

TIREE FLAG COMPETITION ANNOUNCED

Tiree, the outermost of the Inner Hebrides, is to have its own flag, and we need the help of the Tiree diaspora.

Flags are increasingly seen as a good way to bring communities together, to raise pride in where people come from, and to show the world what they stand for. In this, Tiree is seeking to join a select, but rapidly growing, movement in Scotland of communities that have designed their own flags, communities such as Shetland in 2005, Orkney in 2007, and Caithness, South Uist, Barra, Kirkcudbrightshire, the town of Denny and Dunipace in Stirlingshire, and Sutherland over the last two years.

This project is being organised by Tiree Community Council, the idea for a flag having been overwhelmingly backed by a public vote last year.

The competition, *Co-fharpais Bratach Thiriodh*, officially opens on April 2nd and runs until May 1st. The competition is open to everyone, on and off the island. The two joint winners of the design for the flag for Denny and Dunnipace were Spanish and Brazilian. Tiree has a huge worldwide diaspora numbering hundreds of thousands following the emigration of a quarter of the island's population in the nineteenth century, and the committee hopes to attract entries from Tiree heartlands in countries such as Canada, America, New Zealand and Australia. People can enter more than one idea. Designs can be submitted digitally. But entries can be as simple as a doodle on a piece of paper – Orkney's flag was designed by a local postman, Duncan Tullock, who sketched his initial idea over a couple of hours using his granddaughter's crayons.

Children are particularly good at competitions like this: the winner of the Black Country flag competition in the English Midlands was just twelve. Philip Tibbetts, the Communities Vexillologist at London's Flag Institute, has visited the island several times, to hold classes on good flag design.

There should be no shortage of inspiration for a flag design. Dr John Holliday, the Convenor of the island's Community Council and retired GP said: "Tiree has such a distinctive signature, from its rich summer carpet of white, yellow and purple *machair* flowers, its corncrakes, its dazzling, white shell sand beaches, its leaping windsurfers, the unique outline of its thatched houses, and the recent success of its bands such as Skipinnish, Skerryvore and Trail West: plenty for designers to get their teeth into."

All the details of the Tiree Flag Competition are on the competition website, at **<http://tireeflag.com>**. Entries will be judged by a panel including the Lord Lyon, Scotland's highest flag authority, along with the committee of local people who have organised the competition. The designs of the six finalists will be flown at the Tiree Agricultural Show on July 20th, where those attending will get a chance to have their say. There will also be a chance to vote online and by post. The winning design will then be submitted to the Court of the Lord Lyon in Edinburgh for registration.

The flag competition has been funded by the Tiree Trust, using money from the community wind turbine, which has generated £1.5 million for local projects over the last eight years.

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Full details on the website **<http://tireeflag.com>**.