
Update on The Scottish Borders Events Plan

Report by Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

6 October 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper provides elected members with an update on the Council's events strategy and recommends a review of the proposed Strategy due to the severe impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic on the events sector, along with the reconfiguring of grant support for the events that the Council has previously supported.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 **I recommend that the Committee:**

- **Agrees that the proposed Events Strategy is fully re-drafted following the severe impact inflicted on the events sector by the Covid 19 pandemic;**
- **Agrees that officers continue to engage with and assess the most appropriate support for event organisers during the current pandemic; and**
- **Agrees funding of £20,000 for the Borders Book Festival.**

3 Background

- 3.1 Events are recognised as an important part of the social and economic life of communities in the Scottish Borders and they have the potential to enrich the lives of local residents, attract visitors and improve the economic viability of an area.
- 3.2 It has previously been estimated that events can generate and contribute over £7million per annum to the local economy in the Scottish Borders.
- 3.3 A Strategic Events Plan for 2020-2030 had been developed by Council Officers following discussions with key national and local stakeholders and a paper was due to be presented to Executive in March this year. That was not possible as scheduled Council meetings were cancelled.
- 3.4 Some of the key events that the Council was proposing to support going forward included; The Borders Book Festival, The Tour of Britain, Tour of the Borders, Melrose 7's, Sir Walter Scott's 250th Anniversary and The Jim Clark Rally as well as a host of other events.

4 Current Proposal

- 4.1 It is clear that almost every event in the Scottish Borders have been cancelled or at least severely curtailed by the Covid 19 pandemic during the course of 2020. Furthermore the ongoing nature of the pandemic and its implications for many events have far reaching consequences for the sector. It is clear this has been one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. It is therefore recommended that Council Officers review the current Strategic Events Plan, have further discussions and engagement with event organisers and seek to produce a fully re-drafted strategy taking into account the impact of recent months along with the potential restrictions initiated by Covid 19.
- 4.2 The Council will continue to support event organisers and work collaboratively with key stakeholders and partners to encourage the delivery of future events that have the opportunity to deliver economic and cultural benefits to the Scottish Borders. In the short term officers will engage with event organisers to ensure that the Council is as responsive as is possible to the needs of event organisers. In particular there will be a focus on assessing, with event organisers, what would be required to make it possible to hold events in 2021 if the COVID Guidance allows this. Recommendations for grant funding will be brought in a subsequent report(s) to Executive. Funding can therefore be made available to event organisers on the basis of these discussions and subsequent decisions.
- 4.3 One of the key events supported by Scottish Borders Council is the Borders Book Festival. Following discussions with the Book Festival, it is clear that they have been very successful in minimising the financial impact of cancelling this year's event and have now been able to develop and provide a virtual offering to customers, which will be beneficial to the festival in the longer term, allowing the organisers to help grow the product. The organisers have incurred significant costs associated with converting this year's event to be on line. Costs have included the development of podcasts, virtual interviews with a wide selection of authors and the marketing and promotion of the festival. These have in effect been start up costs for a new Book Festival. It is therefore recommended that Scottish Borders Council supports the festival during the current financial year with a financial allocation of £20,000. This proposed allocation is in line with previous grants provided to the event organisers.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

The proposal will be funded from existing budget allocations.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

Event development is a priority in the Scottish Borders Economic Strategy and the Scottish Borders Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. There is a risk that if the Council does not support businesses and communities in relation to taking advantage of event related opportunities, the economic, environmental and social benefits will not be maximised.

5.3 Equalities

A key aspect of Scottish Borders Council’s work in relation to Economic Development is to reduce barriers to economic inequality and help ensure that information on service delivery in relation to equalities groups is constantly monitored. An equality impact assessment (EIA) will be undertaken as part of the development of the new Strategic Events Plan.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

The new strategic events plan will seek to ensure that the planning, development and delivery of events incorporates socially and environmentally responsible decision making balanced with providing economic benefit to help sustain local communities.

5.5 Carbon Management

This is an informational report and there are no specific effects on carbon emissions.

5.6 Rural Proofing

This is an informational report and it does not require any rural proofing.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes which are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Corporate Management Team, Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR and the Clerk to the Council have not been consulted on this report at the current time.

Approved by

Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: None

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. The contact can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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