



Date: 9th December 2003
Embargo: Immediate

PRESS RELEASE

Award for "Excellent" Elma

The quality of the tours product in Shetland tourism was again highlighted this week as Elma Johnson, of popular tours and trails company *Island Trails*, built on her already successful reputation with the recognition of a four star Tour accreditation. Elma is previously a 'Thistle Award Finalist', the trophies thought to be the Oscars of the Scottish Tourism Industry and of which Jonathan Wills of Bressaboats has been a winner.

All the categories within the visitor attraction gradings take into account the standard of customer care they provide for the visitor. The Star awards focus on such things as the standard of the welcome, hospitality and service and the attractions presentation. This achievement signifies the first four star Tour accreditation for Shetland, and is hoped to be a sign of things to come. The only similar product in this set is that of John Tulloch, of CycharTERS, who has held a four star Visitor Attraction accreditation for over two years.

Buoyant as ever, Elma mulled over the news with, "I am over the moon at this award! I have worked hard with this business, met many friends and told many stories. Being finalist in the Thistle Awards was an exciting enough accolade, but this is truly a reward for all the effort and thought by myself and all the people involved in helping me since I started. My thanks go most strongly to the team at Shetland Islands Tourism, for their commitment, initiative, creativity and support to Island Trails. Without that shoulder, I may not have achieved as much as I have today."

Starting with her 'Street Trails', Elma has expanded her portfolio and now includes an evening at the Crofthouse, the Busta Story and an Under the Street Trail. Elma is also happy to tailor tours for clients – and can boast of a celebrity clientele. This includes the Rockefeller family – turning up on her doorstep one bright morning.

Pleased with the news, Chief Executive of Shetland Islands Tourism, Andy Steven added, "This is another triumph for the quality of tours which Shetland can offer. There are a few exceptional, entrepreneurial individuals working hard to improve this element of the local industry. Jonathan Wills of Bressaboats, John Tulloch of CycharTERS, Hugh Harrop of Shetland Wildlife - and Elma are examples. On the latest example, the work and commitment of Elma and her team, alongside the staff in our office, has paid off. Let's hope that this up-step is a further sign of a general 'gearing up' of the industry in delivering a higher quality and innovative product to our visitors backed by an enthusiastic, entrepreneurs edge."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- This was Elma's first application to gain a Quality Assurance award – gaining four stars up front.
- Elma is determined to work towards a five star accreditation.
- A four star is officially "Excellent", a five star is "Exceptional"
- Jonathan Wills is a previous Thistle Award Winner for his Bressaboats Noss Trip.

CONTACT: Rebecca Hamilton, Head of Marketing and Business Development (contact details below)

Shetland Islands Tourism, Market Cross, Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0LU.

Tel: 00 44 (0) 15 95 69 78 98 Mobile: 07789 930 664 Fax: 00 44 (0) 15 95 69 58 07

Email: rebecca@visitshetland.com

www.visitshetland.com