# Stromness Project’s Empty Homes Award Special Mention

28/11/2012

The new Empty Homes Award recognises a person or organisation who over the past year has, in the view of the judging panel, best engaged in activity to bring private empty homes back into use and is intended to provide a method for showcasing exemplary contributions to the field of private sector empty homes work in Scotland.

Miriam Frier is Strategic Project Officer for the Stromness Townscape Initiative (THI), “It’s the very first year of this award. We are over the moon to have received a special mention for the fantastic work that has been done in Stromness to transform empty buildings into useable living and working spaces to have been recognised in this way.”

The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) has been running in the Stromness conservation area since July 2009 and will run until June 2014. The overarching aim of the Stromness THI is to aid the regeneration of the town centre, ensuring economic viability through investment in the built heritage.

The initiative is funded by Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and other partners, notably Historic Scotland, through the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and Orkney Islands Council. The total funding for the scheme is approximately £3.426 million.

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said: “Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted that Stromness THI has been recognised for the sterling work it is doing in transforming neglected properties and finding new uses for them. Through the THI, the historic character of the town is being given a new lease of life making it a more appealing place to invest, work and live in. HLF is committed to helping regenerate local economies, such as Stromness, through the its THI programme, adding a much-needed injection of funding to organisations intent on turning round the fortunes of their town.”

Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, said: “I congratulate the partnership in Stromness for the sterling work that has earned them this recognition. Bringing empty homes back to use is key to regenerating our towns and I am delighted the Scottish Government, through Historic Scotland, was able to assist this THI and deliver long term benefits for this Orkney community.”

Mrs Frier, said: “None of these projects in Stromness would have come to fruition without the funding which has been brought into Stromness, through the Stromness Townscape Heritage Initiative. The community has felt a really positive impact of the work carried out in transforming so many properties and bringing them back into use and into the private property market.”

THI’s are funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), and are intended to enable partnerships of local, regional and national interests to preserve and enhance the character of historic areas by:

• repairing the fabric;
• restoring authentic details and materials;
• securing the continued use of historic buildings;
• bringing vacant floorspace in historic buildings back into use; and

• facilitating a high standard of design and materials in filling gap sites and key frontages.

“A key theme in the Stromness THI has been to bring historic floor space back into use. Many private properties had been left vacant for decades and it is only through external funding that it has been possible to bring these properties back into use again. Some have been converted from commercial premises and some are vacant homes which will now be occupied once again,” added Mrs Frier.

**Notes to editors**

Award Criteria:
Camelot encouraged nominations on a wide range of activity, from practical work on the ground, research and information analysis, publicity and strategy or funding approaches.

Decision committee:
The decision committee consisting of Camelot and the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership Advisory Group met in October 2012 to draw up a short list of finalists and the winner was announced at the Scottish Empty Homes Conference on 28th November 2012.