



Helix Business Plan 2018/19



BUSINESS PLAN SUMMARY

Purpose of the Plan

Falkirk Community Trust has now been operating the Helix Park over four seasons; this document takes the learning from that period and sets out our Plan for the management of the Helix from April 2018 to March 2019. This Plan builds upon the 3 year Business Plan 2017/2020 and details our intent for the coming year.

Introduction

Helix Park was created as a new green heart for the communities of Grangemouth and Falkirk. Over the last three years our shared long term vision for the Helix as a place of transformation has been delivered through a range of projects covering the main delivery aims of 'a shared vision'

People: *People enjoy coming to the Helix, which has become a major visitor destination whilst continuing to meet local recreational needs.*

Place: *Local communities and businesses are proud of the Helix and wish to be associated with it. People feel the Helix embodies the 'My Future's in Falkirk' message.*

Enterprise: *The Helix has transformed the landscape into a place of delight, with diverse habitats and rich wildlife. It is fully accessible and managed sustainably.*

We are committed to consolidating the excellent progress made so far as well as acknowledging and addressing the challenges which have emerged along the route. This document outlines the forward plan of the partnership for continuing to develop the site.

Context

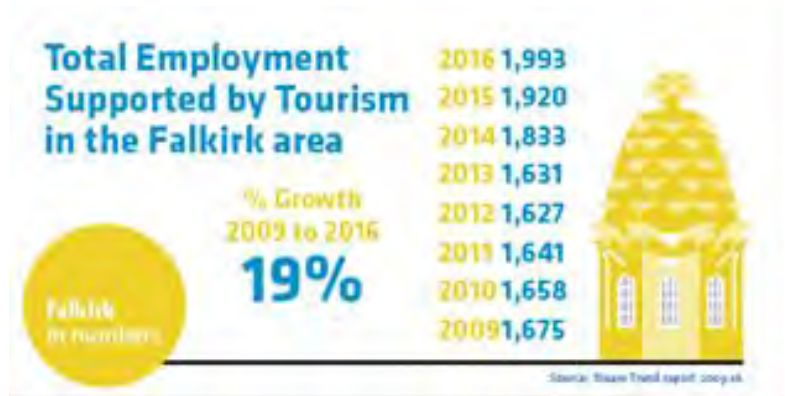
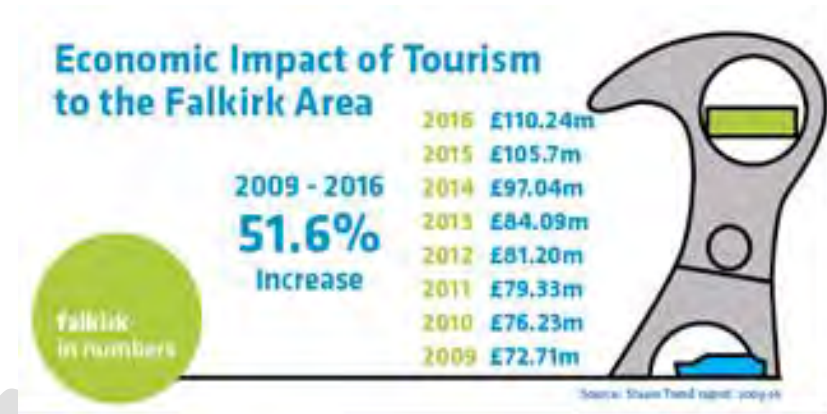
Building on the initial stages of the Helix project which saw the building of the Kelpies, the landscaping of the Park and the creation of a Visitor Centre, we have delivered a series of key improvements over the last twelve months:

1. Upgrade of Visitor Centre Café servery and menu
2. Resurfacing and upgrade of the main car parks
3. Growth in quality of events
4. Habitat improvements and new woodland walks
5. Dedicated approach to customer service

The outcomes of these improvements have been increased spend per head contributing to continued income growth, increased volunteering hours, continued growth in visitor numbers and achieving 5 Star VisitScotland accreditation.

In order to deliver the vision and objectives for the Helix Park in the long-term we spend time looking in-depth at the new opportunities and reacting to them in an agile way. This approach will ensure we can attract new markets, develop training opportunities and capitalise on the financial security afforded by new revenue streams. The local business community have embraced the Kelpies as their own and at a national level they are seen as a symbol of creativity and of a forward looking Scotland.

The Trust continues to broadly align our business planning with the wider industry's ambitions as laid out in the Tourism Strategy TS2020 priorities and the VisitFalkirk 2020 vision, ensuring our outcomes are not only regionally but also nationally focused. This focus has enabled the Helix to be instrumental in aiding Falkirk Council's ambitions to become a destination of first choice for visitors to Scotland.



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The Helix Park has undoubtedly added value to the region, not just in terms of increasing awareness and footfall but through those successes playing a small but significant enabling role with the relaunch of the Falkirk Gateway Project.

We have made progress against our vision which has noticeably and positively improved Falkirk, but there is still work to be done to develop further:

In 2018/19 the partners will:

- Resolve remaining defects from the landscaping phase of the project to ensure our Asset Management Plan provides not only a clear direction of travel but also an accurate financial forecasting tool.
- Grow and develop the unique events on site which differentiate the Helix from the current events on offer in Scotland to secure the development of the place making aims in our original vision.
- Integrate our volunteers with the work of the Trust as a whole to lay the foundation of how we see volunteers adding value to

the work of the Helix and our family of locations across the Trust. Capitalising on the re-energisation of the community will enhance our ability to deliver the 'people' elements of the vision.

- Respond in a fluid/agile manner to trading conditions enabling us to overcome current constraints on capitalising on the income opportunities the 850,000 of visitors to the site offer. Projects such as changes to the Plaza Café operational plan, concessionary arrangements with external providers and proposed capital investment by the partnership as a part of the Falkirk Investment Zone will confirm Helix Park as a key enterprise location.

The focus of our business in 2018/19 will be to consistently deliver the five star experiences the onsite team have worked hard to achieve. By focussing on quality as a key watchword we will not only develop a respected brand but also increase revenue and control costs which affect our profit margin. The twin pillars of reputation and cost effectiveness will hold the Helix in the face of a nationally uncertain economic future.

Operational Summary

The Helix Project is an excellent demonstration of urban regeneration in-action, with many aspects of the project having surpassed expectation.

Since the Park's inception it has exceeded the original business plan assumptions and the Kelpies have quickly become one of Scotland's iconic structures.

With the international coverage the Kelpies receive through VisitScotland and high profile events, like Her Majesty the Queen's visit, the Kelpies are now one of VisitScotland key visitor attractions.

Over the period the operational team have overcome many challenges and are now well placed to consolidate operations and continue their focus on the customer journey, quality of experience and income generation.

During the past 4 years lessons have been learnt about customer needs, people flow and expectations, as well as the site operationally. The income generated across the site has increased significantly in that period too, from just under £500,000 in 2014/15 to in excess of £1.2 million 2017/18

During 2017 the Helix Team was delighted to be awarded 5 Star Visitor Attraction status by VisitScotland and the Green Flag Award by Keep Scotland Beautiful, along with many other accolades since the Park opened, these awards demonstrate the Trust's commitment to service excellence.

The Trust has developed a very robust induction program for new employees, we are committed to paying the living wage and providing a fair and compassionate employee package to ensure staff retention and continuity of staff, fundamental to delivering a world class experience.

With the opening of the Visitor Centre in late 2015 revenues across the site are now well in excess of £1 million, attaining the much lauded '£1 per head from every visitor'. Core revenues are attained through catering and retail at the Visitor Centre, additional spend is

generated through car parking, tours, catering concessions, events and outdoor activities across the site.

The Helix Park and the Kelpies continue to be well received by the public and from the data gathered indicates there is an almost even split of visitor between the two areas.

The Park is very weather dependant, but while being a true local resource, anecdotal evidence suggests resident populations are traveling up to an hour to enjoy the parks excellent attributes.

The Kelpies are very much a tourist destination, with the international coverage the Kelpies receive through VisitScotland and events like the Queen's visit, the Kelpies are now on visitors to Scotland's 'bucket list' as must-see destination.

With the historical defects resolved and with 'phase one' of the Helix Project now complete, the bedding-in of the site and the learning from the last 4 years, the 2018/19 season sets the Trust and the operational team up for, what will be in effect, the first 'steady state' year.

The focus for the business in 2018/19 will be to consistently provide a 5 Star experience, increase revenues and profit, control costs and foster new business partner relationships.

Key themes for the business for 2018/19 will be:

- ❖ Legal
- ❖ Project Executive
- ❖ Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) Works
- ❖ Marketing
- ❖ Income Generation
- ❖ Customer Service
- ❖ Maintenance of Site
- ❖ Events
- ❖ On-site Activities
- ❖ Volunteering/Community Engagement
- ❖ Asset Management Plan, Annual and Long-term

Summary of FCT Helix Operations		
Area		Response
Legal	With only one defect within the Plaza Café still outstanding, the Trust is keen to see the signing of the lease brought to a timely conclusion.	To work with the Project Executive and legal advisors to resolve outstanding issues.
Project Executive	Falkirk Community Trust provides a quarterly update on activity, high level income, footfall and future events. With more partner activity taking place on site, a more comprehensive reporting structure by all site operating partners may be helpful.	Utilising the joint communications and operations meetings to focus on day to day operations allowing the PE to maintain the strategic oversight.
TIF Works	The duelling of the A9 and A904 will have an impact on visitors arrival to the Helix	Ensure close liaison with Falkirk Council TIF and Roads departments
Marketing	As the business enters the 5 th year of trade, maximising our marketing opportunities will be critical to maintain the profile and visitation	Ensure a robust, yet responsive marketing plan. Targeting key geographical areas, utilising online and traditional marketing mediums

Income Generation	Income generation across the whole site has made a significant impact on the business's ability to reduce the subsidy the Helix requires. The importance of continuing to reduce the subsidy is the core driver for developing new income streams.	During 2017 the Trust developed a 3 year business plan approach. Over the coming year the Helix will continue to explore opportunities and develop plans to increase footfall and income across the site
Customer Service: Parking	During 2017 both the small 78 and the centre of the 175 were upgraded and mono blocked. This has made a significant impact on the quality in the visitor experience and first impressions of the Park. Traffic management remains a key issue on event days and high-days. Working with Falkirk Stadium and Falkirk Council has alleviated some issues; however, lack of suitable parking nearby impacts on the customer experience on event days.	Further review of visitor welcome signage, charges, traffic management and maintenance will be carried out.
Customer Service: Signage	Falkirk Council have vastly improved brown signage around Falkirk and the motorway signage erected on the M9 at junctions 5 and 6, in July 2017 will significantly improve the journey experience for the visitor.	An assessment to the value of further motorway signage at on the M9 - M80 - M80 - M876 - M9 intersections will be undertaken
Income Generation: Lagoon Activities	Since opening Lagoon activities have been an underutilised opportunity. Although the pedalos have operated well, they are very weather dependant and staff intensive. Although other water activities were tried, with limited staff resources the impact was limited.	The Lagoon and other outdoor activities will form part of the wider income generation planning the Trust is undertaking during 2018/19
Events	To continue to develop events in line with the Trust's Event Strategy.	Progress a program of events of various sizes to meet the community's needs, while reinforcing the Helix values and broadening audiences' horizons.

Volunteering/ Community Engagement	Volunteering has become a key aspect of the Helix, enabling habitat development, supporting routine ground works and delivering a world class welcome.	Grow the numbers of volunteers, develop new areas for volunteering and continue to offer the same customer care training to the volunteers that is offered to our employees.
Asset Management Plans	The higher than anticipated initial footfall impacted on some of the high usage grassed areas which effected the original asset management, however the Parks team, with the support from volunteers, now have the majority of Park in an excellent and manageable condition.	To continue to focus on the high impact areas, maintain the standards currently achieved and engage contractors to assist with the heavy landscaping works.

Priorities

Our annual priorities for the Helix are as follows:

- 2018/19
- Further development of income generation opportunities across the Helix
 - Commission a 'design and development' tender for activities across the Park, including the Lagoon, to implement for the 2019 season
 - Continual reappraisal of the Annual Helix Asset Management Plan and development of the asset lifecycle renewal program
 - To support the Helix team through training, continual

personal development, and to achieve further national recognition for the contributions the Helix makes to the sectors it is aligned with

- Develop relationships to grow sponsorship opportunities which will appeal to local and national business
- Continue to grow and develop the Helix volunteering programme within the wider Falkirk and Grangemouth area

2019/20

- Continue to enhance the events programme, raising the profile and attracting new audiences to the Park and area
- To develop new activities and interpretation on the site that encourage visitors to explore the wider Helix
- To grow relationships with commercial operators to develop income generating opportunities
- To support Helix Phase 2 developments

2018–19 forward intent

Customer service will continue to be at the heart all that we do, to ensure we maintain if not improve the world class welcome across all aspects of the Helix.

Footfall is pivotal to the income strategy, increasing the physical numbers as well the dwell time and repeat visits.

Strong marketing messaging via quantitative online utilisation, alongside traditional media will ensure a broad reach, coupled with a strong events program to engage the local audiences.

Building upon the successful introduction of various volunteering teams during 2016 and 2017, 2018/19 will see these teams extended across more areas of the business, particularly the Ambassadors' role, bringing a new dimension to our customer service.

2017/18 saw the resolution to the outstanding defects across the site, 2018/19 will see the lease agreements secured.

Continuing to build new partner relationships to benefit the revenue generation opportunities across the site will aid the animation of the Park; however, customer service must be the number one focus

Visitor Projections

3 million visitors will have visited Helix by the end of October 2017. Through the development of new outdoor activities within the Park and our continued focus on customer service, we envisage growing visitor numbers for 2019/20; however, for 2018/19, we anticipate maintaining our current footfall.

Year	Projections	Actual Helix Visitor Numbers
2014/15	330,000	952,508
2015/16	730,000	719,146
2016/17	800,000	603,624
2017/18	850,000	677,939 (to Sept)
2018/19	850,00	
2019/20	950,00	

With the support of VisitScotland, VisitFalkirk, Scottish Canals, EventScotland and other agencies, the Helix and Kelpies receive a huge amount of visibility. Through close liaison with these organisations, we anticipate this support to continue, contributing to our own marketing efforts thereby helping maintain the visitor numbers.

Key Priorities 2018/19

Service Standards

During 2017/18 we empowered the operational team to set and maintain quality standards; this has paid dividends with the business achieving 5 Star accreditation from VisitScotland in late 2017.

The Helix embraced the 'WorldHost' training program which became the foundation for our customer service standards.

VisitScotland and the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions have now developed the next stage to WorldHost, Welcome to Excellence, 'Exceeding Visitor Expectations'. This is specifically tailored to visitor attractions and the Helix will adopt this resource as our starting point to ensure we maintain our 5 Star status and continue to deliver a world class experience.

Income Generation

- The Visitor Centre continues to be the core hub for income generation. With a new staffing restructure introduced in late 2017 within the Centre this will ensure a resolute focus on retail, upselling and customer service.
- Car Parking Charges – the car parking team play a pivotal role in ensuring the first contact with customers is a positive one and that the welcome sets the tone of the visitors Helix experience. Prices were reviewed during 2017 and the current charge of £3.00 per car will be maintained during 2018.
- Kelpies Tour Income – during 2017/18 we saw a further decline in tour numbers. The impact of moving from the 'Tour Base' in the main car park to the Visitor Centre has been considerable. Visitors are now 'onsite' and are aware they do not need to pay to get up close to the Kelpies, whereas when the Tour Base was open, 90% of visitors 'stopped in' as they thought they needed to pay!

- The improved signage on and around the Visitor Centre has helped and having evaluated the breakdown of demographic on the tours, we now do not charge for children as there was limited take up and by doing so we hope to encourage families on to the tour.
- Cost Management – Having now had two years of trading experience all teams need to ensure they are more commercially aware. Focusing on income generation as well as managing all costs within their teams.

Animation of the Park

After a number of trial activities over the past years, there is recognition that there is a demand for further 'paid for' activity within the Park.

- It is the Trust's intention to put out a call for 'expressions of interest' (EOI) to gain an understanding of what the current market opportunities might be for activities across the Park. The Trust wishes to engage with initiative thinkers who provide outdoor activity, to ensure the Park is ahead of the curve on the new wave of ideas.
The EOI will detail the Park and footfall but will not be presumptive or prescriptive as we do not wish to constrain the potential by our own assumptions.
This process will run throughout 2018/19 with the expectation of having any new facility in place for the start of the season 2019/20.
- Events programme – over the past two years the Events Team has been successful in securing grant funding for the larger events, HorsePower and Fire & Light. These events have raised the profile of The Helix and the Kelpies, however future funding is not guaranteed. The development of a robust sponsorship plan is required to maintain the level and scale of events.

- The Events Team delivers approximately 40 events a year, 6 of which are large scale and with the limited people resources it is necessary to enable the team to become more efficient. We need to look at better ways to store and move large and heavy equipment. There is a need to find and develop set-up and take-down crews to alleviate the pressure on the Team.
- The Events Team is looking at Project Management software to aid the planning of events, the sharing of critical information and the alleviation of unforeseen elements. Training for this software should reach beyond the Events Team to include the wider Helix Team.
- Third party-managed events will become increasingly important. During 2018 work will be done to engage with potential production companies.

Asset Management and Maintenance

The Asset Management Plan (AMP) allows the gardening team to develop an annual unit action plan, ensuring the Park is kept to the design specification.

Landscaping

As the sites original landscaping continues to settle there are 3 cores areas that will be the focus for the coming year.

High Impact areas

We will continue to bring the high impact areas up to the excellent standards of the rest of the Park. This will include managing desire lines, poorly drained areas and high footfall points.

Habitat Management

One of the main disappointments from the original planting has been the heather mounds and wild flower meadow beside the A9. The heather mounds have now been replaced with perennial wildflowers, as the conditions were not right for the heather. This

gives a mosaic of colour through the meadow, however unfortunately most of the wildflower within the meadow has now died off.

As part of the habitat management the fencing around the hedges will be removed, trees within a number of the woodlands will be thinned and additional hedges will be planted.

Grassland Management

Key to the grassland management is to have high amenity cut grass for the key public spaces and low maintenance rough areas. This aids the sites biodiversity, time and cost management.

Currently there is a high density of clover within the high amenity grass and due to the poor quality of the soil it will take time to resolve this.

Site Surveys

The team will be carrying out the first species survey during 2018 which will give the Helix the baseline count for coming years. After some trail counts and training during 2017 the team are expecting an interesting and varied data set.

The Lagoon

The water quality within the Lagoon continues to be inconsistent throughout the year, bringing challenges for certain events. The Trust is investigating how to maintain a high quality water level throughout the year.

AMP Financial 2018/19

Conditions of the Big Lottery grant state that the Helix is required to return the Park to Falkirk Council at the end of the contract term in the same condition as it was received. Within the financial planning there is an asset lifecycle renewal program, requiring an annual fund of £87,000.

During the coming year a detailed plan will be developed to indicate the works required.

The AMP is managed within the annual maintenance grant and during 2018 a detailed replacement plan will developed.

Trading Activity

The Visitor Centre catering, retail, Plaza Café and third party catering suppliers are overseen by the Trading Company.

Retail

The retail offer at the Visitor Centre is a key income driver for the business. Working closely with Andy Scott Merchandise, the business now has a strong range of Kelpie products. The introduction of the popular miniature Kelpies at the end of 2017/18 season demonstrated an opportunity for further increasing a limited but high quality and high value range.

With the introduction of the new staff structures to the Visitor Centre reception and visitor services supervisors, this will allow a renewed focus on the upselling of merchandise and the efficient purchasing of new and existing lines.

The team has a strong understanding of the themes for the shop and of our customer's needs. We will again be attending the key trade fairs throughout the year; however we are keen to continue to work with local suppliers to ensure the products on offer are of excellent quality and supporting local enterprises.

Retail Objectives 2018/19

- To achieve an average GP of 50% across the range, this is a 10% rise from 2015/16
- To achieve an average transaction value per visitor of £5.95, up from £1.03 when the Centre first opened
- To achieve income of £340,000
- To monitor and review GP, staffing and 'cost of sales'
- To extend the product lines out with of the licensed ranges

Visitor Centre Catering

The catering team will work over 2018 to achieve VisitScotland's 'Taste Our Best', ensuring the Visitor Centre sources and uses Scottish produce where possible and we are now promoting the provenance via our menu boards and website.

The changes made to the servery and kitchen appliance have increased the customer flow capacity, reduced costs and increased margins. This focus will continue through 2018/19.

Work is ongoing to manage the efficient clearing of tables and the recycling of materials from customer's trays.

Currently our food waste and materials recycling is being contaminated by the poor process currently in place and as environmental awareness is a key driver within the Helix ethos, the business wishes to demonstrate best practice at every opportunity.

Visitor Centre Catering Objectives 2018/19

The catering team are very focused on quality and cost and this has been reflected not just in the excellent plaudits the food receives but also in the excellent GP achieved since the Visitor Centre opened. These two attributes will continue to be our core focus.

- To achieve an average GP of 70% across all sales, up from 55% when the Centre opened
- To achieve an average transaction value of £7.20
- To achieve income of £415,000
- To monitor and review GP, staffing and 'cost of sales'
- To work towards 'Taste Our Best'

Plaza Café

The Trust intends to refurbish the servery area of the Plaza and review the offer. We have in the past relied on 3rd party mobile providers to supply ice cream and hot drinks during the peak periods. With the alterations to the servery it is our intention now to offer all facilities from the Café, with the exception of event days.

As part of the refurbishment, alterations will be made to reduce the wind flow through the building, making the Café more comfortable on the inclement days, helping to increase to number of days the Café can be opened and usable by customers over the main season, improving the customer experience and the dwell time.

Objectives 2018/19

- To achieve an average GP of 69% across all sales
- To achieve an average transaction value of £3.50, up from £2.20 in 2015/16
- To improve the product range in line with the Helix values and customer needs.

External Catering

External caterers have filled a necessary gap, however with the poor weather this year, the return from external caterers has impacted on our turnover and margins.

For 2018/19 we shall review the positioning of external units, the offer and the timings the operators are trading.

We shall also review payment terms, moving to a guaranteed pitch fee with a % commission on top.

Objectives 2016/17

- To achieve income of £45,000
- To maintain good relations with the quality local providers
- To work with Scotland Food & Drink to procure the best local suppliers

Events Strategy

The Event Strategy was completed in 2017 setting the forward ambition for the Park, as detailed below.

'To build and sustain a financially viable event programme across Falkirk that helps to attract economic investment, raises the profile of the area and excites and motivates the local community to participate and feel proud of Falkirk'.

Event Type	Definition	Target Audience	Example
Animation	Pop-up activity, demonstration or one-off performance that animates areas at peak times. These events will be little to no cost and delivered by third parties. The aim of these animations is not to drive footfall but to provide an extra experience to regular Park users and encourage repeat visits, they will also aim to highlight Falkirk as a creative place. Limited resource required.	Local.	Traditional bands; one-off performances

Small	Small-scale activity that attracts a local audience; produced by FCT or delivered by a third party at little to no costs. Some of these events may be ticketed and so generate income or aim to be delivered cost neutral. The activity will aim to drive footfall, encourage repeat visits and showcase local organisations. The activity will be of a scale that these events can be delivered at peak times and during shoulder months. Approximate audience/participant number: 0 – 1,000 people. A degree of resource will be required.	Local.	RSPB led outdoor education sessions; Chase the Turkey; Charity Walks; Cosy Christmas Read; Duathlon; Summer Fun Sessions.
Medium	Medium-scale activity that attracts both local and regional participation. Again, these activities can be delivered in-house or by third parties but audience/participant numbers will be approximately 1,000 – 3,000. These events will drive footfall, attract new visitors and secondary spend. These events will	Local and Regional (90 minute drive time to site).	Outdoor theatre performances

	tend to be recurring and public good events (see descriptions below). A high level of resource will be required.		
Large	Large-scale experiences that attract new and repeat visits to the site. These events require a significant level of Trust resource through planning time, partnership working and investment. Programming of these types of events should avoid peak times to prevent pressure on site infrastructure. These events will require sponsorship, funding and/or additional financial support but should generate a large amount of media coverage. Approximate audience/participant numbers: 3,000+ people. Large events will tend to be one-off, recurring, public good or hallmark events (see descriptions below).	Local, regional and national.	Home, Fire and Light.

Types of events relevant to the Strategy:

Recurring events: take place annually at the same location for a number of years on a biennial/quadrennial basis.

One-off events: usually bid for and brought to the area in a single staging.

Public good events: those which all sectors of the community can enjoy at little or no cost. Proved sustainable due to their public popularity - we should look to more financially sustainable models of delivery to ensure the longevity of these events.

Hallmark events: 'an event that possesses such significance, in terms of tradition/attractiveness/quality/publicity that the event provides the host venue/community destination with a competitive advantage - in time the event and destination can become inextricably linked – these events are rooted in one place and appeal to most residents but can also attract visitors'. (Donald Getz).

2018/19 Events

We will hold the Emergency Services' Day, The Big Picnic and Supernova during 2018 however we do not intend to hold a 'signature' event similar to HorsePower. Funding has been secured for a STEM event, working in conjunction with S1 pupils across Falkirk schools and a public 'Science in the Park' event.

Volunteering

Volunteering has made a demonstrable impact to the Park. We now run 4 teams of volunteers across the business.

The Presenters: we have a team of 3 people who attend local clubs and societies to give talks about the development and ongoing running of the Helix, encouraging the group or individuals to visit. During 2017 they gave talks to 15 groups, attending talks from Glasgow to Bridge of Allan.

The Events Team: this team of approximately 50 people come and support our varied events program helping with stewarding, lost persons, litter picking, setup and take down.

The Green Team: a core of 8 people attend the Green Team activities, running every Tuesday during the summer and every second week during the winter supporting the gardeners with the weeding and the Parks with habitat development and maintenance.

The Ambassadors: this highly visible, frontline team of 6 are the Helix equivalent of the Games Makers. Located mainly near the Visitor Centre they are there to help, support and upsell to the customers.

Marketing

Marketing activity for the 2018/19 period will focus on the following objectives:

Digital first will continue to be a cornerstone of our strategy. We have significantly grown on all digital channels, and are well underway with the development of a new digital platform for FCT that will signify a shift in how we approach all our marketing. This significant investment will see demonstrable improvements in the way we can target and track marketing activity. During 2018 our new platform will be able to track return on marketing investment and as a consequence our activity will be far more effective. This digital shift will also see us driving the creation of more video content, both user generated or commissioned, as well as showcasing the many “faces” of the park – during regular days and special events to further deepen engagement with our visitors. The development of the new app will also provide innovative ways for us to engage with visitors to the site and gather information. This approach will also provide us with robust data that will help us refine our tactical activity even further.

Alongside a digital shift we will, with the support of all the partners, be clearer and stronger around protecting and promoting the brands we have. As operators of the site we will define ourselves as custodians of the two brands, gain more control and direction for how the brands are perceived in all markets.

Developing the international profile of the site is a key cornerstone of the strategy. We continue to work in close partnership with VisitFalkirk, Scottish Canals and VisitScotland to develop international markets further and grow the profile of the area as a credible destination. We will continue to develop our local and day-tripper markets with new products, encouraging repeat visits, and seek to monetise activity such as evening events or events utilising the Visitor Centre. The growing secondary spend will be top of mind when we approach marketing activity.

Finally, we will also seek to develop relationships with partners such as Cruise Forth, more accommodation providers and travel providers who can help augment the marketing budgets we have also penetrate deeper the internal independent visitor market.

Marketing Activities

	Activity	Priority (1-5)
	Establish the Helix and Kelpies as one of the must see destination's in Scotland. VisitScotland have identified the Kelpies as one of the key 23 sites Moving to top 15	1
	Responding to business requests	1
	Implement regular market research to optimise marketing activities	2

Updating income generation information on website	1
Shift marketing efforts to social media and online platforms by creating a digital strategy to reduce costs and be reactive to time sensitive campaigns	1
Become a trend setter by working on innovative campaigns with bloggers and YouTubers to keep a competitive advantage on other must see destinations in Scotland	2
To support the commercialisation of the Visitor Centre @ the Helix	1
Marketing plan focusing on improving guided tour sales	2
To deliver marketing activity with the primary focus to support income generation for the Trust in all relevant areas of the Helix	1
To capitalise on the interest and activity related to the Kelpies that has been successfully achieved during the past two years	2
To work in partnership with relevant bodies, including VisitScotland to target visitors within a 90-minute drive time as well as seeking a UK and international audience	2
To implement a Travel Trade engagement plan that delivers a sustainable group travel market to the site. (World Travel Market November 2018)	3
To develop a clear sales plan to attract, nurture and convert existing and new	2

customers to make the Helix a destination of choice.	
Promotion and marketing of events	1
Promotion and marketing of income generation areas	1
Promotion and implementation of online sales for events and activities	1



Alexander D

Level 2 Contributor

6 reviews

14 helpful votes

"Outstanding visitor attraction"

Reviewed 6 days ago via mobile

NEW

Having paid a visit to the Helix park in Falkirk with relatives from Austria, my wife and I were delighted to see the cleanliness of the entire park area and facilities. Our relatives were fascinated with the Kelpies and the canal system created around these amazing structures and were pleased to see that ground staff were going around emptying bins and keeping the area tidy.

We visited the visitor centre/cafe for coffee and must mention the pleasant nature and courtesy of Alison and Alyx who served us. They are two nice talkative girls and a credit to their employers, we were made to feel welcome. Keep it up girls!

This area of outstanding beauty is well worth visiting and we thank Falkirk Council for creating this splendid recreation area.

Visited August 2017

Helpful? Thank Alexander D

Report

[Ask Alexander D about The Kelpies & The Helix](#)

This review is the subjective opinion of a TripAdvisor member and not of TripAdvisor LLC

Management and Staffing

The Helix experience is contingent on our teams and we have excellent individuals and teams who go the extra mile for our customers and the Helix. We commit to our teams by investing and nurturing them. On joining the Helix we have a fun but robust induction and we put all our staff through 'WorldHost'; however, for 2018 we shall roll out 'Welcome to Excellence'.

We work with the wider industry to ensure all our staff and customer experience training is as current as possible and we are currently instigating 'Welcome to Excellence' the succession to 'WorldHost', a collaboration between ASVA and VisitScotland.

'... a one-day customer service course designed specifically for visitor attraction front-line staff that combines the expertise of VisitScotland's Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme and the experience of the renowned Welcome to Excellence training programmes.'

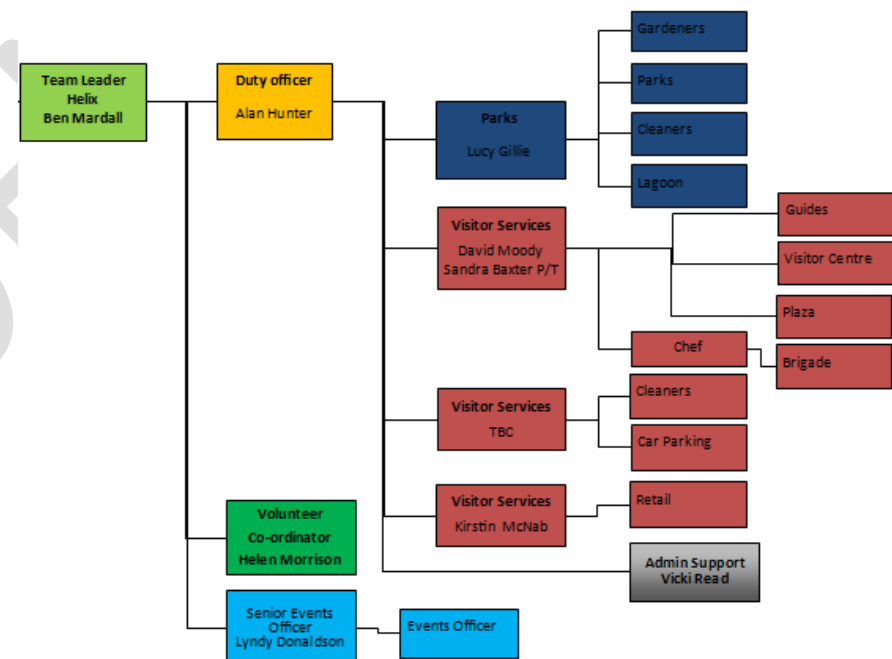
This commitment to the teams pays off as demonstrated by our retention and seasonal return rate of staff and through the excellent feedback on TripAdvisor, our Facebook and Twitter pages.

The Visitor Services Supervisors holds weekly and monthly team briefings which are key to ensuring all team members are aware of all activities across the Helix.

The Team was instrumental in the development of service standards for each department, ensuring the continuity of service which is so critical to securing the 5 Star VisitScotland Award.

During 2017/18 we have developed key team members who are now able to train the new people joining the business, which allows us to grow those individuals while growing the business.

During the past few seasons the staffing structures have been modified and refined as the business has grown and we anticipate the need to continue to do this as the business further evolves.



Visitor Service Supervisors

We have recruited a third Visitor Services Supervisor, freeing up resource to concentrate on the retail, evening functions and allowing this crucial layer of management to focus on tour, catering and employee development.

By strengthening the Visitor Services Supervisors role we free up more time for the Duty Officer and Team Leader to focus on the strategic direction of the business, as well as giving time to develop the Supervisors enabling us to build a succession plan.

Gardeners

We will be recruiting a seasonal gardener for 2018, enabling the team to continue to the excellent work they do.

Parks

As the Parks Team evolves, their ability to be seen as the overall support provider to the other teams diminishes.

Initially it was proposed the Parks Team would fulfil a 'Ranger' type role, supporting and managing events, leading volunteer sessions and delivering habitat management, however it is evident that with their current H&S roles, hard landscaping, building maintenance and portage of stock, West Mains to VC and VC to Plaza, means there is little time flexibility in their schedule.

This puts increased pressure on all teams as there was an expectation of support from Parks, particularly on events and volunteering.

Although all teams recognise the benefits of events, volunteering and additional activity within the Park, finding the time resource to

fulfil these areas without a detrimental knock on to core services, is becoming increasingly difficult.

General resilience within the teams is good, however as the business develops, we need to be prepared to adapt and react to market forces and business needs.

Risk

Each of the trading years has brought its own challenges and new insights.

The business needs to be nimble to short notice requests for events, while maintaining standards and procedures.

The business needs to be aware of the potential impacts from the fluctuations in sterling £, world terrorism and Brexit.

The tourism sector is currently enjoying a positive influence due to the position of the pound against the Euro, however this will quickly become the norm and new influences will impact our income and footfall ambitions.

Significant risks are summarised in the table below

Risk	Mitigation
Reduced visitor numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong marketing• Quality events• Animation• Quality reputation• Customer Service
Reduction in Revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage costs• Achieve GP targets
Infrastructure integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update and refine AMP• Maintain Lifecycle renewal program• Manage antisocial behaviour

Weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good weather brings higher footfall but also increased anti-social behaviour • Poor weather impacts on revenue projections due to the lack of covered areas
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Finance

The Trust is aware of the pressures on the budgets across all services and the Helix is not exempt to these pressures.

In the last four years the subsidy received for managing the Helix has reduced by 25%. This reduction has been made up through the trading activity.

The Helix team is investigating mobile electronic point of sale (EPOS) systems to allow credit card transactions at the car parks and outdoor activity areas, as well improving the cash handling and accounting systems.

The Trust are working hard to reduce this further predominately through trading activity, however we are still learning the nuances of the site and full cost implications and the Helix contract is distinct from the other Trust agreements.

The agreement commits the Trust to ensuring the asset is returned to Falkirk Council in the same condition as it was at handover.

Within the subsidy there is an assumption the annualised cost will be set aside for long-term asset management repair and renewal.

The following assumptions have informed the financial projections for 2018/19

- The projected visitors numbers being achieved as per the key projections section
- The cost base remain relatively static over the year
- We maintain the level of maintenance across the site

- The staffing structures remain as 2017/18
- Revenue and gross profit targets are met.

Indicative Budget 18/19

Headings	Indicative 18/19 Budget
Employee Costs	£ 1,019,600
Property Costs	£ 216,770
Transport	£ 19,510
Supplies and Services	£ 615,330
Third Party	£ 239,370
Income	(£ 1,495,370)
Grand Total	£ 615,210

Monitoring and Evaluation

Our monitoring and evaluation tools are limited and more quantitative data needs to be collected.

Utilising the questions and data from the 2014 Perceptions Survey a questionnaire will be sent out via our social media and data bases to gain some broad insights.

This work will help the business develop a more comprehensive survey for 2019/20.