



GALLOWAY GLENS

Landscape Partnership

Galloway Glens and Business Gateway Dumfries & Galloway 'Business Academy' Resource Pack:

Maximising the Income from your Accommodation Business.

Based on presentations given in Dalry on the 31st January 2019.

The poster is for the '2019 Business Academy' event. It features logos for Galloway Glens, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Dumfries & Galloway, and Business Gateway. The main title is '2019 Business Academy' in large, bold letters. Below it, the topic is 'Maximising the Income from your Accommodation business'. The date and time are '5:30 - 7pm, Thurs 31st Jan 2019, Clachan Inn, Dalry, DG7 3UW'. A list of topics includes: 'Top Tips from an award-winning B&B', 'What your website and social media should be doing for you', 'Do you need your own booking system?', and 'Managing your finances and planning for the future'. A 'FREE EVENT' badge is in the bottom right. Booking information is at the bottom: 'Book through www.businessgateway.com/events or by emailing helen.keron@dumgal.gov.uk'.

GALLOWAY GLENS
Landscape Partnership

LOTTERY FUNDED

Dumfries & Galloway

business gateway
your gateway to business expertise

2019 Business Academy

**Maximising the Income from
your Accommodation business**

5:30 - 7pm, Thurs 31st Jan 2019, Clachan Inn, Dalry, DG7 3UW

- Top Tips from an award-winning B&B
- What your website and social media should be doing for you
- Do you need your own booking system?
- Managing your finances and planning for the future

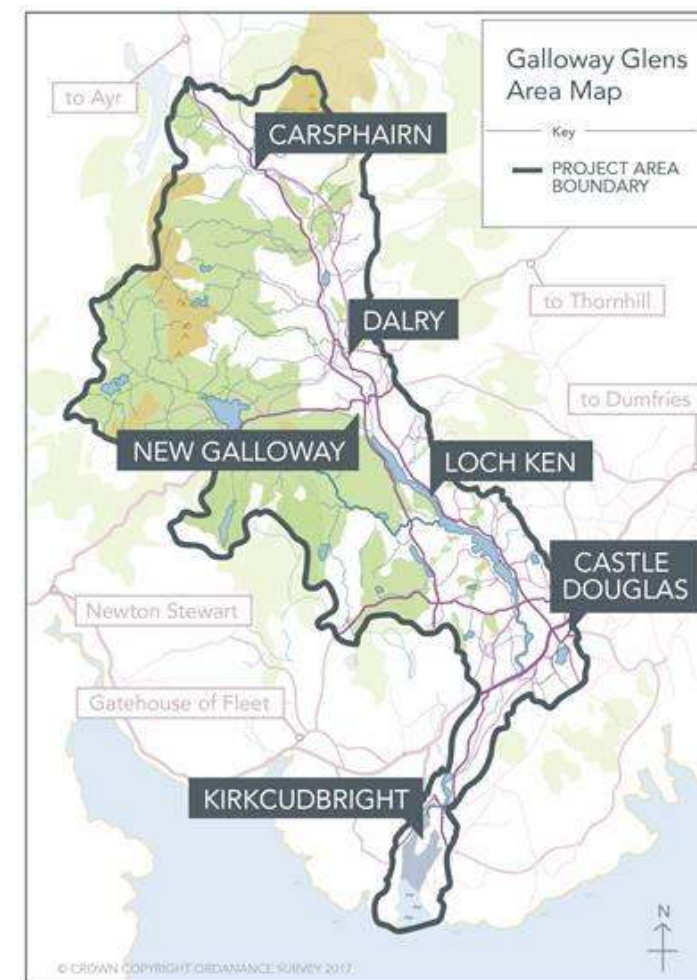
FREE EVENT

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The Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme

- 35 projects across the Galloway Glens area over the next 4 years.
- The GGLP area covers the Glenkens, Castle Douglas and Kirkcudbright.
- 'From Source to Sea' – follows the route of the Ken and Dee rivers.
- Funded by the Heritage Lottery and other partners, including Dumfries & Galloway Council.
- All GGLP projects are aimed at connecting people with their heritage and supporting sustainable rural communities.
- Two of the six key themes for GGLP are:
 - Encouraging more people to visit the area.
 - Improving access to the outdoors, for residents and visitors.





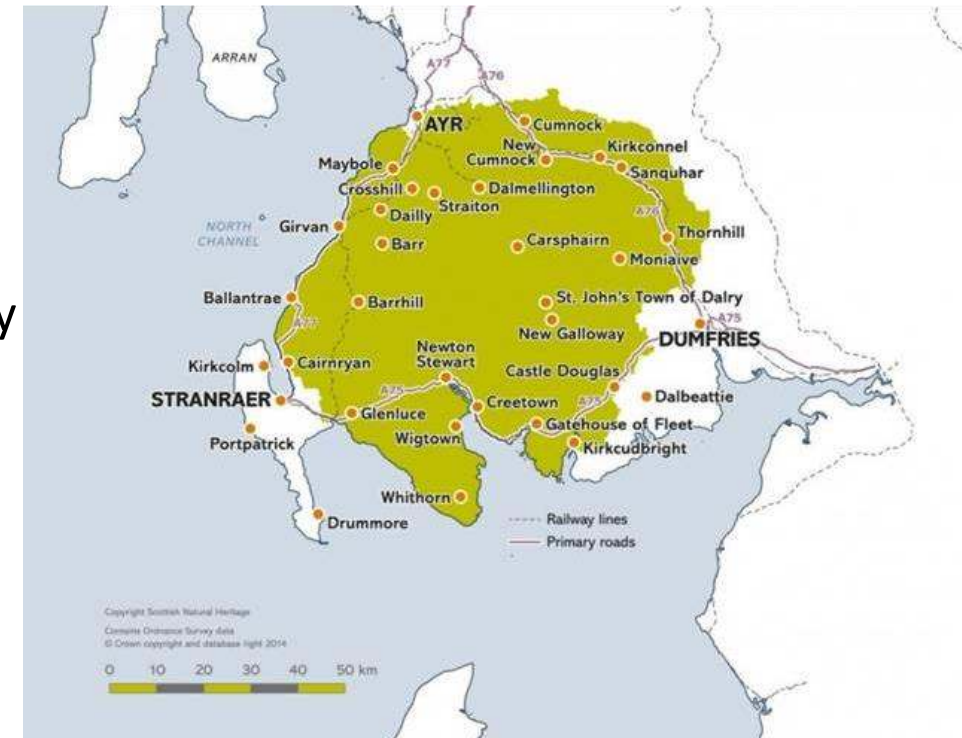
Projects of possible interest to your visitors

- **Galloway Glens Biosphere Experience:** A pilot project to put together experiential tourism packages capitalising on our unique natural assets.
 - Laura Davidson is looking to network with providers who would be interested in being part of these packages. See Laura afterwards if you'd like more information.
- **Loch Ken Alive:** Improving laybys, signage and access to the Loch. Planning festivals around the Loch to draw visitors. Marketing and promotion of the Loch as the beautiful asset it is.
- **Dee Treasures:** A cycling or driving app that will give information about routes of interest and the history associated with them.
- **Kirkcudbright Dark Skies Visitor Centre:** Starting development; when completed, will help the entire area capitalise on being Scotland's first Dark Sky Park.
- **Glenkens Way:** A walking trail that will link Polmaddy to New Galloway.
- **Canoe Trail:** A long-distance canoe trail down Loch Ken. Second in Scotland.
- **Heritage Hubs:** New interpretation centres in Dalry, Crossmichael, Balmaclellan and Kirkcudbright.
- **Red squirrel hide:** Barhill woods, Kirkcudbright.

Galloway and South Ayrshire Biosphere



- This area is so special, UNESCO designated it as a Biosphere in 2012. (1 of only 2 Biospheres in Scotland.)
- All tourism businesses, and especially accommodation providers, should be using this in their marketing.
 - UNESCO Biosphere
 - Dark Sky Park
 - Galloway Forest Park
 - Loch Ken
 - Solway Estuary
- All of these will draw in visitors, but only if they know they are there!



Presentation 1:

Case Study from Brookford B&B.

Ronnie Bradford, proprietor.



Guiding Principles

- Be aware that you are part of a fledgling tourism sector, the future of which **you have a direct responsibility to help flourish and grow.**
 - In practice this means that at every stage of the visit, you have the opportunity to not only meet but surpass the expectations.
- **Do your research**
 - Get to know your surroundings so you can advise your visitors.
 - Local and built heritage
 - Towns and villages
 - Biosphere
 - Dark Sky Park
 - Galloway Forest Park
 - Get to know your fellow accommodation providers.
- **Our competitors are in the Lake District and the Highlands, not here!**



Guiding Principles

- Know the difference between price and value for money – your customers will.
- Attention to detail is critical for a memorable visitor experience.
- Don't 'Make Do and Mend' – Innovate and Spend.
 - Re-decorate regularly
 - Renew linen and towels
 - Keep up with technology – wifi and TVs
 - Consider your 'green' credentials
- Work on your digital advertising
 - Take advice if you need it.



Do:

- Make sure you are aware of the specific rules regarding running accommodation in D&G, particularly fire regs.
- Check to make sure your insurance isn't more or less than you need.
- Remember TV Licence.
- Remember you need a licence to play recorded music in a public place.
- Keep on good terms with your neighbours!
- Consider getting food hygiene training if offering food.
- Carefully consider your Ts&Cs to make sure they work for you.
- Enjoy the experience – if you don't, it will show!



Don't:

- Don't put barriers in the way of people booking to stay with you.
 - Make booking easy and seamless.
 - Consider not taking deposits.
 - Make sure you get valid card details you can charge if things go wrong.
- Don't insist on guests having to contact you by phone to confirm the booking.
- Don't have restrictive rules around check in / check out times and/or curfews.
- Don't be over attentive or intrusive.

Thank you and good luck!



Presentation 2:



What your Social Media and Website should be doing for you

Dane Smyth, Let's Go D&G.

<https://www.letsgodg.co.uk/>

Visually attractive
accommodation
features on Let's
Go D&G

CONIFER LODGES
NEWTON STEWART

OWL COTE
GATEHOUSE OF FLEET

BIRDS NEST
GATEHOUSE OF FLEET

let's go 
dumfries & galloway

ALLANTON MILL
DUMFRIES

WILLOW COTTAGE
NEWTON STEWART

GLEED COTT
CREETOWN

CLOUD CUCKOO LODGE
CASTLE DOUGLAS

LOCHENBRECK BYRE
CASTLE DOUGLAS

BELTON HOUSE
WANLOCKHEAD

AIRDS BAY
GATEHOUSE OF FLEET

KIRKENNAN ESTATE
HOLIDAY COTTAGES
PALNACKIE

WE ARE
LET'S

Online

- Choose a modern and bright photo of your accommodation.
- Include plenty of detailed shots of the interior.
- Focus on what makes it different or what stands out – remember the Instagram effect!
- Remember to save your images as key-words – Search Engines don't see images, just text.
- Change your images and see what works with bookings / likes.

Google functions.

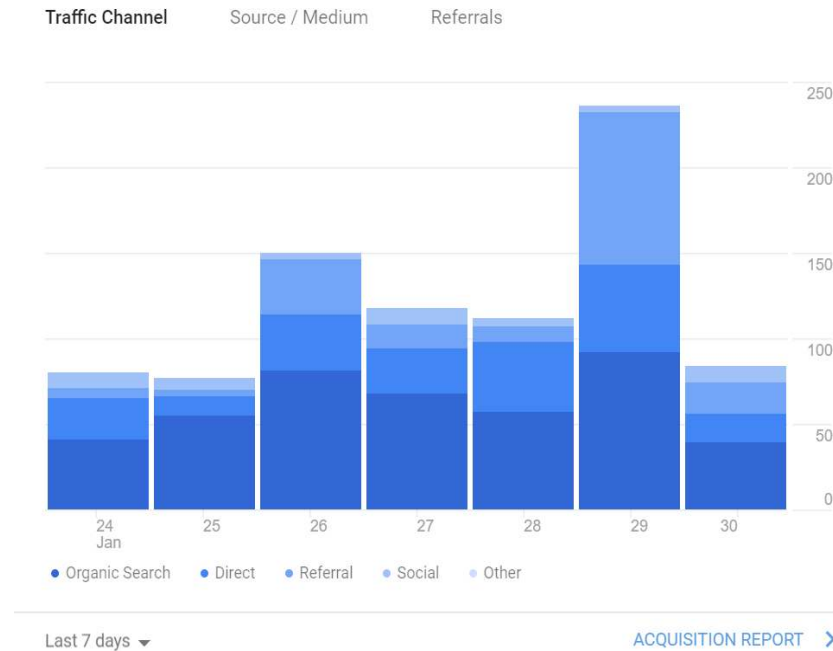
- Register on Google Maps (for free), so your accommodation comes up automatically when people are near.
- Use Google Console – this will give blog-type information next to the check-in mark on Google Maps.
- Use Google Analytics to see how your web-page is performing.
- **Organic** reach is what you're after – people searching for and using your website.

Google Analytics



What pages do your users visit?

How do you acquire users?



How well do you retain users?

What are your top devices?

Where are your users?

Sessions by country



Last 28 days ▾ [LOCATION OVERVIEW](#) >

When do your users visit?

Social Media tips

- **Facebook:**
 - Make sure you are commenting and liking other posts and pages **as your page**. (Look for the drop down option above the Comment line to use your business page not your personal one)
 - Always post a picture with a Facebook post.
 - Competitions still work well – give away a room for a night in return for a ‘Like, Share & Tag a friend’. Make sure you choose the winner fairly!
- **Instagram** – check the analytics to see how many click-throughs an image receives.
- **Twitter** – not great for accommodation providers (better for business to business) but posting links can help with Search Engine Optimisation.
- Good pages to follow and share to show off the region:
 - D&G Through a Lens
 - We love D&G





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Presentation 3:

Do you need an online booking system?

Jo Blaylock, SuperControl

<https://www.supercontrol.co.uk/>

01556 506701



Do you need an online booking system?

In 2018, 81% of people booked a holiday online.

15% of people booked over the phone or in person.

People over the age of 65 are the most likely to book on the phone – but it's still just a quarter of this age group that do so.

And there's nothing stopping you from continuing to take bookings over the phone anyway.

Providing guests with the option to book and pay online just gives them the choice – and removes any barriers to those who want to book there and then.



When people search online for their holidays, what are the first results they see?

There are a few big companies that dominate the market: Booking.com, Airbnb, Expedia etc.

Our advice is to make the most of this massive opportunity – list your properties on as many of the big websites as possible. It will increase visibility.

45% of the bookings that come through these big channels are from international guests (who typically spend more money). You would struggle to reach that audience on your own.

Use the big channels to get initial bookings, then you can really look after your guests when they arrive, and encourage them to book direct when they return.

Decorative graphic element at the bottom left corner consisting of overlapping blue and black geometric shapes.

That's where your online booking system comes in.

You don't have to worry about double bookings. **Choose a booking system that has a built-in channel manager.** This means it act likes a hub – so you can take bookings on your own website, on Booking.com and VisitScotland (AS WELL AS continuing to take them over the phone or in person) – but your booking system will synch with all these booking channels, so availability will always be current and up-to-date.

A good property management system also helps keep things simple – auto emails, payment reminders, directions and important information, review requests etc.

From your guests' point of view, giving them the option to book online makes it really easy for them to check availability and prices.

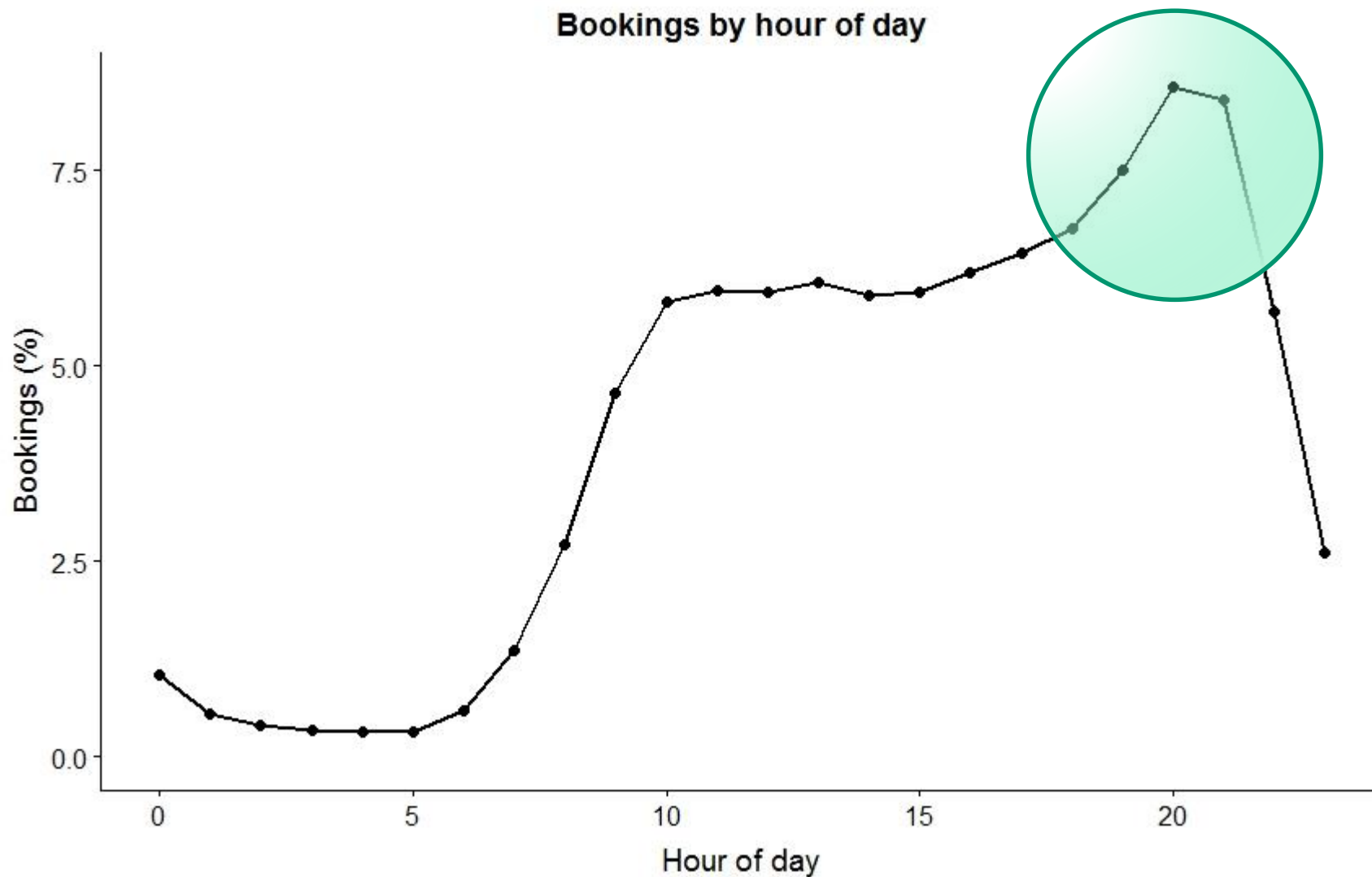
It's all about convenience – most of us live life in such a hurry we want to get things we want or need at a time that suits us.



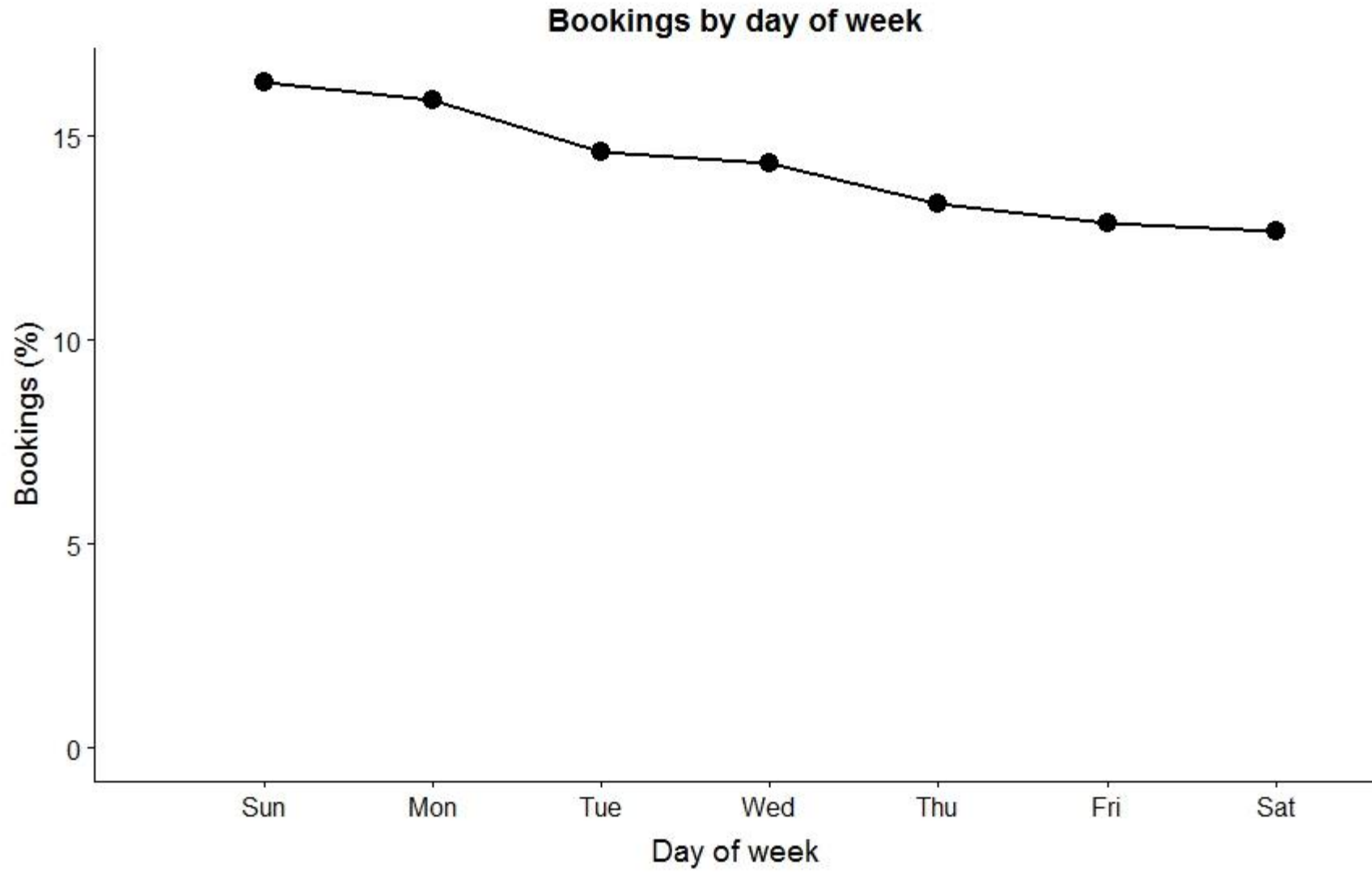
An example of a booking system embedded into the top right of an accommodation website.

Most bookings are made in the evening – do you want to be available on the phone then?

In 2018, 17% of the bookings our clients received came in between 8pm-10pm and 40% between 6pm and midnight.



Similarly, most bookings are made on a Sunday.



Summary of benefits of an online booking system:

1. It will save you time. One of our clients told us they spent 80% less time processing each booking. This frees your time to concentrate on other areas of your business.
2. It will make you money because it removes a massive booking barrier – 81% of holidays were booked online last year. Making that process as simple as possible gets your guests' journey off to the very best start.
3. You stay in control. You set your own prices, start days, length of stay, and you can be flexible. e.g. you might choose to only enable short stays or certain start days during the quieter months, or if you have a cancellation or late availability.

And your clients will benefit too:

Increased booking efficiency means timely messages are sent to guests, which improves the service you provide and makes them feel valued.

Guest management tools in the booking system allow you to provide the very best guest experience from when they search for availability, through to getting feedback after they leave, then staying in touch. So they are more likely to return – remember, direct repeat bookings are *the* most cost effective.

There are also great upselling opportunities – helping you to maximise the value of every single booking (e.g. hampers, chef service, spa treatments, flowers and champagne ...)

Next steps.

- Do your research: look for specialist booking systems in e.g. self-catering, B&Bs, hotels, glampsites.
- How much does it cost? Check what the price includes, make sure there are no hidden costs. SuperControl does not charge commission, there is a one-off set-up fee of £200 then an annual licence fee - £370 for up to 3 properties.
- What payment providers and booking channels do they integrate with?
- How do they synchronise with booking channels? The best systems update prices, availability and property details two-way and instantly. You want a full API integration.
- (A basic iCal basically just blocks the dates and there can be a time delay, so more risk of double booking. This is one-way integration)
- Try it – you shouldn't be under any obligation to buy, and you will get to see what is in an account, how it works and get a feel for the help provided.

Presentation 4:

Business and Financial Planning

John King, Business Gateway Dumfries & Galloway

<https://www.bgateway.com/local-offices/dumfries-and-galloway>

john.king@dumgal.gov.uk



Business & Financial Planning

Business Gateway

- Free impartial advice
- 1:1 Advice on starting and growing your business
- Workshops
- Social Media
 - www.bgateway.com
 - www.facebook.com/businessgatewaydumfries

Business & Financial Planning

- Making Tax Digital
 - Accountancy Software
 - Card Machines
 - Business Plans
 - Loans
- 

Making Tax Digital

- Making Tax Digital is a key part of the government's plans to make it easier for individuals and businesses to get their tax right and keep on top of their affairs.
 - more effective
 - more efficient
 - easier for taxpayers to get their tax right
- **VAT-registered businesses with a taxable turnover above the VAT threshold** are required to use the Making Tax Digital service to keep records digitally and use software to submit their VAT returns **from 1 April 2019**.
- Making Tax Digital will not be mandated for taxes other than VAT until at least April 2020.

Making Tax Digital

- VAT tax returns will now be submitted using HMRC approved software
- 133 providers available now with more in the pipeline



Making Tax Digital

What do I need to do next?

- If you use an accountant or bookkeeper, check they have compatible software.
- If you use accounting software, check that it is compatible.
- **If you do your own VAT but don't use accounting software, then you will need to buy some compatible software.**
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/making-tax-digital/overview-of-making-tax-digital>

Accounting Software

Get control of your finances

- Web based and free mobile App
 - Connect to bank account
 - Bookkeeping / Payroll
 - Tax / VAT online returns
 - National Insurance
 - Create quotes, invoices and receipts
 - Snap (photograph) and sort receipts
 - Mileage tracking
 - No need for an accountant?
 - £15-30 per month
- 

Card Machines

New Generation



- Connects to a smartphone
- Reader £20
- Chip and pin and contactless
- No monthly fee
- Approx. 1.75% fee
- Print or text a receipt



The Business Plan

What does it do?

- Clarify your business idea
 - Spot potential problems
 - Set out your goals
 - Identify your market
 - Measure your progress
 - Present your idea for financing
- 

The Business Plan

What or Who is it for?

- To organise your thoughts
- To help secure funding
 - Banks
 - Grants
 - Lenders
 - Investors
 - Customers

Business Planning Process



Loans

Generally banks offer the best rates

- Credit check and business plan check
 - Sector by sector approach
 - Lending restrictions
 - Packages combining public and private finance
- 

Public Funded Loans

DSL Business Finance Ltd - <https://www.dsl-businessfinance.co.uk/>

- Loans up to £50,000 available to enterprises based in Scotland
- Face to face pre- and post-loan support provided
- Low cost microfinance options with a competitive interest rate
- Tailor made solutions for individual businesses

Business Loan Scotland for larger loans <https://www.bls.scot/>

- Funding up to a maximum of £100k to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) where public sector funding would not exceed 50% of the total funding package.

For more information

Contact John King on john.king@dumgal.gov.uk

- Arrange a drop-in appointment at the Galloway Glens office in Castle Douglas on a Wednesday morning.
 - Discuss your business plans by phone.
 - Support offered to all businesses, no matter how large or small!
- 

- For more details, see www.gallowayglens.org
- Contact Helen Keron, Education and Community Engagement Officer, Galloway Glens.
- Helen.keron@dumgal.gov.uk
- 07827 306 866

All information correct at February 2019.