

## FILM IN ARGYLL – SCREEN INDUSTRIES UPDATE REPORT

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### 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. It outlines 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 2024 to December 2024.
- 1.2 For the period January 2024 to December 2024, Argyll and Bute Council received **87 film enquiries** and **40 productions** filmed during this period. This has led to an estimated local production spend of **£1.4M**. This compares favourably to the 2023 estimated local production spend of **£1.3M** despite there being less days of filming. This is due to the quality and the number of productions that have filmed in the area, and also the nationally agreed increase of the estimated per day local production spend that are used to calculate these figures. In addition, the continued upward trend over the last three years is highly likely to be a direct reflection of the establishment of more studios in the Central Belt as well as UK and Scottish Government incentives for the screen industries.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee are asked to consider the contents of this report and the continued positive economic impact the screen industries have 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 covers the period January 2024 to December 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 can use Argyll and Bute for location filming which has significant economic benefits for the area.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Members of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee are asked to consider the contents of this report and the continued positive economic impact the screen industries have on Argyll and Bute.

**4.0 DETAIL**

- 4.1 Development of screen industries continues to be a key growth sector for both the 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 national 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. In line with this, Argyll and Bute's Economic Strategy supports the growth of the creative industries under the "Prosperity" outcome.

- 4.2 'The Economic Value of the Screen Sector in Scotland' published in 2023 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 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. Research is currently underway to update these figures and a report is expected later this year.
- 4.3 Screen industries growth can also be attributed to the increased number of studio spaces, mainly in central Scotland, and there is a further studio, Stirling Studios, which is yet to open. 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. In Argyll and Bute we have one studio/build space on offer which is The Factory at MACC Business Base and this is advertised internationally on the Screen Scotland website. In addition, there is an opportunity to offer office space for productions should there be any such spaces available within Argyll and Bute.
- 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; 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 There were more independent cinemas in Argyll and Bute than anywhere else in Scotland however this may have changed due to the closure of the Phoenix Cinema in Oban. Cinemas across Argyll and Bute are under severe pressure to be financially viable due to continuing high costs for heating etc. and changes in consumer behaviour, an issue which is also affecting other venues across the country. Representation from the screen sector in Argyll and Bute have requested a reduction in the Council Cinema Licence fee to assist with costs. Further considerations identified that there is an exemption from requiring a cinema licence (section 20), if the exhibition is promoted by a society (established and conducted wholly for purposes other than purposes of any commercial undertaking) and monies are applied for any purpose calculated to benefit the society as a whole. As a result, one cinema in Argyll in Bute has obtained an exemption. It should be noted that cinema provides an alternative wet weather offer for residents and visitors thus supporting both our visitor economy and cultural activity.
- 4.6 To assist in growing the sector and the associated benefits, Argyll and Bute

Council Transformation, Projects and Regeneration officers deliver the Film in Argyll Service, working 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 can directly benefit Argyll and Bute through increased production and inward investment within our area.

- 4.7 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](http://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.
- 4.8 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 supports film tourism guides, providing an overview of film locations and highlights high profile productions that have filmed in the area over the years. Film in Argyll will continue to work across council services and with key partners to promote filming in Argyll and Bute.
- 4.9 For the period January 2024 to December 2024, Argyll and Bute Council received **87 film enquiries** and there were **40 productions** filmed during this period. This has led to an estimated local production spend of **£1.4M**. Compared to the 2023 estimated local production spend of **£1.3M**, the upwards trend over the last 3 years is likely to be attributable to the number of studios in the central belt and also the UK and Scottish Government financial incentives. In 2024 there was a higher quality of productions and the costs per day spend figures used to calculate these figures were increased nationally to better reflect real costs. It should be noted that industry figures do vary year on year and can change dramatically given that one large budget production can significantly increase spend figures in one year.
- 4.10 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. Within the period January 24 to December 24 examples of productions include:
- i. **The Undertow (Netflix Series)**, Mull was the location for a seven part drama starring Jamie Dornan as identical twins. It is based on the Norwegian Series Twin. Filming took place over 13 days in June.
  - ii. **Borges & Me (Feature Film)**, Kilcreggan pier was dressed and used

to double for a pier in Shetland in this production. The film is an adaption of Jay Parini's memoir covering a road trip he took across the Scottish highlands with Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. Filming took place in October.

- iii. **The Diplomat (Netflix Series)**, a political drama series in its second season filmed in Inveraray. Filming took place in February.
- iv. **Outlander: Blood of My Blood (Series)**, a prequel series to the popular tv series Outlander. Shooting in and around Luss at the end of May and into June.
- v. **Karen Pirie 2 (ITV Drama)**, British crime drama based on the novels by Val McDermid, filming took place in Helensburgh in June.
- vi. **The Primrose Railway Children (BBC Film)**, a modern adaptation of the classic story "The Railway Children". Shot in and around Luss at end of July and beginning of August.
- vii. **The Buccaneers Series 2 (Apple TV Series)**, a period drama based Edith Whartons unfinished novel of the same name. Filmed at Geilston gardens near Helensburgh. Filming took place in June.

## 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. 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 Economic Strategy under Prosperity outcome.
- 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 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – None.

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

**Councillor Math Campbell-Sturgess, Policy Lead for Business Development**

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