

Celtic Fringe – 12 month Report by Project / Subject, 2008 -2009

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!

This year was very productive, and has seen several valuable pieces of work completed that should see us in good stead for the next few years – Read on!

General Membership services / development:

Membership numbers are doing well with numbers at around 110 (a notable increase compared to a couple of years ago) with nearly 100 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!). Until recently, members could use this to forward news and views to all other members of the organisation, however it was decided that the system was prone to sending out emails that were not always aimed at the appropriate recipients, therefore this now operates one way only – from myself to the membership. **Note, that it IS still possible for anybody to send news into this system though - it just has to come through myself first of all.** Email to: contact@celticfringe.org.uk and I will be delighted to forward this to everybody.....honest!

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 me know about this by forwarding a note to contact@celticfringe.org.uk

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

The vast majority of members are now on a standing order system for payment – 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.

To close, 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?*

Completed.....

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

[The Wester Ross Brand – “Live the Highlands”](#)

The Wester Ross brand was launched in November 2008 at venues in Lochcarron, Gairloch, and Ullapool. A full report on the brand launches can be read by clicking on the headline above. **Note: This link also contains application forms to join the brand, and other relevant information.**

On the surface, this may simply look like a straightforward logo and a few carefully debated words (*which believe me, they were*), but we are confident the brand image will grow in importance as time goes on. This was brought home to us by several other projects that we were involved with over the year, many including examinations of other places and locations in the world that have a successful and sustainable tourism industry – in short, they ALL have a brand logo as an integral part of their development, and they all include a set of criteria that identify the particular qualities that they seek to promote about their own area and its attractions. Not only that, but as the brand progresses, it has become clear that many funders now expect to see this kind of background thinking behind a successful organisation – therefore the potential importance of the new brand to the future development of Wester Ross and to Celtic Fringe cannot be underestimated. Brand membership also says to the visitor “I run a successful business, and I care about your custom & about Wester Ross’s future”

It’s £10 a year to become a member = two pints and a packet of crisps!



**** Thanks to Highland Council for their ongoing support, both financial and practical, towards developing the brand project ****

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

Click on the above link, and you will see the new Wester Ross.com website. This was created with the help of **Highland Council** funding to develop a generic “portal” website for the area. Our own (and other) local sites are full of accommodation details, but sometimes don’t go very much further than that. This site will seek to develop a really first class information resource for the area, while directing actual accommodation inquiries to the appropriate local sites that operate at any given moment. At the time of writing, we are aware that there are still some pieces of text and a few photographs to be loaded on to the site, however this will be

done in the very near future. **Note: If you are interested in contributing to the site, let us know! Access can be gained to the site via a password, and you can assist with its development at your own pace.**

Are you a hotel, business, or guest house that occasionally runs special offers or has news that you would like to send out to people? The site also has a news / special offer facility, along with the ability to gradually build up a customer database – this has already started, and we already have interested parties for this. ***Let us know about your special / seasonal offers!***

**** Thanks to Highland Council & local Highland Councillors for their valuable support and assistance in developing this site ****

[Feasibility Study for WREN](#) (Wester Ross Environmental Network)

The WREN network has been in existence for a few years now, and was originally formed to take forward the Biodiversity Plan for Wester Ross (Click [HERE](#) for a link to this). The natural environment - which, by association, has a strong connection with the local biodiversity – is one of the main reasons why people visit the area. Therefore, maintaining and sustaining this has to be in the interests of us all. At the same time, WREN needed to raise its public profile, while seeking new and innovative ways in which it could raise funds to sustain its work. With the assistance of funding through Scottish Natural Heritage, Celtic Fringe therefore carried out a feasibility study to look at various ways in which this might happen. The principal suggestion was through a “Visitor Payback Scheme” – would this work? What were the alternatives? Have a look for yourself at the results.

As a result of the scheme, WREN (with the assistance of both CF and SNH) is currently taking forward some of the ideas expressed in that report.

Thanks to SNH, particularly Nicola Tallach and Mary Gibson, for their assistance

Ongoing!

Tourism@ Wester Ross

Well, whether this is “ongoing” or “temporarily stalled - awaiting mechanic”, we are not sure. As a quick reminder, T@ etc was the result of efforts by Celtic Fringe and Highland Council to try and get the various associations in Wester Ross to work together towards developing and promoting Wester Ross as a region, rather than focusing on their immediate neighbourhood. The initial groups involved were ourselves, LADBA (from Lochcarron), the UTBA (Ullapool), and GALE (from the Gairloch / Inverasdale area). The GBA (Gairloch Business Assoc.) subsequently became a participant as well.

It has worked very well on several levels – without the time and effort spent on this, we would not have a Tourism Strategy for Wester Ross for a start. It is also questionable whether we would have an area website, the WREN study may not have been carried out, and the brand might not be here. Neither would our workplan for the forthcoming year or two be quite so obvious. In tandem with this, **Celtic Fringe, LADBA, UTBA, and GBA** have all developed greatly improved links between each other, and are no longer working in comparative isolation. However, GALE’s involvement with T@ caused a number of difficulties that cannot be resolved, and they are currently not part of future plans. Unfortunately, due to the

way in which the original constitution was written, it is difficult for T@ to carry on as a constituted organisation with this issue hanging over it – so for the moment, it has been effectively mothballed. However, the other groups are working well together, and have joint projects in the pipeline for the coming year.

Newly Underway!

“Live the Highlands” – promoting Wester Ross for 2010 and beyond

We have been awarded a significant grant from Visit Scotland towards a year long drive to promote the Wester Ross area. This will take the form of printed material, website development, and representation at the Glasgow Caravan and Camping Show, 2010. With visitor numbers up for this year across the area (for a variety of reasons – credit crunch, travel concerns and so on), this is an opportunity to turn what might be a temporarily busy year into a sustainable boost over the next few years.

There are advertising opportunities available for local businesses as part of this drive, and the whole campaign will be closely linked into the brand development as well. The main challenge for ourselves in the immediate future is to meet the demands of the Growth fund and generate the balance of funding for the project from the industry itself – ie: Advertising! If you and your business would like to know more about the campaign, either call Douglas on 01445 712085 OR e.mail contact@celticfringe.org.uk

And finally.....Proposed!

For 2009 – 2010, the main focus will be the “Live the Highlands” campaign. However, we are now actively seeking funding funding for our training program under the name “Target”, and also to carry out a re-run of the Visitor Accomodation packs. The ideal shelf life for these is probably about two years, so a new pack for 2010 would fit in perfectly with this.

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 contact@celticfringe.org.uk

Listserver

This has carried about 28 separate newsletters and articles over the last year, never mind a significant amount of membership related information. It remains well read and a highly useful piece of kit that enables a geographically 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, VisitScotland, and Activity Scotland 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 – 2008 inclusive
- Research into potential walking routes and paths covering Wester Ross, 2004
- Highland Council Tourism Seminars, 2003 - 2008
- 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

Everything is on the website as well! Feel free to download anything!

Our main site: [HERE](#)

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 Richard Spence**) for support and encouragement , and a warm welcome onto the committee now to **Steve Plowman**, from Achnasheen. Also to:

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

Douglas Gibson, Celtic Fringe Development Officer June 2009

And I'm not just a faceless email contact, you know...See "Scruffy Pixie" mode, below.

