

Scottish Agritourism Monitor Farm Programme

Meeting Four Report – WEST CENTRAL

‘Business Boot Camp’

Luss Village Hall – Friday 1st November 2019





The fourth and final West Central Scottish Enterprise Agritourism Monitor Farm meeting of 2019 took place on Friday 1st November 2019.

The all-day meeting focused on the theme 'BUSINESS BOOT CAMP' and had 23 individuals from farming/agritourism enterprises attend from all over Scotland - with people travelling from as far north as Morayshire and as far south as Dumfries. The meeting followed a slightly different format in comparison to previous meetings, with the aim to provide a confidential and supportive environment for business owners to share challenges, find solutions and to share and discuss new business ideas.

The meeting was held with Chatham House Rules which ensured that any outputs from the meeting are either not attributed to a particular business and/or have not been shared out with the group.

MEETING SUMMARY

The participants were asked to undertake various tasks throughout the day to help them think about their personal abilities, as well as looking at their businesses from a different angle.

1. **BUSINESS INFORMATION** – Although many of the participants have been regularly attending the agritourism meetings and have started to develop strong relationships, they were all asked to provide a detailed introduction explaining their business.

Since the start of the Agritourism Monitor Farm meetings in April 2019, there has been several individuals that have progressed forward with their diversification plans and now have established their own agritourism businesses.

2. **WORK/LIFE BALANCE ASSESSMENT** - Participants were asked to complete a work/life balance assessment to grade each area of their business and personal life. The key messages from this exercise were;
 - Running and growing your own business shouldn't be something you do in isolation;
 - Everyone is juggling areas of their life such as making time for family and friends, exercise and health, personal finances, looking after others in the family/community as well as running a business;
 - Each area must be nurtured but we have limited time and competing demands on time;
 - Good mental and physical health is essential if we want to be fit to enjoy working in and growing our business;
 - People will feel differently at a different point in time – some days/weeks/months good and others not good – this has an impact on the energy required to grow your business.
3. **WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?** - In pairs, participants were asked to work in confidence and discuss the areas they feel are holding them back. One person shared their information while the other listened.

Each person was asked to note;

- What was keeping them awake at night;
- What was holding them back;
- What was stopping them from moving forward;
- What could help them progress.

After listening to each other, they then offered support and a solution to a range of very personal and honest challenges.

For many, the truth is that the only thing holding them back was themselves and the recognition that a perception of a difficult situation may be not the reality.

4. **REFLECTING ON ACHIEVEMENTS IN PAST 12 MONTHS.** – We are usually bad at recognising our achievements, even if we consider that the year gone by has been

challenging. It is important to list and recognise progress/achievements in our business and personally, to record these and share with staff/family/wider team.

In groups of four, participants were asked to reflect on the last 12 months, taking into consideration what they have achieved and what has been holding them back.

These are summarised and listed below;

What is keeping you awake at night?

- Time;
- Overthinking;
- Finances;
- Lack of IT knowledge;
- Brexit;
- Too much going on;
- The future of animal produce;
- Future of our business;
- Family;
- Finding tradesmen/help for the business;
- Competitive funds continuing (subsidies);
- Inter-family communication (or lack of it!);
- Lack of risk analysis and planning;
- Small details can cause a problem that can be difficult to solve;
- Logistics within the business;
- New business arrangements;
- Not growing the business and the consequences of that;
- Conflict of ideas between others in the business;
- Too many ideas and not knowing where to start;
- New job and not enough time.

What is holding you back?

- Me;
- Older generation involved within the business and not wanting to make change;
- Finding investment;
- Time to implement new ideas;
- Money;
- Bank not willing to support or listen;
- Lack of IT knowledge;
- Time;
- Inability to grow the business;
- Delegating tasks to free up time.

What is stopping you move forward?

- Me;
- Making time or change;
- Lack of experience;
- Knowledge of IT and websites;
- Trying to get everything done for the next day;
- Being in a new business stream;
- Not enough time to speak with fellow director to push ideas forward;
- Too many tasks.

How do I achieve progress?

- Offer new experiences;
- Increase assets;
- Get the foundations right for the business to grow;
- Improve website capability to ensure more bookings;
- Learn to delegate and release control of smaller things;
- Maximising profit opportunities;
- Extending the business;
- Headspace is needed and time is required;
- Make time for it;
- More 'open days';

- Increasing customer spend;
- Push farm tours;
- Planning;
- Prioritising time with family;
- Separating family and work life;
- Capital investment;
- Stop seeing family as barriers to success;
- Have a better understanding of the new venture.

5. **GROWING PROFITS IN 2020** – working in groups of four, participants shared information on how they will grow profitability in their business in 2020. It is important that we are not just growing sales if costs are not in control and we are left with nothing to show for the hard work. A discussion took place on driving up profits, building asset value, the importance of cash in any business and not just being 'busy fools'.

Participants shared plans for specific business development activities for 2020. These were recorded and each business will be supported through the Scottish Enterprise Monitor Farm Programme to deliver these objectives. There will also be a similar session held in November 2020 to reflect on whether these targets have been achieved.

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Be honest
- ✓ Have regular team/family meetings that have an agenda and format
- ✓ Make time to leave the business, attend meetings and share/gather knowledge from other individuals within the industry
- ✓ There is no such thing as a silly question or idea
- ✓ Make sure the business venture has agreement from all partners/directors involved
 - Then distribute responsibilities to share the workload
- ✓ The importance of writing down and sharing objectives with your team – to keep focus and to be working for a common goal.

BUSINESS FEEDBACK

What have you achieved/ your business has achieved in 2019?

- Started farm tours/ increased numbers
- Started business/ new business (3)
- Build the first accommodation pod (3)
- New kitchen (2)
- Staff with same vision (2)
- Attending the Agritourism MF meetings (4)
- Welcoming paying customers (2)
- Returning customers (3)
- Increase in sales
- Increase in confidence
- Rebranded and opened new business
- New website and online booking facility (2)
- Secured grant funding (2)
- Applying for planning/planning permission (4)
- High/increased occupancy rates (2)
- Objective planned
- Private marketing as opposed to agency marketing
- Survived (3)
- Selling meat directly from farm

What did you learn from others at the meeting that you can use in your business?

- Planning (4)
- Time

- Benchmarking
- Scheduled weekly meetings (3)
- Buy 'Oversubscribed by Daniel Priestly'
- What others do that adds more value
- Gift vouchers for Christmas (4)
- Look at the breakdown of costs and margins
- Joining up with other businesses to deliver tourism
- Don't be scared to bring more visitors to the farm
- Marketing advice (4)
- Increasing bookings during quiet times
- Power of funding
- Views and architecture sells the property/business
- Partnering with other businesses
- Ideas to create profits
- It will get easier
- Farm tours generate cashflow

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

- Watch costs
- Plan
- Earlier marketing (2)
- Financial figures (2)
- Look into Farm tours – create bookable farm tour and offer to operators (2)
- Working with local businesses
- Lower outlay to drive larger profit margin
- Develop stronger farm links
- Increase spends per head
- Fill empty days with third party work shops
- Profit is key not turnover (2)
- Social media and its importance (4)
- Planning
- Card machine
- Farm tours/ lambing experience
- Website launch (5)
- Offer new experiences
- Customer service is crucial

What is your overall goal for 2020?

- Get accommodation pods established (5)
- Outside kiosk
- Funding source for extensions/new projects
- Increase profit margin (3)
- Up and running with good occupancy rate (2)
- Become a LEAF farm
- More farm tours (2)
- Marketing strategies
- Clear start-up debt (2)
- Maintain and expand business (3)

What did you enjoy about the meeting?

- Openness of everyone (2)
- Warm environment
- Networking (8)
- Hearing of successes (6)
- Sharing problems
- Catching up with everyone's project
- Meeting new contacts
- Group activities

WEST MEETING THREE ATTENDEES

There were 23 attendees at the main meeting from 10pm to 4pm.



No.	First Name	Surname	Ticket Type	Company	Website
1	Kay	Wilson	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	Shemore/Shantron Self-Catering	http://www.shemoreonlochlomond.com
2	Bobby	Lennox	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	Shemore/Shantron Self-Catering	http://www.shemoreonlochlomond.com
3	Anne	Lennox	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	Shemore/Shantron Self-Catering	http://www.shemoreonlochlomond.com
4	Stuart	McNicol	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	DRIFT./Castleton Events	
5	Jo	McNicol	Agritourism/Monitor Farmer	DRIFT./Castleton Events	
6	Chris	Scott-Park	Agritourism business	Portnellan Farm LLP	http://portnellanfarm.co.uk/
7	Freda	Scott-Park	Agritourism business	Portnellan Farm LLP	http://portnellanfarm.co.uk/
8	Andrew	Gauldie	Rural Tourism business	Free-lance guide in training	
9	Izzy	Gauldie	Rural Tourism business		
10	Helen	Smith	Agritourism business	Byres Farm	https://byresfarm.co.uk
11	Bill	Smith	Agritourism business	Byres Farm	https://byresfarm.co.uk
12	Eric	Linklater	Agritourism business	G Gibsons & sons	
13	Niall	Bowser	Agritourism business	Argaty Red Kites	http://www.argatyredkites.co.uk/index
14	Tom	Bowser	Agritourism business	N M Bowser	http://www.argatyredkites.co.uk/index
15	Trudi	Cueto	Agritourism business	G Gibson & Son	
16	Jasmine	Jackson	Agritourism business	Jacksons at Jedburgh	
17	Shona	Duncan	Agritourism business	Duncan Family Farms	
18	Gordon	Murray	Agritourism business	Craigmaddie Muir	
19	Emma	Smith	Agritourism business	The Heron Farm Shop	https://theheronfarmshop.com/aboutus/
20	Grant	Turnbull	Agritourism business	Carr's Hill	https://carrshill.co.uk
21	Adam	Wright	Agritourism business	The Scottish Goat Meat Company	https://www.scottishgoatmeat.co.uk/
22	John	Auld	Farmer looking to diversify		
23	Shelia	Bannerman	Farmer looking to diversify		