



**31 May 2007**

**LOCH NESS BIDS FOR WORLD HERITAGE STATUS  
- £80 million increase in tourism revenue targeted -**

Loch Ness and the Great Glen, one of world's natural wonders is today, (Thursday 31 May) launching a bid for World Heritage status to raise awareness of the heritage value of the area as part of a vision to increase the area's visitor economy by a massive £80 million a year.

If successful, the bid will position Loch Ness and the Great Glen alongside the Grand Canyon, Great Barrier Reef, The Taj Mahal and Scotland's own New Lanark and the Old City of Edinburgh, as one of 830 of the world's finest heritage sites.

Launching the bid is the newly formed destination management organisation - Destination Loch Ness (DLN), a group of some of Loch Ness' biggest private businesses, who recognise the need to take a proactive approach in improving the area's economy.

According to latest economic reports, day trip visitors spend only £14 per trip compared to £54 per trip for the rest of the Highlands. Overnight visitors spend just £83 per trip compared to £123 for the rest of the Highlands, showing huge potential for growth.

Professor Terry Stevens, international heritage and tourism consultant advising DLN said: "I have rarely experienced such a high level of leakage of visitor spending from an iconic destination with such strong international appeal. Loch Ness gets 75 per cent less spend by day visitors and just 40 per cent spend by overnight tourists. World Heritage Status would provide the stimulus to encourage investment in tourism as well as the essential commitment to the conservation of the environment."



Initial assessment of Loch Ness and the Great Glen suggests it potentially meets four out of 10 UNESCO criteria. These reflect the area's rich biodiversity, unique geological structures, the masterly engineering feats of Thomas Telford's Caledonian Canal as well as the pioneering history of hydro-electric production in a remarkable cultural landscape and, of course, the legend of the Loch Ness monster.

Napier University and the UHI Millennium Institute have already committed to assisting the campaign and the bid is already receiving support from across the world with World Heritage specialist advisors sending messages of goodwill.

Sean Browne, advisor for the World Heritage Site of Palmyra in Syria said: "Since I first rested my gaze on this striking landscape, almost 40 years ago, I felt it was something really special. Revisiting it in the last five years I could immediately see the need for decisive action ensure that its true worth is conserved and enhanced."

Chairman of Destination Loch Ness, Graeme Ambrose, is already canvassing support from people both in the UK and abroad. He said: "The campaign has already captured the imagination of local people and specialists around the world. We have received messages of goodwill from Lapland to South Africa, all stressing the importance of World Heritage Status in creating a sustainable economy within a carefully managed environment. Today we are calling on Scots around the world to make this bid a success."

MP for Inverness, Nairn, Baddenoach and Strathspey, Danny Alexander welcomes the bid. He said: "The process of applying for World Heritage Status will help to re-emphasise Loch Ness's iconic status in Scottish tourism. It will - I hope - galvanise local businesses and agencies to work together to attract more people to the area and to improve the visitor experience when they are here."



"It is welcome that local businesses are in the lead, but it is vitally important to make sure that local communities are fully engaged and consulted every step of the way. It is particularly important so that people can be re-assured that this application is about better promoting Loch Ness and that appropriate development for the benefit of the local economy will not be hampered if this application is successful."

Loch Ness and the Great Glen is already a popular short breaks destination. Destination Loch Ness has identified the area within several of VisitScotland's niche markets such as walking, cycling and wildlife and the tourism agency recognises Loch Ness as one of the country's top five most important brands.

Philip Riddle, VisitScotland's Chief Executive said: "Loch Ness is one of Scotland's most important icons and is a major draw for visitors from around the world. World Heritage Site Status is a prestigious designation and will bring a wide range of benefits for the Loch Ness area and Scotland as a whole. I would like to wish the Destination Loch Ness group every success in their quest to achieve this designation."

-Ends-

#### **Notes to Editors**

- Destination Loch Ness (DLN) is a private company taking responsibility for developing Loch Ness as a world renowned iconic destination. The company is led by a group of directors representing some of the largest businesses in the Loch Ness area and made up of local businesses.
- Destination Loch Ness encompasses Glenurquhart and Drumnadrochit, Strathglass, Fort Augustus and Invermoriston and South Loch Ness.
- UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation) works to create the conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based upon respect for commonly shared values.

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