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## **UPDATE ON THE SCOTTISH BORDERS STRATEGIC EVENTS PLAN**

**Report by Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy**

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### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**20 April 2021**

#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This paper provides Elected Members with an update on the Council's Events Strategy and the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the events sector.
- 1.2 This paper outlines the significant impact events have in the region as well as highlighting some of the future opportunities.
- 1.3 The report recommends that a new Events Strategy should be produced this year and should reflect the Event Scotland National Strategy, the VisitScotland National Tourism Strategy and take account of the significant challenges associated with the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- 1.4 One of the key events in forthcoming years is the Enduro World series. This event will be held in the Tweed Valley and an allocation of £10,000 from the Scottish Borders Council Events Budget is recommended to help support this major event during the current financial year.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee:**

- a) **Agrees that a new Scottish Borders Strategic Events Plan 2022 – 32 is presented for approval later this year following discussions with event organisers, Event Scotland and VisitScotland;**
- b) **Agrees funding of £10,000 for the Enduro World Series during the current financial year and**
- c) **Agrees to delegate authority to the Executive Director Corporate Improvement & Economy in consultation with the Executive Member for Economic Regeneration & Finance to provide financial support for Events in 2021 as follows:**
  - i. **Up to £2.5k to plan an entirely new event in 2021 or 2022**
  - ii. **Up to £5k in 2021 to prepare to hold an existing event in 2022 where no event is held in 2021**
  - iii. **Up to £10k to hold an existing event in 2021**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The previous Scottish Borders Events Plan 2010-20 outlined the vision that the Scottish Borders is to be seen as a destination for significant events that raise the profile of the area and create sustainable economic benefits.
- 3.2 Events are recognised as an important part of the social and economic life of communities, they enrich the lives of local residents, attract visitors and improve the economic viability of an area. Recognising the importance of events the Council has had an Events Plan for over ten years and has allocated funds to large scale events accruing economic benefits on an annual basis. Separate arrangements and funding are in place to support community events, festivals and common ridings.
- 3.3 A draft Strategic Events Plan 2020-30 was developed by Council Officers but due to the Covid-19 pandemic was not presented to Executive as planned in March 2020. That draft Plan has been significantly superseded by the impacts of COVID -19. It is proposed that a new Events Strategy 2022-32 is developed and that this should outline the Council's approach for the support, development, delivery and measurement of the impact of events in the Scottish Borders. It has previously been estimated that events generate and contribute over £7million per annum to the local economy in the Scottish Borders.
- 3.4 With the improving conditions from COVID-19 and a reduction in current restrictions it is possible and in some cases likely that the following events may take place in 2021, The Tour of Britain, Tour of the Borders and Melrose 7s being examples. Events around Sir Walter Scott's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, The Enduro Worlds Series and The Borders Book Festival (in November) will take place. Looking ahead to 2022 we are hoping to see the return of the Melrose 7's in the Spring and the Jim Clark Rally in May as well as a host of other events.

### **4 EVENTS AND FUNDING 2021**

- 4.1 It is clear that almost every event organiser in the Scottish Borders in 2020 has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore the ongoing nature of the pandemic and its restrictions have had far reaching consequences for the event sector during the current calendar year. Planning events for 2021 remains very challenging.
- 4.2 Event organisers and promoters are increasingly confident about running events when restrictions will allow. However, in some cases the host communities appear to be somewhat less confident at the present time. This reticence is wholly understandable and must be addressed and reflected in planning for any event. A good example of excellent community involvement is the Community Interest Company in Innerleithen which has been established to assist with the delivery of the Enduro World Series (see below). The event organisers have established good practice around community involvement and engagement and the community are involved at the planning stage of the event and are encouraged to support local periphery activities. This can reduce community resistance and negativity, thereby creating a positive experience for all.

- 4.3 In the short term, Officers will continue to engage with event organisers to ensure that the Council is as responsive as possible to the changing needs of the sector. In particular, there will be a focus on assessment in collaboration with event organisers in terms of event organisation within the current changing and challenging Covid-19 guidelines. This will be managed through the Council's long established and highly effective Safety Advisory Group (SAG) process.
- 4.4 The Council has provided a range of financial support to events over many years. This funding is provided following assessment of an application from Event Organisers that sets out exactly what the funds will be used for, the visitor numbers anticipated and the likely economic impact of the event. Event Scotland guidance and impact assessments are used to assist with this process. All funding requires completion of a post event report that sets out the impact of the funds provided. This process and use of funds was established as part of the 2009-19 Strategy.
- 4.5 For 2021, in the absence of a current Events Strategy, an interim process is proposed to allow the allocation of funds to event organisers. Given the impacts of COVID-19 and the absence of events in 2020 there is a clear need to redesign many events as well as undertake new planning and assessments to manage events. This is likely to be onerous for event organisers and incur a series of one off costs. It is proposed to offer funding for 2021 that recognises the needs and challenges in both planning and holding events. Additionally, event organisers considering new events should be supported in order to ensure the viability of their events can be appropriately considered within the SAG process.
- 4.6 It is therefore recommended that Officers continue to engage with and assess the most appropriate support for event organisers in 2021 and that in undertaking that work Council provides funding in three ways to event organisers:
- i. Up to £2.5k to plan an entirely new event in 2021 or 2022
  - ii. Up to £5k in 2021 to prepare to hold an existing event in 2022 where no event is being held in 2021
  - iii. Up to £10k to hold an existing event in 2021

It is anticipated that it should be possible to return to more normal funding arrangements in 2022 and decisions in respect of that can be made when the draft Events Strategy 2022-32 is considered later this year.

- 4.7 One of the Key events for the Tweedvalley over the next few years is the Enduro World Series (EWS), with the first event due to take place in October 2021. It is anticipated if COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed and international travel has resumed there will be approximately 1200 competitors and in excess of 5,000 spectators building up to a potential 10,000 spectators in 2023. With an estimated economic impact of £1.5m for the area. At the present time, the event already has 1000 entrants and a waiting list.

- 4.8 Post 2023, the organisers envisage hosting two more years of the EWS in the Scottish Borders leaving a lasting legacy. This potential five-year project for the Tweed Valley could create a wealth of opportunities for cycling activities and adventure sport and could also help promote the Scottish Borders to a global audience. This event is likely to be supported by Event Scotland.
- 4.9 Scottish Borders Council has been asked by the organisers of the EWS to provide a contribution of £10,000 to the overall project budget for the event. Officers are working with the Event Organisers to develop the proposal and to clarify the exact use of the funds along with the anticipated Economic outcomes the event is seeking to achieve; there is a strong fit with desired outcomes from major events and it is therefore recommended that £10,000 is allocated to this event subject to the normal application and review process.

## **5 NEW EVENTS STRATEGY FOR 2022-32**

- 5.1 A redrafted 2022–2032 Strategic Events Plan should be ambitious and propose targeting support towards events that have the greatest economic impact as well as a national and international profile. The approach will aim to maximise financial leverage from EventScotland and other partners, as well as maximising social, cultural and environment benefits. Successful event delivery requires a partnership approach with ambitious event organisers and National agencies as well as local businesses and communities. The plan will also reflect the current state of the event sector following the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic.
- 5.2 The National Events Strategy for Scotland (Scotland The Perfect Stage) provides the strategic focus for delivering events throughout the country for a ten year period, with the document initiated in 2015. The strategy document is due to have an interim review during the current financial year and will likely reflect the problems associated with the Covid-19 Pandemic. In addition, Visit Scotland announced a new tourism strategy in March 2020 which has a ten year horizon. The main focus of the strategy document is centred on responsible and sustainable tourism.
- 5.3 It is therefore recommended that Council Officers, undertake new work and engage with event organisers to produce a fully re-drafted event strategy for 2022-32 taking into account the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions and taking account of proposed revisions in the National Events Strategy and referencing the Visit Scotland tourism document.

## **6 IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Financial**

The proposal will be funded from the existing event budget of £100k.

### **6.2 Risk and Mitigations**

Event development is a priority for Scottish Borders Council and there is a risk that if the Council does not support events the economic, environmental and social benefits will not be maximised.

**6.3 Integrated Impact Assessment**

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.

**6.4 Sustainable Development Goals**

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.

**6.5 Climate Change**

There is no specific impact in relation to Climate Change.

**6.6 Rural Proofing**

There is no impact in relation to rural proofing.

**6.7 Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

**6.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no proposed changes to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation.

**7 CONSULTATION**

7.1 The Executive Director, Finance and Regulatory Services, Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

**Approved by**

**Rob Dickson**  
**Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy**

**Signature .....**

**Author(s)**

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jane Warcup	Events Officer
Graeme Johnstone	Lead Officer

**Background Papers:**  
**Previous Minute Reference:**

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

Contact us at [jwarcup@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:jwarcup@scotborders.gov.uk)