

Notes from company visits – West Dunbartonshire, 2 February 2018

MSPs in attendance – Jackie Baillie MSP and John Mason MSP

Turkey Red Media Ltd – Strathleven House, Dumbarton

1. Members met with Martin Gillon and Craig Jump, directors of Turkey Red Media (TRM), a video production and drone aerial video company.
2. Customers include Toyota, the BBC, Visit Scotland, Edinburgh City Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, West Lothian Council, Audi, Scottish National Parks, Network Rail, Bear Scotland, Barrat and Cala Homes.
3. TRM was established in April 2017 by Craig and Martin who worked together previously. Their first year has been successful, with the company exceeding their annual target turnover by October.
4. They recently became VAT registered and a limited company; however they do not directly employ anyone and mostly use freelancers when increased demand requires it.
5. One of the directors, Martin, felt that starting a new company allowed him a better work-life balance. This became more important to him after becoming a father.
6. Martin and Craig both feel that the creative industries have high number of freelancers. Employing more people is not an immediate priority for TRM.

Experiences of Scottish Enterprise/Business Gateway

7. TRM have had limited support from Business Gateway and Scottish Enterprise. They feel their sector is very specialised and that the public agencies don't really have knowledge of their market.
8. They feel they know far more about their industry, technologies and customers than the advisers in public bodies.
9. There was a £500 grant available from BG, but Craig felt the effort required to fill-in the application was not worth it.
10. Craig and Martin believe that SE is only interested in businesses that have employment growth as an aim. That's not how the "gig economy" works (according to TRM) – there is much self-employment, seasonal work and short contracts in the creative/digital field.

What support do they want?

11. When asked what support they *would* appreciate, Craig and Martin responded:
 - Help finding suitable premises.
 - Help ensuring access to excellent internet connectivity.
 - Help networking with other “creatives”.

Other issues raised

12. TRM's belief that schools and universities aren't teaching the fundamentals of self-employment – the commercial, accounting and business side.
13. Financial education at school is not good (the example of filling-in a tax return form was highlighted).
14. As the creative industry is driven by small enterprises, college and university courses in these fields should do more training in the business side of things.
15. Other perception is that there are too many creative university courses but not enough job opportunities available once people graduate.
16. There are some specific legislative restrictions on drone flying which is limiting their business expansion.

Loch Lomond Brewery – Lomond Industrial Estate, Alexandria

17. Lomond Brewery was launched in 2011 by wife and husband Fiona and Euan MacEachern. Previous employment (police and construction) was not working for them as a family, so they felt starting a business would better suit their life plans.
18. Both were keen home brewers, so they attended a course in commercial brewing in Sunderland.
19. They now have 5 and a half staff working for them and are looking to expand with new premises.
20. They have grown by more than 25% every year since 2011.
21. Their company is currently going through a major rebranding exercise and have recently taking on a new exports manager.

22. Having won a large export contract with an Italian importer (during the Glasgow Beer Festival), expanding exports is a major aim.
23. The Brewery exports around 20% of their output at the moment.

Support from BG and SE

24. They have received some assistance from Business Gateway, and initial financial support from their bank (after some persuasion).
25. They were a BG high-growth company and recently became an SE account-managed company.
26. They have also received Regional Selective Assistance (RSA) support.
27. Loch Lomond Brewery was also part of a “learning journey” mission to North America in 2014, organised and funded by Scottish Development International (part of SE).
28. There is a perception that beer companies in the HIE area get more support.
29. However, Fiona and Euan were keen to stress that their SE account manager is very good and an expert in the drinks industry.

Barriers to expansion

30. Lack of independent bottling facility in Scotland – they currently send their beer to Cumbria. They hope to have their own bottling capacity after moving to new premises.
31. Gaining access to financial support is also important, as their relationship with their bank is not as good as it used to be – so thinking about using crowdfunding instead.
32. They have concerns about Brexit, as expansion in European markets is key to their growth aspirations.