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# Place Brand of the Year **The New York Times**



## Argyll & The Isles

Entered by Argyll & the Isles Tourism Cooperative



Argyll and the Isles developed as a traditional holiday destination close to Glasgow initially during the Victorian 'Doon the Watter' era and into the 60s and 70s... but recently has been losing its appeal with changing trends. The market has become characterized by over 50s and the brand identity became almost non-existent with the area being disparate, with poor collaboration and a lack of marketing effort.

The place brand needed (re-)positioning to challenge historic perceptions and make it relevant and a catalyst for growth, and in developing the place brand, adventure Tourism was prioritized. Adventure seekers, as the target market, offered exciting opportunities being much younger than the current market and accessible online so easy to target and influence. In addition, with Argyll being located right on Glasgow's Doorstep, there was a very immediate opportunity to appeal to the adventure seeker day trip market – climb a hill after work, spend the day on the water – and build on this to develop the overnight and short break market.

AITC decided that new content was needed which profiled the amazing experiences on offer and that film was the best way to capture this – to be shared online with adventure seekers who were active on social media and, certainly to begin with, were living on Argyll's doorstep in the Central Belt of Scotland. But to be authentic and to challenge perceptions of the region an influencer was needed who had the respect of AITC's target market and an authentic reason to want to help raise awareness – rather than 'just for the money'. Wild About Argyll was born. Funding was sourced to engage Mark Beaumont, the Scottish endurance athlete. Mark undertook a 12 day multisport epic adventure covering every corner of the region, engaging over 100 businesses and operators and involving 12 different sports.

Three core objectives were established

- To celebrate Argyll & the Isles unique coastal setting and outstanding natural environment
- To highlight Argyll and The Isles proximity to Glasgow and the Central Belt of Scotland
- To express the spectrum of experiences on offer suited to everyone from the beginner to the expert – wild or mild.

In November 2016 AITC successfully secured a £100k budget from VisitScotland and the local Council to launch a Wild About Argyll campaign using the film content.

The Wild About Argyll films and campaign were launched in January 2017 to an invited audience of 300 people in Glasgow's west end – funders, stakeholders and the media. Mark hosted the launch event and within a week the hashtag #wildaboutargyll had over 4million impressions. Mark posted the main edits on his own channels and over 270k people viewed these but more importantly over 6,000 people reacted and commented. Skerryvore who had just won the Scottish Traditional Music Award in 2016 were invited to perform at the launch and asked AITC if a film could be produced from the footage as a music video for their next single 'Live Forever' – this was produced and launched that night and immediately went to No1 on the itunes world chart.

AITC has now secured a 3-year funding package from Highlands and Island Enterprise for 2017-2020 to develop the adventure product linked to food and drink, and events and festivals. Wild About Argyll, although originally aimed at the adventure market is now seen as the tourism place brand for the region.