



## Inverclyde Regional Tourism Strategy 2016-2020

***Building for the Future***

March 2016

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## INVERCLYDE TOURISM STRATEGY 2016-2020

### Strategic National Framework

The national tourism strategy puts the customer at the heart of the tourism experience. This means providing excellent experiences which exceed visitor expectations and offers visitors a uniquely joined up experience that will generate future growth.



## Tourism in Inverclyde

Tourism is worth £60m (source STEAM) to the local economy and employs up to 1,000 people. The sector is a resilient and important contributor to the economic and social sustainability of the area. Tourism is one of Scotland's most enduring industries and is recognised by many as the most sustainable long term sector of the Scottish economy.

Much has changed since the previous 2009-2016 strategy was written. Developments across digital and social media continue to make the customer more discerning, smarter and more demanding by the day.

Inverclyde sits in an enviable position of being a maritime destination, rich in history and heritage and linked directly with Glasgow and the Clyde Estuary. The tourism and hospitality offering has several large operators and is well served by a range of smaller locally owned businesses. Inverclyde is ideally suited to maximise its location as an events base for local, regional and international water based activities.

The area is set to go through a major investment with the recently announced City Deal development plan with £30m planned to be invested in local infrastructure projects.

The area is further strengthened by its proximity to the main markets as recognised by local business. Such a position makes for the area being a prime day trip and event orientated destination.

There is however an ongoing challenge to attract water based activity providers and to pull together interest groups and businesses operators, no matter the size of business, to share in the ambition to provide the customer with the very best experience.

Public sector resources are restricted and there is a new approach towards destination development with local groups and the business communities taking the lead in setting the local agenda. Local businesses are leading the way in determining the future of the sector whilst aligning with a national strategic framework. Future success is dependent on a continued partnership approach between private and public sectors.

There remains a challenge in attracting and retaining a range of higher quality accommodation and food and beverage businesses. Such a gap in the local offering will hold back tourism development and restrict making the most from the visitor economy.

The strategy sets out to be bottom up, industry driven, aimed at bringing growth to businesses that chose to engage, share and contribute to a customer experience driven industry. Collaboration between

groups, membership bodies, sector and event-based interest groups is essential for the area to realise its full potential.

The strategy is based upon a partnership approach between public and private sector stakeholders to jointly influence, guide change and grow the value, volume and resilience of the tourism sector.

The Strategy sets our key aims and ambitions that will in turn require annual detailed action plans to be prepared by the proposed Inverclyde Tourism Partnership Group.

Inverclyde has the very real potential to stake a claim as Scotland's leading maritime waterfront destination with a strong offering attracting the lucrative day visit family market. To do this however it must be recognised that the private sector cannot do it all on their own and strong partnership must remain in place between public and private stakeholders.

(STEAM: **Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor**)

## Vision, Mission, Delivery and Action

### **Vision**

*By 2020 Inverclyde will be recognised as a leading coastal and day visit destination of first class memorable customer experiences delivered by skilled and passionate hosts.*

### **Mission**

This strategy seeks to grow the value of tourism by £4m, the volume of visits, the likelihood to return to the area so increasing jobs and the economic contribution tourism makes to the Inverclyde area.

### **Delivery**

The delivery of the strategy will be through three key themes of:

- Providing Memorable Experiences
- Improving the Customer Journey
- Building our Capabilities

### **Measurement and Targets**

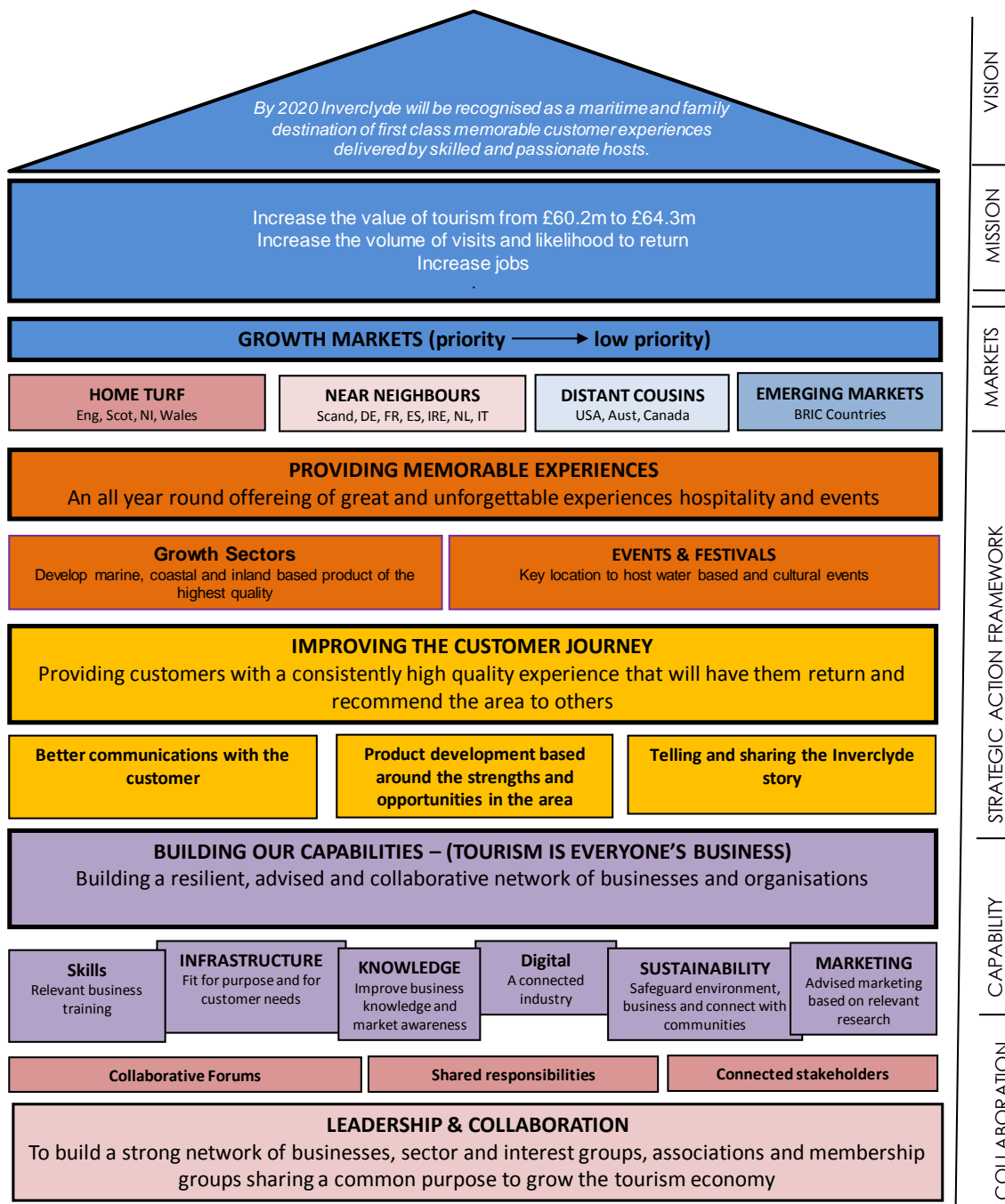
Measure	Source	2015	Growth	2020
Revenue £ (millions)	STEAM	£60.08	7%	£64.3
Visitor numbers (millions)	STEAM	.552	2%	0.563
Visitor days (millions)	STEAM	1.131	5%	1.187
No. of day visits per year	STEAM	2.03	3%	2.10
Spend per visitor day	STEAM	£53.12	2%	£54.15
Total employment (FTEs)	STEAM	984	4%	1023
Customer Feedback Score	Local	0	-	50%

- **Revenue** – growing the local economy
- **Visitor numbers** – building all year round visitations
- **Visitor days** – building time spent in the area
- **No. of day visits per year** – building likelihood to return
- **Spend per visitor day** – increasing quality and value for money
- **Total employment (FTEs)** - building the community
- **Customer Feedback Score** – providing memorable experiences to be recommended to others

### **Action**

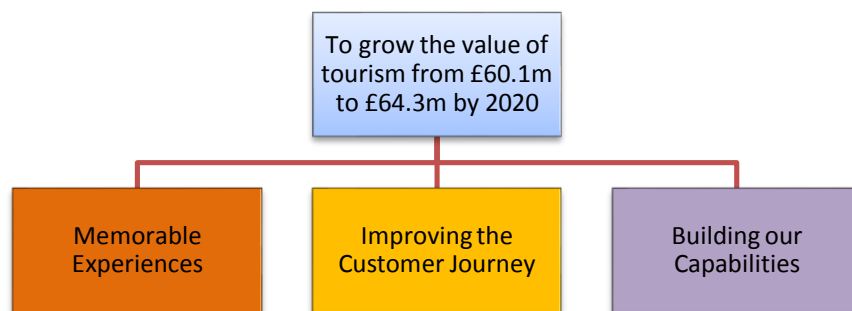
This Strategy looks to set the overall aims for tourism growth across the Inverclyde area. Following the formal adoption of the Strategy, a detailed annual Action Plan will require to be developed. The Action Plan will set out detailed and measurable actions that will be required to achieve the above Vision, Aims and Targets.

## INVERCLYDE STRATEGIC CONTEXT





## STRATEGY IN ACTION



### 1. Memorable Experiences - an all year round offering of great and unforgettable experiences, hospitality and events.



Inverclyde has a unique mix of marine, coastal and inland based tourism assets and is closely associated with one of the most iconic waterways in the world. The following sectors are seen as key to future growth and attracting visits from key markets; Glasgow, west, south and central Scotland.

#### 1. **Growth Sectors** – Develop marine, coastal and inland based product of the highest quality.

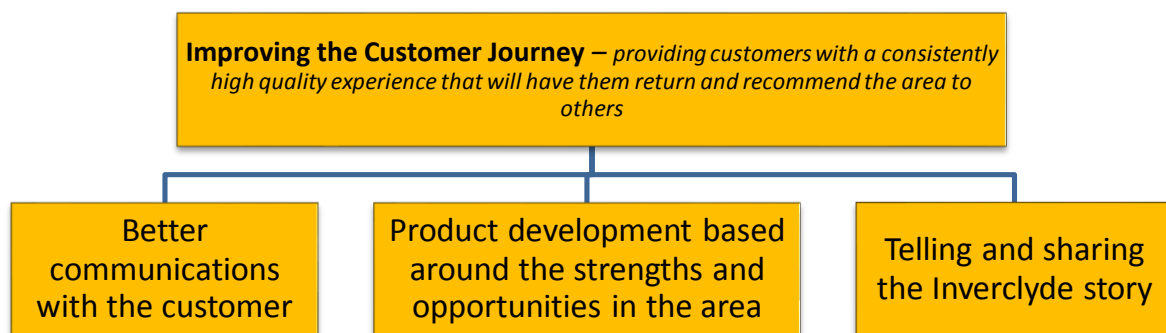
- Marine – develop tourism offering that is connected to the sea, The River Clyde and builds Inverclyde’s position a key marine tourism area in Scotland.
- Waterfront – maximise access to and the potential of Inverclyde’s waterfront as an attraction in itself, as Scotland’s busiest cruise ship port and to host events and attract new operators associated with coastal and marine tourism.
- Inland – fully maximise the potential of outdoor activities and recreation products associated with Inverclyde’s rich and diverse countryside through product development and promotional initiatives.

- Arts, Culture and Heritage – increase visibility of coastal heritage trails, arts and the culture of the area.
- Food and Drink – develop an Inverclyde Food & Drink group challenged to develop a business network aiming to ‘raise the bar’ for the provision of local food and drink.

**2. Festivals & Events** – Position Inverclyde as a key location in Scotland to host water based events whilst continuing to develop the strengthening arts and cultural sectors.

- Strengthen local partnerships to bid and attract new events and to promote and raise awareness of a developing year round series of events and festivals.
- Develop sustainability capacities and resilience of locally led events.
- Build better awareness across sectors of the programme of festivals and events to help boost visitor numbers and overnight stays.

## 2. Improving the Customer Journey – providing customers with a consistently high quality experience that will have them return and recommend the area to others



The ability to connect with the customer pre, during and post visit is essential to the success of the area. Built around local responsibility for the customer experience local business networks will drive up the quality and experiences. There will be more cross referring and cross selling of local and regional products and events so providing the customer with a real sense of place when touring or visiting the area.

1. Joined up communications with the customer- clear lines of communication offering the customer access to business and events
  - Aligning tourism messages across digital web, app and print channels.
  - Providing a shared digital information gateway to the area.
  - Information sharing supported through collaborative news network across the area.
2. Product development based around the assets, strengths and opportunities in the area.

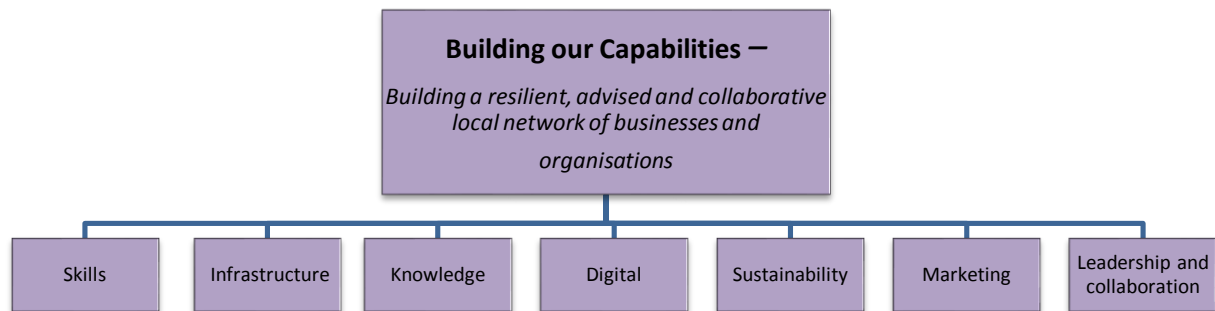
The following areas are earmarked as priority sectors and align with national strategy. Within each, a clear action plan will be developed and targeted to develop the levels of quality and capabilities of operators.

- Activities, Attractions, Marine and Nature
- Events and Festivals
- Arts, Heritage & Culture

- Accommodation, Food and Drink

**3. Telling the Inverclyde story - connecting the visitor with the area and local businesses.**

- Development of the Inverclyde story – an initiative that provides businesses with ‘nuggets’ and ‘gems’ about the area, what’s on and what to do.
- Customer journey testing; local groups to self-assess their area and what can be done to improve the customer experience.
- Creation of a Business Communication Network, thereby sharing news and business updates through a circulation news bulletin.



### 3. Building our Capabilities – Building a resilient, advised and collaborative local network of businesses and organisations

The building bricks of the industry will be based around the ambition of developing a knowledgeable, advised, digitally skilled and networked range of businesses, interest groups and organisations.

- Skills- relevant business training.
  - Development of a specific and locally driven tourism customer service skills programme suited to local businesses, local product and customer needs. The programme will be developed to 'raise the bar' for entrants to the sector through to experienced and established businesses.
  - Further build the digital skills capacities of the sector through development and delivery of a series of digital skills courses covering IT, web, social media awareness for business.
  - Packaging – support development and wider availability of packaged tourism products through local businesses capable of selling such product.
- Infrastructure - fit for purpose and for customer needs.
  - Further develop town and village signage, gateway signage and trail signage.
  - Working with Abellio Scotrail to develop growth of train passenger visits and local partnership tourism products to boost arrivals.

- Knowledge – improve business knowledge and market awareness.
  - Customer research – undertake consumer research programme to advise and influence business decision making and marketing.
  - Customer feedback – a programme of capturing feedback from business, destination and events will be grouped and shared to measure customer satisfaction, likelihood to return and to recommend. Programme to provide Net Promoter Score data for local and national benchmarking.
  - An annual Business Barometer will gather local data for local businesses. This will be supplemented by national gathering processes (STEAM and VS).
  - Shared knowledge - mechanisms will be put in place to share and disseminate information, data, and statistics.
- Digital – a connected tourism industry maximising digital opportunities.
  - Building the digital agenda into all strands of work.
  - Maximise the potential of available digital development programmes such as Digital Scotland to benefit local businesses so enhancing business and event capabilities through structured support, advice and signposting to best practice and training support.
  - Best use of digital network platforms to aid and support business to business networking.
- Sustainability – to safeguard the environment, businesses and to connect with communities.
  - To develop inward investment tourism opportunities for the area.
  - To link with Zero Waste Scotland, Energy Saving Trust, Keep Scotland Beautiful.
- Marketing - advised marketing activities based on relevant research.
  - Guided by consumer research, targeted marketing to recognised key markets with prioritisation towards Scotland's Central Belt day visit market.

- Fully engage with neighbouring product and destination marketing groups to maximise potential to extend marketing reach and develop joint initiatives and campaigns.
- Recognition of the new VisitScotland segmentation will influence marketing activities.
- Review and shared agreement reached regarding the core proposition that is presented as 'Inverclyde' to key markets.
- Leadership and Collaboration – to build a strong network of businesses, sector and interest groups, associations and membership groups, sharing a common purpose to grow the tourism economy.
  - Work in partnership with a local business led destination group and explore the potential of a collaborative business forum drawing together; businesses, organisations, communities, sectors, membership organisations. Such a forum (e.g. Visit Inverclyde Partnership) to lead and shape the delivery of the strategy.

## **RESOURCES – HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN**

The delivery of the strategy will not happen without support, resource and commitment from both the private and public sectors. The ambitions within the strategy and their achievement will directly relate to the collaborative partnership and the resources it can lever in to make things happen.

The majority of the initiatives that will percolate through to the Strategy Action Plan will be dependent upon an investment of time and people contributing to delivery. There are however elements that will require discrete funding, these being staff resources at Inverclyde Council to support and at times lead on matters plus resources for the primary and secondary research that is called for within the strategy.

The subsequent Strategy Action Plan will determine the scope of such costs and commitment.

## **STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**

Following on from the signing off and adoption of the strategy, detailed work will require to be undertaken to set out the delivery action plan, along with timetables, resources required, means of measurement and prioritisation.

The development of the Strategy Action Plan will involve further engagement with stakeholders prior to finalisation.

## **MEASUREMENT**

To measure progress against targets and to build the capabilities of local businesses a robust approach to data collection, research and distribution of that research is required. To meet this requirement a mix of externally sourced data will be collected along with locally sourced information. The sources are anticipated as:

### **STEAM**

The continuance of subscription to the STEAM data reports.

### **Visitor Attraction Monitor**

The continuance of subscription to the Visitor Attraction Monitor.

### **Business Barometer**

The Business Barometer was introduced in 2015 and provided local insight to tourism and business trends. The Barometer has the potential to gather high quality locally based data from the tourism sector. Data collected and interpreted can support strategic measurement and be circulated to businesses so supporting the ambition of a better advised industry.

It is recommended that the Business Barometer is carried out twice a year and is supported by a strong communications action plan so as to build take up and quality of final reports.

### **Customer Feedback**

Central to the strategy of putting the customer at the heart of tourism there is the need to measure customer feedback and their experience in the area. The strategy sets targets of increasing the likelihood to return and recommend the area. To understand if this key target is being met a method of measurement is required. It is recommended that the net Promoter Score (NPS) is adopted at the



core of this work. The NPS is the adopted approach within the National Strategy and so will allow for benchmarking with other areas of Scotland and nationally. The NPS will also allow local benchmarking to take place at a business level and aggregated sector level.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Inverclyde Tourism Strategy 2016-2020 seeks to put the customer at the heart of actions and ambitions and also seeks to maximise the natural assets of the area.

This is summarised as follows: ***By 2020 Inverclyde will be recognised as a leading coastal and day visit destination of first class memorable customer experiences delivered by skilled and passionate hosts. The strategy seeks to grow the value of tourism, the volume of visits, likelihood to return to the area so increasing jobs and the economic contribution tourism makes to the Inverclyde area.***

The delivery of the strategy will be through three key themes of: ***Providing Memorable Experiences, Improving the Customer Journey, Building local Capabilities***

To realise the above a new approach to tourism development is being sought where private sector and public sector partnerships are strengthened in pursuing commercial opportunities that will grow the sector and make a greater contribution to the economic prosperity of Inverclyde. Tourism is arguably Scotland's most sustainable industry that has a strengthening place in Scotland's economy. Ongoing investment in the sector is required to realise this opportunity.

The area has the potential to be a leading day trip destination with an inextricable connection with the Clyde and maritime Scotland.

The Strategy identifies the sectors within Inverclyde that can offer growth and calls for continued investment around; marine, the waterfront, inland activities, arts, culture and the areas rich heritage. In addition development of local food and drink offering and the events and festivals sector is highlighted along with partnership work with Abellio Scotrail.

The ability to connect with the customer pre, during and post visit is essential to the success of the area. Built around local responsibility for the customer experience, local business networks will drive up the quality and experiences. There will be more cross referring and cross selling of local and regional products and events so providing the customer with a real sense of place when touring or visiting the area.

The building bricks of the industry will be based around the ambition of developing a knowledgeable, advised, digitally skilled and networked range of businesses, interest groups and organisations.

To measure progress against targets and to build the capabilities of local businesses a robust approach to data collection, research and distribution of that research is required. To meet this requirement a mix of externally sourced data will be collected along with locally sourced information, the latter being of critical importance.

Within the strategy there is a call for a collaborative approach and the formation of an 'Inverclyde Tourism Partnership'. With the pending winding up of the Local Area Tourism Partnership it is vital that a cohesive local body exists to bring private and public sector stakeholders together. Such an approach will challenge resources, however an industry that employs up to 1,000 FTEs and contributes over £60m to the local economy will provide a return on the investment likely to be required to form a realistic Action Plan and to give the Strategy a fighting chance.

It is essential that the leadership of an 'Inverclyde Tourism Partnership' is addressed both in terms of private and public sector stakeholders but also to have adequate support and resources to enable and deliver the key priorities within the Action Plan.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Following on from the strategy being accepted by stakeholders the intention would be to explore the potential of the formation of an 'Inverclyde Tourism Partnership'.

The 'Inverclyde Tourism Partnership' will then move to lead and input to the formation of a business led Action Plan.

**End.**