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## **Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' 'Black Watch' receives a warm welcome in scenic Fort William, Highlands of Scotland**

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines was delighted to welcome Kate Forbes MSP (Member of the Scottish Parliament) and a delegation from Fort William Marina & Shoreline Company and local media on a VIP visit to its 804-guest ship, 'Black Watch', in Fort William on Friday 18th August 2017, as part of the Scotland's Towns Partnership 'MSP Towns Connector Programme', during the ship's seven-night 'Lochs of Scotland' itinerary.

The dignitaries visiting *Black Watch* – which had arrived from calling at Ullapool the previous day – comprised Kate Forbes MSP, Kate's assistant

Ruaraidh White, Simon Abberley and Esme Leitch from Nevis Radio, photographers Iain Ferguson (The Write Image), Kim Ferguson (Kimages), Seonaidh MacKenzie (BBC Alba TV and radio news) and Sarah Kennedy, Company Secretary of Fort William Marina & Shoreline Company.

The group took the tender boat to board *Black Watch* and were received by Captain Henrik Mattsson, Ship's Master, in the Observatory Lounge on Marquee Deck 9, along with Hans van Welzen – Hotel Manager, Alexandra Newton – Guest Relations Manager, and Rachael Jackson – Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' Public Relations Manager.

Welcome drinks and canapés were served in the stunning Observatory Lounge, with its panoramic views of Fort William, followed by an exchange of commemorative gifts. Kate Forbes MSP presented a bottle of Ben Nevis Whisky, donated by the Ben Nevis Distillery, to Captain Mattsson, and Captain Mattsson reciprocated with a plaque from *Black Watch* to both Kate Forbes MSP and Sarah Kennedy. Sarah Kennedy presented the Captain with a jar of Lochaber Heather Honey, a frog-shaped beeswax candle and a card welcoming him and *Black Watch* to Fort William.

The group were then treated to a guided tour of *Black Watch*, showcasing the ship's elegant décor and spacious public areas, which benefitted from an extensive multi-million-pound refurbishment last year.

Rachael Jackson, Public Relations Manager for Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, said:

“We were very pleased to welcome Kate Forbes MSP and prestigious guests on board *Black Watch*, the most classic and intimate ship in the Fred. Olsen fleet, on our final call to Fort William this year.

“Our guests thoroughly enjoy scenic cruising around the most spectacular destinations in the world, and Fort William is certainly a dramatic and beautiful place for them to explore.

“The feedback from guests has been very positive, and we would like to thank everyone involved in the town for extending such a warm welcome to us. We look forward to visiting again next year.”

Half of the guests on board *Black Watch* chose to experience the four half-day

shore excursions on offer: 'Majestic Glencoe & Highland Panoramas'; 'Fort William Highlights & a Dram'; 'Glenfinnan by Scenic Steam Train'; and 'High in the Nevis Range'.

Guests also enjoyed the entertainment that had kindly been arranged in the town, which included a Craft Fayre, a fascinating 'Fort William Then and Now' talk by historian Ian Abernethy, held in the West End Hotel, and an insightful 'Wildlife in the Geopark' talk by David Findlay OBE, in the Lochaber Geopark Visitor Centre.

Lochaber Community Wind Band also entertained guests with a variety of tunes in Cameron Square, which was followed by the Lochaber branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Club performing a dancing demonstration, and pipers on the quayside to see off guests on the last of the tender boats...many armed with shopping bags, having taken advantage of the attractive retail offer within the town.

Sarah Kennedy, Company Secretary of Fort William Marina & Shoreline Company, said:

"It was a very successful visit by both Kate Forbes MSP and *Black Watch* and great memories were made by all involved in the event.

"The feedback from the passengers was that the town was clean and tidy and they enjoyed the entertainment and wonderful welcome that they received on shore. There were plenty of shopping bags going back on board and going round the town there was positive feedback from all the retailers and, despite the weather, a number reported an increase in takings of 5-10%, with one shop reporting a 15% increase!

"We are delighted that it went so well and we look forward to welcoming five cruise ships to Fort William in 2018 and anticipate this to increase significantly in 2019, with four bookings already received!"

The Fred. Olsen fleet has visited Fort William six times in 2017, from 10<sup>th</sup> May to 18<sup>th</sup> August, with three calls on *Boudicca* – sister ship to *Black Watch* – two on *Black Watch* and one on *Braemar*.

*Black Watch* will be returning to Fort William on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2018, on a seven-

night 'Lochs of Scotland' itinerary from Liverpool, and *Boudicca* on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2018, as part of a nine-night 'Lochs, Islands & the Military Tattoo' cruise from Dover.

Photo caption: Captain Henrik Mattsson, Master of Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' 'Black Watch', presents Kate Forbes MSP (right) and Sarah Kennedy, Company Secretary of Fort William Marina & Shoreline Company, with a commemorative ship's plaque, on a cruise call to Fort William on Friday 18th August 2017.

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Fred. Olsen Cruise Line operates in the UK with four intimately sized ships for a more personal cruising experience.

## Contacts



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