
STRATEGIC EVENTS & FESTIVALS

1. SUMMARY

1.1 At the September 2011 Executive members agreed the 3 year funding for a list of strategic events and festivals across Argyll & Bute. The only event identified for support within the Helensburgh and Lomond area was a new event which was to be locally determined and following detailed discussions with local stakeholders a new winter festival will be introduced. An annual sum of £16k has been agreed to support the event. A contingency sum was also agreed within the events budget and an appropriate use for this money has now been put forward.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Members are asked to approve the allocation of the £20k contingency sum within the Strategic Events budget for the promotion and development of the new Helensburgh Winter Festival.

3. DETAIL

3.1 At the 29th September 2011 Executive meeting members approved the introduction of a Strategic Events & Festivals budget to provide 3 year financial support to a range of major events in Argyll & Bute. The key reason for supporting the major events was to maximise economic benefit to the area through increased cultural tourism.

3.2 The issue of legacy was identified as an important factor in achieving longer term economic impact from an event. Bringing back repeat visitors to the area provides a continuing to stimulus to the local economy. While one-off events can be very successful in their own right, they tend to have limited long term economic impact. A truly successful event not only delivers an immediate impact but also leaves a footprint for years to come.

3.3 Funding was agreed for a new event in the Helensburgh and Lomond area that could meet this longer term objective. A decision has now been reached amongst the key local stakeholders/organisers to move forward and create a winter festival in late November/early December. This should provide a welcome boost to the local economy in the early winter with the aim of establishing Helensburgh as a significant short stay visitor attraction at that time of year.

3.4 Given this is the only new festival that funding was agreed for, it will be vitally important that it is effectively marketed and promoted in the early years and there will also be additional set up costs involved which do not apply to all the other ongoing events which the Council is funding. The loss of the Scottish Open Golf Championship to the Helensburgh & Lomond area in 2011 has created a significant gap in visitor income to the area and through the Chamber of Commerce local businesses are very keen to support a new public/private sector funded festival which will bring in visitors to help address part of the lost income to the area.

3.5 In addition to the specific grant support agreed by the Executive, a contingency sum of £20k was established with the primary goal of financing the promotion of a new event. The Helensburgh Winter Festival organising group have made a request for this one-off fund to be granted to them to help build up the festival into a well known and established event across the west of Scotland and much further afield. No other major new events are being developed in the area and this would be an appropriate use of the contingency fund to ensure the winter festival is successfully launched and given a sound early platform on which to base and grow its future success.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 As evidenced by the success and major economic benefit generated to this area by the Cowal Highland Gathering and Royal National Mod, the scale of the event and the degree of media coverage and marketing are critical success factors. Providing additional resources to assist with launch of the Helensburgh Winter Festival will maximise the likelihood of its success and provide the greatest opportunity to create a longstanding legacy for the area.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Policy: This proposal fits with the Council's Culture & Economic Development strategies.

5.2 Financial: The £20k funding has been set aside within the Strategic Events & Festivals budget.

5.3 Legal: None

5.4 Equal opportunities: None

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