

Savour the Flavours of Dumfries & Galloway

Final Report

Background to the Project

How was the idea for the project developed?

In 2003 Scottish Enterprise set up an ERDF project called Savour the Flavours which focussed on encouraging D&G food and drink producers to increase trading outside D&G. In 2008-9 after funding came to an end and following a reorganisation of the SE network, the private sector led committee of the previous Savour the Flavours explored ways of reviving the organisation to make it more inclusive, more responsive, more representative of the full lifecycle of D&G food and drink – from producers to end users to consumers. The project is led wholly by businesses operating within this sector.



In putting together a programme of activities for the new Savour the Flavours, the committee drew on their own experience and history, and took cognisance of other food initiatives across the UK. These included Food from Cornwall, a web based consumer initiative linking food producers with members of the public, Taste of Arran, a sales, marketing and distribution company branding products from 11 producers, Grampian Food Forum and Taste of Grampian, a business development organisation with an emphasis on events and Northumbria Larder, a food and drink development organisation with an emphasis on tourism, serving a similarly diverse geographic area as Dumfries & Galloway.



The general approach for StF is being proactive and outward looking, actively seeking to establish links and networks with other organisations, services, businesses and information providers.

The in developing the project the committee recognised the importance of food tourism and consumer focussed activities and the need to create an information resource and build contact databases (trade and consumer) to which businesses can access, thereby leaving a tangible legacy for D&G businesses in the longer term.



Who was involved in the project? Individual and Organisations

Savour the Flavours (STF) was established to support Dumfries & Galloway based food and drink producers and users. It was originally funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and led by Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway.

Dave Smith had taken on position of Chairman just prior to the project folding. He,

along with Lorna Young, embarked on creating a new approach to Savour the Flavours which would be much more proactive and outward looking, making the organisation relevant and responsive to the majority of food and drink businesses in Dumfries & Galloway.

The project also worked very closely with Chris Brown, Principal Economic Regeneration Officer with D&G Council in developing future plans.

The current committee members are as follows:

Dave Smith
Buccleuch Arms Hotel, Moffat

Wilma Finlay
Cream o'Galloway/Destination Dumfries & Galloway

John Mellis
Honey Producer, Auldgirth

Caroline Birse
Visitor Centres Manager Forestry Commission Scotland, Newton Stewart

Sandra Collinge
Drumlanrig Castle, Thornhill

Judith Johnson
Langholm Initiative, Langholm

Penny Halliday (Chair) / Derek Bathgate (Vice-Chair)
Wigtownshire Food & Drink, Portpatrick

Keith Irving (Chair)
Castle Douglas Food Town

There have been several committee member changes as the project unfolded due to illness, business commitments and emerging organisations during the course of the project.

What were the aims and objectives of the project?

Project aims:

- To support, advise and encourage new and existing food and drink businesses in D&G
- To mentor and provide information to encourage the business growth of food and drink businesses
- To encourage innovation within the food & drink sector, sharing knowledge and best practise within the membership



- To establish a consistent and coherent food & drink message in D&G – a single point of contact for consumers and the trade
- To actively support and encourage growth of food & drink consumer and trade events
- To actively support and promote the emerging farmers' markets
- To build links with other regional groups, Scottish and national organisations and industry

How was the funding package assembled?

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Savour the Flavours own funds | £ 4,936 |
| Project Match Partners | |
| Dumfries & Galloway Council | £ 70,000 |
| In-Kind from Committee Members | £ 11,520 |
| LEADER Grant Approved | <u>£ 86,456</u> |
| Total Funding | <u>£172,912</u> |

How much money did LEADER provide?

£86,456

The Project Experience

When did the project take place?

The project commenced on 1st July 2009 and finished on 30th June 2011. There were delays in the beginning due to the D&G Council summer recess delaying the release of match funding by nearly three months. As a result the Project Manager was not appointed to take up her post until 1st December 2009.

What actually happened?

Savour the Flavours supports Dumfries & Galloway's food and drink industry, working with producers, chefs, retailers, manufacturers, event managers, schools and consumers to help raise awareness of the local produce to be found in Dumfries & Galloway. Led by food and drink businesses, the organisation is helping to create a stronger, more robust food and drink industry in Dumfries & Galloway. It does this by supporting producers, retailers and manufacturers to grow and develop; by encouraging chefs and the wider hospitality sector to use local food and drink; by encouraging local people and visitors to embrace Dumfries & Galloway produce and by helping children learn about local produce. The project aims were created to have a



direct impact on the regional food and drink sector; throughout the supply chain from primary producer, to end user and including processors, consumers and tourist. As a result Savour the Flavours has been recognized as the key industry body for the food and drink sector in the region.

How was the Project delivered?

The most significant achievements of Savour the Flavours so far is the work done in bringing people and businesses together, opening lines of communication and facilitating joint working across communities and across sectors for the benefit of the entire food and drink sector. This approach to getting people working together resulted in the September celebration of Flavour Fortnight. This region-wide food festival drew together 48 events and activities organized by 43 businesses to showcase Dumfries & Galloway food and drink. Despite being organized in only two months, over 7,000 local people and visitors took part in the programme of events.

Underpinning all Savour the Flavours activities is a clarity of communication and the free flow of information, listening to the concerns and experiences of businesses, learning directly what their needs and aspirations are and adapting the activities of the project to meet those needs.

Notable activity undertaken by Savour the Flavours includes:

- Setting up the Wigtownshire Food & Drink Forum, a group of food producers, retailers and hospitality businesses in the west of the region who are working together to raise the profile of local produce through events and marketing activities
- Drawing the region's farmers' and community markets together to explore a joined up approach, which has led to the establishment of the Dumfries & Galloway Farmers' and Community Markets Association
- Organising a high impact group presence at the BBC Good Food Show in Glasgow in October 2010 and sourcing special grant funding to help eight businesses take part under a Savour the Flavours banner
- Working with some of the region's top chefs and encouraging them to become ambassadors for regional produce throughout the hospitality industry
- Organising Flavour Fortnight and several Taste of Dumfries & Galloway events to showcase the diversity and the quality of local food and drink – incorporating workshops, chef demonstrations and producer participation
- Organising a Shop Local Christmas campaign
- Producing Delicious D&G, a marketing newspaper distributed throughout the region
- Winning 'Stall Wars' at the Royal Highland Show 2011



What Marketing was Undertaken?

Much of the marketing undertaken focused around supporting events and activities, these included:

- Marketing the Taste of Dumfries & Galloway events at Cream o' Galloway, Kirroughtree Visitor Centre (2 events), Foodhall at Gretna Green (2 events).
- Supporting businesses in completing award entry submissions, and supporting them and offering advice on maximizing benefit following award shortlisting / wins
- Business to business marketing to raise awareness of the establishment of networking groups, such as Wigtownshire Food & Drink Forum and the Farmers' Markets open meetings
- Shop local Christmas campaign across print and radio media supported by recipe bookmarks and branded shopping bags distributed via members
- Business to Business marketing via double page features in In Commerce, Dumfries & Galloway Chamber of Commerce's magazine
- Developing and launching a complex website with extensive opportunities for content development and business linkages by members
- Sponsorship of media platforms, such as D&G Life's Food & Drink Magazine, Beautiful D&G and DNG Media's Be supplement to leverage branding and strong editorial presence within key publications
- Responding to opportunities, such as 7Stanes press trip link up, feeding journalist enquiries through to StF members and supporting them in their response
- Attending BBC Good Food Show in Glasgow
- Sponsoring D&G Life magazines People of the Year award in the category of Food & Drink Champion to cement StF's position as Dumfries & Galloway's regional voice of food & drink
- Attending Royal Highland Show through participation in Stall Wars
- Producing Delicious D&G, a Savour the Flavours newspaper distributed extensively throughout Dumfries & Galloway and, through members, further afield
- Providing PR support for community events and farmers' markets, such as Kirkcudbright Food Festival and Dumfries Farmers' Market



- Providing regular member communication, primarily through email
- Undertaking photography and filming of members and events to visually represent the region's food and drink industry, and supplying content to third parties, such as VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Executive to increase representation of Dumfries & Galloway within national publications

Who benefitted from the Project?

Members of Savour the Flavours who participated in a survey which was carried out by the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) as part of the evaluation process were asked what outcomes their business had experienced or were likely to experience which could directly be attributed to their involvement with Savour the Flavours. A significant number of businesses have already achieved increased sales directly through their involvement with Savour the Flavours, other areas of note included impact on skills and knowledge, impact on competitiveness and increased awareness of products and other businesses within the region.



Although these are direct impacts noted there were also a number of respondents indicated additional impacts were not yet experienced but impacts were likely to be experienced. The early stage measurement of impact illustrated that Savour the Flavours, over only a short timeframe, had a demonstrable and marked impact on participating businesses. Benefits are expected to increase in time, and be sustained over time, as businesses develop their strategies according to their involvement with Savour the Flavours as well as continue to collaborate with other participating businesses.



The survey also asked what benefit had being part of Savour the Flavours had on their business. The responses indicated that significant benefits were recorded in the following areas:



- Increased number of contacts within the industry
- Improved business relationships
- Increased awareness or knowledge of key industry issues
- Identified new business opportunities
- Entered new markets/increased customer base
- Ability to exploit partnerships with others in the industry



In excess of 75% of the survey respondents indicated their businesses had benefitted as a direct result of being a member of Savour the Flavours. A selection of comments provided by survey participants are provided below.

"We have an increased awareness of local produce and the knowledge, that we little businesses can be part of something bigger and positive. We need the leadership of a project like this."

"We always tell people about our own website and also the Savour the Flavours website. People are interested to learn that we are a member of this body and that other like minded businesses are in the area too. Quality overrides prices and we find that being on Savour the Flavours has helped to get our name out into the business world."

"Their knowledge, experience, skills and contacts made setting up the business so much easier and targeted."

"Savour the Flavours has given us a point of contact, informed us of otherwise unknown events and has allowed us to participate in regional events successfully."

The evaluation highlighted multiple economic benefits to members that they attributed directly to Savour the Flavours activities. Key points from the economic impact section of the evaluation are detailed below:

Over the past two years at least £175K has already been secured as a direct result of Savour the Flavours, not to mention the many significant elements of expected future benefit recorded by members.

- *A key outcome realised by 24 respondents was the direct role Savour the Flavours has in increasing sales and therefore turnover. Of these 24 businesses, 16 were able to estimate the financial impact of Savour the Flavours, this totalled £88,000.*
- *13 firms had witnessed a financial impact through skills development, of which four estimated total financial benefits of £8,500.*
- *Four firms had managed to secure cost savings as a result of Savour the Flavours support, totalling £10,000.*
- *Five firms noted that Savour the Flavours had a direct role in improving internal process, of which three estimated total financial benefits of £5,000.*
- *Ten firms indicated that Savour the Flavours had a direct impact on improving their competitiveness, of which seven recorded a total financial impact of £64,500.*

These are broad and conservative economic impacts as a number of businesses were unable to put a figure on the financial impact and a significant proportion of businesses noted that they expected financial impacts to accrue in the future.

How did the final budget turn out?

From the original project approval of £86,456, the project claimed £86,453.78.

What lessons have been learnt?

Survey respondents were asked how Savour the Flavours could be



improved. Many respondents believed the organisation was working effectively and minimal change was necessary, some key suggestions are listed below:

“More chefs, shouting from the roof tops!”

“Continued liaison across the region is vital and maybe more opportunities business to business.”

“Networking and communication with other organisations.”

“Savour the Flavours has already made a quantum leap forward, the next step is to recruit more businesses with more joined up marketing with tourism and industry”

“With the increased endorsement of chefs it can only enhance what Savour the Flavours are trying to achieve and bring it to greater public attention. Chefs should be used as ambassadors”

“More promotion of local food within all catering sectors in Dumfries & Galloway.”

Survey respondents provided suggestions on the role Savour the Flavours should adopt in order to develop their businesses, many suggested the organisation was working effectively and the vision going forward for Savour the Flavours very much reflected the points raised by members, additional comments included:

“Raise awareness of quality food establishments using fresh local produce.”

“Providing a list of contacts for suppliers and organising events which promote the region which all concerned can participate in.”

“Maintain its current role.”

“Be the key link to external services and introductions outside the region.”

“Promotion of local producers and the local food chain.”

“Maintain a presence and be a point of focus for food buyers. Possibly closer connection with Scottish tourism.”

“An ambassador for Food & Drink from Dumfries and Galloway.”

“Develop chef skills based around a Taste of Dumfries & Galloway, as so many of our cooks/chefs have little training. Looking beyond Dumfries & Galloway would help our business more, but I appreciate that this has not been the focus of Savour the Flavours.”

Will the project be mainstreamed or transferred?

A new project, Savour the Flavours II, has secured funding for a further 2 year project which has been match funded by LEADER. Flavour Fortnight 2011, a spin off project has also secured funding from D&G Council for a 1 year project which has also been match funded by LEADER. There is support from Council to look at mainstreaming STF in the future.



Detail the sustainability of the Project and/or the exit strategy?

A new project, Savour the Flavours II, has secured funding for a further 2 year project. There is support from Council to look at mainstreaming STF beyond this foundation period. The outcome focus approach adopted by the project will enable the creation of sustainable activities, such as collaborative industry groups and marketing activity funded by advertising revenue.

Detail how the Project has addressed the LEADER issue selected in the Application?

The project tackled D&G LEADER issue - 'Add value to local products'.

The success of this issue within the project has been clearly demonstrated in the evaluation document.

