

FILM IN ARGYLL – SCREEN INDUSTRIES UPDATE REPORT

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update of the work of the Council’s Film in Argyll service in attracting inward investment into Argyll and Bute from the screen industries and the economic benefits that this brings to the local economy, including the opportunities to promote and market the area. This report covers the period January 2023 to January 2024.
- 1.2 For the period January 2023 to January 2024, Argyll and Bute Council received 90 film enquiries and there were 31 productions filmed during this period. This has led to an estimated local production spend of £1.3M. This compares favourably to the 2022 estimated local production spend of £580,000 and in addition it should be noted that the quality of productions and length of time productions have filmed in the area has significantly increased in 2023. The upward trend over the last 2 years is highly likely to be a direct reflection of the continued recovery from the pandemic and the establishment of more studios in the central belt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee consider the contents of this report and the continued positive economic impact the screen industry has on Argyll and Bute.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report provides an update of the work of the Council’s Film in Argyll service in attracting inward investment into Argyll and Bute from the screen industries and the economic benefits that this brings to the local economy, including the opportunities to promote and market the area. This report therefore covers the period January 2023 to January 2024.
- 2.2 Argyll and Bute continues to reap the rewards of its geographical position in relation to the central belt and the number of film studios and productions using Glasgow/Edinburgh as a base. This means that more productions are able to use Argyll and Bute for location filming and for increased lengths of time which has significant economic benefits for the area.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee consider the contents of this report and the continued positive economic impact the screen industry has on Argyll and Bute.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Development of screen industries is a key growth sector for both UK and Scottish Government. Screen Scotland has the overarching role of growing the sector in Scotland in partnership with a range of organisations, including the enterprise agencies amongst others. In recognition of the key role the screen industries plays in the economy, both the UK and Scottish Governments disburse a number of funds to grow indigenous talent and attract productions, including providing tax incentives aimed at productions which represent significant investment in the UK.
- 4.2 This growth and the potential for growth was highlighted in a recently

published report, 'The Economic Value of the Screen Sector in Scotland' (EVSSS). This stated that the screen sector GVA in 2021 was continuing to grow and had increased from £567.6 million in 2019 to £627m in 2021, on track for a potential growth to £1 billion by 2030. The GVA figures in the EVSSS report are made up of development and production, tv broadcast, distribution, exhibitions and festivals, talent and skills development, infrastructure and screen tourism. The biggest increase within this was in High End TV Production, supported by UK tax relief and public service broadcasting, with production more than doubling between 2019 and 2021.

- 4.3 There are now a number of studio spaces, mainly in central Scotland with Pyramid Business Park in Bathgate being the most recent. These studios continue to offer the potential for more location shoots in Argyll and Bute as a result of the accessibility of Argyll and Bute to the central belt. More recently however both the writers and the actors strike have impacted on screen production and have delayed production.
- 4.4 The key economic benefits of the screen industries for Argyll and Bute include income from hire of locations and ancillary services such as accommodation providers, caterers etc. Economic impact also includes: indigenous production companies and freelancers; cinemas in the area (there are more independent cinemas in Argyll and Bute than anywhere else in Scotland); film festivals of which there are currently two, Dunoon Film Festival and Sea Change on Tiree; film tourism and the publicity and subsequent visits to the area as a result of productions which feature Argyll and Bute.
- 4.5 To assist in growing the sector and the associated benefits, Argyll and Bute Council Transformation, Projects and Regeneration officers work with Screen Scotland. Screen Scotland facilitates a Screen Locations Network made up of mostly local authority film officers, who work to an agreed protocol. This protocol is based on providing information on locations, crew etc. and facilitating productions in the area as well as promotion of locations. Screen Scotland Locations (SSL) work closely with The British Film Commission (BFC) and British Film Industry to promote production in the UK. International enquiries are fed into CSL, who in turn pass this on to local film offices. All the above frameworks, recent developments and funding could directly benefit Argyll and Bute through increased production and inward investment within our area.
- 4.6 Core to the Council's Film in Argyll service is providing confidential advice and support as a "one stop shop" to the industry through a single point of contact (www.filminargyll.co.uk). The "one stop shop" supports the production's needs in many ways including, liaising with other council departments (for road closures, access to land/property including car parks etc.), providing locations to film enquiries, landownership queries, local knowledge and connecting productions to local services such as Gaelic speakers and community groups.
- 4.7 Delivering this screen industries development meets with our Outcome Improvement Plan objective of 'Our Economy is Diverse and Thriving, our Economic Strategy objective under the "Place and People" outcome "Creating

a vibrant, cultural experience and strong creative industry". In response to the pandemic, Argyll and Bute's Economic Recovery Plan published in August 2020 also highlights council action to "Continue to support cultural activity including film and TV locational work" under the key Scottish Government theme, Place and People. It is also an excellent opportunity to showcase Argyll and Bute to a national and, in some cases, international audience.

- 4.8 The screen industries continues to have the potential to not only bring production spend to the local economy but to be a catalyst for the growth of the tourism industry in Argyll and Bute. Liaising with Visit Scotland, Film in Argyll has supported film tourism by supporting the "Set in Scotland" guide which provides an overview of film locations throughout Scotland and highlights many high profile productions that have filmed in the area over the years. As part of Argyll and Bute's economic recovery process from the coronavirus pandemic, the Development and Economic Growth Service will continue to work across Council services and with key partners to promote filming in Argyll and Bute.
- 4.9 For the period January 2023 to January 2024, Argyll and Bute Council received 90 film enquiries and there were 31 productions filmed during this period. This has led to an estimated local production spend of £1.3M. Compared to the 2022 estimated local production spend of £580,000, the upwards trend over the last 3 years are a direct reflection of the continued recovery from the pandemic. It should be noted that the quality of productions and the length of time productions have filmed in the area has significantly increased in 2023 however industry figures do vary year on year and can change dramatically due to the fact that one large budget production can significantly increase figures in one year.
- 4.10 The type of enquiries and productions coming into Argyll and Bute has changed compared to pre pandemic years, whereby Film in Argyll is seeing a decrease in unscripted TV small scale productions, and an increase in larger productions with a cast and crew of 30+ with a higher budget and filming for longer periods of time. There could be various factors responsible this change, but it is highly likely that the work and opportunities that are being created at a Scottish level around creating more studio space in the central belt, is having a positive economic impact on surrounding areas. Film in Argyll continues to work closely with our key partners in Screen Scotland and the Scottish Location Network to champion Scotland as a top location for filming.
- 4.11 Within the period January 2023 to January 2024 examples of productions include:
- Argyll and Bute featured as a key location in the new Channel 4 – GP's in the Wild series. The documentary aims to explore the unique challenges, opportunities and case types/medical needs, experienced by GPs in remote communities. Filming took place in May 2023 across a number of weeks.
 - Float Season 2, a six part BBC Drama series filmed in the former Helensburgh Swimming Pool returned to film the demolition of

the building as part of the series and surrounding areas in Helensburgh. Filming took place in June 2023.

- Sacred Islands with Ben Fogle, an eight part series where Ben travels across Scotland's remotest islands, Filming took place in the summer last year and included islands such as Iona, Islay and Jura.
 - Harvest, the 2013 Booker Prize adaptation drama filmed in August 2023 until the start of October 2023 in Oban and surrounding areas. This production filmed in the Argyll and Bute area for a significant period of time and included a full set build on location.
 - Post Malone "Mourning" Music Video, was filmed in the Loch Lomond area in May 2023.
- The Isle of Bute featured as a key location for The Hairy Bikers (Go West), where the best local restaurants with the most innovative local suppliers were highlighted. Filming took place in June 2023.
- Bollywood Feature, a large scale Bollywood feature filmed in the Arrochar area in December 2023.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The screen industries continues to have the potential to not only bring production spend to the local economy but to be a catalyst for the growth of the tourism industry in Argyll and Bute. As part of Argyll and Bute's economic recovery process from the pandemic, the Film in Argyll service will continue to work across Council services and with key partners such as Screen Scotland and the Scottish Locations Network to take advantage of the newly developed film studios and ensure the sector continues to grow in Argyll and Bute.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – Supports Outcome Improvement Plan, Economic Strategy and Economic Recovery Plan under Place and People theme.
- 6.2 Financial – Provides income for Development and Economic Growth. Film in Argyll service covered by core staff.
- 6.3 Legal – Film Location Agreements put in place when filming takes place on Council owned land or asset.
- 6.4 HR – None.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – None.
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – None.

- 6.5.3 Islands – None.
- 6.6 Climate Change – None.
- 6.7 Risk – None.
- 6.8 Customer Service - If we do not continue to respond to enquiries timeously and develop Film in Argyll we could lose productions to other areas in Scotland and beyond.
- 6.9 Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – None.

Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth

Policy Lead for Islands and Business Development – Councillor Liz McCabe

5th February 2024

For further information contact:

Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth

fergus.murray@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Arlene Cullum, Transformation, Projects and Regeneration Team

arlene.cullum@argyll-bute.gov.uk