

# Dornoch tourist campaign launched

By Caroline McMorran  
reporter@northern-times.co.uk

AN ambitious £80,000 marketing drive to encourage more visitors to stay in Dornoch and explore the north Highlands was launched yesterday.

Behind the initiative is Dornoch Area Community Interest Company (DACIC) which has secured financial support and backing from VisitScotland.

Group chairman Jenifer Cameron and company secretary Joan Bishop unveiled details of the project to members of its business group at an event held in Dornoch Social Club.

Present at the meeting were VisitScotland's regional director Scott Armstrong and senior growth fund manager Marion Walker.

The 12-month campaign will see Dornoch marketed under the specially commissioned branding "Dornoch — You Can Do It All From Here". The town and wider area will be extensively promoted online and in print media as the ideal short-break destination.

A programme of special events in the off-season is also being organised, including a walking festival in September.

In tandem with the marketing drive, DACIC has improved the town's website and produced an app for smartphones and other mobile devices and map. Visitors will be able to create packaged experiences on the website with a range of activities on offer, including fly fishing lessons, golf tuition and whisky tasting.

A separate project to improve signage in the town is ongoing following a £100,000 award, announced at the turn of the year, from the Coastal Communities Fund, part of the Big Lottery.



Dornoch Area Community Interest Company chairman Jenifer Cameron (left) and company secretary Joan Bishop, with Highland councillor Jim McGillivray at the launch.

Eighty-seven "fingerprint" signs will shortly be erected throughout the area.

Mrs Cameron said the group had decided to take action following the publication of the Dornoch Economic Masterplan, commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

"The main thrust of the master plan was that if Dornoch's profile was raised in the tourism industry, then more people would visit and the wider area would be more prosperous as a result.

"That was at the heart of what we decided to do. We know Dornoch is full for 10 to 12 weeks during the summer but the rest of the year it is relatively empty."

One of DACIC's first moves was to set up a business group which now has 86 members.

Mrs Cameron said yesterday's launch was the fruition of nearly 20 months of intensive research. Advertising and digital marketing agency Purple Frog, Oxfordshire, was commissioned to come up with a branding for the town.

The marketing drive has been made possible thanks to a £15,000 award from Dornoch

Common Good and £5000 — ringfenced for marketing from the grant Coastal Communities Fund — with match funding from VisitScotland's Growth Fund.

"The whole premise of the marketing campaign is to promote Dornoch as a destination. We are saying come and base yourself in Dornoch and while you are here, you can do lots of other things," said Mrs Cameron.

She added: "There is tremendous goodwill out there and local businesses have been very supportive. It's very encouraging that people want to work together and that is something that VisitScotland really like."

VisitScotland's Scott Armstrong told the Northern Times: "Dornoch is a beautiful town with a rich history and we're delighted to support this exciting new marketing campaign through our Growth Fund.

"The Dornoch Area Community Interest Company has worked hard to bring this campaign to fruition and we expect it to encourage many more people from all over the UK to discover Dornoch."

# Embo set for high speed broadband

EMBO homes and businesses are the first in Sutherland to be able to order high speed fibre broadband, thanks to a digital roll-out being led in the region by Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

The east coast village has joined the growing number of locations, stretching from Shetland to Argyll, where residents can now access fibre-based services through a new network being built across the region.

Around £146 million is being invested over three years to reach 84 per cent of Highlands and Islands premises by Digital Scotland partners — the Scottish Government, Broadband Delivery UK, HIE itself and BT, which is the private sector partner delivering the project.

The Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband project is bringing services to areas which would not have been reached through roll-out of next generation broadband by the commercial market.

Members of the Dornoch Focus Group and Embo residents joined HIE and BT at the village's green fibre cabinet to celebrate the arrival of the first services for Sutherland. Further roll-out is due soon in Dornoch and in Golspie, with areas in Brora, Helmsdale and Dunbeath amongst those set to start during 2015.

Nick Scroggie, who works with the Digital Highlands and Islands team, said: "Fibre is a completely different product to existing broadband so customers aren't just upgraded. Those interested do have to order it.

"You should contact your internet service provider or check available deals online. Some customers may

need a visit from an engineer to get connected.

"Depending on the distance of the house from the cabinet download, speeds can be as fast as 80Mbps. This makes it easier for people to access the internet, download and share large files, and use online software even when there are a few people in the household using it at once."

Local Highland councillor Jim McGillivray welcomed the arrival of better broadband to the village, saying: "It's great news that high-speed broadband is available in Embo, and also that work on the local networks bringing it to Dornoch and Golspie is underway.

"The Sutherland community is working together to make the very best of the many assets our area offers, and the introduction of an improved broadband infrastructure is another boost which will help us maximise opportunities."

The homes and businesses in Embo join more than 47,000 premises across the region which can access fibre based services.

Brendan Dick, BT Scotland director, said: "Embo residents now have access to their best ever broadband speeds and more will follow across Sutherland. As the fibre network extends, making the most of it is vital in our remote and rural communities. High-speed broadband will bring social and economic benefits not just to Embo but to the wider Highlands and Islands as well."

Potential customers can check availability with their internet provider. Also, there's an interactive map on [www.hie.co.uk/digital](http://www.hie.co.uk/digital) where you can check your phone number or postcode for the latest information on progress.

THE NORTHERN TIMES MARCH 1, 2015