SUMBISSION FROM FOOD FROM ARGYLL

1. Understanding the scale and growth of social enterprises and employee-owned businesses in Scotland;

Food from Argyll is a consortium based organisation with a co-operative structure. It has 20 members and has been operating since 2007. It has two part time development workers/co-ordinators plus a part time accountant and assistance from SAOS staff.

Background

In August 2007, a group of Argyll food producers to broke new ground by creating a unique area at the Connect Festival in Inveraray at which festival goers could sample and feast on genuine local food, prepared and sold by the producers. Spurred on by the enthusiastic reception, the producers were encouraged to meet and explore future possibilities to bring local food to a new audience. Planning over the winter months resulted in an extended tour for 2008 and every year since. The group, which is constituted as a co-operative, operates under the banner of ‘Food From Argyll’ further solidifying the connection between what we eat and where it is produced. The groups now has a regular programme of events which members attend and has built up a loyal following.

For the event goers the group provides good food, sourced and produced with passion and in depth knowledge such as only those who actually create the food can bring to an event. Feedback, in the form of questionnaires and surveys at events, has shown customers enjoy finding out about where the food has come from as much as using it to fuel up before watching the next event

For the producers it provides an opportunity to reach a new audiences and expand the potential for sales of their products into new markets.

For event organisers it provides a food offering which not only keeps its customers happy but actively draws in increased visitor numbers.

The groups success has resulted in it expanding its activities from Festivals to sporting events (Murrayfield stadium), major events in Glasgow (world Pipe Band Competitions) as well as local events (Inveraray Games) and private parties (After party for You Instead film premier).

In recent years development funding has helped the group expand again to work on joint developments for its members. These have included marketing initiatives, including website, social media and marketing materials, as well as long term projects such as a distribution and processing hub, hamper business and a retail/café outlet.

The group played a major part in the public catering at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014, operating at the BBC Pacific Quay site and at Glasgow Green. This raised their profile considerably as well as adding to their skills and ambitions.
2. Hearing examples of innovation from businesses, for example employee involvement in developing new products, services or processes and innovative partnerships within communities;

Food from Argyll have been innovative in looking for new outlets for their members and also in joining with other groups to deliver projects. For example they join hosted a National Food Tourism conference in Oban in Nov. 2015, working alongside the Argyll and the Isle Tourism Co-operative. They have also worked with Taste of Arran on a joint promotion at the London Boat Show in Jan. 2015. They have close links with Art Map Argyll and with the individual DMO’s within Argyll.

Their promotion of good quality, local sourced food at events has been influential in developing this as a growing trend within events and encouraging programmes such as Event Ready producers.

The group has members of a variety of sizes, from small to medium companies to sole trader. One of the major achievement of the group has been in the support the large businesses have been able to give the smaller businesses and how expertise has been shared across all members.

3. Assessing the sources of funding and support available;

The group has been supported by Argyll & Bute Council, the Community Food Fund Think Local Programme and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and SAOS. This support has been crucial for the ongoing development of the group,

4. What public bodies are doing and should be doing to encourage these business models.

Food from Argyll is a producer led group, formed and driven by a group of committed individuals passionate about their product and location. It has been able to progress thanks to the support and financial assistance of public bodies who have had the confidence to invest in the group. The continuation of this support is crucial to further development and growth.

Contact Details

Virginia Sumsion
Food from Argyll