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New chairman for Scotland's largest mutual life office

Scottish Friendly has announced the appointment of the prominent businessman Michael Walker as chairman, with effect from 1 January.

As chairman, Michael will capitalise on his wealth of financial services and international business experience to reinforce Scottish Friendly's position as Scotland's largest mutual life office and a competitive financial services group which now manages and administers in excess of £1bn.

Michael's career spans over thirty years in business, legal and financial services. Michael's career includes twelve years as managing partner and later chairman of Maclay Murray & Spens, the Scottish-based UK law firm, a period of ten years as a director of John Menzies plc and time as chairman of Lex Mundi, the international legal network. Michael is currently the chairman of the iconic Scottish brand, Walkers Shortbread, chairman of the London-based financial PR company, Broadgate and a director of Cornelian Asset Managers. He was also until the end of 2008 a member of the International Advisory Board of Emory University, Atlanta.

Fiona McBain, chief executive of Scottish Friendly, said: "Michael Walker is one of Scotland's most well-respected business people and his appointment as chairman of the Scottish Friendly group is a major coup. Whilst we will undoubtedly miss the presence of Graham Webster, our current chairman and a member of the board here for fifteen years, Michael will be a huge asset to the Scottish Friendly board and with his wealth of experience will help guide and shape our ambitious future growth plans."

Scottish Friendly is successfully pursuing a three-pronged strategy of organic growth, mergers & consolidation and business processing outsourcing. In 2008 the group announced a significant business process outsourcing partnership with Aviva and distribution partnerships with Reader's Digest and Celtic, Rangers and Portsmouth football clubs.

Michael Walker said: “I am delighted and honoured to be taking over the chairmanship of the Scottish Friendly group. Over the last three years in particular the group has achieved great success, transforming itself from a traditional friendly society into a major UK financial services group. I look forward to playing a significant part in the future of Scottish Friendly as, together with Fiona and the rest of the management team and our staff, we continue to implement the ambitious growth strategy which we have adopted and continue to develop. Markets are challenging at the moment but I am already struck by the focus on success which has been embraced by all at Scottish Friendly.”