Michael’s showcasing Scots-Italian heritage

By John Paul Breslin

WHAT do the Pope, David Beckham and tartan-clad cars have in common?

No, it’s not a joke. The answer is Michael Lemetti — a Scottish businessman with big plans on how to cash in on Scotland’s links with Italy.

Michael’s business, Clan Italia, which produces and sells Italy’s official tartan, is looking to launch a whole new range of products.

The 52-year-old, who helped devise and produce the unique tartan worn by dignitaries during Pope Benedict XVI’s visit, is looking to kit out footballers, fashionistas and Fiats.

AC Milan

Next year will see him launch the AC Milan Club Supporters Tartan. The latest design to be added to the Clan Italia range, it has the club’s full backing and will be sold through Michael’s website.

It could also be stocked in AC Milan’s official stores as early as next year.

And Michael is in talks with Italian car manufacturer Fiat with a view to decking out the interior and exterior of its vehicles with his unique tartan.

But the roads aren’t the only places where his designs could be on show.

He’s hoping to encourage designers Dolce and Gabanna to opt for Italy’s official plaid in forthcoming collections.

Michael is also venturing into the world of beverages.

Next month will see him launch a Scots-Italian microbrew beer called Antonine Amber Ale, produced by Tryst Brewery in Larbert.

If his numerous projects prove successful, his products could appear everywhere from the driveways of Govan to the runways of Milan and every pub in between.

And while the Romans may have abandoned the Antonine Wall 1850 years ago, one Italian is still on it — Michael.

“I thought Antonine Amber Ale would be a good name because the Antonine Wall is an example of Scotland’s links with Italy.

“The wall even runs through part of my garden. My conservatory sits on top of where it would have been.

“It’s believed the Romans made their own ale when they were in Scotland because they couldn’t get wine.

“So I’m fitting that I’m making a Scots-Italian ale.

“We aim to sell it in up-market bars in Scotland and I’m in talks with a number of microbreweries in Italy who are interested in producing, bottling and selling it there.”

Michael with the Antonine Amber Ale.

And the Pope isn’t the only world-famous figure he’s worked with.

Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli, Scots pop star Paolo Nutini, celebrity chef Gino D’Acampo and former Rangers footballer RinoGattuso have all worn Michael’s tartan.

He also met David Beckham when the star was in Scotland to play with AC Milan in their friendly match against Rangers last year and once presented Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi with a tartan tie.

Heritage

Business Gateway is helping Michael push the Clan Italia brand at home and abroad in the hope of bringing more jobs to Falkirk and, hopefully, the rest of Scotland.

“This is just the start of a major push to showcase products that embrace my Scots-Italian heritage,” said Michael.

“With around 30,000 Scots with Italian roots in the West of Scotland alone there’s a huge market for the products we make.”

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