

MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE USE

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The Gathering 2009 will be piping hot!

The bagpipes are set to play a major part in the greatest international clan gathering and Highland Games being held in Edinburgh next year. The top solo pipers, young up-and-coming talent and massed pipes and drums will showcase the very best of Scotland's national instrument at The Gathering 2009 on July 25 and 26.

The two-day piping extravaganza will include a special invitational competition for eight of the world's best pipers in Holyrood Park which will be organised by The National Piping Centre. Competitors will be invited on the strength of their performances in this year's elite contests, such as The Glenfiddich Solo Champion, the Piping Live! Masters' Solo competition, The Silver Chanter and the Bratach Gorm.

The first day of The Gathering 2009 Invitational Piping Competition will see the pipers perform in Piobaireachd, March, Strathspey and Reel, Hornpipe and Jig. On Sunday, spectators will be entertained by a more contemporary style with a "Kitchen piping" event, an open stage event where musicians prepare their own take on piping traditions.

Younger talent will have their chance to shine in Pipe Idol, the prestigious Under 18's invitational piping competition, also being held on the second day of The Gathering 2009. The players will perform a March, Strathspey and Reel set, one Hornpipe and Jig and a tune of their own selection for 'hidden' judges who are in the audience.

Roddy MacLeod, Principal of the National Piping Centre, and winner of this year's Silver Chanter said: "The National Piping Centre is thrilled to be involved in the Gathering 2009 and delighted that the event provides the opportunity to showcase a world class piping competition. The invited pipers are internationally renowned masters of their art and visitors are bound to be amazed by the quality of their musical expression, technical brilliance and tonal excellence.

"This one-off historic event will truly be a memorable occasion for the pipers and audience alike and a great celebration of our piping tradition which has distinguished our Scottish culture across the globe."

Lord Sempill, Co-director of The Gathering 2009, added: "We are delighted that the National Piping Centre is working with us on The Gathering 2009 Invitational Piping Competition. One of our main aims is to give people an opportunity to hear and watch virtuoso performances from some of the most talented pipers in the world."

No Highland Games would be complete without the sound of the massed pipes and drums. Many of the leading bands will join The Gathering 2009 after the European Pipe Band Championships in Inverclyde for the Historic Pageant and Clan Parade along Edinburgh's historic Royal Mile on Saturday 25 July, and the second day of action in Holyrood Park.



The Canadian Massed Pipes and Drums have confirmed they will be performing at The Gathering 2009. The band, comprising four drum majors, 81 Pipers and 48 Drummers, will be travelling from Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Ontario to take part in this key event of the Homecoming Scotland year.

Senior Drum Major Norman MacKenzie said: "This will be a great honour for me to be leading the Canadian Massed Pipes and Drums at this possibly, once-in-a-lifetime great historical event. The event has further significance for me in my role as President of The Clan MacKenzie Canada, as I am looking forward to meeting MacKenzies from around the globe."

Tickets for event and information for pipe bands interested in joining The Gathering 2009, log on to www.thegathering2009.com

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Notes to editors:

The Gathering 2009, a one-off event being held in Homecoming Scotland year, will celebrate the contribution made by the clans to the culture and history of Scotland. The events include: a Historic Pageant on Edinburgh Castle's esplanade which will be attended by those taking part in the Clan Parade on the Royal Mile on the evening of 25 July, and the Highland Games in Holyrood Park on 25 and 26 July.

The Highland Games include: the Deuchars World Highland Games Heavy Events Championship; Highland dancing competition; elite solo piping competition; hill race and kilted fun run; massed pipe bands, traditional and contemporary music; traditional storytelling and children's area; the best Scottish food, drink, textiles, arts & crafts; a clan village and a genealogy research zone. There will be 140 clans represented in the Clan Parade, and 110 of those will have a presence in the clan village in Holyrood Park (figures as at 11 August 2008).

The National Piping Centre in Glasgow is a national and international centre of excellence for the instrument and its music. It incorporates a school with rehearsal rooms and an Auditorium, not only for the Highland pipes but also Scottish Smallpipes, Uilleann Pipes, Fiddle, Accordion and Drumming. There is also a museum and interpretation centre, and a reference library, as well as conference facilities and a hotel.

The Canadian Massed Pipes and Drums was a dream brought to reality in 1974, by Pipe Major Ross Baxter, with the formation of the core Band, the "Ontario Massed Legion Pipes and Drums". The band has participated in 14 tours, six of which have been to Scotland. With the core group still operating in Ontario, they come together once a month in Orillia, on a Sunday from April to November to practice. In addition they participate in various events and parades throughout the year in Ontario. Members come from various walks of life, and include tradespeople, doctors, firefighters, police officers, prison staff, and teachers.

For further information, interview and feature opportunities, please contact Iona Scott, Media/PR Manager, The Gathering 2009 on +44 (0)131 561 1328, mobile +44 (0)7764 250268, or iona@thegathering2009.com .