

The Highland Council

City of Inverness Area Committee – 3 June 2014

Agenda Item	6
Report No	CIA/17/14

Marketing Inverness

Joint Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure and Acting Head of Community and Democratic Engagement

Summary

This report updates Members on the delivery of actions from the marketing action plan for Inverness. This activity contributes to delivering a number of commitments in the Council's programme "Working Together for The Highlands", namely:

- working with the Scottish Government, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and private sector partners, the Council will maximise the tourism potential of the Highland area;
- the Council will work with Highlands & Islands Enterprise, the Scottish Council for Development & Industry and statutory infrastructure providers to promote and develop the Highland area as one of the most attractive environments to do business in Scotland;
- the Council will continue to work with private and public sector partners to promote the Highlands' ports and harbours; and
- the Council will seek to support the development of our urban centres, and put local communities at the forefront of these processes. Working with the Scottish Government, we will ensure that Inverness and the wider region realise the benefits of the 'Seven Cities Strategy'.

The report concludes by outlining a way forward that is currently under consideration by the Inverness Partnership Marketing Group.

1. Background

- 1.1 At the meeting of this committee on 14th February 2011 Members were presented with a report outlining work undertaken to produce a marketing action plan for the Inverness Partnership Marketing Group and seeking additional funding towards these activities from the Inverness Common Good Fund. Further reports on 10th October 2011 and 3rd December 2012 have updated Members on progress with these activities.
- 1.2 The activities have been led by the Inverness Partnership Marketing Group which is a sub group of the Inverness Partnership, with an emphasis on creating resources that the partners can use rather than undertaking marketing activity. This avoids duplicating what partners are already doing but also recognises the fact that many partners require to target very specific markets with messages that appeal directly to them.

2. Previous and current activity

2.1 Website

A new version of the www.inverness-scotland.com website was launched in May 2012 as a new portal for the City. Since its launch the website has had over 220,000 visits and over 190,000 different users.

Inverness promotional video

A promotional film about Inverness featuring the same themes as the website was also launched in May 2012 and has been viewed over 22,000 times. It has also been used by VisitScotland and Inverness hotels association in attracting conferences. The video was shown at the close of the 2014 Celtic Media conference in St Ives as part of the introduction to Inverness which will host the 2015 event where it received a standing ovation.

Inward Investment

Activity undertaken by HIE included pieces of work looking at labour market information and at quality of life indicators while Inward investment activity has also benefitted from the other activity outlined here for example using resources when promoting Inverness at events in London and France.

PR and Social Media activity

A contract was let to the Keith consultancy, a local PR company with the aim of raising the profile of Inverness. Traditional PR activity has largely been support for press visits and radio broadcasts featuring Inverness while the Social media contract sees daily use of Facebook & Twitter and a blog used to promote Inverness. The Facebook profile currently has 1180 likes while on twitter there are 2485 followers and 3,679 tweets have been sent.

Photographic library

Construction of a photo library was completed in early 2013 and over 300 images have now been added to the library. All areas around Inverness & Loch Ness have some images included although some thematic gaps still remain with no images for a number of subjects. To date images from the library have already been used by travel media, incoming tour operators and the Scottish Cities Alliance as well as by public sector partners and local businesses for their own promotional activities.

2.2 The Inverness Partnership Marketing Group had a total cash budget for the above programme of activity of £60,000 with £30,000 coming from the Inverness Common Good Fund. Further in kind support with an estimated value of over £25,000 was provided by the private sector notably in support for press visits and by The Highland Council in terms of staff time to commission, undertake or manage activities.

2.3 Activity to date has seen £57,539.92 spent and a further £2,145.00 committed leaving a balance of £315.08. Future commitments include website hosting for the remainder of the year and the continuation of the Social media activity until the end of August 2014.

The main areas of expenditure to date are as follows:-

Inward Investment activity	£20,000
Video production	£7,110
Website build and hosting	£6,558
PR	£7,423
Social Media activity	£10,800
Photographic library build & purchase of photography	£5,645

2.4 Over the past two years the activities expected of the marketing group have largely been accomplished and in achieving this over 99% of the available budget has now been spent or committed.

3. Uniqueness – The Loch Ness & Inverness Tourism Business Improvement District

3.1 Following a successful ballot of businesses in March, Uniqueness – the Loch Ness & Inverness Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) formally came into existence on 1 April 2014. Amongst the TBID's business plan objectives are a number of marketing activities some of which the TBID aim to deliver jointly with partners including the existing City Centre BID and the Inverness Partnership Marketing Group. This brings an entirely new element to the marketing of Inverness & Loch Ness that was not in existence while the marketing group's previous activities were being undertaken.

4. Future Inverness Partnership Marketing Group activity

4.1 Although most of the initial work proposed has been completed some elements are still outstanding notably the need to fill remaining gaps in the photographic library while the nature of social media activity suggests there is merit in continuing to undertake such activity.

4.2 One of the main issues the Marketing Group has had to deal with has been the lack of a dedicated staff resource and over time the ability for partners, including the Council to contribute time to this alongside other commitments has been decreasing. However it is also clear that in the current circumstances funding a dedicated member of staff at the same time as some of the partner organisations are reducing their own staffing levels can be difficult to justify.

4.3 One solution to this could be to contract one of the existing members of the group to deliver these services on behalf of the Marketing Group. As the TBID will be employing a person, at least on a part time basis, to undertake marketing activity they have indicated an interest in offering services to the marketing group. As TBID resources have already been allocated to delivering some marketing activities for the tourism sector (including business tourism / conferences), one possible option is to have the funding allocated for tourism activity to be matched by funding from another source thereby allowing the TBID to undertake agreed activities that cover other sectors or areas of

interest.

- 4.4 Ultimately it is for the Inverness Partnership Marketing Group rather than the Council to decide whether or not to accept this approach and this is due to be discussed by partners at a meeting of the marketing group on 27th May 2014 (which falls between publication of this report and the meeting of this Committee).
- 4.5 However, in recognition of the Council's interest, and the fact that a likely funding source for the wider activity would be the Inverness Common Good Fund, it is considered appropriate to notify members of this proposal and seek their views. A verbal update will also be given to the Committee informing them of any outcome from the marketing group's discussions at their meeting on 27th May.

5. Implications

- 5.1 There are no Legal, Equalities, Climate Change / Carbon Clever, Risk or Gaelic implications arising directly from this report.
- 5.2 While there are also no resource implications arising directly from this report, the decisions taken by the Inverness Partnership Marketing group at their meeting could lead to a subsequent funding bid being made for either Highland Council or Inverness Common Good Fund support. In these circumstances, any application would be subject to the usual governance and approval processes in place for these funds.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- note the marketing activity already delivered by the Inverness Partnership Marketing group; and
- endorse the approach agreed by the Inverness Partnership Marketing group to delivering future activities on the basis that any funding awards would only be made following applications to the Highland Council or the Inverness Common Good fund and as such would be subject to the governance and approval processes already in place.

Designation: Director of Development & Infrastructure

Date: 20 May 2014

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