them. It was traditionally promoted by tourist board, larger attractions and businesses - and more recently through numerous digital touch points – TV, film, social media, Online Travel Agents, bloggers, travel trade, VisitScotland and DMOs.

But as more and more communities across Scotland form local development trusts, take ownership of assets, and are providing visitor facing services and experiences.... there is a growing sense of tourism being not just something that can happen with the community but also something that can deliver many positive benefits and can help address priority issues such as social isolation, retaining young people, showcasing local producers and crafters and preserving artefacts and assets.

SCOTO defines community led tourism being where a geographic community is directly involved in managing the tourism offer in their area and ensuring tourism derives tangible benefits at a local level.

SCOTO believes there are two types of community tourism in Scotland.

- *Community Led Visitor Services and Experiences*
- *Community Led Destination Development and Promotion*

What is Community Led Tourism?



A: Community Led Visitor Services and Experiences

B: Community Led Destination Development & Promotion

WHAT	Travel, events and visitor services and experiences that are owned, managed and/or delivered by the local community
WHY	Using tourism activity as a means to an end – providing wider benefits for the community which address local priorities
WHO	Social Enterprises – Cooperative, CIC, SCIO, Charitable Trust with trading arm
HOW	Asset transfers, service level agreements, partnerships, change of use, added value

A geographic community makes a conscious choice to come together to manage their tourism offer and how their area is promoted

To avoid tourism just happening – tourism becomes a force for good. Business and community interests work together

Community Development Trusts, Community Associations, Cooperatives, Town/Village/Area DMOs

Community led destination competency appraisals and action plan
Community led place branding and visitor proposition

What is Community Led Tourism?



A: Community Led Visitor Services & Experiences

This is typically where the community has set up a social enterprise which delivers a visitor facing service or experience which derives important benefits back into the community as well as servicing the needs of visitors. The service may not be totally visitor facing and equally tourism may not be seen as the primary driver. But the interface with visitors brings in much needed spend and other social benefits and helps the community deliver against priority issues and opportunities.

B: Community Led Destination Development & Promotion

This is where a geographic community – a village, an island, a town, a city neighbourhood or a glen, for example – come together to consider and then manage their tourism offer and how their area is promoted. This involves local business and community interests collaborating to better understand how the area presents itself as a destination and jointly agree what could be done better or differently that can make the place an even better place to live, work and visit

SCOTO'S

Press Pause Initiative



SCOTO's Press Pause Initiative has been designed to support geographic communities in taking time to review their current situation and reflect on what could be done differently or better in terms of tourism activity.

SCOTO first piloted Press Pause with the North Highland Initiative in summer 2023 working with Thurso and Lochcarron, and then has been working with the Social Enterprise Academy supporting the delivery of their Community Lottery funded 'Imagining New Futures Together' Programme.

ARIA – Ayrshire Rural and Islands Ambition Fund – appointed SCOTO to explore community led tourism across their area in Autumn 2023 and included the delivery of Press Pause in three Ayrshire Valleys.

Press Pause takes place in destination and facilitates reflective conversations with individuals at a workshop with key business and community representatives at the table.

Each workshop generates key findings and SCOTO then provide recommendations on next steps and opportunities for community led tourism services and experiences.





Why Press Pause?

A New Era

- Tourism and travel choices are changing – they already were and this has rapidly accelerated following the pandemic
- Everyone is much more conscious of their wellbeing
- We are increasingly aware of the climate emergency and the need for individual action
- Technology is revolutionising travel, tourism and everyday lives
- Digital content is an increasingly important source of travel inspiration
- Visitors are now seeking to slow down, meet local people, have authentic experiences

Meanwhile ...

- Scotland is seeking a 'wellbeing' economy [NSET – National Strategy for Economic Transformation]
- Scotland is focusing on Community Wealth Building [NSET]
- Scottish Communities are being empowered to do more for themselves - to own assets and strengthen their voice
- Scotland is seeking 'responsible tourism for a sustainable future' [Scotland Outlook 2030]





Why Press Pause?

Strategic Context

The National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) has a vision ***“to create a wellbeing economy: a society that is thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions, and that delivers prosperity for all Scotland's people and places. We aim to achieve this while respecting environmental limits, embodied by our climate and nature targets.”***

Scotland Outlook 2030 – the national tourism strategy – is seeking ***“responsible tourism for a sustainable future”***. Responsible tourism considers four themes – reducing carbon, inclusion, biodiversity and communities.

The strategy focuses on four priorities –

- Our passionate people
- Our thriving places
- Our diverse businesses
- Our memorable experiences

Scotland has provided the strategic context for a new way of doing tourism with communities to the fore.



Why Press Pause?

Regional Context

In 2023 a partnership of the three Ayrshire councils, Ayrshire and Arran Destination Alliance, VisitScotland and Scottish Enterprise launched the 'Ayrshire and our Islands Visitor Economy Strategy 2030'. It has a strong focus on regenerative tourism.

"Our collective ambition is for the visitor economy in Ayrshire and our islands to connect, restore and regenerate. We think these are the drivers to creating memorable and transformative experiences, that improve our environmental assets and infrastructure, including through programmes such as the Ayrshire Growth Deal, and create a platform for community wealth building – so our communities can participate in, own and benefit from the social and economic benefits of a thriving visitor economy."

Taking the lead from the national tourism strategy Scotland Outlook 2030 Responsible Tourism for a Sustainable Future, this strategy places the wellbeing of our people and the environment at the heart of everything we do."



OUR VISION

"Together, we will build a thriving, inclusive visitor economy across Ayrshire and our islands that delivers transformative experiences for our visitors, builds prosperity for our communities and nurtures the natural environment."

Why Press Pause?



By taking time to pause and reflect on tourism in their local area there is immediate scope for individual communities to consider what perhaps isn't working as well as it might and how things could be done differently and be much better for community life and the local environment.

Across Scotland, prior to Covid, tourism data suggested that many parts Scotland were experiencing record numbers of visitors and the season was extending. Many businesses were benefitting and new businesses emerging. Economically fragile communities were seeing tourism as an opportunity. But some communities were feeling overwhelmed.

Post covid there has been a major focus on recovery and initially with a sense of getting back to 2019 levels – getting back on the hamster wheel... But by pressing pause individual communities can determine a new and different future for themselves where tourism doesn't just happen to them –it happens with them and tourism actually helps a community tackle priority issues they have identified.

By pressing pause tourism can be recalibrated and help a community be an even better place to live, work and visit. Tourism can be a real force for good.



Key considerations



The Press Pause Initiative facilitates conversations on:

- What is the geographic extent of the Destination in the eyes of locals as well as visitors
- What's working, what's not working, and what could be done differently/better
- Competitors and Comparators
- Visitor Profile – Past, Present and Future
- Community Led Destination Competency Appraisal
- Community Led Place Branding – USPs, POPs and PODs
- A Community Led Visitor Proposition
- Reflections ... and Actions



GARNOCK VALLEY 'PRESS PAUSE' REPORT

MARCH 2024

GARNOCK VALLEY, NORTH AYRSHIRE



1. GARNOCK VALLEY

Scene Setting



Late Autumn 2023, ARIA commissioned SCOTO to undertake an audit of community led tourism across their area, produce six case studies and deliver three Press Pause initiatives, one in each of the three Ayrshire council areas.

For North Ayrshire following various discussions the area known as Garnock Valley was ultimately selected and including the communities of Beith, Kilbirnie and Dalry.

A joint workshop for the three communities was agreed. This took place on 15 February 2024 in Beith and followed the 'Press Pause' workshop and reporting format designed by SCOTO.

This Press Pause Report sets out the key findings and lists a number of quick win and longer term recommendations for the communities to consider as part of their journey in community led tourism across the valley.



1. GARNOCK VALLEY

An Overview



SCOTLAND

- Garnock Valley includes the upper reaches of the River Garnock in North Ayrshire
- The three principle towns are Beith, Kilbirnie and Dalry
- Dalry has a population of c5260
- Kilbirnie has a population of c7090
- Beith has a population of c5930
- The A737 is the main trunk road through the valley connecting Paisley and Kilwinning
- There is a commuter train service in the valley with stops at Dalry and Glengarnock

1. GARNOCK VALLEY

Community Structures

The area is covered by three community councils: Kilbirnie & Glengarnock; Beith & District and Dalry. There is no active community council in Dalry at present.

There are a number of active community groups within the Garnock Valley with some tackling very specific issues and topics and others working across their local community.

Beith has a Community Development Trust which was established to improve the health and mental fitness of the community through the regeneration of social, environmental, financial and physical assets. Their mission is to create new conditions which equip their community with the skills and resources needed to thrive. In 2015 the community acquired Geilsland estate and has positioned it as gateway to North Ayrshire

Dalry established a Community Development Hub in 2014 to work together to secure resources and funds to tackle local community issues and is focused on physical and social regeneration initiatives.



1. GARNOCK VALLEY

Tourism Structures - DMOs



Garnock Valley falls within the **Ayrshire and Arran Destination Alliance** area.

Ayrshire and Arran Destination Alliance (AADA) is the Destination Management and Marketing Organisation (DMO) for the region of Ayrshire and the islands. It is led by a voluntary board of directors from across the region who represent different tourism and hospitality business interests. The Directors support the delivery of AADA's activities and ensure good governance and financial management.

AADA is a membership organisation and operates on a not for profit basis.

Research published in 2021 concluded that tourism is contributing over £600 million of visitor spend and supporting over 13,000 jobs regionally – but there was a need for more cohesion and joint working across the whole region.

This led to the development and publication of the Ayrshire and Our Islands Visitor Economy Strategy 2030.



**AYRSHIRE
& ARRAN**
Find your balance



1. GARNOCK VALLEY

Tourism Structures - Local

At present there are no local tourism groups or organisations within any of the three towns or across the valley.

Everyone at the workshop recognised the merit in collaborating across the valley but had major concerns about the lack of resource to facilitate this and the right skills.

Of note, a key conclusion from the SCOTO Press Pause workshop was to establish an initial tourism/business group to coordinate existing activity and work together to develop and promote the visitor (and local) offering within the Garnock Valley – and cross promote each others' businesses and activities.

An initial step is to establish a Whats App group which was agreed at the meeting and all shared their details to allow this to be set up.



1. GARNOCK VALLEY



Initial Observations



- Garnock Valley is an area located immediately next to the Glasgow conurbation
- The three towns are less than an hour's travel time from the city
- It has been a predominantly industrial area with significant businesses operating in the area within living memory – steelworks, flax, woodwork and furniture
- These industries have closed and Garnock Valley is in a post industrial era
- The area has witnessed notable decline in the three town centres but also have a number of high quality independent businesses

GARNOCK VALLEY



GARNOCK VALLEY

BEITH



GARNOCK VALLEY

BEITH



GARNOCK VALLEY

KILBIRNIE



GARNOCK VALLEY

GLENGARNOCK CASTLE AND STATION



GARNOCK VALLEY

DALRY



GARNOCK VALLEY

GEILSLAND ESTATE, BEITH



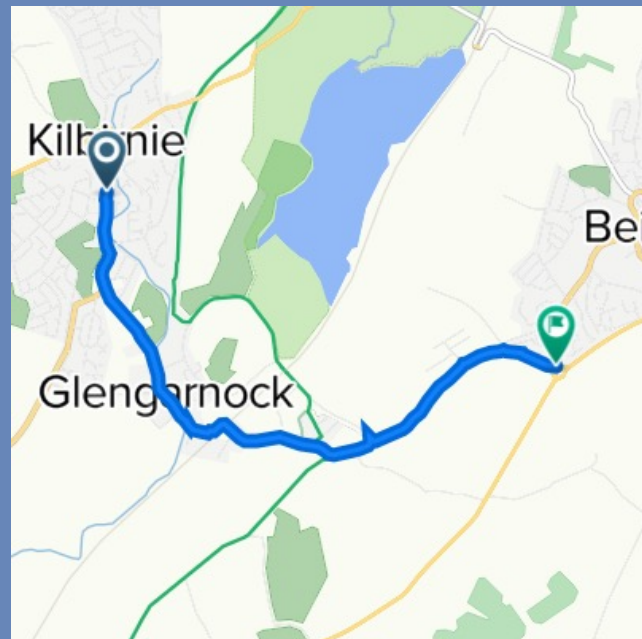
GARNOCK VALLEY

LOCHSHORE, KILBIRNIE



GARNOCK VALLEY

GARNOCK VALLEY CYCLING AND CYCLE ROUTES





1. Press Pause Format

Engagement

14 individuals attended the Press Pause workshop from the area and representing

- BEITH TRUST
- GARNOCK VALLEY MUSIC NETWORK
- BYPASS ART
- GLOW, DALRY
- EGLINTON INN, BEITH
- WEST AUCHENHEAN GLAMPING
- THE LITTLE GIFT SHOP, BEITH
- HARMONY, BEITH
- CURIOSITY COFFEE AND VINTAGE SHOP, BEITH
- GARNOCK VALLEY PIPES AND DRUMS
- NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
- LOCAL RESIDENT

Topics Explored at the Workshop

1. Defining the GARNOCK VALLEY Destination as a visitor and as a local
2. What's working, what's not working, and what could be done differently/better in GARNOCK VALLEY
3. GARNOCK VALLEY'S Competitors and Comparators
4. GARNOCK VALLEY'S Visitor Profile – Past Present and Future
5. GARNOCK VALLEY'S Destination Competency Appraisal
6. GARNOCK VALLEY'S Place Branding – USPs, POPs and PODs
7. Measuring tourism impact in GARNOCK VALLEY

1. Opening Remarks



As individuals introduced themselves and to start the conversations, several comments were made which provided valuable context to the subsequent discussions

- *Tourism effort in North Ayrshire focuses on the marine and coastal offer and needs an inland focus*
- *There is a lot of music related activity and keen to grow the audiences*
- *Keen to breathe new life into Beith*
- *There are important heritage artefacts and stories to share with visitors – and also engage locals*
- *The Craft Fair is now a big event – having got people here how can we encourage them to stay and do other things*
- *North Ayrshire presents itself as the gateway to Arran...*
- *Guests are staying in the surrounding area and are looking for things to do – need awareness*
- *The area had mass employment in the past and global products – opportunity in industrial heritage?*
- *What identity can the towns and the valley work with to promote itself?*
- *With the development of Lochshore and the facilities at Geilsland how can visitors be drawn into the towns?*
- *There are good local events – how can this be expanded as a programme?*
- *Can events have more stalls and minimarkets to promote local businesses and makers?*
- *Shops shut on a Saturday afternoon – long standing tradition...*

Map of Glasgow, Lanarkshire & Clydeside showing various locations marked with red dots. The map includes labels for areas like Glasgow, Lanarkshire, and Clydeside, as well as specific locations such as Glasgow, Lanarkshire, and Clydeside. A legend at the bottom left indicates that red dots represent 'Locations marked on the map'.

A map of the Klamath River watershed in the Pacific Northwest. The map shows the river network originating from the Klamath Mountains and flowing into the Pacific Ocean. Major cities labeled include Eugene, Medford, Klamath Falls, and Yreka. The map also shows the border between Oregon and California, and the location of the Klamath Dam. The watershed area is shaded in light green, and the river network is shown in blue.

North Ayrshire Localities



3. What's working/not working

Initial thoughts from the workshops are noted below:

- Locals do support local businesses
- Quality business operations (eg Independent Retailer of the Year)
- Scottish Craft Fair – attracts big numbers
- Pipes and Drums events do attract people
- Local accommodation providers are booked year round – people are in the area
- Geilsland has focused on regeneration and working with local people – provides accommodation and event space
- Heritage walks – very low key but are good
- The A737 bypasses the towns
- Lochshore Park has had no investment in marketing and engagement with the local communities
- The towns see themselves as dormitories for the city and coast
- Geilsland and Lochshore are on the edge of the towns
- Town facelifts are urgently needed
- No public toilets in the area
- Saturday closing
- Out of town shopping has seriously impacted the town centres
- Very limited EV charging
- Low awareness of what is in each town
- Empty shops and absent owners
- Lack of transport – need a car
- Very limited cross selling
- Lack of capacity to do more



3. What could be done better



Ideas from participants included the following:

- Build capacity – knowledge and resources (this is a deprived community and needs investment from ARIA and other funders)
- Build on what there is – eg a bigger music festival with a headline act
- Incremental change – eg of West Kilbride and frontage grants which lifted the main street
- Single platform for the valley – NB had an app but needs boots on ground for sign ups (scope to repurpose content from previous app initiative)
- Find ways for Geilsland and Lochshore to attract and then feed visitors into the towns
- Stronger community control and use of Lochshore
- Better coordination of the events and festivals across the three towns – shared calendar
- Shared communications between businesses and cross selling – build a new network and jointly gauge performance
- Facelift – involving local artists – eg images in empty shop windows



4. Competitors & Comparators

A useful exercise is to think of communities/ areas that are either direct competitors and can be attracting the visitors you would like to see so worth considering what is it that differentiates them? Or comparators which are communities that are similar but located elsewhere and have achieved success and therefore could have valuable insights to share. Learning exchanges can be very fruitful.

GARNOCK VALLEY COMPETITORS

COAST AND CITY – People are attracted to the coast especially for days out in good weather. Glasgow and the big out of town retail centres are a big pull for shopping and days out. Garnock Valley feels between the two and insufficient awareness and product to attract visitors

LOCHWINNOCH & WEST KILBRIDE – felt to be 20 years ahead of Garnock Valley and different socioeconomic mix so have skills and capacity that Garnock Valley doesn't have. West Kilbride has had a lot of public support.

GARNOCK VALLEY COMPARATORS

WIGTON - very run down village that bid to be Scotland's Book Town and won – significant regeneration of dilapidated buildings and festival activity. Discounted tickets for locals.

GIRVAN – portrayed as worst high street in Scotland. Decided to own their story and focused on how dog friendly their town is. Developed digital campaign and content and ultimately won Dog Friendly UK award.

There is a sense that the area is at a turning point but does need external support to build capacity.



5. Visitor Profile

Past, Present & Future

PAST

- No strong tourism tradition in the area



PRESENT

- Mainly events related



FUTURE – WHAT IS DESIRED

- Overnight stays and repeat visits linked to events and festivals
- Appeal to different interests (outdoors and active, creative and heritage)



6. Destination Competence

An Introduction



Being a successful destination is a function of many factors and how they interplay.

SCOTO has devised a competency appraisal for geographic communities to undertake as part of the Press Pause conversations.

Through conversation and discussion at the workshop the community are asked to describe their current offer under each of 16 criteria and then rate it in terms of

Red – things are really not working/don't exist.

Amber – things do need improved.

Green – things are functioning well.



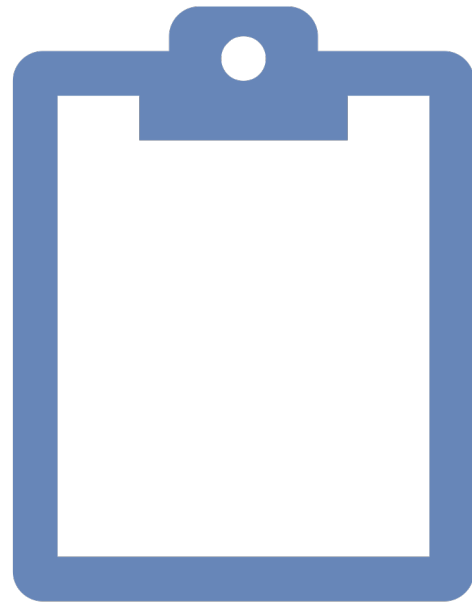
This rating is generated by all present and helps facilitate collective thinking and also trigger ideas for improvement.

The initial discussion about tangible and intangible assets is a precursor to this more detailed appraisal.

6. Destination Competence Appraisal – 16 Criteria



1. Tourism Traditions and Timelines
2. Sense of Place and Visitor Proposition
3. Features and Attractions
4. Accommodation
5. Activities and Experiences
6. Food, Drink and Refreshments
7. Events and Festivals
8. Makers and Producers
9. Travel and Connectivity
10. Amenities and Infrastructure
11. Visitor Management, Signage and Interpretation
12. Digital Presence and Marketing
13. Biodiversity and Net Zero
14. Community Assets
15. People and Players
16. Destination Collaboration



6. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	CLT OPPORTUNITIES
1	TOURISM TRADITIONS. TIMELINES & SEASONALITY	No tourism tradition Local authority have invested in Lochshore development to attract visitors but no marketing or engagement		Scope to develop a new proposition for Garnock valley that appeals to local and central belt market Build on festival and event successes
2	SENSE OF PLACE	Recognition that Garnock Valley is not known or understood – significant local heritage especially industrial heritage Area has been associated with global brands		Place branding and visitor proposition – need to ignite interest in the area and a new wider collaborative offer
3	FEATURES & ATTRACTIONS	Recognise do have several attractions but poor awareness - Spout of Garnock waterfall - Tianna Falls - St Inans Chair - Lynn Glen and Falls - Golf Courses - Cycle Track - Hen harriers and red kites - Old Kirk Kilbirnie - Clyde Muirshiel Reg Park		Map of local attractions with parking and access Itineraries connecting walks and points of interest with local coffee shops and lunch stops
4	ACCOMMO-DATION	Good self catering offer around the area No serviced accommodation in the towns Many stay in the area for events in the city		Audit of existing accommodation and encourage the providers to join the new enterprise network

6. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	CLT OPPORTUNITIES
5	ACTIVITIES & EXPERIENCES	Very limited Community rather than visitor facing (eg golf) No bike hire Cycle route isn't connected into the towns		Active travel routes connecting features and attractions
6	FOOD & DRINK	Varied across the area Beith has good offer – pub, coffee shops and takeaways Kilbirnie only has takeaway Opening hours vary		Collate information on all food and drink offers and opening hours for a new Garnock valley platform
7	EVENTS & FESTIVALS	Have a few events and festivals Reliant on volunteers so hard to maintain momentum Beers Music Car Craft Fair		Develop a Garnock Valley events programme and clash diary Arrange event management capacity building workshops Encourage small scale events that celebrate local talent and heritage
8	MAKERS & PRODUCERS	Biggest Craft Fair at Geilsland – not necessarily local producers There are several makers and producers but not accessible for visitors Michelle Lindslow Little Birdhouse Bakes Frank Boyd		Consider options for shared working space and shop front (eg artists cooperative) Provide pop up opportunities at existing events Garnock Valley business forum – re-energise with a new enterprise network
9	TRAVEL & CONNECTIVITY	Train station at Glengarnock and Dalry Poor bus service Need a car to explore the area Bypassed by the A737 – difficult to cross eg to access Geilsland		Active travel needed urgently Community transport options that can also be used by visitors

6. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	CLT OPPORTUNITIES
10	AMENITIES & INFRA-STRUCTURE	Good provision in the area – ie don't need to leave for health, supermarkets, fuel etc No public toilets	Green	Simple map of what to find where
11	VISITOR INFO & SIGNAGE	What signage there is is out of date There is no means to orientate yourself in the towns	Red	Develop a simple area map with key attractions and facilities which can be accessed by QR code (flyer for accommodation and eateries)
12	DIGITAL PRESENCE & MARKETING	The valley is not represented on VisitScotland and Ayrshire & Arran Destination Alliance channels No collective presence for each town or the Garnock Valley Some individual sites are good – web and social media No Whats On resource Hard to find local information – poor search results	Red	Develop a Garnock Valley presence and each town contribute to it. Develop new Garnock Valley and individual town content and update information on VisitScotland and Ayrshire & Arran Destination Alliance sites
13	BIO-DIVERSITY & NET ZERO	There is a biodiversity forum – not visitor facing No concerted effort on Net Zero	Red	Develop a simple net zero plan setting out easy actions and quick wins for businesses – eg displaying green credentials for what they are already doing

6. Destination Competence



NO	CRITERIA	CURRENT APPRAISAL	RAG	CLT OPPORTUNITIES
14	COMMUNITY ASSETS	Geilsland is significant for Beith area but not valley-wide Barmill Garden Dalry Park and Pavillion Mens Shed		Red as it is very limited across the valley Undertake an audit of assets and review what visitor facing uses they could provide
15	PEOPLE & PLAYERS	Sense of a few good movers and shakers but also a lot of moaning which is dispiriting A lot of small scale activity – tends to be the same people Tends to be done in isolation and not joined up Concern re burn out Appetite for a new enterprise forum/network		Consider a new valley wide enterprise group Open day/eve to socialise this Press Pause activity and recommendations Use event to show case key initiatives local businesses and individuals can get involved with and benefit from Learning exchange to a similar community that has used tourism as part of regeneration – eg Go Girvan
16	DESTINATION COLLABORATION	Very limited liaison with either VisitScotland and Ayrshire & Arran Destination Alliance by individual businesses No Garnock Valley representation		Once enterprise network/forum has come together invite VisitScotland and Ayrshire & Arran Destination Alliance to work with the group

6. Potential Community Tourism Opportunities in Garnock Valley



CRITERIA	CLT OPPORTUNITIES WORTH EARLY EXPLORATION
Sense of place	Take the lack of tourism tradition and sense of place as an opportunity and develop a Garnock Valley place brand and visitor proposition that celebrates the area's unique heritage and the sum of the parts.
Attractions & Activities	Produce a Garnock Valley map of the main features and attractions with parking and visitor facilities and services
Food and Drink	Audit of what is available in the valley and opening times. Use existing events and festivals to showcase local produce and providers.
Events & Festivals	Develop a Garnock Valley events calendar which also is a clash diary for new and satellite events to complement existing events. Seek support for an event management skills workshop for local providers
Travel & Connectivity	Consider active travel itineraries using existing cycle path and trails and connecting local features of interest. Consider community transport options linked to events to help locals attend
Visitor Information	Develop a local Garnock Valley map with features, attractions and key services. Provide QR code flyers/posters throughout the area to cross promote
Digital Presence	Develop a new Garnock Valley platform – website and social channels. Create a stronger digital presence on VisitScotland and Ayrshire & Arran Destination Alliance platforms – curate Garnock Valley content
Community Assets	Review all existing community assets and scope for visitor facing provision – eg VIP, toilets, bunkhouse, motorhome aires. Learning Exchange to Cullen to learn about their Discover Cullen umbrella model
Destination Collaboration	Establish a new enterprise network/forum and invite VisitScotland and Ayrshire & Arran Destination Alliance to explore joint working

6. CLT Opportunities

Two Notable Place Based Opportunities



Geilsland Estate

The Beith Community Development Trust acquired Geilsand and are developing it as a community resource with tourism activity – notably day trip and event based – at its heart.

It is already hosting notable events including a large craft fair which attracts big numbers. This is generating local wealth but could further spread this benefit by signposting other nearby attractions and experiences in Beith and across the valley. It can also showcase local businesses, crafters and producers at these events and as support for private functions.

Geilsland is an important asset for the wider valley.

Lochshore Park and Hub

Significant sums have been invested in this area with good quality facilities and an attractive landscape created. However there is a sense that the community are not integrated - yet it offers considerable scope for community led tourism activity and social enterprises.

A key recommendation from Press Pause is a focused project which begins the process of building the relationship between the community and Lochshore and developing the sense of community ownership of the space.

By pursuing a community wealth building approach for Lochshore it could become a very important resource and space for community empowerment and community enterprise activity.

6. CLT Opportunities

Inspiration from Elsewhere



Findhorn Campervan Aire

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/fsgnta50/scoto_findhorn-case-study.pdf

Callander Youth Project/Callander Hostel

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/f3oerevm/scoto_callander-hostel-case-study.pdf

Loch Ness Hub, Drumnadrochit

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/ylepaaos/scoto_loch-ness-hub-case-study.pdf

Wild Skies Shetland

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/xgzchqln/scoto_wild-skies-case-study.pdf

Callander Visitor Information Centre

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/ogmnlyxl/scoto_cvic-case-study.pdf

Tweedsmuir The Crook Inn Plus

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/bznbqgqxg/scoto_tweedsmuir-case-study.pdf

Isle of Eigg Camping Pods

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/zy4lzkkt/scoto_eigg-camping-pods-case-study.pdf

Lewis Point & Sandwich Trail

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/31khsd2p/scoto_point-sandwich-case-study.pdf

Strontian Oakwood Tourism & Crafts

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/yppgkurp/scoto_oakwood-case-study.pdf

Moray Walking and Outdoor Festival

https://www.scoto.co.uk/media/341kukao/scoto_moray-walking-festival-case-study.pdf

6. Managing Expectations



A key consideration for any destination is managing visitor expectations.

Visitors don't always do their research, or may struggle to find information and can arrive in a community with preconceived ideas of what to expect.

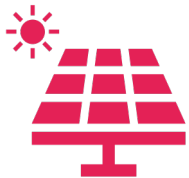
This can be anything from getting a mobile signal to finding toilets, being able to use credit cards and not need cash, get an Uber, order a takeaway for delivery or having a sit-down meal in the evening.

To avoid disappointment and frustration communities can do a lot to manage expectations in general but also if there is a specific and short-term issue affecting a service.

A valuable resource is an open access 'what's on' group page on FaceBook where information can be posted (and pinned) and also visitors can ask questions. Local business should be encouraged to join and post regularly and also invite questions. Many communities have these pages. A key pointer is to reserve this for local information posts and not use it to moan about public services.

GARNOCK VALLEY

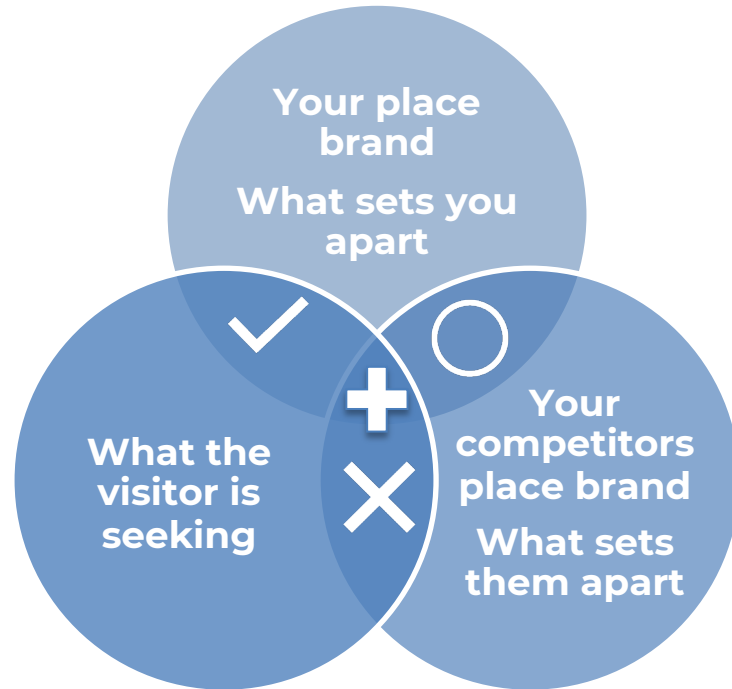
- Develop a simple Garnock Valley map-based PDF with the key attractions and local services and facilities highlighted plus parking and cycling/walking trails. Could be made available as a tear off in local shops, attractions and accommodation, displayed on community noticeboards and accessed by QR code – also available as a weblink on individual websites and social media
- Develop 'Be Local Garnock Valley' open Facebook page for visitor enquiries and for all businesses and enterprises to post updates and features for locals and visitors
 - encourage all local businesses and organisations to promptly respond to visitor enquiries and queries [check what already exists and possibly repurpose]



7. Community Led Place Branding



- Place branding is the idea that **a place, a town, a city, or a region can be branded** – given an identity with a value proposition for a target market and have branding techniques and marketing strategies applied to drive a marketing campaign. Much in the same way a product, service or business can.
- In essence, place branding is "**a strategy for projecting images and managing perceptions – and expectations - about places**". **Authenticity.**
- Place branding seeks to form **a meaningful relationship between person (locals and visitors) and place.**



7. Place Branding Community Led

- We now live in a rapidly developing digital world
- Visitors are influenced by multiple sources of inspiration before, during and after travel – Visitor Touch Points
- Much of this content lacks a proper sense of place and rarely is the host community's voice heard
- To ensure authenticity and integrity, host communities should assert themselves – scope out and own their place brand – differentiate their community and then influence other visitor touch points to use their place brand and positioning - and help target appropriate visitors
- Host communities can readily develop products and experiences to bring their place brand to life





7. Place Branding Hierarchy

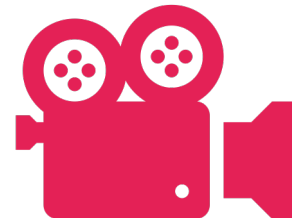


7. Place Branding



“To see ourselves as others see us”

- Places across Scotland are promoted by many players – notably VisitScotland and local DMOs (Destination Marketing Organisations) as well as the media, bloggers and on social media
- These players often have very good reach online and are targeted in how they share their content to interested audiences
- Community groups and individual businesses have limited reach
- There is therefore significant value in firstly seeing if and how others portray this community to their audiences - and how it fits with reality – and then seek to influence their content
- This is a very good prompt for communities to develop and take ownership of their own place brand and to then develop new content that reinforces how the community sees itself and wants to be portrayed to the outside world
- Developing an image/content library that brings this to life is then recommended
- This new curated content can then be shared with the key players directly or by tagging and using hashtags on social media



7. Place Branding



“To see ourselves as others see us”

NO results could be found for GARNOCK VALLEY,
KILBIRNIE OR DALRY
(St Johns Town of Dalry comes up)



BEITH

Towns & Villages

Beith is a small attractive town on the A737, 25 miles north of Ayr and 21miles west of Glasgow.

The remains of the Auld Kirk date from the late 1500s, while the impressive High Church dates from the early 19th century. Eglinton Street is the most attractive part of the town, with small, neat two-storey buildings dating from the late 18th and 19th centuries.

Landmarks in the town also include Scapa Cottage and the Town House. There are several shops, including a small supermarket and food is available at several outlets throughout the town.

Fishing is available at nearby Kilbirnie Loch and the 18 hole golf course welcomes visitors

7. Place Branding

“To see ourselves as others see us”



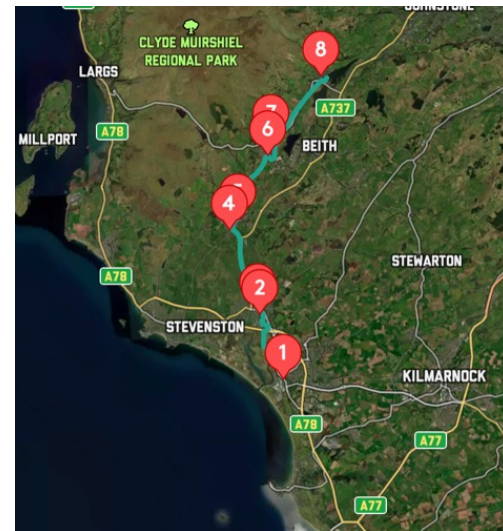
**AYRSHIRE
& ARRAN**
Find your balance

GARNOCK VALLEY CYCLEWAY

This 29km cycle route links the towns of Irvine, Kilwinning and Kilbirnie. This tour is 15.5 miles long, please allow at least 1 hour 50 minutes to complete it, excluding the time taken to enjoy the destinations along the way.

Although lengthy, the Garnock Valley Cycleway is a family-friendly route. Part of National Cycle Route 7, conditions consist of almost entirely traffic-free tracks or riverside pathways. From Irvine, the route progresses north through Kilwinning – look out for the ruins of 12th century Kilwinning Abbey, which occupy the centre of the town.

Follow the A737 until you reach Lynn Sprout – a magnificent waterfall surrounded by a myriad of smaller cascading waterways. Kilbirnie is the next stop on the route. Take a break from the pedals to wander around the stunning 17th century Kilbirnie Auld Kirk before ending the tour in the village of Lochwinnoch, neighbouring the expansive Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.



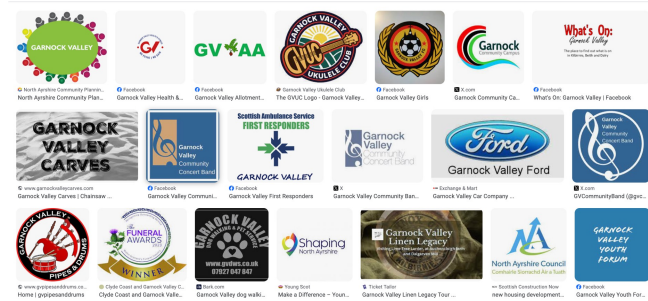
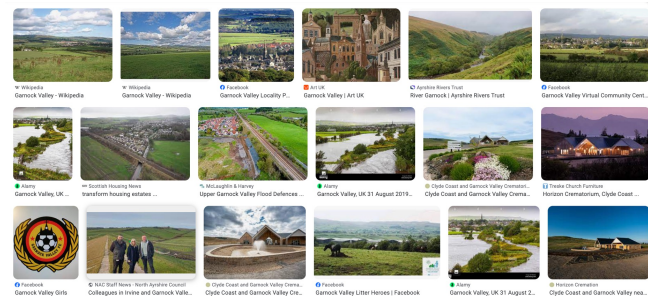


7. Place Branding

Garnock Valley – Initial Observations

The Garnock Valley is not represented on VisitScotland, and the Ayrshire & Arran Destination Alliance web site refers to the cycle route but with limited local information. Beith features on VisitScotland but very limited information and Dalry and Kilbirnie are not included. Garnock Valley as a search term doesn't generate good relevant visitor facing content on Google searches for images and brands.

However this presents an excellent opportunity for producing locally generated 'click bait' that portrays Garnock Valley in Ayrshire in an appealing way that locals love and recognise and potential visitors find appealing/intriguing. A key task is to get Garnock Valley recognised as the umbrella place reference and with authentic visitor propositions linked to the area's unique attributes and points of differentiation.





7. Place Branding

Using USPs, POPs & PODs



USPS

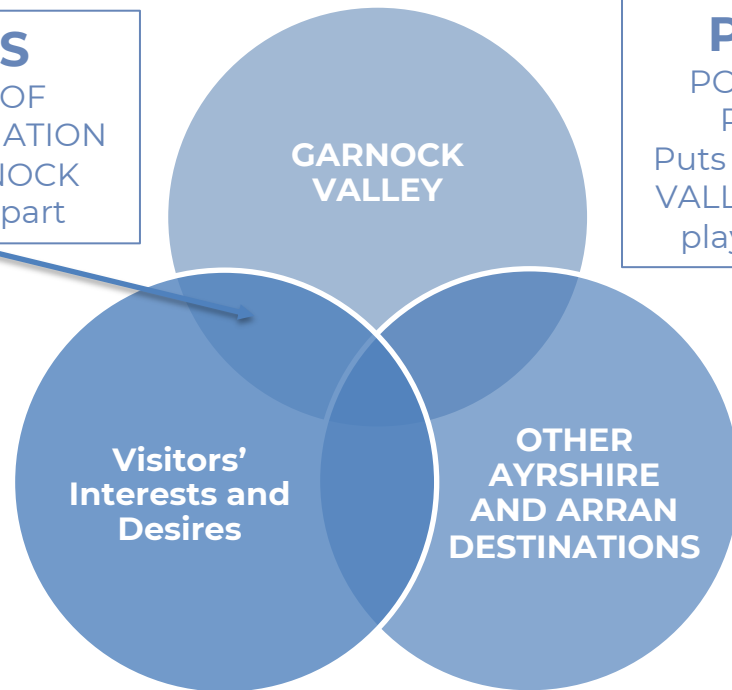
UNIQUE SELLING POINTS
What is unique about GARNOCK
VALLEY that no other destination
can claim

PODS

POINTS OF
DIFFERENTIATION
Sets GARNOCK
VALLEY apart

POPS

POINTS OF
PARITY
Puts GARNOCK
VALLEY on the
playing field





7. Place Branding

GARNOCK VALLEY'S USP's, POP's & POD's

USPs – what would the world miss if GARNOCK VALLEY didn't exist?

POP's – what gives GARNOCK VALLEY a right to be considered by visitors to Ayrshire/ South of Scotland?

POD's – what sets GARNOCK VALLEY apart for visitors from other South of Scotland destinations?

7. Place Branding

GARNOCK VALLEY'S USPs, POPs & PODs



USPs – what would the world miss without GARNOCK VALLEY?	POPs – what makes GARNOCK VALLEY a viable destination?	PODs – what sets GARNOCK VALLEY apart?
▪ Beith Craft furniture – used to furnish the Queen Mary liner - can still buy (costly) – later became G-Plan with global reputation ▪ Smugglers – first stop from Ardrossan with a galloping horse – had to change horse here. Tea was the treasure (SE Indian monopoly) Excise men were based in Irvine. ▪ Dugald Semple – author of the founding book on veganism (lived off the land here and in a tent – founded 'veganism' in 1944) ▪ Hendry Faulds born in Beith invented fingerprinting ▪ Dr Wotherspoon – minister from Garnock Valley was the second signatory of the Declaration of Independence	▪ Walking and cycling trails ▪ Historic sites ▪ Golf courses ▪ Gift shops ▪ Craft fair ▪ Music events	▪ Large capacity indoor venue at Geilsland ▪ Music and live venues plus recording studios ▪ Cattle show ▪ Industrial heritage (not all visible)

7. Place Branding

Points of Inspiration



As Garnock Valley is at the start of a [community led] tourism journey some essential building blocks are needed.

Prior to Covid there was a Garnock Valley business forum – it was council led and met monthly for talks and discussions, but lost momentum. There was keen interest at the workshop in establishing a new enterprise group led by the businesses to encourage collaborative working and mutual support.

A first step would be a Whats App group to share ideas and start building momentum. Funding for a 'quick win' initiative for the group will help this grow and suggestions are funding for painting shop fronts, artwork for empty shop windows and orientation signage in the town centres over 2024.

A business leadership group can be developed from this which pulls in enterprise interests across the valley. This group can then be formally constituted and apply for a three – five year Enterprise Development initiative to support existing and new businesses with a dedicated programme of capacity building and training - and with an enterprise development role to drive the group forward. Garnock Valley Community Investment Fund was flagged as a good source of funding for this.



NB Garnock Valley Locality Partnership may be able to facilitate first steps. Specific enterprise expertise will then be needed to develop the group.



7. Place Branding

Garnock Valley Visitor Propositions?

Once an enterprise forum is in place with a dedicated developmental resource there are a few possibilities for product and event development

Existing events – seek to use any events in the area to showcase local enterprise and product.

VISITOR PROPOSITIONS

- **GARNOCK VALLEY VEGAN FEST** – celebrating the role of Dugald Semple and tapping into the growing plantbased diet movement.
- **GARNOCK VALLEY TEA PARTY** An annual event which celebrates the tea smuggling heritage and works with local coffee shops and tearooms.
- **GARNOCK VALLEY SMUGGLERS RUN** A new endurance team event between Ardrossan and Beith which involves teams smuggling items from the coast to Beith without getting caught/spotted.
- **GARNOCK VALLEY “FINGER PRINT”** A new event in the Valley celebrating the importance of finger prints – eg Crime book festival celebrating Scottish authors or programme of crime themed creative writing workshops
- **GARNOCK VALLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL AND TALENT COMPETITION** building on the local talent, studios and including open stage/mike activity – learning exchange with Darvel Music Company



OTO do to help?
that no-one else is

scoto Scottish Community Tourism

A growing network of Scottish community run tourism enterprises inspiring visitors to be temporary locals.

scoto.co.uk | #scotonetwork | #beatemporarylocal



8. Reflections ...





8. Reflections

Garnock Valley has some individual tourism enterprises and experiences - but these are not, as yet, joined up. The valley is in close proximity to a large centre of population offering significant potential for days out activity and experiences. It also could provide an interesting events calendar which is rooted in the place.

A first and vital step - which was proposed and gained traction at the workshop - is a local enterprise forum to lead on this activity – but with skills and capacity developed through a three-five year enterprise development programme.

There is a local pot of money – the Garnock Valley Community Investment Fund – which is believed to have available funds and therefore could fund this. By being Garnock Valley wide it will be strategic in its focus.

Time is needed to get momentum behind a group to then constitute it so it is eligible for funding. A quick win project over 2024 is recommended to garner interest and build that momentum.



9. Recommendations

Embracing Community Led Tourism in Garnock Valley



Community led tourism offers Garnock Valley some important opportunities to build local pride and celebrate what has made the area what it is today.

Each town has historic groups and societies and a key piece of enterprise work could be a heritage event to bring these groups together to review what artefacts and stories exist and seek to package new events and experiences to celebrate these. Some examples are suggested linked to the tea smuggling, the development of fingerprinting and Dugald Semple who founded the vegan movement. These are only scratching the surface and there will be many more stories and connections that will spark further ideas. SCOTO can readily facilitate this.

The destination competence appraisal flags several shortcomings which led to some despondency on what the valley can actually offer. However, a major strength is the proximity to the central belt, the wealth of local heritage and stories, plus existing events - and the event space at Geilsland. A key point of learning is to build on what is already happening and to use every opportunity like the Craft Fair to showcase and nurture local businesses, groups and activity.

Many people do travel through the area to the coast. The By Pass Art project is a really interesting way of highlighting what is being by-passed and could readily be further developed.



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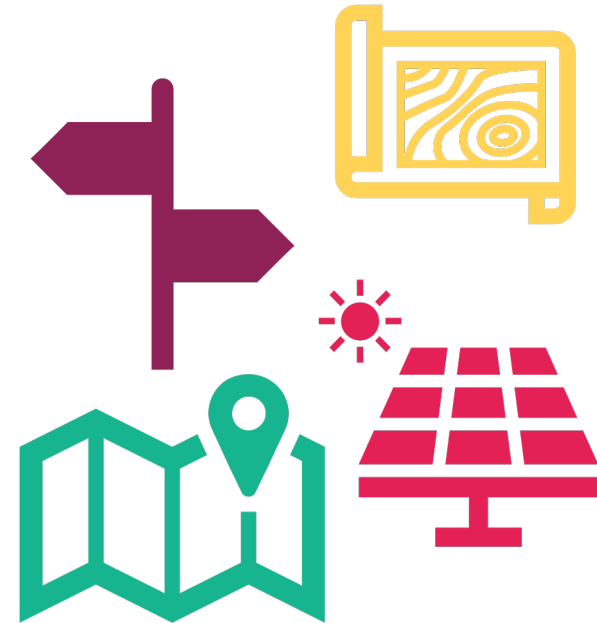
9. Recommendations

Community Led Tourism in Garnock Valley – Immediate Opportunities



Based on the workshop findings and review, there are some immediate opportunities for Garnock Valley to consider

- Encourage local enterprises to consider how they could have a presence at events taking place either to simply showcase their businesses or as satellite enterprises
- Approach North Ayrshire Council to consider the potential for community led enterprise at Lochshore Park – and to develop capacity building support programmes to enable social enterprise activity
- Establish a Garnock Valley events calendar and clash diary
- Establish a basic Garnock Valley web platform and social media channels
- Pull together all existing features of interest and walks and trails on a Garnock Valley map



9. Recommendations

Possible Quick Wins



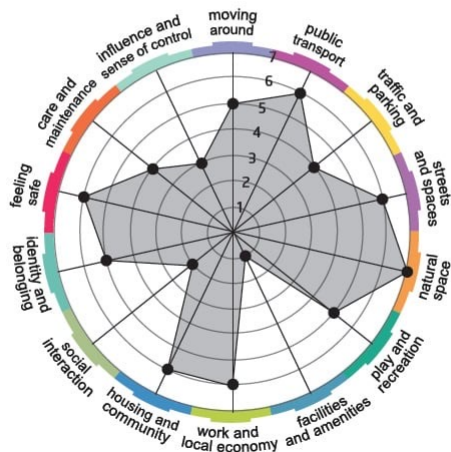
- Arrange an open day event in the community aimed specifically at anyone who has skin on the game - to share the Press Pause findings, gather interest in the place branding and project ideas. Seek steering group members for the new enterprise group and
- Agree and seek funding for a quick win project for 2024 season to galvanise everyone – eg linked to refreshing shop fronts in the three town centres with refreshed paintwork and with sense of place themed artwork and orientation posters in empty shop windows plus ideas to engage more local business in an existing event/festival such as the monthly craft fair .
- Establish (or repurpose an existing) Be Local Garnock Valley Facebook page for locals initially and encourage business engagement on the page with posts on features and offers, plus quick responses to queries.
- Repurpose and develop the content from the app developed by Beith Development Trust around lockdown.
- Arrange a learning exchange to Go Girvan (for example) to explore their approach to repositioning the town.



10. Recalibrating Tourism in GARNOCK VALLEY



Place Standard – How good is Our Place?



Tourism in Scotland is traditionally measured by footfall, spend and employment. SCOTO seeks to recalibrate tourism and measure what is important to the individual community. Many communities have developed Community Action Plans and/or are taking part in Place Planning activity.

These plans highlight priority themes and issues for the individual community. By measuring impact of CLT in relation to local priority issues the benefits can be clearly articulated – eg young people retained/attracted to return, permanent living wage jobs created, local crafters and producers supported, heritage assets celebrated, volunteer hours provided and succession addressed. This measurement demonstrates tourism as a force for good within the community.

10. Recalibrating Tourism in GARNOCK VALLEY



"What we measure affects what we do. If we measure the wrong thing, we will do the wrong thing. If we don't measure something, it becomes neglected, as if the problem didn't exist".

Carnegie UK

This Press Pause community led tourism initiative can help address some of the identified issues within Garnock Valley and also stimulate new ideas.

Tourism has traditionally been measured by footfall, overnight stay and spend. However this information doesn't convey anything about the impacts of visitor activity. Better measures are jobs created, young people retained, cultural assets conserved. These convey the positive impacts of visitor activity.

Press Pause seeks to better understand what the local community issues and priorities are and then see how community led tourism can address these in some way. There may be a priority relating to local culture and heritage and measuring event and festival activity can demonstrate how visitor activity is helping conserve local culture.

Further work is recommended exploring what the local priority issues are in Garnock Valley and how visitor activity could help address these. Measurement is key to this.

11. Press Pause Garnock Valley

Closing Thoughts



SCOTO's Vision

"For every community in Scotland to embrace and be ambassadors for localness and to develop community led tourism as a force for good which enables their community to be an even better place to live, work and visit".

The Press Pause initiative seeks to help individual geographic communities take time out to consider tourism and how it could be much more of a force for good within their community. This involves business and community interests having constructive conversations – and everyone attending the workshop having a stake in the game and willing to take things forward.

Post pandemic there has been a focus on recovery but this can't be to pre-pandemic conditions. We are in a new era in tourism – post Covid, post Brexit, in the midst of a technological revolution and a climate and biodiversity emergency. SCOTO believes this requires a new approach as well as a new mindset which has responsible tourism at its core. It also presents many exciting opportunities at a local level for individual communities to focus on, which also mirrors what more and more visitors are seeking – to meet local people, have authentic experiences, discover new places, learn new skills and spend locally.

This reports seeks to set out what was discussed together, highlight what could be done differently to help the community move forward, provide a range of ideas for consideration and also set out inspiration from elsewhere. The community is the driver and can establish which ideas to pursue or explore further.

Whatever action is taken the primary aim should be for tourism to deliver real benefits that address local issues at an individual community level – the presence of visitors should be making a positive difference and helping make the community an even better place to live, work and visit.

scoto

Scottish Community Tourism