

# Case study 24 - website, podcast and app

## Using: Whereverly Ltd, Bespoken Media, social media, website, podcasts

### Scotland Starts Here

The organisation behind Scotland Starts Here is the Midlothian & Borders Tourism Action Group (MBTAG), an initiative set up by Midlothian Tourism Forum and Scottish Borders Tourism Partnership back in 2017.

MBTAG has been funded by Scottish Enterprise Tourism Development Fund, Blueprint, LEADER and private sector investment as well as support in kind.

Initially, MBTAG was a 2-year project to maximise and drive the tourism potential in the destination on the back of the Borders Railway opening in 2015. To capitalise on the new developments and ultimately spread the impact as wide as possible, the project focused on the entire region and supported businesses to be tourism ready through a range of activities, events, training and providing essential tools.

Through the enormous successes of this 'Phase 1', a second phase was created, which began in January 2019 and is ongoing as of June 2020. While MBTAG until then represented the B2B side, the group was to then take on consumer marketing under the separate brand and slogan 'Scotland Starts Here'.

- Resulting digital development for Phase 1: Scotland Starts Here App
- Resulting digital developments for Phase 2: Corresponding Scotland Starts Here website, podcast, marketing assets, and social media channels

## Podcasts

[Home](#) | [Podcasts](#)

Let the sound and voices of Scotland take you on an adventure, wherever you are. Our podcasts are packed full of authentic local stories from Midlothian and the Borders – you'll never hear them anywhere else!



**Food and Drink**

Farm to fork experiences and taste sensations start here. Whether it's a trip out in the pristine Berwickshire Marine Reserve to reel in your own fresh fish supper, an evening of exquisite locally-sourced fine dining, or a tour of old and brand-spanking new distilleries and breweries, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders... [Read More](#)



**Art and Textiles**

Heritage, culture and high fashion start here. Follow in the footsteps of celebrated fashion designers to the Scottish Borders and Midlothian, and discover why it's a global centre of textile manufacture and high fashion. You might not arrive on Concorde like Vivienne Westwood and Donna Karan used to, but you... [Read More](#)



**Active and Outdoors**

Adventure starts here. The Scottish Borders and Midlothian are essential destinations for anyone who loves the great outdoors. Whether it's the peaks, glens and reservoirs of the Pentland Hills, or the world-renowned Tweed Valley trails – that are perfect for exploring, on foot, horse, or mountain bike. There are rivers... [Read More](#)



**History, Heritage and the Border Reivers**

History starts here. Episode 1 of Scotland Starts Here takes us back to the days of the wild and bloodthirsty Border Reivers, to William Wallace, and Mary, Queen of Scots. We'll whisk you away on a tour of hidden towers, majestic monuments and battle sites. You'll discover why the famous... [Read More](#)



## App - Scotland Starts Here

One of the main projects in Phase 1 had already seen concise actions taken towards these goals, laying the groundwork for the next phase. Following workshops, research, as well as innovation labs with local businesses and national partners it had become clear that a digital product would be key to overcoming challenges within the destinations.

After considering options including augmented / virtual reality and more, a tourism app was identified as the best solution and saw broad support. This app would combine interactive maps, itineraries suited for cycling, walking, driving and exploring by public transport, while also allowing users to create their own by browsing the destination offer. It needed to benefit and represent the whole destination.

Additionally, the app needed to bring our destination's uniqueness alive through songs, stories, myths, and legends, in order to encourage visitors to stop in Midlothian & The Scottish Borders. With connectivity not a given in parts of the region, it also needed to work on and off-grid. And with a breadth of business, sights and experiences available, it needed to bring our culture, history, heritage, food & drink, experiences and outdoors alive. Indeed, it would be no small feat to create this app.

Developers Whereverly Ltd drew on their industry experience in developing the Scotland Starts Here app, ensuring usability for users planning a trip and businesses listing their offer. The app is free to use and free to be listed on. Businesses receive access to the backend of the app to update and modify their entry, and the MBTAG team is on hand to add new business members, offer support, and troubleshoot where needed.

At its centre, the app design utilises an interactive map with filtering system for interests ranging from accommodation to visitor attractions. Tours and routes add to this easy options for planning days out, while events listings provide further incentives to travel to the region. Audio channels with tours from major attractions, local musicians and Midlothian and Borders storytellers add a unique flavour.

Further key features include: accessibility filters, inclusion of Google navigation by public transport, driving and walking, Book Now button, favouriting and build-your-own route, photo journal feature (Beta), near you now function, search function, full reporting and analytics.

**Available to download:**

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/whereverly.mbttag.android>

<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/scotland-starts-here/>

**Development time:** 7 months from conception to launch

**Estimated cost:** £50,000



## Website

To build on the success of the app, MBTAG then developed the Scotland Starts Here website. Until that point, there had not been a destination website for Midlothian and the Scottish Borders, adding to the invisibility of the region. But with businesses ready and eager to attract new audiences, it was clear that a robust digital strategy would hold the key to further success.

Under the title of Scotland Starts Here, new brand assets and a launch campaign for the region were created. For the first time, MBTAG communicated to consumers that this region offered unmissable Scottish experiences. And the destination website would be the first step in Phase 2 to put Midlothian and the Scottish Borders on the map.

The site and accompanying branding were designed by marketing and digital agency The Union, and the website then created by Whereverly Ltd. Ongoing management and new content development lies with MBTAG.

Four key pillars were identified for categorising products and develop storytelling on the site, all under the banner of 'Scotland Starts Here': History & Heritage, Behind Closed Doors, Food & Drink, and Outdoors & Activities.

The website was created to inspire visitors to come to the destination. With this in mind, the digital marketing strategy, assets and digital activities developed together with The Union included include podcasts, eBooks, social media campaigns and blog posts.

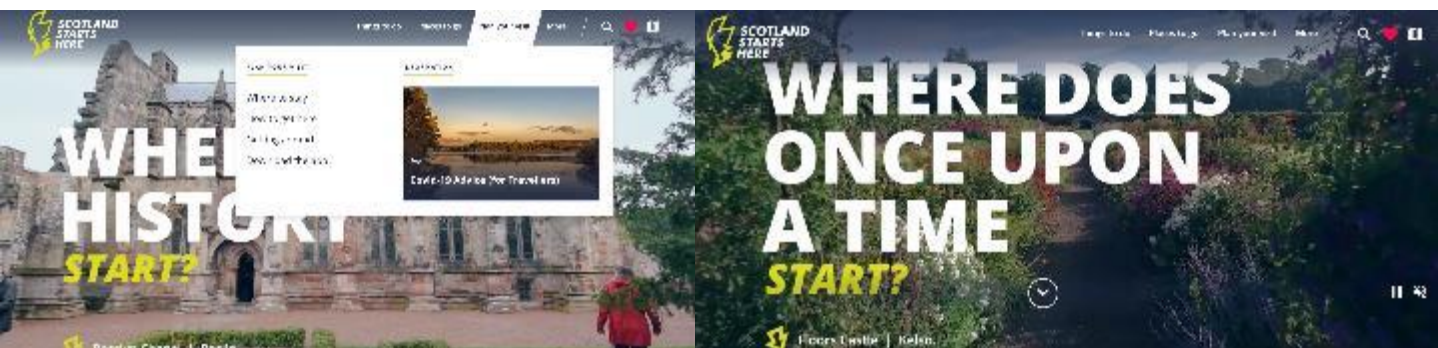
In terms of functionality, the website utilises the MyWhereverly platform, drawing listings from the main database to the app and the website. The interactive map from the app was replicated and extended for the best possible user experience on desktop, tablet and mobile.

### Key Features:

- Utilises Whereverly API, all listings from app available on website and vice versa
- Points of interest categorised by four major themes, with additional search functions
- Stories section: podcasts, eBooks and blog provide inspiration
- Favouriting

**Development time:** 4 months from conception to launch

**Estimated cost:** £20,000 including design and wireframes



## Podcast

To support the new Scotland Starts Here Campaign and Website, four podcast episodes were created. Each episode tells the story of the destination to potential visitors, framed by four themes.

It was imperative to add assets to our marketing campaign that would enable us to tell real, authentic stories. Podcasts are one of the most successful medium for connecting with audiences aged 25 to 35, and a staggering 1 in 8 listens to podcasts each week. With 7 million people in the UK alone tuning in every week, the community-building potential of podcasts cannot be denied. Listeners identify with the stories, places and presenters, a perfect opportunity to bring Midlothian and the Borders to life through storytelling.

MBTAG and The Union worked with BBC journalist Dave Howard from Bespoken Media to produce four 30-minute podcasts about different elements of the region: Food and Drink, Active and Outdoor Activities, Art and Textiles, History and Heritage. This gave us an opportunity to dive further into the intriguing stories of the destination and bring these to life in a different way.

Dave went out to meet business owners, guides, artisans and artists who shared their personal experiences and stories. Recording in location meant each feature would be authentic, taking in the sounds of the region. Engaging and inspirational were the words on everybody's minds, with further information on each person supplied in the episode. Banter was encouraged; and a distinctly local and fun feel was the result!

**Development time:** 3 months from conception to launch

**Estimated cost:** £4,000

## Social Media Platforms and Campaigns

As part of MBTAG's consumer facing marketing activities, it was crucial to establish Scotland Starts here on major social networks and present potential visitors an opportunity to connect with the destination. The chosen channels are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, with daily updates providing an inspirational and engaging mix of UGC (user generated content), promotional assets, as well as podcasts, eBooks and new blog post promotion.

Based on the strong communities of many tourist destinations, building rapport and a personal connection with target groups was seen as crucial from the beginning.

### **Key Stats:**

- Launch campaigns reached almost 2 million people, resulting in a 600% increase in followers in 4 weeks
- Social channels continue to see high levels of engagement, consistently outperforming previous months

**Development time:** 2 months from conception to launch

**Estimated cost:** £12,000 including design and wireframes, and initial paid-for social media marketing campaign

