



Scotland's brand story

A consistent story

This document is designed to help you tell a consistent story about Scotland.

It sets out:

- Why telling a unified story is beneficial.
- How Scotland's brand story was developed.
- The unifying story of Scotland we want to tell.
- Tips for finding and telling your own stories of Scotland, in a way that's authentic for you.





1

Why telling a unified story is beneficial

Challenger brand

In a world competing hard for talent, tourism and investment, Scotland is a challenger brand.

While we have many strengths, we know success rarely comes from using strong proof points alone.

When challenger brands break through and succeed, it is usually from creating emotional connections. Successful challengers stand out by offering something unique that resonates with people on a deeper level.

And that's where stories come in.



Collective stories

Storytelling isn't new to Scotland – we celebrate it every year with 'The Scottish International Storytelling Festival'. It's at the heart of Scottish culture.

Stories have a unique ability to build memorable emotional connections whereas facts and mission statements risk being forgotten. Stories weave a connection between the present and the past, and help to form and inform our identity.

The more we tell an authentic, distinctive, consistent story about modern Scotland, the more we will connect emotionally with our audiences, welcoming them into our culture.



2

The story behind
the story



Good storytelling starts with good listening

Scotland's story needs to be one that people recognise as rooted in truth and feel proud to support – as well as having distinct appeal for our international audiences. We listened to a variety of perspectives to understand what makes Scotland special including:

- People who were born here and those who chose to move here.
- People in other countries who didn't know us well, and Scottish diaspora who do.
- Business and consumer audiences.
- A wide range of partners and stakeholder across different sectors through hosted workshops and consultations.



The unifying theme we heard

Some people follow their head and some follow their heart. In Scotland, we have always had a spirited determination to follow both. To be a place where groundbreaking ideas meet the warm embrace of tradition.

To celebrate progress and kindness in equal measure.

From the invention of the first working television to the creation of the world's first ethical hacking degree.

From the world's largest floating windfarm to sustainable tourism protecting our unique natural environment.

A combination of head, heart and spirit makes us who we are, and helps us turn ideas into actions.

Head, Heart & Spirit



A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a modern building's facade. The building features a prominent grid of windows and a series of white, angular architectural elements that create a jagged, zig-zag pattern against a clear blue sky. The perspective is from below, looking up at the structure.

3

Introducing Scotland's
brand story



Our unified Brand Story.

What makes Scotland, Scotland.

Head

Innovation and creativity are in our DNA. We put our many talents and diverse backgrounds together to improve lives with progressive thinking. From the discovery of penicillin to world renowned advancements in Space, we are always pioneering better ways of doing things.

Heart

Our warm-hearted generosity is legendary, whether we are welcoming just one person or the whole world. Our belief in fairness, kindness, and inclusion runs deep. We cherish our natural landscape and resources, acting today to protect them for future generations.

Spirit

Our Scottish spirit is how we respond to challenges and opportunities. It gives us the courage to turn ideas into actions and the determination to find a way, even when the path is not easy.

A large white offshore wind turbine stands in the dark blue sea under a vast, blue sky with wispy white clouds. The turbine's tower is yellow at the base. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Head, Heart & Spirit
make good things happen

The logo for Scotland, featuring a stylized white thistle.

SCOTLAND



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How you can tell
Scotland's brand
story yourself

How to spot great 'Head, Heart, Spirit' stories



Brand Scotland does not create or invent new stories about Scotland. We find the amazing ones that already exist and bring them to life.

The great news is, there are 'Head, Heart, Spirit' stories all around us. We just need to tune ourselves in to recognising the patterns and themes. When choosing people or projects to feature in Brand Scotland activity, a good question to ask is: "who's mixing bold ideas, compassionate heart, and courageous determination – in interesting, inspiring ways?"

It could be The Macallan auctioning a rare whisky for a quarter of a million dollars with the profits going to arts charities. It could be the story of Bikes for Refugees Scotland. It could be Cyacomb, an Edinburgh Napier University spin-out business using innovative technology to reduce harmful content online and bring criminals to justice. It could be a social media influencer meeting the people behind the best new food trucks in Scotland. It could be LVRA (pictured) pushing the boundaries of electronic music blending traditional Chinese instruments and R&B vocals to create her own cross-cultural sound.

The next page provides an example of a 'Head, Heart, Spirit' story to help inspire you.



Inver Restaurant

Innovation, community spirit, and determination are at the heart of Inver restaurant, owned by Chef Pam Brunton and her partner Rob Latimer. In their own words, 'it takes a village to raise your dinner'.

After travelling and cooking around the world, the couple returned to Scotland. Inspired by the land and the opportunity to create something truly meaningful, Pam took a break from cheffing and completed a master's degree in food culture policy and sustainability.

In spring 2015, with their friends and family, Pam and Rob launched something that was very personal, that celebrated meaningful connections – with family, friends and the local community.

The green Michelin star restaurant has received huge acclaim for blending avant-garde culinary concepts with deep respect for local ingredients and sustainable sourcing. Inver reflects a spirited commitment to people and place, redefining Scottish dining with creativity and purpose.

Explore more 'Head, Heart, Spirit' stories in Section 7.





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Tell your story using
a quest structure

Scotland: A country on a quest

Many academics say there are only seven basic narrative plots in all storytelling. These frameworks are used repeatedly, but populated by different settings, characters and conflicts, from Rags to Riches (Cinderella), Tragedy (Romeo and Juliet) and The Quest (Lord of the Rings).

Naturally, there are Scottish stories that reflect many of the seven common patterns. But when we listened to people describe Scotland's stories, the story pattern they used most often was the quest. By reinforcing this story pattern, we can build an emotional connection with Scotland.

Quest stories take many forms, but they tend to follow the same underlying pattern, where someone has an ambitious goal, and embarks on a challenging journey to make their goal a reality.



A quest story usually has four main parts:

1. The moment /event that triggered the quest.
2. The inspiring quest goal.
3. The challenging journey and collaborators (requiring head, heart and spirit).
4. Making good things happen.

You can use the pattern of a 'quest' when telling your story. An effective way to get started finding your own quest story is to work through two key questions:



1. What did you set out to achieve?

2. Why you/Scotland?

This can help bring a quest story flavour to whatever you're doing - whether that's a vox-pop video, speech, or influencer collaboration. And remember, you don't need to use the actual word "quest"! It's fine to use if you're quoting someone talking about their personal experiences and feelings, but you want to avoid sounding like a Star Wars trailer!



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How to tell the
story in a way that's
authentic for you

Choosing your words

You don't need a head-section, heart-section, and a spirit-section in everything you do. And you don't have to use those exact words. (Things will quickly become too rigid and repetitive if we are all doing this).

The following pages contain tips for how you can develop and tell your quest story and use 'Head, Heart, Spirit' as themes. But these are not strict rules. They are about freeing you up to avoid clichés and tell the brand story using words that feel authentic to you and right for your audience. Whether you're planning an event, working with an influencer, choosing a soundtrack, or promoting a new tech start-up.



'Head' language

Avoid this

Using too many 'big' words in proximity as this can dilute their impact.

This includes 'big' words like:

- **Pioneering**
- **Ground-breaking**
- **Disruptive**
- **Dynamic**
- **Redefining**
- **Revolutionising**

If what you're doing is starting to sound like a boomy-voiced car advert, there are probably too many big words.

Try this

Choose one of those big words and focus on bringing it to life with tangible examples.

Think about more down-to-earth ways of talking about Scottish ideas and thinking, which can be more meaningful, e.g.

- **What no one had thought of before**
- **Rethink**
- **Reimagine**
- **Thought about in a completely different way**
- **Discovered**
- **Uncovered**
- **Turned on its head**
- **Changed the way we think about...**
- **Came at it from a different perspective**
- **Experiment**
- **Challenge the conventional idea**
- **Combine expertise in...**
- **Bring different talents together**
- **Took the unconventional approach**



'Heart' language

Avoid this

Talking about our warm, welcoming qualities in the same way every other country talks about those things – try and give it a Scottish twist.

Words and phrases in danger of sounding a bit clichéd include:

- **Life and soul of the party**
- **From the bottom of our heart**
- **For generations to come**

Try this

Thinking about words and feelings that are more real, relatable, and paint a picture of something distinctive to Scottish people. For example:

- **Strike up a conversation**
- **Caring**
- **Compassionate**
- **Generous**
- **Unforgettable welcome**
- **Big-hearted**
- **Listen to our conscience**
- **Warmly inclusive**
- **Community**
- **Belief in fairness**
- **Wellbeing**
- **Brilliant host**
- **Protect**
- **Love**
- **Connection with nature**
- **Deep responsibility**



'Spirit' language

Avoid this

Feeling you need to put your finger on it!

It's OK for the Scottish spirit to be a somewhat indefinable, magical, 'secret ingredient' in terms of making us, us.

Try this

Focusing on spirit qualities:

- **Courage, determination, tenacity, guts**
- **Sticking with it**
- **Not giving up**
- **Standing up for the 'little guy'**
- **Saying what needs to be said**
- **Joining forces**

It can also include:

- **Lively energy**
- **Passionate support**
- **Generosity of spirit**
- Our spirit can also be qualities like:
- **Self-deprecating humour**
- **Being hugely proud but not boastful**



Making good things happen language

Avoid this

Assuming the outcome always has to be “worthy”.
A Fintech company making a hugely profitable breakthrough will have all sorts of positive ripple effects.

Try this

Looking for stories involving progress, action and change (rather than just promises and commitments).

Remember that a challenging quest often changes the way we feel about ourselves, our goals, and what’s important, and this tends to be more interesting than someone getting exactly what they wanted.

- **The real reward was...**
- **Paving the way for...**
- **Shown it’s possible to...**
- **Changed the way we...**
- **A positive ripple effect on...**
- **Seeing the difference it makes**
- **Knowing this has...**
- **Worth it when she saw...**
- **Inspired them to go a stage further**



Brand Scotland campaigns

Occasionally distilling the brand story into a clear, external-facing line can add impact. For example, in core Brand Scotland campaign films, we use:

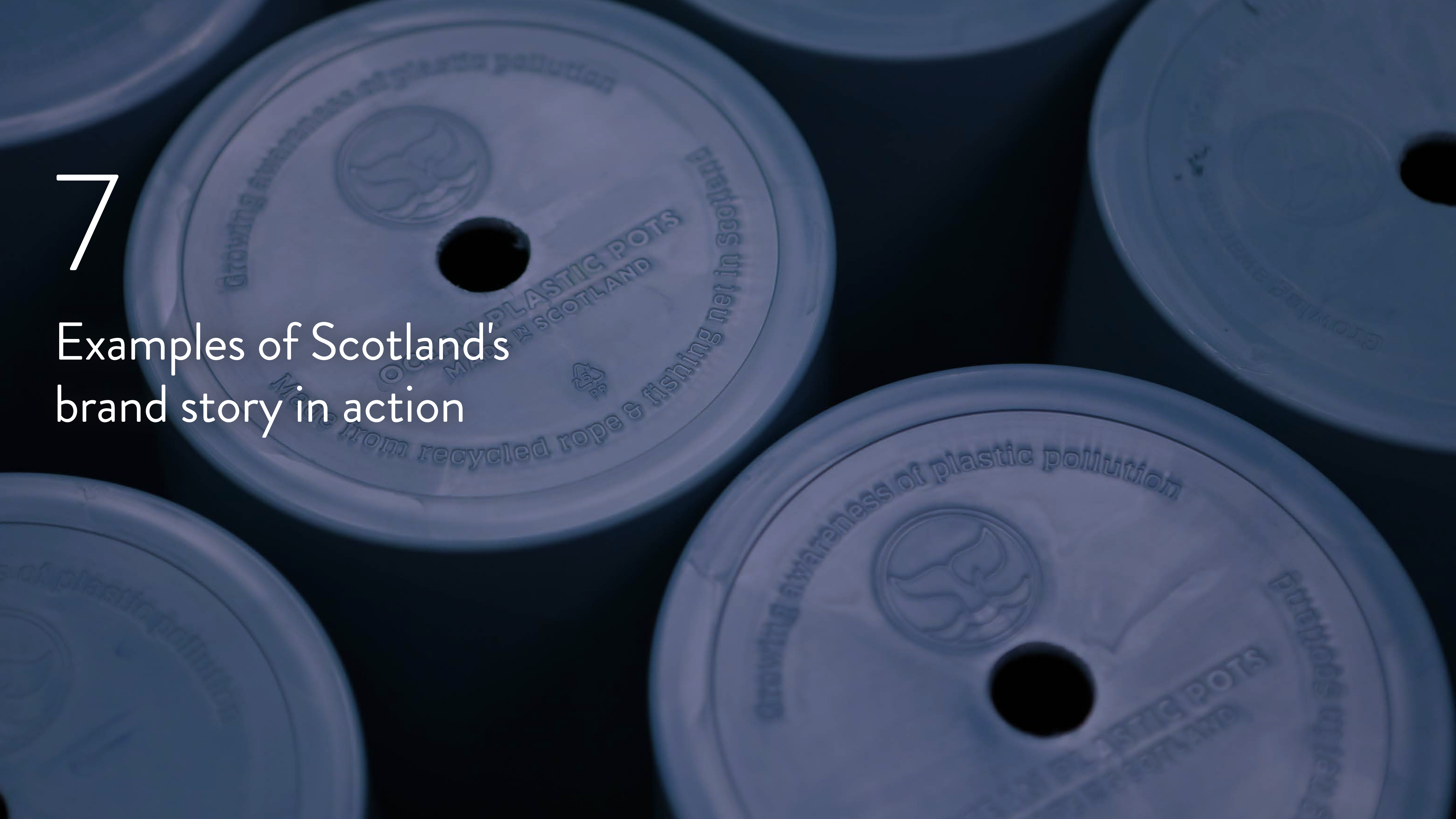
Scotland.
For the head, heart and the spirit.

In an era where actions speak louder than words, we recognise that showing real-life examples or embodying key qualities is usually more powerful than relying on slogans. However, we do incorporate this line as a wrap-up in longer pieces, as it reinforces meaning and adds substance to our content.



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Examples of Scotland's
brand story in action



Ocean Plastic Pots

In 2019 a sperm whale washed up on Luskentyre Beach in the Outer Hebrides with 100kg of rope, fishing net and plastic debris inside it. Three months later, commercial diver Ally Mitchell was called to salvage shredded plastic waste from a wrecked cargo ship just 20km from the same beach. That job inspired him to take on a new mission, making a positive difference to the environment by tackling ocean-bound plastic.

From his shed in Glasgow, Ally began a journey to develop a way of turning ocean plastic into durable plant pots. As a commercial diver, Ally had to teach himself basic manufacturing techniques from scratch, using plastic that he had picked off the beach. He also started to work with discarded ropes and fishing nets, shredding and moulding the nets by hand.

After six months of trial and error, and what Ally refers to as “failing badly”, he had a breakthrough and made a plant pot from 100% waste plastic.





Today Ocean Plastic Pots are manufactured in Scotland on a commercial scale using 100% rope and fishing nets collected in Scotland. The colours of the pots reflect the rope and net recycled to make them.

They recycle waste from a big beach cleaning project every year. To date, Ally and his team have recycled 25 tonnes of rope and fishing net from Scotland. In 2023 they recycled rope and net from six Scottish Islands including Skye, Coll, Muck, Rum, Eigg and Canna in a first-of-its-kind project.

Ocean Plastic Pots have won multiple awards and featured in design museums. But for Ally the real goal is to inspire the next generation to combine their own bold ideas, love of the Scottish environment and gutsy determination, to make a positive difference in the world.

How this draws on the brand story

The quest trigger

Ally's experience of the whale and cargo ship spur him into changing his purpose in life.

The inspiring quest goal

Ally is determined to find a way of turning waste rope and net into something useful, and recyclable as part of a circular economy.

The journey and its collaborators (involving head, heart and spirit)

As a diver by trade, Ally has to go on a daunting journey of trial and error, teaching himself the design and manufacturing skills he needs – but remains committed to his goal.

Making good things happen

Ocean Plastic pots have received many accolades, but Ally hopes they will have a bigger role, inspiring the next generation to make their own positive difference to our environment.

Street Soccer Scotland

In 2003, while sleeping rough, David Duke saw an advert for the Homeless World Cup. Four years later he led Scotland to Homeless World Cup victory. His experience kick-started a lifelong journey to use the power of football to inspire more people to change their lives.

After a difficult childhood, David lacked formal qualifications. But his passionate determination to make a difference earned the confidence of a social enterprise fund for start-up businesses who gave him a £3,000 grant to set up Street Soccer Scotland.

He explains: “The Homeless World Cup was great for the players who went there. But, actually, the build-up to it was probably even more valuable, because it gave me purpose. I’d find role models in the coaches and teammates. When you’re living in hostels, it can become easy to get into negative routines. It gave me some positive direction. Street Soccer was always about scaling that impact. If it worked for me, how can it work for more people? The idea was to have somewhere people can go every day where they can be part of a team and access support.”

Today, more than 22,500 players have benefitted from Street Soccer programmes. But it hasn’t been an easy journey.





Street Soccer Scotland aims to help people with a range of issues such as homelessness, poor mental health and addiction. In the early years, renting spaces for clubs and services made it hard to give people the level of support they needed to come through complex situations.

But in 2021 they opened a permanent base, enabling the players to access not just fitness and mental health improvement, but help with housing, drug and alcohol problems, and help creating bank accounts which many formerly homeless players didn't have access to. A dedicated women's programme and London offshoot have also expanded the support they provide.

And while Team Scotland have won the Homeless World Cup twice, (which is twice more than Scotland's official national teams), for CEO David Duke, it's the small wins that mean the most.

“When we ask our players what better looks like, what moving on looks like it's often the simple things like love, and relationships, being part of something and self-worth, so my vision and my hope for the players, is to find that.”

How this draws on the brand story

The quest trigger

Realising the positive personal impact of being involved in the Homeless World Cup.

The inspiring quest goal

Harnessing the power of football to bring positive change to more people's lives.

The journey and its collaborators (involving head, heart and spirit)

Overcoming challenges, and maintaining the original open, caring, respectful ethos with all players.

Making good things happen

Success defined by positive outcomes for the players.

Black Scottish Adventurers

When COVID-19 restrictions eased, Joshua Adeyemi and his brother Enoch discovered many friends were eager to try their passion for hiking in Scotland's wild places. But many, having moved to Scotland to study or work, didn't know where to begin.

"I had been connecting with wild spaces for a long time and it benefited me significantly, but I noticed a lack of representation," explains Joshua. "There are loads of ethnic minorities coming to Scotland, and we've gotten an influx of interest in hiking from the African and Caribbean communities. So, in April 2022, it was time to officially brand Black Scottish Adventurers."

The community-led group encourages ethnic minorities to connect with wild spaces. Most members are first-generation immigrants wanting to explore their new home and find a support network.

"Our access rights here in Scotland are world-class, but many ethnic minorities aren't aware of that. We love showing what Scotland has to offer them."

For Joshua, the goal wasn't to emulate existing hiking groups but to create new experiences with a "good vibe" of its own. Group adventures include music, dancing, and shared meals, proving there's more than one way to enjoy nature responsibly.





With adventures soon attracting 60 to 100 people, the experience hasn't always been positive, with some white walkers 'politely' reminding them not to leave litter – something that has always been at the heart of the group's ethos.

Undaunted, Joshua and Enoch have used these reactions as an opportunity to connect with staff at Scotland's National Parks, and play an active role in supporting their goal of making Scotland's incredible wild spaces accessible and welcoming to everyone.

Today, Black Scottish Adventurers has over 300 members and thousands of followers across its social media platforms.

And while it was initially set up to support the Black community it is open to everyone looking for a fun, supportive way to explore the joys of hiking, swimming, paddleboarding and kayaking.

“My aim is to inspire other people,” says Joshua. “So, especially in Scotland, you can look at it like, if this guy all the way from Lagos, Nigeria, can do this, then what's stopping me from doing that?”

“I could be trying to hike up all the Munros in Scotland” Joshua reflects, “but I don't care about that. I care more about the lives I'm impacting, because if we go together, we're empowering more people and lifting ourselves up together.”

How this draws on the brand story

The quest trigger

After COVID-19, more and more friends were interested in coming with them to try exploring Scotland's amazing natural spaces – prompting them to form a group.

The inspiring quest goal

Their goal is to help more people enjoy and benefit from time in nature while respecting and protecting the places they visit.

The journey and its collaborators (involving head, heart and spirit)

It was important to create a different type of group experience, and this created some challenges, which the brothers and their growing community turned into opportunities.

Making good things happen

The brothers could be pursuing their own new hiking and mountaineering goals but find satisfaction in helping other people take their first steps.

Scottish Ballet

As ‘dance for Parkinson’s Disease’ projects took off across the world, around a decade ago, Scottish Ballet wondered why there were no equivalent projects supporting people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

MS is a complex neurological condition which affects the central nervous system, making it difficult for the brain to send signals to the rest of the body. It’s particularly relevant in Scotland, which (like other so-called ‘Viking nations’) has a comparatively high rate of MS, particularly in island communities.

Realising little had been done anywhere in the world, Scottish Ballet became determined to make a journey into the unknown – exploring if and how dance could improve the health and wellbeing of people with MS.

With no map to follow, their journey involved collaborating with health professionals and academics, drawing on Scottish Ballet’s experience of dance-for-health projects, and developing a pioneering pilot project to deliver Scottish Ballet dance classes on the Orkney islands.





Through consultations, pilots and evaluation, Scottish Ballet finally discovered its own model and best practice.

Scottish Ballet Elevate[®] is now a thriving dance programme that aims to support the physical, mental and social wellbeing of people living with Multiple Sclerosis. As one Elevate participant said:

“It’s completely changed the way I live with MS. When I dance, I feel free. I’m free of judgements, I’m free of obligation, I’m free of responsibilities and it gives me the chance to be me.”

And Scottish Ballet’s journey didn’t stop there. Building on the positive impact of projects like Elevate[®], in 2023 they launched the National Centre for Dance Health – enabling them to reach more communities in Scotland and beyond through classes, health resources, online programmes and research studies.

Scottish Ballet’s mission is to inspire on stage and beyond, and with the National Centre for Dance Health they are inspiring health and creative communities around the world.

How this draws on the brand story

The quest trigger

The Scottish Ballet team see the good work being done around Parkinson’s and are prompted to wonder why there’s no equivalent for people with Multiple Sclerosis.

The inspiring quest goal

Realising there’s very little work being done on this, they become determined to explore the potential themselves.

The journey and its collaborators (involving head, heart and spirit)

With nothing similar to draw-on, they combine health professionals and academics, their own creativity, and the experience of people living with MS.

Making good things happen

The Elevate[®] programme is a success, but Scottish Ballet see an opportunity to extend their journey and create more benefits than they had imagined at the start of their journey.

Smart Green Shipping

From Polynesian voyaging canoes to the Golden Hind, the wind has been transporting and powering ships across the globe for centuries. Smart Green Shipping, are a Scottish startup using wind power to decarbonise the shipping industry.

In 2012, as her concern about climate change grew, Di Gilpin had a brainwave. With her experience in yacht and motor racing, she wondered if this racing mindset could help tackle the huge challenges within the shipping industry.

The shipping industry accounts for around 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Di realised that if the shipping industry could harness wind power, it would provide an immediate step towards the decarbonisation of the industry.

Her bold idea was to retrofit ships with wind power technology, enabling them to harness the power of the wind when conditions allowed, saving fuel and reducing emissions.

To realise her vision, Di brought together an extraordinary team of technologists, academics, entrepreneurs, yacht racing engineers and shipping and wind specialists – including one of the few people in the world with a PhD in optimised sailing routes to cut emissions from international shipping.





The emotional toll of developing and funding such a bold idea has been huge, but Di's formidable resilience has kept her going.

Since COP 26 in Glasgow, in 2021, Di and her team of collaborators and investors have designed, created and produced the first FastRig – a lightweight, data-driven, wing-sail solution designed to be easily retrofitted to existing commercial vessels with deck space - bulkers and tankers. It's designed and manufactured in the UK from 100% recyclable materials.

In March 2024, land-based testing began on the prototype FastRig, installed on the Firth of Clyde in Scotland, with on-ship trials planned for later in the year.

With a proud heritage in shipbuilding, it's fitting that Scotland is now home to the future of green shipping. Di explains "Seeing this 20m test and demonstration FastRig raised for the first time represents the culmination of a lot of hard work across the entire shipping ecosystem, and I couldn't be prouder of the whole 'Winds of Change' community who have supported us on our journey. But this is just the beginning: we're developing larger FastRigs, integrated weather routing software and frictionless wind-as-a-service offerings for our customers."

How this draws on the brand story

A quest trigger

As concern about climate change increases, Di realised her experience in yacht and motor racing could play a part in the solution.

The inspiring quest goal

Di has a bold vision for how 21st century sail technology can help ships harness wind energy, reducing fuel use and emissions.

The journey and its collaborators (involving head, heart and spirit)

The journey brings together a remarkable team of collaborators, from different areas of expertise, and stacks of determination.

Making good things happen

The technology is being tested on land, and there's excitement for the benefits it will bring in the future.

We hope this has helped to inspire you to share your own versions of Scotland's brand story.

For more inspiration on spotting and telling quest stories, where head, heart and spirit make good things happen, visit:



www.Scotland.org
www.scotland.cn

