

Scottish Islands Abattoir Project

End of Project Report

Executive Summary

August 2016



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In the last three years the seven Scottish Island Abattoirs have slaughtered 37,276 beasts.

Had the abattoirs in Barra, Islay, Lochmaddy, Mull, Orkney, Shetland and Stornoway not existed the impact on the beasts slaughtered by these abattoirs in terms of animal welfare both in minimising the distance that animals would have had to travel to slaughter and the contribution made to biosecurity by keeping food production local would not have happened.

As well as the positive impact on animal welfare and biosecurity, the project has confirmed the most obvious benefits that small local abattoirs provide employment and make a significant contribution to the production and marketing of local produce. The project has highlighted that increasingly, both local people and tourists demand locally produced food with an origin they can trace.

“Involvement in the project has given us confidence regarding the future. We’ve all improved our positions as regards sustainability of the business, and we’re all in a better position now than we were at the start of the project.

If the project was to gain sustainability, that has been achieved, but we now need to focus on growth!”

Statement agreed by all abattoirs at their meeting in Mull on 19th May 2016

Executive Summary

In 2013, a project was suggested to support the sustainability and future of the seven island based abattoirs throughout Scotland.

The project was facilitated by a team which comprised Scottish Agricultural Society Scotland and Scottish Business in the Community (now Business in the Community Scotland). They formed a project team which involved dba projects to work with the abattoirs in Barra, Lochmaddy (North Uist), Islay, Mull, Orkney, Shetland and Stornoway. In addition, a Project Advisory Group made up of representatives from industry agencies provides the project expert guidance and advice and supports the project team.

The objective of the project was to consider how the economic sustainability of the seven island abattoirs could be ensured, their levels of operation improved and increased.

The project has allowed the seven distinctly different abattoir businesses to meet and share challenges and examples of good practice. These meetings have been so successful the Abattoirs have formed the Scottish Island Abattoir Association to provide a collective voice and ensure that they continue to work together beyond the lifetime of the project.

The project's key aim was to support the sustainability of the abattoirs, this meant working with a number of agencies and training providers to ensure that the abattoirs' staff very specific skills levels were catered for and were in line with the growing demand of regulations. A number of facilities have taken the opportunity of recruiting Modern Apprentices as a way of bringing new and young people in to the Sector.

Through the funding provided by the Princes Countryside Fund the project has contributed to improving the infrastructure of each facility by making appropriate capital investment. All investments have been subject to mechanisms that support quality and sustainability including detailed business plans, commitment to an effective quality management plan and commitment to skills development.

As regards business development, many of the abattoirs are in the position to positively exploit the Deer Management (venison) policy and are now actively marketing their facilities to cater for supporting the local estates, and indeed some have received positive forward notification of future kill levels.

The businesses are more confident and ambitious about reaching new markets, but continue to be frustrated that their product remains to be seen as expensive and unattainable by many residents within their island community.

Support of local produce varies throughout the area, ranging from Orkney which has developed a strong "Orkney" brand and enjoys local, tourist and public procurement support, versus many of the other island abattoirs, in whose case it is very hard to find any local product available in local shops, eateries and hotels, but not for the want of trying on the abattoirs' part.

Over the last 3 years (September 2013 to August 2016) the project has delivered:

- Capital investment of £110,000:
- Encouraged and supported 15 Modern Apprenticeships:
- Developed and introduced a Quality Management Programme:
- Provided training in quality management for abattoir management staff:
- Provided business mentoring:
- Provided benchmarking information on a range of business-specific issues:
- Established the Scottish Island Abattoir Association:
- Commissioned and agreed a logo, website and promotional materials for the Association and member abattoirs:
- Commissioned Resource Efficiency Audits for all facilities:
- Contributed to increased kill figures over the three-years of the project:
- Contributed to increased staffing levels in five of the participating abattoirs:
- Contributed to an increase in turnover (2015/16) for all abattoirs involved in the project.

This report concludes with a number of recommendations. These are summarised as:

- That support is sought to ensure the Scottish Island Abattoir Association delivers a major brokerage, marketing and sales project that incorporates local branding under a collective banner e.g. Scottish Island Meats.
- That the project recommended above is supported centrally by the Scottish Island Abattoirs Association.
- That as part of the ongoing review process for the Quality Management Programme the Association looks at the Programmes alignment with insurance companies' risk assessment requirements.
- That the Association explore the potential of local authority/government procurement by making a strong case for the added economic and social advantages of local supply.
- That through the Association the Island Abattoirs' contribution to deer management is promoted and recognised.
- That the Association becomes self-funding as soon as possible and within three years.