



a million voices for nature



NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday 8th April 2008

Calling all Businesses: Shetland's First Ever Festival of Nature Needs You!

Organisers of Shetland's first ever Festival of Nature, to be piloted from 4th to 12th July 2008, are calling on local businesses to come on board and get involved by offering trips, tours, arts and crafts, and workshops to feature in an exciting programme of events planned for this summer.

With an outline programme featuring everything from guided walks and family fun days to talks on wildlife photography and sketching, organiser Helen Moncrieff, South Shetland warden for the RSPB, in conjunction with partners including Scottish Natural Heritage and VisitShetland, hopes to raise awareness amongst both locals and visitors of the islands' extensive array of wildlife, geology and landscape.

"The idea came about from a desire to promote the islands' unique natural history and natural offering, whether through boat trips or photography talks, and generally celebrate Shetland as a fantastic place to enjoy nature in some of its purest forms," explains Helen. "We have so much to shout about here, and we might as well have fun while we do it and try to promote the islands as a great place to visit."

VisitShetland is to be the 'hub' for the event, providing free promotional space on their website, while other organisations will be involved to provide financial and logistical support. Helen continues: "We chose a start date of 4th July to coincide with the school holidays, and thought it should finish on Noss Open Day, weather permitting! The only criteria for businesses wishing to be involved are that they can cater for all ages and abilities where possible, and can provide informative and inspiring activities about the natural world."

Andy Steven, Area Director for VisitShetland, said: "I am very pleased to be able to offer VisitShetland's support in this exciting new venture. As

highlighted in last year's National Geographic survey, which saw Shetland ranked third equal in the world's most idyllic island settings, the islands have a great deal to offer in terms of nature and wildlife, and it is events like these that are essential to raising the islands' profile as a fascinating holiday destination, with a great eco-tourism product thrown in. I urge local businesses to lend their support to this event, by getting involved and helping to make a great event for Shetland and one which I hope will prosper well into the future."

Anyone wishing to get involved should contact Helen Moncrieff at RSPB Shetland on 01950 460800 or 07887 625991.

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For further information, please contact:

Helen Moncrieff
RSPB Shetland
Tel: 01950 460800
Mobile: 07887 625991
Email: Helen.moncrieff@rspb.org.uk

Sally Wallis, External Relations Executive (Aberdeen & Grampian, Orkney and Shetland)
VisitScotland
Tel: 01224 288816
Mobile: 07785 515465
Email: sally.wallis@visitscotland.com

Note to editors

- RSPB Scotland is part of the RSPB, which speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing - help us keep it that way.
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654.
- VisitScotland has three key roles: to attract visitors to Scotland, to engage with partners in the industry and to add value to the visitor experience.
- VisitScotland is working with the tourism industry and other partners to achieve a 50 per cent growth in tourism revenues for Scotland by 2015.
- The organisation employs over 1,000 people and has 15 Network offices from London to Lerwick.
- For every £1 VisitScotland spends on promotion £14.50 is generated in return on behalf of Scotland's tourism industry.
- Tourism employs 200,000 people in Scotland in 20,000 diverse businesses. The industry generates £4.2 billion revenue (5 per cent of GDP).
- Tourism supports around 9 per cent of employment in Scotland (13 per cent in the Highlands).
- VisitScotland's press releases can be found on www.visitscotland.org

- For holiday information on Scotland go www.visitscotland.com