

Press Release  
TKC7011  
Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2007

## **HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS AIMING HIGH AT CANNES FILM FESTIVAL**

As the 60<sup>th</sup> Cannes Film Festival gets under way tomorrow (Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> May), movie makers are heading to the hills as the Highlands and Islands becomes an increasingly coveted location for films.

The Scottish Highlands and Islands Film Commission (SHIFC), whose representatives have flown out to the Cannes Film Festival to do business with the celluloid world's movers and shakers, is seeing a growing interest in the region more than a decade on from the blockbusters *Braveheart* and *Rob Roy*. And thanks to the additional help of the recent *Harry Potter* movies, a new raft of films featuring the landscape of the Highlands and Islands are being released this year or are in the pipeline for future filming in the region.

After a dip following concerns over tax legislation in 2005, the Highlands and Islands is attracting a high number of enquiries about film projects. The rate at which such enquiries are converted into actual productions stands at almost 50%, with economic investment for projects in 2006-2007 expected to reach an estimated £6million.

Trish Shorthouse, of SHIFC, which promotes the area globally as a location for film making, said: "We have been getting a good return for the work we have put in considering we are operating in an extremely competitive market and that the cost of filming in Scotland is affected by the high exchange rate.

“Cannes is all about making new contacts and meeting existing ones. It’s a huge opportunity to get at all the world’s movie makers in a short space of time and show them not only the stunning locations we have, but also to show them that we have got skilled production crews and the infrastructure to provide the right services.”

She added: We are hoping that a major Scottish/Danish joint production will be shot on location in the north of Scotland soon. We met the producers at last year’s festival and they have come back for further discussions with us this year”.

Two films shot in the Highlands and Islands will be shown at Cannes. The first, *Mister Lonely*, a Scottish and French co-production starring award winning actress Samantha Morton and James Fox, is due for release this summer. The film, which features scenes shot around Duncraig Castle at Plockton, is in *Un Certain Regard* and if it secures one of the festival’s coveted prizes, there could be tremendous tourism spin-offs for the area.

Also featuring in this year’s line-up is the first Gaelic feature film to be screened in Cannes. The *Inaccessible Pinnacle (Seachd)* is a family drama filmed on Skye, with the assistance of the SHIFC, and made by Skye-based film maker Chris Young. It will have two screenings in market in Cannes and there are hopes it will get a worldwide distribution deal.

The fantasy epic *Stardust*, made by Paramount and starring a host of big names including Robert de Niro, Michelle Pfeiffer and Sienna Miller, will also raise the profile of the Highlands and Islands when it is released later this year.

Since 1994 the SHIFC has had a presence in Cannes as part of a wider Scottish delegation and over the years it has built up an extensive network of national and international business contacts including production executives who have either filmed or intend to film in Scotland, and delegates from a wide range of agencies who support the industry.

By working with the UK Film Centre in Cannes and co-ordinating meetings, lunches and receptions in order to network with these influential contacts, the SHIFC aims to raise global awareness of Scotland, and the Highlands and Islands in particular, as a location for filming and as a good base for crews, film facilities and services.

A Film Crews Welcome Scheme, piloted by SHIFC, is to be rolled out nationwide by VisitScotland. It will ensure that Scotland's tourism industry is familiar with the requirements of film location scouts, producers and film crews when they are working in the area and can provide them with an exemplary service countrywide.

A reception will be held by SHIFC for media moguls at a villa on Monday, 21<sup>st</sup> May, themed around the delights of Shetland, Orkney and the islands' Viking heritage.

Ms Shorthouse said: "Things are looking very promising film-wise for the Highlands and Islands. Also, people forget that Cannes is a TV as well as a film festival and the Highlands and Islands is showing up more and more on television, particularly in the form of nature programmes. There are some tremendous opportunities for us here."

ENDS

EDITORS' NOTES

- Check out [www.cannesvenue.com/2007blog](http://www.cannesvenue.com/2007blog) for all the news from the SHIFC Cannes Villa, its events and sponsors throughout the Cannes Film Festival
- Further information from Caroline Keith at the **Keith** consultancy on 01463 811000 or 07734 543923 or [caroline@thekeithconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:caroline@thekeithconsultancy.co.uk)