

US Consulate tartan chosen by public vote

The United States Consulate General now has its very own tartan chosen by an online poll and announced on St Andrew's Day.

Although there has been a consular presence in Scotland for 224 years, this is the very first time that there has been an official tartan.

From the three choices the winner is the "Thistle & Rose" – This design features blocks of 98 threads crossed with sections of 17 threads to represent the founding of the U.S. Consulate General Edinburgh in 1798.



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L-R Jack Hillmeyer US Consul General, Clare Campbell and Angus Robertson Minister for the Constitution, External Affairs and Culture

Designer Clare Campbell of Prickly Thistle explained that, as a former chartered accountant, she often describes tartan as the Excel spreadsheet that she dreams about, but as a Highlander she was emotionally drawn to tartan and so set up her business. After four years Prickly Thistle now employ a team of 14 people, having started a mill from scratch, bringing back the “beautiful craft”. This is now the only b-corp certified mill in the UK, a for-profit company certified for its “social and environmental performance”, or as Clare explained, “putting people and planet before profit”.

She said: “It is such a powerful cloth when you see it, and it creates so much positivity. The added layer in tartan is who has made it, and what is it made of, as well as the design itself.”

All of the possible designs incorporated the colours and patterns which demonstrated the shared history between Scotland and the US, but this was a particularly special one for the designer, Clare Campbell, from Prickly Thistle in Evanton.

She said: "For the design we focused on the four colours, (Old Glory Blue, Old Glory Red, Saltire Blue and White) the most symbolic imagery associated with Scotland. These colours come from the US and Scottish flags. The arrangement is the biological DNA of the tartan, and as each person has a unique DNA so does a tartan. It thinks about the colours and the numbers. The most beautiful thing about tartan design for me is about the thread count. I am really passionate about how to embed the numbers.

"For the US Consulate General, the history showed that the first office was opened in Scotland on 14 July 1798. We took that number as the landmark and is what we have used to create the design. So what we have here is two blocks that are made up of 98 threads for the year and alongside that two blocks of 17. With each centre pivot which alternate threes a combination of 14 threads either side of seven.

"So it is super simple, four colours instantly recognisable between Scotland and the USA and we focussed on one day."



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Clare explained that the Thistle and the Rose tartan considers the circular economy and looking after Mother Nature, thus the name refers to two plants symbolic of the two countries. The tartan has been pre-registered and approved by the Tartan Register and it will appear in the National Records of Scotland with full details of the design.

US Consul General Jack Hillmeyer said at the unveiling of the new tartan at the US Consulate on Wednesday evening before a small invited audience: "This is a special night for us since after 224 years we will now have our own tartan. We started the process about a year or so ago. The Scottish tartan is special and means collaboration and friendship as well as membership of an organisation. It can mean many things. Now that we have chosen the design we can actually go out and make things. We can now make the products which will become part of our brand."



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VIP guests who were invited along to the event at United States Consulate General Edinburgh included the Presiding Officer, The Rt Hon Alison Johnstone, Murdo Fraser MSP, Liam Kerr MSP, Ben Macpherson MSP and Minister for Social Security and Local Government, Anas Sarwar MSP, Leader of the Scottish Labour Party, Peter Mathieson, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Edinburgh, Reverend Peter Sutton, Minister The Parish Church of St Cuthbert Edinburgh, Fraser Thempson, Office Manager for Joanna Cherry KC, MP and a volunteer trustee of the Scottish Flag Trust, and Cllr Amy McNeese-Mechan who was born in the US.



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