STIRLING BASED SOCIAL ENTERPRISE CAN DELIVER BIG ON SCOTTISH TOURISM

Friday 14 December, 2018

You might not have heard or even know about FVSE, a Stirling based social enterprise that seems to have been working in the shadows over the last 5 years, building its tourism offering that not only fulfils its own social aims of providing practical training support for young people but also generating considerable economic impact for the city by encouraging more visitors to Stirling.

This Community Interest Company was founded back in late 2012 by Matt McGrandles, a Stirling born social entrepreneur and past Stirling County RFC 1st XV Captain. This old Warrior from Glasgow Rugby days focuses on providing support to young people through FVSE's Training Academy which looks to level the playing field by offering a real focus on being part of a practical learning experience rather than a purely academic one.

Matt believes individuals all learn and develop differently. "We are not all academic learners, but we do all have the ability to achieve more in the right learning environment and by incorporating a hands-on approach provides so much more engagement and reward for young people."

Over the last 5 years FVSE has built up its reputation in the event sector so when SenScot, Scotland's support organisation for social enterprise networks, were invited by Visit Scotland to select a social enterprise that can showcase their impact on tourism at the Scottish Parliamentary Tourism CPG, FVSE were delighted to accept.

Sruighlea, the Scots Gaelic for Stirling and is pronounced Sreee-lie, is the growing annual festival and the financial backbone to the CIC. It now incorporates the Stirling Highland Games, a Foodie Festival, Heritage Tours, Activities Challenges, Fringe Performances and Live Music.

You may think that FVSE's delivery model of events can be somewhat back to front but the realisation of the lack of financial support to help establish this CIC in its early days gives reason to the madness. "Once we acknowledged there was nobody interested in providing that initial seed finance, I knew we had to grow our event organically from year to year and couldn't rely on just selling tickets to cover the overhead costs of the event. So we engage with private businesses every year to secure sponsorship, which creates the event budget. Dependant on how much sponsorship we raise depends on the offering at the event."

Even with the challenges faced since 2014 including the local authority agreeing to another major event happening over the same weekend in 2018, FVSE has proven their tourism offering agrees with most. This one event has provided opportunities for up to 120 young people through its Training Academy programmes and projects, attracted almost 20,000 visitors generating £1.2 million for the host economy and engaged with 229 volunteers.

"Yes, it's been an uphill struggle," Matt explains, "but my Board are proud of our achievements to date and the work we provide to our community. Its crucial for the stability of the organisation that we continue to focus on trying to attract 10,000 visitors to our event. Ticket sales are our life line just now."

Plans are already in place to develop the next 3-year strategy including celebrating the 150-year anniversary of Stirling Highland Games, the launch of Sruighlea 2020 Legacy project which focuses overseas, with support from Scottish Enterprise, to identify sponsorship opportunities with North American and Asian businesses that have connections in Scotland.

Adding to this, FVSE's new Business Development Manager Dan Rous explained the longer-term plans are for the organisation to have their own HQ, which builds on the tourism event offering to date by creating an all year-round visitor attraction. In a city that boasts about supporting its 3rd sector organisations with its new city deal one can only hope that people start to take notice of this resilient and determined social enterprise.

One thing is clear, this social enterprise delivers on its tourism offering for both Stirling and Scotland. Something surely that every town needs in the current financial landscape is more of these home grown annual festivals that benefit a multitude of sectors. Unlike the tug o war competition you can find in the Festivals Activities Challenge area, should everyone not be pulling in the same direction for the festival to succeed?

Media:



Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits :: Entertainment & Arts :: Food & Drink :: Travel & Tourism ::

Related Keywords:

Tourism :: Scottish Parliament :: Tourism Cpg :: Scotland :: FVSE :: Event Delivery :: Sruighlea :: Stirling's Summer Festival :: Stirling Highland Games ::

Scan Me:

Company Contact:

_

Ceangail

T. 0330 122 1997
E. office@ceangail.org
W. https://www.ceangail.org

View Online

Additional Assets:

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.ceangail.pressat.co.uk