

# Edinburgh Castle is Number 1

- ✘ Edinburgh Castle has been confirmed as Scotland's number one stand alone visitor attraction.

The castle saw 1,210,248 people cross its doors in 2010, the highest number of visitors to a single paid or free visitor attraction in Scotland.

The figures were issued today by The Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA). The association releases its figures annually, with members including some of the UK's biggest and best known attractions ranging from the British Museum, through to Tate Modern and the Tower of London.

The castle experienced an extremely successful 2010, maintaining the visitor levels seen in 2009, which was a record breaking season for members in the UK. Historic Scotland, who run the castle and 77 other ticketed attractions across Scotland reported its best April – September on record in December of last year, with the castle seeing a 12% increase in visitors in the month of September alone.

- ✘ Fiona Hyslop, Minister for Culture and External Affairs said;

“I'm delighted that the castle had such a successful 2010 season.

“The fact that the castle has sustained its numbers in the face of two unprecedented events- the ash cloud at the beginning of the year and the extreme weather at the end of the year, and on the back of a very strong season the year before, illustrates the enduring appeal of the castle as a brand and the hard work of staff to provide a world class visitor experience.

“The castle is a Scottish icon, with a strong global pull and

identity but it's important that we continue to evolve our offering to attract a new generation of visitors."

The castle is currently gearing up for another busy season and has recently appointed a new executive manager in the form of Nick Finnigan, who had previous responsibility for heading up the organisation's events and filming unit.

The castle has a packed summer ahead with the line up ranging from the Tattoo through to band of the moment, and double Brit award winners, Arcade Fire who will be playing on the esplanade in September as part of the castle concerts season.

Finnigan said:- "It's fantastic to join the castle at such an exciting time. This is arguably the biggest job in Scottish tourism, or certainly the most visual as a symbol of the Scottish market.

One of the things I'm keen to do is attract more local visitors to the castle. Membership is a great way to come to the castle throughout the year and enjoy many of the costumed events which are designed to bring the past to life – as well as providing access to all of our other sites throughout the country.

We're also delighted to host stand alone events such as Arcade Fire on the esplanade this year who we hope are the first of many big names to perform this year.

"This is a living, breathing monument and we want people to return again and again at different stages throughout their lives."

Historic Scotland also returned figures for two of its other properties – Urquhart Castle and Stirling Castle. Urquhart, on the banks of Loch Ness, saw it maintain its previous year's performance with visitor numbers at 286,262, with particular upweight seen from the cruise market. Stirling Castle's figures were down slightly by 2% to 377,204 as the castle

conducts maintenance works in preparation for the opening of its £12 million Palace Project this June.

The Minister concluded:- “2011 is a big year for the culture tourism sector in Scotland. Our £12 million refurbishment of the Stirling Palace project, will return the inner chambers of the palace to how it would have looked in the 1560’s and will transport visitors back in time, providing a truly unique visitor experience for people in Scotland.”