

# The Big Ask

## A working paper

**Mission Statement:** To support the development and delivery of Highland Clan Gatherings, Clan and inter Clan events, in marketing to the world wide Clan membership, increasing participation and attendance at such events. To support Ancestral, Heritage and Cultural events with a Highland Clan basis. To generally increase visitor numbers to the Highland region for those with an interest in their ancestry and culture.

The requirements of the Clans in financial terms fall into three categories.

- Seed funding to set up and run Gatherings. This may be simply deposits for venues, buses and possibly some staff costs. Most Societies have a limited income which is spent on Clan magazines, postage and admin costs. Not the sort of funds to finance a large gathering at today's costs. Well run, there is no reason for this not to be refundable at the end of the Gathering. Otherwise, it can simply get spent on grandiose gestures.
- The second, and most important, element is marketing costs. The better the marketing, the greater the attendance. This I would envisage in the form of grants as this would benefit the whole of the Highland Tourism economy. In practice, for 10% of the visitors budget spent at the Gathering a further 90% is spent on accommodation, food and transport within the local community.
- The final element is support for ancestral and heritage events/development: Roots Conference at Eden Court, Clan Challenge events etc and also information/education signage and i-pad/android apps(Strathpeffer Tourist App) to promote sites of interest. The Dog's cemetery at Brahan, the Roderick Mackenzie Cairn, and site of the demise of the Brahan Seer at Chanonry Point come to mind as examples of either opportunity or best practice.

How do we actually deliver this? In the spring, there is the expectation of the official forming of the Association of Highland Clans. This is a good start but as a Federation or Forum of Clans, for want of a better description, it would not be totally suitable for a funding Secretariat.\* I would envisage that body as a not for profit Company in the same way that Communities set up such organisations where Community Councils are not able to hold assets or major funds. This Clans Co. would mean that the Directors would have limited liability. Directors could be drawn from appointees of the Clans (possibly put forward by the Highland Clans Association), representatives of the Clan Chiefs and independent members (possibly from the Tourist industry, possibly appointed by the SG). They would be appointed on a three year rotation. The Secretariat would be staffed by a small permanent, but possibly part time, staff reporting to the board. Decisions on funding would be a board decision based on the advice of the staff. The Clans Co. would look to the Scottish

Government to provide funding and also be free to seek other funding from other sources such as Highland council, Big Lottery or private benefactors both UK and overseas.

So what could Clans Co. do?

- Essentially a conduit for funding enabling a quick decision to be made, ring fencing funds from being diverted elsewhere. The sums are often of relatively small values which government agencies are often ill equipped to handle.
- Provide advice on setting up Gatherings and providing a database of facilities and entertainment.
- Providing insurance cover for Gatherings and events and assisting with such as cancellation insurance.
- Providing a payment portal for small clans, who may find it hard to get credit card facilities for a short term event.
- Liaise with Visit Scotland on marketing and web site info portals.
- Liaise with Historic Scotland and National Trust for Scotland in regard to Clan Events and ticket discounts.
- Provide overseas marketing assistance such as the US and Canadian major Games.
- Liaise with Cosca in the USA and the representative bodies within Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South America\*\*.

*\*The Highland Clans Association and its members and officers should be protected from any personal liability from the operation of Clans Co. Therefore it is best to have an arms length operation. The Clans Co. would represent all Highland Clans, or in fact any Clan organisation arranging a Highland Gathering or event. Not all Highland Clans would necessarily be members of the Association. However I would envisage that the two organisations would be closely linked. As a Secretariat, it might be appropriate for Clans Co. to take on some of the administration for Highland Clans Association. That would be up to the Officers of the Association and Directors of Clans Co to discuss and agree. However in practise, the two will be separate entities but with a common purpose.*

*\*\* South America is presently a relatively untapped market. Brazil is one of the fastest growing world economies. Chile, Peru, Argentina and Brazil all have considerable populations of those with Scottish roots.*

I have not addressed the position of a CEO who could be either the Chairman or an appointee manager. Certainly it is important to have someone of high calibre, ability and enthusiasm to drive this project forward.