

At the outset of establishing the Bute Business Improvement District (BID) the businesses identified 3 key areas to address and prioritise.

77% wanted

better marketing and promotion of Bute with a stronger place in the tourism sector, holding local events and visible branding.

78% of the

Bute business community understood that environment and image of the island attracts independent investment, further tourist footfall and can increase visitor and live-in population.

65% expects

that working with the Bute BID will deliver increased business support, business facilitation and business advocacy that may be unavailable individually.

BUTE BID AGM

The AGM was held in Rothesay Joint Campus and was attended by a good section of the Bute business community and Levy payers. The whole BID Board were in attendance along with Fergus Murray from Argyll and Bute Council, who sits on the BID Board. All were there to answer the questions that had been submitted to the Board prior to the meeting. In most cases it was unhappiness with the level of communication that has been offered by the Board that caused concern. It was presented to the businesses that the BID Board have a website that is updated regularly with all actions and events that the Board do. Regular BID newsletters were promised and access to them should also be on the BID website. One business owner wanted the BID Board meeting minutes to be added onto the website. It was assured that the the BID Assistant was trying to set up a 'members only' part of the BID website where access to documents could be available. Instead the BID have provided the Board Meeting Minutes under the BID INFO page of the website. BID Facebook also offers regular information for Levy payers from other organisations such as the AITC, the ABC, Business Gateway as well as funding opportunities.

Please note the BID still does not have all Levy payers email addresses, so if you have not received any emails from the BID office please send an email to info@butebid.com.

The BID office hours were re-iterated, and it was mentioned that there was an open door policy for anyone to visit should they have an issue or need assistance. Year 1 BID accounts were presented along with an annual report of all the actions undertaken by the Board in their first year. Questions on various spends was discussed, as was the apparent reduction of Council input into the island. Fergus Murray clearly illustrated the Council's position of constant savings being forced upon them and the bleak landscape of both funding and work scope. He underlined that BID's were the way the Scottish Government were moving forward in dealing with areas and business communities and that he hoped Bute businesses would get behind the BID.

New BID Manager Post

The search is on for a replacement BID Manager. The job was advertised on both the BID website and over two weeks in the local newspaper, The Isle of Bute News. Applicants for the post will be interviewed soon and an announcement given as to the successful candidate. We will keep you posted.

Funding News

Argyll and Bute Council contacted the Bute BID a short time ago and asked for any 'shovel ready' projects they may have to apply for the Capital Fund. Three projects have been submitted and the BID look forward to the learning of the outcome.

Arts for Bute

Following the success of the Christmas Light projection in 2022, Bute BID have been working in collaboration with Bob Henshelwood of IBAC to bring to Bute a Local Artists Projection pilot event displaying two well connected local artist's work onto Rothesay Castle. Look out for the projections which will both illuminate the artist's talent as well as bring light to the island as the darker nights come upon us.

Bute BID Survey

A survey has been sent out to the email addresses that the BID office have stored from the Levy payers. If you have NOT received an emailed survey - PLEASE get in touch as we need to keep adding Levy payers up to date emails, as well as get back any and all feedback from our BID survey. Email us on info@butebid.com or pop into the BID office.



And It's a Wrap!

After working to both establish the Bute BID Steering Group and then seeing a successful island BID come to fruition in 2022, John Weir handed in his resignation after finding his working path moving back to England. John's tenure as BID Manager in the first 18 months he agreed was indeed a baptism of fire. The Bute BID is the only whole of island BID in the UK, making it quite unique. Having to do a dual role in both establishing working relationships with external bodies such as the Scotland Towns and Partnerships, Scottish Government, Argyll and Bute Council's Senior Management, AITC, Visit Scotland, Mount Stuart and the local schools and community groups, as well as work alongside the Bute businesses trying to bring to fruition their ideas and wants for the island to prosper.

John had a number of successes to the benefit of the community such as a working fountain, contracting the annual management of the chairs and tables in the amphitheater, commissioning the re-publishing of an updated Visit Bute Map, ensuring the town was cleaned and jet-washed in the first year, securing funds from the council for a playpark at Children's Corner, new bike racks, as well as the contract of continued painting of street railings and bollards and hopefully shelters which is ongoing. John also worked alongside Mount Stuart to create a warm and informative welcome to the visiting cruise ships who he helped visit the island.

Visit Bute Update

Marketing and advertising through Visit Bute



Your own adventure island

The BID board agreed the Visit Bute marketing plan that was devised with input from Cathy Craig of the AITC. Finding the USP for Bute which is not limiting, yet piques interest for a visit had to be debated. The BID Board were keen to promote an inclusive idea which could encompass the whole island and 4 key target audiences. The theme 'Outdoors' was thought to be the most fitting. No matter the weather, the time of year or even where you are on the island, Bute offers a fabulous opportunity to enjoy the best of a Scottish island - in the most accessible way. Working this theme into all marketing efforts moving forward, a 'shopping list' of advertising and marketing ideas was budgeted and presented to the Board. Using the tagline, where relevant, Visit Bute - Your own adventure island - will be used on print media and some social media too.

Visit Bute's Target Audience

- Aspirational Family Fun**
Information hungry, British based higher earners with children at home, they can regularly take breaks where they will indulge in active family friendly pursuits.
- Cultural Travellers**
Older demographic with money to spend on visiting cultural and heritage sites. Happy to spend more than one night in their destination of choice. Often have links to the area. Well researched prior to visit.
- Adventure Seekers**
25 - 50+ age group who purposely seek out activities that help them explore their environment be it cycling, walking, water activities, sailing, wild swimming, paddle boarding.
- Free and Easy Mini Breakers**
Younger, up to middle aged demographic happy to explore the area without too much direction. Looking for food and drink experiences, local events, walks, beaches. Uses social media and print media to research and explore. Will often use the destination as a bolt hole if within an easy commute.



Holiday West Highland Advert for Autumn/Winter 2023



Continuing with the promotion of Bute's businesses and Bute as a holiday destination, we are finalising the next 3 page insert in Holiday West Highland that will take the magazine into Autumn/Winter months of 2023. This is Visit Bute's third promotion in the magazine handout. Editorial focus this time is to promote Bute's full calendar of events taking place from Autumn 2023 and into whole of 2024. The blurb prior pushes the audience to consider Bute for a holiday even in the quieter 'shoulder months' after September. Distributed through The Oban Times, over 50,000 printed copies are distributed in over 500 outlets including airports, high footfall retail outlets and ferry ports across Scotland. Going head to head alongside other popular Scottish holiday destinations, Bute businesses will now have a strong voice in a popular periodical on a regular basis.



Visit Bute Your own adventure island

Our Unique Selling Proposition (USP) premise is that every visitor who comes to this island will have their own experience, their own adventure to take home and remember, re-tell, refer to and hopefully RECOMMEND to others, which is of course, our main goal.

*as far as researched, this has no other links to islands or marketing of other areas.

Bute Soars Above The M8!



Towering above the M8 motorway over Glasgow, the Rise+ Digital Billboard is hard to ignore. More importantly for Bute, it will be impossible to miss the thousands of motorists who travel past it each day as Visit Bute launches its very first foray into billboard advertising in September. **'Go big or go home was the motto here', said Alayne Byers the BID Assistant.** The BID through Visit Bute secured 5 images of Bute that will be advertised over 2 weeks, with 1 board in every 4 being one of Visit Bute's adverts. '75Media who built the Rise+ Tower own a 9m x 6m high resolution digital screen which looks spectacular. We focused on pictures that are wistful, autumnal and fun and show them just prior to the September weekend. Visit Bute needs to focus its efforts in gaining traction for the 'shoulder months', and hopefully get tourists coming to visit Bute in the quieter months as well', added Alayne.

The Visit Bute website received this contact from Mrs J. McGuinness:

Hi - Just a wee note to say that your Bute advert on the lit up board on the M8 at Glasgow Airport is fabulous. I've asked around and loads of people have noticed it. Put me in the mood for a visit.

Kind Regards

Jean

Looks like it's working for Bute!

Plant Pot Sponsorships are GO!

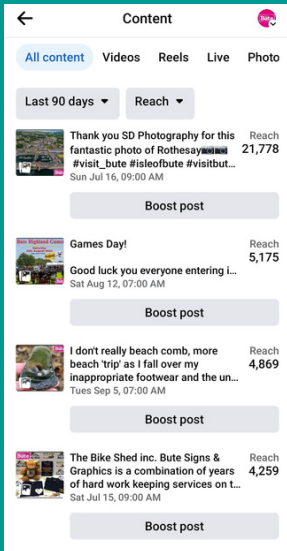
The BID office had a successful number of applicants to sponsor the town's plant pots with over six local companies happy to put their logo on plant pots around the town which will now be managed by the BID. Patricia Docherty, a Bute resident was happy to see that the plants were being upkept in the town, 'with the council doing less and less, it's great to see the companies doing their best to keep the town looking nice!' she said.



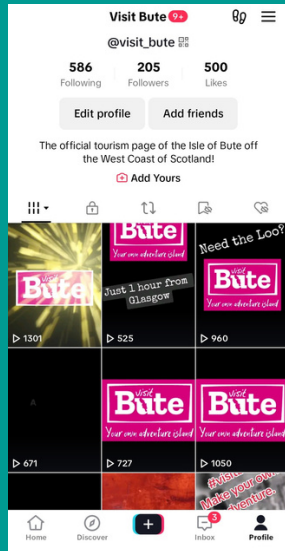
Social Media Update

Using Social Media to push Visit Bute has just gone from strength to strength since the BID has taken it over. A fast paced and sometimes fickle marketing outlet, creating a strong brand in the world of SM requires both consistency and an eye for following trends and hooks when appropriate. In the first year of the BID, Social Media was taken over by Alayne Byers with the help of some Board Members. Firstly a daily Facebook and Instagram post is set up - where the content alternates between promoting businesses on the island to promoting parts of the island itself. Everything from places of interest, activities, events and even the local loos! VB TikTok has gained traction with a lot of scenic and quirky 'reels' which are then shared to Facebook reels which then finds another audience for showcasing the island.

Facebook Impressions



VB TikTok



Your Content Needed for Visit Bute!

The BID Board encourages all Bute businesses to look at the social media being undertaken, and ask for their input in terms of new content. Content for ideas and social media marketing gives the BID office through the Visit Bute arm, a chance to promote your business, your favourite place, favourite activity, favourite place to go - even favourite review you've had!! Please send your thoughts, pictures and films to info@butebid.com. Visit Bute is also happy to promote your business too, just email the office and ask for help and we will do our best to create a social media post. Visit Bute continues to use all offered content to push Bute as the best all round holiday destination off Scotland's West Coast!

AITC - WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS IN JOINING?

The Argyll and Isles Tourist Cooperative (AITC) is funded by a mix of both public and private funding which is spent on continuing to attract regular visitors to the Argyll and Bute area. The organisation focuses on keeping the sustainability of this effort by trying to attract a more equitable spread of visitors, and appeal to them. This is a key Bute quotient, as our theme of 'outdoors' is there to attract as many traveler 'types' as outlined in our Visit Bute target audience chart. The AITC works daily with government and public sector groups to help influence government policies and matters that directly impact tourism. They signpost the latest opportunities for funding and training opportunities for our members - as well as scoping membership collaboration and product advice. 3rd party financial investment such as the Highland and Islands, and Argyll and Bute Council have helped to secure £240,000 which is an impressive +727% on the core membership received. In terms of Bute's figures there are 112 members listed at present, in the last 90 days, there have been 647 online engagements with Bute businesses, with the average time spent being 1m 10secs on the WAA website. Cathy Craig encourages Bute businesses that are not members to go onto the WAA site and become a member to benefit directly from their national and international reach. Contact wildaboutargyll.co.uk

BID Sector & Breakfast Meetings for Bute Businesses Held

There has been two BID sector meetings held so far after the feedback from the AGM. The first was the Licensing Sector. The meeting was held in May and was well attended. Feedback taken from the meeting was concentrated on 4 key topics; October Fest - an idea was put to the pubs for a month long music inspired festival for pubs and restaurants which the BID could assist the promotion of. Discussion turned to the Rate Increase of the NDR, and how this would affect businesses. Outside licensing and the gap site near the Grapes Bar was discussed, and the BID has been asked to see what funds could go toward putting in better seating as well as electricity for the area to be used by the public. Lastly, specific marketing for the Licensees had the idea for a 'Bute Pub Trail' to be created as a trifold leaflet that could be distributed in marinas, accommodation providers etc. The BID agreed that this was something they could do.

Accommodation providers, retailers and activity providers were invited to a sector meeting on 12th July at The Glenburn Hotel. Of the handful who made the meeting all found that the meeting was useful for sharing thoughts and ideas. Visit Bute marketing ideas were shared with the audience and a general discussion on the holiday market was had. One attendee noted that their accommodation was now hosting longer stays, and from more international audiences and this seemed to be the trend. It was thought this was great for Bute, but agreed Bute businesses needed to be able to step up in terms of providing things to do, places to eat and offering consistency in shop opening hours. Finding enough places to eat and eat in later on in the evening was seen as a big hurdle for some guests.

Mount Stuart held their first Business Breakfast meeting with Stuart Brownlee, who is the the Fund Manager for The Bute Enterprise Finance Fund. Mr Brownlee gave more information on the Fund and how it could be helpful to businesses on the island and just how to apply for loans.

In collaboration with the BID, the AITC held an open meeting to all businesses on the 21st of June. CEO, Cathy Craig talked for over an hour to the assembled audience of approx. 10 Levy payers. She also provided the slides to the BID to be shared with the Levy payers which can be found under NEWS on the BID website. Cathy gave a talk which was informative and concise focusing on the island and offering up ideas for Bute businesses to help with their own marketing, reach and visibility, and how to meet the established trends of the domestic and international tourism market.

Few people have more insight into tourist 'wants' than Cathy Craig. At her recent talk in the Discovery Centre she highlighted a few for local businesses to think upon. Feedback from her 'fam trips' are that visitors are often looking for 'bookable experiences' and often wish for these to be hands-on activities. These particular guest types require at least 3* accommodation, and are willing to pay a premium for that upsell. She explained that the Scottish tourist sector was doing well since Covid but it was a very competitive market and the Argyll and the Isles needed to offer their own brand of niche activities, quality food and drink experiences to rise to the challenge of securing our share of that holiday footfall.

Direct Distribution Trifold

Direct Distribution are the company that owns leaflet distribution space in train stations, airports, museums and many other high traffic areas all over the UK. Visit Bute will be securing leaflet space in a variety of busy outlets with a colourful and enticing Visit Bute leaflet these will be distributed across areas of Scotland and the Central Belt. Bright and eye catching, it will be displayed from January 2024 as a 6 month campaign to capture the interest of potential visitors up until the summer months are upon us.

Highland Dancing on the Waverley

Senior dancers from the Anne McIlroy School of Dance put on a memorable performance on a journey of the Waverley in August. Passengers were treated to the third generation of Anne McIlroy's Dancers in a performance that ties in the strong bond the Isle of Bute and the Waverley Paddle Steamer share.

Bute Bar Trifold

The Visit Bute Trifold leaflet wanted by the Licensees was designed, proofread, published and has been distributed around shops, restaurants and public houses on the island. The leaflet lists all the bars on Bute and what they have to offer from real ales to outdoor seating. Another leaflet will be designed and published which will offer the same type of information pertaining to the eateries on the island. Copies can be delivered or picked up from the BID office.



Cruise Liner Arrival

The last cruise ship to visit Bute in 2023 was on the 17th of September and called the Seabourn Ovation built in 2018. Despite the cold weather the Visit Bute team were there to offer a warm welcome with a goody pack with a Bute map, leaflets and even a bit of tablet for their journey. Just over 250 brave souls disembarked and were able to do a number of activities; either a pre planned tour around the island, a trip to Mount Stuart House or a walking tour of the town of Rothesay. These tours are all organised on the ship prior to disembarkation. From Visit Bute attendance at the Cabbies Rest we were able to note quite a number of guests wanted to just use the time to go around the town themselves at their own pace. A lot were asking about shops to buy scarves, fleeces and even gloves as well as souvenirs of the island. Young Neil Campbell Gillies was the highlight for many with his lovely bagpipe playing for each tender that came in throughout the day. A big thank you goes to Neil and his mum Jane, who kept us company that day!



LETTER FROM OUR CHAIR

As the Summer season comes to a close I am heartened to see that Bute was busy with tourists with an increasing number visiting from abroad. Feedback from many accommodation providers say their season has been good and the eateries have been finding themselves busy, and quite often fully booked. This is great to hear, but we can't rest on these laurels. The island is still needing Bute businesses to pull their collective efforts together and make the island one to spend more time upon now in the quieter months. This is sure to help those businesses who depend on the income to keep trading year round. Visit Bute had some poor feedback from one Waverley visitor who found the town to be closed when they arrived, and lacking in things to do. We need to work on signposts for our visitors to help them find the many things that we do offer on the island. It is imperative to finish the bar and eateries trifold leaflets and have them distributed all over the island. Pushing our street scene clean, and sprucing up the areas that the Council no longer have in their remit is important too. We were glad to see the 30 new bins that have been added, and we hope to get some Visit Bute branding on these, with QR codes to the VB website.

Please also take a minute to fill out the BID survey that has been sent your way. This will be sent annually and will be instrumental in providing the data we need to make sure the BID Board focus on the actions you find important for your business's success.

I'm sure Bute will benefit from the advertising push that the Visit Bute arm are doing to keep the island at the forefront of potential visitors minds through the digital billboards, the trifold leaflet distributions and the Drive By billboard that Visit Bute are taking just prior to Christmas holidays.



John Glen
Chairman of the Bute BID

