

Austen Morley

Age: 24
Location: Aberdeenshire
<https://www.slaintemhathevents.com/>

 @auz_morley



Image: Rural Youth Project

Main Challenges



Infrastructure



Connectivity

Rural Youth Project Involvement

Austen attended the 2019

Ideas Festival

“It has been inspiring. The networking has been invaluable – just knowing that there is a community out there. I recently just came back from London, so I was very much in an urban bubble and when you get out to the rural places again you forget that there are so many other people out there. So, it is all about people connecting and find the medium that will get you connected as well.”

Background

Austen has recently returned to rural Aberdeenshire after living in London.

After months of grafting, Austen is set to launch the family business Slainte Mhath – a mobile pop up coffee and cocktail bar, providing high quality barista style coffee by day and locally crafted alcoholic beverages by night. He will run this from a regular pitch in Aberdeenshire, as well take it to weddings, public events, shows, and festivals. It will also be available for public hire. This is the first of its kind in the area. Although heavily delayed due to the Covid 19 lockdown restrictions, Austen is ready and eager to begin as soon as this is possible.

Austen has a creative outlook and an enterprising, can-do attitude. Drawing heavily on his urban experiences, he is reimagining what rural can look like, whilst celebrating the abundance of existing local producers in the area.

“The goal is to bring barista style coffee from the cities - where everyone has cravings for their caffeine, latte art and fancy drinks - into a rural area where that can be shared, but also tapping into the wealth of crafted alcoholic beverages that the North East has to offer.”

Austen is passionate about providing a platform to champion the provenance of the fantastic local food and drinks producers in Aberdeenshire. With very few businesses of this nature in the area, Austen believes many local producers are not necessarily getting the attention they deserve.

“There are so many gin distilleries and whisky distilleries and obviously crafted beer as well which I want to showcase and promote because there is so much to offer, and the North East doesn't always get the headlines. I think it is about time that we get more enterprises that can get that to the public.”



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Background

This is no ordinary coffee van but a beautifully restored 1981 Citroën HY van, freshly sprayed with ‘ocean blue’ finish and newly fitted with an antique brass and tan leather interior.

The aim is “to provide a classic, vintage looking aesthetic without set-up complications; the van will be fully modernised underneath and pulls its very own silent generator and trailer”. Slainte Mhath will not only look the part but will also bring cutting edge hospitality to rural areas where this is often inaccessible.

However, getting this business off the ground is no easy feat. Austen must be pioneering in his approach as Aberdeenshire is relatively embryonic in its tourism and hospitality sector. Austen is starting from scratch to establish relationships with local suppliers and producers who are not necessarily used to working with small businesses of this nature.

Nonetheless, Austen is unperturbed, and his solutions focussed attitude drives him to join the dots; not just to ensure his own business thrives but also to elevate the producers he partner with and ultimately to raise the profile of the area.

“There is an awful lot to offer here. You might think that there’s not going to be the footfall available but there is a surprising amount that goes on in Aberdeenshire – you’ve just got to find a way of knowing about it.”

Austen is confident that there is a clear market for his business, however like many rural businesses, he is encountering the issue of connectivity and how best to access to his target audience. By making best use of social media platforms of Instagram and Facebook, he can direct people towards his website.

However, he recognises that, perhaps more so than urban areas; “a lot of it comes through word of mouth”, so it will be a case of forging strong partnerships over time.

Solutions

1. Use your experience from elsewhere. Do not be afraid to bring urban ideas to rural areas.
2. Connect with others: provide a platform to celebrate local provenance. Bringing up those around you will not only forge stronger connections but through shared reach will likely build a stronger business and bring more to the area generally.

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