

Celtic Fringe – 12 month Report by Project / Subject, 2007 -2008

General Situation / Background:

Celtic Fringe have a project co-ordinator in place at an average rate of 8 hours per week. The remit of this post is to provide services towards the general running of the organisation, maintain the email based listserver, and to progress any proposals that come from the committee and membership. As a result, and depending on what's happening at the time, the figure of 8 hours is really just a simple average over the year: *actual* hours in a given week can vary from 0 – 30!

Now that the NEST project (see separately) has been completed, several of these proposals are likely to come to the fore over the next 12 months – at least one of them, “*Target*”, is potentially one of the most interesting proposals we have yet been involved in.

General Membership services / development:

Membership numbers are doing well with numbers at just over 100, (a notable increase on last year) with over 90 of those attached to our list server. And for those who are sitting there wondering what on earth a “listserver” is - it's a method by which members can all be kept in touch at the press of a button (or sending of an email!). This is a two way service: Myself and the committee can forward emails to all members simultaneously – but any individual member can also forward news, views, and information as well to everybody: Just email the address discussions@celticfringe.org.uk, press “send” – hey ho, it's done!

Note: If you USE email, but know nothing about the list, then this is because we are not aware that you have an e-mail facility – please let our co-ordinator know about this by forwarding a note to douglasg@burach.org.uk

And remember, it's up to yourself as the email recipient to let us know if this has changed over the last year – a huge amount of people gaily change their addresses and website on a regular basis without ever realising that organisations they belong to aren't automatically aware of these changes!

Of these members, 85% are now on a standing order arrangement for fees related to the website and CF in general – this is a much more efficient method of payment, saving time and trouble for all concerned, and has streamlined the administration by quite a large extent.

There have been a number of new members recently, and we'd like to welcome all of them on board. We trust they find this report of interest.

And absolutely finally – As the project co-ordinator, I am always available to contact for any feedback, comments or suggestions. Contact details are as follows:

Name: Douglas Gibson
E-Mail address: douglasg@burach.org.uk / contact@celticfringe.org.uk
Telephone: 01445 712085
Location: 13 Strath, Gairloch, Wester Ross, IV21 2BX

And so, on to the projects themselves. *What's been happening?*

Ongoing.....

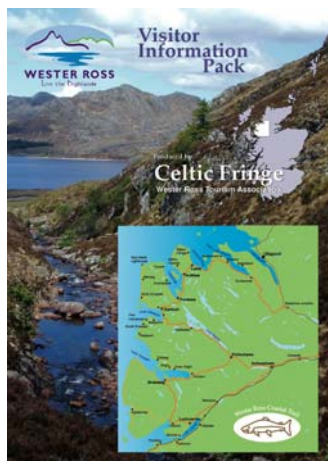
(Note: Some headlines on the following pages are “clickable” links)

Visitor Information Pack

Broadly similar to an item produced a number of years ago, but now quite far out of date, this is an information pack that contains details of a range of activities and suggestions for the visitor to do while they are on holiday here. The aim is to keep spending local, rather than see folk travel outwith the area simply because they aren't fully aware of what there is available here.

ALL accommodation providers in the area can be supplied with these free, whether these providers are members of CF or not. Our initial target for this was a minimum of 20 advertisers, however over 40 eventually asked to be included. 1000 of the packs are being produced and distributed during Spring 2008.

The project has been totally sustainable, requiring no outside funding at all. Updates will be planned for approx 2 years hence.



TARGET – Tourism Apprenticeships: Recognising and Growing Excellence through Training

The need for the TARGET project has been identified through discussions with local employers and the Gairloch High School. The aims are to encourage local skills development, increase knowledge and awareness of the tourism “product” in a Scottish context, and to provide mentored work placements in the local tourism industry for the 16 – 25 age group. Long term, TARGET intends to move youngsters away from the idea that tourism is simply a means of generating extra funds over a short season, and to show that this is actually one of the most important and interesting long term industries in the region, carrying real work and career prospects for many.

Along with the Gairloch High School, six local businesses have pledged support for this proposal. We have agreed that the optimum start date would be late September / early October, and have started to source the necessary funding required for what would be an initial pilot year to establish the potential for TARGET. The Gairloch High School catchment area will be used to initially pilot this concept, and if successful, can be rolled out further afield.

[Creation of a Wester Ross wide, fully interactive website](#)

Click on the above link, and you will see the existing Wester Ross.com website. This was created with the help of Northern Periphery funding to see how a generic “portal” website might work for the area. Our own (and other) local sites are full of accommodation details, but sometimes don’t go very much further than that. Amongst the items that we propose to include are:

- **A downloadable media gallery of area images that local businesses, media and partners can access for use in their own materials**
- **A visitor statistics package & customer database**
- **Local access for communities in order to update and maintain local information on site**

This would not replace existing websites, but would act as a feeder site to aim potential visitors towards these. The goal must be to try and weave together the plethora of existing sites and present these collectively in a highly visible manner, coupled with a genuinely comprehensive amount of information on the entire area, and we will be liaising with other groups and individuals to see how we can achieve this.

[Activities Guide \(Update & Pricing Revision\)](#)

This is a full colour quality booklet of over 40 pages packed with information on activities in Wester Ross – who provides them, contact details, maps, useful telephone numbers, photographs etc. The booklet and an accompanying pocket handout (listing and describing over 20 activities in the area) are packed in a plastic wallet.

NOTE: The pocket handout is FREE to any of you that carry out publicity drives, in whatever numbers you require, or if you simply want to display this as a piece of visitor information to take away. Full-scale booklets are now available at the wholesale price of £2.00 (Retail £3.00 as a suggestion)

The guide is available through our website, and has resulted in a steady flow of requests to supply this, albeit generally at one copy per enquiry.

“We have just returned from a short break in Mellon Udrigle, and we found the guide informative and useful”. Richard and Sally Hudson, Harrogate

“Very impressed with the layout, as it was easy to find the relevant activities and all the contact numbers”. Bill Oakes (hotmail address)

Tourism @ Wester Ross

Tourism@ was formed to potentially take forward joint projects which affect the whole of Wester Ross. In 2006, T@WR produced a five year marketing strategy for the area which has been approved by all the groups involved. Along with developing a brand identifier / strapline for the area, (separate article) these have been the two main projects to date in a collective sense. The group was heavily involved in the NEST project, and with this now having finished, it is expected that T@WR will continue to hold regular meetings between the main

groups involved with a view to informing and co-operating with each other, and to present a more integrated approach to tourism in this area. Following a recent meeting in Gairloch, the GBA (Gairloch Business Association) will now be on board at these meetings as well.

Tourism@ was initiated through discussions between Celtic Fringe and Highland Council, and CF have been a lead organisation and voice in development of the group

NEST

This stands for Northern Environment for Sustainable Tourism. For the last few years, Wester Ross was part of a collective of Sweden, Iceland, and Finland all of whom are looking at ways of developing their National Park areas (although we do not have a national park as such here, we have a National Scenic Area – hence our involvement.)

NEST has now finished as a project, however, and unfortunately there are no clear plans as to a possible successor as yet. We will stay in the frame with this, however, because if there is ever a “NEST 2” it would be well worth the area’s involvement.

Have a look at the website for further info on the regions and partners that were involved.

Wester Ross - wide “Events” website

There are several ways in which you can arrange to have events put on the site, so please have a look at it, and forward information as required. **It is there for everybody to use, is not only limited to CF members, and it’s FREE!**

Advertising is also available on the site for a very reasonable £10 per entry – this can include a link to your own website.

Any queries about the site, or for putting information on, please email:

events@celticfringe.org.uk

Wester Ross Logo & Strapline

Final versions of these were decided on after consultation with various community groups and individuals throughout Wester Ross early last year (2007). However, at the time of writing these are still not freely available.

The project to develop the logo & strapline was given to a local organisation as far back as January 2006. Although there were certain delays in obtaining funding to progress the work, it was reasonably expected that the project would have been completed by mid - 2007.

Unfortunately, the organisation in question has consistently failed to deliver this as a finished project, despite several attempts by both ourselves and Visit Scotland to obtain completion.

The delays eventually led to Challenge Funding being withdrawn, subsequently affecting LEC funding as well, losing a total of something in the order of £4000.

In January of this year, Celtic Fringe offered to take the project over, however we were *not* given clear answers to questions on the funding applications and actual finance surrounding the work – therefore, it was decided not to pursue this course of action.

It was also discovered that no action had taken place at all to launch or promote the items concerned, and the withdrawal of funding meant that there were no longer funds available to carry this out anyway.

However, subsequent discussions with LADBA / GBA / UTBA, and Highland Council now mean that we should shortly be in a position to access funds required to complete this. And since the property rights to the logo and strapline collectively lie with the above groups and NOT with any single organisation, we will also be taking over the future administration and management of the project. Once the current Visitor pack work has been completed, we will therefore be launching the logo with immediate effect.



Proposed!

Development of a funding resource for the Environment (Held over from last year)

This is based on the idea that the vast majority of people visit this area because of its relative peace and quiet, the fact that it is one of the most scenically attractive areas of Europe, and that it is clean, fresh, and unspoilt (*and before anybody shouts "No it's not!", and starts rabbiting on about how we've felled trees and ravaged vast areas in order to install a few deer and grouse for the privileged few etcthis is from the visitor perspective*)

In several others areas of Europe, schemes have been set up whereby visitors are encouraged to contribute to an ongoing fund that is aimed specifically at projects designed to enhance and develop the local environment. There is a written commitment / pledge given that all contributions will be used this way, and this has proven an extremely effective way of working.

The contributions in question are individually tiny (ie: the equivalent of 1% of your accommodation bill or similar) but in an area where there are many thousands of visitors annually, this raises a considerable amount of income. As an example, the town of Bled (Slovenia, population 10,000) asks for a voluntary contribution of ONE Euro per night.....68p. **This results in an annual income of no less than £408,000 at the last count!** Obviously, the figures would be different here, but you get the point.

Other Info and Activities

Main Website:

The site always comes up within the first set of results visible, and as such, meets the requirements of such a site. But the way websites operate is not always clear to everybody, and we would like to emphasise to all that an enquiry might not always arrive on your doorstep directly from Celtic Fringe. It can equally stem from the multitude of links that are carried nowadays by almost every website. Therefore, your booking can come from an initial visit to a UK wide site based in London, then through to Highland Council, to VisitScotland, to Celtic Fringe. Or, it might go from VisitScotland to a site that looks at Scottish geology, then through a myriad of other sites including Celtic Fringe, and eventually to your B&B or Guest House. Visitors are not always clear about the differences between the official tourist organisations and the community tourist groups or individuals that operate here - so, our priority is to make the site visible to search engines and to make sure it appears on the list of results that greet the web traveller. Which it does!

And if you are a member - check your advert / entry for accuracy and up to date info. If there is something that needs altered, contact me on douglasg@burach.org.uk

Listserver

This has carried about 20 separate newsletters and articles over the last year, never mind a significant amount of membership related information. Despite the occasional glitch (where an email that should go to an individual inadvertently goes to the whole membership), it remains well read and a highly useful piece of kit that enables a disparate....look it up.....organisation to function effectively.

Representation of members, Celtic Fringe, and Wester Ross:

We are regularly asked for input and feedback to a variety of programmes and events. Examples might be Highland Council's annual tourism seminar, the Tourism Innovation Group, AimHi, and VisitScotland meetings. And there are several others! If you haven't heard of them, don't worry! The point is that they all exist, they are part of the Tourism scene across Scotland, and feedback to them all helps maintain our profile here in Wester Ross.

Reports etc

If you wish further information on any of our work over the last few years, just contact us through myself or the committee (who will then probably ask me!) Reports are available covering:

- Annual reports, 2003 – 04, 2004 – 05, 2005 – 06, 2006 - 07
- Research into potential walking routes and paths covering Wester Ross, 2004
- Highland Council Tourism Seminars, 2003 - 2007
- The Wester Ross Marketing Strategy (Nov 2005)
- Summarised version of above
- Joint tourism associations meeting at Cromarty, March 2004 (leading directly to T@)
- NEST visit to Koli National Park, Finland, October 2005

- NEST Icelandic Visit, and return trip by students here in May 2007
- AGM details etc

Finally:

Are you aware of UK-APAS? This is a free information service which carries details of frauds / bounced payments /scams / disruptive guests to watch out for.

<http://www.ukapas.org.uk/>

Do you actually plan your marketing and advertising activities? If so, there's a fascinating website with all the date you need to help you...

http://www.visitscotland.org/research_and_statistics/national_facts_and_figures/tourism_in_scotland_2006.htm

How many Tourism Associations are there in Scotland? Find out on

<http://tigonline.atkinsgeospatial.com/frameset.aspx> There's a lot!

Thanks to all the committee (**Fran, Sandie, Chris, Gina, James and recently – Richard Spence, from Gairloch**) for support and encouragement , and also to:

Highland Council, Members of NEST, T@ Wester Ross, SNH, NTS, VisitScotland, &.....everybody else.....plus.....The members! That means YOU!

Douglas Gibson, Celtic Fringe Development Officer April 2008

