

Going the Extra Mile

New Drive for Welcome Scheme

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First, a Press Release from Stewart Ross, Corporate Press Officer, VisitScotland:



A welcome scheme which aims to capitalise on Scotland's popular touring routes, such as the North Coast 500 (NC500), has been officially relaunched by **Cabinet Secretary**

for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop.

VisitScotland's revamped **Classic Cars Welcome Scheme**, which is open to businesses that go the extra mile to meet the needs of visitors who travel Scotland in classic, vintage or thoroughbred cars, was unveiled on 14th March during a NC500 reception at the Scottish Parliament.

With an estimated 350 classic car clubs in the UK, and even more across Europe, the Classic Car Welcome Scheme is a valuable promotional tool for businesses that wish to expand into a potentially lucrative market.

The national tourism organisation has updated the scheme to include visitor attractions and garages for the first time with new criteria also now taking into account use of apps and the provision of Wi-Fi.

The scheme, first launched in 2006, recognises businesses that offer a warm welcome, safe parking, car cleaning facilities and basic maintenance equipment for visitors.

Businesses that take part are also knowledgeable on places to visit, local petrol stations and workshops facilities available en-route.

Fiona Hyslop MSP said:

"The North Coast 500, a 516-mile scenic route around the north coast of Scotland, has played an important role in promoting Scotland as a must-visit destination for classic vehicle enthusiasts.

"The Welcome Scheme is an excellent way to attract more classic car owners to Scotland, and demonstrates how a successful collaboration between the private and public sector can have a positive impact on our tourism industry."

Malcolm Roughead, VisitScotland Chief Executive, said:

"Our Welcome Schemes, which complement our world-leading Quality Assurance scheme, act as drivers for investment in particular markets and raise awareness on ways to meet and exceed visitor expectation in a number of different areas.

"Scotland is an ideal destination for visitors with a passion for touring in classic vehicles – from beautiful scenery and great open roads to incredible attractions and a world-renowned welcome, there is no better place for the perfect road trip.

"The success of routes such as the NC500 and the popularity of Scotland as a must visit destination for touring car enthusiasts creates a real opportunity for businesses – we are sure the updated Classic Cars Welcome Scheme will help more capitalise of this opportunity."

James Henderson, Chairman of the Imp Club, who helped relaunch the scheme, said:

"As Chairman of the Imp Club and a lifelong classic car enthusiast I am very pleased and excited to hear of the new Classic Car Welcome scheme.

"I have had numerous holidays in Scotland with a Hillman Imp and have had great fun driving my classic car around the stunning Scottish roads. If you own a classic car and have not had the chance to take your pride and joy on holiday to Scotland you have missed out on some perfect classic car driving roads.

"The new Classic Car Welcome scheme is going to make that experience even better by helping to ensure that the security and running of your classic car is that much easier. I would like to thank VisitScotland for involving The Imp Club in the relaunch of this scheme."

Tom Campbell, Managing Director of North Coast 500, said:

"The North Coast 500 has taken the North Highlands to global visibility since the official launch in May 2015. Accolades have included National Geographic and CNN ranking it as one of the top five "must see" destinations in the world.

"The Classic Car Welcome Scheme is a great resource for owners of some of the best-known classic car marques to come and tour this amazing route, and another way for businesses and attractions along the route to make the most of the tourism opportunity."

VisitScotland's Welcome Schemes recognise tourism businesses that meet the needs of visitors in relation to their specific interest. Other Welcome Schemes include: Walkers, Cyclists, Golfers, Anglers, Children, Pets, Country Sports, Bikers, Ancestral and Gaelic.

The Welcome Schemes are open to any tourism businesses in Scotland regardless of whether or not they take part in a VisitScotland Quality Scheme.

To join the VisitScotland Classic Cars Welcome Scheme visit www.visitscotland.org/welcome-schemes.aspx



Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs with Scott Armstrong, VisitScotland's Regional Director for the Highlands whose idea the Classic Cars Welcome Scheme is
Photo: Iain Morrison



Left to right: Jim McEwan (1971 Deluxe), Joe McMillan (1974 Super), Jim Fraser (1967 Chamois Coupé), Mike Thomson (1968 Deluxe) and Ian Sinclair (1972 Super). And, yes, the rainbow is real!
Photo: Iain Morrison

The Press Release was issued in mid-March during Scottish Tourism Week to mainstream media. It has been very good publicity for the Imp Club with coverage (including Imp photos) in Glasgow's *Evening Times* and the *Press and Journal*.

It was great to have the Imp Club involved and the scheme is an excellent idea – a real encouragement to classic car touring!

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop announced the Classic Cars Welcome Scheme in her speech at the event and also thanked the Imp Club for its involvement. (It's also worth noting that she is also responsible for National Museums Scotland which has an Imp in the National Museum.) As well as myself (in government capacity), there was representation from the Imp Club through Jim Fraser, Edinburgh & Fife ACO, and Ian Sinclair, ACO Glasgow ACO.

The Imp was suggested by me not only due to its connections to the route, but the very strong and active club scene, which is something the scheme wants to attract. Fiona Hyslop mentioned that it was tested in pre-production there, but the Rootes brothers also owned estates on what would become the NC500 – Lord William Rootes at Inchnadamph (the house now a popular backpackers) and Sir Reginald Rootes at Rispond, Durness. Sir Reginald's wife apparently was quite a character, including sharing a dram at Rispond with the local lobster fishermen, including my grandfather.

The Parliamentary Reception, as with all receptions in the Scottish Parliament, is hosted by an MSP. In this case it was Gail Ross MSP, the MSP representing Caithness and Sutherland, which along with Inverness-shire forms the NC500 route. Gail is also partly responsible for Ross-shire which is also an integral part of the route.

Gail proudly mentioned that her mother had an Imp, and this was referred to by the Minister during her speech. The Minister also suggested she speak to the Imp Club and I was introduced. Gail kindly provided a photo of herself on the bonnet of her mother's Imp – affectionately known as *Imper Dimper* – at the age of five.

It was great to see the five Imps present for the launch and also to meet fellow members, some of whom I hadn't had the opportunity to meet before. Cars and owners who kindly gave their time were Jim Fraser, Ian Sinclair, Joe McMillan, Mike Thomson and Jim McEwan.

A young Gail Ross atop the bonnet of her mother's Imp, *Imper Dimper*. Currently MSP for Caithness and Sutherland, Gail is proud of the part the Imp played in Scotland's heritage

Photo supplied by Gail Ross

