

Press Release  
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## **HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TOURISM INDUSTRY WINNERS HONOURED AT GLITTERING AWARDS CEREMONY**

The Highlands and Islands' top tourism businesses were announced during a glittering awards ceremony at the Drumossie Hotel in Inverness on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> November.

It was a nail-biting finale as 350 representatives from the region's top tourism, hospitality, leisure and travel businesses gathered for the Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards 2007 to discover who had won the most prestigious hospitality and tourism industry awards which could help to raise their profile across the country.

The awards showcase and celebrate business excellence and quality in the tourism industry in the Highlands and Islands, and this year there were 12 awards up for grabs and one special award for outstanding services to the tourism industry.

Awards Board Chair Elizabeth Mackintosh said: "The evening was a fitting tribute to the passion displayed by businesses and individuals around the Highlands and Islands who contribute to the high quality, diversity and creativity synonymous with tourism in the region today. It's important that the industry consistently strives to set standards which make the region a top "must visit, must return" destination and to achieve the highest levels of customer satisfaction; without doubt, the enthusiasm and dedication demonstrated by our winners sets a shining example for others to follow".

One of the highlights of the evening was the closely guarded announcement of the Highland Ambassador of the Year which was awarded to Duncan Chisholm of the renowned Inverness-based family kiltmaking business, for the time and energy he has devoted to making a difference to tourism in the Highlands and Islands.

Duncan is acknowledged throughout the industry for always delivering a first class service, and going above and beyond the call of duty for his local customers and visitors to the Highlands. He has devoted significant time and effort into various projects, promoting and marketing the Highlands and Islands including the Inverness town twinning initiative, and has donated much of his time to ensuring the growth and development of the tourism industry in the Highlands and Islands.

A special award was given this year for outstanding services to the tourism industry in the Highlands. The award recognised the professional year-round service provided by the Highland Council Countryside Rangers and the range of high quality activities linked to the understanding and enjoyment of the area's world class landscapes, wildlife, culture and history. Their local knowledge and enthusiasm was seen not only to enhance the experiences of visitors and local communities, but it also helped a wider local audience understand, appreciate and enjoy the region's countryside.

Bringing a cultural flavour to the evening were the young Gaelic singers and musicians from Feis Rois, which has provided a platform for the tuition and performance of traditional music, song and dance in Ross and Cromarty since 1986. The musical entertainment ranged from clarsach and bagpipes to fiddles and was a big hit with the distinguished guests. Other live entertainment was by Red Square, who played a mix of Scottish and popular music.

Compere for the evening was Steven Jardine, STV's presenter and anchorman, who kept the evening running smoothly and maintained the dramatic tension throughout the awards ceremony. Journalist and broadcaster, Lesley Riddoch, was guest of honour.

Summarising this year's event, Scott Armstrong, Area Director for VisitScotland Highlands said: "All the award winners are a fantastic example of excellence within the tourism industry and I'm thrilled this has been recognised by the Highlands and Island Tourism Awards. They, alongside other excellent businesses, are helping to position the Highlands and Islands as a premium destination for visitors.

"Tourism is an extremely competitive industry, but with businesses like those recognised by the awards setting the standard for Scotland, we're undoubtedly in an excellent position to achieve our shared ambition of growing tourism revenues by 50% by 2015."

The full list of Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards winners is:

**WILDERNESS SCOTLAND**

Investing in the Environment: sponsored by Scottish Natural Heritage

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL COUNTRYSIDE RANGERS**

Special award for outstanding services to the tourism industry in the Highlands, presented by Scottish Natural Heritage Chairman, Andrew Thin

**HIGHLAND FOLK MUSEUM**, Kingussie

Tourism People Development: sponsored by UK Atomic Energy Authority

**INVERGORDON TOURISM ALLIANCE**

Community Tourism Award: sponsored by the Highland Council

**TAIGH CHEARSABHAGH**, Lochmaddy, North Uist

Marketing Initiative: sponsored by Historic Scotland

**OFFICELODGE**, Lerwick, Shetland

Innovation: sponsored by British Waterways

**BOGAIN ADVENTURE AND HERITAGE FARM**, Inverness  
New Tourism Business: sponsored by Bord na Gaidhlig

**THE TORRIDON**, Torridon, Wester Ross  
Highland Dining Out Experience: sponsored by Scottish Provincial Press

**MORAG'S LODGE**, Fort Augustus  
Customer Care: sponsored by VisitScotland

**THE OLD FORGE**, Knoydart, By Mallaig  
Best Visitor Experience: sponsored by Glenfiddich

**FEIS AN EILEIN 2007**, Teangue, Isle of Skye  
Highland 2007: sponsored by Highland 2007

**GRANT MACNICOL**, Dornoch Castle Hotel, Dornoch  
Young Ambassador of the Year: sponsored by the Royal Bank of Scotland

**DUNCAN CHISHOLM**  
Ambassador of the Year: sponsored by Caledonian MacBrayne

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