

STRATEGIC EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND – ROUND 3 GRANT AWARDS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 As members will be aware it was agreed at the February meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee to defer the decision in regard to any formal grant award for SEF Round 3 to the May meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee. The reason for this was due to the uncertainty in regard to if and when strategic events would be able to go ahead in light of the national lockdown that was in place at that time. This additional time was to hopefully allow both the council and the event organisations themselves to be clearer as to the feasibility and viability of these events taking place in 2021.
- 1.2 Whilst the National lockdown has been partly lifted and things are beginning to open up again, restrictions remain in place and the situation still remains difficult and challenging with regard to COVID-19 pandemic and especially in regard to mass gatherings. However it is hoped that events will be able to go ahead at some point later in the year and it is therefore felt important to support our events industry as much as we can by awarding grants to those strategic events that hopefully still have a chance of going ahead either because of the nature of the event or the fact that they are due to be held later in the year.
- 1.3 The SEF third round of grant funding is to support strategic events and festivals that are to be held in 2021/22. The call for applications was issued on 22 October 2020 and closed on the 7 December 2020 and a total of 10 applications were originally received. Unfortunately due to the continued uncertainty regarding when events can take place 5 events have formally notified the council that they have had to cancel (see table 1 & 2). One of these events, Cowal Highland Gathering, has advised that they are considering to hold a one day live music/family festival event and requested a smaller grant towards this. In addition Jura Music festival organisation and Dunoon Multi Sports event organisations have advised that although they are having to cancel the original event they may hold a smaller scaled event and are also requesting support. Mull Rally has also changed its format and reduced the grant request. These requests along with the remaining strategic events and the associated grant requests are listed in table 2 for consideration. The total request for grant is £56,850.

- 1.4 As members will be aware SEF Round 2 events, planned to be held between June and December 2020, also faced a set of extraordinary circumstances and challenges brought about by the coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic and the need to social distance and all 9 events had to be cancelled. There is still uncertainty as to if and when events of a strategic nature, which would fall into the definition of mass gathering, may be able to take place in the remainder of 2021. The hope is that some strategic events will be able to go ahead in 2021/22 but further information is awaited from the Scottish Government in regard to events taking place.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.5 Members of the Policy and Resources Committee are asked to:
- a) Agree to the award of SEF Round 3 grants as detailed in table 2 with any grant offer only being formally issued upon confirmation from the individual event organisation that the event is formally confirmed and is definitely going ahead and still meets the SEF Round 3 criteria.
 - b) Agree to the delegation of powers to the Director of Development and Infrastructure to allow any subsequent amendment to existing grant requests to be made brought about as a consequence of COVID-19 restrictions regarding holding of events/mass gathering in 2021/22. Any amendment to a current grant request/offer would only be considered if the amendment related to either the same level or a reduction in the request from SEF Round 3.
 - c) Note that at the February Council budget meeting the Council agreed funding of £90,000 for an SEF Round 4 (2022/23), to be augmented by any underspend in 2020/21.
 - d) Agree and recommend to Council that any underspend from SEF Round 3 (2021/22) is earmarked and used to augment a future SEF round for 2023/24.
 - e) Agree that the SEF Round 4 is launched in October this year with a report to Policy and Resources in February 2022. This follows the same time line for SEF Round 3 and will allow the position with regard to COVID-19 to hopefully be much clearer in regard to the holding of mass events in 2022/23.
 - f) Agree that the process for SEF Round 4 follows the same process for SEF Round 3 with an additional point being awarded to those events that had to cancel during 2021/22 and were unable to benefit from SEF grant.

STRATEGIC EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND – ROUND 3 GRANT AWARDS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members in regard to Round 3 Strategic Events and Festivals (SEF) Fund for 2021/22, and seek agreement to approve the award of SEF grant to 8 strategic events planned to be held during the remainder of 2021/22. In addition members are also being asked to approve the process and timing of the call for SEF Round 4.
- 2.2 Members will recall that it was agreed at the February Policy and Resources Committee to defer a decision in regard to any formal grant award for SEF Round 3 to the May meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee. This was due to the fact that a National lockdown that was in place in the early part of the year and in order to allow additional time to hopefully allow both the council and the event organisations themselves to be clearer as to the feasibility and viability of these events taking place in 2021/22
- 2.3 At the Business Continuity Committee meeting on 11 June 2020, members agreed that a grant pot of £90,000 be made available for SEF over financial year 2021/22. The call for applications was issued on 22 October 2020 and closed on the 7 December and a total of 10 applications were received. The total grant request at that time was £104,700 which exceeded the budget available. 5 applicant organisations have since made the decision to cancel their original event although three of these event have come back with a possible amended event leaving a total of 8 applications (see table 2) and a total grant request of £56,850. This allows for two of the events which will take place later in the year (Helensburgh Winter Festival and Tiree Wave Classic) and hopefully stand a better chance of going ahead in their original format to be awarded over the 15% maximum grant award. The restriction of the maximum grant request to 15% was originally imposed to allow as many strategic events to benefit from the £90,000 Round 3 funding pot. However in light of the number of cancellations and associated reduction in requests for funding and in order to support these later events it seems appropriate to allow for the full grant request to be allocated.
- 2.4 Whilst there is still uncertainty and unpredictability it is hoped that events will be able to go ahead at some point later in the year and it is therefore felt important to support our events industry as much as we can by awarding

grants to those strategic events that hopefully still have a chance of going ahead either because of their nature or the fact that they are due to be held later in the year. Members are therefore being asked to award in principle 8 SEF grants currently totalling £56,850. It is proposed that any underspend from SEF Round 3 (2021/22) is earmarked and used to augment a future SEF round for 2023/24.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Members of the Policy and Resources Committee are asked to:

- a) Agree to the award of SEF Round 3 grants as detailed in table 2 with any grant offer only being formally issued upon confirmation from the individual event organisation that the event is formally confirmed and is definitely going ahead and still meets the SEF Round 3 criteria.
- b) Agree to the delegation of powers to the Director of Development and Infrastructure to allow any subsequent amendment to existing grant requests to be made brought about as a consequence of COVID-19 restrictions regarding holding of events/mass gathering in 2021/22. Any amendment to a current grant request/offer would only be considered if the amendment met the SEF criteria and related to either the same level or a reduction in the request from SEF Round 3.
- c) Note that at the February Council budget meeting the Council agreed funding of £90,000 for an SEF Round 4 (2022/23), to be augmented by any underspend in 2020/21.
- d) Agree and recommend to Council that any underspend from SEF Round 3 (2021/22) is earmarked and used to augment future SEF round for 2023/24.
- e) Agree that the SEF Round 4 is launched in October this year with a report to Policy and Resources in February 2022. This follows the same time line for SEF Round 3 and will allow the position with regard to COVID-19 to hopefully be much clearer in regard to the holding of mass events in 2022/23.
- f) Agree that the process for SEF Round 4 follows the same process for SEF Round 3 with an additional point being awarded to those events that had to cancel during 2021/22 and were unable to benefit from SEF grant.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 The overarching aim of the Strategic Events and Festivals Fund is to support event organisers to enhance and grow their events with the result that more visitors are attracted to Argyll and Bute, providing substantial economic benefit to the respective areas. The fund will provide critical support in the economic recovery of the area.

4.2 At the time of agreeing to holding an SEF Round 3 it was hoped that there would be a greater likelihood that mass gatherings may be able to be held in

2021/22 and it would be a more positive outlook for events. Unfortunately to date that has not proven to be the case and it is still unclear as to when events will be able to go ahead. The fact that 5 events have already advised of their cancellation further reinforces the uncertainty facing event organisers. It should be noted that the organisation of 1 of these cancelled events, Cowal Highland Gathering, which would normally take place over a weekend, is still considering holding a one day live music/mini festival event and a sum has been allocated should this prove feasible. This is the same for Jura Music Festival event and Dunoon Multi Sports event organisation both of whom may hold a more localised event.

- 4.3 The strategic events that have applied for SEF Round 3 funding are currently scheduled to be held between end of July and December 2021. Of the 8 remaining (see table 2) some of these may not go ahead or will need to reconsider the event format in light of the current situation. The position will be predicated on when mass gatherings will be safe to be held and advice is still awaiting from SG in relation to this.
- 4.4 It is fully appreciated that events of this scale are still facing an unprecedented set of extraordinary and challenging circumstances brought about as a result of the coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic and that this has put a strain on the financial stability of many of the organisation and the outlook for Argyll and Bute strategic events in 2021 is still uncertain.
- 4.5 Events Scotland (ES) are supporting events through Scotland's Events Recovery Fund (SERF). This has been established in conjunction with Scottish Government to help Scotland's events sector plan and deliver events through to the end of 2021, and to provide support as the industry responds and adapts to the effects of COVID-19. The fund, which was launched prior to the National Lockdown and the increase in COVID 19 cases, is part of the tourism and events recovery plan and aims to help restart the events sector as restrictions are eased, and address additional costs which may be incurred as a result of new hygiene and health and safety requirements, allowing communities and the public to regain confidence in hosting and attending events.
- 4.6 The ES funding will also assist in the delivery of virtual events and a number of those strategic events that had applied to the SEF Round 3 fund and have already had to cancel, are in discussion with ES in regard to grant support to hold digital events. Digital events are an eligible event under Events Scotland SERF. Some event organisations are also looking at the possibility of holding more localised events and again this is something that ES is able to support.
- 4.7 The loss of any event from the area is likely to have a significant impact on the local economy, especially those events which are longstanding. There is no doubt that the cancellation of all 9 of the SEF Round 2 (2020/21) events will have had an economic impact on the area and potentially on the viability of the event organisations although it is hoped that both Council and SG funding support will have helped to minimise the impact in some way. The importance of the SEF Round 3 funding is fully recognised in assisting in the recovery of the

sector. It is still hoped that events will be able to go ahead at some point later in the year and it is therefore important to support our events industry as much as we can by awarding grants to those strategic events that hopefully still have a chance of going ahead as planned in 2021/22.

- 4.8 Strategic Events and Festivals Funding is conditional on events taking place and whilst payment was made last year to organisations to assist with their costs there are other sources of funding from both SG and Events Scotland to support event organisations. It is therefore not intended to repeat the approach of the partial release of grant to support the event organisation. In addition it is not intended to issue any grant contracts until such time as confirmation is received from the event organisation that the event is in fact going ahead. This is different from SEF Round 2 2020/21 grant contracts where the council had already issued contracts. Also unlike 2020, event organisations have had the benefit of the learning from last year and should be taking a more cautious approach in line with SG advice and the route map in relation to the holding of mass gatherings.
- 4.9 We will continue to liaise with the event organisations who have been awarded a grant and continue to support them and work with them as the situation develops especially as some events may need to reschedule, change their format and some may even decide to cancel.
- 4.10 The continued support to the event sector post 2021/22 will be critical and the fact that Full Council at February 2021 budget meeting agreed to allocate £90,000 to a Round 4 SEF (2022/23), augmented by any underspend remaining from 2020/21, will greatly assist in the recovery and will allow an application process to commence during 2021 and the proposed time line for the launch of SEF Round 4 is anticipated to be October this year with a report to Policy and Resources in February 2022. It is hoped that this timing will allow for there to be much greater clarity with regard to COVID-19 and the position in respect of events being held during 2022/23. However, this timeline will be continually reviewed in light of COVID-19, and if it requires to be amended a further report will be brought back to members.
- 4.11 The process adopted for SEF Round 2 and 3 has proven to be robust and successful and no significant amendments are therefore being proposed to the process for Round 4, with the following exceptions
1. Events that have been forced to cancel due to COVID-19 and received no SEF Round 3 funding will score an additional point should they make a grant application to Round 4 for 2022/23.
 2. Events will score an additional point where a low carbon strategy is being implemented in the delivery of the event and specifically in regard to encouraging the use of local produce, recycled products and reducing waste
- 4.12 As was the case with Round 2 it is intended to issue a call for applications to Round 3 in autumn 2020, for consideration by Policy and Resources Committee in winter 2020/21. However, this timeline will be continually reviewed in light of COVID-19, and if it requires to be amended a further

report will be brought back to members.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Unfortunately the impact of the coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic is likely to be felt across our area for some time and the position in regard to the holding of strategic events and festivals especially during the rest of 2021 is likely to continue to change and may well be challenging. The loss of any event from the local economy is significant, and for a number of our strategic events this has now happened over two consecutive years. This means that both for those events that do manage to go ahead this years but especially those that do not, the £90,000 SEF Round 4 funding for 2022/23, agreed at Feb 2021 budget meeting, will be even more important funding support when all events are in a position to go ahead.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – The Council’s Economic Strategy and Recovery Plan supports the value of events and festivals for their positive impact on the economy.
- 6.2 Financial – £90,000 in grant has been made available for a third round of Strategic Events and Festivals Funding for 2021/22.
- 6.3 Legal – Award letters and grant contracts would be issued as and when a decision is made and confirmation has been received that the event will go ahead.
- 6.4 HR – Resourced from existing staff
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
- 6.6 Equalities - protected characteristics - None
- 6.7 Socio-economic Duty – The Fund seeks to support the economic growth of areas
- 6.8 Islands – The Fund seeks to support island economies by encouraging increased levels of visitors
- 6.9 Risk – The full effects of the impact that the coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic will have is at this stage unclear, although it is anticipated that the impact will be significant and as we have already seen the cancellation of 5 SEF Round 3 events due to take place in 2021/22 albeit that some of these events may go ahead in a different format.
- 6.10 Customer Service - None

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

9th April 2021

Policy Lead – Cllr Redman

For further information contact:

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APPENDICES

Table 1 – SEF Round 3 Grant applications received in December 2020

Table 2 – Current proposed SEF Round 3 grant awards

Table 1 –SEF Round 3 Grant Applications received in December 2020	
Event	Original Funding Requested
£2,500 - £5,000 Fund	
Inveraray Highland Games	3,000
Jura Music Festival	5,000
Helensburgh Winter Festival	5,000
Argyll Rally	5,000
Tiree Music Festival	5,000
Subtotal	<u>23,000</u>
£5,001 - £15,000 Fund	
Mull of Kintyre Music and Arts Festival	11,000
Tiree Wave Classic	8,200
Dunoon Multi Sports Festival	6,500
Subtotal	<u>25,700</u>
£15,001 and Over Fund	
Mull Rally	26,000
Cowal Highland Gathering	30,000
Subtotal	<u>56,000</u>
Total SEF Round 3 request	<u>104,700</u>

Table 2 Proposed SEF Round 3 grant awards

Table 2 Proposed SEF Round 3 grant awards		
SEF Fund	£2,500 - £5,000 Grant	
Event	Original SEF Requested	Proposed Funding Award (15% SEF Limit)
Inveraray Highland Games	3,000	Cancelled
Jura Music Festival (original event cancelled but may hold more localised event)	5,000	5,000***
Helensburgh Winter Festival	5,000	5,000 *
Argyll Rally	5,000	5,000
Tiree Music Festival	5,000	Cancelled
Sub Total	<u>23,000</u>	<u>15,000</u>
SEF Fund	£5,001- £15,000 Grant	
Event	Level of Funding Requested	Proposed Funding Award
Mull of Kintyre Music and Arts Festival	11,000	11,000
Tiree Wave Classic	8,200	8,200 *
Dunoon Multi Sports Festival (original event cancelled but may hold more localised swim event)	6,500	6,500***
Sub Total	<u>25,700</u>	<u>25,700</u>
SEF Fund	£15,001- £30,000 Grant	
Event	Level of Funding Requested	Proposed Funding Award
Mull Rally	26,000	6,150**
Cowal Highland Gathering (original weekend event cancelled may hold mini festival)	30,000	10,000***
Sub Total	<u>56,000</u>	<u>16,150</u>

Summary

SEF Round 3 Budget	90,000
Total Original Funding Request	104,700
Current Proposed Funding Award	56,850
Unallocated to be carried forward to future SEF Round	33,150

* Original request approved despite exceeding maximum 15% grant offer. Both these events are due to be held later in 2021 and hopefully this will help to deliver these.

** Event organisation reduced grant request to reflect change to event

***Original Cowal Highland Gathering cancelled but possible 1 day Live Music /mini festival being considered if viable and links to SEF criteria. This also applies to Jura Music Festival and Dunoon Multi Sports event both of which have cancelled but may hold a more localised event.