

Press Release
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SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED FOR HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TOURISM AWARDS 2007

The Highlands and Islands-wide quest to honour the area's most successful tourism businesses, initiatives and individuals is on target for a nail-biting finale as the shortlist for the 2007 Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards is announced.

The awards scheme recognises industry players at the top of their game across a range of distinct categories, each designed to reflect the high quality, diversity and creativity synonymous with tourism today in the Highlands and Islands.

This year there are 12 awards up for grabs and 33 shortlisted nominees fighting for the ultimate accolade of a prestigious Highlands and Islands Tourism Award.

The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony and dinner at the Drumossie Hotel in Inverness on Friday, 16th November.

Shortlisted winners represent a wide cross-section of the regions around the Highlands and Islands, including entries ranging from Strathspey to Skye and from Sutherland to Shetland.

The Old Forge at Knoydart has made it to the shortlist in three different categories – Best Visitor Experience, Marketing Initiative and Highland Dining Out Experience.

Bogbain Farm, Inverness has been shortlisted in the New Business Tourism category, and faces stiff competition from Tigh Dearg Hotel on the Isle of North Uist, The Castle and Gardens of Mey in Thurso and walkhighlands.co.uk on the Isle of Skye.

A range of businesses are in the running for the Community Tourism Award – Invergordon Tourism Alliance, Who Cares Wins on the Isle of Lewis and Lochaber Centre for Tourism Excellence; and the Highland 2007 Award sees Feis an Eilean 2007, Cromarty 2007 – Sea Cromarty Sparkle and Adventure Racing World Championships 2007 competing as finalists.

People as well as businesses are recognised in the awards and four promising young tourism professionals - Grant MacNicol of Dornoch Castle Hotel, Rory Cameron and Daniel Campbell, both of the Clansman Hotel, Loch Ness-side and Katy Maclelland of The Three Chimneys on Skye – are finalists in the Highland Young Ambassador of the Year Award, sponsored by the Royal Bank of Scotland.

The award for Investing in the Environment and Highland Ambassador of the Year will be announced and presented at the event.

VisitScotland Highland Area Director, Scott Armstrong, said: “We are in one of the most competitive industries in the world and we know that it’s the little things we do which will make the difference and keep visitors coming back to the Highlands for more.

“The Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards do a fantastic job of recognising the businesses across our area that go the extra mile to drive up quality and make a holiday in the highlands and Islands unforgettable.

“I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the businesses that have been shortlisted and wish them luck in the final stages of judging.”

The Chair of the Awards Board, Elizabeth Mackintosh said: “We have been very impressed by the quality of entries we have received this year from tourism businesses and initiatives from Caithness to Kingussie and from Skye to Shetland.

“In reaching these final stages, all the contenders are already recognised as outstanding performers in the industry and we would like to congratulate them on the standards they have set and the contribution they have made to raising the tourism game in the Highlands. We wish them all the best of luck as we head for an exciting finale in November.”

Over 350 representatives from the region’s top tourism, hospitality, leisure and travel businesses will attend the prestigious awards ceremony in November to celebrate all that is best in tourism in the Highlands and Islands. The ceremony will be compered by STV presenter and anchorman, Steven Jardine.

Categories this year include Best Visitor Experience, Community Tourism, Customer Care, Highland Ambassador of the Year, Highland Dining Out Experience, Highlands Young Ambassador of the Year, Innovation, Investing in the Environment, Marketing Initiative, New Tourism Business, Tourism People Development and fittingly this year, Highland 2007 Award, encompassing aspects of the diverse and traditional culture in the Highlands and Islands.

Sponsors for 2007 are: Scottish Provincial Press, VisitScotland, The Royal Bank of Scotland, Glenfiddich, Historic Scotland, The UK Atomic Energy Authority, British Waterways, The Highland Council, Highland 2007, CalMac Ferries Ltd, SNH and the **Keith** consultancy offering PR support.

ENDS

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TOURISM AWARDS 2007 FINALISTS

- CUSTOMER CARE (sponsored by VisitScotland): Morag's Lodges, Fort Augustus; Jacobite – Experience Loch Ness, Inverness; The Torridon, Torridon; The Lodge – Daviot Mains, Daviot.
- BEST VISITOR EXPERIENCE (sponsored by Glenfiddich): The Old Forge, Knoydart; Jacobite – Experience Loch Ness, Inverness; Speyside Heather Garden and Visitor Centre, Dulnain Bridge.
- NEW TOURISM BUSINESS: Bogbain Adventure and Heritage Farm, Inverness; Tigh Dearg Hote, Bar, Restaurant and Leisure Club, Lochmaddy, North Uist; The Castle and Gardens of May, Thurso; walkhighlands.co.uk, Staffin, Isle of Skye.
- HIGHLAND 2007 (sponsored by Highland 2007): Feis an Eilean 2007, Isle of Skye; Cromarty 2007 – Sea Cromarty Sparkle; Adventure Racing World Championships.
- COMMUNITY TOURISM (sponsored by The Highland Council): Invergordon Tourism Alliance; Who Cares Wins, Isle of Lewis; Lochaber Centre for Tourism Excellence.
- INNVOATION (sponsored by British Waterways, Scotland): Office Lodge, Lerwick, Shetland; Booth Scotland Ltd, Inverness; Speyside Heather Garden and Visitor Centre, Dulnain Bridge;
- TOURISM PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT (sponsored by UKAEA): The Highland Folk Museum, Kingussie; Historic Scotland – Visitor Services
- MARKETING INITIATIVE (sponsored by Historic Scotland): The Old Forge, Knoydart; Tuminds Ltd, Inverness; TAIGH Chearsabhagh, Lochmaddy, North Uist.
- HIGHLAND DINING OUT EXPERIENCE: The Torridon, Torridon; The Chandlery, The Bosville Hotel, Portree, Isle of Skye; The Old Forge, Knoydart; The Cabarfeidh Hotel, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis.
- INVESTING IN THE ENVIRONMENT: To be announced and presented on the evening
- HIGHLAND YOUNG AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR (sponsored by the Royal Bank of Scotland): Grant MacNicol, Dornoch Castle Hotel; Rory Cameron, Clansman Hotel; Daniel Campbell, Clansman Hotel; Katy Maclelland, The Three Chimneys.
- HIGHLAND AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR (sponsored by Caledonian MacBrayne): To be announced and presented on the evening

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