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# **Evaluation of Destination Leadership Programme**

## **Final Report**



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MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS  
INNOVATION • STRATEGY • CREATIVITY

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# Evaluation Destination Leadership Programme

## Final Report

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# Contents Page

1. Introduction	1
2. Destination Leadership Programme	3
3. Consultation & Survey Findings	7
4. Conclusions and Recommendations	24
Appendix 1: Comparative Radar	28

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of a qualitative assessment of the Destination Leadership Programme (DLP) undertaken by O'Herlihy & Co. Ltd. in the summer of 2017 for Scottish Enterprise.

## 1.2 Aims of evaluation

Scottish Enterprise wished to commission a qualitative review of the impact Destination Leadership Programme has had on:

- individual DLP participants
- their organisations
- their wider tourism destinations.

The ITT identified the areas on which the evaluation should focus:

- the impact of exposure to the DLP
- how the pipeline of leaders can be supported and
- whether there is any need for further support.

## 1.3 Methodology

Our response to the assessment utilised a qualitative approach we have refined over the past to measure the impact of Leadership development programmes. It involves identifying the key areas of change the programme is designed to address and asking participants to record their level of change from the point in time when they first commenced on the programme to the current day. A ten point scale is used where 10 is the best score possible.

Through a review of the approvals papers and conversations with Scottish Enterprise, the following (ten) criteria were used to conduct the interviews:

- Understanding what makes a successful destination
- Seeing the key challenges/opportunities facing your destination

- Utilising Professional Networks to which you gain access
- Your confidence to take on a destination leadership role
- Collaborating with others in your destination
- Leading others to implement tangible improvements to strengthen your destination
- Understanding the customer journey for your destination
- Your ability to think strategically
- Awareness of external factors and events and their impact on your destination
- Understanding the link between your destination's strategy and the strategies of its businesses.

In terms of process, we discussed the radars with firms first, identifying the areas that were most beneficial for the individual, before moving on to capture feedback on each of the principal elements of the programme's delivery:

- Promotion
- Motives for participating
- Workshops
- Residential Weekends
- The Learning Journey
- The project
- Alumni and post programme engagement.

## 1.4 Report structure

The next chapter presents details from the approvals papers on key elements of the programme and is followed by Chapter 3 that presents our Consultation & Survey Findings. The report concludes with a chapter on Conclusions and Recommendations.

## 2 The Destination Leadership Programme

### 2.1 Pilot

#### 2.1.1 Aims

Tourism Scotland 2020 highlighted that strong, effective leadership is essential if the tourism sector is going to meet the ambitious growth targets set out in the strategy. It stated that success would rely on industry-wide collaboration on a common agenda, with strong leadership at business, local and national level. As business level support was already covered by Scottish Enterprise, the aim of the Destination Leadership Programme, was to support and develop leadership capacity at the local and national destination levels.

#### 2.1.2 Description

The pilot DLP set out to deliver a unique professional development programme for the tourism sector in Scotland. It focussed on building the skills and knowledge required to be an effective leader within the context of destination development. The course ran for six months from October to March and comprised:

- Five full-day workshops covering five key themes set within a destination context
  - **Customer Journey** - component elements of the product / customer experience / knowing your customer / market and future trends / importance of workforce skills, training and customer interface / customer service.
  - **Destination development** - vision and strategy / product knowledge / holistic development / stakeholder management / the role of festivals and events / business tourism / providing authentic experiences (heritage and culture) / role of innovation / value added from collaboration / effective partnership building and networking.
  - **Marketing and Branding** - what defines "World Class" / competitor analysis / sponsorship / sales and promotion all within a specific destination context.
  - **Sustainability** (Economic, Environmental and Social) - achieving a competitive advantage for your business and the destination.

- **The digital economy** - impacts on consumers of information and communication technology (ICT) developments / social media / ICT impacts on customer journey and touch points (websites/apps/ecommerce) delivery through partnership working and collaboration.
- Three two day residential weekends at the beginning, middle and conclusion of the programme. Four key themes were covered:
  - **Effective collaboration** - engaging key destination players to achieve extended and added value - particularly around product and service innovation.
  - **Leading the future** - understanding of international destination best practice and future opportunities and threats
  - **Partnership and collaborative working across sectors** (influencing and negotiating) - the ability to influence and motivate diverse businesses to achieve a common destination goal
  - **Vision and strategy** - developing a skill set which promotes clear, effective strategic leadership - the ability to motivate and raise destination aspirations.
- An assessed leadership project, which addresses a strategic issue within the destination.

The programme included a graduation ceremony and a structured programme of Alumni events post course. The aim of the alumni programme was to sustain, develop and extend the learning and networking benefits of the DLP, by building a strong cohort of destination leaders at both local and national level. Where appropriate, opportunities for linking into the SE Leadership Programme through masterclasses, GlobalScot events and leadership networking activities were to be utilised.

The DLP included 100 hours of contact time for participants as well as 35 hours of project work.

The Pilot programme was developed during 2012/13 and the programme was launched at the ETAG Conference in January 2013. The Pilot course ran in 2013/14 and 2014/15. There was a target of 25 participants per course, to be drawn from the St Andrews and Edinburgh destinations. The Programme was to be developed and delivered by a preferred supplier sources via SE tender procedures.

### 2.1.3 Funding

The total funding sought for the Pilot programme was £228,000, £168,000 of which was sought from Scottish Enterprise and £60,000 private, via participant fee. The total funding included £35,000 for development costs, £158,000 for delivery costs (£79,000 per year), £25,000 Alumni Programme expenditure and Evaluation and review costs of £10,000.

### 2.1.4 Targets/KPIs

The specific SMART objectives set out for this Pilot programme were to;

- Develop an effective, professionally accredited destination leadership course
- Deliver practical project outputs which address the strategic issues in destinations
- Put 50 participants successfully through the course over 2 years
- Create an Alumni programme to sustain, develop and extend the learning and networking benefits derived from the course
- Assess the programme for national roll out and if appropriate, put in place a strategy for achieving this
- Provide a pipeline of qualified emerging leaders to facilitate effective succession planning within destinations.

The specific economic growth targets set out at the destination level in the Project Approval paper were:

- Edinburgh ; to generate an additional £485 million visitor spend per annum by 2020
- St Andrews; to generate an additional £36 million visitor spend per annum by 2020.

## 2.2 Main Programme

### 2.2.1 Aims

The successful delivery of the 2 year Pilot programme resulted in the increasing awareness of, and demand for, the DLP. The Main programme aimed to expand the destinations covered, manage demand and target the delivery of the programme effectively, in order to maximise outputs and impact.

### 2.2.2 Differences between Pilot and main Programme

The key change to the Pilot programme was the selection of further destinations which:

- Fit clearly with the SE Destinations approach and prioritisation
- Have the potential to make a significant impact to the Tourism 2020 objectives
- Can deliver a sufficient number and quality of participants
- Have an existing "leadership infrastructure" which will support the delivery of the programme and benefit from the development of a pool of emerging leadership talent.

Based on the above criteria and discussion with the Scottish Tourism Alliance, HIE and SE Destination managers, the following destinations were identified (Table 2.1):

Table 2.1 – Programme Summary		
Year	Destinations	Rationale
2015/16	Edinburgh & Glasgow	Bringing Edinburgh and Glasgow together creates the opportunity to build a new network across Scotland's 2 core visitor destinations.
2016/17	Dundee & AN other	The DLP aimed to link to and directly support the destination development activity that SE had already initiated. It aimed to maximise on the economic opportunities created by the investment in the Dundee Waterfront via the V & A etc.

2017/18	Aberdeen & AN other	This destination was subject to the outcome of the Aberdeen Tourism strategy and proposed investment in the Aberdeen Conference Centre.
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We would note that the Pilot and main Programme approvals papers both proposed supporting a single destination for each cohort. We understand that due to requests from funders, the Programme supported representatives from *two* destinations on each cohort. It will be seen later that feedback from participants suggests that mixing destinations introduced complexities around the choice of case examples and suitable Learning Journey destinations (especially where there was a marked urban:rural split in the cohort's representation).

### 2.2.3 Funding

SE funding for the Main programme was £222,000 including VAT. The total cumulative SE approval for both the Pilot and Main programmes was £390,000 (£168,000 covered by the Pilot programme).

Table 2.2 below shows the total (Pilot and Main) project costs for the DLP.

Table 2.2 – Programme funding						
	2012/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Total
Nature of expenditure						
Pilot project	£215,000					£215,000
Development/marketing		£5,000	£5,000	£5,000		£15,000
Delivery		£78,000	£78,000	£78,000		£234,000
Alumni programme		£9,700	£12,700	£15,700	£18,900	£57,000
Evaluation and review					£10,000	£10,000
<b>Total project costs</b>	<b>£215,000</b>	<b>£92,700</b>	<b>£95,700</b>	<b>£98,700</b>	<b>£28,900</b>	<b>£531,000</b>

### 2.2.4 Targets/KPIs

The SMART objectives for the DLP 2015-19 programme are:

- To deliver 3 sector specific leadership programmes
- To deliver 20 Alumni industry events generating a total of 1,000 attendances
- 60 to 75 new/emerging tourism destination leaders
- 15-20 individuals taking a visible significant lead on projects
- 1 new industry network (DLP Alumni group)
- 50 businesses participating in the DLP Alumni group.

In addition, the DLP aimed to make a significant contribution to the delivery of the Tourism Scotland 2020 growth target by increasing visitor spend by £1 - £1.5 billion by 2020.

## 3 Consultation & Survey Findings

### 3.1 Programme consultation

We spoke to Ken Wardrop who was the catalyst in creating the DLP. The idea came from his visit to Melbourne in 2010 when he spent a day with the Melbourne Destination Leadership Programme team. He recognised the potential of creating something similar in Scotland. The strength of the Melbourne programme's Alumni network was striking. Shortly after, he became an Associate of the Edinburgh Institute at Edinburgh Napier University.

He approached Scottish Enterprise to discuss the possibility of creating a Destination Leadership Programme in Scotland and found that it had already been speaking to Common Purpose about doing something similar. It was felt to be better to have a Scotland-wide program rather than one that was Edinburgh centric. He and the Edinburgh Institute co-developed the programme design and content. Its delivery has comprised a close partnership with Scottish Enterprise and both they and the University have shaped the content and structure of the DLP as it has evolved. In the early stages, the University and Scottish Enterprise held planning meetings every six weeks. This regular contact worked well and enhanced the strength of the programme's design as it evolved.

The rationale for the DLP was framed by the Scottish Tourism Strategy which had Leadership Development at its heart. At a destination level, they recognised that it was essential to get all elements of a destination's tourism offer engaged. At an Edinburgh level, the existence of ETAG was a considerable help.

The Melbourne programme was a stand-alone offer. It had no link to a research/academic institution. Given Edinburgh Napier University was delivering the DLP, it felt that there should be an academic element/assessment included. They also felt that a structured team-based project should form a core part of the participants' engagement. The extent to which participants commit to the project has been surprising and very positive. People take projects very seriously and this shows in the high quality of their output (especially presentations).

For Scotland, the inclusion of a Learning Journey was considered to be important to enable local tourism practitioners to be exposed to best practice elsewhere.

These experiences would also allow practitioners to compare the aspects of Scotland's offer that were good and those that might be improved.

Attracting top class speakers was viewed as being a critical success factor for the Programme and this is something the team has aimed to deliver throughout the delivery.

A member of the University team attends all sessions. Based on observations by staff and feedback from delegates, a number of changes have been made to the Programme structure. Some topics have been reduced in intensity while others increased and there is now more reflection time included within the Workshop and Residential Weekend programmes.

The original programme design was built around a single cohort per destination. Funders requested that multiple destinations be engaged and this has not always led to smooth delivery as the characteristics of the paired destinations have been very different on occasion. Separately, the University team delivering the DLP were given very short notice of the inclusion of some cohort groups (notably Argyll & Islands) and this led to logistical challenges when booking accommodation and travel for the Learning Journey.

Although the participation is relatively "open", the team applies a selection process. It is essential that those who participate understand the need to have input from multiple sources if a destination is to be strengthened - they need to understand that this holistic perspective is essential. If they don't, they will not be selected to attend.

Overall, the consultee was very positive on both the pilot and full Programme delivery. He felt that the collaborative approach to delivery with Scottish Enterprise worked well and contributed to enhancing the participants' experience.

### **3.2 Survey Sample Selection**

A total of 33 participants were interviewed by telephone.

Scottish Enterprise required that the sample was representative across the four years being appraised (the two "pilot" years and subsequent two years). The split by year and area is presented in the table below

Table 3.1 Participation by Destination	
By Destination	Number
Edinburgh	16
Glasgow	5
Tayside Perth and Kinross	6
Argyll & Isles	3
Aberdeenshire	2
St Andrews	1
Total	33

Table 3.2 – Participation by year	
Year	Number
2013	4
2014	10
2015	10
2016	9
Total	33

We consider below the feedback on each of the ten “radar” indices before moving on to summarise the feedback on the programme design.

### 3.3 Gender balance

The Programme attracts proportionately more female participants – the average cohort size was fractionally under 20, with each cohort supporting 13 female participants (approximately two thirds). This gender balance is broadly reflective

of the gender distribution within Scotland's sector. While more women are employed in the sector, proportionately fewer are engaged in leadership roles<sup>1</sup>.

At 72%, our sample was slightly over-representative of females when compared to the gender balance of the population.

### 3.4 Indices

#### 3.4.1 Understanding what makes a successful destination

This was one of the areas where the programme had greatest effect. Participants noted that in advance of participation, they tended to have been very narrowly focused on the effective operation of the business within which they worked or their specific segment.

The programme enabled participants to gain insights into how the factors influencing the performance of a destination differed from those of a business. These insights were gained through material and discussion in workshops and the residential weekend coupled with first hand engagement on the Learning Journeys.

Specific points of feedback included:

- Seeing other locations (cities) provided genuine insights (Amsterdam especially) into how partners can work together (Argyll) and collaborate to enhance the visitor experience and the product
- The need for collaborative working by key players
  - Linked to the Customer Journey and ensuring all Journey elements are consistent
- Understanding the influence of external factors
- Very valuable perspective for those who were new to Tourism
- Understanding how others see your destination.

This index is one of four where the programme had a notable impact.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.womenintourism.co.uk/passion-for-industry-drives-women-in-tourism/> accessed on 27.09.2017

### 3.4.2 Seeing Key Challenges and opportunities

The feedback for this metric was specifically slanted towards opportunities rather than challenges:

- Enabled me to see bigger picture and where my destination fits
- I knew the challenges but I couldn't see how to address them - DLP showed me how
- Understood the difference between urban and rural destinations, and the challenges/opportunities facing each
  - Urban has more corporate and rural has more owner managed - two groups that are very different and that fundamentally shape the activity of a destination
- Could see my local situation within a global perspective
- See how to use scarce resources to greatest effect
- Seeing how other destinations respond gave me insights into my destination. Also the expert speakers (for example Brian King - Hong Kong & Melbourne) added real value.

As with the first index, the participative elements gave significant value. Learning journeys appear to have been especially effective in providing insights into opportunities for new destination development activity in Scotland.

### 3.4.3 Using Professional Networks

Based on the feedback, this was an area of significant benefit for the DLP. Bringing together like minded professionals who were selected from *all* relevant sectors in a destination was very powerful. It gave participants a perspective that they would not otherwise have gained in their day to day roles and created a network of Alumni.

We also observed evidence of a phenomenon that is often an aspiration of other Leadership Development programmes, namely that participation on the programme provided cohorts with a common language and shared goals around which they could take projects forward. We appreciate that this was not an explicit aim of the DLP, but it is a clear and positive finding.

Examples of benefits cited by participants include:

- I can pick up the phone and get straight through to the right person - I now know who to contact and critically they'll take my call
- I had lots of contacts previously but these were linked to my narrow field of business - my network is now much broader across the range of sectors and segments defining my destination
- DLP shows you the importance of *collaboration* - critically, it provides you with the network links to make this happen
- An excellent opportunity to learn from others (peers) and to contribute as an equal to the debate
- Builds strong personal and professional friendships - I still meet my group regularly after 3-4 years.

#### 3.4.4 Confidence to take on a leadership role

Building peoples' confidence was a key area of the DLP's benefit. Respondents indicated clearly and specifically that the DLP:

- Increased their self esteem
- Project showed them how to work collaboratively and in partnership with others and being able to contribute positively with your peers gave an insight into how to do this elsewhere
- Provided an opportunity to discuss topics and challenges as equals with the expert speakers - this gave them confidence as it showed that their knowledge was valued by others
- Through using the concept of the Customer Journey, it enabled participants to see and explain the role others could play in taking a project forward
- Enabled participants to see how others achieve destination enhancements - this gave them confidence that they could do likewise in Scotland (through tailoring specific approaches locally)
- Gave participants 'profile' within their organisations - confidence gained in this way also had a positive impact on personal development
  - three promotions/new career positions that would not have been achieved otherwise
  - they realised how much they knew and how valuable it was

- Leadership Weekend was *very* valuable for self-reflection, even amongst those who had completed leadership profiling previously.

Enhanced confidence was particularly notable amongst female participants with several citing examples of how their participation had fundamentally changed their approach both to developing their businesses, destinations and careers.

### 3.4.5 Collaborating with others

The DLP gives participants a much broader network and encourages them to use it. The 'effective pool' of contacts to which participants have access is much broader on completion of the programme. This increase in breadth is not limited to the cohort in which they participate, it spans different years. This finding reinforces the observation above on "common language" – presenting yourself as someone who is interested in and understands the challenges of destination development singles you out (in a positive way) amongst your peers.

Adoption of the Customer Journey concept meant that participants gained an understanding of the range of sectors that had to be engaged to make something positive happen. They also noted that while they might see the importance of getting a 'non-core' sector engaged, those in that sector often needed the reasoning to be spelled out clearly. This reflected a common observation (discussed below in the difference between destination development strategies and those of the firms that comprise them)

Other "collaborative" benefits put forward by participants include:

- Project work helped to building collaboration skills
- DLP leads to people being more open to collaboration as they understand why collaboration is essential
  - It breaks down barriers
  - It leads to greater focus - "I now focus on those who are likely to have an impact"
- Edinburgh noted Argyll & Islands group had strong collaborative relationships in place and this led to several in the Edinburgh group discussing how a similarly collaborative approach might work for Edinburgh
- "after working in Argyll, I worked in another area of Scotland that does not have a coordinated local approach - the lack of collaboration there was striking as it takes a huge effort to make anything happen at all".

### 3.4.6 Leading others to implement tangible changes

Consistent with participants' understanding of how their destination might be strengthened, and the confidence gained through understanding their personal leadership styles, there were a number of other factors that were considered to be important for mobilising wider destination development activity (where the participant could see where they might lead). It was notable that many (but not the majority) of participants noted that they would typically not have "put their head above the parapet" previously and would have been happy to let others take the lead (or not as the case may be). This is encapsulated in one participant's feedback - "I'm naturally a backbencher - DLP encouraged me to step to the frontbench and it has been really empowering".

The DLP projects were seen as being key examples of how people can be mobilised, specifically "Women in Tourism" and "China Ready" (although it was appreciated that these were successful for very different reasons)

Those who had benefited from other leadership development programmes (Aurora, Rural Leadership Programme) suggested that the DLP was better. The areas of advantage included:

- Its focus on destination development which was common for all participants
- The quality of the content and the speakers
- The experiential inputs (international speakers and Learning Journey opportunities).

Expert speakers were excellent and considered to be very empowering (Amanda McMillan was noted by many).

The DLP Group Project was felt to allow participants to develop "leading others" skills but in a safe environment.

### 3.4.7 The Customer Journey

While most (not all) participants were aware of the customer journey concept on joining the DLP, they felt it was very well suited as building block for Destination development discussions. Many commented that it was through the DLP that they gained a comprehensive insight into why it was important to take an holistic view of the visitor's experience from the point the first considered their destination as one they might visit.

Those who were not accommodation providers, or engaged in visitor attractions, tended to find the customer journey concept the most enlightening. It informed them of the value of the "link in the chain" - this was uplifting and made them much more conscious of the need to maximise the value of the experience for the visitor.

As mentioned above, the Customer Journey concept also provided a common language that seems to have bound in all of those representing a destination's tourism sectors. It influenced the group projects and also led to cross destination discussions on collaboration. An example of the latter was a conversation between Argyll's representatives and the participant from Edinburgh Airport on possibilities for joint promotion. This did not conclude but we understand that Argyll and Glasgow Airport subsequently developed a joint promotion approach.

#### **3.4.8 Ability to think strategically**

The participants' feedback on this indicator suggests that the Programme had a comparatively lower impact on it than it did for the other metrics. This is not to say that the Programme was ineffective of that activities to enhance strategic competence are inappropriate - rather that those who were attending were in senior positions and felt that thinking strategically was a critical requirement of their "day job". Where it did have an impact, the benefits of the DLP included:

- The participant gained the skills and tools which in turn gave them the confidence to take strategic projects forward
- One person said that it could have covered this area in more depth, one said it had fundamentally changed their entire professional approach exemplifying common feedback on personal development programmes - one person's weak session is another's star performer

#### **3.4.9 Understanding external factors and their impact on your destination**

This was a key area of benefit - a finding that complements discursive feedback from participants that the DLP expanded the scope of their thinking, away from the narrow concentration of their hotel group or specific tourism segment and towards the comprehensive view of the destination as a whole and how it functioned. This 'helicopter' view provided an insight into how the destination's operation could be affected by external events or changing customer preferences. Specifically, participants noted:

- They now had much greater awareness of external factors (BREXIT, ISIS), what they are and how they might impact the destination
- They tended to be isolated and narrowly focused when growing their business - DLP helped them to see the other factors that impact the destination
- Seeing the bigger picture of where their destination fits and what impacts upon it.

#### 3.4.10 Links between strategies of business and those of the destination

Feedback of the impact of the DLP on this index was less significant in terms of businesses in general and more with reference to the participant's own business and how they viewed their change in perspective.

Overall, the DLP enabled participants to understand the difference between business priorities (specific, narrow) and destination (broad ranging). It also explained the need to have a dedicated destination strategy. It was not felt sufficient or helpful to 'gross up' the activities of the individual businesses as this does not provide a perspective on how the destination as a whole operates.

Two respondents noted that a person's priority will always be to their business first, not their destination. While this is obvious and indeed proper, it is important to appreciate that businesses whom you try to engage on destination development activities will have competing priorities and that those of their business will tend to come first. This was felt to be a critical point of awareness in terms of destination leadership

#### 3.4.11 Overall observation

One observation we would note is the enthusiasm the programme appears to have engendered in those who participated. Respondents were clearly and positively invigorated by the experience and this manifested itself through their actions:

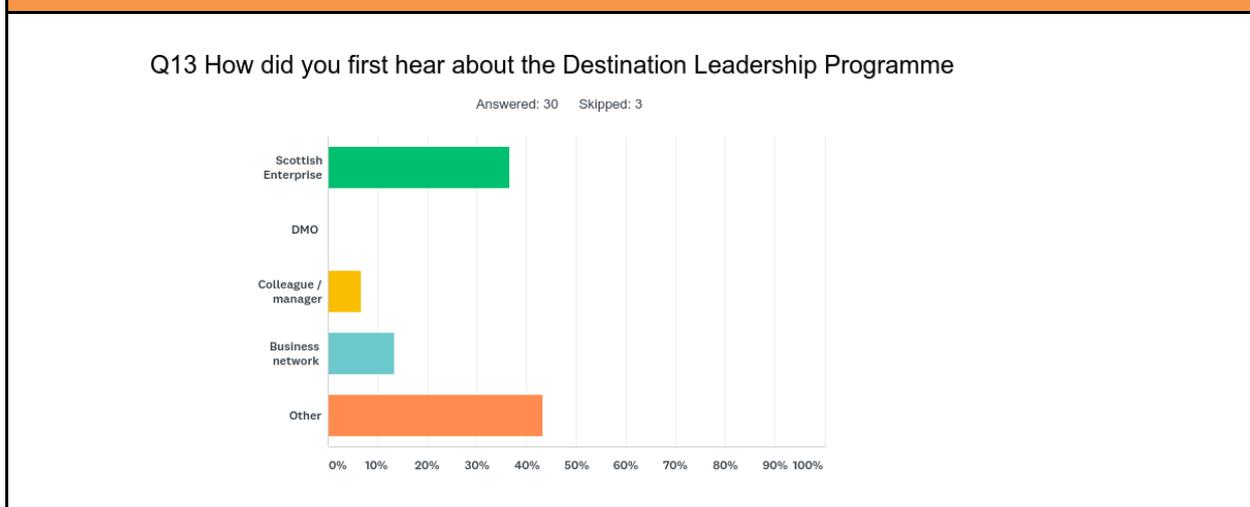
- Proactively taking the lead to "seed" new ideas to take forward their destination
- Maintaining links with members of their cohorts

The remainder of this section presents feedback on the individual elements of the programme.

### 3.5 Promotion

Figure 3.1 below provides an indication of how firms first heard of the DLP. It will be seen that Scottish Enterprise is a key source. Co-nomination by a colleague (seven respondents) and the Edinburgh Tourism Action Group (ETAG, 6) were the other principal sources. Respondents differentiated between Scottish Enterprise and ETAG. We have reviewed the responses data in detail to assess whether participants' awareness changed or evolved over the four years, but this was not the case.

**Figure 3.1 Programme Awareness**



The high level of co-nomination is good as it emphasises the value peers gained through their participation. We are aware that attracting participants to the first cohort in particular was a challenge as the DLP was an untested offer. The feedback above indicates that the programme quickly built a reputation for value.

Whereas there was some deviation in the areas of value when discussing the radar indices, there was a very high degree of consistency in the feedback on the individual programme elements as we set out below.

## 3.6 Workshops

### 3.6.1 Key strengths

The key strengths of the workshops were the **speakers** who were frequently described as being 'exceptional' and the **content**. Amanda McMillan (Glasgow Airport) received particularly positive feedback.

The variety was also considered a key strength, both in terms of the content and venues. The examples from Vienna, Hong Kong, Melbourne and Helsinki were considered to be excellent

Separately, the participative nature of the workshops was viewed as being a key attribute both to enhancing learning and individuals' confidence. Participants frequently noted that being viewed as equals by the speakers, who were genuinely interested in their views, led them to realise that their knowledge and experience was valuable.

Linked to the point above, it was also very valuable to have real discussion and debate in addition to being able to access to the speakers afterwards for one to one conversations.

### 3.6.2 Observations on possible improvements

The suggested improvements must be seen within the context of very positive feedback where just under half (15) of the respondents suggested that no change be made at all.

Some felt that certain sessions were not particularly valuable *however*, and as mentioned above, one person's star session can be another's fail. That said there was consistent feedback that the IT Workshop could be more focused'.

In general, the sessions were felt to work very well. One respondent suggested an inclusion of a workshop dedicated to Business Tourism

The other general point that was made related to the nature of the content - it was felt to be very 'urban' in style and 'east coast focused'. This observation was made by Edinburgh and Glasgow based participants. We appreciate that it was not anticipated at the outset that cohorts would be mixed but the mixed approach seems to have enhanced understanding that Scotland's tourism offer is multi-faceted and comprises a mix of urban and rural elements. The DLP enabled

participants to appreciate how these are different but at the same time complementary.

## 3.7 Residential Weekends

### 3.7.1 Key strengths

The key strengths of the residential weekends were similar to those for workshops (speakers and content) but with one key additional difference - the ability to **Network** and **Socialise**. Socialising strengthened relationships with new contacts and allowed participants to meet “professional” contacts in a social setting - this was deemed very valuable. It also appears to have cemented relationships that have endured well after the cohorts participation has ended.

In particular, the **Leadership Weekend** was very highly rated. It enabled the participants to gain genuinely new insights on their personal preferences and approaches. It also allowed them to work as a team in a ‘safe’ environment

### 3.7.2 Observations on possible improvements

As with the Workshop feedback, the suggested improvements must be seen within the context of very positive feedback where just under half (14) of the respondents suggested that no change be made at all.

In terms of the Weekends, the location of the venues was an issue for the earlier cohorts in particular, notably Argyll. The Edinburgh participants also commented that they would have valuable to experience a location outside the city (for example Argyll). The Argyll cohort also noted that they frequently had to allow an extra overnight stay to attend the Edinburgh meetings. However, we understand that the Argyll cohort was suggested for inclusion very late and that the venues had already been procured by that time.

## 3.8 Learning Journeys

Learning journeys were viewed as being an especially valuable element of the overall DLP experience.

### 3.8.1 Key strengths

The key strengths of the Learning Journeys were considered to be:

- The opportunity to *see and discuss* how others achieve destination development *in a practical way*
  - Accessing people you would never meet otherwise
  - Openness of hosts when discussing the challenges they face(d)
- The realisation that the approach in Scotland is (very) good
- Identifying ways around challenges in Scotland
- Seeing how to
  - Collaborate (Copenhagen, Amsterdam - helped seed initiatives between Edinburgh and Argyll)
  - Expand the tourism product (Amsterdam - VanGogh museum at night)
  - Have a seamless unity of approach (Amsterdam Movenpik/Concert Hall)
  - Have active outdoor offers (Bergen - Fjord Norway) - also learned that private sector is more collaboratively organised despite being geographically dispersed which is a key finding for Scotland while noting that speakers “excellent”, at Fjord Norway and GM of funicular railway
  - Have one single promotional body/message (I Amsterdam)
  - Have a single destination pass, for example the Copenhagen Card - passed to Edinburgh
  - Adopt innovative marketing - Amsterdam where Arnhem marketed as ‘Amsterdam Beach’
  - Offer an “amazing experience” (Copenhagen). Convention centre very relevant to business tourism as is link up to Wonderful Copenhagen.
- The effect of strengthening further the cohort’s relationships

### 3.8.2 Observations on possible improvements

There were no fundamental areas of improvement put forward for enhancing the Learning Journeys. There was a suggestion that some of the foreign trips were very intense and requiring travel very early at the start of a very long day which made it difficult to maintain concentration and absorb the information in the evening. However, it was accepted that there will be a trade-off to be made in

getting people to participate (short time away) and elongating the duration of the trip. It might be appropriate to offer a longer trip for those who prefer it and where they cover the cost of the extended stay.

The other suggestion related to the balance of urban:rural Learning Journeys made principally by those from Argyll. They noted that while Amsterdam was a distinctly urban experience, they gained many insights into how to introduce positive change to their destination.

### 3.9 Project

The project stimulated a lot of discussion amongst those we interviewed. It will be seen from Figure 3.2 below that participants derived significant value from the project in terms of developing the destination leadership skills. We would observe that while participants may have derived significant value, this does not imply that the project completion process was plain sailing - in many cases it was quite the opposite, but this reflects the nature of collaborative project experiences participants are likely to encounter in their destination when trying to get others on board and aligned.

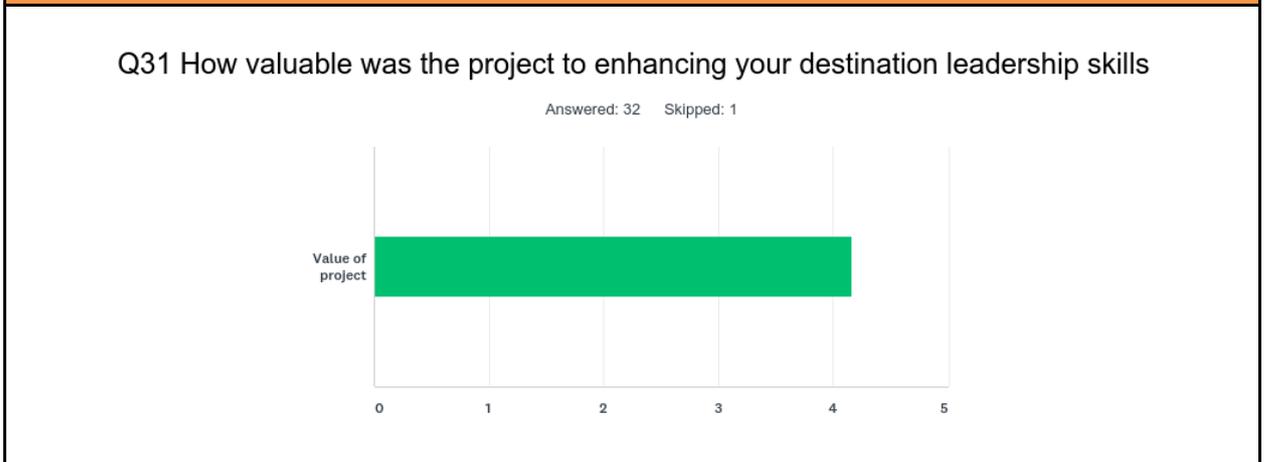
#### 3.9.1 Key strengths

In terms of the projects' strengths, they:

- Were viewed overall as being very valuable
- Strengthened collaborative working
- Highlighted the challenges of how hard it is to get people to work together
- Addressed interesting and relevant topics with real potential to impact
  - China Ready
  - Women in Tourism
  - Curious Edinburgh
  - Music Tourism
  - Our Edinburgh

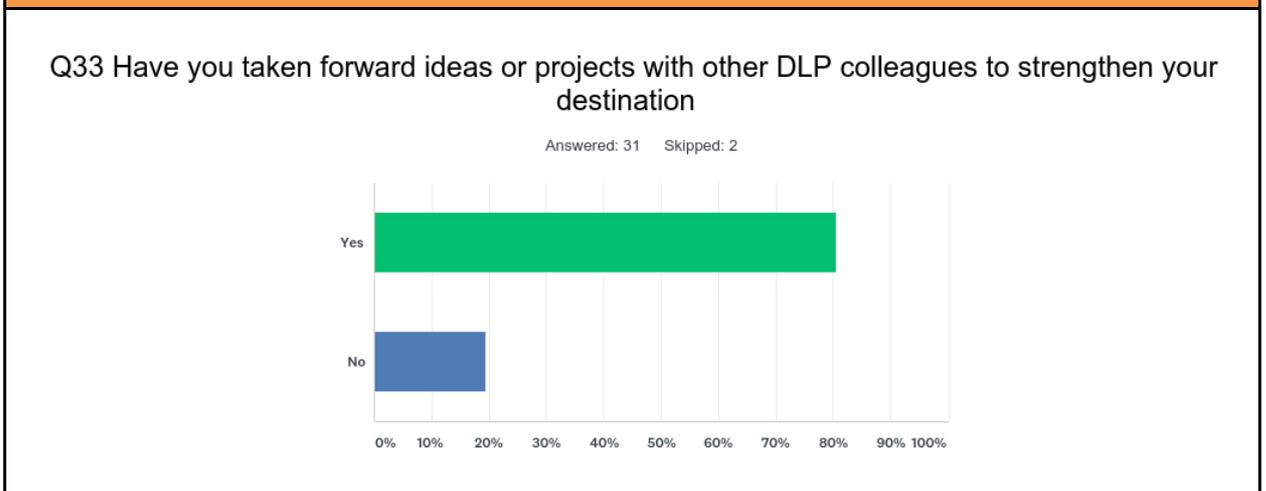
The projects conveyed significant value (average score of 4.16/5) through enhancing participants' destination leadership skills (Figure 3.2)

Figure 3.2 Value of project to enhancing leadership skills



It can be seen below that four fifths of the participants have taken forward a project with colleagues that is designed to help strengthen their destination (Figure 3.3). Scottish Enterprise was keen to identify any project activity that the participants might have undertaken that was not in the public domain. When asked, all the participants were certain or fairly sure that these activities were well known - we would note that in many instances, the projects to which the respondents were referring in Figure 3.3 were those that were initiated and undertaken while they were on the programme. However, it appears that many have maintained an active collaborative involvement subsequently, taking actions to support the on-going development and delivery of the DLP project.

Figure 3.3 Participants' project activity



### 3.9.2 Observations on possible improvements

We feel obliged to caveat the areas suggested for improvement. One area commonly cited related to the project's academic requirements. Respondents seemed to have two issues with the academic angle:

- First, some felt that the academic focus was disproportionately emphasised for a Programme of this kind, given its action-learning focus
- Second, that the reporting requirements (academic referencing etc) and the briefing by Edinburgh Napier University was disproportionate given it was a 2,500 word report - this may have been a particular issue for early cohorts as we understand that guidance session on this is now shorter and more focused.

Those who seemed most perplexed about the academic slant tended to be those who had not had been to University.

While some took issue with the academic requirements, they and others accepted that the course is certificated and that academic assessment was therefore required.

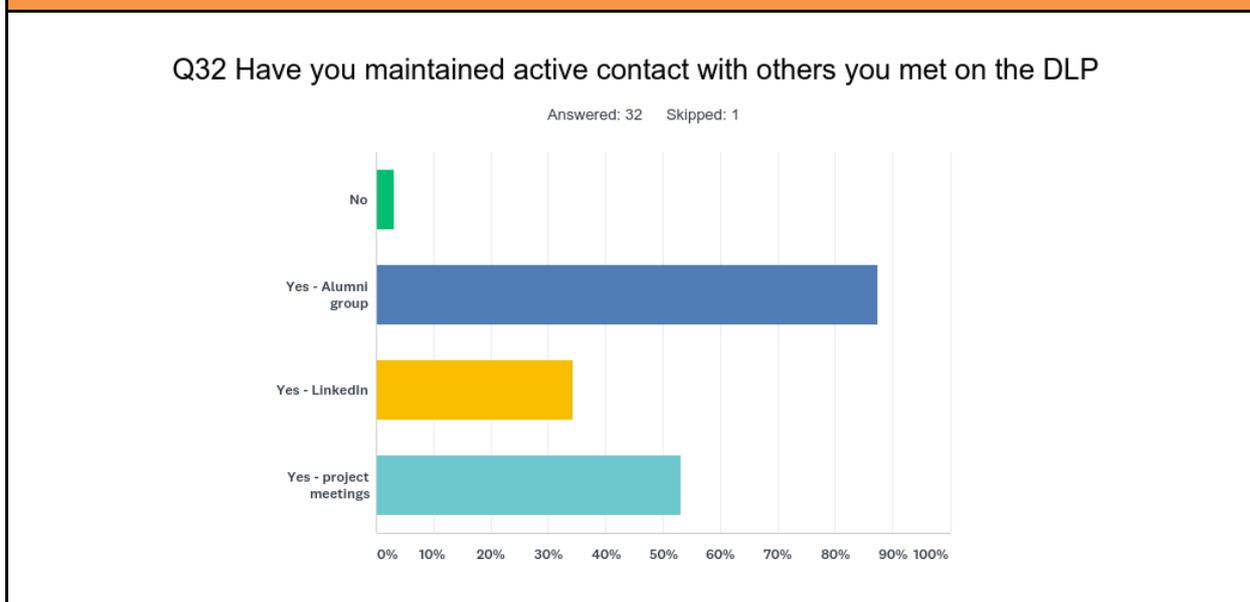
Other issues related to the challenges of working with people across geographies or who travelled a lot. Earlier cohorts suggested that more time should be allowed in the core Workshop/Weekend programmes for project work - we understand that this change has been made.

Two respondents suggested that the DLP should make sure that resources are available to take successful projects forward. We are reticent in noting these suggestions (on engaging colleagues who are geographically distributed and ensuring funding is available) as we feel these are key challenges that will be encountered in many if not all destination development projects. Our view is that it is a strength of the programme that participants are exposed to these challenges in the 'safety' of the course syllabus - they can test out their thinking and skills with limited risk of failure.

### 3.10 Alumni

Participants have been actively engaged with the DLP's alumni activities (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 - Engagement with DLP (post programme)



As evident from Figure 3.4, there have been different routes to engagement

- 88% have participated in Alumni network
- 53% through project meetings
- 34% through LinkedIn

The Alumni group was regarded as beneficial through developing tourism contacts across all years of the programme and destinations. It was also seen as a continuous form of learning and an excellent follow on from the programme.

While engagement has been active, a notable minority felt that while the course was excellent, participation 'energy' dissipated 6-12 months post participation. While this was accepted as being inevitable for all programmes of this kind and that the DLP was performing comparatively well in this regard, there were suggestions for how engagement might be enhanced. The most consistent was to introduce an annual Weekend/Learning Journey for DLP Graduates. This would address a current 'topic' of relevance to Scotland's destinations. If the group was too large, then it might be split. Our view is that this is a good suggestion and we feel that Scottish Enterprise/DLP organisers could charge a fee that covers costs etc. Furthermore, suggestions were put forward that the location of the Alumni meetings could vary, with some also being held on the west coast.

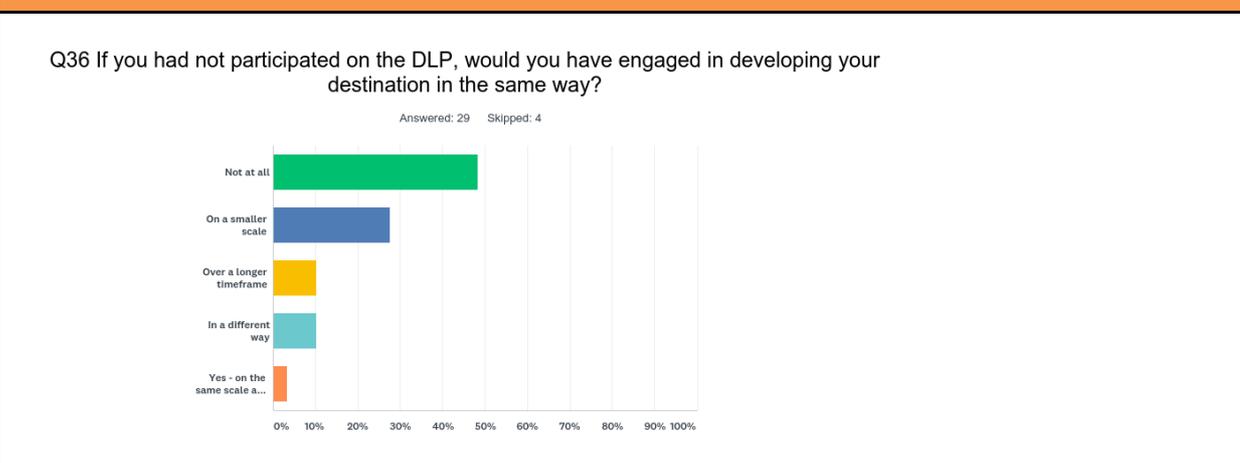
Another suggestion was to use DLP Graduates as mentors for the current cohort so as to build relationships. We understand that this has been trialled recently so it may be worth promoting more widely given some of the participants were not aware of this development.

### 3.11 Additionality

The additionality for the programme is high as indicated in Figure 3.5:

- 48% indicating that they would not have taken any similar action that would have led to them to engage in developing their destination in the same way (full additionality)
- Just 3.4 % indicating that they would have engaged in the same way (non-additionality).

Figure 3.5 – DLP Additionality



Based on evaluations of other programmes of this kind, we would expect to see the answer to this question:

- A level of full additionality of around 25-30%
- A level of non-additionality of around 30-35%.

The reasons put forward to support these scores highlighted the practical positive change that had occurred as a result of participation. Those participants who felt they might have done something to develop their destination, suggested that it would have been very much smaller in scale and would have taken much longer to implement. Enhanced confidence and enthusiasm, not just amongst the

participants but also those whom they persuaded to get involved in the destination development activity, was a key aspect of this feedback.

### 3.12 Impact

#### 3.12.1 Clear positive change in all indices

We presented the radar and described how it was used in Chapter 1. Thirty two of the respondents completed a radar. Each person's responses are unique but the mean scores across the sample indicate (Table 3.3, Figure 3.6):

- a consistent increase across all measures
- The greatest change in indices relating to seeing what to do, having the confidence to do it and getting others to help you.

DLP Indices	Mean Before	Mean Now	Change
Understanding what makes a successful destination	5.4	8.8	3.3
Seeing the key challenges/opportunities facing your destination	6.2	8.8	2.6
Utilising Professional Networks to which you gain access	5.5	8.5	3.0
Your confidence to take on a destination leadership role	5.0	8.4	3.5
Collaborating with others in your destination	6.3	9.2	2.8
Leading others to implement tangible improvements to strengthen your destination	5.3	8.3	3.0
Understanding the customer journey for your destination	6.0	8.5	2.5
Your ability to think strategically	5.9	8.0	2.1
Awareness of external factors and events and their impact on your destination	5.9	8.5	2.7
Understanding the link between your destination's strategy and the strategies of its businesses	5.6	7.9	2.4

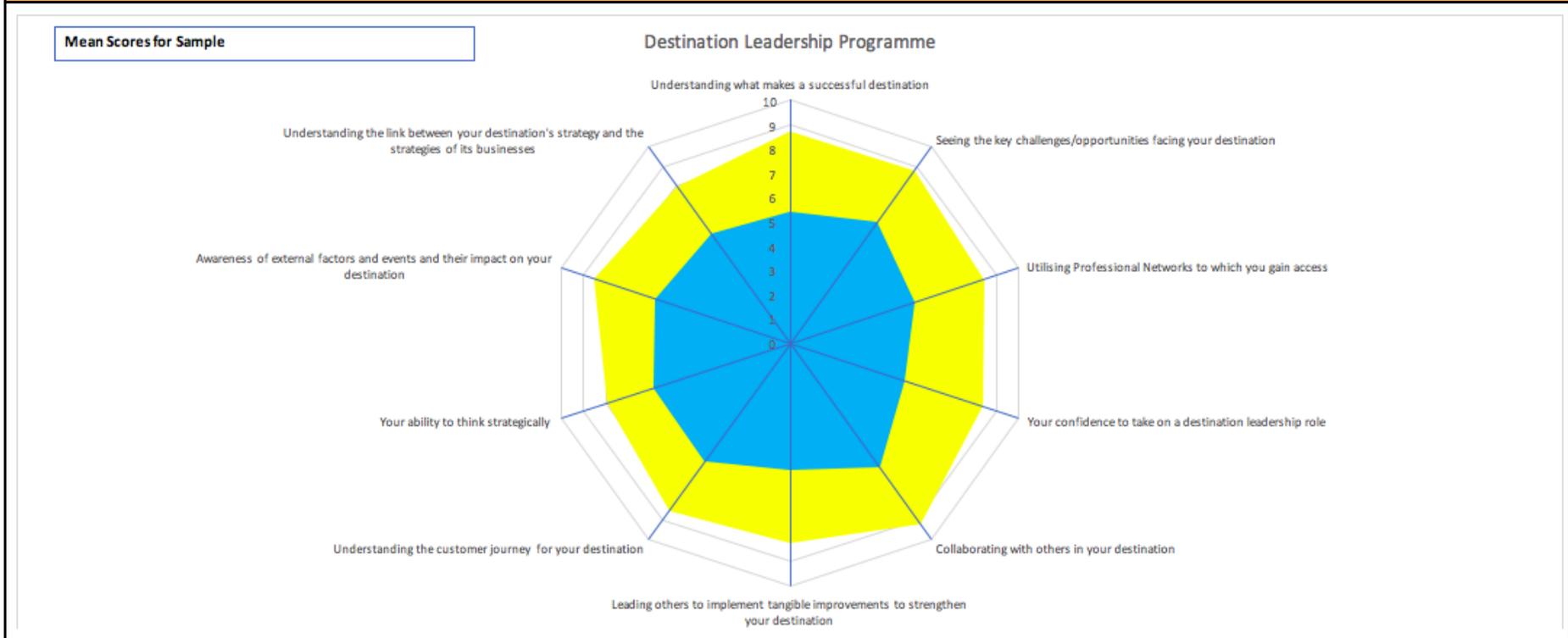
Key points to note from table 3.3 and Figure 3.6:

- There are notable areas of positive change and notable differences in average scores across all indices – it is unusual and positive to see the level

of average change 2.8 (as the deviation in scores usually cancel themselves out)

- The Programme has a notable effect on
  - Understanding what makes a successful destination
  - Enhancing participants' confidence in their potential to be a destination leader and
  - Leading others to take action – this role in leading others is supported by a comparatively high score for 'collaborating with others'
- The Programme gives participants insight into what makes their destination successful and increases their awareness of external factors and events that impact upon their destination. The combination of higher scores in this area indicates that the Programme helps participants understand how their destination 'works' within the wider regional and global environment
- The Programme was effective in building networks of people in the destination who had an interest in developing the destination – we would note that the reported average scores are lower for this metric than we would have anticipated based upon our conversations with participants. On reflection, we feel that this may be because respondents tended to say that they were well networked before commencing the Programme – participation meant that they cemented these relationships within the context of their destination rather than their businesses which had been the case previously.

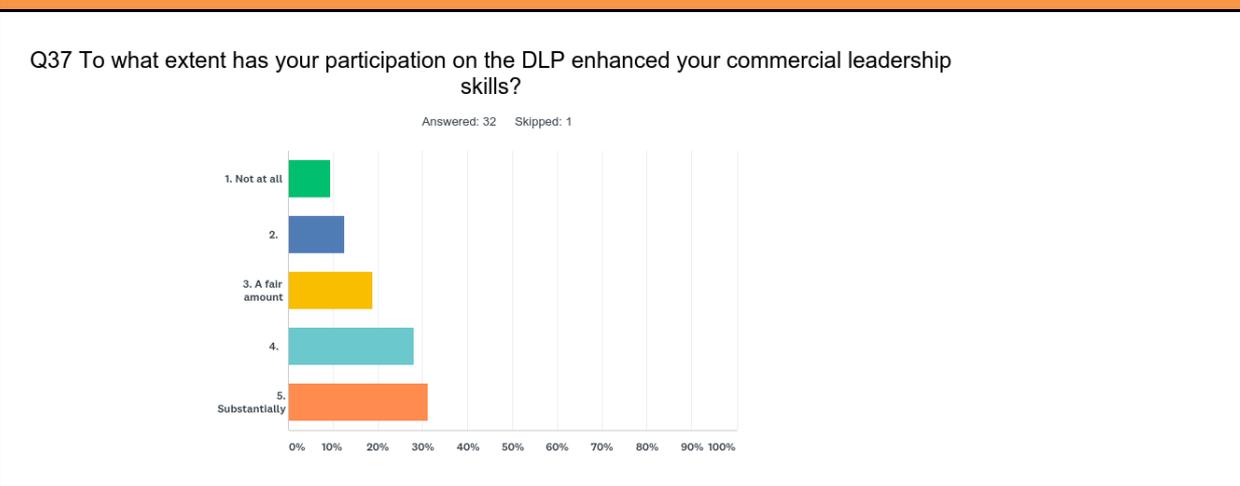
Figure 3.6 - Impact



We noted earlier the significant contribution the collaborative DLP project made to participants' understanding of what was required to make an effective change to a destination's performance.

The benefit in the participants' uplift in leadership skills was not limited to strengthening the destination, it also led to improvements in their own organisations.

**Figure 3.7 - Commercial Impact**



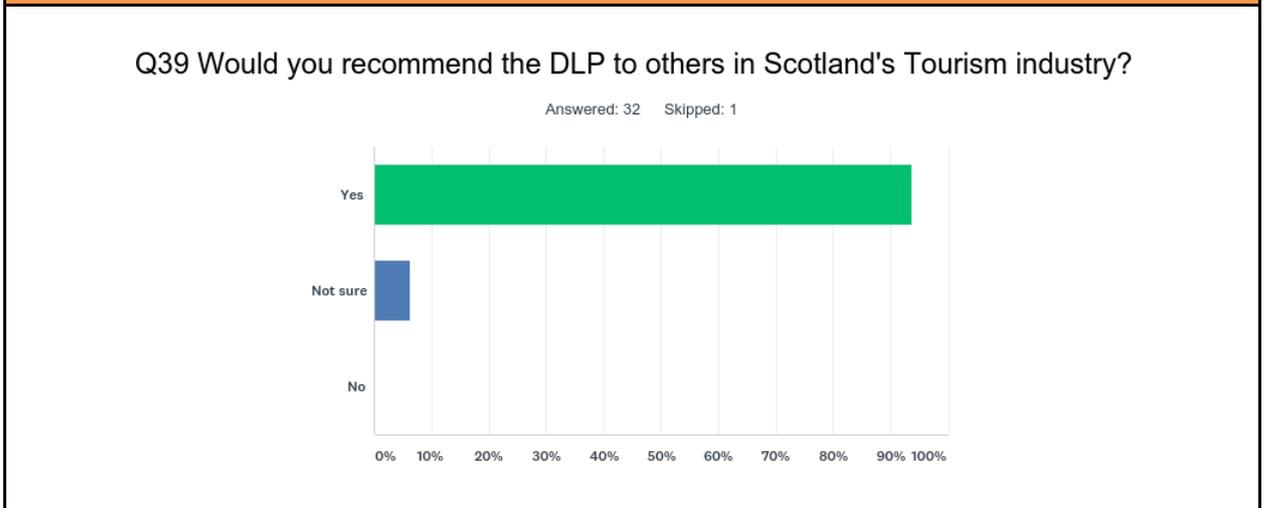
Approximately 60% of respondents indicated a score of 4 or 5 (with 31% scoring a 5). While the programme focused on identifying opportunities to improve the performance of the destination, this mindset developed through this process had a similarly beneficial impact within participants' own organisation. Participants report that developing your destination has a symbiotic effect on your own business - a so called 'win-win'.

### 3.13 Personal recommendation

Personal recommendation is a surrogate 'value' metric, as professionals do not risk damaging the professional standing through recommending a substandard product to their peers.

All but one of the respondents would recommend the programme to another potential leader within their (or other) destination.

Figure 3.8 - Personal Recommendation



The participant who was “not sure” whether she would recommend the DLP, stated that it would depend on the management level/seniority of the participant involved. In her opinion, those with less experience gained more from the programme than those at a higher level. She felt that the programme needed to be more strategically focussed to attract those in more senior positions. That said, there were many others in senior positions who noted that they felt they would derive modest benefit at the outset given they had been on leadership development programmes previously and who gained substantial benefits through participating

## 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 4.1 Introduction

It will be clear from the discussion of findings earlier that the Destination Leadership Programme has been a very positive experience for those who participated and, based on their feedback, Scotland's tourism destinations.

### 4.2 Aims of evaluation

The invitation to tender requested a qualitative assessment of the Destination Leadership Programme's impact on:

- individual DLP participants
- their organisations
- their wider tourism destinations.

### 4.3 Programme Impact

We consider each of the three elements of the ITT below.

#### 4.3.1 Programme design

The key strengths of the programme design were:

- **Learning Journeys** providing the opportunity to see first-hand how other leading destinations have strengthened their propositions
- The **content** of the materials in workshops and residential weekends
- The quality of the **speakers** in workshops and residential weekends
- The **ability to debate with leaders as equals**
- The opportunity to build new and relevant professional **networks** with contacts in other tourism segments (relevant to your destination) - residential weekends were particularly valuable in this regard
- Good **organisation** and programme management.

#### 4.3.2 Individual benefits

The key positive findings at the level of the individual include:

- Creating understanding of what is required for successful destination development
- Identifying the factors (internal and external) that impact upon a destination's performance
- Building leadership skills and competencies.

The programme provides participants with an in-depth insight into their personal **leadership styles and preferences**. This helps them to understand their strengths and those of others - this has a positive impact on their collaborations at a destination level. They also report that it has a tangible benefit on their commercial leadership skills.

The programme **increases confidence** amongst participants 'to put their heads above the parapet at a destination level' - participants noted that they were leaders within their organisations before the DLP but would not have risked putting themselves forward to drive destination development activity.

This increased confidence was particularly noticeable amongst female participants. It has **enhanced peoples' careers** (both genders) and has led to DLP participants taking tangible action to pursue proactively destination-improving activity.

The DLP has **significantly strengthened networks**. Many participants noted that they considered themselves well networked at the start but that these connections tended to be narrowly focused (i.e. within their specific tourism segment or niche). The DLP explained the customer journey, the importance of all segments within the journey and provided contacts into these other segments. A common response was that 'I now have a much bigger black book. I can pick up the phone to someone in a different area of tourism *and* they will always take my call and understand what I'm talking about'.

The DLP has seeded a range of **destination development projects** that participants considered were instrumental in driving destination improvements. These included, but were not limited to:

- China Ready
- Women in Tourism
- Curious Edinburgh
- Music Tourism

- Our Edinburgh

The DLP also led indirectly to project activity, for example through a collaborative promotion link between Glasgow Airport and the Argyll and Islands destination.

### 4.3.3 Comparative radar

We present in Appendix 1 a composite radar for a corporate leadership development programme that we evaluated previously. It can be seen that, due to averaging, the "before" and "after" scores for this programme normalise and that individual differences are balanced out across the sample. The change in competence appears to be uniform for each metric.

We include Figure 3.6 (the DLP composite radar) in Appendix 1 for comparison. Comparing the two radars indicates clearly that the DLP has had a discernible impact on *understanding what makes a successful destination, your confidence to take on a destination leadership role and leading others to implement tangible improvements to strengthen your destination*. It also made a notable contribution to *utilising professional networks to which you gain access*.

These findings reinforce the conclusion that the DLP is enhancing participants' personal leadership skills *and* is doing so through showing how to enhance the operation of their destination and the strength of its offer. This finding indicates that the DLP has been successful in creating the 'executive infrastructure' necessary to strengthen Scotland's key tourism destinations.

### 4.3.4 Organisational benefits

The principal benefits at an organisational level were due to participants enhancing their individual leadership skills which improved their performance (average score 4.16/5) and their expanded professional networks.

Given the management level of participants tended to be high, it raised their organisations' profiles within and beyond their destinations.

### 4.3.5 Wider Tourism Destination benefits

We consider the programme has had an impact on participating destinations, most notably Edinburgh (given that the largest number of participants from one destination across the four years were based there and that the more impactful projects identified by participants were Edinburgh-based).

Cross sectoral collaboration has been increased and there is a better understanding of the diversity of Scotland's tourism project amongst Edinburgh participants in particular.

The programme has significantly strengthened professional networks, both within and across destinations.

More subtly, those who have completed the DLP understand why people from other tourism segments might contact them. Participants on leadership development programmes frequently comment that a key benefit of participating is the 'creation of a common language' within their organisations that helps improve communication and gain greater alignment. The DLP appears to have achieved a form of this alignment, not so much by language, but by creating a shared understanding of what actions might be taken at a destination level and why.

#### **4.4 Areas for enhancement**

It is important to stress that most of those interviewed struggled to identify substantive or meaningful changes that might usefully be made to the programme design.

##### **4.4.1 Projects' design**

A few respondents requested greater guidance at the start of the project and greater lead-time into it. Also, the timing of the project should take into account the main holiday periods over Christmas and Easter, and the impact they had on project completion dates.

##### **4.4.2 More geographic balance**

The content and examples were considered to contain an Edinburgh bias. There is an opportunity for broader geographic focus including more rural examples. Alumni meetings should be held in both the East and West coasts.

##### **4.4.3 Single cohort versus multiple cohort representation**

The pilot and each of the subsequent cohorts comprised representation from two destinations. As identified in para 4.4.2, this 'mixing' has caused some issues with rural cohorts in particular viewing the content as being "too urban" focused. Our

review of the SE approvals papers indicates clearly that the Programme was originally designed to engage representatives from one cohort at a time, but that funders requested the “dual” approach. In the light of the evaluation feedback, it would be appropriate to consider running single destination cohorts in future where two complementary cohorts cannot be engaged. Appropriate advance notice of the chosen cohorts should be provided to the Programme delivery team.

#### **4.4.4 Learning Journeys**

Learning Journeys were felt to be very intense, especially where pre-dawn travel is required on the first day. It was suggested that there should be an opportunity to elongate the visit (any extra cost covered by the participant) so as to make the trip more comfortable for those who preferred.

#### **4.4.5 Introduce Annual Learning Journey/Weekend for “graduates”**

The idea of an annual event or learning journey opportunity for DLP graduates was suggested. We consider that this could be charged for and would likely be well received based on participants’ feedback.

#### **4.4.6 Balanced cohorts**

Ensure participants are drawn across the whole of the tourism industry and not too heavily focussed on one specific area. The right mix of participants is essential for the future programmes success.

#### **4.4.7 Use DLP graduates to promote its strengths**

Greater promotion should be undertaken by past participants, this was seen as the most effective means of recruiting participants to the programme. The depth of detail covered in the workshops was also described as “excellent” by a number of participants and this could be promoted to a greater extent than has been done to date.

#### **4.4.8 Early identification of future destinations**

Advance warning of upcoming programme destination areas should be provided, so that organisations in these areas can recruit to the programme.

## **4.5 Overall**

Overall, the DLP has reviewed very positively. It was one of the most consistently positive set of evaluation interviews we have completed for some time. The participants appear to have derived genuine value from their engagement, which in several cases has been (positively) career changing. The uplift in personal and professional confidence was striking amongst those who gained most.

## Appendix 1 – Comparison: Corporate Leadership Development Programme with DLP

