

2030 Go Golspie Tourism Strategy



SKS Scotland CIC

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Executive Summary

The Golspie 2030 Tourism Strategy was commissioned by Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE), with its objective being to enable; “Go Golspie Development Trust and the wider community of Golspie to strategically plan tourism development in the village. It will allow the community to better utilise the opportunities currently provided by tourism, particularly the North Coast 500 tourist motoring route (NC500). It is the intention that this piece of work will outline a route for Go Golspie and other organisations to create new income streams as well as enhancing footfall for the wider business community in the village.”

Golspie is in the enviable position of being both a rural and coastal destination within relatively easy reach of Inverness and on the official North Coast 500 route. Its location and impressive range of assets and amenities brings Golspie many opportunities, but the town must also address weaknesses such as its limited food offering (in particularly for good quality ‘pub/bistro’ food and evening meals) and some aspects of the accommodation offering which frequently drives potential tourists to alternative and better-known destinations. Improved collaboration between businesses, local organisation and travel industry organisations is essential for Golspie to reach its full potential.


A range of local businesses/organisations were contacted to establish community needs, aspirations and support required, which help inform the strategy and marketing plan (nb. all contacts provided by Go Golspie or which became visible during subsequent research were approached by SKS Scotland: those that have not commented either did not respond or did not want to take part).

Golspie’s tourism infrastructure has been analysed to highlight those areas that need to be improved and others which provide important selling points. The subject of overtourism is looked at in this section and highlighted as a possible threat. The market is also assessed and learnings taken from competitors and comparators to provide useful insight.

The actions recommended in this document are considered by SKS Scotland as achievable for Go Golspie and, in SKS’s experience, would have a quick and impressive return on investment. It provides a clear marketing strategy and plan with indicative actions, costs and a timetable to show how to best market Golspie to tourists.

Large scale developments and investments which would help to attract tourists such as a marina are longer-term goals that stakeholders such as Golspie Community Council are starting to actively examine. The goal of this strategy - as agreed with Go Golspie - is to provide a working document that they and the community use for reference and guidance to implement effective marketing to increase visitor footfall in the town and the opportunities this brings, whilst at the same time ensuring that the impact of any success does not prove detrimental to the local population and environment. Go Golspie wants to actively use this strategy as a working marketing document, adding to it and providing updates which is the recommended course of action to ensure progress is made and the changing environment is adapted to.

The overall vision for the Tourism Strategy is that:

 ***By 2030 Golspie will be a destination of choice for outdoor activities, heritage and adventure tourism, and memorable experiences will be delivered by a welcoming local community.***

Growth markets are highlighted as being the ‘staycation’ sector within the UK, Europe and the USA. Strategies for encouraging diverse businesses and a thriving village are proposed, with suggestions

for improving the customer journey being an integral part. A Strategy Action Plan with phases, aims and actions/deliver is also suggested, which will prove useful when worked in tandem with the Marketing Plan.

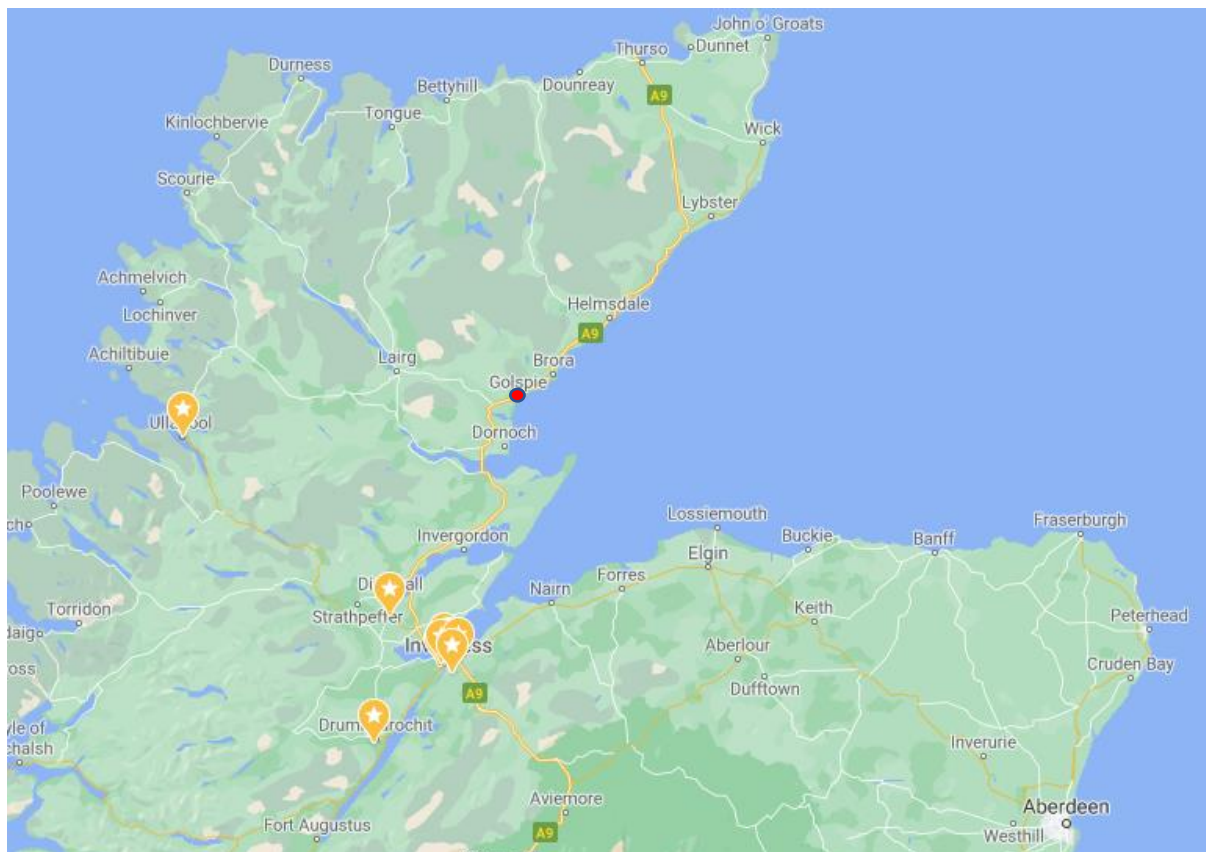
The Marketing Plan gives objectives and the following USP:

Golspie is the stunning outdoor centre of Sutherland with an abundance of activities, heritage attractions and eco-tourism options creating an authentic and memorable experience for visitors.

It also provides key messages and tools to help Golspie create an identity to give visitors an immediate sense of what the town offers, also enabling local enterprises to sell it and their businesses more effectively. A pride in Golspie and its outstanding location and amenities should be conveyed and promoted through them. The tools proposed as being initiatives that Golspie should undertake include a collaborative news network, brand/logo, signage, photography, website, social media, video, printed materials, app, events calendar, collaborations, accommodation opportunities, packaging of products, reviews and improved skills of those delivering the visitor experience. An indicative timetable and costs are also given for these tools, which should help Go Golspie and the wider community prioritise and make decisions going forward.

Finally, potential issues surrounding the delivery of the marketing strategy are addressed and a funding strategy proposed.

1. Introduction



Golspie is a small town in Sutherland, Highlands with a population of approximately 1,350. It sits on the North Sea coast line, 10 miles north of Dornoch and 52 miles north of Inverness.

Objective of Golspie 2030 Tourism Strategy

This piece of work was commissioned by Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE), with its objective being to enable; “Go Golspie Development Trust and the wider community of Golspie to strategically plan tourism development in the village. It will allow the community to better utilise the opportunities currently provided by tourism, particularly the North Coast 500 tourist motoring route (NC500). It is the intention that this piece of work will outline a route for Go Golspie and other organisations to create new income streams as well as enhancing footfall for the wider business community in the village.”

SKS Scotland was appointed by HIE to support Go Golspie, which is looking to take a lead on the marketing/branding aspect of the strategy and recognises that engagement with all other local tourism related organisations will be required to create a holistic and place-based vision for the area. The strategy will clearly articulate how the community will achieve this vision through the delivery of three strands of activity: assets, infrastructure and marketing/branding.

There is an exciting opportunity for Go Golspie to help create new income streams, attract investment and encourage visitors to the benefit of the business community in the town. It already has an impressive range of assets and attractions within it and the surrounding areas. With a coordinated and planned approach between the various organisations and businesses, these can be marketed more effectively and the development of other facilities, such as restaurants that are open in the evening and more varied accommodation options, encouraged.

1. Vision and Objectives

Go Golspie was set up in 2015/16 to stimulate economic growth and social activities in the area with the objective of making Golspie a more attractive place to live and work. It assists in the development of the town’s assets and to create and improve job opportunities along with affordable housing. Its aim is to implement the 2016 Golspie Development Plan, which includes tourism as an area of development. It has delivered a wide range of projects to date, including the Community Bus (which is available for the community to book on-line) and the recent community purchase of Fountain Road Hall for multi-use purpose from the Church of Scotland following a successful Scottish Land Fund bid.

The 2030 Golspie Tourism Strategy will enable Go Golspie and the wider community to:

- strategically plan tourism development in the village
- allow the community to better utilise the opportunities currently provided by tourism, particularly the North Coast 500 tourist motoring route (NC500)
- outline a route for Go Golspie and other organisations to create new income streams as well as enhancing footfall for the wider business community in the village

2. Community Needs Analysis and Challenges

As shown in Appendix 1 (which details Golspie’s current demographics and some of its economic

challenges), Golspie has a high rate of unemployment and is recorded in The Scottish Index of Deprivation as having above average levels of deprivation. Consequently, and as with many smaller towns and villages, Golspie must strive to increase levels of employment, aim to keep young people in the town and attract others to live and work there to create a vibrant, sustainable and growing economy. The opportunities available to Golspie through tourism, are, therefore, extremely important. Its excellent amenities and outstanding location should be marketed to take advantage of the opportunities currently available and enhanced through an increase in staycations, to increase the number of tourists and visitors coming into the town and encourage them to stay for longer periods of time.

This project will examine these opportunities by:

- articulating a holistic and place-based vision for Golspie
- showing how the community will achieve this vision
- identifying new income streams
- highlighting how to increase footfall to local businesses
- creating a strategy for marketing/branding, partnerships and funding
- ensuring that the assets and infrastructure are planned to best serve visitors and local community alike
- enabling Golspie to maximise the tourism related opportunities arising for the community through the NC500

3. Assets: amenities, recreation & attractions

Golspie has an impressive number of amenities, recreational assets and attractions available to residents, people local to the area, visitors and tourists:



EDUCATION

- The town is home to Golspie Primary School (with approximately 95 pupils) and Golspie High School (with approximately 250 pupils).



HEALTH CARE

- The Lawson Memorial Hospital is located in Golspie which provides healthcare services including care of the elderly (medical and rehab), a minor injuries service, out-of-hours service and a day surgery unit.
- It also has a health centre, an NHS dental practice and a pharmacist



TRANSPORT

- Golspie has a railway station with regular trains to and from Inverness and also northwards to Wick with onward travel to Thurso and ferry connections to Orkney.



- It also has a regular bus service run by Stagecoach North which enables connections throughout Scotland and the UK.
- The Go Golspie Community Trust bus was purchased in 2018 and is available to book on-line to members of the local community.

SPORT & RECREATION

There are a multitude of sports and outdoor recreation activities in Golspie, particularly for a town of its relatively small population:



- Sutherland swimming pool is based in the town, which is run by High Life Highland and hosts swimming classes, aqua aerobics and lane swimming times. It had a £1.2 million refurbishment by the Highland Council in 2008, and has a 25m pool, sauna/steam room, fitness room and classes.

- Golspie Bowling and Tennis Club.
- There are numerous walking/hiking opportunities around Golspie and surrounding areas, with trails connecting local towns, areas of outstanding beauty such as the Big Burn and a multitude of forest and hill walks.
- Highland Wildcat bike trails is located just outside the town, making it the most northern of Scotland's mountain bike centres. It is billed as the longest freeride decent in the UK with a trail on Ben Bhraggie. Highland Hardline also operates locally, providing a downhill race series for younger riders and instruction-based sessions.
- A cycling track connects the town to Loch Fleet and Littleferry.
- The town is also home to the North of Scotland Kart Club, which is based to the South of Golspie beside a small static caravan site.
- Golspie Golf Course has a challenging 18-hole layout which was rated 54th in Golf World's Top 100 courses in Scotland (2015). The club house serves a range of hot meals throughout the day. Golspie is often referred to as a centre of golf, being very close to Royal Dornoch, Brora and Tain which are all highly regarded courses.



- Golspie

Watersports is made up of the East Sutherland Canoe Club and the Golspie Rowing Club, with a club store adjacent to the harbour. The Canoe Club is affiliated to the Scottish Canoe Association and the Sutherland Sports Council. They have recently been awarded funding from the Kilbraur Wind Farm to help buy canoes, wetsuits and a trailer. They are also exploring funding opportunities for coaching training to assist visitors who would like to hire their canoes.

- The Golspie Angling Club is active in the area, visiting Loch Horn, Loch Brora and Loch Lundie for fly fishing (brown trout, salmon and sea trout).
- A local ParkRun club is being set up, encouraging running in both the local community and visitors to Golspie. Running is increasing in popularity and is a recreation that could be

further developed and promoted in Golspie and the local area by setting up welcoming clubs and holding events/races.

- Golspie Sutherland Football Club, founded in 1877, is one of the oldest football clubs in the country and an active part of the community encouraging memberships and participation.

HISTORY & HERITAGE

- Dunrobin Castle is based 1 mile outside Golspie and is a major tourist attraction, bringing thousands of visitors to the area. It has a tea-room, shop, museum and gardens where daily falconry displays are given. It attracts bus tours and cruise liner tours, which sell excursions to the Castle.



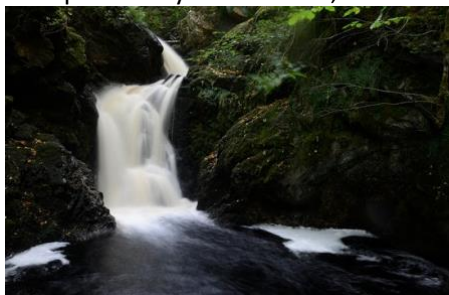
EVENTS

- Golspie holds a Gala week every year at the end of July; it's been running for 39 years and has a diverse programme of events. These include golf competition, bowls competition, Ben Bhraggie hill race, fancy dress parade, wheelbarrow race and the massed pipe bands. It began as a "homecoming week" for returning locals, but now entertains visitors too.
- A torch light procession has been held on the 1st January in Golspie and is enjoyed predominantly by the local community but could be successfully promoted to tourists to grow the winter season.
- Existing businesses and amenities within Golspie are likely (and should be encouraged) to hold their own 'events' such as open days or small competitions. For example, it was suggested by Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland that Golspie should host a regular event that could start as a small race but develop over a number of years.

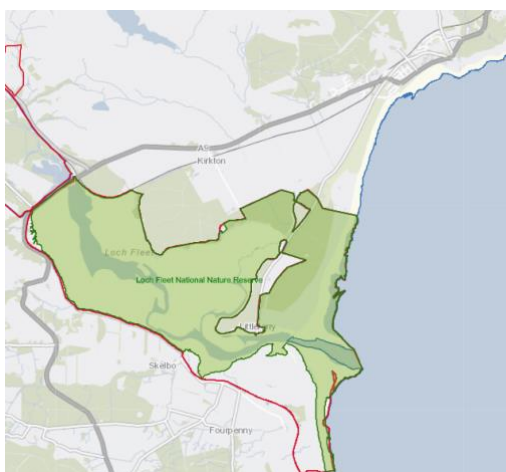
NATURAL LANDSCAPE

Golspie is located in East Sutherland, an area of natural beauty which attracts visitors from the UK and beyond.

- Golspie is surrounded by beautiful beaches including the North and South beaches, Embo, Dornoch, Burn Mouth, Brora, Shandwick Bay, Portmahomack and Crakaig beach.
- As previously mentioned, there are many opportunities to walk or hike in and around Golspie, from well-known landmarks such as the Big Burn gorge walk (see photo left), climbing Ben Bhraggie, beach and coastal walks.



- Loch Fleet National Nature Reserve is located a couple of miles south of Golspie, beyond the golf course. It has an extensive tidal basin fringed by coastal habitats and Scots pine forest and is recognised as an internationally important wildlife reserve with osprey, terns and swallows in abundance.



It is clear that Golspie benefits from excellent amenities, sports & recreational facilities, historic sites and an abundance of fantastic natural landscape. Easily accessible information should be given to tourists and visitors encouraging them to visit the town by promoting its wide range of assets and, once they are there, to stay in Golspie and enjoy all it and its surrounding area has to offer.

4. Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Stakeholder and community engagement is a vital element of this project to establish community needs, aspirations and required support: all integral to the strategy's development. After discussions with Go Golspie it was agreed that the preferred route was to engage one-to-one with a varied range of local businesses and organisations enabling us to gather a range of ideas, aspirations and perceived obstacles to progress. Members of the public who didn't have business interests were not contacted for this research, as the immediate objective of Go Golspie was to connect with businesses and stakeholders.

We obtained a full list of local businesses and contacts, including:

Thistle Lets/Monster Moves Golspie Inn	Capaldi's Ice Cream Identity Hair salon	Nisa Invicta House B&B/The Fabric Fairy
Sutherland Stonework Ben Braggie Hotel	Poppy's Café Coffee Bothy	Bracoden B&B Benview Stores
Highland Whisky Chocolates Lindsay's & Co	Golspie Stone Shop Grants Butchers	The Golspie Gala Dunrobin Castle
Campbell's Fish Merchant Trawler	Mitchells Chemist Bike Hub	Stags Head Hotel Highland Tourism Alliance (proposed)
Golspie Community Council		

All of these businesses/organisations were contacted either by phone call or email and interviews were carried out with those that were available and/or wanted to discuss their thoughts through one-to-one calls (face to face meetings were unfortunately not possible due to COVID restrictions). These conversations have helped to inform the opportunities which the project will create for the local economy and community through the tourism strategy and marketing plan.

It is worth noting that Golspie Community Council is also prioritising tourism in the town, in particular:

- Short-term: challenges were created by a rise in visitor numbers in 2020 (due to more UK tourists/motorhomes visiting Golspie because of Covid-19 restrictions on overseas travel leading to an increase in staycations). To accommodate this and avoid overnight parking in the town centre/beach area, a small temporary motorhome park was created in the mountain bike car park and signage installed to direct people there. Portaloos were hired by the Community Council to alleviate potential issues around disposing of waste sewage which they are looking at doing again this year (2021) along with the installation of septic tanks. Nb. there is interest from an experienced party in buying and developing the industrial estate in Golspie and the adjacent field, which is extremely positive news but there are no firm plans or applications for this as yet.
- Long-term: Golspie has suffered from three floods due to storm surges in the last fifteen years which have caused significant damage, including to the promenade area and giving concern for public safety. The frequency of such floods appears to be increasing. The Community Council are therefore investigating the possible refurbishment of the town's sea defence structure which was created 150 years ago. This is likely to cost approximately £2-3 million, so will clearly rely on funding being obtained. The Community Council is applying for money from the Coastal Communities Fund (£100,000 approximately) with future funding routes also being sought. This development would provide an opportunity for the creation of a marina and its associated activity, which would prove to be of major appeal to tourists and an exciting prospect for Golspie and the local businesses that are likely to benefit.

The full details of the stakeholder engagement are listed in Appendix 2. Highlighted below in the word cloud are some of the significant themes to arise.



Partners / Potential Partners



GOVERNMENT BODIES

The Highland Council

We have engaged with the Council's 'Infrastructure and Environment' Department, in particular looking at signage for the town (and the possible application for regeneration funding for this) and stakeholder contacts.

The Highland Council's tourism role¹ *"is focussed largely on tourism development rather than marketing and promotion (which is carried out by VisitScotland and local Destination Organisations). In particular the Council's role includes*

- *Assisting in the development of tourism strategies for Highland*
- *Providing much of the infrastructure used by visitors*
- *Supporting tourism businesses and business groups"*

Tourism Infrastructure Plan

The Council published a draft Tourism Infrastructure Plan in November 2020². It aims *"to provide a simple audit of relevant tourism infrastructure around Highland as well as identifying gaps in provision"*.

Elements of this have helped inform the Infrastructure Analysis (section 6).

The Highland Council also works closely with a series of Destination Management Organisations.

Highlands & Islands Enterprise

The HIE support services are open to communities, social enterprises and business of all sizes and sectors. They run a number of programmes that may be useful to Go Golspie, including 'Communities Leading in Tourism'³ - *a personal development programme which will give you, and your community organisation, the knowledge and leadership skills you'll need to influence, plan and manage sustainable tourism recovery for the benefit of your community.* This is a 12-day online programme, led by business experts and explores issues such as tourism sector Covid recovery, seeing what others are doing, social enterprise and community case studies. The current session closing date was 7th January 2021, more dates will be released on their website.

Visit Scotland

www.visitscotland.com *"proudly promote the wealth of incredible features our country has to offer. Its aim is to benefit Scotland by growing its tourism industry and giving it a renowned presence in the global marketplace."*

It has a number of initiatives to assist destinations and tourism businesses in Scotland, including marketing advice, digital advice, toolkits, funding opportunities and specific courses.



SPORTS INITIATIVES

Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland

¹ https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1457/tourism_and_visitor_attractions/148/tourism

² https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/12991/draft_sutherland_tourism_infrastructure_plan_discussed_at_committee

³ <https://www.hie.co.uk/support/browse-all-support-services/communitiesleadingintourism/>

Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland (hosted by Scottish Cycling) is striving to develop the sustainability of mountain biking and devise a Bike Plan for the Highlands and Sutherland. They are working in collaboration with 'Bike Plan Switzerland'⁴ to benefit projects in both countries.

Due to Covid-19 the ability to carry out engagement and consultation has been limited and progress therefore restricted. Golspie is seen, however, as a town of interest and the organisation are looking at it as a possible growth destination for visitors/tourism. The existing 'Highland Wild Cat' trail on Ben Bhraggie was created approximately 15 years ago and, although there is a strong team of volunteers who work hard to maintain it, it is looking worn and could do with some maintenance work. It is still recognised amongst the mountain biking community as a fun, progressive and challenging trail, with an iconic unique landscape and views. It has the benefit of having a walking trail up the front of the mountain which meets the bike trail, which makes it more appealing to families, although it is not an environment for unskilled bikers.

There is some community interest in developing a lower trail for those mountain bikers with less experience or for children, which is also likely to encourage tourists. Biking events in the town are also something which Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland recommend are developed by Golspie, and attracting organisations such as the Highland Hardline seen as an objective.

Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland is also investigating new trails with longer, more accessible routes through the countryside which would provide impressive viewpoints. It is expected that this would not require a huge outlay apart from installing signage and that it would appeal to the local community, families and those tourists who are wanting to take part in outdoor activities. Any project such as this would be designed to be appropriate for beginners through to the more experienced, giving an achievable adventure for outdoor enthusiasts as opposed to dedicated mountain bikers.

NC500 Marketing Opportunities for Golspie and its businesses

The North Coast 500 is a 516-mile-long road trip that was launched in 2015, starting and ending in Inverness following the main roads along the coastal edges of Wester Ross, Sutherland, Caithness, Easter Ross, the Black Isle and Inverness-shire. Golspie is located on the NC500 route, just over a one hour drive north of Inverness. Further background and the route's impact on Golspie is given in Appendix 3.

The [North Coast 500 website](#) reached 3.3 billion people worldwide in 2018. It is the leading digital platform for the tourist route and businesses can be listed on the website from £110 per annum and obtain:

- A listing on the NorthCoast500 website and its interactive map.
- Permission to use its logos and trademarks.
- Social media package with 8 social media promotions throughout the year.
- Priority stockists of the NC500 maps,
- PR & marketing activities.
- Monthly newsletters.
- Member events, VisitScotland VIP scheme, VisitScotland Classic car scheme.

Golspie is mentioned in their planned itineraries but is not highlighted (Dunrobin Castle is).

- [The VisitScotland website](#) has a dedicated section for those interested in the route. It

⁴ <https://www.bikeplan.swiss/?lang=en>

features Dunrobin Castle but does not mention Golspie - only Brora Beach, Brora Golf Club and the Nature Reserve. VisitScotland does offer free listings on its site and partnership opportunities for which they should be contacted.

The NC500 is clearly a significant opportunity for Golspie to take advantage of, with the route going directly through the town and consequent substantial increase in traffic. Improved promotion/marketing, signage, street scaping and eating / retail options will undoubtedly encourage tourists to stop and spend time exploring. However, Golspie's position on the route – both clockwise and anticlockwise – is seen as not being the ideal stop for visitors.

Whilst looking to take advantage of these opportunities, the town, its entrepreneurs and businesses must, therefore, also promote Golspie as a destination in itself: it has the amenities, facilities and landscape to provide the ideal holiday destination for tourists to base themselves and explore the Highlands of Scotland.



DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS

Visit Sutherland

"Visit Sutherland emerged as an idea brought forward by the voluntary sector in Sutherland to investigate opportunities for Homecoming 2014. The Council of Voluntary Services North (CVS North) and Voluntary Groups East Sutherland (VGES) secured funding in 2011 from the Sutherland Partnership Community Project Development Scheme to invite ideas from community groups across Sutherland."

Venture North

Is *"a group focusing on promoting the tourist offer of Caithness & Sutherland with a grass roots collaborative ethos."*

We spoke to Venture North and they aren't aware of any marketing taking place on behalf of Golspie or of having had any particular engagement with any businesses/groups in the town. They would be keen to receive content that they can share on their website and social media. They have a 'What's On' page on their website which is free to upload information to, and they'd be able to highlight walks, outdoor activities etc in Golspie. They believe that staycations will be the primary activity for the next 12 to 24 months with tourists looking specifically for outdoor activity holidays, which they feel would fit the Golspie model particularly well.

Heart of Sutherland

"The Heart of Sutherland Tourism is a constituted organisation, which was formed to promote tourism and business attractions located in communities within the main NC500 route."

Full membership of HOST costs £25 per year, with which you receive a full listing on the website including a photo and business description, and a welcome message on social media channels, features, promotions and social media interaction. They were contacted, and explained they are a small group of 4 on the committee to try to promote the area and the businesses on social media and via our website. They would be happy to speak to Go Golspie directly to assist if they can.

Highland Tourism Alliance (proposed)

"Connecting communities, businesses and visitors"

We spoke to John Murray, the driving force behind this initiative, who explained that he has been

trying to create the Highland Tourism Alliance for a number of years and is making good progress in bringing together key bodies and personnel to form a body that acts as an umbrella organisation, effectively promoting communities and businesses in the Highlands of Scotland to tourists. He would like to form a Board of 20 people, with expertise from Government bodies, Destination Management Organisations, travel, accommodation, business, distilleries etc. He wants the tourism opportunities within the Highlands of Scotland to be considered strategically, rather than individual towns and businesses simply thinking of themselves, believing the promotion of the Highlands as a whole would be more effective than small initiatives.

5. Market Assessment

The nearby towns of Dornoch and Brora have been examined to identify their marketing strategies and what can be learned from them, along with the comparative towns of Aviemore and Stirling to highlight initiatives that they undertake particularly effectively. These are shown in Appendix 4.

6. Tourism Infrastructure

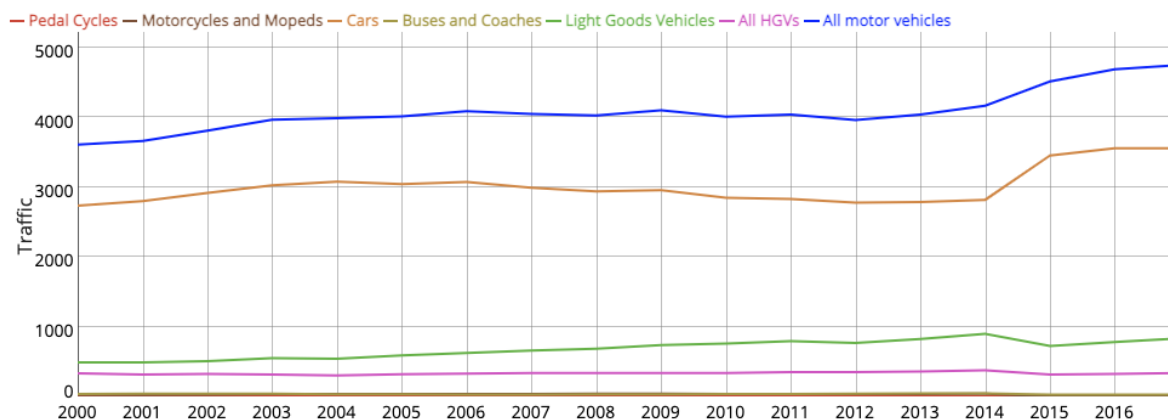
Overtourism

At this relatively early stage of its tourism development, ‘overtourism’ has not, as yet, been significant in Golspie. Comments made by business owners during this project’s research include that they had seen a marked increase in road traffic since NC500 was promoted, parking around the Co-op during the summer can be difficult and wildcamping/motorhome parking has created litter/waste problems. However, the Council’s Draft Tourism Infrastructure Plan (which examined parking, electric vehicle charge points, public toilets, motorhome waste disposal facilities, public wi-fi services and paths/trails) suggests that Golspie is relatively well-placed at the present time to cope with an increase in tourism numbers. The report notes that possible gaps in provision include motorhome parking, which Golspie Community Council is currently addressing with the temporary motorhome park and portaloos created in the mountain bike car park last year and which will also be in place during 2021, with the possible addition of a septic tank (see section 4).

Studies have, however, shown that the influx of visitors and tourists in Scotland and the Highlands & Islands in particular over the last few years due to the success of various marketing initiatives, has had a major impact on some communities and this is something Golspie should be aware of. Possible impacts, as highlighted by ‘Sustainable Tourism or Overtourism on the NC500’ by Lucy Hutton, include wild camping, irresponsible behaviour, socio-cultural impacts and economic impacts – the latter two impacts having generally positive outcomes.

The following graph shows traffic statistics⁵ on the A9 between Golspie and Brora, indicating a significant increase between 2014 and 2015, particularly in cars, which can be attributed the impact of the NC500 (figures are not yet available beyond 2017). As noted above, lack of parking has not been flagged as a significant issue in Golspie yet, although some negative comments were made during stakeholder interviews. When researching similar towns that are close to Golspie, however, parking has become a major issue, Dornoch being a case in point. They are currently undertaking a Visitor Management Plan in an effort to collaborate with stakeholders specifically on this issue. This would be something we would recommend that Go Golspie is aware of and considers going forward.

⁵ <https://roadtrafficstats.uk/traffic-statistics-highland-a9-highland-40719>



Trends

Looking back at trends before the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on tourism, Visit Scotland notes that 2019 was a very good year for tourism in the Highlands⁶. “The volume and value of overnight travel to the region exceeded any other year back to 2013. The Highlands attracted 17% of all overnight trips and 13% of the total overnight tourism expenditure in Scotland...The driver behind this strong regional performance in 2019 was domestic tourism. Residents of Scotland travelled much more to the Highlands compared to previous years, and while this was observed across many Scottish regions in 2019, the Highlands also witnessed a big increase in overnight tourism from residents of England and Wales. Trips, bednights and expenditure of travellers from the rest of Great Britain all increased by 21% from 2018.”

Visit Scotland’s accompanying statistics include:

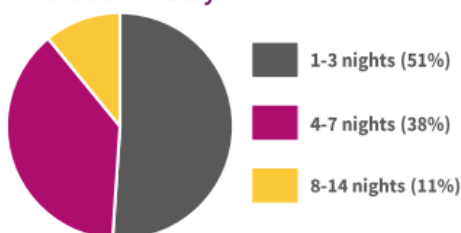
⁶ <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/highland-factsheet-2019.pdf>

Domestic Overnight Tourism, 2019

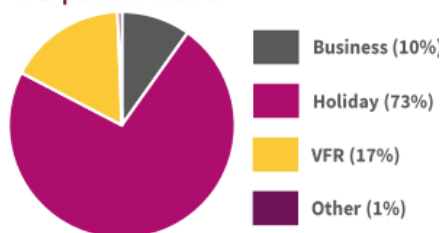
Indicators	Scotland		Highland	
	Key Facts in 2019	% Change 2018/19	Key Facts in 2019	% Change 2018/19
Visits (000s)	13,810	+17%	2,448	+45%
Spend (£M)	3,200	+16%	575	+35%
Nights (000s)	46,413	+15%	9,487	+32%
Average length of stay	3.4 nights	-2%	3.9 nights	-9%
Average spend per day	£69	+1%	£61	+3%
Average spend per visit	£232	-1%	£235	-7%

Source: GBTS, 2019.

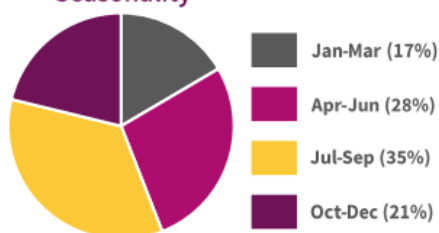
Duration of Stay



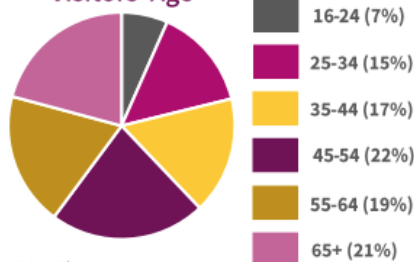
Purpose of Travel



Seasonality

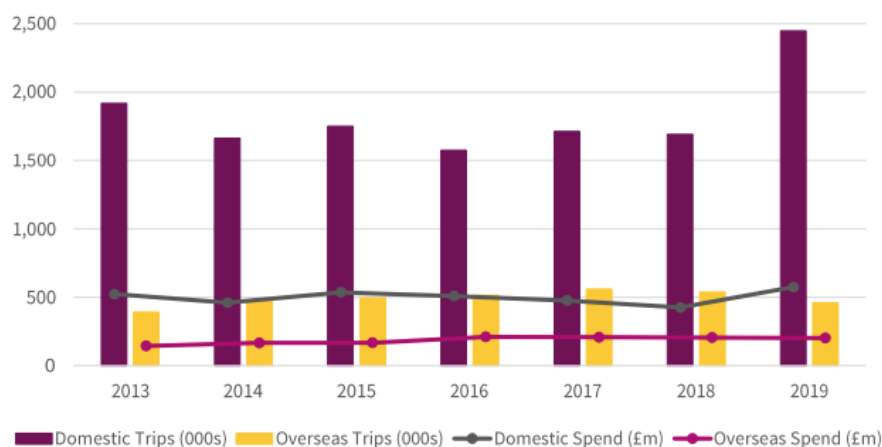


Visitors' Age

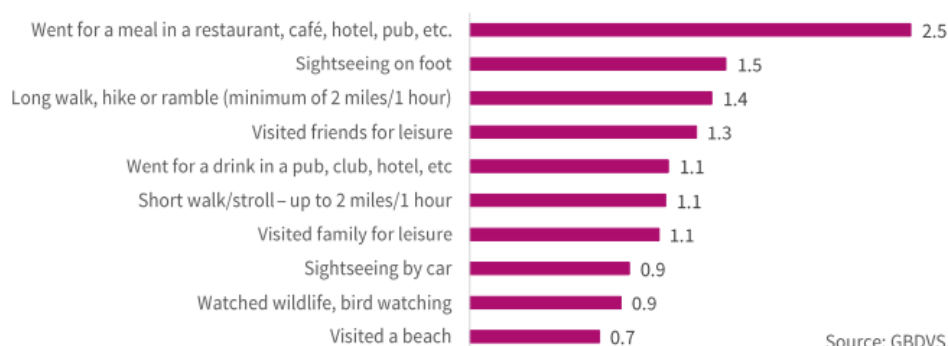


Source: IPS. All charts are based on 3-year average data (2017-2019) on visitors to the Highlands. Figures may not sum up due to rounding.

Domestic and International Overnight Tourism, 2013-2019



Most Popular Activities Undertaken as Part of a Day Trip, Highlands: 2016-18 Average Annual Figures (Number of Day Trips in Millions)



The above graph shows the importance of having good ‘eating out’ options available to tourists in Golspie, to ensure that they are not tempted to go elsewhere. It is also important that it is easy and inviting for visitors to walk around the town and take advantage of all it has to offer. These challenges are particularly relevant to Golspie at the present time, and are addressed in the Marketing Plan (section 8)

Impact of Covid-19

Turning now to the impact of Covid-19, research⁷ carried out for Visit Scotland in the last quarter of 2020 states that:

- A lack of confidence in travelling from December to March is largely driven by restrictions on travel from the government - particularly among Scotland residents where restrictions tend to be introduced earlier than England. Concerns over catching COVID-19 have dropped (from 51% to 46% among U.K. residents) but are still a strong influence.
- It’s worth noting that despite still being in the negative, intentions to take overseas longer trips have increased, suggesting that the public are increasingly starting to consider trips outside of the U.K.
- Higher confidence in Spring trips going ahead means that the profile of intenders is very different to the winter. The 20% of Spring intenders are more likely to be retirees, to belong to risk-averse segments, and to require enhanced safety measures on their trip. Although this audience is likely to have strong pent-up demand, confidence remains low (albeit higher than earlier time periods) and only a small proportion have actually started planning or booking their trip. Pre-nesters are less likely to be considering Scotland in the Spring.
- Coastal destinations grow in popularity in the Spring – likely driven by improvements in the weather – and the differing make-up of visitors (retirees opting for rural over urban destinations). The Highlands is particularly popular – 2 in 5 anticipating a trip there, compared to 3 in 10 in the winter. Commercial self-catering is the number one accommodation type.

Recent market intelligence from Visit Scotland indicates that the prolonged impact of Covid-19 will see a late start to the 2021 tourist season, but once travel restrictions are lifted, staycation visitors will be back in greater numbers. This is the picture coming out of the pandemic, the aim must be to use this opportunity to engage tourists and ensure they become repeat visitors.

⁷ <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/coronavirus-insights/uk-market#tracker>

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis has been carried out to look at the tourism infrastructure within Golspie (see below). Elements of this have been extracted from the Highland Council's Draft Tourism Infrastructure Plan.

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An active, successful Community Trust and community behind it. • The NC500 runs directly through Golspie. • Golspie is considered to have good public parking available throughout the town. This includes 'longer stay' parking i.e. for one day (Golspie Burn, Rhives, Shore Street, Littleferry Road). • A couple of electric vehicle charge points are being located in the town centre. • Golspie has public conveniences that are open all year round and operated by the Council. • It has been proposed by the Council that public WIFI is made available in Golspie. • Paths & trails are prevalent in and around Golspie. • Its amenities, recreation and attractions are outstanding for a town of its size. • Good public transport with links to destinations throughout Scotland. • Supply of B&B accommodation. • There is some current investment in local businesses e.g. hotel and site opposite Fountain Road Hall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Golspie is not perfectly positioned for a 1st or last stop on the NC500. • Lack of cohesive marketing behind Golspie's substantial tourism attractions. • Go Golspie Community Trust volunteers and staff need support in carrying out their work if they are to continue their momentum and undertake the marketing required. • Poor signage both into and around the town. • Lack of eating and dining experiences (no evening dining apart from fish & chip shop). • Motorhome parking was considered a weakness by some participating in the community engagement. • Motorhome waste provision is not currently available in Golspie, but the Council notes that this is a possible gap in provision. • Golspie Links caravan site is small with few amenities. • Lack of popular hotels and accommodation options.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take advantage of the increasing number of visitors to the Highlands. • Promote Golspie, its facilities & activities. • Improve digital presence e.g. website, social media, app. • Align tourism messages eg create brand. • Share info through collaborative news network. • Investigate funding for a Development Officer to assist Go Golspie in carrying out the promotional and marketing techniques that are outlined in section 8 of this strategy. • Make more of the NC500 potential. • Be aware and learn from the affect that overtourism can cause, before the issues impact more on the local population. • Further engage with the Council to ensure talks regarding motorhome parking and waste provision has a successful outcome. • Engage with Destination Management Organisations (such as Venture North) who will actively promote Golspie if content is supplied. • Actively pursue funding opportunities for signage within the town. • Engage with the Council in any revision of its Core Path Plan, to encourage more investment. • Create more of a connection between Dunrobin Castle & Golspie – encourage the Castle to engage with community. • Encourage entrepreneurs and people with experience in tourism to invest in businesses in Golspie, in particular food and accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other areas/towns (competitors) with better tourism infrastructure. • To not improve the promotional and marketing opportunities open to Golspie. • The possible effect of over-tourism in Golspie - a small town with a limited infrastructure. Learnings should be taken from other towns & research which are ahead in their development of tourism, such as Dornoch. • To not work in a collaborative nature with stakeholders and other organisations would lead to missed opportunities. • The opportunities to improve signage, motorhome parking and waste provision, the Core Path Plan etc are not taken.

- Opportunity for more people to **move to Golspie if working from home** (opportunity to use Inverness airport if ‘commuting’ to London).
- Be aware of longer-term projects such as the redevelopment of the sea defences and consequent possibility of a **marina development**.

In summary, the above information indicates that pre-Covid travel to the Highlands of Scotland was strongly increasing, primarily due to rising domestic tourism. 2020 figures are likely to show a continuation of this trend, and although this growth in staycations may return to more normal levels growth when the impact of the current pandemic wanes, indicators suggest that it will continue on an upward trajectory for the next five to ten years. If Golspie wants to take advantage of these visitors and the investment they make, it must therefore address the weaknesses and threats it has and take advantage of its strengths and opportunities through the following proposed tourism strategy and marketing plan.

7. Tourism Strategy

Golspie is in the enviable position of being both a rural and coastal destination, within relatively easy reach of Inverness and on the official North Coast 500 route. This location brings Golspie many opportunities, yet it faces several challenges including some limited/poor local facilities (food and accommodation), the draw of nearby better-known destinations and lack of collaboration with other stakeholders.

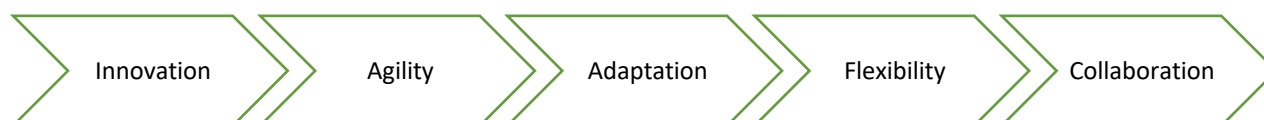
Collaboration between businesses, local organisations and travel industry organisations is essential for Golspie to reach its full potential. They need to work together to ensure the village provides visitors with a great customer experience. The strategy looks to set up a phase of actions that will build momentum over the long-term, creating a sustainable tourism economy for the future.

Visit Scotland’s consumer research during 2020 highlights the key decision points for both consumers and the tourism industry. We will use these to inform the tourism strategy for 2030.

Consumer decision drivers:



The tourism industry needs to respond with:



These characteristics are based on the industry changes during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, they are relevant to the challenges Golspie faces to develop its tourism businesses.

Taking the National Tourism Strategy and Scotland Outlook 2030⁸ as a guide, we have designed a local strategy for Golspie.



Strategic Framework

VISION

By 2030 Golspie will be a destination of choice for outdoor activities, heritage and adventure tourism.
Memorable experiences will be delivered by a welcoming local community.

MISSION

Build the tourism infrastructure of Golspie to allow it to attract and service more visitors.
Increase the length of stay, activities and services provided.
Increase local income from tourism.

STRATEGY

Growth Markets

- Staycation – Scotland, England, NI and Wales.
- Europe - Scandinavia, Germany, France, Spain, Ireland, Netherlands, Italy
- USA

Providing Memorable and Authentic Experiences. Develop products based around:

Outdoor sports, recreation and adventure
Heritage and NC500
Eco Tourism
Events

Encouraging Diverse Businesses and a Thriving Village

Encourage entrepreneurial and resilient businesses and local organisations to deliver experiences.
Build a collaborative network of businesses and organisations, within the village and externally.
Engage the local community.

Improving the Customer Journey

Connections with potential guests at digital touch points.
Storytelling to connect emotionally.
Marketing touch points.
Encourage reviews and word of mouth marketing.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Facilities – Develop visitor facilities to service customers – food, drink, accommodation, activities.

⁸ Scotland Outlook 2030, Responsible Tourism for a Sustainable Future.
<https://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Scotland-Outlook-2030.pdf>

Skills – Develop hospitality skills to deliver great customer service.
Marketing – At a local and national level. Both digital and traditional.
Sustainable and responsible tourism – To improve community wellbeing and protect the local environment.
Review – Collect feedback from visitors and improve market awareness to continue to develop the product.

Delivery of the Strategic Framework

Growth Markets

Staycation – This was already a large part of Golspie’s market and the potential for growth will continue as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. This is an opportunity to ensure those who have been “forced” to holiday in Scotland in 2020 want to return. Marketing messages should reinforce the “consumer decision drivers” mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Europe – The Europeans are the second largest market visiting the Highlands (after GB), they can be expected to return once flights recover to pre-Covid levels. There is potential for an increase in cost of flights whilst the airlines recover, so this will remain a smaller percentage of the market for some time to come.

USA – North American visitors were increasing pre-Covid, they should return once the vaccine is widely available. Flight costs and confidence may slow the recovery of visitor levels.

Delivery will be through three core themes:

STRATEGY THEMES



PROVIDING MEMORABLE AND AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

Authenticity is a buzz word in tourism marketing as it’s high on the list of visitor demands. This can be achieved by personalising local marketing, information and experiences in Golspie. “Localism” is shown by not just churning out the standard experiences and marketing, but by telling the story and through place making.

Visitors are looking to make **memories**, which can be provided by an immersive experience, e.g. living like a local. Allow visitors to discover and experience a different lifestyle for a short period of time in a new and exciting place.

Golspie needs to recognise, understand and build experiences around the assets that visitors will value.

Experiences

There are wide variety of outdoor experiences for a range of abilities and interests, however they aren’t always well promoted or managed.

Businesses and organisations need to collaborate to present themed products to customers and help open new markets.

Outdoor Sports, Recreation and Adventure

Develop products offering ways to enjoy the outdoors:

Walking – create packages with accommodation and walking guides/self-guide route.

Organised by the accommodation, a guide or a local travel agent.

Golf – create stay and play packages. Liaise with other nearby courses to create 36 holes + dinner + accommodation.

Cycle and mountain bike tourism – do accommodation providers have safe bike storage, bike washing facilities, drying rooms? Can they link with bike tour providers and organisations?

Coastal/Marine/Canoeing/Sailing/Fishing – products and packages created around Golspie's natural environment.

Adventure Tourism – taking the outdoor activities products one step further, by packaging them into experiences pushing visitors outside their comfort zone or allowing them to experience new cultures.

Heritage Attractions & NC500 – Golspie should become the best place to stay when visiting Dunrobin Castle. Look for reasons for visitors to stay longer e.g. package Castle tours with whisky tours.

Eco Tourism – visit Golspie by bike, train or electric car. Possible links with Zero Waste Scotland, Energy Saving Trust, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Green Tourism.

Events – Promotion of the Gala Week. Annual Events to celebrate the different activities e.g. bike competitions, track races, fishing week.

ENCOURAGING DIVERSE BUSINESSES AND A THRIVING VILLAGE

The visitor economy will benefit from building a strong network of businesses, interest groups, associations and membership groups sharing a common purpose to grow the tourism economy. Working together they can create a destination where people will stop for more than a brief rest on the NC500.

Accommodation

Taking into consideration investment needed and funding available, the accommodation provision in Golspie could progress in the following order. This would allow enough footfall and income to build up to make a larger investment, such as a good quality hotel and restaurant, viable.

Motorhome Provision. The pop-up trial was successful in 2020. This could grow with funding from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund. It would be the first step in providing more accommodation and building the footfall in the village. The services to facilitate this development are already in place e.g. Co-op, take-out food options. It is also a growth area⁹, with occupancy figures increasing significantly.

⁹ Scottish Accommodation Occupancy Survey 2019

Pods/Cabins. Adding pods or cabins to a motorhome site or hostel setting diversifies Golspie’s offering. To create an area where this accommodation can be developed on one site will allow for economies of scale, combined marketing and expansion of facilities.

Hostel for mountain bikers, families. Modern hostels offer affordable accommodation, with rooms of 2-6 beds ensuite, with shared kitchen and lounge facilities. This would fit well with the outdoor recreation focus.

Self-catering – Current providers may need support marketing their properties and increasing occupancy rates. Online Travel Agencies (OTA’s) can be used in combination with direct sales.

B & B’s - the accommodation sector with the most provision in Golspie. Joint marketing would help increase occupancy rates.

Hotels - The Golspie Inn is under development and The Stag’s Head is currently operating under Covid restrictions. If footfall can be increased by the other accommodation options (leading to more food and drink options in the village) and the town’s other assets marketed more successfully, a hotel should succeed. Occupancy levels for hotels on the NC500 is good, especially for high-end provision. There is a fantastic opportunity if the right product with good customer service is put in place.

Food and Drink

This accounts for 20% of visitor spend¹⁰, so Golspie may be losing significant income through lack of provision. It is a vital link in the tourism strategy – helping connect the nature, heritage and activities with a quality visitor provision of food, beverage, accommodation and retail.

Scotland’s local produce is a distinctive asset which should be marketed to visitors. Products such as whisky, salmon, shortbread, jams, seafood should all be part of the visitor offering.

Different visitors will have differing needs; NC500 visitors may be attracted by a fine dining experience whereas mountain bikers may want “food-on-the-go”.

It is important to reflect the quality and authenticity for all food and drink experiences offered in Golspie.

Activities

The list of activities described in the previous “experiences” list take time and commitment to develop. Partnership with organisations such as Cycling Scotland are vital for funding and knowledge. Activities are delivered on a local level, the infrastructure of trained guides and associated businesses e.g. bike hire need to develop/expand to facilitate these activities.

Place Making

Place making “creates an identity, an image, a difference from other places¹¹”, it helps to increase visitors’ positive feelings about a place, thus increasing the likelihood of a return visit and a glowing review online and to friends. Signage, branding and marketing all contribute to this. Also essential is

¹⁰ Scotland Tourism Strategy 2020

¹¹ An Examination of the Role of Placemaking in Tourism on the Entrepreneurial Eco System - <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/tfschmtcon/86/>

the support from local businesses and stakeholders, and ultimately the goal is to attract new entrepreneurs to expand the visitor experience.

IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

The aim is to provide customers with a consistently good experience to encourage them to return and recommend the area to others. We need to ensure their experience is excellent at every touch point.

Journey	Customer	Golspie Touch Points
<i>Inspiration</i>	Searching and looking for ideas. E.g. sees a friend's photos on social media.	Search engines Review websites Social Media Links on partner sites e.g. NC500 website OTAs
<i>Shopping</i>	Compare offers, activities, reviews.	Informative website Social media informative content Partner sites OTAs
<i>Booking</i>	Book transport, accommodation, activities	Direct bookings. Via Golspie website. Via partner sites. E.g. tours and excursion sites OTAs
<i>Visit</i>	Visit attractions, experience activities, visit shops and restaurants.	Local recommendations Signposting Review sites Social media
<i>Post Trip</i>	Review and feedback	Ask for reviews at destination Review websites Social media

Digital Technology

"Technology has become intertwined with every aspect of tourism. It gives us information and choice. It is an essential part of how a traveller researches and books a trip, experiences a destination and shares that with the world.¹²"

An improved digital presence will help Golspie access new visitors and increase revenue. Digital is at the heart of the customer journey, from using websites for research and booking to; using mobile apps during a trip; or writing reviews and sharing photos upon returning home.

Marketing

The Marketing Plan (section 8) examines digital options such as a website, apps and the importance of a presence on local, regional and national tourism sites, in more detail.

¹² Scotland Outlook 2030

Reviews and User Generated Content

“User generated content is integral to destination marketing. Emotional connections with products, people and place are being made in the digital world and visitors can now get a taste of what Scotland might be like to visit before arriving¹³”

To create authenticity in the product, storytelling through bloggers and social media is very powerful. For example, a simple story about “The Trawler” having the best fish and chips in Scotland to tales of an amazing adventure on the mountain biking trails can create a story around Golspie in a prospective visitor’s mind and encourage them to visit. Golspie viewed through the eyes of a visitor can highlight the current assets of the village and help build footfall to reach the ultimate goal.

Package products

Support development and wider availability of packaged tourism products. Stakeholders need to work together to design, develop, market and deliver these products.

INFRASTRUCTURE



We have described how accommodation, food and beverage, activities and communication facilities make up the core tourism infrastructure needed. To support these facilities a wider infrastructure needs to be built:

Skills

Go Golspie could help facilitate development of tourism in the village by highlighting opportunities to improve the skills of those delivering the visitor experience. Management, leadership, enterprise and delivery skills all require appropriate training to deliver a high-quality product.

Digital: Build the digital skills capability of the sector through development and delivery of a series of digital skills courses covering IT, web and social media awareness for business.

Hospitality qualifications: In partnership with industry, Higher and Further Education develop hospitality and tourism courses suited to the local market to build opportunity to work and train in the area.

Guide Training: promotion of entrepreneurship through training in a specific field. e.g. train British Canoe Union instructors to take tourists on a canoe safari along the coast.

Marketing See section 8.

Sustainable Tourism

Golspie’s tourism developments will aim to have a positive economic, social, and environmental impact on the village. These characteristics are essential for the ongoing success of the local tourism industry. Go Golspie and other stakeholder organisations need to work together to ensure benefit is felt across the community, with employment and economic opportunity fairly distributed throughout the village.

¹³ Scotland Outlook 2030

Responsible Tourism

Go Golspie should promote a positive interaction of visitors, residents, and businesses with tourism. For example, promoting the opportunity to travel responsibly and follow responsible business practices.

Review - Measurement and Monitoring

It is important to measure the impact of the tourism strategy by:

Customer feedback – facilitate a village-wide method of measuring visitor satisfaction. Share village wide to highlight strengths and weaknesses in the visitor experience.

Village tourism group – to share knowledge, work collaboratively and execute village-wide development plans.

Strategic Approach to Development

In the table below, we have taken a strategic approach to the different phases of development. The focus is on creating a destination and telling its story, so people will want to stop for 3 nights because there is a variety of things for them to do/see/visit.



STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Phases 1 - 4	Aim	Action / Delivery
1 Market what is available.	A place to stop for an activity and a coffee/fish and chips E.g. round of golf, bike ride, beach walk. Fantastic coffee shop, great fish and chips, beautiful beach.	Social media platforms. Reviews of coffee shops and The Trawler. Signposting development. Annual gala event. Create village tourism group/sub group.
1 Build awareness	A place to stop for an activity and a night in a B and B or self-catering.	Social Media. Basic map/leaflet development. Build partner website links. Collaboration between accommodation and activity providers.
2 NC500 Stopping Point “motorhome friendly”	A place to stop for a campervan overnight stay, activities and food/drink. Known as a “motorhome friendly”	Motorhome site development. Website development. Fountain Road pop-up restaurant.

	destination with good facilities to empty tanks, buy food, eat out and experiences.	
2 Build reputation	Place making activities - E.g. hanging baskets, banner flags, give people a sense of what is there and why they should stop.	Place making. Digital presence expanded. Marketing initiatives.
3 Develop accommodation	A place with a variety of accommodation – campervans, camping, cabins, hostel. Focus on environmentally friendly options.	Product development – attracting entrepreneurs, skills training. Deliver an annual programme of events.
3 Develop activities	Additional mountain bike trails, footpaths, coastal experiences are developed and marketed.	Activity development. Integrated marketing of activity product.
4 Golspie, the outdoor capital. (moving beyond a NC stopping point)	A place with a variety of all levels of accommodation, restaurants, great cafes. Or a great local seafood restaurant. Gift shops and pop-up markets are well used.	Product development – sustain more accommodation options, restaurants and shops.

8. Marketing Plan

The marketing plan outlined below (i.e. the practical interpretation of the tourism strategy) is designed to be a ‘working document’ that can be developed, adapted and re-interpreted as Go Golspie and the community takes ownership and inevitable external influences impact, such as funding and changes in businesses within the town. The opportunities available should be continuously reassessed and taken advantage of, tweaking the plan as required.



OBJECTIVES

1. Promote Golspie as a stand-alone destination – an outdoor capital - packed with outdoor pursuits, activities, heritage attractions and eco-tourism options.
2. Encourage tourists to stay longer in Golspie i.e. 2 nights plus.
3. Maximise the considerable opportunities brought to Golspie by NC500 tourists, making the town a ‘must-stop’ on the route.



Unique Selling Point (USP)

Golspie is the stunning outdoor centre of Sutherland located on the NC500, with an abundance of activities, heritage attractions and eco-tourism options creating an authentic and memorable experience for visitors.

TARGET MARKETS

- Staycation – Scotland, England, NI and Wales.
- Europe - Scandinavia, Germany, France, Spain, Ireland, Netherlands, Italy
- USA

KEY MESSAGES

It is useful to have a key message for the town to help create an identity which gives visitors an immediate sense of what Golspie offers them and to enable local businesses to sell the town more effectively.

For example, in a logo the following key message could be used as the strapline:

The Outdoor Destination: Visit, Stay, Experience

Supplementary text:

**Experience Golspie, its outdoor adventures, activities and natural beauty!
This beautiful coastal town is ideally located between the mountains and sea, packed with
memory-making experiences for you and your family.**

TOOLS

The following marketing tools should be used to start promoting Golspie to tourists who are looking to visit the Highlands of Scotland and also those travelling on the NC500.

Collaborative News Network

As mentioned previously, it is vital to the success of the Golspie 2030 Tourism Strategy that a Collaborative News Network is created from the outset, which is flexible and can adapt throughout but allows all stakeholders to be involved and take ownership of the plans. It is important that local businesses buy-into the Strategy, taking a pride in all Golspie has to offer and enabling them to sell the whole package.

A Collaborative News Network can be initiated through meetings (remote or actual) when the strategy is shared and a working team created to action points. Digital communication such as WhatsApp can be used to communicate progress, which could develop to become a private area of a Golspie website, newsletter, blog etc.

Brand

A brand name/logo should be created for Golspie that can be used on all materials and by local businesses, to give a cohesive, professional impression that gives a sense of place. A graphic designer could be employed to design a logo or a simple design can be created relatively easily and cheaply on-line if required, through websites such as <http://www.canva.com/>.

For example, this was created quickly and was free to design:



Branding such as this will help differentiate Golspie from other local towns such as Brora and Dornoch.

After initially viewing the branding suggestion above, a board member suggested that the name 'Go Golspie', created for the Golspie Development Trust, is extended into the tourism brand to link the organisations. Using the above design, it could therefore look like:



The 'Go Golspie' brand would also successfully extend to give the many attractions within Golspie an identity, such as 'Go Golf', 'Go Walk', 'Go Bike', 'Go Shop', 'Go Swim', 'Go Adventure' etc. These devices would be particularly effective when used in social media and for hashtags e.g. #GoGolf.

Signage

Research carried out for this strategy has identified that poor signage is a significant weakness for Golspie and its businesses. Improved signage and place making activities, such as hanging baskets, will give people a sense of what is there and why they should stop.

The lack of signage on the trunk road, within the town and from Dunrobin Castle means that tourists are not aware of the attractions and infrastructure available to them in Golspie, often driving through without stopping - even if they are touring on the NC500. If they do stop there is no indication as to the quality or number of experiences open to them and no obvious flow, route or walk to follow, preventing them being aware of or easily accessing/visiting the attractions on offer. This has a significant negative impact on the businesses within the town and the necessary improvement to Golspie's signage must be considered a priority.

Usage, placement & cost

- Road Signs - consultation should take place with Traffic Scotland on the placement of signs on the trunk road, but the Council has indicated that they do not like too many on the main route. With this in mind, it is proposed that four signs are placed on the trunk road, indicating Golspie, the NC500 and, if possible, using the new Golspie branding.

Cost = £4 x £500 = £2,000

- Gateway signs on north and south entry to Golspie using new branding and strapline. These will give the immediate impression to anyone visiting that the town is a place worth stopping in and give a flavour of what it has to offer. An example of a gateway sign for a

town entry point can be seen below:



Cost = £2 x £2,500 = £5,000

- Wayfinding signs are required to highlight the location, direction and routes within Golspie for the following amenities and attractions:
 - Primary school
 - High school
 - Lawson Memorial Hospital
 - Health Centre
 - Dentist
 - Pharmacist
 - Golspie train station
 - Sutherland swimming pool
 - Bowling / tennis club
 - Wildcat bike trails
 - Cycling track to Lochfleet
 - Lochfleet Nature Reserve
 - Kart club
 - Golf Course
 - Watersports centre
 - Dunrobin Castle (in the village and improved signage from the Castle)
 - North Beach
 - South Beach
 - Various accommodation options

These will be designed as both posts with single signs that are close to the destination but also as posts with multiple signs on it (as per photograph below) in various central points to help reduce street 'clutter' and also give immediate impact to a visitor of the extensive nature of Golspie's attractions.



<https://streetsignsdirect.co.uk/wayfinding-signs>

The signs could also give an indication of how long it will take you to walk/cycle/drive to the various attractions (see example below) to promote the sheer number of 'experiences' that Golspie has to offer within a close proximity.



Direction sign at decision point

The cost of this type of signage is approximately £500 per single post/sign. The cost of this proposal is therefore estimated to be £15,000.

The total cost for the road, gateway and wayfinding signs proposed for Golspie is estimated to be:
Indicative budget = £23,000

Photography

Good quality photography should be taken of Golspie that can be used on its promotional/marketing materials. This should highlight Golspie's spectacular location and first-class amenities and attractions.

There may be a talented local photographer that would be willing to do this at a reduced cost, but it is important that the photos don't look amateur or dated.

Indicative budget = £1,500

Website

A website should be developed for Golspie to promote the town and its extensive attractions, amenities and reasons tourists should visit it. Using the town's new branding and elevator pitch/key messages, it should tie all Golspie's selling points together with information about amenities, attractions, accommodation, shops, things to do, places to eat and drink, what's on, news etc. It should have links to its social media, useful partner sites and downloadable PDF guides. (A downloadable PDF guide should be easy to update with current info. Users should be requested to enter their email address to download it, which can then be added to a marketing database.)



An example of a simple website showcasing a town is 60thingsdunbar.scot (see screenshot, left) which was put together privately by a hostel owner in Dunbar.

Dunbar, situated on the east coast of Scotland 30 miles from Edinburgh, is famous for its sunshine, spectacular coastline and Christmas Lights (or it should be!)

"IN EVERY WALK WITH NATURE ONE RECEIVES MORE THAN HE SEEKS"

It is also the birthplace of the pioneering American naturalist, John Muir. However, this town has so much else to offer and we invite you to come and explore it with this list of 60 things (in no particular order), as a starting point. Get out on the water, be active on the land and above all have fun with your kids (or spoil your inner kid).

The cost of creating a relatively simple but professional looking is approximately: Indicative budget = £3,000 - £5,000.

Social media

Golspie should become active on

Facebook and Twitter, using local attractions, sites, events and businesses as content. This will help market what is available, build awareness and build a strong reputation as a place to visit and stay. It should communicate the brand, unique selling points, key message and 'tell the stories'.



For example, the Visit Aviemore website is linked to the Visit Cairngorms Twitter account (see screenshot, left), which shares local photos and stories from local businesses and people, creating and maintaining awareness in visitors even when they cannot visit.

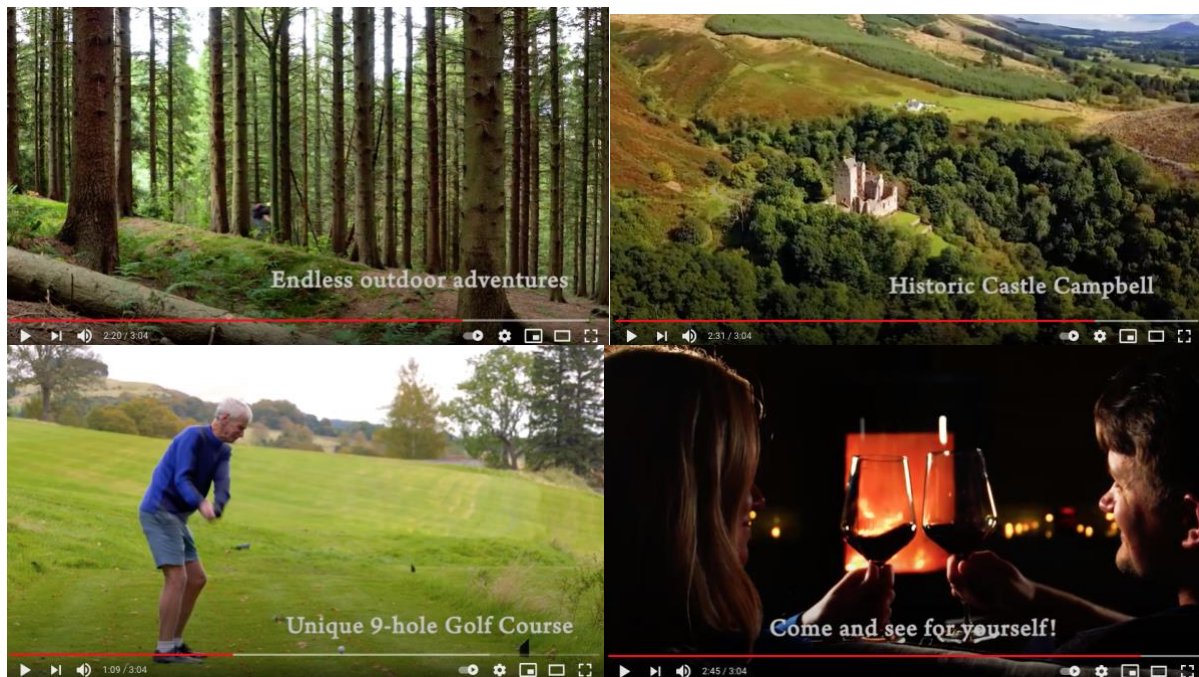
Social media is an activity that could be carried out by volunteers within Golspie's tourism businesses to keep costs down.

Indicative budget = £0

Promotional Video

A promotional video could be produced to promote Golspie by simply using a drone to capture its spectacular setting and some of its attractions. This could be used on the Golspie website on the home page and on social media. An example of one such promotional item can be viewed [here](#) (see various screenshots from the video below). This was made for the Dollar Community Development Trust and highlights various businesses and amenities within the town.

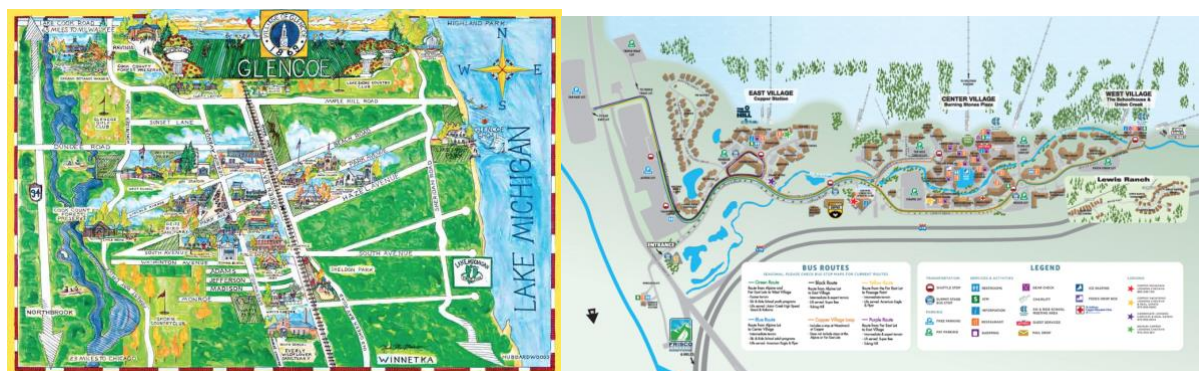




There may be a local volunteer with a drone who could produce a basic video, but the cost of a simple professional video starts at approximately:
Indicative budget = £500.

Printed materials

A printed brochure should be produced that can be picked up by tourists in local shops and also distributed in tourist destination point of sale racks. This should contain a graphic map, highlighting Golspie’s location and attractions. This could also show local walks, bike routes etc, and either be very ‘true to life’ or a more graphic representation (see examples below). This brochure/map should also be available to download on-line, within a Golspie website.



Depending on the print-run, size and folding of the brochure the cost of design and print may be:
Indicative budget = £ 500 - £2,500.

App



An app can be created that helps visitors to the town explore all Golspie has to offer. This should use the same graphic style as the brochure (above) so that they can be used together or independently.

An example of an app used for this purpose can be found on the [Dornoch website](#) (see the Dornoch App, left).

Indicative budget = £2,500

Events calendar

Golspie should create an events calendar, based on the events that are already scheduled such as the Gala and New Year torch light procession, and added to with initiatives that can be created around businesses, activities or time of year. This will help develop activities, such as biking, walking etc and build awareness. Local businesses should also be encouraged to produce their own event calendars, which could be pulled together in a main Golspie one.

Indicative budget = £0

Collaborations

Build relationships with regional and national tourism websites. E.g. list on Visit Scotland Event page, Visit Sutherland, EventScotland, Heart of Sutherland etc. Local businesses in Golspie should be encouraged to do this.

Indicative budget = £50

As noted in the Tourism Strategy above (section 9) it would be useful to explore the following strategies that should be carried out in tandem with the marketing tools:

Accommodation opportunities

There is range of accommodation providers in Golspie, from high quality self-catering facilities (such as The Girnals, Littleferry, see below left) to hotels (such as the Golspie Inn, see below right).



However, providers could be encouraged to use online travel agents such as [Booking.com](#), [Homeandaway.com](#) etc, and Channel Managers to increase occupancy rates (the golf club self-catering property only has 40% occupancy rate). A Golspie website should also have an accommodation section to help bring them all under one platform with links to their own sites/booking agents.

Packaging products

Collaboration should be encouraged between accommodation and activity providers to give customers a one-stop-shop. E.g. Play and Stay (golf course and B & B package), Bike and Stay etc.

Online Reviews

Encourage businesses to ask customers to review them on Trip Advisor, Google Reviews, Facebook etc to help improve their digital footprint and drive more people to visit.

Skills

Go Golspie could help facilitate development of tourism in the village by highlighting opportunities to improve the skills of those delivering the visitor experience. Management, leadership, enterprise and delivery skills all require appropriate training to deliver a high-quality product.

Digital: Build the digital skills capability of the sector through development and delivery of a series of digital skills courses covering IT, web and social media awareness for business.

Hospitality qualifications: In partnership with industry, Higher and Further Education develop hospitality and tourism courses suited to the local market to build opportunity to work and train in the area.

Guide Training: Promotion of entrepreneurship through training in a specific field. e.g. train British Canoe Union instructors to take tourists on a canoe safari along the coast.

An indicative timeline for this marketing timeline is given in Appendix 5.

9. Strategy Delivery



PERSONNEL

Go Golspie currently has a board of nine trustees, one advisor and 220 members all from the local area. It is recognised as having a strong skill set and possesses a wealth of experience. The Development Trust has one paid part-time administrator, who is funded primarily to run the Go Golspie Community Bus initiative but also carries out some general admin. However, it is recommended that to further develop and implement the 2030 Tourism Strategy effectively, funding should be sought to create the role of Development Officer. A Development Officer would provide assistance with the development and implementation of the strategy, visitor management and the development of tourism products, services and facilities.

10. Funding Strategy

Go Golspie should consider funding options that would enable them to undertake this tourism strategy and marketing plan and help to develop tourism in the town.

Caithness Business Fund

Caithness Business Fund is a private sector fund established to distribute grants to small businesses within the Caithness and North Sutherland area. The Venture North website was part funded by this initiative.

The Fund's mission is to promote the economic growth of Caithness and North Sutherland by supporting new and existing businesses and developing the skill base to meet new challenges. The Fund was created after discussions between Caithness Chamber of Commerce and Baillie Wind Farm Ltd who had a vision to see a wider area of Caithness and North Sutherland benefit from local wind farms. Baillie Wind Farm Ltd is contributing £25,000 per annum to the Fund so that it can promote economic growth and assist small businesses.

[Scottish Government - Regeneration Capital Grant Fund](#)

The RCGF supports locally developed place-based regeneration projects that involve local communities, helping to support and create jobs and build sustainable communities. It is a capital only fund that the Local Authority has to apply for on an annual basis.

The funding focuses on:

- projects in areas that suffer from high levels of deprivation and disadvantage
- projects that demonstrate clear community involvement
- projects that will deliver large scale transformational change with strong regeneration outcomes
- projects and programmes that can encourage additional investment and address market failure

The National Lottery Community Fund - [Grants for Community Led activity](#)

This funding aims to support communities to improve the places in which they live and the wellbeing of those most in need. It will fund organisations to deliver work that achieves the following outcomes:

- Everyone in the community has the opportunity to influence and get involved in community-led activity.
- People in the community are better connected and work together to improve their well-being.

The fund is looking for project that are **people-led, connected, and strengths-based**. Find out more about these **three approaches** on the National Lottery website.

National Lottery Community Fund - [Awards for All Scotland](#)

Small grant applications for project development within communities, including requests for capital and revenue funding, £300 to £10,000.

[VisitScotland Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund](#)

This fund has helped other communities set up motorhome sites and helped pay for toilets, waste disposal, parking etc. When contacted to establish the current status of the fund, Visit Scotland said that Round 3 of the funding programme had closed but they are hoping that the Scottish Government will confirm the 4th Round soon.

[Business Gateway Highland](#)

Business Gateway has offered to run skills workshops for Golspie businesses if there was sufficient demand. For example, they've organised several Digital Boost workshops in partnership with Heart of Sutherland Tourism where the events were also used as networking opportunities for the Group.

A range of other Trusts and Foundations will also be worth applying to for specific capital equipment on a case-by-case basis.

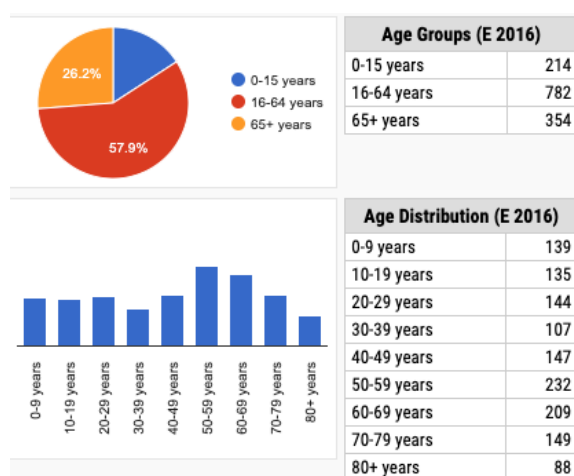
11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community Demographics



DEMOGRAPHICS

Golspie had an estimated population of 1,300 in 2019, seeing an 8% decrease since the last census in 2011 when it was 1,410. This goes against the upward population trend in the Highland Council area (where Golspie is located) and of Scotland as a whole. It is situated on the A9 approximately halfway between Inverness and Wick. One of several villages along this main transport route, Golspie is a significant distance from the main town of Inverness (52 miles and over an hour's drive) and has developed key services locally.



There is a higher proportion of people in the 65+ age group compared to other areas, with the elderly being 26% of the total population compared to this group being 22.5% of the population in the Highland Council area.

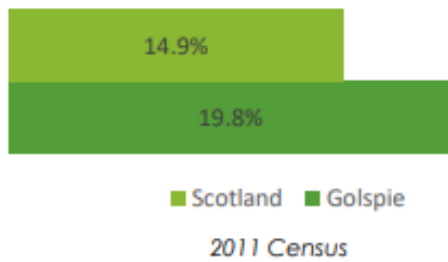
Golspie has a slightly higher percentage of people who are economically inactive (34.2%) than Scotland as a whole (31%). The Highlands and Islands Enterprise Caithness and Sutherland Area Profile similarly shows that Sutherland has a lower employment base per 10,000 adults compared with the Highlands and Islands and also higher unemployment rates.

The 2011 Census data also illustrates that Golspie has a higher percentage of people who are economically inactive due to poor health or disability and more people proportionally who have a limiting long-term illness. A higher percentage of people report their health as bad (5.1% compared with 4.3% in Scotland) or very bad.

The [Golspie Community Plan](#) explains that Golspie has been identified as one of five areas in Sutherland that are 'most deprived' and that work is ongoing to improve living standards and increase equality.

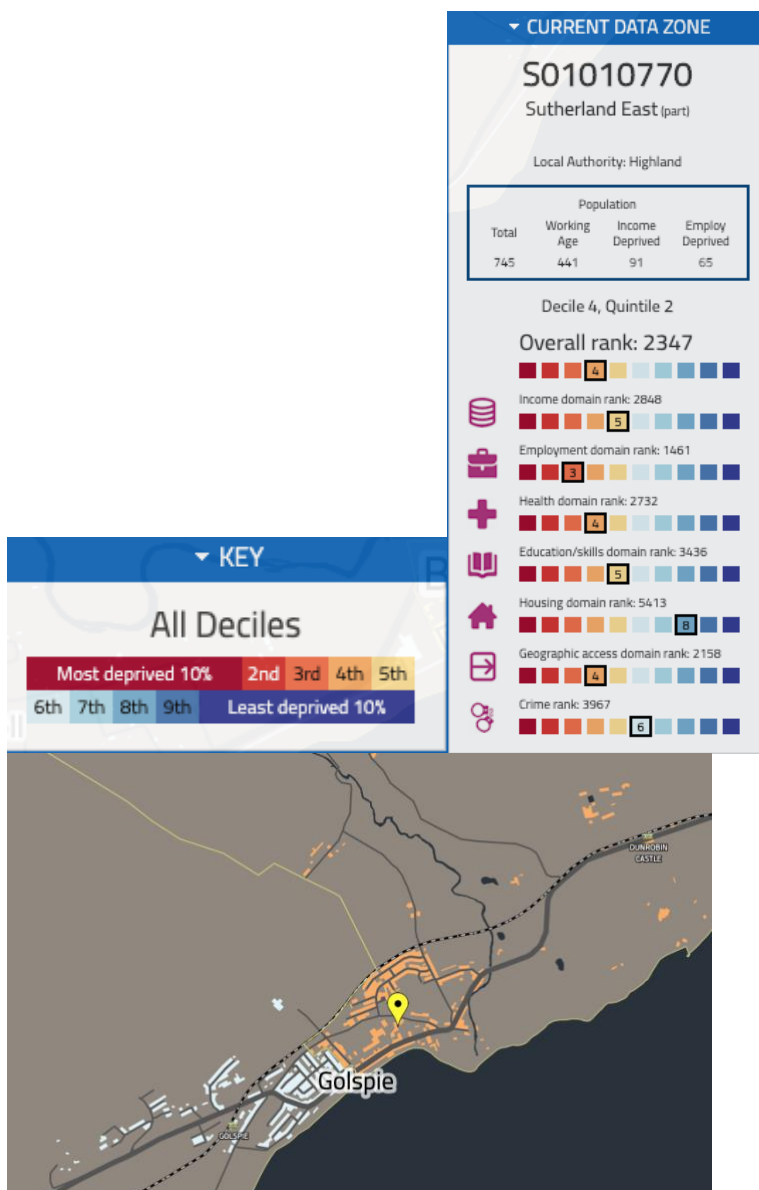
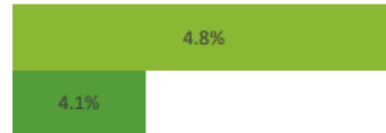
The Golspie Community plan also highlights unemployment and retirement figures from the 2011 Census:

Proportion of the population who are retired



2011 Census

Proportion of the population who are unemployed



Sourced from SIMD data for Golspie <https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTFTT/14/-3.9586/57.9699/>

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that an overall ranking for Golspie in the 4th decile of the most deprived in Scotland, with employment being in the 3rd decile, which is a high rate.

Appendix 2 – Stakeholder Engagement

11 Nov 2020 – Kendra, MD of Thistle Lets / Monster Moves

- Thistle Lets / Monster Moves are based in Golspie, Kendra noted that there had been an increase in traffic and visitors / tourists in the town over the last three years, since the NC500 really took off.
- She feels the town has the advantage of being directly on the route, picturesque, excellent facilities and attractions and halfway between Inverness and John o' Groats.
- Opportunity for more people to move to Golspie if working from home (opportunity to use Inverness airport if 'commuting' to London).
- However, she also noted that Golspie is let down by a number of issues, including the lack of good eating places (with nothing available in the evening), no permanent campervan park and no entrepreneurs making a go of the local hotels.
- She feels that the town needs something that makes people stop in it when they are driving on the NC500, and also want to book to stay for a few days. It is a good base for exploring the area.

23 Nov 2020: Nicole Murray, Benview Stores

- Runs shop in residential area (not main street)
- Golspie has lots of passing trade but not much to draw them to stay, drive past. See people walking along looking for something to do.
- There are a few cafes, nowhere to stop for dinner. Trawler only has a few tables.
- The Golspie Inn has been bought and someone is doing it up as a hotel with food and accommodation.
- What can people do in Golspie? Castle, lots of walks, but not activities.
- Lots of NC500 tourists coming through.
- Public toilets.

23 Nov Michelle Cooper - Invicta House B&B / The Fabric Fairy (Haberdashery)

- There are 8 or 9 B&B's in the Golspie area – not all open all year round.
- Their B&B open all year round. Easter to mid-Oct is their busy season, tourists. In the winter they get workmen and people coming up for family and appointments.
- People come for:
 - Lots of long-distance cyclists.
 - Walkers – Lands' End to John o Groats – or people based there and go out for walks.
 - People going up to Orkney or going back. Touring the highlands.
 - Castle visitors.
 - Golf.
 - Distilleries
- Mainly one-night guests.
- Main tourist attractions – Castle, Golspie walks books in the rooms (Big Burn), Go into Dornoch or Tain
- Not many come for the beach – only families and they don't get many. Doesn't seem to be a big thing.
- They do talk dogs.

- Do work with a Dutch company that does train travel groups and itineraries – “transfyle twinkle”. And Booking.com
- Would like to see somewhere for people to eat out. Only The Trawler and Golspie Inn (which is open and closed a lot) – have to send people out of the village if they want a sit down.
- Parking is good.
- Have charging to electric car in the heart of the village.
- Co-op etc for people on the road.
- Don’t have many children staying – 2 play areas (well looked after) and the beach.
- People come to visit the Distilleries.
- People passing through not, staying – encourage people to stay for more than one night. Encourage people to come by train. Encourage bikes – built new bike store for the B&B – environmental tourism.
- Things are on the up.

Haberdashery – more for locals. Some visitors have a look, will open up for them. Do sell cross stitch kits – one is the NC500.

23 Nov – Shania, Stags Head Hotel

- Guests from tourism and locals – open all year round.
- NC500 clients and locals that have moved away and workmen.
- No ideas about what could be improved in the town.

25 Nov - Rod Houston, Secretary, Golspie Golf Club

(ex-Community Council & runs the Highland Football league)

- Constituted club run by members
- Visitors – Scotland, UK, (North America, Europe)
- Stewards Flat was refurbished as self-catering – 40% occupancy. Occasional long let in the winter months. 2-bed, twin bed. Not advertised, just on the website.
- Food at the club – franchise. Open license. Anyone can eat. Don’t get many people staying in the town coming up to eat. Ladies who lunch – are their main custom.
- **For the golf club** – feel the lack of a good hotel in the village. Where people would stay, would be interested in packages with golf. Look at Dornoch, better accommodation has an impact on visitor numbers – therefore green fees etc. E.g. Marine in Brura. Bottle neck. Issue for the club. Have packages with other clubs, e.g. golf in Dornoch, hotels etc will send them to Golspie. Could get more income for the club if there was an anchor hotel.
- This year they’ve done better with visitors because of staycations.
- Lost the North American market completely. Don’t expect that back until 2022. Royal Dornoch is an internationally renowned course and they live in a “beneficial shadow”.
- **General village** (he was chairman of the community council) – had good discussion with the Dunrobin Castle (was a long time ago) – how to get more people to stop in the village. Bus tours from the port at Invergordon go to the castle. Could we increase the beneficial spill from that into village? Dunrobin was interested but Rod had to step down from the council. They are pro community.
- Kart track – North of Scotland has a Kart racing track which was a former rifle range, it’s to the south of the Golf Course. Brings people in. Go carts. Accommodation.
- Mountain biking – Ben Braggie. Don’t see that many. The project figures were inflated.
- NC500 – benefit to the local shops. We’re on the early run that isn’t quite enough intercepts to get people to stop. Need parking for campervans. Needs advertising and signposting.

- Food in the village – The Trawler is very good, the Chinese is fine. Couple of coffee places that are excellent. Nowhere to go out for a meal. Golf Club does a certain type of menu that suits its guests. Need a better standard of menu in the village. Shop provision is ok.
- Employ 3 green keepers. They have shop.

28 Nov – Heather Vonck, Highland Whisky Chocolates

- They make a big variety of chocolates (whisky, gin, Baileys, fruit, little bags of chocolate, hot chocolate sticks etc) that they sell from their shop and are also being stocked in Dunrobin Castle
- They have only been opened since August 2020, so just learning as they go. They moved to Golspie 2 years ago, love the community feel, everyone has been really supportive.
- They have put signage out themselves on the High St to attract people using the NC500. She thinks more signage would be beneficial.
- Golspie has toilets and good parking (with new electric charging points) so she feels that is sufficient.
- Food – Very good fish & chip shop (from 4pm onwards), they don't really eat out so she's not familiar with the others.
- Lots of activities for tourists to do.
- There is usually a torch light procession on the 1st Jan which Heather said was stunning.
- She couldn't think of anything else that might help promote Golspie but is interested in learning from the strategy outcomes.

2 Dec - Martin Ross, owns old McKay's Hostel site (opposite Fountain Road Hall)

- Martin has bought a 1 acre site opposite Fountain Road Hall in Golspie (McKays old hostel?), that he is converting into a Bike Hub.
- He would let part of it to another local guy who runs 'Sam's Bike Shed'; he has a work shop in the old technical rooms where he's been for 10 years and does bike repairs. Martin would also like to sell, rent, have a bike wash bay and encourage local kids groups to use it. He has applied for regeneration funding to improve the frontage and parking. He is also thinking about running a distribution centre from the site, to cut down on the number of vans in Golspie (i.e. it would be a central point that vans deliver to then they are re-distributed by bike?) and also focus on electric bikes and is currently looking for funding.
- The major problem with Golspie is that it doesn't have good places to eat – people that are staying for a few days have to travel. There is optimism because the local hotel has been taken over and it should hopefully improve their dining offer.
- If people on the NC500 are going round it clockwise, they arrive at Dunrobin Castle first, stay there for a couple of hours then drive through Golspie not needing to stop again. Martin has thought about connecting the castle to the castle by cycle path and making bikes available for visitors there to rent and cycle to the village. He has spoken to Scott Morrison (at the Castle) in recent years and feels the Castle should engage more with the community.

18 Jan - Ian Sutherland, Chair of Golspie Community Council & member of Go Golspie

- Ian updated us on what the Community Council were prioritising for Golspie to address potential issues of overtourism and also longer-term opportunities:
- Short-term: challenges were created by a rise in visitor numbers in 2020 (due to more UK tourists/motorhomes visiting Golspie because of Covid-19 restrictions on overseas travel leading to an increase in staycations). To accommodate this and avoid overnight parking in the town centre/beach area, a small temporary motorhome park was created in the

mountain bike car park and signage installed to direct people there. Portaloos were hired by the Community Council to alleviate potential issues around disposing of waste sewage which they are looking at doing again this year (2021) along with the installation of septic tanks. Nb. there is interest from an experienced party in buying and developing the industrial estate in Golspie and the adjacent field, which is extremely positive news but there are no firm plans or applications for this as yet.

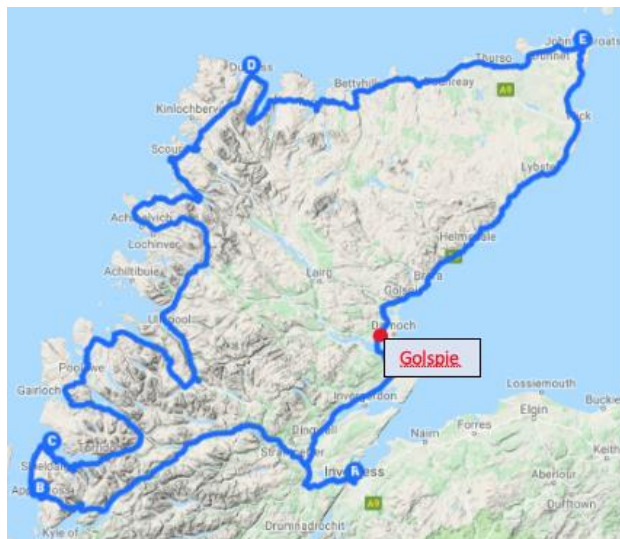
- Long-term: Golspie has suffered from three floods due to storm surges in the last fifteen years which have caused significant damage, including to the promenade area and giving concern for public safety. The frequency of such floods appears to be increasing. The Community Council are therefore investigating the possible refurbishment of the town's sea defence structure which was created 150 years ago. This is likely to cost approximately £2-3 million, so will clearly rely on funding being obtained. The Community Council is applying for money from the Coastal Communities Fund (£100,000 approximately) with future funding routes also being sought. This development would provide an opportunity for the creation of a marina and its associated activity, which would prove to be of major appeal to tourists and an exciting prospect for Golspie and the local businesses that are likely to benefit.

20 Jan – Valerie Mackay, owner of Identity Hair Salon and member of Go Golspie

- Val raised concerns around overtourism, with issues being created in 2020 from wild campers (more needing done, what about a new site in the business park or Kart Trak which lies empty most of the time and has electric points?). She also thought more litter bins were needed, volunteers to keep the beach clean, honesty boxes would be useful, more recycling places (Golspie lost a private business which took recyclable material recently).
- Better signage needed which she thought was currently being addressed.
- Improve the notice board down at the beach which looks outdated.
- More links to the castle, with a monorail/signed pathway (only a 10 minute walk).
- Encourage investment just outside Golspie, similar to Landmark in Aviemore and GoApe in Aberfoyle.

Appendix 3 – The NC500

The original concept for the North Coast 500 was that it should be Scotland’s answer to Route 66 in the USA, but its own brand and identity has strongly grown and today, generating £22.8m for the north Highlands’ economy in 2018, according to research carried out by the Moffat Centre for Tourism.



The Centre also reported that in 2018:

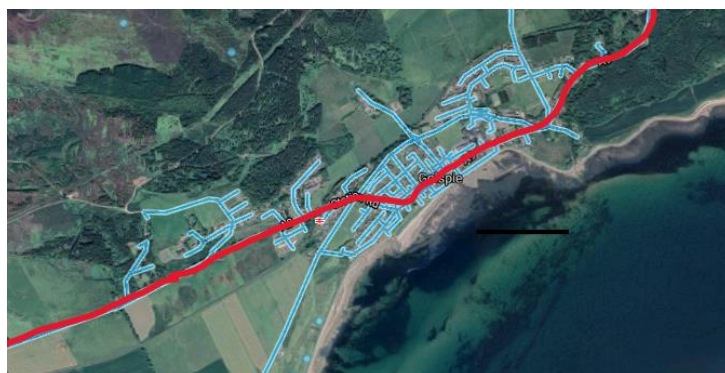
- 180 new jobs were created.
- North Highlands’ tourism businesses such as tour operators and camper van rental firms reported year on year growth of 16%.
- £13.4m in sales was also generated for accommodation, attraction and retail businesses on or near the route.
- A 19.9% increase in visitors to free admission attractions, with paid admission attractions benefitting from a 41.7% boost in visitor numbers.
- A rise in room occupancy throughout the area from 52% in 2014 to 78% in 2018.

The NC500 is a huge asset to the destinations on its route, if the flow of traffic can be managed and given a good reason and the right facilities to stop and spend time (and money) in the area.

“A decade ago it was a relatively well-kept secret - a circular route, often on single-track roads, through breathtaking scenery in the far north of Scotland. But no more. Now known as the North Coast 500, it has been cleverly marketed as one of the world's great road trips.” (BBC website, 2018a)

THE NC500’S IMPACT ON GOLSPIE

The NC500 runs directly through the centre of Golspie, along the A9.



When discussing the NC500 with stakeholders, in general they did perceive an increase in visitor numbers and tourism since 2015, but did not feel it was significant to Golspie nor having as big an impact on the local economy as it should be having:

“Golspie has lots of passing trade but not much to encourage them to stay; they tend to drive past. I watch people walking along looking for something to do.”

“The town needs something that makes people stop in it when they are driving on the NC500, and also want to book to stay for a few days. It is a good base for exploring the area.”

“If people on the NC500 are going round it clockwise, they arrive at Dunrobin Castle first, stay there for a couple of hours then drive through Golspie not needing to stop again.”

“Golspie is only 1½ hours north from Inverness so those travelling anti-clockwise when doing the NC500 might make a quick stop in the town, but not explore or stay longer.”

“I’ve seen a dramatic increase in traffic through the town over the last four years because of the NC500, but sadly not in visitors to Golspie.”

Appendix 4 – Competitors & Comparators

Competitors

DORNOCH

Dornoch is 10 miles south of Golspie and is slightly larger town with a population of approximately 2,500. It also has a well-respected golf course which is next to a beach that has gained a blue flag. The NC500 by-passes the town, but it more prominent in sections of the NC500 website than Golspie.

Dornoch's Marketing

Dornoch's marketing and promotional platforms consist of:

- The brand – 'Do Dornoch: you can do it all from here' is a simple graphic device that ties their marketing together.



- The website - <https://visitdornoch.com/> contains information about accommodation, places to eat and drink, shop, things to do, what's on and news. It has a video, connects to its app and other partner apps.

It is run by the Dornoch Area Community Interest Company, which is: "a member organisation open to those 18 and over who live in IV25. It is run as a volunteer board of directors. DACIC established a business group in 2014 to form a marketing co-operative to promote Dornoch as an all year round tourist destination via VisitDornoch.Com, Social Media and the Visitor Centre. In 2020 DACIC purchased the redundant Police Station with support from the Scottish Land Fund and its transformation into the Dornoch Hub with offices, studios, workshops, community room, gym and seasonal staff accommodation is due to be completed in the spring of 2021."

- Social media – Do Dornoch is active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube.
- Do Dornoch app - uses the location information on the visitor's mobile accessed from GPS satellites, Wi-Fi networks, and mobile networks to provide an estimate of their location. It helps the visitor discover more of the town by having walking routes, notes and directions, navigation tools, a photo gallery and a selection of interesting places.
- What's On – there are a number of calendared events in Dornoch, including community markets, pipe band displays, the County Show, the Dornoch Highland Gathering, a Festival Week and a whisky festival.

BRORA

Brora is six miles north of Golspie and is of a similar size. It also has a railway station and is a pretty town, with an interesting history, a nice beach and good golf course.

Brora's Marketing

- Brora has a website - <https://www.brora.name/> which lists places to stay, food & drink, useful information, maps, links and a webcam/video.

Comparators

AVIEMORE

Aviemore is a town that has grown into a significant tourist destination since the installation of the first chairlift in 1961. It has re-invented itself several times, with the most recent development

happening in 1998 when much of the original tourist buildings and facilities in ‘the Centre’ dating back to the 60’s were demolished.

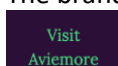
Today it promotes itself as a year-round destination, selling its beautiful scenery and lots of outdoor experiences for the whole family. These include snow sports, walking, climbing, biking, water sports, fishing and wildlife watching.

Aviemore is not on the NC500, but some might use it as an overnight stop before going north to Inverness.

Aviemore’s Marketing

Aviemore’s current marketing and promotional strategy is run by the Cairngorms Business Partnership, a private sector Chamber of Commerce and Destination Management Organisation.

- The brand – Visit Aviemore.



This is not a sophisticated graphic but simply a device to pull together all the town’s assets under one name.

- A website (www.visitaviemore.com) - pulls all the town’s different offerings together. These include attractions, accommodation, places to eat, things to do, offers, ‘what’s on’, a community section and a business directory. It is thought that businesses will be charged a small fee to be in their directory.
- Social media - VisitAviemore is active on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest and YouTube. They also write blogs with articles including information about the area, attractions, what is on etc.
- Events - Aviemore promotes events in and around it throughout the year (see screen shot below) including a nature weekend, a motorbike rally, a half marathon and fireworks display in a local hotel.

Aviemore Annual Events

The main Aviemore annual events are listed below. For the full list of all Aviemore events on throughout the year see [what’s on](#).

January – Siberian Husky Club of Great Britain Aviemore Rally

May Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend

July – Corrieyairack Challenge finishing at Badaguish Outdoor Centre

August – ‘Thunder in the Glens’ Harley Davidson Motorcycle Rally

September – Cairngorm Adventure Triathlon, Loch Morlich

October – Aviemore Half Marathon, 10k and Fun Run

November – Fireworks Display, Cairngorm Hotel

November – Cairngorm Ski Club Snowsport Sale

December 24th – Christmas Eve Parade with Santa & Reindeer from School to Cairngorm Hotel for carols and fireworks

December 31st – Fireworks at the bells Cairngorm Hotel

To add to the main list of Aviemore annual events please [get in touch](#).



STIRLING

‘YourStirling’, the brand and marketing platform used to promote this small City, is run by ‘Go Forth

Stirling', an organisation that; *“involves businesses working together and investing collectively in local improvements. The principle aim of the BID is to deliver projects and services that will improve the trading environment of the BID area; to the benefit of the businesses, their customers and visitors to the city centre.”*

A levy is charged on all business rate payers in addition to the business rates bill they already receive. This levy is used to develop projects which will benefit businesses in the local area. There is no limit on what projects or services can be provided through a BID, as long as they are an addition to services provided by local authorities. A BID typically lasts for 5 years with the bottom-line being that it improves the trading environment and public domain. BIDs are governed by legislation contained in the Local Government Act 2003.

- The brand – Your Stirling is once again simply a device to pull together all the town’s assets under one name.



- A website (<https://www.yourstirling.com/>) has a video on its homepage showcasing Stirling’s location, landscape, historical buildings and activities. The website has a see & do section, what’s on and plan your visit. It has attractions, tours & activities and free to see.
- Social Media – Your Stirling is active on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.
- Events – Your Stirling promotes events in Stirling (not currently highlighted, due to Covid-19)

