

# **Barbara Smith to head up Diageo's Johnnie Walker Experience in Edinburgh**

**Johnnie Walker has announced that Barbara Smith will join Diageo as General Manager of the Johnnie Walker Princes Street visitor experience in Edinburgh.**

She will also be responsible for running the company's network of 14 distillery brand homes in Scotland, leaving her current post as Chief Executive of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland.

The Johnnie Walker Princes Street attraction will be the focal point of Diageo's £150million investment in Scotch whisky tourism, which includes the transformation of the visitor experiences at the distilleries around Scotland.



Barbara Smith who will head up the flagship Diageo whisky experience at the West End

Ms Smith has over 30 years leadership experience running some

important leisure and tourist attractions, including Edinburgh Castle, Chester Zoo and Edinburgh Zoo, building a reputation for developing major visitor destinations.

Cristina Diezhandino, Diageo Global Scotch Whisky Director, said: "We are absolutely delighted to have recruited a leader of Barbara's quality to run our whisky visitor experiences in Scotland.

"She has an exceptional record of leadership at some of the UK's most successful attractions and we are thrilled to have someone of such capability, experience and vision joining us. We look forward to working with Barbara to deliver our ambition of creating the world's leading whisky destinations."

Barbara Smith said: "I am incredibly excited to join Diageo and Johnnie Walker at a time when they are making such a major investment in the future of Scotch whisky tourism, both in Edinburgh with the Johnnie Walker Princes Street flagship and in distilleries around Scotland. I look forward enormously to playing a leading role in delivering this transformational programme.

"I would like to thank my colleagues at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland. It is a wonderful organisation and it has been a true privilege to lead them over the last few years. I wish everyone there the very best for the future."

As well as creating the Johnnie Walker Princes Street global flagship Diageo's whisky tourism investment will transform four distilleries – Glenkinchie, Cardhu, Caol Ila and Clynelish – which will be linked to the Edinburgh venue, representing the 'four corners of Scotland' and the regional flavour variations crucial to the art of making whisky. Together these sites will create a unique Johnnie Walker tour of Scotland, encouraging visitors to the capital city to also travel to the country's extraordinary rural communities.

Diageo is also investing over £35million to restore the iconic

lost distilleries of Brora in the Highlands and Port Ellen on Islay, which will take the number of distillery visitor experiences in Scotland to 14.

