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Abstract: This research explores the community role in the regeneration of social places for local tourism promotion in Scotland. We focus on the regeneration of railway stations by drawing on a recent example of community engagement called 'Adopt a Station.' We use ethnographic research and highlight six key themes: roots, commitment, gateway, heritage, aesthetics and benefits. Many studies on tourism planning reach pessimistic conclusions with regards to the capabilities of local residents to make valid and worthwhile contributions to the tourism process. In contrast we highlight the potential for co-creation when the community are offered opportunities for involvement in a place meaning creation process.

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Kathy Hamilton is a senior lecturer in the Department of Marketing, University of Strathclyde, UK. Her research tends to fall within the area of Consumer Culture Theory. Key projects have focused on consumer disadvantage, poverty and the role of community in contemporary culture. Kathy is interested in interdisciplinary research and her work has been published in a variety of journals including Journal of Marketing Management, Sociology and European Journal of Marketing.

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ORGANIC COMMUNITY TOURISM: A Cocreated Approach

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Abstract

This research explores the community role in the regeneration of social places for local tourism promotion in Scotland. We focus on the regeneration of railway stations by drawing on a recent example of community engagement called 'Adopt a Station.' We use ethnographic research and highlight six key themes: roots, commitment, gateway, heritage, aesthetics and benefits. Many studies on tourism planning reach pessimistic conclusions with regards to the capabilities of local residents to make valid and worthwhile contributions to the tourism process. In contrast we highlight the potential for co-creation when the community are offered opportunities for involvement in a place meaning creation process.

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Highlights

- We explore the local community role in regenerating social places.
- We introduce six themes which relate to community activities and benefits.
- Cocreation allows locals to recapture and represent the essence of the community.
- A sense of ownership and empowerment facilitates a place meaning creation process.
- There is evidence that benefits from involvement can ripple out into other areas.

ORGANIC COMMUNITY TOURISM: A Cocreated Approach

INTRODUCTION

“I just like seeing the pleasure on people’s faces when they see the finished work, I mean most of the work that I do would be during the evening and at weekends when the booking office at Mallaig Station is not open. So at the same time as I am doing the gardening I can answer people’s queries about train timetables or where the public toilets are, where to eat, any of these things, so you become a public information system whilst you are gardening at the same time” (Sonia, Mallaig and Arisaig).

The aim of this paper is to explore the community role in the regeneration of social places for local tourism promotion in Scotland. We focus on the regeneration of railway stations by drawing on a recent example of community engagement called ‘Adopt a Station.’ The development of the rail network played an important role in the growth of tourism in the Scottish Highlands (Butler, 1985). As well as facilitating access, the railway is also viewed as a central part of the tourist experience itself, for example, the West Highland Line has been voted the best railway journey in the world for the last three consecutive years by Wanderlust travel magazine. The impact of railways also has broader benefits in terms of ensuring social inclusion for local communities and offering an alternative to congested roads (Dallen, 2007). The Beeching report ‘*The Reshaping of British Railways*’ had a dramatic impact of the role of railways in our lives. It resulted in the closure of approximately one third of the UK rail network between 1963 and 1972 (J. Simmons & Biddle, 1997). However, recent years have witnessed a rebirth with the rise of the Community Rail movement in England and Wales where some local and branch lines are specified as community routes, facilitated by the association of community rail partnerships (ACORP, 2012) who serve as ‘an organisation of ‘do-ers’, focused on practical initiatives which add up to a better more sustainable local railway’ (ACORP, 2012). ACORP’s community stations initiative serves to better link the community to the railway; support rural communities and market towns; revitalise stations with non-railway activities and enable community groups to offer a wide range of social benefits to their communities (Miles, 2012). ScotRail’s (who hold the rail franchise within Scotland) ‘Adopt A Station’ scheme has its roots in this movement. We demonstrate how, through participation in Adopt a Station the local community can co-create services that

1 enhance the tourist experience. This is important because Duffield and Long (1981) argue
2 that development of tourism in Scotland needs to align with local values and stem from local
3 initiatives.
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5 6 7 *Community Tourism* 8

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10 In recent decades, community-based approaches to tourism have gained increased attention
11 (Lepp, 2007). Murphy's (1985) book *Tourism: A Community Approach* moved community
12 based tourism initiatives to the centre of tourism planning and sought to establish the
13 community as a key focus of decision making and approval for tourism planners. Murphy
14 (1985, pp. 96-97) suggests
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17 the [tourism] product and image that intermediaries package and sell is a destination
18 experience and as such creates an industry that is highly dependent on the goodwill and
19 cooperation of host communities. It is the citizen who must live with the cumulative
20 outcome of such developments and needs to have greater input into how his community
21 is packaged and sold as a tourist product.
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24 As a result the knowledge, capabilities and insight of local stakeholders are seen as key in
25 collaboration with tourism planners (Bramwell & Broom, 1989). Jamal and Getz (1995, p.
26 188) define stakeholder collaboration as "a process of joint decisionmaking among
27 autonomous, key stakeholders of an interorganizational, community tourism domain to
28 resolve planning problems of the domain and/or to manage issues related to the planning and
29 development of the domain." However the lack of support from locals towards tourism
30 development and collaboration is also noted within the extant literature (Harrill, 2004).
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33 One of Murphy's (1985, p. 151) goals was to create more of a shared vision of the
34 community and, by 'focussing on the community's heritage and culture in the development of
35 the tourism product,' tourism initiatives could retain distinctiveness. Within a democratic
36 world, public participation in tourism planning may be viewed as a right (D. G. Simmons,
37 1994). Jamal and Getz (1995, p. 194) argue that community participation should be "dynamic
38 and active" to allow for adjustments in line with changing economic, social and
39 environmental community perceptions. This approach supports local communities in
40 becoming the subjects rather than the objects of development, and in turn increases feelings
41 of empowerment (Mitchell & Reid, 2001). There are many benefits to a decentralised
42 approach to tourism planning including a sense of ownership, feelings of responsibility and
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1 practical involvement (Simpson, 2008). Globalisation and increased competition has led to a
2 greater need for cooperation and collaboration to ensure sustainable tourism development
3 (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Mutual benefits should create positive economic impacts as well as
4 increased satisfaction for residents (Mitchell & Reid, 2001) and, as such, it remains the
5 responsibility of tourism practitioners and policy makers to “continually strive to raise the
6 level of awareness of tourism’s potential for communities and thereby to contribute to raising
7 standards of tourism practice” (Simpson, 2008, p. 13).
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10 Although this rhetoric may appear promising, many researchers appear less than convinced
11 about its practical application. For example, Simmons(1994, p. 106) acknowledges that
12 community-based approaches to tourism planning should focus on skill development and the
13 empowerment of local people, but nevertheless reaches a rather patronising conclusion that
14 “the public’s knowledge of tourism appears, at best, to be barely adequate to instill
15 confidence in the soundness of their contributions.” The literature also reveals potential
16 issues of conflict between a community’s awareness and ability to engage despite their
17 willingness to do so (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005; Campbell, 1999). Research on
18 collaboration reveals problematic aspects to community participation in tourism planning. In
19 a study of collaboration in local tourism policymaking in England’s Peak District National
20 Park, Bramwell and Sharman (1999) highlight problems including lack of consensus, unequal
21 power relations and a lack of consultation with local residents. Simpson (2008, p. 3) suggests
22 that problems can occur where communities are subject to “external pressures, issues of
23 governance and structure, conflicting stakeholder agendas, jealousies and internal power
24 struggles, and the growth of artificial hierarchies and elites may occur, diminishing or
25 undermining potential benefits to the community”. Taylor (1995, p. 488) suggests that the
26 ‘friendly community’ is ‘attractive to all kinds of inward investment but for the tourist
27 destination it is the stuff of advertising hyperbole’. Furthermore, local tourism initiatives are
28 often viewed with suspicion, where benefits are realised by the few. A shared vision for the
29 community is therefore seen as romanticised (Taylor, 1995, p. 488). Problems also occur in
30 development where community views are secondary to those of the planning organisation.
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33 There is also the potential that those involved in collaboration will be from the business
34 sector, thereby creating a bias towards economic factors (Aas, et al., 2005). Campbell (1999,
35 p. 549) suggests that tourism initiatives ‘will not originate in the community and individual
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entrepreneurs, both local and foreign, will drive tourism development'. Tosun (2006) presents a typology of community participation which ranges from Spontaneous (bottom up, authentic community planned and led tourism), to Induced (Top-down, passive, formal, indirect, tokenistic, shared benefits) to Coercive (top down, formal, limited choice, manipulative). In a study of local destinations in Turkey Tosun (2006, p. 503) concludes that the desired form of community participation was induced and suggests tourism agencies clearly wish to retain the power over local communities. The risk is that the need for profit may result in social and environmental community objectives being overlooked. Discussing tourism in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Duffield and Long (1981, p. 422) suggest that "the workings of the market" may accelerate the decline of "community cohesiveness and community-based social interaction." Cohen (1993, p. 74) suggests that community approaches may simply result in the removal of any distinctiveness and replace with a stereotype where 'internal variety disappears or coalesces into a simple statement'. Analysis of the literature reveals various techniques which have been used to involve the local community in tourism planning such as surveys and focus groups (D. G. Simmons, 1994; Simpson, 2008; Tosun, 2006) and consultation, working groups and information dissemination (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Tosun, 2006). Such approaches tend to be formally planned and executed and are essentially 'top-down' methods (Campbell, 1999; Simpson, 2008) and as Tosun (2006) observes have the potential to be tokenistic. These approaches and the problems above, stemming from both community actors and the wider business sector illustrates the need for local community involvement beyond the established business boundaries so that tourism can be integrated into a broader and more complete range of community objectives. In this way, local forces can prevent market forces from eradicating community culture and heritage (Teo & Yeoh, 1997). Our research reveals an alternative, more organic, approach to local community involvement and one where the community's distinctive features can be retained. We now provide detail of the Adopt a Station scheme as the context for our study.

ADOPT A STATION AND ORGANIC COMMUNITY TOURISM

The scheme is a partnership between ScotRail and groups invited to 'adopt' local railway stations. The scheme allows community members to utilize unused space within the station free of charge to provide a range of uses or facility improvements that benefit the community.

1 Membership of the scheme is straightforward, adopters are required to complete a simple
2 application form and agree to health and safety regulations. Since its launch in 2005, 128
3 stations (out of a total of 343) have been adopted. Adoptions take place across the whole of
4 the railway network in Scotland with both rural and urban areas represented. The scheme has
5 seen success in the form of bookshops, model railway clubs, community meeting rooms, art
6 galleries, charity shops, toy libraries alongside small businesses and, most commonly,
7 extensive gardening activity (ScotRail, 2012). Both the company and the adopters have a role
8 to play. The company provides redundant spaces, free of charge, and also funds gardening
9 expenses associated with the adoption. Adopters pay overheads, provide their time and are
10 responsible for any interior design costs involved in the restoration and customisation of the
11 building, something which often involves seeking funding from alternative sources. The
12 existence of vacant rooms is key to the success of the scheme and relates closely to some of
13 the themes in our research. Many of the stations feature listed, historical buildings built in the
14 Victorian era which Butler (1985) identifies as the key growth period for railways in
15 Scotland. These would have featured 1st, 2nd and 3rd class waiting rooms and ladies waiting
16 rooms and in the contemporary era many of these rooms are vacant and, as such ripe for
17 regeneration. The regeneration of buildings that have lost their original purpose is a common
18 theme in heritage tourism, for example, Meethan (1996) found evidence of this strategy in his
19 exploration of the regeneration of the city of York, UK. In contrast to Meethan, adoptions
20 take place within a still functioning station.

21 Adopt a Station is therefore an example of co-creation, a concept which encapsulates the
22 changing role of the consumer from a passive recipient of services to a proactive cocreator in
23 the activities of an organisation (Chan, Yim, & Lam, 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).
24 In cocreation consumers are viewed as a resource (Lengnick-Hall, Claycomb, & Inks, 2000;
25 Schau, Muñoz Jr, & Arnould, 2009) with firms increasing collaboration to create benefits for
26 both parties. Cocreation activity can offer improved predictability and quality in the exchange
27 for the firm (Evans, Stan, & Murray, 2008) and feelings of self-efficacy, enjoyment and
28 psychological benefits for consumers (Dong, Evans, & Zou, 2008). Zwick et al. (2008, p.
29 166) suggest that “the co-creation economy is about experimenting with new possibilities for
30 value creation that are based on the expropriation of free cultural, technological, social, and
31 affective labour of the consumer masses.” Previous work has acknowledged the role that

1 tourists play in cocreating the tourism experience (Goulding & Shankar, 2011) and the
2 relevance of cocreation for tourism, and the need for empirical research is highlighted by
3 Shaw, Bailey and Williams (2011). Our context demonstrates that local residents can also
4 make worthwhile contributions to the provision and promotion of tourism in their
5 communities by cocreating the value proposition of the firm.
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10 *Study Methods*

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12 In keeping with standard ethnographic practice, we employed multiple methods of data
13 collection. Initial access to the scheme was achieved through the External Relations Manager
14 of ScotRail who proved to be a vital contact for the project and this individual (referred to
15 throughout the paper as John Y) was an invaluable source of background information,
16 artefacts and gaining access.
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24 Data were collected within a 2.5 year period. To gain insight into the scheme and its
25 contextual background the research team followed the Odyssey tradition (Wallendorf, et al.,
26 1987) and embarked on a rail tour of selected adopted stations in Scotland as an initial
27 scoping exercise and immersion process. This helped us to make connections with adopters
28 that would be followed up during the main data collection period.
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34 For the main data gathering, we identified a number of categories to classify adoption
35 projects. These included gardening, arts and heritage, hospitality, education, rotary groups,
36 community councils and individual adopters. We wanted to ensure that our sample reflected
37 the full diversity of activities included within the scheme and we conducted in depth research
38 at a total of 19 stations across Scotland which included the West Highland Line and the North
39 East Coast line as well as the Central Belt and South West Lines (see figure 1 for the
40 geographical dispersal of stations and table 1 for detailed information on the nature of
41 adoptions).
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1 We recorded data through extensive field notes, photographic evidence (taken by the
2 researchers and provided by our participants), video capture of the station visits (which
3 included video ‘shorts’ with participants) and a combination of audio recorded and
4 electronically captured interviews. Data gathering was enhanced by large-scale collection of
5 artefacts including specialist books, press articles, radio programmes, flyers, leaflets and
6 pamphlets, organisational reports, group newsletters, and adopter group meeting information.
7 Participant observation included attendance at various events and exhibitions, including
8 Annual adopters lunches, press launch, model railway exhibition, and a trip on the famous
9 Jacobite steam train (as seen in the Harry Potter films).

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12 Each station visit followed a similar pattern. On arrival at the station the adopters would give
13 us a tour of the station with a particular focus on their activities (e.g. a renovated heritage
14 centre at Cupar, Pupil artwork at Barrhead, a community allotment project at Wemyss Bay
15 and even a hanging basket watering system at Mallaig). Following these guided tours in-
16 depth interviews were held, sometimes these took place within the station or at an alternative
17 location recommended by the participants. Interviews were a combination of individual and
18 group depending on the nature of the adoption. The researchers were overwhelmed by the
19 enthusiasm and welcome of the respondents and their willingness to participate, at one station
20 the researchers were met by a welcoming committee of 12 people, other groups provided
21 hospitality and others have continued to stay in contact sending updates of adoption activities.
22 Visits to stations lasted from 1.5 hours to a 2 night stay in a railway carriage bunkhouse at
23 Glenfinnan.

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26 After the station visits were concluded a supplementary data gathering exercise was
27 undertaken using an email interview approach and this yielded a further 23 responses. We
28 also conducted interviews with other relevant stakeholders including with First ScotRail staff,
29 the Chief Executive of the Railway Heritage Trust and representatives of passenger focus
30 (rail passenger watchdog). In total, 40 adopters participated in the in-depth audio-recorded
31 interviews and informal conversations with held with more than 60 others. A rich body of
32 evidence has been collected throughout the project. This includes 321 pages of interview
33 transcriptions, 6 hours of video and 886 photos, alongside comprehensive field notes,
34 archival material and information obtained from websites maintained by adoption groups.

During the course of our project, we had regular meetings and discussions of emergent themes. Following the completion of data collection, both researchers had a period of intense immersion in the data. An initial set of codes was created by each researcher independently and these were then compared, filtered and refined using NVivo 9 to finalise the codes, including place transformation, place attachment, nostalgia, challenges, heritage, motivation, and ownership. A sample of respondent quotes and attached codes were shown to colleagues for validity purposes. We then followed a hermeneutic approach to interpretation. Data relating to each station was interpreted initially to gain a comprehensive overview of each station. These were then compared and common patterns identified. The main findings of this research suggest that through involvement in Adopt a Station, community members play a role in the promotion of their local areas through their everyday activities at the railway station. This provides a contrast to other more formally structured approaches to public participation in tourism planning and implementation. We demonstrate this by discussing six key themes: *roots, commitment, gateway, aesthetics, heritage and benefits*.

Roots

The roots theme relates to the background of the adoptions and the motivations of those involved (figure 2 shows a range of adoption projects). The format of the 128 station adoption projects is extremely varied as depicted in table 1. The External Relations Manager at First ScotRail, who is responsible for the successful running of the scheme, suggests that adoption is an effective means of making the stations unique and providing the local community with the opportunity to take ownership of this important place within the town/village. Although there are some constraints related to health and safety and standardised colour schemes on the building exteriors for corporate branding purposes, he noted that:

“railways always aim to deliver a consistent product this function is potentially a bit dull, by buying into [the stations] we are making them look a bit different and everywhere is a bit different because we are not saying, sorry, you can only have purple flowers, we are inviting people to inspire and explore in their own way” (John Y).

This flexibility is one of the key attractions of the scheme and reflected in the range of activities that adopters engage in. In many stations, gardening forms part of the adoption. Sometimes this is carried out by an individual, for example, the adopter at Whitecraigs station

requested to treat the station as an extension of his own garden. Other gardening is undertaken by groups, for example some “In Bloom” groups become involved in the station adoption as a continuation of other floral activity throughout the town.

There is a distinction between adopters motivated by commercial and community interests (or a combination). For many, involvement with Adopt a Station voluntary and viewed as simply good citizenship, as one adopter put it “*I care about the community.*” For others, Adopt a Station provides the opportunity to access premises at a nominal rate. For example, Kirsty at Ladybank suggests:

“It means that I get it more or less rate free....so I am going to have a lovely place to work and it will just be heating, insurance and stuff, but that is a good thing. I could not do it if I had to rent it all.”

From the company perspective, the provision of rent free space is justified as “*if it’s lived in, it’s loved*” and otherwise it would be “*a no-man’s land.*” Also for the firm they are subject to a monthly quality control audit as part of the franchise arrangement and fined annually according to performance. John Y notes that:

“Last year we were fined £780,000, the year before £950,000 so in terms of things which are purely within our gift to control, SQUIRE [Service Quality Inspection Regime] is probably the biggest one. A SQUIRE inspector coming along to a station that’s functional and unkempt will mark it down. If he or she comes along and the sun is shining and everyone’s happy and there’s some flowers or the buildings are in use, they might think hey this is not a bad place, I’ll move on¹. ”

Many of the station adoptions have a very obvious role in promoting tourism. Some adoptions involve bunkhouse accommodation, either in converted disused railway carriages or in the station building itself. Others have dining cars and tea-rooms, particularly prominent on the West Highland Line which is regarded as one of the key Scottish destinations for tourists. In another station, the charity bookshop is regarded as a “*minor tourist destination*” while others have opened heritage centres and art galleries. Several adoptions include more than one of these activities and can involve a range of community groups and/or local businesses:

“We have on our Committee a very good mix of residents and business people and I think that is the key to it all, you must have a good balance otherwise you can be seen

¹ In the 3 years the project has been running fines have reduced from £938,959 in 2009 to less than £500k in 2011. In the same period station adoptions have increased from around 85 to 128

1 *to be totally commercial and working for the businesses and not working for the local*
2 *residents.*"(Sally, Pitlochry)

3 This involvement from a range of different stakeholders overcomes the potential bias towards
4 economic factors (Aas, et al., 2005) and means that involvement in Adopt a Station can be
5 related to broadening community tourism objectives.
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9 Many adopters, both volunteers and businesses, attribute their involvement in Adopt a Station
10 to the enthusiasm and support shown by the external relations manager at ScotRail. The
11 process of adoption is kept simple with limited layers of bureaucracy. Overall the scheme
12 demonstrates the potential for local tourism promotion to emerge organically and according
13 to the needs of the local community without complex planning and management procedures.
14 Scheme involvement, however, requires considerable commitment from adopters and this is
15 discussed in the next section.
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23 *Commitment*

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27 The commitment of station adopters was very evident and manifested in the time they
28 devoted to station activities alone. Within volunteer groups, some members will devote
29 several hours per week, while for others it is a much greater time commitment. For example,
30 one adopter who is responsible for 6 stations dedicates significant time to gardening
31 activities: *"I spend between 1 and 3 days a week, leaving home at 8.30am and returning*
32 *about 8.30pm."* Another quite simply stated *"it's my life."*
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40 As noted above, some researchers question community capabilities and the effectiveness of
41 community contributions to tourism planning (Aas, et al., 2005; Campbell, 1999; D. G.
42 Simmons, 1994). Evidence from this study suggests otherwise and shows Adopters with a
43 range of resources and expertise to draw on. These range from gardening knowledge and
44 community leadership skills to heritage management and generating funding applications to
45 supporting future development plans at the station:
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51 *"People in the community wonder why I do it sometimes because it is a battle with the*
52 *weather but if you are a gardener then you carry on doing it. If you are a painter you*
53 *carry on doing it, if you are a chef and you do a bad recipe you try again, so resilience*
54 *is the answer I suppose.....So as long as it gives people pleasure and I can still do it,*
55 *then I carry on doing it. So that is that."* (Sonia, Mallaig and Arisaig)
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1 At Glenfinnan the adoption couple run the station as a tourism initiative with the added
2 benefit of being a railway station as well. The station has a museum and two railway
3 carriages which act as a bunkhouse and tearoom. The couple secured a significant funding
4 package to further develop the station to include educational facilities and refurbish the
5 station itself (see figure 3).
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10 *“Oh the funding for our station, oh gosh, well that is a big funding package that I have*
11 *worked on for probably five years to put together, so I suppose that is my voluntary*
12 *input because I know how to get funding, I can argue our case in writing. So, we have*
13 *managed to put together a funding package of over £450k” (Hege, Glenfinnan)*
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16 The passion and enthusiasm of community members is evident from the above interview
17 extracts. There is strong evidence of place attachment here which in its most simple terms is
18 “the bonding of people to places” (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 2). Much place attachment theory
19 highlights the emotional and affective nature of bonds between individuals and specific
20 places (e.g. (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Milligan, 1998)). The station adoptions certainly
21 demonstrate this with comments such as *“those of us who use the station, love it”* and *“I*
22 *could not stand seeing the stations going into decline.”* The adopters might be described as
23 “local heroes” (Cutcher, 2010, p. 79) where their civic-minded response to the regeneration
24 of a focal point in their communities creates an “ethical surplus” (Arvidsson, 2005, p. 241).
25 The next section introduces a key role recognised by adopters which views the station as a
26 community gateway.
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38 *Gateway*

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41 Many adopters considered the railway station to be the focal point of their town/village. They
42 recognised the station’s role as a gateway or threshold that provides one of the main
43 entrances to the community (see figure 4 for images of community gateways). A common
44 theme was therefore ensuring that tourists (and local residents) arrive at a welcoming station.
45 John Y and Sally (responsible for gardening and floral displays at Pitlochry station) describe
46 the importance of this initial impression:
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53 *Okay, to showcase the community for people passing by or people visiting for the first*
54 *time, that they have a sense of welcome. Because I think that impressions are formed of*
55 *places by chance means, some places have bad reputations which will be associated*
56 *with myths or long damaged industries and whatever, others it may be just a first*
57 *impression that seals their fate if you like. (John Y)*
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1 *I do think that it has got a very well cared for feel about it and that tends to make*
2 *people feel quite safe and secure...I think people do feel quite confident walking about*
3 *here, you know, it is clean, it is tidy, and you would perhaps assume if the place looks*
4 *well cared for that the tourists will be well cared for too. (Sally, Pitlochry)*

5 This supports Jutla's (2000) study of Simla in Northern India, where the railway station
6 played an important role in creating a memorable image for tourists arriving by train as this
7 was their first contact with the city. Adopt a Station highlights the need to involve local
8 people in creating this initial image of the community. Through their involvement stations
9 become "flags of identity" (2005) that reflect core community values:
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11 *I think it is about the community and having a say in what its local gateway looks like.*
12 *It is about owning that, it is about taking control, it is about putting something back, it*
13 *is about community spirit involving folks and being able to project a little of the*
14 *community into the station because the look of it would be very different if people from*
15 *another place came...The community creates its own personality around the station*
16 *and that is wonderful because it gives people a nice soft landing and as soon as they*
17 *get off the train you can see them breathing out because you can see that somebody*
18 *cares. If this is the first thing they see then how much better is everything else going to*
19 *be. (James, Passenger Focus)*
20

21 As well as providing a good impression to tourists stopping at the station, adopters also
22 believe that a welcoming and attractive station can generate increased tourism by
23 encouraging a (return) visit from those who are passing through.
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25 Within the UK rail network some stations, particularly in rural areas have few or no
26 employees working at the station. This de-manning, often due to re-signalling schemes, was
27 described negatively; as one adopter commented "*the place basically died.*" In other stations
28 staffing hours are limited so the presence of adopters offers additional benefits. This is
29 reflected in the opening interview extract to the paper when the adopter describes herself as a
30 "*public information system*". Similarly, other adopters are often asked for details on the
31 "*story of the line*" or "*quirky*" facts about the surrounding area.
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33 The adoption of Stonehaven station provides an interesting example of the role of the station
34 as a gateway to tourist activities. There are a series of posters at the station displaying
35 information for tourists on the activities that are offered in the town along with associated
36 dates. As a result the adopters believe that the station is an "*adjunct to the tourist office in the*
37 *centre of the town.*"
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1 For some of the gardening adopters, care of the station is part of a broader enterprise as many
2 are involved in national competitions such as Beautiful Scotland or Beautiful Britain. For
3 these adopters the gateway role of the station extends beyond welcoming tourists to
4 welcoming judges:
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8 *They don't always come by train, but the last two times when we have been in Beautiful*
9 *Britain they have come here and this time they arrived at 4pm and they were*
10 *gobsmacked you could say because they thought that this was the most beautiful station*
11 *they had ever seen. They were taken to the hotel along the road but they came out at*
12 *night to come back to the station to have a look at it. (Liz, Uddingston)*
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15 Winning such awards are regarded as a further means of marketing the town/village to
16 tourists and serve to legitimise the activities of adopters. The appearance of a cared for station
17 along with adopters' physical presence at the station was seen as central and contributing to a
18 welcoming spatial narrative, described in the following section.
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23 *Aesthetics*

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27 The activities of the adopters have contributed to the transformation and regeneration of the
28 stations. The language used to describe the station pre-adoption was littered with negativity;
29 *"it was an embarrassment," "unloved and uncared for," "dismal," "uninviting," "horrible*
30 *place," "awful," and "terrible."* In contrast the stations are now seen as places to be proud of;
31 they are *"more cheerful," "colourful,"* and transformed with *"the brightness and beauty of the*
32 *flowers."* This is aptly summarised by Nancy at Wemyss Bay who suggests that adoption has
33 *"restored life and interest to areas of the station which had been in darkness for several*
34 *years."* Adopters have their effort rewarded with feedback and compliments from visitors and
35 local residents and in many stations, adopters gain pleasure when they see tourists taking
36 photographs of the floral displays and buildings (see figure 5). This reinforces the importance
37 of visual image in creating a sense of civic pride for residents (Jutla, 2000).
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49 While undoubtedly the floral displays are prominent in the discussion of aesthetics, the
50 regeneration of the station buildings themselves also contribute to aesthetic appeal. To
51 illustrate, the adoption of two stations is based on the opening of art galleries in disused
52 station buildings. One of the artist-adopters described a *"shift in energy"* at the station since
53 the gallery opening and both described the significant effort that was involved in the
54 transformation from redundant space to art gallery:
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1 *It is a great source of entertainment in a way that people keep coming in. I have had*
2 *loads of visitors wanting to look round...I certainly get a lot of feedback that they like*
3 *to see the place looking good because the windows were all rotten and rubbish, and*
4 *you could see that the building was tatty, although that is not my responsibility, but just*
5 *having it freshened, cleaned and occupied and the fact that it is going to have a gallery*
6 *is quite nice too (Kirsty, Ladybank)*
7

8 Importantly, this energy shift occurring at the station extends to other areas of the towns; a
9
10 phenomenon described the following quotes:

11
12 *It is like ripples on a pond, you know, if one person tidies up their patch then*
13 *immediately the bit on either side looks a bit scruffy so if you do one good project it is*
14 *amazing how it ripples out into the community and everybody will think, hmm, maybe I*
15 *could do something like that..... in the beginning it was all done by us and now*
16 *everybody takes a part, individual businesses look stunning, residents' gardens are*
17 *beautiful.....it is the kind of knock-on effect in the community (Sally, Pitlochry).*
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19

20 *You are working towards a whole, you are working towards a bonny town and a bonny*
21 *station and all the rest of it and you get to the stage where you are pretty fanatical, our*
22 *wee group are pretty fanatical about things, they will challenge anybody that makes a*
23 *mess, you know, and we have got the town thinking our way as well (Alan,*
24 *Stonehaven).*
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27 Alongside contributing to the community as a gateway and through aesthetic, transformative
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29 benefits adopters also viewed adoptions as opportunities to represent the heritage of their
30
31 community.

32 *Heritage*

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37 The chief executive of the Railway Heritage Trust recognises that the Adopt a Station scheme
38
39 plays an important role in the preservation and regeneration of railway buildings to make
40
41 them fit for modern uses:

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43 *It tends to be the older stations that have the surplus rooms [they] tend to be bigger*
44 *stations and obviously older stations tend to be listed. So, my interest is in Listed*
45 *stations and the fact that the second of the Trust's two objectives is to find a new use*
46 *for redundant property, or redundant Listed structures and buildings, ties in very*
47 *closely with what First ScotRail are doing with Adopt a Station (Andy S)*
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50 As illustrated throughout this paper, the adopters' efforts to make the sites sustainable are
51
52 varied and include cafes, art galleries and bunkhouses. Some of the station adoption projects
53
54 also have links to heritage, for example several adopters have opened heritage centres, one
55
56 group has created a mural at the station that depicts a key moment in the town's history, and
57
58 another has hosted a heritage-themed painting exhibition (see figure 6). Others place
59
60 emphasis on preserving the history of the station itself by recreating the way it used to look:
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1 *The station used to be famous for its potted plants and hanging baskets, all the old*
2 *photographs showed the station in the days when there were lots of staff and men who*
3 *had time on their hands and were keen gardeners did it. There was a greenhouse on*
4 *the station concourse at one time and several of the station houses had greenhouses*
5 *attached to them. (Nancy, Wemyss Bay)*

6
7 Current efforts at Wemyss Bay station aim to replicate and revitalise the appearance of the
8 station. There are also visual displays in plant material to commemorate historical moments
9 that are important to the local area. The adopters believe there are high levels of attachment
10 to the station because of its position beside the ferry terminal connecting to the Isle of Bute.
11 People “*from far and wide have fond memories*” of childhood holidays and associate the
12 station with “*escape,*” “*pleasure and excitement.*” This suggests that the survival of stations is
13 not only important in terms of preserving listed buildings, but also from more personal
14 perspectives. Some stations have links to the visitors’ personal heritage, reinforcing Poria,
15 Butler and Airey (2003) who recognise the importance of emotion for heritage tourism.
16 Drawing on Urry (1990), they argue that some visitors come to “feel” rather than to “gaze.”
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27 Adopt a Station provides an effective example of the role of the local community in historical
28 preservation. The opening of a heritage centre at Cupar station offers an interesting
29 illustration of how involvement can extend from adopters to the entire community:
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33 *Like most small heritage centres it will be open as many hours as we can manage but*
34 *principally weekends, summer evenings, that kind of thing, so it will enable us to show*
35 *artefacts and photographs. We have got numerous photographs and artefacts already*
36 *and obviously it will help us to collect more, we hope, from the people that come in and*
37 *remember that there are things in their family and whatever and hopefully that will*
38 *strengthen the things that we have got, or already holding as collectors. But, far more*
39 *than collectors as well we hope that it will develop the connection of Cupar Heritage*
40 *with other projects in the town. (Cupar Heritage)*
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44 This reinforces the work of others (Aas, et al., 2005; Nuryanti, 1996) who have noted the
45 custodian role played by the community in terms of heritage management. Government
46 policy has also recognised the role of the public in protecting national heritage (Meethan,
47 1996). Alternatively the work of the community through adopt a station is also seen as
48 creating heritage as much as preserving it. John Y in one interview was somewhat scornful of
49 “*the glory days of rail travel*” and suggested that:
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56 *“ they are when you want them to be and you can to an extent make them up...the*
57 *golden age of rail travel which for a start might be rather dirty and the services might*
58 *not be as frequent as today and they might be rather pricey perhaps and so on but if it*
59 *makes you feel good hey”(John Y)*
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1 So in fact, the work of adopters is presented as a key initiative, giving life and meaning to
2 areas of the community which in the past may have been perceived in more functional ways:
3

4 *This is not, so far as we can make out, a traditionally, glorious station. There are not*
5 *many sepia photographs of the glorious basket trees of Victorian times and what we*
6 *hear this is a new reputation the local press photographs [will comment] on*
7 *baskets and the lovely gardens in Uddingston. It is all new; the heritage is now if you*
8 *like (John Y)*
9

10
11 The work of adopters within their local station appears to stimulate a broad range of benefits
12 to the adopters, the firm, the wider community and other stakeholders.
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15 16 *Benefits* 17

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19 The tourism benefits of Adopt a Station have been highlighted in previous sections, in terms
20 of stations as welcoming gateways to the town that are visually appealing and sometimes
21 tourist attractions in their own right through the presence of heritage museums, tearooms and
22 galleries. For example, Helen who runs a bunkhouse at Bridge of Orchy station suggests that
23 “people are always overwhelmed I think when they come and stay here because it is a very
24 different thing to do.” The benefits of Adopt a Station also extend beyond tourism.
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28 The adopters mention a range of personal benefits including camaraderie and social contacts,
29 the opportunity to engage with an activity that they enjoy such as gardening, satisfaction and
30 pride in achievements, improvements to wellbeing and gaining respect from the local
31 community. The sense of ownership of the stations created by the scheme empowers the
32 community to the extent that they frequently viewed their activities as primary:
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36 *If we could extend further, our ambition, which we don't tell ScotRail, is actually to be*
37 *a bookshop through which trains run (Norman, Pitlochry).*
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41 Those adopters with a business interest also praise the benefits of the scheme, as one
42 mentions “we cannot quite believe our luck that we have found this thing.” Lynette, who is
43 opening an art gallery at Kinghorn comments:
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47 *Well personally for me it is a whole new change of life because I have committed myself*
48 *to doing this, I have given up a job, I will be 55, I am retiring actually and going at a*
49 *age when I can retire and I am trusting that they will let me stay here, obviously the*
50 *lease is running out soon, it is leaps of faith for me all round but it means that I can be*
51 *an artist all the time and run my own business and it is quite exciting, you know at a*
52 *time when people are travelling, giving up, I am actually starting a new career so I find*
53 *that very stimulating, slightly nerve-wracking but I know that I have got people that*
54 *will come to my classes, I know they will (Lynette, Kinghorn)*
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Some of the benefits also spread to the community at large who may experience a renewal of “civic pride” in one of the town’s focal points. As noted above there is a ripple effect to station adoption, and other adopters believe that this creates a virtuous circle which ultimately reduces vandalism similar to the theory of broken windows. Some adoptions have also resulted in benefits for local charities. This takes a variety of forms. There may be a direct financial benefit such as the significant revenue generated through the sale of second hand book shops, or there may be promotional benefits whereby the involvement of charity groups at the station raises their profile.

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There are also benefits for First ScotRail. As one adopter suggests, “*adoption means not only keeping it nicer and tidier and prettier it also means that they have got other eyes looking after their stations.*” These “other eyes” become an unofficial labour source, policing the station and alerting First ScotRail to any problems that need addressed, an aspect that is especially beneficial at those stations with limited staff. For example, one adopter suggests he is an “*informal cleaner*” and describes how he collects litter around the station grounds. This reflects the sense of ownership created by station adoption in that volunteers are willing to work in this way without any financial reward. Other benefits include positive public relations created by the scheme, an improved working environment for station staff and a more pleasant environment for passengers, both locals and tourists.

37 38 39 40 CONCLUSION

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This paper has used the context of Adopt a Station to explore how local communities can contribute to the regeneration of social places, and in turn, tourism promotion in Scotland. Drawing on evidence from ethnographic research we introduce six themes which relate to the activities of the adopters around the stations and the benefits that they can offer.

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Our research identifies the latent potential residing within our local communities to transform their local stations from places of transit to experiential places of consumption. The scheme enables residents to convert liminal spaces into places of entertainment, heritage, dining, and accommodation but crucially as gateways that simultaneously welcome and inform the tourist and local resident alike. This regeneration has obvious potential economic benefits, but benefits also go beyond this as it is through Adopt a Station that residents appear to recapture

1 the essence of their communities and are able to represent it to the outside world. This place
2 commodification links the physical regeneration of the station buildings and gardens with the
3 cultural regeneration in terms of the production of symbolic value (Meethan, 1996). The
4 scheme appears to inspire communities and there is evidence that benefits ripple out from the
5 gateway into other areas.
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10 Our research represents an important counterpoint to existing theory on community
11 participation. Many studies within the literature on tourism planning reach rather pessimistic
12 conclusions with regards to the capabilities of local residents to make valid and worthwhile
13 contributions to the tourism process. Ceding control of the stations to the community allows
14 the resources, skills, and passion of the adopters to be used to their greatest effect. The
15 scheme highlights the potential for co-creation when the community are offered the
16 opportunity to feel a sense of ownership and empowerment through involvement in a place
17 meaning creation process. Recent works on cocreation highlight the importance of giving the
18 consumer freedom. Adopt a Station allows communities to showcase local culture and allows
19 the offering to evolve organically. So whether it is through posters, floral displays, murals,
20 museums or heritage centres the stations become dynamic representations of the culture,
21 heritage and life of the community, unconstrained by planning processes and regulations.
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34 The benefits associated with the scheme appear to be line with recent views of cocreation
35 with adopters acting as a resource in the creation of the value proposition of the firm
36 (Lengnick-Hall, et al., 2000) and improving quality in the exchange (Evans, et al., 2008).
37 However, unlike existing views of cocreation which sees consumer involvement as a political
38 form of power and exploitative (Zwick, et al., 2008) Adopt a Station appears to act as a
39 catalyst to the community and their passion to represent the town or village in the most
40 positive way to tourists.
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49 The benefits outlined within our research could easily be viewed as idyllic, almost utopian.
50 The schemes, however, were not without their challenges. Adopters in turn, highlighted
51 problems relating to communicating with the wide range of organisations that they were
52 exposed to within a complex franchise arrangement (not, it should be highlighted, with the
53 administration of the scheme itself), there were some minor issues with vandalism and a lack
54 of funds which restricted activities in some schemes. However, the simplicity of the scheme,
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1 the willingness and passion of the community and the sense of ownership contribute to a
2 successful community engagement scheme which represents a form of organic community
3 tourism planning.
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6 Although we have focused on the Adopt a Station scheme in Scotland our findings have
7 broader implications. Other types of adoption schemes can be found across the UK involving
8 other contexts (e.g. community gardens and other companies (British Telecom's Adopt a
9 Kiosk Scheme)) and these offer possibilities for research into promoting the local tourism
10 offering. Future research might also explore the role of authenticity in the regeneration of
11 historical places for tourism purposes and the various marketing communication techniques
12 used to promote place identity and distinctiveness.
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21 The Adopt a Station scheme offers some intriguing possibilities for tourism planners.
22 Through the patronage of ScotRail, Adopt a Station offers the community groups legitimacy
23 without bureaucracy. As a result activities are formalised and structured by the community
24 with seemingly minimal involvement of the firm beyond that needed to ensure the smooth
25 running of the day to day activities of the station and in this sense it is different to other
26 guerrilla community projects. This freedom to create the tourism offering organically may
27 come closer to Jamal and Getz's dynamic and active participation and suggests that creating
28 the community tourism product may be best achieved from within.
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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Adopted stations participating in the project

Ref.	Station	Nature of Adoption
1	Arisaig	Most westerly station in the UK, has community meeting room and flowers by Sonia Cameron. On Jacobite steam train route.
2	Barrhead	Features posters displaying schoolwork and art projects of pupils at Barrhead Academy
3	Bridge of Orchy	The West Highland Sleeper is a bunkhouse that serves the West Highland Way. Stations flowers also feature.
4	Crianlarich	Famous station tearoom and flowers.
5	Cupar	Flowers by Cupar in Bloom and Cupar Heritage Society have opened a heritage centre.
6	Glenfinnan	Station Museum, Glenfinnan Bunkhouse and Station Tearoom (both in disused railway carriages). Historical Water Tank and Snowplough. Landscaping and Flowers.
7	Invergordon	‘The Long Goodbye’ is a mural depicting the departure of the Seaforth Highlanders from the station in 1939 and their subsequent war history including capture at Dunkirk and captivity in Germany. 8 community groups involved in gardening.
8	Kinghorn	Stationhouse and flat now home to Lynette Gray an artist who uses the station as a gallery and studio. She also looks after the flowers.
9	Ladybank	An artist studio and gallery run by Kirsty Lorenz.
10	Mallaig	Extensive gardening and hanging baskets tended lovingly by Sonia Cameron.
11	Maxwell Park	Community meeting room and flowers by Pollokshields Heritage Trust
12	Neilston	Flowers by Neilson Development Trust
13	North Berwick	Flowers by North Berwick in Bloom
14	Pitlochry	Flowers by Pitlochry in Bloom and Pitlochry Station Bookshop
15	Stonehaven	Tourism Posters and Flowers by Stonehaven horizon project.
16	Uddingston	Station Café and Flowers by ‘Uddingston Pride’
17	Wemyss Bay	The Friends of Wemyss Bay station have a bookshop and exhibition space, tend to a huge range of flowers and have a community ‘mini-allotment project.
18	West Kilbride	Flowers by West Kilbride Community and Chu Chu’s Restaurant
19	Whitecraigs	Flowers by Peter McKinley

Figure 1: Scotland rail map

Figure 4: Community Gateway Images (from left: seaside theme at North Berwick, welcome to Pitlochry

Figure 5: Station Aesthetics (from left, tub at Stonehaven, floral colour at Whitecraigs, palm trees at Mallaig)

Figure 6: Station Heritage (from left: Station Museum at Glenfinnan, Mural at Invergordon, Gallery and local heritage exhibition at Wemyss Bay)

Statement of Contribution:

1. We explore the community role in regenerating social places for local tourism promotion. By focusing on “Adopt a Station,” a community engagement scheme run by First ScotRail, we demonstrate how the local community can co-create services that enhance the tourist experience. Many studies on tourism planning reach pessimistic conclusions with regards to the capabilities of local residents to make valid and worthwhile contributions to the tourism process. Our contribution is to highlight the potential for co-creation when the community are offered the opportunity to feel a sense of ownership and empowerment through involvement in a place meaning creation process. Additionally, existing views of cocreation see consumer involvement as a political form of power and exploitative. We offer a contrast with a scheme that acts as a catalyst to the community and their passion to represent the town or village in the most positive way to tourists.
2. Our study methods follow a qualitative social science approach. In keeping with standard ethnographic practice, we employed multiple methods of data collection over a 2.5 year period. We recorded data through extensive field notes, photographic evidence, video capture, a combination of audio recorded and electronically captured interviews and large-scale collection of relevant artefacts and documents. Our research is informed by and should be of interest to various disciplines within the social sciences umbrella including sociology, tourism, marketing and geography. We build our theoretical contribution around themes of community, cocreation and urban regeneration which are all key concepts within the social science tradition.