

Case study:
Enterprise Renewal
Business Grant

Region
Flintshire

Sector
Tourism

Project value
£4,548

DOG FRIENDLY DESTINATIONS

This online travel directory for dog lovers is building a trusted brand in both the physical and digital worlds.

Launching a travel business in the teeth of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 wasn't a job for the faint-hearted. Co-founders of Dog Friendly Destinations Rachel Southern and Lauren Jones did wonder if they were doing the right thing. But their timing turned out to be perfect.

The mission of their online magazine and travel directory was to seek out and share the UK's best places to stay, eat and go where dogs were not just permitted – but thoroughly welcomed. Their "no dog left behind" message struck a real chord.

"Lots of people got dogs during the pandemic and we helped their owners dream about getting out and about again," says Lauren. "We had the time to engage on social media and build a real community of dog owners, trying to get people to see the positive side of lockdown and explore locally whereas in the past they might have gone farther afield."

With more than 60 paying properties already signed up to their website and an incredible 50,000-plus social media followers, the Flint Mountain-based company is clearly going places. But their ambitions could have stalled without their Enterprise Renewal grant.

Instead, by working with a local design agency, they've added iCal functionality to all their property listings, so visitors can check availability without clicking off the site. It means they stay longer, look at more pages and make more enquiries.

They've also created a printed map of "tail-wagging trails and paw-fect pit stops" around North Wales and Chester for their loyal customer base. It's being sold via a newly developed ecommerce platform with branded notebooks, mugs and prints next in the pipeline.

"The map has been a huge success," says Rachel. "We held an Instagram competition to find our canine cover stars with thousands of entries and we asked for suggestions for favourite walks, user-generated content and feedback to build a buzz around it. We love print – I'm a firm believer that people want something to hold, it's an extension of our brand."

"It would all have taken a lot longer without the grant. We'd have had to delay the ecommerce platform by at least a year with no efficient way to sell the map, losing a year of sales from an audience who were ready and waiting to buy from us. It would have had a big impact on us becoming a more well-known and trusted brand outside of social media."

