

Dufftown community wifi

OUTCOMES, IMPACT AND EVALUATION 2023



DDCA

Dufftown and District
Community Association

The need

Dufftown and District Community Association (DDCA) works towards creating a fairer community by delivering better change for all. With experience from the COVID19 pandemic and community planning, we identified lack of free and accessible internet provision in Dufftown and District.

Poor IT connectivity is a key challenge facing rural Scotland. Improved IT infrastructure and access has been identified as a key priority by the Dufftown and District community in various community planning exercises. During the COVID19 pandemic, DDCA supported low-income households with iPad loans, free 3G dongles and internet top-up vouchers. Internet access is a fundamental need in an increasingly digital world. With funding from EDF Dorenell Community Benefit Fund, this project set out to provide free wifi provision in Dufftown town centre.

Desired outcomes

The desired outcomes of the Dufftown community-led free wifi provision was:

- Local community has increased internet access.
- Dufftown town centre is a more connected place.

About us

Dufftown and District Community Association (DDCA) is a two-tier Scottish charitable incorporated organisation (SCIO). We act as Dufftown's anchor organisation, providing community development to improve prosperity, amenities, enterprise, opportunities and advocacy. Our current projects involve running and repairing the clocktower, providing a community food larder and bike hire, as well as organising various events in the community.



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What we did

Using the tallest building in Dufftown, we installed free public wifi covering the main routes connecting to the Dufftown square.

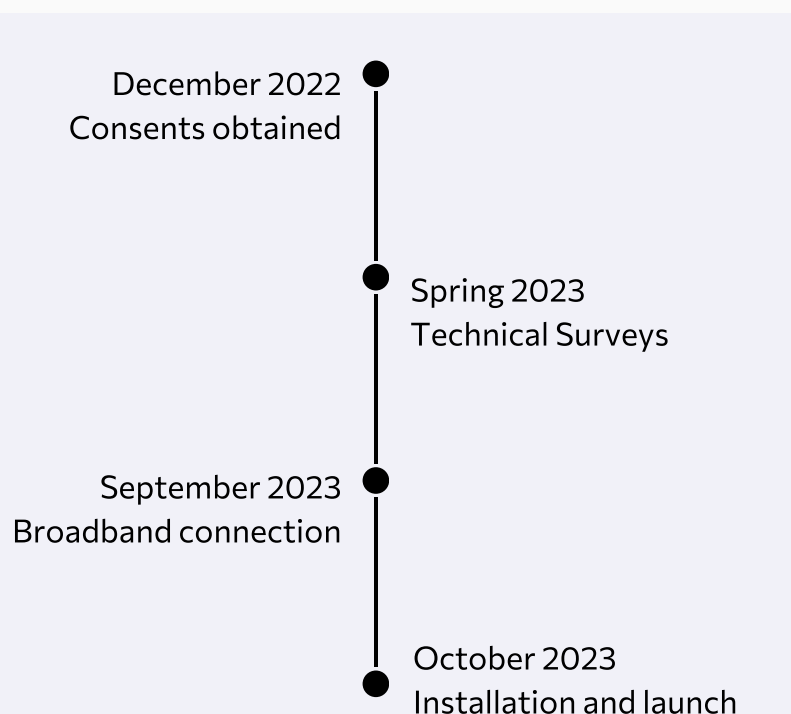
Pre-launch

The first step required was to commission a technical survey by the wifi installers. With these findings in mind, we secured relevant consents from our local authority. Finally, we set up a broadband contract, and had the hardware installed and tested.

Post-launch

Once the wifi was up and running, we configured our third-party captive portal. We developed an evaluation plan and gathered user data for the initial three months. We advertised the service on social media.

Wifi coverage

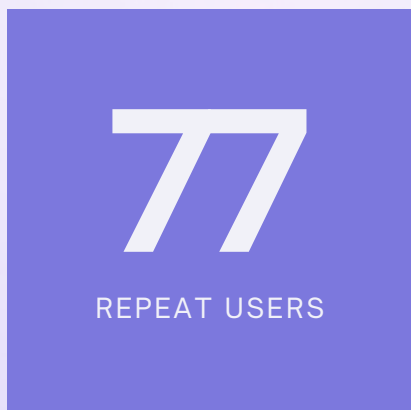
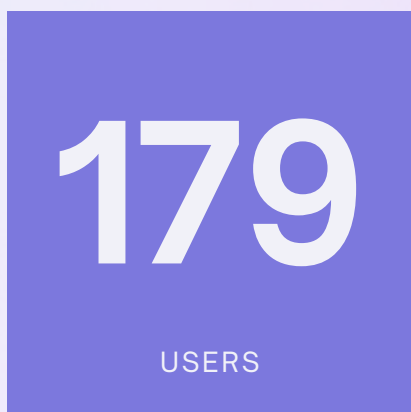


Outcomes

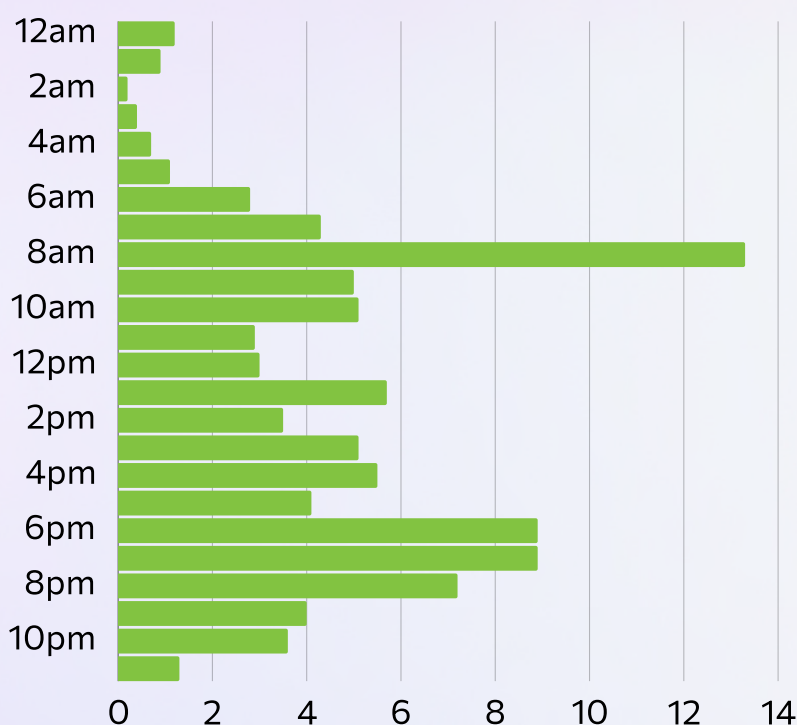
During the first three months of the Dufftown community wifi, 179 individuals used the services. The wifi was most popular during the morning and evenings.

To access the free public wifi, users need to authenticate themselves through a third-party captive portal. The data collected through the captive portal allows us to understand visitor numbers, time and day of wifi usage. Between October and December 2023, an average of 60 users per month accessed the wifi service. Of these, 77 users accessed the wifi on multiple occasions. As such, a substantial amount use the wifi service regularly.

The network was busiest during the morning, with 13% of all users accessing the wifi between 8-9am. It is possible that this spike in usage is related to school-age children and workers waiting for the morning bus, which departs from the Dufftown square. This suggests that public and free internet can benefit young people and commuters in rural Scotland. The wifi footfall is spread out throughout the rest of the day, with a slight increase during the evening, with 9% of all users accessing the service between 6-8pm.



Footfall (%) by hour



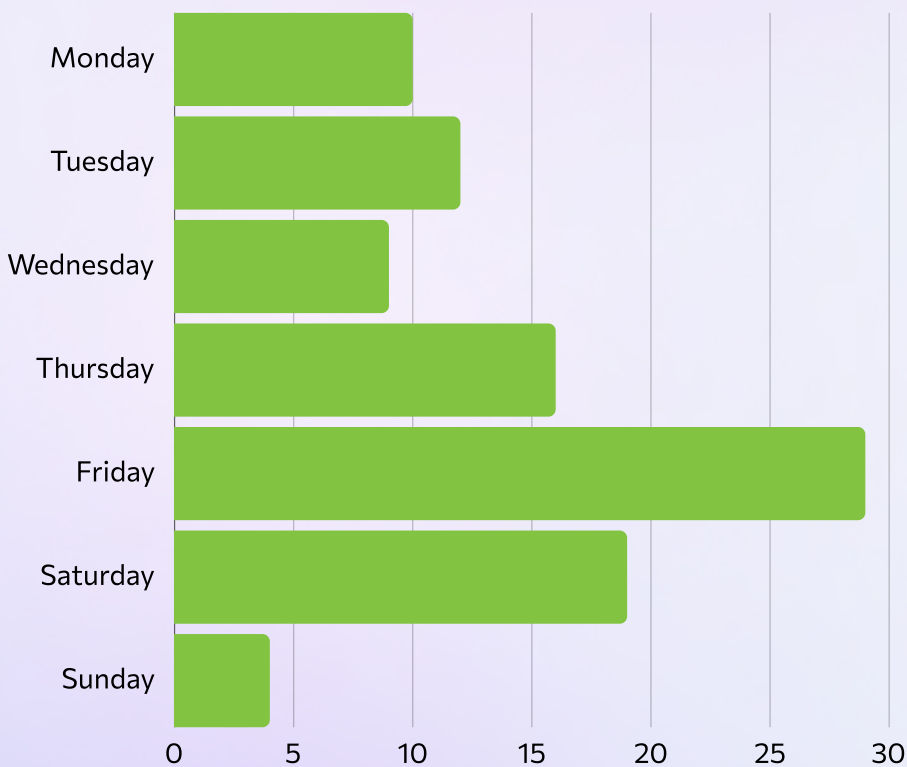
Outcomes

Both locals and visitors use the free public wifi. Users are most likely to use the service between Thursdays and Saturdays.

When accessing the free wifi, users had the option to tell us whether they live locally or are visitors to the area. Majority of users chose not to answer this question. Of those that did, 13 individuals were local and 15 were visiting. This suggests that free public wifi in rural communities can be beneficial to locals and visitors alike.

The free public wifi is used every day of the week. However, users are most likely to access the service towards the weekend, with 29% of users accessing it on Fridays.

Users (%) by week day



46%

LOCAL USERS

54%

VISITOR USERS

Initial 3 months of operating: October - December 2023

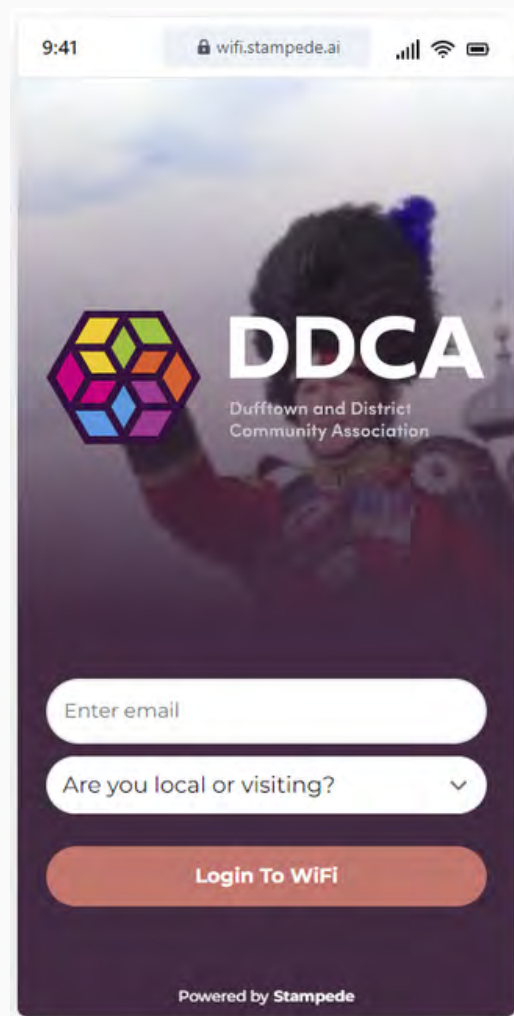
Key learnings

Technical considerations

The building used to install the hardware is listed. This required us to find an installation solution that respected the listed nature of the building while providing strong wifi signal reach. Furthermore, the wifi signal struggles to reach past thick walls and buildings. As such, the reach of the network is limited to the main streets coming off Dufftown square. Similar projects in the future should consider the technical feasibility and reach of the wifi signal.

Financial sustainability

Based on the first three months' user metrics, there is demand for free public wifi in Dufftown. The project has achieved its desired outcomes by providing free internet access and improving the connectedness in Dufftown town centre. As such, there is scope to continue delivering the service. To cover the running costs and ensure the service is financially sustainable in the long run, DDCA will consider how the captive portal can be monetised through local business advertisements and sponsorships.



Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our findings further, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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Dufftown community wifi project is funded by the EDF Dorenell Windfarm Community Benefit Fund, which is administered by Foundation Scotland.



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