

Destination Leaders Programme Case Studies



Destination Leaders Programme Stories and Successes



DLP Case Study: Destination Leaders: Stories and Successes

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Introduction: This case study offers key insights and motivations of DLP alumni from programme years 1, 2 and 3. Read about their reasons for taking part in the programme, what impact taking part has had, both professionally and personally, and get some top tips for getting the most out of doing the programme. Find all cases studies online or listen to DLP alumni talking about their experiences on YouTube.

Why Take Part in the Destination Leaders Programme?

Anna Young, Tourism Executive, Visit West Lothian: I believed that the Destination Leaders programme had the potential to offer me a fantastic opportunity to share what I have learnt over the past five years and I wanted to benefit from engaging with other professionals in the tourism industry. I believe that Scotland would benefit from a stronger network of leaders within the tourism industry, and I saw the development of this course as hopefully the first step towards forging this.

Pete Duncan, Operations Manager, Haggis Adventures: I wanted to have a deeper understanding of what affected the tourism industry on a more strategic level and I was looking for an opportunity to meet and mix with people within tourism but not necessarily working in the same sector as me. I was looking to push myself to engage with people whom I wouldn't normally meet and to learn from this experience.

Nancy Riach, Partnerships & Development Manager, The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo: I wanted to improve my leadership skills; I needed the reinforcement of being able to lead people through things. Personally, I wanted to understand the tourism sector better, improve my leadership skills and gain "tourism credentials" – that is, that I could say that "I'm part of the tourism make-up of Edinburgh and Scotland.

Neil Ellis, General Manager, Place Hotels: Collaboration was definitely the greatest influence of the programme and the fact that the Destination Leaders Programme brought us all – the eighteen industry professionals taking part in the first year – together into a lasting network.

Susan Russell, Marketing Manager, Festivals Edinburgh: The DLP seemed ideal because of the aspect of the academic side of looking at the destination marketing element. That appealed to me because I had been away from academia and I was keen to look at models of best practice, the best ways of working. Work-based learning appealed, plus the opportunity to look at projects which had a return and real results.

Brendan Miles, Digital Business Director, The List: I came into the DLP wanting to grow my network personally, to find business opportunities and actually the DLP has delivered on that enormously. There's any number of people that we're now having much closer conversations with and there's real genuine business that's going to come out of it.

What do people get out of doing the Destination Leaders Programme?

Diane McRae, Senior Sales & Event Manager, The Royal Yacht Britannia: There was just this confidence that I hadn't tapped into and I didn't really know I had – by being part of this whole journey I really feel as if it's given me more confidence. Our weekend learning journey to Amsterdam was such a valuable experience and we took back lots we could apply in Edinburgh. It helps you see things differently – it teaches how to see things from different perspectives – it really opens your eyes.

Marion McKean, Operations Director, Edinburgh International Conference Centre (formerly of Premier Inn Edinburgh): It opens up a completely different network of people. Having worked in the city for a long time and having worked for a big brand for a long time I just felt that doing the courses and the workshops as part of the DLP it gave me a different confidence level going out into the market place and working with different industries and just looking at how you can collaborate to make the destination better together. I've signed up to do mentoring now with the Career Ready programme which is about mentoring school children. It's made me recognise where I can give something back to the industry and also the personal impact I can have on improving Edinburgh as a destination for tourism.

Gordon Hodge, Conferencing & Events, University of Strathclyde: I work in an academic institution and what I do is slightly different from everyone else, but we do have an impact in the city. It allowed me to see how my part of the organisation can have an impact on the economic development of the city. It lifts you out of the day to day and lets you look at what you're doing in a more holistic way which I think is very helpful.

Susan Russell, Marketing Manager, Festivals Edinburgh: I think the experience of being with people from different sectors who use different approaches has helped me in terms of confidence with my own approach. In the public sector there are often constraints, so by coming into contact with people from the private sector I had the opportunity to question things and change things. I feel this gave me more power, more personal power, and the ability to influence.

Nancy Riach, The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo: The programme gave me what I like to call "destination thinking" which I consider really important: a sense of business thinking but also the business which you represent, your individual contribution to the organisation –you take this with you wherever you go.

Pete Duncan, Haggis Adventures: The strong network which we have built via the programme is an extremely positive thing and I can now pick up the phone and consult with all kinds of new contacts, and similarly I can be there for them. I also believe that my organisation, Haggis Adventures, has benefited from my increased confidence, and the strategic ways in which I can apply leadership learning from the course to my role and my team.

What Does the Programme Cover?

There are three residential weekends focus on leadership covering areas including:

- **Leadership skills** - leadership behaviours; understanding your leadership style; team building and leadership; leadership challenges in a destination v a business
- **Developing strategic views at a destination level** - goal setting in tough times; vision and strategy; change management; personal development theory and practice
- **Creating and enhancing collaborative environments** - effective collaboration; partnership working across sectors (influencing and negotiating); advanced communication and negotiation

Assessed Group Leadership Project:

Working in groups, participants identify a specific leadership or destination management issue or problem within their business or a related organisation. The focus will be on creating a positive impact on the visitor experience, enhancing market and competitive positioning, and maximising the return on investment to the destination. Participants apply the theory and practice gained on the programme to provide an in-depth situational analysis, recommendations and solutions. At the end of the programme, each group presents its recommendations to a panel of Senior Destination Leaders.

Shona Clelland, The Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh: On the residential weekend in Amsterdam I learned so much about leadership and the fact that it's not about disparate organisations, it's about one group of people coming together to promote their city and their country and it really did leave me feeling really inspired.

Anna Young, Visit West Lothian: Some of the destinations like Melbourne and Amsterdam particularly, were so inspiring and very open about some of the challenges that they'd had, they certainly weren't portraying it in that everything had been perfect or smooth sailing for them.

Susan Russell, Festivals Edinburgh: The last residential weekend of DLP, the Amsterdam learning journey, was where a lot of what I'd learned was really consolidated and things fell into place. Although I did leave my day job at the door, I found there was quite a lot to compare between Edinburgh and Amsterdam. From a destination perspective, having absorbed a lot of academic learning on the DLP programme by that point, it really brought everything together for me.

Gordon Hodge, Conferencing & Events, University of Strathclyde: On our programme we heard from some really brilliant speakers, Brian King from Hong Kong Polytechnic, Amanda McMillan from Glasgow Airport, Jonas Wilstrup from Wonderful Copenhagen, and the speaker from the Bella Center, Denmark.

Top Tips for Making the Most of DLP

Susan Russell, Festivals Edinburgh: In terms of advice for anyone going into the DLP, I'd very much say: leave your day job at the door. I think you need to go into it with an open mind, be willing to listen to new ideas, new frameworks, new models of working, some of them you might adopt for your day job, others you might not, but it might make you think in an aspirational way, in terms of your future career, so just go into it with an open mind, you never know what you might learn and what you might take from it.

Brendan Miles, The List: The DLP is a great opportunity – if you have the chance to do it, I'd highly recommend that you do it. I think a lot of people who have done the course would say the same thing. It is a lot of hard work at times, though – we all have our day jobs and by the very nature of people who are on the course, those are some quite important day jobs. Working out how you can fit everything in can be certainly challenging, you'll find that you'll be taking more work home at evenings and weekends, it will impact on your work. Go into it with open eyes, to understand this level of work is there but you'll absolutely get out of it what you put into it.

Pete Duncan, Haggis Adventures:

If you're already thinking about doing the DLP, I'd say, just do it. It will help you improve your network immeasurably, it can really improve your confidence. I'd say, don't expect to learn specific skills – it's the kind of course that you'll get out of it what you put in. Be prepared to work hard, get stuck in and enjoy it.

DLP Alumni: “A Coalition of the Willing”

Since the launch of the pilot programme in October 2013, the Destination Leaders Programme had a significant impact on participants across each cohort year, both professionally and personally.

Several DLP alumni from across the first three cohort years are now collaborating together on a diverse range of industry projects and activities, some inspired to “pay it forward” in the form of business mentoring for students and schoolchildren. The DLP alumni network continues to build, with regular alumni events and activities, and a private LinkedIn group for alumni to stay in touch and communicate.

Margaret McNeil of Scottish Enterprise says: *“It's rewarding to see our own DLP alumni identify themselves as a 'coalition of the willing' and watch them continue to develop their own destination leadership styles and approaches, applying the insights they have gained from taking part in the programme to enhance their own respective destinations”*.

Leadership, Learning & Industry Impact: Group Project Legacy

The assessed leadership project is a chance for participants to work together and identify a specific leadership or destination management issue or problem, and use the theory and practice gained on the programme to provide an in-depth situational analysis, project report, and deliver a presentation to industry leaders with recommendations and solutions.

Read about the positive impacts and outcomes which DLP group projects have had for participants and the wider industry in just a few of the following examples. Find more case studies ([URL](#)) or listen to DLP alumni talk about their experiences on our YouTube Channel.

Engaging with Local Residents and Creating Ambassadors

Tourism Executive Anna Young of Visit West Lothian was inspired by what she learned from the destinations of Amsterdam, Manchester and Melbourne in how they valued their local residents; putting them at the heart of their destination development. Anna says, *“They specifically target locals in their marketing activity and they make them feel valued by offering incentives specifically for them to encourage them to utilise their own attractions/events. They encourage a sense of ownership amongst their residents which has worked well in developing them as Ambassadors, ultimately delivering significant benefit to each of the destinations”*. As a result of her group’s research into targeting locals and visiting friends and relatives, Anna used destination insights to ensure that community engagement was prioritised in West Lothian tourism strategy, through various measures including a destination toolkit.

Making Edinburgh China Ready

For their group leadership project, this DLP group chose to ask the question, *“Is Edinburgh ready to capitalise on the Chinese Market?”* and used their research findings to identify practical industry recommendations on how the city could become China-ready. Since presenting their findings and recommendations to industry in May 2015, the four DLP alumnae Marion McKean of EICC, Diane McRae of The Royal Yacht Britannia, Susan Russell of Festivals Edinburgh and Lyndsay Wilkie of Edinburgh First have watched their DLP group project transform into a tangible industry initiative with support from ETAG, Scottish Enterprise, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh Airport and China Air Services. The **China Ready** Plan currently includes an industry group, a published Business Opportunities Guide, and a series of industry business briefings including a digital media workshop, available to the Edinburgh tourism sector via ETAG (Edinburgh Tourism Action Group).

Leadership, Learning & Industry Impact: Group Project Legacy - continued

Glasgow and Edinburgh: Closer Collaboration for Greater Economic Benefits

Year 3 DLP participants from Glasgow and Edinburgh (Nesta Gilliland, Head of Sales and Marketing at Abellio Scotrail, Gordon Hodge, Head of Conferencing and Events at the University of Strathclyde, Brendan Miles, Digital Business Editor of the List Ltd, and Laura Vass, formerly Marketing Manager of Rabbie's Travel) researched *the domestic tourism market between Glasgow and Edinburgh* with the objective, *'to deliver some simple, effective and practical ideas that can be taken out in to the real world'*.

Research results suggested that people did travel between the cities in their leisure time, especially for events and festivals; and that while public transport between the cities was perceived as reliable and of good quality, there was a need for more competitive fares and flexible scheduling, specifically later trains to make it easier to attend evening events.

The DLP group succeeded in opening up active new dialogue and engagement between Edinburgh and Glasgow destination organisations, identifying committed industry partners to work collaboratively to attract additional businesses through targeting residents from each neighbouring city; culminating in joint consumer campaigns.

Summary

The Destination Leaders Programme has delivered three academic programme years to date and over sixty tourism professionals have graduated with an Executive Certificate in Leadership awarded by Edinburgh Napier University. DLP alumni from Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews, and Argyll and the Isles have taken part in the programme to date. 2016-2017 participants are currently participating from Aberdeen and Tayside.

The highly engaged, active DLP Alumni network continues to build and the group stays in touch via a programme of alumni events, e-communications and a private LinkedIn group.

To find out more about the programme visit the links below.

Further Links:

Scottish Enterprise: www.scottish-enterprise.com

DLP Case Study Videos: <http://bit.ly/1okkX9Q>