

The Highland Council
City of Inverness Area Committee
3 December 2015

Agenda Item	4
Report No	CIA/58/15

Event Tourism – The Way Forward

**Joint Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure
and Inverness City Area Manager**

Summary

This report provides background on activity connected with making the City and Area a vibrant place for both local communities and visitors. It reflects on the support provided by the Inverness Common Good Fund (ICGF) and Partners, as well as the outputs from the recent Events Tourism Charrette lead by Professor Joe Goldblatt of Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. This work supports the Council's 2012-2017 "Working Together for the Highlands" programme commitment to work with partners to maximise the tourism potential of the Highland Area.

1. Background

- 1.1 Tourism is one of Scotland's key growth sectors and the Highlands' most important industry. Latest full year figures for Inverness City (2012) showed tourism generated £88m of direct expenditure and a further £27m of indirect expenditure and supported over 2000 jobs.
- 1.2 Since 2008, the focus of the City of Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group (EFWG) has been on the development of an Events Strategy (latest version attached at **Appendix1**) and the delivery of an annual events programme. This has been achieved on time and within budget. Funding for the events programme has been made available from the ICGF.
- 1.3 The investment made in the events programme has enhanced the profile of the City and area, especially in relation to Hogmanay which is now the only free event of its type in Scotland and is attracting increasing attention from overseas visitors. Festivals such as Highland Homecoming September – October, 2014, have also acted to boost bed nights in the City and Area through the 'shoulder' months.
- 1.4 With the events programme having run consistently since 2008, a pattern has developed with a regular series of events being supported by locals and a growing number of visitors. Partnership support has come in-kind from Inverness BID and Eden Court Theatre. The inclusive approach taken by the EFWG has allowed partners to enhance their own events programme.
- 1.5 This report highlights the potential benefits of developing a new events delivery model which will complement previous work on attracting conferences and marketing of the City and area. The Benefits of Conference Tourism were detailed in report no CIA/9/15 which was taken to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 5 March 2015 and which can be found at http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/67578/item_11_attracting_busines

[s_tourismconferences_to_inverness](#)

- 1.6 Marketing of the City and Area has been undertaken by individual organisations from both the public and private sectors. The Inverness Marketing Group was formed in 2008 to develop a format which would allow for the collaborative development of marketing initiatives which embrace the unique selling points of both Inverness and the landward areas, with a focus on Loch Ness. This group quickly recognised that it could not undertake all forms of marketing as each target market would tend to respond to marketing activity that focussed on their particular needs – for example the marketing messages used to attract an inward investor will be very different to those used to attract a leisure visitor. However the group did recognise there were a number of common areas and so concentrated their efforts on developing a range of marketing resources that partners could then use in their own marketing activities. These resources included a web portal, a social media presence for the city, an Inverness promotional DVD and a photographic library with images for the use of partners and relevant media.

2. National Context

- 2.1 At a national level work has been under way to develop a new national events strategy resulting in the publication of “Scotland – The Perfect Stage” on 16 September 2015. Produced with over 100 contributions from the public, private and third sectors, the strategy sets out how Scotland can enhance its reputation nationally and internationally as the perfect stage for events. This includes major events of international significance and smaller events supporting local communities.
- 2.2 At the centre of the National Events Strategy is the requirement that, to successfully deliver the strategy, all agencies, organisations and individuals involved with Scotland’s events industry will need to demonstrate their support. In particular it identifies three key areas to be addressed over and above the expressed need for political and financial support for events:-
- We need to keep securing, growing and sustaining a strong events portfolio in both events and festivals and business events.
 - We need to bring the events industry together to create a thriving and unified sector.
 - We need to influence the context in which events take place and make sure their impact and legacy is maximised and recognised.

Each of these key areas are significant for Inverness and Area and the need to address these should form the core of future event development plans.

- 2.3 From the tourism perspective events can assist in attracting visitors, help extend the tourism season and bring additional economic benefit to the host area. Consequently, the close links between events and tourism are well recognised, most notably by the inclusion of EventScotland as a directorate of VisitScotland. The National Tourism Strategy “Tourism Scotland 2020” and the Highland Tourism Action Plan also recognise the importance of events and festivals and commit to encouraging their growth.

3. Events Charrette

- 3.1 As mentioned in 1.4 above, Inverness has a regular series of events supported by locals and a growing number of visitors. However, as events become a more

important part of the visitor experience for many there is a need to ensure that Inverness continues to offer an attractive programme of events with further events added to the existing portfolio. To help identify such opportunities Professor Joe Goldblatt from the International Centre for the Study of Planned Events was invited by the Council and HIE to run an “Events Charrette” in Inverness in June 2015.

- 3.2 The Events Charrette took place at the Archive Centre in Inverness on 16 June 2015. Invitations were issued to a range of relevant organisations including Inverness BID, Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID, Inverness Chamber of Commerce, Inverness Hotels, Eden Court Theatre, High Life Highland, EventScotland, VisitScotland and the Events and Festivals Working Group as well as the Council and HIE as hosts. Each of these organisations had at least one representative at the event.
- 3.3 The Council and HIE discussed options for developing an opportunity for partners to work up a plan to deliver a collaborative strategy for Event Tourism for Inverness and Landward Areas. Specifically the Charrette:
- Coded and analysed a transcript of all comments,
 - Made recommendations for a framework or strategy process and the key components of such a strategy as derived from the comments from the Charrette,
 - All in the context of examples of best practices in bench mark destinations.
- 3.4 Importantly, Event Tourism has a very different profile than Conference Tourism. Both are vital to the Highland Economy and so our strategy should have independent goals, being;

Conference Tourism;

- To attract more Conferences
- To develop a niche market for conferences best suited to our offer of facilities in a historical and environmentally attractive setting.

Event Tourism;

- To attract more events to Inverness
- To develop and deliver the unique Inverness Events and Festivals Programme
- To assist our local Community with the delivery of events
- To provide an environment which promotes the development of new events

HIE and the Council are proposing a Workshop with Partners, to include Members of the Events and Festivals Working Group (EFWG), to agree a draft Action Plan based on the targets set by the Charette. This will be reported to the Committee at a future date early in 2016.

4. Inverness City Centre BID and Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID

- 4.1 Two of the key business organisations involved in events are the Inverness City Centre BID and the Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID but each have taken on different roles.

- 4.2 Inverness City Centre BID (the City BID) have long recognised that events can be an important way of attracting both local people and visitors into the City Centre with a subsequent spin off to businesses. The City BID are involved in the organisation of events in the City Centre area. The Inverness City Area Manager supports the Provost who sits on the Board as a Director of the City BID. The BID Manager meets with the City Area Manager and Central Ward Manager every two weeks. The City BID Business Plan focusses on driving a vibrant City centre and Events are part of that initiative.
- 4.3. The Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID (TBID) was formed on 1 April 2014 following a successful ballot of businesses in the sector and is now considered to be the lead tourism organisation providing support from the business community. The City Leader is a Board Director and officer support and advice is given by the Aird and Loch Ness and Inverness South Ward Manager and the Principal Tourism & Film Officer.
- 4.4 Included in the TBID business plan are a number of actions designed to support events and to use events as a method of growing tourism in the area. More specifically these include:-
- Work with Highland Council, Event Scotland and other partners including event/festival providers to support and expand the range of new sustainable cultural, music and sporting events in and around Inverness and Loch Ness.
 - Promotion of new and existing events/festivals.
 - Expand and develop existing event ticket booking system... to incorporate more events/festivals and
 - Promote event booking system to members and assist if required with incorporating into their own websites.
- 4.5 HIE are already working with the TBID as one of their account managed companies and as part of this support are already in discussions about assisting with the production of a Tourism Development plan for the City and area. In keeping with the previous approach taken at both a National and a Highland level the intention is that such a plan should be industry led with the TBID taking on the lead role.

5. Recommended approach

- 5.1 It is clear that significant work on events is already under way, in particular through the work of the EFWG, and the two BIDs and the events charrette has proved a useful way of bringing the relevant parties together and capturing many of the common areas of interest. There is however a clear need to ensure collaboration is continued and indeed strengthened, and merit in any future strategy incorporating both tourism and Events. It is therefore recommended that rather than developing a separate events strategy, a dedicated element on the development and promotion of events be included in the Tourism Development plan for the City and area to be developed by the TBID in conjunction with the Events and Festivals Working Group.

6. Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. However, any future approach to enhance the quality and range of Inverness events is likely to mean resources from a number of sources will be required and this may include

funding from the Inverness Common Good Fund. It is anticipated that any such demands would be able to be met from the annual sums available from the fund.

- 6.2 There are no direct Rural, Legal, Equalities, Climate Change or Risk Implications arising directly from this report.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the roles of the Council, HIE and other Partners, the progress made to date and the benefits that events can bring to the City of Inverness Area and it's businesses;
- ii. approve the recommended approach to developing a strategy for the future development of events in Inverness and area, and.
- iii. note that progress will be reported to the City of Inverness Area Committee early in 2016

Designation: Inverness City Area Manager

Date: 23 November 2015

Authors: David Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Colin Simpson, Principal Tourism & Film Officer Tel: 01463 702957
Gerry Reynolds, Inverness Events Manager Tel: 01463 785006

Appendix 1

Inverness Events and Festivals Action Plan

Originally Approved on 14 February 2011

1. Introduction

1.1 Goal

- To stage Events and Festivals that will benefit and engage with the people of Inverness and the surrounding area.

Aims

- To develop Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter Festivals and Events which will bring a) economic b) social and c) cultural benefits to the City of Inverness;
- To use and focus upon the use of local talent to the social, cultural and economic benefit of our community;
- To use and focus upon the opportunities offered by the imaginative use of the infrastructure and fabric of our community
- To develop the active involvement of a broad range of the City of Inverness and surrounding area's residents and organisations in our Events and Festivals
- To develop a learning culture around our Events and Festivals encouraging interconnectedness between community groups, by enabling co-operation, joint initiatives and the sharing of resources;
- To stimulate a positive sense of Festival ownership, Festival design and Festival involvement amongst the younger members of our community;
- To continue to develop Events and Festivals which will attract visitors to the City of Inverness
- To work in partnership with independent promoters ensuring that, notwithstanding the fact that they are in a competitive market, the best use is made of the opportunities that are available; and
- To ensure that the Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group works closely with the Inverness Partnerships Marketing Working Group (IPMWG), The ICArts Working Group and the Lochness and Inverness Tourism BID and the Inverness City Centre BID by ensuring that the best possible use is made of the opportunities that are available to heighten the profile of the City of Inverness and Area as a destination locally, nationally and internationally.

2. Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group

- Enhance the core events of the city's Festivals by continuing to allow them to grow organically, focusing on the heritage of the city and the Highlands;
- Enhance links with businesses within the city through Inverness BID, Inverness Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses
- Develop the relationship with other economic / artistic partners such as Eden Court, ICArts and the University of the Highlands and Islands; and

- Create sponsorship opportunities which will grow in line with the stature of individual events

3. External Partners and Promoters

- Develop opportunities to enable Council controlled premises such as Northern Meeting Park , Ness Islands and Whin Park to host events
- Continue to enhance relationships with promoters to maximise the opportunities offered by the synergies between the Inverness Events and Festivals programme and the events organised by others
- Work closely with promoters to identify ways in which their events can be enhanced by linking them with other events or promotional activity (linked to the Marketing Strategy); and
- Facilitate events which have the potential to develop into national and international events

4. Partnership Working

4.1 Principally through the Inverness Partnership – enhance the links with other Local Authorities, national bodies and appropriate community and local youth groups in order to maximise the cohesion and co-ordination between the Inverness Events and Festivals programme and the City’s Marketing programme.

4.2 Actions

- Continue to develop the multi-agency approach to event design utilised by the Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group
- Ensure that communication between stakeholders and partners is clear with a consistent focus on the aims and objectives contained within this action plan
- Continue to develop a culture of cross working between Inverness Partnership Marketing Work Group, ICArts and Events and Festivals Working Group to ensure synergy between objectives; and
- Enhance and promote the Inverness Events and Festivals calendar together with other Council Services and external partners

5. Evaluation

5.1 Action

- Establish baseline Key Performance Indicators to enable the value of existing and future events to be monitored and developed. Assist events organisers in determining the economic impact of their events

6. Sponsorship

6.1 Develop opportunities to add value to and enhance the Inverness Events and Festivals Programme

6.2 Actions

- Ensure that a consistent message is developed about the benefits that events bring to the City and Area; and

- Work closely with the Highland Business Community and their partners to develop sponsorship opportunities

7. Cultural Links

7.1 Enhance existing cultural links nationally and internationally and, where appropriate and resources allow, develop new links.

7.2 Action

Continue to work with the Basque Country – Euskall Herria – District of Goriza to foster a cultural partnership which enhances the profile of the City and the Highlands within the current resource allocations.

8. Twinned Towns

8.1 Work with the existing Twinned Towns of La Baule, Augsburg and St Valery

(through the Town Twinning Committee) to develop opportunities for our twinned towns to take part in the Events and Festivals programme and, where appropriate, to link with other events.

9. Charitable Involvement

9.1 To work with charities for the benefits of the residents of the Burgh of Inverness

9.2 Actions

Evaluate requests from charities who have submitted applications using the Council's standard application procedures to fundraise at events. Focusing on:

- The benefits that the organisation can bring to the people of Inverness; and
- The benefits that the organisation can bring to the event

10. Charging for Certain Events

10.1 It has been traditional to make a modest charge for entry to the Inverness Highland Games. Noting the need to develop the events portfolio, consider applying a modest entry charge for events as appropriate.

10.2 Actions

The Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group to agree a policy which could be used to enable a reasonable entry charged to be levied for events which could be used to:

- Enhance the event;
- Enhance the events programme; and
- Enhance the city's Events venue infrastructure

11. Summary

11.1 This Action Plan will be subject to review by the Inverness City Area Committee on an annual basis

Appendix 2: Summary of key findings from Events Charrette

Introduction

In June 2015, the International Centre for the Study of Planned Events was appointed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and The Highland Council to conduct an Event Tourism Charrette to identify trends and future opportunities for the development of a sustainable event portfolio for Inverness.

The stakeholders included:

- Officials and economic development professionals from the Highland Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Visit Inverness Loch Ness Tourism BID
- Inverness City Centre BID
- EventScotland, the national event development agency
- Eden Court Theatre
- High Life Highland
- Inverness Chamber of Commerce
- Local event and concert organisers

The reports executive summary lists 4 main conclusions:

1. The establishment of a Highlands and Islands Event Tourism Development task force will facilitate action to implement several of the recommendations provided in this study.
2. Existing successful events within the current portfolio such as Inverness Gala, Halloween and Hogmanay may be developed further through additional financial support.
3. The City of Inverness should give due consideration to the development of a winter event (January–March) with the main focus of illuminating the structures on either side of the River Ness.
4. Sustainable funding, through additional funding streams, should be identified to provide the resource for longer term planning for the Highlands Event Tourism portfolio.

The full report also makes a number of recommendations for a future strategic plan:

1. An Event Tourism Task Force, perhaps led by a chair from the private sector, should be organised as soon as committed, effective and sustainable leadership may be identified.
2. Successful events including Halloween and Hogmanay should be further developed and resourced to be able to grow from strength to strength and new iconic events should be researched and potentially developed.
3. These activities must occur within a context that ensures environmental sustainability whilst embracing and adapting to technological change.