

CONNECT LOCAL

Scotland's local food
and drink marketing
advisory service

**Putting Inverclyde
on the food and drink map**
Connect Local chats to Andrew Bowman,
founder of Taste Inverclyde



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When and why was Taste Inverclyde set up?

Taste Inverclyde was created in 2017 by Riverside Inverclyde, the regeneration company focused on delivering the economic development of Inverclyde. The website – www.tasteinverclyde.co.uk - was launched in collaboration with Scotland Food & Drink in December 2017 and is celebrating its one-year anniversary.

Food and drink is a targeted growth sector for Inverclyde given the excellent inter-connectivity, premises, proximity to central belt, ability to import and export from Greenock Ocean Terminal and the 2030 £30bn ambition to grow the food and drink industry in Scotland. Taste Inverclyde was created as a vehicle to support and highlight the food and drink opportunities and successes across the area.

How would you sum up the group's progress to date?

Taste Inverclyde has a three-year strategy with two core aims – to increase the number and mix of manufacturers within Inverclyde and to support, grow and capitalise on the growing food and drink tourism opportunities.

The first year has been primarily focused on the tourism opportunities with over 70 independent cafes, bars and restaurants now showcased via the website with free marketing and social media support across.

There has also been a focus on identifying local manufacturers and producers of all sizes and scales, as well as butchers, farms, caterers and other food and drink related businesses which are currently being added to the website for a January 2019 launch.

To begin our support for manufacturers, we've held two events – The Taste Tent – at [Gourock Highland Games](#) and [Scotland's Boat Show](#) in Inverkip where

we provide free space for local manufacturers to promote their produce.

Finally, we launched the inaugural Inverclyde Food and Drink Guide in 2018 in partnership with Newsquest with the aim to make this a regular annual publication. This can be [found here](#).

Where do you think the main opportunities lie for the local food and drink sector?

With the 2030 ambition and level of support available on both a local and national basis, there has never been a better time to enter the food and drink sector. Inverclyde has a selection of premises and development sites available to support growth and Riverside Inverclyde works in partnership with its tenants to help support their growth.

The price differential in Inverclyde compared to neighbouring areas and cities provides opportunities to put investment directly into the business, skills and growth which several businesses are utilising in their favour. Riverside Inverclyde is also currently building [Baker Street](#) - a food and drink incubator hub which will be ready for occupancy in Autumn 2019.

Inverclyde seen success already with a number of new businesses choosing the area as the location for their business including [The Start-Up Drinks Lab](#), [Nutcrafter Creamery](#) and [The New Chocolate Company](#) joining household brands like [Golden Casket](#) and [Aulds](#). These businesses are already collaborating together and finding new opportunities.

The Glasgow City Region Deal will also see a £14.7m project to deliver a landmark visitor centre and 180 seat restaurant at the Greenock Ocean Terminal, creating one of the largest and highest calibre restaurants the west coast will have ever seen. This provides exceptional opportunities for businesses and producers, with the number of passengers and crew set to rise to 180,000 per

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annum.

We also continue to work with a number of different agencies, companies and education providers to develop and create the skills provisions required to support the food and drink sector growth in Inverclyde.

And what are the main challenges?

We have a small number of manufacturers and Inverclyde is not widely known as a place for food and drink businesses to thrive, so we are having to tackle some perceptions and understanding of the area, where it is and how easy it is to get to and from.

There is an ambition to attract large scale operators and manufacturers to the area and with that, many jobs to the area. There is a huge amount of support for these businesses, but we often struggle to liaise with these types of businesses.

Inverclyde boasts many ambitious chefs and owners but there are certain challenges locally as to what people expect when they go out for a meal. The aim is to raise the calibre of food and menus as well as premises so that it meets the expectations of locals as well as tourists and strike a balance to cater for all tastes.

Approval for Baker St was recently announced - what does this mean for food and drink businesses and the area?

Baker Street is a hugely exciting project which will provide commercial kitchen space as well as hot desk, storage, board room, change, shower and development facilities for new-start or growth businesses as well as providing financial support towards machinery, development costs and SALSA accreditation.

There will also be a food and drink development programme similar to the [Opportunity North East](#)

programme in Aberdeen which will be designed to support the businesses within Baker Street to grow their business to the next level in a sustainable way.

This is a great model to support not only passionate local food enthusiasts but also those in and around the area, and we've seen a large amount of interest from businesses out-with Inverclyde.

How do your ambitions fit with the recently launched Food Tourism Scotland plan?

Food tourism provides a great opportunity for Inverclyde. We often struggle to retain passengers and other visitors within Inverclyde given it is a gateway to Glasgow, Argyll and the Trossachs. However, we do know that people will still need to eat and drink whilst in the area and therefore a lot of our strategy is to align and capitalise on the opportunity.

There is a real focus on raising the number of ['Taste Our Best'](#) accredited businesses locally; many already meet the criteria but just haven't completed the applications and we see this as a legitimate way to support the calibre of food.



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The main aim of Taste Inverclyde is to develop a wide range of produce locally that can then be sold and served in the different locations, schools and households across Inverclyde and Scotland.

The Connect Local service aims to support regional food development. If we could do 3 things to help Taste Inverclyde flourish, what would they be and why?

- Help create a wide range of manufacturers that we can support and ready to take to a regional level
- Promote Inverclyde has a place of opportunity for food and drink businesses and to consider bringing their business to the area
- Support the development of the existing manufacturers to ensure continued growth and opportunities are capitalised upon

Have you collaborated, or plan to collaborate with, other regional food groups across Scotland?

Yes – as one of the newer groups the many other groups to date have been hugely supportive and inspiring and provided advice throughout. The Inverclyde food and drink guide was inspired by the [Borders Food Network](#), the Baker Street development is supporting Opportunity North East's aims to create something larger, and we've

spent a lot of time with [Food from Argyll](#) (café in Oban) and Forth Valley's local food projects, including [Stirling NeighbourFood](#) to understand how we could potentially do something similar in our area.

The group also communicates through social media to keep everyone up to date, so we have thoroughly enjoyed learning from our Scottish neighbours and look forward to further supporting the wider Scottish networks.

To find out more

<https://www.riversideinverclyde.com/>

Follow on twitter via @InverclydeTaste



Connect Local is delivered by a team of experts from SAC, SAOS, Scotland Food & Drink and Seafood Scotland and funded by Scottish Government and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

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