

Press Release  
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## **OUTER HEBRIDES BUSINESS SCOOPS TOP HONOURS AT HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TOURISM AWARDS**

Back-based Broad Bay House celebrated a night of triumph last Friday (21<sup>st</sup> November) at the Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards 2008.

Broad Bay House, the first 5 star hotel or guest house in the Outer Hebrides, picked up the award for the fiercely contested New Tourism Business category.

Four businesses were shortlisted for the best new tourism business, and although each of the four was commended by the panel of judges, Broad Bay House, in particular, stood out. It scored well across the categories that were being assessed, and was considered to have a strong business model and one that was dedicated to quality at every turn.

The judges felt that something quite special had been created at Broad Bay House and that the business had made itself a destination in its own right.

In addition to its five star grading, the guest house has also been awarded an East Scotland 'Silver' award for its food, which is based on the freshest local fish, meat and game.

The location itself is worth a five star rating, adjacent to a sweeping sandy beach with direct access from the house to the shore. The accommodation is furnished in solid oak, with a restful contemporary décor and a great collection of local original artwork, and boasts four spacious luxury en-suite bedrooms, and come equipped with home cinema system, Samsung flat screen TV and an iPod dock, and personal decking area.

Other free guest facilities include wireless internet access, guest laundry, guest library (with PC/printer, local maps and books and a CD/DVD collection), bikes for loan and collection from air or ferry port. The guest house is also licensed to hold weddings for up to 12 people.

Ian Fordham of Broad Bay House said: "The awards ceremony was a fantastic event and we were delighted that Broad Bay House won the New Tourism Business Award against such strong competition."

350 representatives from the region's top hospitality, leisure and travel businesses gathered for the 2008 Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards (HITA). The awards showcase and recognise the cream of the area's tourism businesses, initiatives and individuals who strive to deliver business excellence and quality within the industry in the Highlands and Islands.

This year awards were presented in 10 categories ranging from Innovation to Community Tourism and Tourism People Development to Customer Care, and the judges handed out an additional special award for outstanding performance.

One of the highlights of the evening was the closely guarded announcement of the HITA Board award for Ambassador of the Year, which went to prominent Inverness businesswoman, Freda Newton, owner and Managing Director of Jacobite Cruises, for the significant contribution she has made to the industry, and for the unstinting commitment and loyalty she devotes not only to the business, but also to her staff, the industry and the wider Highlands and Islands business community.

Freda is the first female Ambassador of the Year, and both she and her company have won considerable awards within the tourism and business worlds, including the highly prestigious National Business Award for Tourism, Scottish Thistle Award for People Development and Highlands and Islands Businesswoman of the Year.

Since purchasing Jacobite Cruises in 2002, Freda has invested considerably in the business refurbishing and adding to the fleet, rebranding the business, adopting a customer focused approach and innovative marketing campaign, and training and motivating staff. The company is now at the forefront of the tourism industry in Scotland and has become one of the industry's iconic brands synonymous with quality and excellence.

Another individual recognised for her contribution to the Highlands and Islands tourism industry was Beata Kaczmarczyk of the Kingsmills Hotel who won the Young Ambassador of the Year Award.

Beata came to the Highlands from Poland with her brother three years ago. At that time she couldn't speak any English and since starting her career as a cleaner, has impressed her bosses with her enthusiasm and dedication to her work to such an extent that she has been promoted to the role of Supervisor and continues to be an exemplary role model for other young people in the industry.

The judges were particularly impressed with Beata's passion and enthusiasm, and felt that she shone in her attitude to her work, her pride in her appearance and her strength of commitment to her newly adopted homeland in the Highlands of Scotland.

Also in attendance at the glittering awards ceremony was the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, Stewart Stevenson MSP, who said: "The Highlands and Islands is steeped in our cultural and historical heritage and boasts some of Scotland's most beautiful and wild scenery. It is no wonder that tourism accounts for 13 per cent of all employment in the area. Tourism is a significant contributor to the Scottish Government's overarching aim to increase sustainable economic growth and with the Year of Homecoming 2009 fast approaching, we have even more opportunity to realise this goal.

"These awards recognise the wealth of experience, the commitment and excellence of tourism operators in the Highlands and Islands. Tonight we have the chance to thank everyone who works tirelessly to extend such a warm welcome and high standard of service to Scotland's visitors, and to celebrate some of their outstanding successes."

Attendees at the event were met with an impressive sight as the Drumossie Hotel's frontage was washed in the emotive Tourism Awards purple brand and logo as well as that of main sponsor, Royal Bank of Scotland.

The talented Charleston and Nairn School Pipe band created a fabulous atmosphere piping in guests as they walked up the red carpet, which was bedecked with rustic twigs and heather and flanked by Highland clansmen in traditional dress.

The evening was compered by STV presenter and anchorman, Steven Jardine, and Scottish celebrity Fiona Kennedy gave a short programme of moving Gaelic singing, including performances by Jillian Isbister from Shetland and Darren Maclean from the Isle of Skye representing the programme Highland Heartbeat.

Chair of the Awards Board, Elizabeth Mackintosh said: "This year's event has been particularly special, and the people and businesses that have been honoured are shining examples of what is good and positive about the industry today. Their hard work, dedication and delivery of quality service and products positions the industry well for the future, and ensures that visitors to the Highlands and Islands will be guaranteed an outstanding experience to the benefit of all concerned."

Summarising HITA 2008, Scott Armstrong, VisitScotland Regional Director said: "This event was a fantastic opportunity to showcase our local talent who really do go that extra mile for the good of the industry. The awards not only offer recognition but also encouragement to operate at a high level continuously and improve which is why I look forward to more

unsung and just as deserving businesses coming forward and being honoured next year."

Sponsors for 2008 are: Title Sponsor: Royal Bank of Scotland; Media Sponsor: Scottish Provincial Press; Scottish Natural Heritage, Bord na Gaidhlig, VisitScotland, VisitBritain, Historic Scotland, The UK Atomic Energy Authority, British Waterways, Macleod and MacCallum, The Highland Council, CalMac Ferries Ltd and the **Keith** consultancy offering PR support.

ENDS

The full list of Highlands and Islands Tourism Awards winner is:

**FREDA NEWTON, Jacobite Cruises, Inverness**

Ambassador of the Year: sponsored by Caledonian MacBrayne

**THE ICE FACTOR, Kinlochleven**

Best Visitor Experience: sponsored by McLeod & McCallum

**POOLEWE CEILILDH PARTNERSHIP, Poolewe**

Community Tourism Initiative: sponsored by The Highland Council

**POTTERY HOUSE BED AND BREAKFAST, Dores**

Customer Care: Sponsored by VisitScotland

**BOOTH SCOTLAND LTD, Inverness**

Innovation: sponsored by British Waterways

**SHETLAND AMENITY TRUST, Lerwick, Shetland**

Investing in the Environment: sponsored by Scottish Natural Heritage

**BROAD BAY HOUSE, Back, Isle of Lewis**

New Tourism Business: sponsored by Bord na Gaidhlig

**BOSVILLE HOTEL AND CHANDLERY RESTAURANT, Portree, Isle of Skye**

Highland Dining Out Experience: sponsored by Scottish Provincial Press

**CENTRE OF APPLIED TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT, Aviemore**

Tourism People Development: sponsored by UK Atomic Energy Authority

**BEATA KACZMARUZYK, Kingsmills Hotel, Inverness**

Young Ambassador of the Year: sponsored by Royal Bank of Scotland

**ISLE OF SKYE YACHTS, Ardvassar, Isle of Skye**

HITA Special Business Award for Outstanding Contribution to Highland tourism

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