

UA marks completion of £250k upgrade at Dalmally Mart

United Auctions (UA) is to mark the completion of upgraded facilities at Dalmally mart with the help of Jamie McGrigor MSP.

Local farmer and Scottish Conservative MSP for the Highlands and Islands, Jamie McGrigor will help 'launch' the newly refurbished facility immediately before its premier Blackface Ram Sale on Saturday 10th October 2009.

The £250,000 improvements, which were completed this month, include replacing the entire penning area with steel pens - including a new livestock auction ring - and resurfacing the concrete as well as upgrading the washing system and installing electronic display equipment.



The upgrade improves health and safety, bio-security and animal health and welfare.

The Dalmally auction mart is an important seasonal centre for hill sheep and cattle and supports around 50 jobs. It also provides an essential facility for marketing stock from the islands, which is supplemented by facilities at Oban, including livestock trailers to ferry animals to and from the islands and an overnight lairage shed for animals being transported to the Dalmally sales.

Scotland's leading livestock auctioneers were awarded a 30 per cent grant from the Scottish Rural Development Programme to help fund the upgrade, equating to £75,000.

The government grants application was supported in writing by Jamie McGrigor MSP who as local farmer uses the mart himself. He said: "My family has been using Dalmally market since 1956 so I know first hand that it is more than a market - it is an institution to people in the area where it also plays an important social role as a place to do business, often not connected with the sale of the day. It is a place where breeders meet fatteners, farmers meet hauliers and it provides a general meeting point on Saturdays during sale periods.

"The market has always overcome the hurdles put in its path by governments and EU Commissioners and I have great confidence in the ability and commitment of United Auctions and those who provide the stock so that further generations may continue to use this vibrant market in what is undoubtedly the most picturesque setting of any market in Scotland."

Another supporter of the application was Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism and SNP MSP for Argyll and Bute Jim Mather. He commented: "This upgrade is a significant boost to agriculture in the West of Scotland and should be seen as a mark of confidence in the future prospects of the industry."

David Leggat, UA's Executive Chairman, said: "We were delighted that we were able to save the mart when we purchased it outright from property developers Elphinstone last year.

"Now, this significant investment has allowed for much-needed improvements, which will help to secure the mart's future as an important facility in the West of Scotland serving the future generations of farmers and crofters to come."

Donald Morrison, Area Managing Director for Argyll and the Islands said: "The Dalmally market provides an essential link in marketing livestock in the West of Scotland together with the area office at Oban and the markets on the Islands of South Uist, Tiree and Islay."

Entries for the Blackface Ram Sale include 688 Blackface shearlings and aged rams and 276 Blackface Ram lambs.