

## Celtic Fringe – 12 month Report by Project / Subject, 2006 -2007

### 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.

Additional to the above, the last year has been notable for our involvement of the Wester Ross marketing group called “Tourism@ Wester Ross”, comprising the four main tourism focused organisations in the region. This initiative stemmed from discussions between Celtic Fringe and Highland Council, and we feel that there are many benefits to the area by developing the joint marketing and promotional opportunities that T@ can bring to this area. “(see separate article Page 2 )

### General Membership services / development:

Membership numbers are showing a steady picture with numbers at 89, with over 80 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](mailto: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@ecosse.net](mailto:douglasg@ecosse.net)**

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.

Every year, of course, members come and go, however we have recently had several newcomers to our membership, all joining up over the last few months. We’d like to welcome all of them on board, and 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@ecosse.net](mailto:douglasg@ecosse.net) / [contact@celticfringe.org.uk](mailto: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: Many headlines on the following pages are “clickable” links)

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

This project was undertaken in conjunction with the UTBA (Ullapool Tourism / Business Assoc.), whose help and assistance throughout was greatly appreciated. The finished product 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. It has a core team comprising a representative of the UTBA, Celtic Fringe, LADBA, and GALE – basically, all the major organisations in the area with a focal interest in tourism. The group is supported by regular meetings between the four groups, with regular attendance from SNH, Highland Council, Visit Scotland, and support from others such as NTS and RACE. The private sector has been present at several meetings as well, and Rua Reidh Lighthouse, The Celidih Place, and Loch Torridon Hotel have provided much valued input to the group. 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, these have been the two main outputs to date in a collective sense. With the assistance of T@, however, Celtic Fringe secured funding to develop other project work which is described later on in this report.

*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*

### [Wester Ross Binocular Trail](#)

With assistance from Highland Council, we are currently gathering data on road traffic and car park areas for possible sites. The idea is to create a visitor “Trail” where quality weatherproof binoculars (coin operated) would be placed at a range of viewpoints throughout the area, accompanied by all - weather panels giving details on the areas history, scenery, and

wildlife along with general visitor information. After that, we will commence the process of obtaining permissions to actually go ahead and locate these - to be honest, this is a possible stumbling block, as there are huge potential difficulties at this stage! Anyway, we'll see. Having looked at the other NEST countries (see below) this is unquestionably where this entire region can miss out on so many opportunities - other countries appear to simply be able to agree that idea "x" is a good one, so let's do it. Here, on the other hand, all that seems to happen is a never - ending process of legislation, meetings and discussions, dead ends, and hoops to jump through.....

Obviously, there will be more to it than that, but we came across several examples of private and community enterprise in Iceland recently where ideas seemed to come to fruition far quicker and easier than they could ever do here. People seemed to be able to simply agree on something being a good idea and then get it done! ***Ok, grouse over!***

## [NEST](#)

This stands for Northern Environment for Sustainable Tourism. Wester Ross is 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.)

There has been no work this year which directly involved NEST & Celtic Fringe, although historically, we assisted with the development of the NEST website. The project is also now in the final stages of its three year lifespan – it is an incredibly frustrating experience watching a project which has such potential simply ceasing to be because it was only ever conceived as a three year proposal, and has no resources to operate beyond that. Bearing in mind the problems of communication between four totally separate countries where something like 70 – odd people were involved in the project, it was only this year that the participating countries were really beginning to develop effective ties with each other. Now – *it finishes.*

(Although we understand that there is some thinking going on as to “son of NEST”, these talks take place at a higher level than us minions, so IF we hear anything, we'll let you all know.)

## [Wester Ross - wide “Events” website](#)

While we have always carried events information on our site, this has always been strictly limited to our own immediate area . Following requests from both our own membership and T@ groups, we have now developed a site which carries information on the entire Wester Ross area. It was agreed that this would not affect where people choose to stay as a home base when they come here, but *would* encourage an appreciation of the full range of attractions and entertainment that can be enjoyed by choosing Wester Ross as a destination. The site was created using “Spanglefish” software which is operated through Plexus Media in Cromarty, and will be run by ourselves for the foreseeable future. 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's there for everybody to use, this is not only limited to 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](mailto:events@celticfringe.org.uk)

## Proposed!

### Development of a funding resource for the Environment

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 etc ....this 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.

So, one proposal for the coming year is to develop such a project, probably in conjunction with suitable existing organisations.

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

Click on the above link, and you are right – you won't see anything on Wester Ross. What you *will* see is the current "Skye" website. Our own (and other) local sites are full of accommodation details, what to see and do etc – but don't go very much further than that. Amongst the items that we propose to include are:

- **A downloadable picture gallery of area images that local businesses, media and partners can access for use in their own materials**
- **A visitor statistics package that provides details of the number of users accessing the site, pages accessed, which search engines or phrases they use etc.**
- **A subscriber database through which users can request regular updates about Wester Ross.**
- **An email broadcasting facility through which emails can be sent to addresses contained within the subscriber database.**

This would not replace existing websites, but would act as a feeder site to aim potential visitors towards these. The Skye site is an excellent example of what can be achieved, and 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 finally.....**

Irrespective of whether we develop the area site described previously, it is planned to take the information contained in the “Activities Guide” and translate that onto a specific “Activities” website in much the same way as the events details are now presented.

## **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@ecosse.net](mailto:douglasg@ecosse.net).**

### **Logo and “Strapline” for Wester Ross**

As I write, this is still ongoing.....over thirty members recently wrote on email to pass on their preferences from a short list of possible logos etc that the designer presented to us. As ever, there are some that think “x” is the best, and some that have gone for “y”, so we are not going to obtain a 100% decision on which one to use. The eventual choice should be ready very shortly, however it’s GALE that is dealing with this project, not ourselves. All we can therefore hope to have done is to influence the decision towards our way of thinking.

### **And this didn’t take off as planned.....**

On last years report, there was a proposal for a new “Accomodation Pack” which would be offered to accommodation providers in the area - this would contain generic info on Wester Ross, and would cover the whole area. However, the entire project became hopelessly bogged down in VisitScotland’s “Challenge Funding“ criteria. Three attempts over nearly eight months were made between ourselves, GALE, and T@ to fit in with the funding package, however at the end of the day we gave up. The basic problems were the VS insistence that **all** members of **each** group must be part of the Quality Assured scheme, and that our proposals had to fit some very specific requirements (far be it from me to describe criteria surrounding the scheme as being “narrow minded”). There was a huge amount of bending and shaping to try and achieve this, but at the end of the day any proposal was going to end up with results that VS wanted, and not ourselves. They could have saved a significant amount of time, effort, and cost through clarifying at the beginning that the proposal was unlikely to meet Challenge Funding requirements - but there you go.



Some pictures from Iceland to make you all jealous:



← Reykjavik: Possibly the cleanest, freshest most colourful major city I think we had ever seen!

→ The “Ice Lagoon” from James Bond’s “Die Another Day”. Formed from Small Icebergs breaking off the nearby glacier



← This was described to us as a “small extension” to the farmhouse which is out of view. 20 self catering bedrooms! They must be confident about their future tourist trade.....

→ The lave plain created in the Laki Eruption of 1783. Totally flat, and totally vast....more than 3 hours driving at approx 50mph and we were still on it...and it’s as wide as it’s long!

