

“Fundraising towards improving the Environmental situation of Wester Ross”

NOTE:

This project was left for future work as a potential “stand alone” project by Celtic Fringe. The decision was taken by the entire T@ / NEST group in favour of proceeding with a Wester Ross regional website. Celtic Fringe decided not to pursue the work as it stood at that time, and will proceed accordingly at a later date.

Thus, CF have not claimed any time / costs for this particular Seedcorn project to date

Background:

As per discussions and subsequent minutes of T@ meeting, dated 11th December 2006.

“Project: Development of a proposal to resource funding for Environmental Development Projects in the Wester Ross area”

From the minutes in question:

- *“FC (Fran Cree) asked if there was any way we could operate a voluntary tourism levy to raise funds for local environmental projects. There was a discussion about the experiences of other areas where this had been proposed or tried, including Lake District, and Aviemore”..* These have been tried elsewhere, and appear to be generally highly effective at raising funds of this nature.

Douglas Gibson, Lloyd Gudgeon, and Fran Cree had initial discussions about this matter. The objective of the project was to research into existing schemes similar to this one, investigate successes – any operating issues – tax implications for operators etc, and to subsequently develop a model for Wester Ross.

Why is this work required?

- Funding for all types of projects can be very difficult. This is due to a variety of reasons such as overall cash shortages, specific criteria affecting project eligibility, and complexity of application forms and general administration.
- If we are to bring about a rise in tourism numbers to this area, we need to be aware of the need for improvements to the environment – visitors expect this area to be in pristine condition, and we must meet this expectation.
- Similar projects in other parts of Europe have shown that a significant amount of funds can be raised for improving the local environment through this type of proposal.
- This would promote local co-operation, benefit the environment, and lead to local and visiting people alike feeling that they have achieved something positive for the area.

As a guide to the potential of these schemes, the municipality of “Bled” in Slovenia, raises something like 600,000 Euros on a per annum basis: In population terms, Bled is not much larger than Wester Ross, with a population of just over 10,000 - with the income raised from this, they have created a wide range of projects to the benefit of the area. As an example of this, a local transport system is under development which has virtually no running costs at all

– this is aimed at the provision of FREE local transport for visitors and locals alike. A perfect example of how these funds can be used to benefit people in and around Wester Ross.

Methodology:

As described earlier, this is a project based around research – speaking to people – visiting tourism operators to talk through the proposals and gauge support – potentially looking at the Lake District model currently operating in the UK.

Following discussions with:

- Sally Dowden (Speyside Wildlife)
- Fran Cree (Celtic Fringe Chair)
- Alastair Pearson (Local Hotelier)
- Several WR local tourism operators

.....Celtic Fringe have so far identified a working list of some 18 organisations and individuals who will be in a position to feed into – and develop – this proposition. *It should be noted that Celtic Fringe do NOT intend raising funds for their exclusive use and control.* What we propose is to link with an existing organisation with a proven record in environmental projects, and to set up a system for administering these funds through them (**WREN has been suggested**). Celtic Fringe will liaise with WREN and other organisations to examine and consequently recommend the most effective method of raising, administering, and utilising these funds to ensure that maximum benefits are directed towards the environment in this area.

In tandem with this, we will examine how these funds can be used to further the Marketing Strategy recommendations already being followed by the T@ groups. Initial examination of the strategy suggests that this fits perfectly with the current brand image work, where a local business would be awarded a logo / accolade for being part of the scheme. Over and above that, the Strategy document clearly identified “environment” as being one of the most important reasons why people come to this area. It therefore makes sense to develop a means of maintaining, developing, and improving this unique and valuable asset which we have.

We feel that this is an ideal “seedcorn” project, and believe this scheme has excellent potential to bring about real benefits to the Wester Ross area. We would therefore be interested in carrying out this research without delay.

Starting date would thus be immediate.

Costings accompany this proposal.

D. Gibson, Celtic Fringe Tourism Association

