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HSBC SUPPORTS LUXURY HIGHLAND ESTATE'S £1.1M EXPANSION PLAN

*****Jobs rise from 6 to 22 as the business is named the top wedding venue in the UK*****

*****Substantial increase in turnover and profit*****



High res images available below

An ambitious expansion plan at Achnagairn Castle, which was recently named the number one wedding venue in the UK*, is leading to substantial turnover and profit growth after castle owners Perfect Manors secured a £1.1m funding package from HSBC.

HSBC's support led to the purchase and development of nine extra properties on the Achnagairn Estate, which is situated on the Beaully Firth, west of Inverness. Eight are luxury residential lodges, capable of housing an additional 76 guests, and were completed in November 2015. The ninth is to become a top-class restaurant called Table Manors, due to open before Easter this year.

Turnover has grown a third in 2015 and further growth is anticipated as awareness of Achnagairn grows internationally and the restaurant becomes operational.

In response to the success of the HSBC-backed business plan, Perfect Manors' owners Gillian and Michael Lacey-Solymar have increased staff numbers from six to 22 to manage the extra business, having first purchased Achnagairn Castle in 2007 when it was on the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland.

Owner Gillian Lacey-Solymar said: "The HSBC funding has allowed us to transform our offering. The additional accommodation makes us one of the few wedding venues in Scotland that can have up to 150 guests staying overnight on an exclusive use basis. HSBC's team has

been hugely supportive of our plans for Achnagairn Estate, which is now a five-star luxury destination to match any in the UK.”

Susan Rowand, Head of Business Banking for HSBC in Scotland, said: “Gillian and Michael’s vision for Achnagairn estate is highly ambitious and extremely successful. Not only has Achnagairn become hugely popular in the UK, they are seeing more visitors come from abroad and wedding parties booked from as far afield as Shanghai.

“The addition of 40 new bedrooms makes Achnagairn Estate internationally attractive and we’re very excited to be a part of this journey and to support further growth.”

The finance from HSBC was allocated from the bank’s national £8 billion SME fund, with £400 million specifically designated to support Scottish firms.

The expansion bolsters Achnagairn Estate’s corporate and weddings offering while providing greater choice to private visitors. The extra accommodation is attracting guests from around the world looking to the Highlands as a luxury wedding and tourist destination.

ENDS

*Rated number one wedding destination in UK by Harper’s Bazaar: <http://www.harpersbazaar.co.uk/travel/travel-guides/news/g33040/best-uk-wedding-venues/>

High resolution images are available [here](#).

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