

## T@ Wester Ross – AGM & Presentations

*Ledgowan Lodge Hotel, March 7<sup>th</sup>*

### **Background:**

T@ Wester Ross is formed by the four main tourism orientated organisation currently operating in Wester Ross – Celtic Fringe, UTBA (Ullapool), GALE, and LADBA (Lochcarron).

Meetings are attended by a mix of representatives of these groups, along with SNH, the LEC, and private industry, with the object being to market and promote Wester Ross as a whole. This is in the face of ever-increasing competition from a variety of areas not only in this country, but Europe and indeed the world – *this area is no longer an automatic choice for many people when choosing where to spend their leisure time.*

### **After some serious coffee..... The morning sessions.....**

*To business.....*Lloyd Gudgeon kicked off the meeting with an excellent presentation on T@'s actions to date. T@ (like many such organisations) is often asked “What have you done” – and if there have been no “*flash bang*” results, then it’s easy to think there has been nothing happening. The fact is that there has been a great deal of work behind the scenes over the last year, and that this has resulted in two major pieces of underpinning work required to put the foundations onto a long term strategy for Wester Ross, along with several smaller projects which are ongoing just now (yes, even as I type!) These are:

- A five year marketing strategy available as a full length document in only 92 easy to read pages! (However, you may be relieved to hear that it’s also in summarised form). **Please ask if you want a copy of either.**
- A brand logo & strapline for Wester Ross.
- An embryonic portal website, which leads directly to the other four sites
- “Business to Business” days, where producers and service providers from across the area have the opportunity to meet with each other, and discuss ways in which they could work together
- Development of a Binocular trail, a potential source for raising funds to be used towards local Environmental projects, and a website offering a central information source for ALL Wester Ross based events
- Finally, the NEST project - this has allowed us to meet and interact with several groups in other countries who are in a similar position to ourselves. It has also produced a means of core funding T@ for over a year now, and has led directly to some of the thinking behind how a brand could be used to promote quality and marketing opportunities in the area.

**(Useful web addresses and general info on where to find all of this is at the end of the report)**

## **Moving on swiftly.....**

Lloyd having concluded his opening remarks, the subject moved over to the branding exercise. This is being carried out for us by “The Marketing Specialists”, and we were shown the first batch of proposals by TMS’s David McIntyre.

The objective here is to develop a logo, and a memorable strapline. This can take a long time to lodge in peoples minds, and we were fully aware from the start that there will *always* be those who say “Errrr...I don’t like that!” That being said, this was the first opportunity for the thirty or so people in the room to have a look at the initial suggestions. Several were dismissed right away, and the room gradually wore the selection down to three or four which each had elements of what we are seeking. TMS have now to try a combine these into one memorable logo!

It’s not an easy task to explain a logo without an accompanying drawing, and since my artistic skills are some degree below Michelangelo (*though I excel at doing odd little stick – things.....*), we’ll leave this one for the moment. Suffice to say that there are mountains / water involved, though I’m sure you could have guessed that. The final article will be unleashed on you some time in the very near future, however.

### **So, to lunch.**

Taking the advantage of an informal break here between the morning and afternoon sessions, I’ll just explain that the structure of T@ Wester Ross will remain the same for the coming year. That means that the four “Core Network” members remain the same, with any of their committee being able to represent them at T@ meetings. Likewise, SNH, the LEC, private industry etc. are all welcome as well. Other organisations are also kept informed with regard to meetings, and are able to attend as well, though not necessarily in a decision making capacity. In practice, this means up to about ten people are at any given meeting – so there’s a good cross section of the tourism industry there to contribute. Hopefully, all the main organisations are doing their duty by keeping their members informed.

## **The afternoon sessions commenceth.....**

And did so with Gordon Ireland (Highland Council). GI was in slightly unfamiliar territory as he was masquerading as Trish Shorthouse, of the Highlands and Islands Film Commission. The business of films and adverts using Highland – based locations bring in approx £20m (yes, “M”) in direct benefit to the area. The H&I FC offer a range of services to media companies including liaison with service providers, arranging locations and facilities, and generally making sure that the film companies have access to all the assistance and information that they need. There are currently 10 films / TV Progs / adverts etc that have used Wester Ross over the past year, ranging from a full length feature film (Stardust), to various adverts for cars (Range Rover), TV series (Coast – Mapman – When Love Comes to Town).

*It may well be of interest to you to note that they also run a service / accommodation database that you can put your details on should a crew of 15 filmmakers decide they want to stay in your village, visit your restaurant, or zip off hunting big game shellfish – contact details and website at the report conclusion.*

## **And finally:**

We had a presentation from David Key of “Footprint Consulting Limited”.  
Brief background to David:

*High flyer in London.....Well paid advertising executive..... rush rush rush....Woke up one day thinking “Hang on , there’s more to life” .....Changed track completely, moved to New Zealand.....*

*Re trained as an Outdoor Educationalist.....Now runs Footprint from Kingussie, and has developed a range of training courses in conjunction with Strathclyde University.....And comes across as a very honest, likeable and clever bloke, basically.*

I had misgivings about his talk initially, fearing it would veer perilously close to the airy - fairy side of things, but actually this was a very good presentation. The subject matter was close to all our hearts, being the sustainability of ourselves, our lifestyle, and the planet generally. This led into an appreciation and discussion about how important nature based tourism has (is?) becoming, and how Wester Ross is in a really excellent position to play a major role in meeting this demand. I have screeds of notes here, so the best thing to do is offer some quotes from the day:

## **Energy Consumption:**

In terms of total energy consumption, imagine each person requiring one planet per year to simply exist .....but, at present.....

In the USA, each person consumes 8.4 planets per year

In the UK, it’s 4.7 ppy

**But in Bangladesh, it’s down to 0.7 ppy**

## **Wealth:**

The UK average wage is in the top 5% of the planet

A general question to everybody from the low paid to millionaires –

*“For your own circumstances, how much would “enough” be in terms of income”*

The average reply was “About twice what I receive now”

**Food miles** (ie the overall distances involved incurred in buying foodstuffs that sometimes travel halfway around the world to get to your table)

Did you know that by law in the UK, ALL fish (even locally caught in Wester Ross) MUST travel down to Billingsgate fish market first of all before coming back up to your local store.

OR

That all Scallops must first go to Holland to then be irradiated, then return to the UK and your table.

Both of the above are therefore 3 days old before you taste them! (Unless of course you are intending to become a hardened criminal by going down to the trawler as it docks and picking them up there.....but you wouldn’t do that would you?)

## **And finally – Tourism.**

“We don’t want World Class Tourism – We want SCOTTISH Tourism”

Over a five year period, environmental reporting and stories in the media have multiplied by over 6 times.

Over a ten year period, nature based tourism has risen by nearly **300%**

If it’s unsustainable – it will NOT last. (This seems obvious, but underlines the fact that you really must examine whether a business / project / organisation IS genuinely sustainable).

2.5 million people now **leave** the UK each year for an “eco – holiday” abroad.....that’s 2.5 million potential customers of yours! Never mind all the other countries!

Wester Ross is in an ideal position to lock onto this type of leisure pattern, as it shows no sign of slacking off. The whole presentation also totally backed up the experience of those of us who visited Aviemore recently – because everybody there claimed a noticeable and steady increase in general interest and awareness of the environment, sustainability, and ecology.

So, conclusion:

An interesting and well thought out day with several good presentations. In particular, the aforementioned David Key.

If you are an activity or accommodation provider, perhaps you are already focused on the type of holidays and activities suggested by David as being the main movers and shakers for the near future. If not, then it’s probably well worth looking at this – NOW.

And maybe have a look at the report on the Aviemore visit as well.



## Useful websites / addresses:

### **Celtic Fringe Tourism Association**

E mail: [contact@celticfringe.org.uk](mailto:contact@celticfringe.org.uk) website: [www.celticfringe.org.uk](http://www.celticfringe.org.uk)

The Marketing Strategy document: [www.celticfringe.org.uk/marketing.pdf](http://www.celticfringe.org.uk/marketing.pdf)

Aviemore report: <http://www.celticfringe.org.uk/cairngorms.pdf>

The NEST website: [www.nppnest.org](http://www.nppnest.org)

And general links: [www.celticfringe.org.uk/links.htm#cf](http://www.celticfringe.org.uk/links.htm#cf)

### **David Key, Footprint Consulting**

E mail: [dave@footprintconsulting.org](mailto:dave@footprintconsulting.org) website: [www.footprintconsulting.org](http://www.footprintconsulting.org)

### **Trish Shorthouse, Highland and Islands Film Commission (Highland Council)**

E mail: [info@scotfilm.org](mailto:info@scotfilm.org) website: [www.scotfilm.org](http://www.scotfilm.org)

### **T@ Wester Ross's portal site**

[www.visitwester-ross.com](http://www.visitwester-ross.com)