Argyll and Bute Council: Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment

Section 1: About the proposal

Title of Proposal
Strategic Events and Festivals consideration for budget savings.

Intended outcome of proposal
Needs clarification however our understanding is that it is the reduction or managed withdrawal of the annual budget for Strategic Events and Festivals which funds culture, sports and other activities. Funding is currently in place for Round 6 2024/2025 therefore any changes would take place from 2025/26 onwards.

Description of proposal

To discontinue through a managed with-drawl of the events and festivals budget which functions as an annual competitive fund to grow the economy of Argyll and Bute by enabling communities to sustain and grow their own events and festivals. Withdrawing the entire budget in a single phase would have more impact than a managed withdrawl over a number of years.

This budget contributes to the annual economic impact of events of circa £10m often assisting economically fragile communities through generated income that sustains rural services and supports local businesses. The majority of the events are run by voluntary communities and foster community pride and cohesion and are a key feature of a place thus contributing to a sense of place, community health and wellbeing, whilst many of these events help support Gaelic culture and language and also fragile island communities. In this round, out of a total of 15 recommended applications, eight events are on islands and five support Gaelic culture.

The events and festivals sector, along with tourism, arts, culture and heritage has seen the slowest recovery after the pandemic and is still fragile as a consequence skill shortages, the cost of living crisis and changes in customer behavior. The events play a key part in the cultural character of Argyll and Bute and provide a positive profile which helps to attract visitors and people to locate here helping with our population issues.

The Council's annual SEF funding plays a key role in ensuring the continued recovery of the sector with strong links to the hospitality and tourism industries that are Argyll's main private sector employer. The withdrawl of funding from events and festivals in the area may threaten the existence of events, such as the 128 year old Cowal Gathering which has been in recovery since the loss of the world pipe band championships and is central to the culture of Cowal.

The Mull of Kintyre Festival is also key for Campbeltown and the surrounding area, and island events such as Tiree Wind Festival have a big global reach and a positive impact on the profile of the area.

The Strategic Events and Festivals fund has assisted the following community organisations and no consultation has taken place with these:

Royal National Mòd
Cowal Highland Gathering
Mull of Kintyre Music and Arts Festival
The Argyllshire Gathering
Highlands and Islands Music and Dance Festival
Oban Games
Oban Live
Oban Winter Festival
Tiree Music Festival
Tiree Wave Classic
Isle of Jura Music Festival
Islay Book Festival
Sea Change Film Festival on Tiree
Tarbert Music Festival
Tarbert Seafood Festival
Tarbert Scottish Series Yacht Race
Sound of Gigha
Helensburgh Winter Festival
Helensburgh Festival Light Switch On
Gathering of Cowal Clans

Argyll Rally (Dunoon/Cowal)
Isle of Bute Jazz Festival
Bute Noir
Doon the Watter (music/Dunoon)
West Highland Yachting Week (Oban and Islands)
Argyll Food Fair

Business Outcome(s) / Corporate Outcome(s) to which the proposal contributes

Strategic Events and Festivals is contained within the following:

ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN
Narrative
In Argyll and Bute we have a strong cultural identity, rich in the Gaelic language, archaeology, architecture, music and the visual arts. This has helped to create a strong sense of place that helps retain and attract people to live in our community and encourage others to visit, often participating in our numerous events and festivals. Specific actions to support Gaelic culture and language are being taken forward in the Council's Gaelic language plan.

Outcome
To raise our profile as a centre for cultural activity and create a vibrant and sustainable creative sector.

Actions
To distribute a strategic events and festivals budget subject to available resources.

GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN
Promoting a Positive Image of Gaelic
1.10 - Maximise the economic impact of Gaelic at events/festivals held in Argyll and Bute.
Target - Minimum 2 events per annum.

Lead officer details:	
Name of lead officer	
Job title	
Department	
Appropriate officer details:	
Name of appropriate officer	
Job title	
Department	
Sign off of EqSEIA	
Date of sign off	

Who will deliver the proposal?

Transformation Projects and Regeneration

Section 2: Evidence used in the course of carrying out EqSEIA

Consultation / engagement

None

Data
None

Other information
Data has been gathered from the applications and claim forms submitted by organisations funded and these have helped to inform the impact on service users highlighted below.

Gaps in evidence
There is no data collected on the impact of the proposals from the organisations.

Section 3: Impact of proposal

Impact on service users:

	Negative	**No impact**	**Positive**	**Don't know**
Protected characteristics:				
Age				
Disability				
Ethnicity				
Sex				
Gender reassignment				
Marriage and Civil Partnership				
Pregnancy and Maternity				
Religion				
Sexual Orientation				
Fairer Scotland Duty:				
Mainland rural population	√			
Island populations	√			
Low income				
Low wealth				
Material deprivation				
Area deprivation	√			
Socio-economic background	√			
Communities of place	√			
Communities of interest	√			

If you have identified any impacts on service users, explain what these will be.
Withdrawl of funding will have a serious impact on the income and viability of a number of community led organisations and the loss of the key cultural events for the area. In particular, organisations such as the 128 year old Cowal Gathering which has been in recovery since the loss of the world pipe band championships and is central to the culture and economy of Cowal with many families returning to the area for the event. Also the Mull of Kintyre Music Festival which is a key economic and cultural event for Campbeltown. Both these events work within their communities to develop skills such as piping, contribute to historic traditions and communities of interest that give a sense of place and operate within areas of socio-economic and area deprivation.

Island populations make up over 50% of the recommended applications for 2024/2025. This year the islands are Tiree, Islay, Jura, Mull, Gigha and Bute.

Any loss of events will lead to a reduction in income for local businesses where these events take place. The impact of this and income to the organisations is circa £10m.

If it was agreed to take a phased withdrawl over a number of years then consultation could take place with the organisations.

If any 'don't know's have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?

Consultation with the organisations would need to take place to fully understand the impacts of the removal of the fund.

Impact on service deliverers (including employees, volunteers etc):

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
Protected characteristics:				
Age				
Disability				
Ethnicity				
Sex				
Gender reassignment				
Marriage and Civil Partnership				
Pregnancy and Maternity				
Religion				
Sexual Orientation				
Fairer Scotland Duty:				
Mainland rural population				
Island populations	√			
Low income	√			
Low wealth	√			
Material deprivation				
Area deprivation	√			
Socio-economic background	√			
Communities of place	√			
Communities of interest	√			

If you have identified any impacts on service deliverers, explain what these will be.

Technically the service deliverers are the events and festival organisers and the information is contained within the previous question. The event organisers are mainly community and voluntary groups and many operate on islands and areas of deprivation.

The key impact on the organisers are:

1. Loss of income and threat to viability of the organisation
2. Loss of volunteering, skills and learning
3. Loss of community cohesion.

If any 'don't know's have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?

How has 'due regard' been given to any negative impacts that have been identified?
The proposal has negative impacts and these will need to be sensitively managed. A reduction in funding would be the best case scenario however if this is not possible then a phased approach over years would be preferable.

Section 4: Interdependencies

Is this proposal likely to have any knock-on effects for any other activities carried out by or on behalf of the council?	Hire of premises and services during the events.

Details of knock-on effects identified
Time would be required to quantify these and no engagement has taken place.

Section 5: Monitoring and review

How will you monitor and evaluate the equality impacts of your proposal?
Through consultation with the sector and analysis of data.