

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Scottish Firms Respond to Funding Cuts for Teaching Children Heritage Art Form

Jamieson & Smith and Thistle & Broom Collaborate to Ensure Future of Fair Isle Knitting

19 May 2010 - LERWICK and EDINBURGH, Scotland – Jamieson & Smith Shetland Wool Brokers and Thistle & Broom announced today they intend to begin a collaborative initiative to foster the continuation of Fair Isle hand knitting in the Shetland Islands. Details are still being worked out but the multi-phased effort will be designed to offset the impact of the recent announcement that the Shetland Council is being forced to discontinue the 60 year funding of teaching schoolchildren the local legacy of Fair Isle knitting.

Similar to the ongoing battle to preserve Harris Tweed, Fair Isle knitting is also a highly regarded and uniquely Scottish craft form with a nearly 400 year history in the Shetland Islands. Made the height of fashion by the Prince of Wales, later Britain's king, at the turn of the 20th century and always appealing within certain circles, Fair Isle knitting been regaining its once high profile with A-List celebrities like Victoria Beckham wearing machine made, designer knock-offs of the iconic British style.

"It would be an understatement to say how dismayed we are at the Council's decision 'to save' £130,000.00 annually in cutting this vital programme from the curriculum of Shetland's schools. The potential long term economic impact of this decision makes it seem very short-sighted," said Thistle & Broom's Managing Director/Chief Creative Officer, Teresa Fritschi. "In cooperation with Jamieson & Smith we have a tremendous opportunity to mitigate the impact of this decision or perhaps reverse it."

Jamieson & Smith purchases 80% of the fleece (certified by the UK's trading standards offices) available from Shetland's flocks. Without subsequent generations of knitters producing the ubiquitous Fair Isle knitwear the 80 year old business and its Shetland based employees would not only suffer but so to those crofters who depend upon the purchase of their fleece to earn or supplement their living. The domino effect of the school budget cuts would be broad and long term in the impact on Shetlanders and their economy.

Mrs Connie Smith, marketing executive for Jamieson & Smith added, "Both of our businesses are focussed upon positively impacting local economies and growing organically within Scotland's borders. Thistle & Broom took on the enormous task of re-creating perceived value for 'made in Scotland' whilst sustaining the traditional skills and our cultural heritage in the process. Their unique business, based upon bespoke luxury and its unlikely convergence with the Fair Trade model, provides the perfect environment for the hand-knit garments made from our Shetland yarns."

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Knitwear connoisseurs domestically, and on a global basis, often queue for months for the privilege of owning one (or more) of the authentic, hand-knit Fair Isle jumpers offered through Thistle & Broom. The sparkling personality of 84 year old Mary Williamson of Whalsay Island shines through in the three patterns of her work (plus variations) which she offers exclusively for purchase through Thistle & Broom. Williamson recently said, "It's so lovely to be appreciated! Customers from all over the world often call or send me thank you notes with pictures of themselves wearing my knitting. I'm not as fast as I once was but they don't seem to mind one bit waiting months for their orders to arrive. And the money that Thistle & Broom pays us makes you realise that people really value the effort put into knitting their jumpers."

Continuing Fritschi said "It's at once ethical and practical. The often seventy plus years of knitting excellence offered by each of the ladies whose work we represent meant nothing short of our 66/33 model would be acceptable (the knitter realising the greater percentage of the retail price). In absence of council funding, hopefully, we're able to fill the void by providing the financial incentive for kids to learn the skills from their grandmothers and thus allow for the perpetual continuation of this amazing craft."

The Jamieson & Smith/Thistle & Broom collaboration will likely include streamlined ordering of the yarns for the knitters with the benefit of a trade discount available through a commercial account held by Thistle & Broom. In addition, the Jamieson & Smith 3 Sheep logo will now adorn every T&B garment made with their yarns as documentation of authenticity and the source of yarn being Shetland. Jamieson & Smith have agreed to help in identifying extraordinary knitters who, without desire or knowledge of computers, have been heretofore been unaware of Thistle & Broom as a vehicle for selling their knitwear. The next step as Thistle & Broom sees it to parlay their niche strength and develop 'Thistle & Broom exclusively for...' collections of hand-knit Fair Isle within the more established lifestyle/luxury goods sector and for private estates in Scotland that host corporate events and golf on site. The decision makers at The Royal and Ancient, LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy), Hermes, Ralph Lauren and the Prada Group would be wise to catch the PR benefit of working with these two firms instead of looking east to support their prêt-à-porter collections.

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About Thistle & Broom, Ltd.

www.thistleandbroom.com Edinburgh based Thistle & Broom is a bespoke luxury ecommerce initiative based upon the Fair Trade model legally incorporated in Scotland in 2004 which commenced trading in May 2005. With a *raison d'être* of preserving, protecting and restoring Scotland's heritage and traditional skills, Thistle & Broom is unique within the luxury goods space in that its product offerings are sourced exclusively within Scotland's

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geopolitical boundaries. 66% of the retail price of T&B's offerings is paid directly to the artisan/craftsperson actually producing the product thus positively impacting Scotland's often rural economies.

About Jamieson & Smith, Ltd.

www.shetlandwoolbrokers.co.uk Located in Lerwick, the capital town of the Shetland Islands, Jamieson & Smith was founded by the Smith Family of Berry Farm, Scalloway and has been owned by Curtis Wool Direct based in West Yorkshire since 2004. J&S continues to be staffed by Shetlanders and operates as a stand-alone company where profits received from the sale of Shetland wool and Shetland wool products come back into the Shetland economy and are passed along to the wool producer. Long established as the islands primary purchaser of the Shetland wool clip, annually purchasing the raw fleece from over 700 local crofters and farmers, a 2009 trading standards investigation revealed that Jamieson & Smith purchases over 80% of the wool produced in Shetland (accepting deliveries ranging from 10 to 6000 kilos). Environmentally conscious, the fleece is hand sorted with the finest Shetland wool put into our yarns for knitwear manufacture and coarser grades of wool are then sold on to other purchasers who use it in the manufacture of other high quality Shetland wool products such as carpets and mattresses. Products which have been manufactured using Shetland wool which has been bought through us usually carry Jamieson & Smith's elegantly stylised trademark the 3 Sheep logo.