

PRESS RELEASE

New era for UA as First Minister opens HQ and Stirling mart

The First Minister of Scotland will mark the start of a new era for United Auctions (UA) as he opens the company's new headquarters and auction mart in the City of Stirling today (Monday 27 July 2009).

The £15 million new mart, developed and owned by Glasgow-based land and property developers Elphinstone, is UA's single centre of operations for their amalgamated Perth and Stirling sales. It is also the new venue for their world-famous "*Perth Bull Sales*", which are keeping their well-known name.

Located on a 52-acre site on the outskirts of the City, the Stirling Agricultural Centre supports around 300 on- and off-site jobs and comprises 400 pens, three sales rings, 18 paddocks, an exhibition hall, viewing gallery, conference facilities, and a 100-seater farmers' restaurant.

It is also home to a range of agri-related businesses and is the new headquarters for the Highland Cattle Society.

The First Minister is officially declaring the Stirling Agricultural Centre open for business today before an audience of customers, staff and specially-invited guests, including Stirling Council's own Provost.

The Rt Hon Alex Salmond MP MSP will also bring down the hammer on the sale of the first animal through the mart in a charity auction. A three-year-old pedigree Highland Heifer, named Bess 1st of Bien Esk, has been generously donated by Mrs Patricia Smith and Mr Paul Burns of Craigengelt, Stirling and all proceeds of the auction will go to their nominated charity, Breast Cancer Care.

First Minister Alex Salmond, said: "The Scottish Government is committed to supporting a vibrant, sustainable and prosperous livestock sector and I'm delighted to join United Auctions and Elphinstone to open the Stirling Agricultural Centre.

"It is an impressive modern facility and a testament to the vision which Ken and David have for the future of livestock production and auction marts in Scotland. That is a vision which the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and I wholeheartedly share and we wish all those involved in this enterprise the very best for the future."

Ken Ross, Chief Executive and Chairman of Elphinstone said: "In 2005, we made a promise to invest in a new mart and it is a great achievement, and a credit to everyone involved, that we are here today to celebrate the opening of this fantastic new facility.

"The new centre is a statement of confidence in the farming industry in Scotland. Not only will the new mart be the headquarters for Scotland's leading livestock auction business and house some of the country's most important sales, but also it will be a hub for a range of agricultural businesses that together will sustain over 300 jobs in Stirling."

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David Leggat, Executive Chairman of United Auctions said: "It's with much excitement that we open our doors to a new era for the company.

"This brand new facility is testament to the hard work and commitment of all those who have supported us along the way and we're confident that our customers will soon reap the benefit of our combined sales calendar, which starts on Wednesday.

"The creation of this new Centre in the heart of Scotland will help to ensure a first class marketing facility for generations of farmers to come and we're honoured that the First Minister and so many of our supporters are able to join us in marking this very special occasion."

The first sale, of store cattle, is on Wednesday 29 July. The autumn Bull Sales will be held for the first time at the new venue from 19th to 21st October 2009.

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Notes to Editor

- United Auctions (UA) are Scotland's leading livestock auctioneers and procurement specialists who operate a network of different auction markets across Scotland, including Stirling, Huntly, Lairg, Dalmally, Tiree, Islay and South Uist
- The company conducts auctions of both commercial and pedigree sheep and cattle, procures stock direct from farms for leading abattoirs and provides a farm-to-farm sales' service for livestock
- Elphinstone is one of Scotland's most innovative and enterprising land and property groups, which trades and invests in land and property for commercial and mixed-use development. Currently, the privately owned Giffnock-based group is managing over £500 million of investments in Scotland
- Elphinstone acquired United Auctions in 2005 for £52 million. A management buy-back was completed in 2007 and the Executive team, comprising Executive Chairman, David Leggat, Joint Group Managing Directors Neil McLean and Robin Tough, runs the company
- The Stirling Agricultural Centre is located in the heart of Scotland, just off J10 on the M9 motorway. It is around 30 minutes to Perth, Edinburgh and Glasgow and has good transport links and easy access.

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