

FORT WILLIAM MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL 2009

6 - 14 March

A celebration of mountain culture

<http://www.mountainfestival.co.uk>

News Release - Tuesday 3 March 2009

TOP SCOTTISH HONOURS FOR MOUNTAIN FILMMAKER

The Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture

Today (Tuesday 3 March 2009), award-winning filmmaker Richard Else becomes the second person whose contribution to mountaineering and Mountain Culture is recognised by the prestigious Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture. As a world-renowned filmmaker and documentary producer Richard has been the eyes and ears for millions of viewers across Britain and internationally. His pioneering approach to filming in remote locations has enabled viewers to gain an insight into the most thrilling climbs, harshest weather conditions and the breathtaking energy of peaks from Patagonia to the Himalaya.

Richard Else becomes the second winner of the award, set up by the Highland Mountain Culture Association Ltd, organisers of the Fort William Mountain Festival and sponsored by Rio Tinto Alcan, to promote mountain culture within Scotland and beyond. The annual award celebrates the achievements and accomplishments of one inspiring individual and their outstanding contributions to Scotland's mountains, encompassing sport, theatre, art, photography, film and literature.

Richard is a multi award winner with films such as Wild Climbs, made for the BBC in Britain, which has won a total of 11 awards worldwide. Another of his films, The Edge, has been described by the Daily Mail as a 'perfect documentary' and received a Scottish BAFTA. It was later described by the then culture minister, Chris Smith, as one of the ten most important programmes made for television. These are just a tip of the iceberg; Richard's BBC investigation into nuclear power won him a Clarion Award recognising best practice in communicating the importance of corporate social responsibility, sustainable development, social inclusion and ethical debate.

Richard Else said: 'I'm honoured to receive this award and think it is vitally important in a wider understanding of why mountains and the culture surrounding them are so important. All of the films I have made are, in one way or another, a celebration of these special places. In Scotland we should understand that our wild mountain landscapes are of international importance and we all have a duty to preserve them for future generations. I'm delighted we have so many individuals and organisations who share that aim, including the Nevis Partnership and the John Muir Trust, but we need to be constantly vigilant if we are to protect these fragile environments. They are the crown jewels of Scotland.'

Today Richard continues as series producer of his own creation, BBC Scotland's monthly primetime television series, The Adventure Show, that in its first series, was short-listed for a Royal Television Society award. He is also currently the executive in charge of BBC Scotland's most ambitious climbing outside broadcast in four decades and the world's first of its type in high definition / surround sound.

Richard has a parallel academic career. He is currently a Professorial Fellow at St Chad's College, Durham University, where he is involved in using the media to promote social justice, including working with Britain's first Fair Trade Organisation, Traidcraft, and is currently jointly authoring a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on poverty and the media. He is also a regular visiting member of faculty at the Banff Centre in Canada.

Based in the shadow of the Cairngorms Richard is co-author of four books on climbing and wilderness travel. Richard has brought the beauty of the great outdoors to millions whether they're in quiet suburbia or city centre high rises and his dedication to his craft has captured rugged wilderness' around the world in all their glorious detail. Thanks to Richard's work inhospitable places including Baffin Island in winter, the Himalaya, the Canadian Rockies, the Yukon, and the European Alps are now recognisable to outdoor and armchair enthusiasts alike.

Mike Pescod, Chairman of the Highland Mountain Culture Association, organisers of the Fort William Mountain Festival, said: 'Mountains have always inspired artists, sportspeople, conservationists, musicians, photographers and writers. Those people in our mountain community never consciously strive for recognition of their talent and commitment. We feel that this award will not only celebrate their amazing achievements and contributions but will also represent the recognition of their peers. Richard Else is an ideal winner of the award, a man who has contributed so much not just to Mountain Culture in Scotland but to people across the world.

'By awarding one exceptional individual every year we will create a list of ambassadors who will represent the best in Mountain Culture in Scotland and beyond. We believe that the continuing success of the Fort William Mountain Festival, together with an increase in its significance and importance by the annual presentation of this award, will also be reflected in economic and cultural benefits to the people of Scotland, particularly those that are resident in mountain or rural communities.'

The idea for the award has been modelled on 'The Summit of Excellence Award' introduced at the Banff Mountain Film Festival in 1987 and awarded to an individual who has made a significant contribution to mountain life in the Canadian Rockies.

A short DVD will be shown at the award ceremony on Saturday 14 March 2009 at the Nevis Centre Festival Theatre, showing film and still photographic highlights of Richard's lifetime achievements. These will include testimonials from his peers and friends.

Edinburgh stained glass artist Emma Butler-Cole Aiken, who has taken holidays in the Outdoor Capital of the UK from childhood and takes much inspiration for her work from the area's landscape, create the award. Emma has created the piece from fused glass - sections of coloured glass layered on top of one another making a rich colourful and textured, two-dimensional sculpture evocative of the mountains. It has been mounted on a wooden block that will have the names of the recipients engraved upon it. The award will be permanently housed in the West Highland Museum, Fort William with a smaller replica piece being awarded to each recipient.

ENDS

Media Contact:

Paddy Cuthbert | Podge Publicity | M: 07968699636 | e: paddy@podge.co.uk

If you are keen to attend the Fort William Mountain Festival for a commissioned travel feature or adventure / activity feature please contact Paddy Cuthbert to discuss a press trip to The Outdoor Capital of the UK.

Notes to Editors:

The Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture, a unique national award, was set up in 2008 to highlight the importance of mountain culture to Scotland, and to celebrate the achievements of one inspiring individual every year.

The prestigious Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture has its integrity ensured by a standard set of criteria. Potential recipients should:

- have inspired others in their particular field and beyond within the scope of Scottish Mountain Culture
- have influenced at a national/international level.

Proposed recipients must either be a Scottish citizen, a resident of Scotland or have been a significant contributor in their field to Mountain Culture within Scotland

The Fort William Mountain Festival, presented with The Nevis Partnership, runs from 6 - 14 March 2009 - <http://www.mountainfestival.co.uk>

Festival information:

Tel: 01397 700 001 / E: info@mountainfestival.co.uk

Book Tickets:

Online - <http://www.mountainfestival.co.uk>. All online sales are subject to a £2 fee.

Ticket Office - Nevis Centre, An Aird, Fort William

Phone - 01397 700 707

Concessions for under 16's only.

Festival Partners & Sponsors

Corporate sponsorship is crucial to the future success of The Fort William Mountain Festival and with your help we can maintain this support and the healthy and productive relationships we have with our sponsors by crediting them in print. This makes a real difference to the festival. Mentions are counted and used as an evaluation of sponsored projects. A credit at the foot of an article or a mention as the title sponsorship can make all the difference to us. Please credit our sponsors where you can.

NEVIS PARTNERSHIP - Presenting Partner

A charitable company formed in 2003 to guide future policies and actions affecting Ben and Glen Nevis and the surrounding area. The Partnership is committed to protecting, managing and maintaining this unique and special environment in a sustainable and balanced way. <http://www.nevispartnership.co.uk>

RIO TINTO ALCAN

Rio Tinto is a leading international mining group headquartered in the UK, combining Rio Tinto plc, a London and NYSE listed company, and Rio Tinto Limited, which is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange. Rio Tinto's business is finding, mining, and processing mineral resources. Major products are aluminium, copper, diamonds, energy (coal and uranium), gold, industrial minerals (borax, titanium dioxide, salt, talc) and iron ore.

Activities span the world but are strongly represented in Australia and North America with significant businesses in South America, Asia, Europe and Southern Africa. <http://www.riotinto.com/riotintoalcan>

ELLIS BRIGHAM - The UK's leading Mountain Sports retailer with its heart and soul firmly in the mountains. With over 60 years experience and 16 stores nationwide we cater for the needs of climbers and walkers, skiers and 'boarders, travellers and explorers and all who appreciate being out and about in the great outdoors - <http://www.ellis-brigham.com>

HOTSCOT - HotScot is a leading Scottish web site design agency with an established specialism in tourism and the outdoors. Based in Fort William 'The Outdoor Capital of the UK' they have developed an established pedigree with their reference client portfolio and can deliver a high quality solution backed by real experience - <http://www.hotscot.net>

NEVIS RANGE - Situated on the slopes of Aonach Mor, Scotland's highest ski area, Nevis Range run the UK's only mountain gondola carrying visitors to 2150ft. Winter climbers can also make the most of a ride up on the climber's chair. The downhill mountain bike track has hosted the Mountain Bike World Cup since 2001 - <http://www.nevisrange.co.uk>

THE OUTDOOR CAPITAL OF THE UK

A not-for-profit community company established to promote Fort William and Lochaber as the best place to experience the outdoors in the UK. There are over 65 different activities to choose from in an amazing landscape that encompasses the small isles to Ben Nevis with white water rivers, sea, lochs, beaches, forest, glens, cliffs and mountains in between. <http://www.outdoorcapital.co.uk>

The Highland Mountain Culture Association Limited, is a not for profit organisation, whose aim is to promote the understanding and appreciation of the world's mountain places and people, by creating opportunities for people of all ages to share their mountain experiences, ideas and visions. To showcase these ideals, it stages annually a programme of events within the Lochaber area, called The Fort William Mountain Festival.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Paddy Cuthbert - Podge Publicity

Lawhead House | East Linton | East Lothian | EH40 3DT

M: 07968 699 636 | E: paddy@podge.co.uk | W: www.podge.co.uk