



## **Start Up, Development & Management of Food Networks**

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### **Seminar Aims**

- **Use the Ayrshire Food Network to illustrate a grass root, regional entrepreneurial Food ,Drink & Tourism-related initiative**
- **Illustrate synergies that can be achieved through a dovetailing of small firm, regional, national & EU strategies**
- **Demonstrate how a network of small firm members can operate entrepreneurially through multiple networks, maintain flexibility and be inclusive**
- **Identify key drivers in the success of AFN that could benefit other such organisation types for sustainable regional F,D&T destination development**
- **Encourage lively debate !**

## Background Howard Wilkinson

- First 25 years spent of career spent working for 6 multinationals including Mars, Black & Decker, Chase Manhattan Bank, Bullough , British Aerospace
- Degree in business studies, MBA
- Chartered Marketer
- Qualifications in leadership for rural regeneration, and practioner led learning

## Rural Collaboration

- 1995 set up Howe Associates- business development “hub”
- 1998 jointly established with my wife Petrie Fine foods –artisan farm based producer vegetarian and gluten free food
- 1999 jointly established Ayrshire farmers’ Market Cooperative
- 2002 set up Ayrshire Food Network

## New website & Blog April 2012



## Where is Ayrshire?

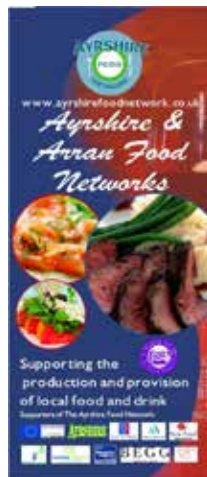


The home of the national poet – Robert Burns

## AFN – ‘sense of place’ assets

- **Networking** allows the coming together of food, drink, culture & heritage: (Role within ACCI)
  - Scotland’s best-loved poet Robert Burns was born in Ayrshire
  - Set in beautiful natural environment
  - UNESCO Biosphere status 2012- region
  - Fertile farming, fishing & abundant food production
  - Colourful historical legacy
  - Full of powerful Scottish icons including ?Arran

## Ayrshire Food Network



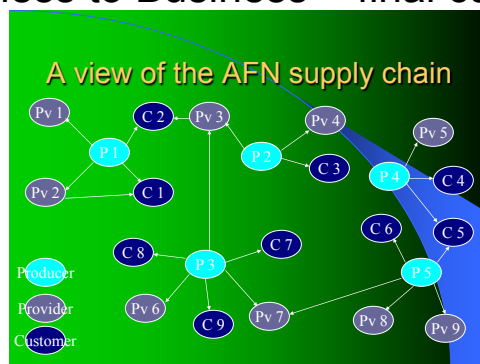
## Ayrshire Food Network:

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

- **Informal** network involving artisan food producers & fine food providers who use the best of Scottish produce from Ayrshire
- Started in 2002 with 20 members :in 2013 it has 32+12 associates, in an area 150km by 70 km area,
- Average membership dues c. Euros 90pa.
- Members divide into 5 categories of:
  - Restaurants & coffee shops
  - Meat & fish suppliers
  - Delis & farm shops
  - Food providers offering accommodation
  - Other food/drink/service producers

## Logistics/Distribution

- Business to Business + final customer



## Promoting Food & Activity Tourism



- Ayrshire Food Network
- Producers
- Providers
- Taste Ayrshire

### **Ayrshire Food Network as a partner :**

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

- Options for multi business engagement
- Opportunities to support Ayrshire activity businesses via networks
- We can match a variety of requirements: budget levels, group sizes, transport arrangements ,special interest groups
- Members include authentic visitor facing diversified rural businesses

## Promoting Food Availability

- Local accessible authentic food experiences +provenance
- + knowledge
- + sharing culinary expertise
- +online



## AFN Drivers

- **An (anti-)response to globalisation: preserving biodiversity, food supply traceability, reduction food miles**
- **Support to and from the Slow Food movement**
- **Represents a geographic, tourism business cluster**
- **Concerned with sustainability across economic, social, environmental & tourism criteria**
- **Survival!**
  
- **(SOURCE AM)**

## Slow Food & Terra Madre



## Slow Food

- Good taste
- Clean - environmentally
- Fair to producers
- Proactive “prosumers”



## The realities & scale of food distribution

- Producers - location +scale
- Distribution - options +pricing
- Providers/outlets/online - types + links
- Consumers- number and preferences

## Member Case Studies: Dunlop Dairy – Cheese



## Scottish Local Food

- Scottish? Country of origin/ Produce of
- Local ? Ayrshire/Scottish/UK/EU
- Food? Fresh / chilled/frozen/processed
- Seasonality /Availability

## Final links in the food chain

- Production
- Education
- Trust
- Markets
- Environment
- Multi sensory
- Experience



## AFN & Strategy Synergies

- It represents a grass root regional initiative that draws energy from regional, national & European level government initiatives e.g.
  - Objective 3 EU Funding – **SME Learning Networks**
  - EU funded DART programme building on **regional development** opportunities -20+ budget air routes/2.m passengers working out of local airport
  - Nationally funded Tourism **Innovation** Toolkit to develop Ayrshire Experience Box -new Branding exercise
  - National support for AFN leader training through UK-based **Social Enterprise** Academy Leadership for Regeneration
  - Regional funding AFN objectives, rationale, approach & membership review to support **enterprise development**
  - **Leader Funding TORE(Tastes of Rural Europe) 2011-13**
  - **Community Food fund -collaboration & research 2013**

• AM

Just be Connected



## **AFN: co-operative relationships**

- **Local FE colleges ,SAC,SRUC**
- **international food networks e.g. Finland, Sweden, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Estonia,Poland,Lithuania**
- **Scotland-wide Farmers Market Network**
- **Slow Food Movement –Terra Madre +merged groups**
- **Environmental Groups /Projects- HTEA/Biosphere**
- **Tourism Innovation group +NPD Toolkits**
- **Regional-3 UAs procurement supplier development**
- **National, Healthy living initiatives +EU initiatives**
- **DMO +Taste Ayrshire +Leader project(TORE )**

## **TORE PROJECT ACTIVITES**

- **REGIONAL FOOD BRANDING**
- **AGRITOURISM**
- **WEB PORTAL+SOCIAL MEDIA**
- **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**
- **PROMOTIONAL FILM CLIPS**
- **FOOD FESTIVALS**
- **NEW REGIONAL PRODUCTS –  
'EXPERIENCE BOX/HAMPER'**



## Networks Defined

- A set of formal, **co-operative relationships** .....
- between appropriate **organisational types & configurations** .....
- stimulating **inter-organisational learning & knowledge exchange** .....
- providing a **sense of community & collective common purpose** .....
- may result in **qualitative** and/or **quantitative benefits** of business activity &/or community nature relative to building **profitable & sustainable** tourism destinations.

**Source:** Lynch & Morrison (2007)

## AFN: benefits?

- **Create marketing & distribution critical mass for small firms**
- **Capture & showcase the regional assets to establish market positioning & presence**
- **Overcome inherent fragmentation in presenting an 'AFN-face' that attracts private & public sector support**
- **Through inter-organisational learning/training drive up quality of product & consumer experience**
- **Realisation of ambitious marketing /Communication initiatives e.g. Virtual working environment –VIDEO 3 -maximise B-2-B inter-network trading, reach international markets...Social Media**
- **(source AM)**

## Virtual Business Relationships



AFN/VIDEO 3  
APRIL 14<sup>th</sup> 2010

VIRTUAL WORKING &  
COLLABORATION  
ENVIRONMENT



### AFN: key success drivers?

- **Objectives & purpose:** members work collectively to a common purpose – a local supply chain reflecting local traditions – strong sense of commitment
- **Organisational structure & leadership:** informal organisation, private/public partnership in a mesh of complimentary networks lead by a 'social engineer'
- **Resourcing:** support from members & govt. support agencies, 'in-kind' – sustainability?

## AFN Collaboration



## AFN: key success drivers?

- **Member engagement:** dependent on the skills of the leader & extent of benefits members recognise/perceive
- **Benefits & inter-organisational learning:** range of benefits difficult to quantify, increased levels of trade achieved (**but not too much please!**), rub off learning from other members etc.
- **Innovative Informal Environment** :working within a loose knit constitution which allows members **to pick and mix** their involvement and benefits

## Key Learning Points

- Objectives?
- Motivations?
- Organisational Format ?
- Need for Constant SWOT ?
- Leadership / Control Communication?
- Environmental issues ?
- Flexibility ?
- Sustainability ?

## The choice is yours

- Sustainable food and drink







- ***'...you don't have to be big to do something rather special. It's about thinking collaboratively. On our own we're nothing. Working with other people we are rather special.'***

**Source:** Howard Wilkinson, Chairman AFN

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