‘Scotland’s Strategic Future: Tourism’

The Scotland United Conference Committee has announced that the annual tourism conference, Scotland United, has been changed this year in favour of a smaller, more focussed industry event. The full-scale conference will return in 2007, and from then on will continue as a bi-annual event, with strategic events held every other year.

Over the last five years Scotland United has gone from strength to strength and is now the single biggest tourism strategy conference in Scotland. However, the publication of the Scottish Executive’s ‘Tourism Framework for Change’ in February has prompted organisers to adopt a different format this year.

The conference will be replaced by a strategic policy event, which will take place at Cameron House, with an agenda focused on producing an industry response to the Tourism Framework document. Delegates will seek to identify how the industry can achieve the objective of a 50% growth in tourism revenue, but will also discuss the barriers to tourism growth - and the means of overcoming those barriers.

Gavin Ellis, Chair of the Scotland United Committee and Proprietor of Knockomie Hotel in Forres said,

‘There is a consensus across the public and private sector tourism stakeholders that tourism is vital to the future prosperity of Scotland, and the industry has signalled its support for the Tourism Framework’s objective of achieving a 50% growth in tourism revenues by 2015. We will be working hard with the Executive to achieve that goal’.

‘However, tourism is becoming an increasingly competitive global market place, with almost 200 countries fighting for a share of the market, many of whom target the same customers as Scotland, with a product range that matches what Scotland has to offer. The tourism industry in this country needs to perform at the highest level to ensure it continues to be a world player. The Tourism Framework for Change recognises this, but in order to progress it will be vital to maintain a clear focus on what needs to be done in order to achieve that goal. 50% is a tough target and this year’s summit will focus on identifying precisely what needs to be done to enable the industry to deliver.’

‘The Scotland United conferences have been incredibly successful and have provided a fantastic opportunity for the industry to get together and help develop tourism in Scotland. While the scale and format of this year’s event is different, I am confident that it will enable us to continue to move the industry forward at this critical juncture.’

Alan Rankin Chief Executive of the Scottish Tourism Forum added. “To ensure Scottish Tourism wins world market share we must have an agenda for profitable growth in our sector. Such growth will make a return on investment for both the private and public sectors. The saying that ‘tourism is everyone’s business’ is true. Tourism brings massive economic benefits across Scotland so it is in everyone’s interest that we create climate of better understanding between private and public sectors as to what is needed for profitable and sustainable growth in our Industry.“

Scotland United will return in 2007 as a full scale event at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre where a progress report on the 2006 event will be presented.

Notes to Editors:

1. Scotland United is an industry-led conference made possible through a partnership between the British Hospitality Association, the Scottish Tourism Forum, VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise

2. This years summit ‘Scotland’s Strategic Future: Tourism’ will be held on the 20th November at Cameron House, Loch Lomond

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