

“Setting up of an events information facility for Wester Ross as a region”

Background:

As per discussions and subsequent minutes of T@ meeting, dated 22 August.

“Project: Testing of a self-financing system of Events publicity for Wester Ross

From the minutes in question:

- *“Events Diary; DG reported that he had compiled and sent out two events listings since the last meeting. Feedback had been positive and it was agreed that a potential seed corn project could be developed in the form of a regular events diary being distributed for a one-year period. Thereafter sponsorship or some other form of finance would be required to ensure the future sustainability of the project. DG agreed to investigate funding options as part of the seed corn project”.*

Lloyd Gudgeon and Douglas Gibson were consequently in discussion about this matter. The objective of the project would be to support this for a year, and to develop / investigate how this can become self-financing during that time.

Why was this work required?

- Existing promotion of events across the region is very poor. Investigations showed there were many instances where information about events in Gairloch / Strathcarron / Applecross only came to light accidentally.
- Existing sources were poor: There were no single, reliable sources covering the entire area. Instead, there was a plethora of websites, papers, and adverts covering individual locations.
- Websites often had misleading and wrong information on them.

Basically, the information was there BUT needed to be both proactively sought out *and* pulled together consistently over a lengthy period of time – the objective here being to allow event providers and locations to get it “into their heads” that the service existed, so that they eventually moved into a frame of mind to contact the service *themselves*.

Methodology:

- Enable a trial period where this information was collated and publicised
- Identify & List all current sources and contacts for Wester Ross based events (including local papers, Internet, Community groups and Individuals, Hotels / Pubs)
- Estimate the annual cost of such a proposal
- Examine how to make this a sustainable proposal, *from the second year onwards*.

Information Delivery:

Bearing in mind the geography of the area, there was only one reasonable method of carrying this information: A website.

Suitable cost effective sites were examined, always with a view to allowing easy access, being understood by the majority of users in terms of putting event information onto the site, and being sustainable in the long term.

Although we looked at various pieces of software, the end result was unexpectedly close to NEST itself, as the NEST site developers themselves offered the most appropriate site software, called "Spanglefish".....

This was free to use (albeit with unavoidable "Google" ads as part of the site), easy to use, and highly adaptable for a small community group such as ourselves. Subsequent use showed that there was also a paid option as well, however, at a cost of only £25 pa (at current rates). For the paid option, the users are free to create and develop advertising and promotional opportunities for customers on the site. These revolve, so that each time they click on the site the viewer is presented with a different advert so that these do not favour any specific advertiser – the rates can be extremely cost effective with the result that the site can be sustained relatively easily over the year.



15,816 visitors to date

Typical Advert

What progress has been made?

The site has been successfully launched, and is now coming up for the start of its second year. There are direct links for the site to several other events sites (including the full site being replicated on the “Celtic Fringe” website, and updated in tandem with the parent address). The difference between other sites and the “Spanglefish” one is that this is the *only* site to cover the whole of Wester Ross and give event information across the entire area from Achiltibuie to Lochcarron & Applecross.

Problems? There have been a few of these, not least that fact that it has been an uphill struggle to get the idea across that anybody can access the site and update their own information if required – all they have to do is to contact events@celticfringe.org.uk and a password can be issued giving either full access or partial access as required.

What the site has underlined, however, is that there are a myriad of events that take place in this area every year that could do a great deal more to have their existence publicised. The target for the second year of the site is therefore to build on the initial push provided by the Seedcorn funding, and to move further towards sustainability as an independent website.

The Wester Ross Events website can be found by clicking [Here](#).

D. Gibson, Celtic Fringe Tourism Association, September 2007

