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Slowing down and enjoying local

By Denise Glass
Tayside reporter, BBC Scotland news website

People across Perth are taking the time to enjoy local produce, culture, history and the environment.

A series of Cittaslow weekends have been - and still are - taking place in the town throughout September.

Perth was the first area in Scotland to become Cittaslow back in March last year.

Cittaslow is pronounced Cheetaslow and is translated from Italian to mean slow city or slow town.

Douglas Ritchie, one of the people behind the Perth scheme, explains: "Cittaslow is a network of over a hundred towns in 15 countries across the world that have adopted the same set of principles to enhance their quality of life.

"It's very much about celebrating the things that make each town unique and special - so it's about encouraging people to go out and enjoy local culture and local traditions, enjoy local food and really get involved in their local communities."

Cittaslow grew out of the Slow Food movement - which is all about rejecting mass produced fast food and instead buying local produce and taking time to prepare and eat it.

There are Cittaslow towns in Australia, Poland, South Korea, Germany, Norway, Spain and Italy - where they were founded.

Only places with fewer than 50,000 people can sign up and they have to meet and promise to work towards a series of goals aimed at promoting the area's unique features.

A major target is to encourage difference to avoid towns becoming clones of each other.

The movement also wants to slow down the pace of modern living, while not rejecting modern technology.

Perth first got involved out of a desire to support and promote local food producers, but also liked the other ideas of protecting the environment, conserving old buildings and encouraging local traditions.

Over the months organisers have been supporting the local farmers' market and encouraging school children to grow fruit and vegetables and then experiment with ways of cooking them.



All Cittaslow towns must hold a regular farmers' market



Locals are encouraged to explore the area's features, such as Kinnoull Hill

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They have also been trying to conserve orchards in the Carse of Gowrie - which was once home to hundreds of fruit growing plots, but now only has about nine orchards.



The idea of joining Cittaslow came from a wish to support food producers

The only other Cittaslow town in Scotland is Linlithgow in West Lothian.

Mr Ritchie believes that Perth locals have got loads out of being part of the movement.

He said: "There has been quite a lot of pride in the fact that Perth is Scotland's first Cittaslow town.

"I think there's growing awareness now and growing understanding of the benefits of buying local, particularly things like local food and local arts and crafts and local business have had a benefit from that."

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