

## Section 5 Mourné Tourism Sector – Working Together

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The tourism industry already brings many benefits to Mourné and has great potential to be even more beneficial to the economic development of the Mourné community. The benefits that your tourism business can bring to the area are by no means guaranteed and depend heavily on the policies and daily practices of your business.

If managed sensitively tourism can also help to preserve and not damage the natural environment of the Mourné AONB. In the long term this is vital to the future of your business, as a deteriorating environment will result in disillusioned customers and falling visitor numbers.

Improving the contribution that you are making to your local area will not only benefit Mourné, but will also improve the quality of your visitors' experience and therefore your business performance. Working with other tourism businesses also brings various benefits. This section looks at several areas where you can make simple changes and provides examples of where local collaboration is bringing benefits in other areas.

The benefits of putting these ideas into practice are:

► **For your business**

- Gives your business a caring image with current and potential customers
- Builds a strong relationship with the local community
- Helps to conserve the area for your future business.

► **For your visitors**

- Increased opportunities to sample local products
- Finding new ways of enjoying Mourné
- Helping to safeguard the area for their future enjoyment.

► **For Mourné**

- Reduces potential damage and helps to spread the benefits of tourism throughout the community
- Gains vital support from those people who live in and visit Mourné
- Ensures sustainable and balanced development in Mourné.

## **Supporting the local economy**

As a business, you are a consumer. There are many products that you buy day to day such as food for guests, as well as less frequent purchases such as furnishings for your premises. Buying these goods locally offers many potential benefits for your business. For example:

- foods are often fresher.
- transport costs for delivery are lower (in both financial and environmental terms).
- local products can give your business a more distinctive character, giving visitors a special feel for the area.
- by working with other enterprises locally you can save on costs and time.

Many small companies in Mourne that are not directly involved in tourism, such as food producers, can still benefit greatly from additional business brought into the area by visitors. Local services such as shops may also be dependent on visitors for part of their income. There are two ways in which you can support local businesses and services:

- use local products and services yourself in your business.
- encourage your visitors to buy local products.

## **Adjusting your business purchases**

Start by listing the products and services that you buy as a business – you could allocate this job to one of your staff. Then check in the local area to see whether there are local producers that you could use to replace your distant suppliers. Try to limit the number of shopping trips that you make, as this will save on both time and money. If you are a producer yourself, investigate whether there are local tourism businesses who you could sell to, and whether there are opportunities for reciprocal purchasing with neighbouring businesses.

From time to time you will need to take on short term contractors, such as builders, plumbers or caterers. Again, hiring local craftsmen can have a number of advantages over other companies, such as:

- more flexibility in working hours and reduced transport costs.
- a good knowledge of local conditions and materials.
- craftsmen who use local and traditional materials and techniques can greatly increase your businesses appeal and character.

### **CASE STUDY : Local Farmers and Restaurants Promoting Local Produce**

The Forest of Bowland AONB in Northwest England (Lancashire and Yorkshire) includes a large area of agricultural land as well as mountainous areas used for recreation. The area attracts visitors for various activities, commonly bird watching and hill walking due to both excellent access to the hills and the presence of a number of rare birds including the Hen Harrier, Lapwing and Curlew.

With changes in the agricultural industry in recent years many of the tenant farmers in Bowland began to feel under pressure from large buyers. This prompted the formation of 'Bowland Forest Foods' a farmers co-operative driven to establish a local brand for quality lamb, beef and pork produced by environmentally friendly means.

Their product is marketed to encourage a pride in local produce and encourages hotels and restaurants in Bowland to move towards promoting local produce.



Other locally themed products have also been developed such as a range of locally brewed beers (Bowland Brewery - [www.bowlandbrewery.com](http://www.bowlandbrewery.com)) and the promotion of Lancashire Cheeses from a local organic dairy (Leagrams Organic Dairy). A wild boar farm and local game from the large estates add further to the local produce available. These products now form an important part of many visitors experience in Bowland and are helping to promote local economic development and community pride.

Bowland Forest Foods promote a network of local butchers and restaurants where their products are available. Check out their website for further details [www.bowlandforest.co.uk](http://www.bowlandforest.co.uk)

## **Encouraging your visitors to buy locally**

Visitors will appreciate the opportunity to sample locally produced foods and take home souvenirs which are typical of the area. However, it is not always obvious where to find these products. Help to promote local shops and producers to your visitors by:

- Using local products to furnish your business, such as fabrics, pictures and pottery. This can generate visitor interest and awareness in local crafts.
- Featuring local and seasonal specialities in your menu. Promote this fact on your menu and in your marketing materials.
- Providing visitors with a 'welcome hamper' when they arrive containing local produce such as mineral water, biscuits etc
- Selling local products yourself in your business.
- Providing self-caterers with local recipe books so they can make local dishes themselves.
- Providing clear information to visitors about local shops and markets and what they stock.
- Providing information on where visitors can see local goods being made and make purchases.

## **Supporting local employment**

The tourism industry is often a very important employer in communities around protected areas, providing the jobs needed to keep young people in the area and supplementing the income of family households. Too often however, staff are recruited from outside the area and the benefits to the local community are lost. Using local staff can have significant advantages for your business. They can:

- be more willing to take on part time and casual vacancies to fit in around other work such as agricultural labour.
- have a good knowledge of the local area.
- require fewer travel or accommodation expenses.
- provide a personal link with the local community and other businesses.

**Some specific steps to follow include:**

- Ensuring that you advertise any vacancies in the local area first.
- Speaking to the nearest schools and colleges about students who may be graduating in relevant fields or may be looking to gain experience during their course.
- Checking with other businesses about their staffing patterns and employment needs. Together you may be able to offer full time employment to a local person through sharing their time.

Consider the opportunities you offer for job progression and training in your company, as this can be critical in attracting and keeping the right staff. Discuss training needs with your current employees and conduct regular staff appraisals. Allocating specific responsibilities and projects to staff members provides them with a taste of management. A number of potential projects have already been mentioned in this guide.

## **CASE STUDY**

### **Tourism businesses collaborating to produce new business opportunities**

**‘Cycling Leisure in Luberon’ (Velo Loisir en Luberon)** has been in operation since 1996. The venture consists of a network of professionals in the cycle tourism industry in the Luberon Regional Nature Park in the Provence region of France.

The network provides the necessary business services for tourists keen to take advantage of the well marked cycle routes through the scenic Luberon region. It comprises accommodation (hotels, campsites, guest houses), bike rental and repair shops, trained cycle guides, taxi-drivers, and travel agencies. They can organise the transport of luggage between different accommodation providers so that longer touring holidays in the region are feasible without the visitor having to restrict their luggage to panniers.

This initiative demonstrates how collaboration between different types of business and similar businesses across an area can generate a new means of attracting visitors to the area.



[www.veloloisirluberon.com](http://www.veloloisirluberon.com)

## CASE STUDY

### The Global Movement For Local Food: 'Slow Food'

Ross and Janet Anderson, owners of East Lochhead County House and Cottages are a great example of a business basing their operations on local integration and use of local produce. They produce some of their own food (from herds of Jacob sheep and Highland Cattle kept on the farm) and they source other items through the Ayrshire Food network, a partnership encouraging the supply and use of fresh local produce in Southwest Scotland. The couple have won several awards for their approach to food and environmental management and are great advocates for using local produce.



*Lochview and Old Byre Cottages*



*East Lochhead with moors beyond*



*Taking delivery of a fresh salmon*

[www.eastlochhead.co.uk](http://www.eastlochhead.co.uk)

**East Lochhead** is part of the Slow Food Movement. An international movement which came into being in Paris in 1989. Its head offices are in Bra, in Piedmont, in the north of Italy where the first national association was founded. Slow Food boasts 80,000 members in more than 100 countries, organized into more than 800 local convivia. Slow food works on the approach of local groups organising food and wine events, promoting local produce and organising tasting courses. The network approach provides benefits from a combined mass of knowledge and support through many years learning and sharing of information.



[www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)

## **CASE STUDY    Increasing your business through a Tourism Forum**

Alpi Marittime Natural Park, a protected area in Piedmont, Northern Italy has a well developed sustainable tourism forum called '*InMarittime Ecoturismo*'. The association which groups together tourism related businesses in the area has a legal constitution and provides practical support to the businesses such as information . The businesses display a panel showing their membership of the association and many of the members have increased their business by promoting referrals among their neighbours providing useful services. The association also provides tourism businesses in general with a voice in important debates about the future of their area.



[www.parcoalpimarittime.it](http://www.parcoalpimarittime.it)

## Tourism in Mourne: Useful Contacts and Addresses

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## Register of Interest 'Mourne Sustainable Tourism Forum'

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*As has been shown throughout this manual the Mourne tourism sector working together brings many benefits to individual businesses as well as the sustainable development of Mourne. The Mourne Heritage Trust has agreed to act as a catalyst to the formation of a business led tourism forum for the area. If you are interested in being involved in this please complete the form below and return to the Mourne Heritage Trust.*

**Title:**            *Mr/Ms/Miss/Mrs (delete as appropriate)*

**Surname :** .....

**First Name :** .....

**Business Name :** .....

**Business Type :** .....

**Address :** .....

.....

.....

.....

**Telephone :** .....

**Fax :** .....

**Email :** .....

**Please return to :**

Mourne Heritage Trust 87 Central Promenade, Newcastle, County Down BT33 0HH Fax : 028 4372 6493 Email : [mht@mourne.co.uk](mailto:mht@mourne.co.uk)