



## News Release

25<sup>th</sup> February 2016

### **SCOTTISH PUB GROUP INVESTS IN ACCESSIBLE FUTURE FOR COMMUNITIES**

Leading Scottish leisure group, Thistle Pub Company III has announced significant £250,000 investment programme in its seven locations to make them more accessible for the wider community, including its patrons with specialist needs, with the support and guidance of Deafblind Scotland, PAMIS and Perth and Kinross Council.

The move was endorsed by Jim Taylor MBE, from rugby injury support charity, Hearts and Balls, who officially marked the group's new commitment to inclusivity at The Wheel Inn, in Scone, unveiling the public house's brand new 'Changing Places toilet' for customers with complex physical disabilities and a free to use, state-of-the-art sensory room, specially designed to offer therapy to adults and children with limited communication skills.

Jim was joined by representatives from a variety of Scottish charities and support groups, including Deafblind Scotland and PAMIS who alongside the general public, will have access to the new sensory room free of charge. High demand for such facilities often means that families and individuals who could benefit from these miss out.

The 'Changing Places toilet' at The Wheel Inn is the first of its kind housed in a Scottish pub. The facility differs from a standard disabled bathroom, with additional space and specialist equipment to cater for patrons with a wide range of complex physical disabilities. When they are not available, family members and carers have to change those in their care on the floor, which is unhygienic, degrading and physically demanding. PAMIS, Scotland's only charity that supports people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, was consulted during the design and construction of the specialist unit.

The group is in the course of making additional changes across its other six sites. These include the installation of lower bar areas for wheelchair access, larger lettering on signage and side lights on

walkways for partially sighted guests and the provision of specialist training for all managers and assistant managers from Deafblind Scotland, so that they can appreciate the difficulties faced by some guests and their carers.

The renovations come on the back of a comprehensive audit of Thistle Pub Company's facilities by Deafblind Scotland, which provided a series of recommendations to help make the group's portfolio as accessible and comfortable as possible for the wider communities it serves.

Alan Stewart, Chairman at Thistle Pub Company said: "Generally, the hospitality industry does not excel at considering customers with disability. Last year, the Business Disability Forum found that three quarters (75 per cent) of disabled people, from a poll of 2,000, said they and their families have stopped spending money at restaurants and other businesses as a result of poor service and a lack of disability awareness.

"We have always aimed to provide a warm and welcoming environment for all our customers with a good food and drink offering. These renovations will go a long way to fulfilling our ethos of serving the widest community possible. We hope that the new facilities will ensure that families and friends from all walks of life have an enjoyable experience when they visit us."

Ruth Dorman, Chief Executive at Deafblind Scotland adds: "Thistle Pub Company III is setting a wonderful example to the rest of the leisure and hospitality industry in Scotland. The renovations will instantly make it easier for patrons living with a wide range of physical impairments including deafblindness to enjoy their time at the pub."

Jim Taylor MBE also commented: "This investment represents an amazing effort from Thistle Pub Company to make all of their customers feel included and catered for. Small measures like larger lettering on signage and a lower bar for wheelchair access are simple and effective ways to make the lives of so many Scottish people, so much easier."

Jim Taylor MBE, 61, has a long history with Scottish Rugby. He was awarded him MBE for his services to charity and sport. Taylor is a key part of the Hearts and Balls charitable trust which provides support to seriously injured rugby players and their families. Jim's own playing career was cut short at the age of 23 when he was paralysed from the chest down.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors:**

**About Thistle Pub Company III PLC:**

TPC III is a successful pub owner, owning a bespoke portfolio of seven freehold pubs ("the Estate") across central Scotland. TPC III was established under the Enterprise Investment Scheme ("EIS") of 2006/7 and raised money from the public by way of offers for subscription.

**About Deafblind Scotland:**

Deafblind Scotland is the offspring of Deafblind UK, an organisation which began life in 1928 as the National Deafblind Helpers' League. Founded by a small group of relatives and friends of deafblind people, Deafblind UK has now become one of the leading authorities on acquired deafblindness. Deafblind Scotland and Deafblind UK share a common vision: "A society in which deafblind people have the permanent support and recognition necessary to be equal citizens."

**About PAMIS:**

PAMIS is the only organisation in Scotland that works solely with people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. They provide a range of services and projects including; Family Support Service, Information & Library service and campaigns for equity in services for people with profound and complex disabilities. People with PMLD and their families face many barriers to accessing and participating in the community, and PAMIS works on a number of fronts to enable inclusion and improve their quality of life. The organisation's priority is to provide support to family carers, carried out by 5 dedicated Family Support Services, which cover 14 local authority areas. Additional intensive support is also provided to family carers through the difficult and often stressful period of transition from child to adult services.

PAMIS has worked closely with the Scottish Government on the development of policy and practice. This work includes representation on government committees, responding to consultation exercises, and campaigning on key issues.

More information is available at [www.pamis.org.uk/](http://www.pamis.org.uk/)