



News release – 25 June 2017

Keith Legge, CEO of SYHA Hostelling Scotland, steps down – after 13 years

SYHA Hostelling Scotland (SYHA) has today (25/06/17) announced that Keith Legge will retire as chief executive officer of the not-for-profit, self-funding charity this month, after 13 successful years at the helm; having guided the organisation through the most radical period of rationalisation, modernisation and cultural change in its 86-year history.

During his time as CEO, Keith and his management team's vision has been to ensure that SYHA remains the principle hostelling organisation of choice in Scotland by delivering a sustainable, modern, fit-for-purpose, good-quality, affordable accommodation network that meets the needs of today's travellers on their journeys of discovery, adventure and learning around Scotland; with a positive culture that delivers the organisation's core ethos.

SYHA Hostelling Scotland now generates £8m annual turnover and has 250 employees hosting over 400,000 guests annually in some 34 Youth Hostels and 28 Affiliate Hostels across Scotland.

It is estimated that as a not-for-profit organisation, it contributes over £25m per annum to the Scottish youth tourism and outdoor pursuits economy.

Keith Legge, CEO of SYHA Hostelling Scotland, said: "Thirteen years ago, I came into SYHA with a large network of youth hostels and limited funds. It was facing an increasingly competitive marketplace and needed to modernise its working practices and ways of thinking.

"With the support of the board of trustees, we set out to develop a strong strategy of change for the long-term future of the organisation that was brave enough to challenge some of the perceived 'untouchables', whilst also developing a more positive culture within the organisation.

"Thanks to the hard work and dedication of employees across the organisation, we have modernised and rationalised the organisation and I am leaving a financially self-sustainable hostelling network for the future.

“SYHA is now a professionally minded, modern not for profit organisation, true to its founding ethos with clear objectives that are understood and embraced by all, giving more people authentic and affordable access to all areas of Scotland from cities to more remote rural locations.

“It has a positive culture that understands the importance of customer service and is clearly focused on delivering the core ethos. It is also aware of the ever-changing needs of our guests and the marketplace in which we operate, and is able to embrace and adapt to change.”

Between 2004 and 2017, throughout Keith Legge’s time in office, the quality budget accommodation market has rapidly evolved to include independent hostels, eco-camping and glamping, budget hotel chains, accommodation pods and AirBnB, massively increasing the competitive environment throughout Scotland.

Over this period SYHA has also experienced major changes to their customer profile, with a requirement to broaden the appeal of hostelling whilst also meeting more demanding lifestyle expectations from 21st century travelers.

Responding to these changes, SYHA has focused on offering an increased choice in accommodation; in particular, the provision of private and en-suite rooms as well as RentaHostel for exclusive use.

Availability of food and drink has also been increased to meet growing demand.

One of Keith Legge’s greatest legacies has been the development of the 280-bed flagship Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel, an £11m project in the capital’s city centre involving the conversion of an office block into a world-class, five-star rated youth hostel, opened for business in 2006.

He has also instigated the diversification from the core business model to offer additional affordable accommodation in key tourist hubs across the peak summer season, utilising accommodation complexes in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth.

Under Keith Legge’s guidance SYHA’s youth development and volunteering programmes continue to grow, ensuring young people can experience and appreciate the Scottish countryside, environment, natural heritage and places of historic and cultural interest in Scotland.

The volunteer programmes have also proven to be a fantastic cultural exchange, offering young people from Scotland and around the world valuable work experience and the chance to develop their skills, gain new experiences and build their confidence.

The current deputy chief executive of SYHA Hostelling Scotland, Margo Paterson, has been appointed to succeed Keith Legge at the end of June.

Keith Legge continued: “Congratulations to Margo Paterson on this well-deserved appointment. Under Margo’s professional leadership, SYHA Hostelling Scotland is in very safe hands.

“I wish Margo and her team across the organisation every success for the future. I am positive that the network will maximise its potential by utilising the unique youth hostel locations throughout Scotland to attract more guests.”

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For downloadable images of Keith Legge, go to:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vtx8np415m0z4kf/AAC1jz5slurwG2csJcuOSgdda?dl=0>

Useful links:

SYHA Hostelling Scotland - <https://www.syha.org.uk>

Ratagan Youth Hostel – <https://www.syha.org.uk/where-to-stay/highlands/ratagan.aspx>

Gairloch Sands Youth Hostel - <https://www.syha.org.uk/where-to-stay/highlands/gairloch-sands.aspx>

SYHA on Twitter – <https://twitter.com/syhahostelling> #syhadventure

SYHA on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/syhahostellingscotland>

Notes to editors:

Keith Legge biography

Keith Legge was appointed chief executive of SYHA Hostelling Scotland in June 2004.

During his time in office, he has led the not-for-profit, self-funding charity through its most radical period of modernisation in its 85-year history.

His vision is to ensure that SYHA remains the principle hostelling organisation of choice in Scotland through a sustainable, modern, fit-for-purpose, high-quality affordable accommodation network to meet the needs of contemporary

hostellers on their journeys of discovery, adventure and learning around Scotland.

SYHA generates £8M annual turnover and has 250 employees hosting over 400,000 guests annually in some 34 Youth Hostels and 28 Affiliate Hostels across Scotland.

Keith has been an active Council member of the Scottish Tourism Alliance since its inception and sits on the VisitScotland Quality Assurance Overseeing Committee and Hostelling International Advisory Committee.

He is a former member of the Cairngorms National Park Sustainable Tourism Committee, former chair of Cairngorm Hostels Sector and was a founding director of the Cairngorms Business Partnership, as well as briefly serving as a director of Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.

On graduating from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1975, Keith was commissioned into The Gordon Highlanders.

He served as a professional soldier in a wide variety of command and staff appointments throughout the world during his 20 years of military service.

In 1994, he studied business management at the Manchester Business School and subsequently qualified as a Chartered Member of the Institute of Personnel and Development.

He was appointed in 1995 as the bursar of Strathallan School near Perth, where he remained for over nine years directing a number of innovative business development projects.

Keith is also an active supporter of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, having formerly been its chair in Scotland, and retains an enthusiastic interest in a number of Scottish rural and outdoor pursuits and African affairs.

SYHA Hostelling Scotland is a self-funding charity operating a network of nearly 60 exceptional youth and affiliate hostels for the benefit of all those wishing to learn and experience what Scotland has to offer. Our unique sites provide affordable, comfortable, safe and quality-assured accommodation with a warm friendly welcome, local knowledge, activities and services for guests travelling around Scotland.

Members enjoy a range of exclusive benefits including dual membership of Hostelling International, providing access to more than 4,000 youth hostels in over 90 countries worldwide. Membership and guest overnight income supports our charitable youth programmes and the maintenance of the hostelling network, particularly in rural Scotland.

