

Agenda Item	3.
Report No	CPB/03/20

Highland Community Planning Board – 21 August 2020

‘Spirit 360’ - A Strategic Funding Initiative for Highland Artists

Report by High Life Highland Chief Executive

The Highland CPP Board is asked to note:

- i. the intent to initiate ‘Spirit 360’ to deliver funding to the culture sector in the Highlands, whilst supporting the development of the Creative Scotland ‘Place Partnership Strategy’;
- ii. the details of the initiative provided in Appendix 1.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Highland Culture Strategic Board (HCSB) is part of the overall Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP). HCSB is responsible for developing a joint strategic approach to cultural development in the Highlands.
- 1.2 A review was undertaken of the work of HCSB in 2018 and a new direction agreed at a meeting of the Board in May 2019. This included agreement to create an Officer Working Group which would take an operational approach to cultural development that included developing proposals to utilise the remaining Creative Scotland Place Partnership funding of around £150K. The Working Group would work with the wider cultural sector to take this forward. The CPP agreed on 28 February 2020 that High Life Highland would facilitate this initiative in collaboration with Creative Scotland. This report provides CPP members with an update on progress

2. Current Context

- 2.1 The Inverness and Highland City Region Deal project to transform Inverness Castle Hill area into a world class visitor attraction has continued to progress during the lockdown and will shortly announce its first public engagement programme – a call for stories that embody the spirit of the Highlands. A key focus of the project is to involve and support Highland based creative talent wherever possible.
- 2.2 The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected the livelihood of many individual artists in the Highlands’ cultural sector who have not been eligible for the various UK Government employment support schemes. Creative Scotland and, more recently, the Scottish Government, have introduced support measures for organisations and building-based institutions in the sector, however, many individual artists remain financially exposed as a result of the pandemic. This initiative will deliver much-needed funding to the sector in the Highlands, whilst gathering material and intelligence that is critical to the

ongoing development of the Place Partnership Strategy. The Inverness Castle Project will be a key factor in the ongoing development of the strategy.

3. Proposition

- 3.1 Following discussions between HLH and Creative Scotland, and informal soundings from the creative community, it is proposed to use the Place Partnership funding as the foundation of a large-scale commissioning scheme that will see around 360 commissions for artists in its initial period.
- 3.2 The initiative, 'Spirit 360', will use stories from the public call as the inspiration for artists' commissions thereby ensuring a good geographic and thematic spread that is rooted within the communities of the area. Finished work will be made available on a dedicated website and some of the works are expected to be developed further to become elements within the Castle itself when it reopens.

4. Operation

- 4.1 The initiative will be administered by HLH officers in liaison with the Inverness Castle Project Team. An Advisory Panel including representatives from the major cultural bodies in the Highlands will provide guidance on the commissions as the initiative progresses. It is anticipated that the first results from the project could be available online within 3-4 months of the project starting.

Designation: Steve Walsh – Chief Executive, High Life Highland

Date: July 2020



Spirit 360

A 360° View of the Highlands and Islands

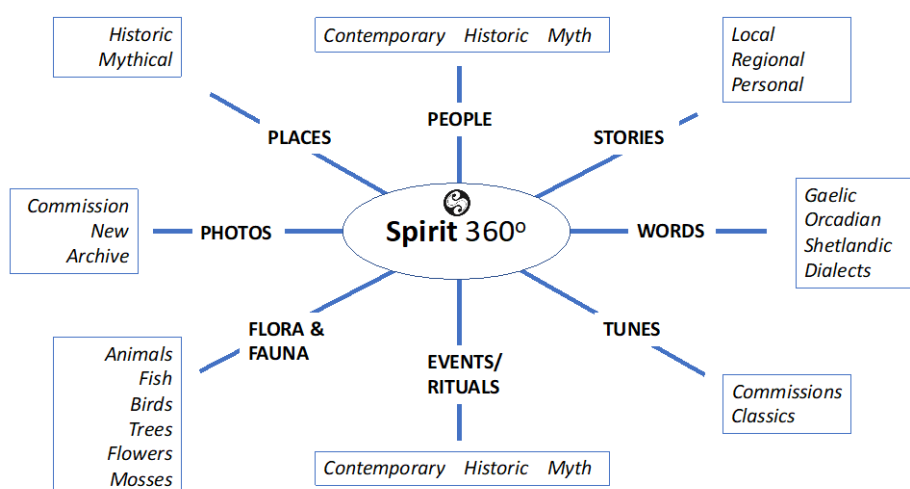
Outline

Spirit 360 is a commissioning programme for Scottish writers, musicians and artists that will create new work for the Spirit of the Highlands project in a series of micro projects.

Each project will be based around an original story that reflects or embodies some aspect of the spirit of the Highlands and Islands. This may be related to folk memory, the environment, language, events, people – a broad range, illustrated in the diagram below.

Each story will inspire either a new performed work (music, dance, theatre) or a new artwork (painting, sculpture, installation, photograph) that interprets it. Initially, these elements will be presented together online through the new Spirit of the Highlands website. They will be released one per day over the course of a year and previous ones will be archived and accessible on the website.

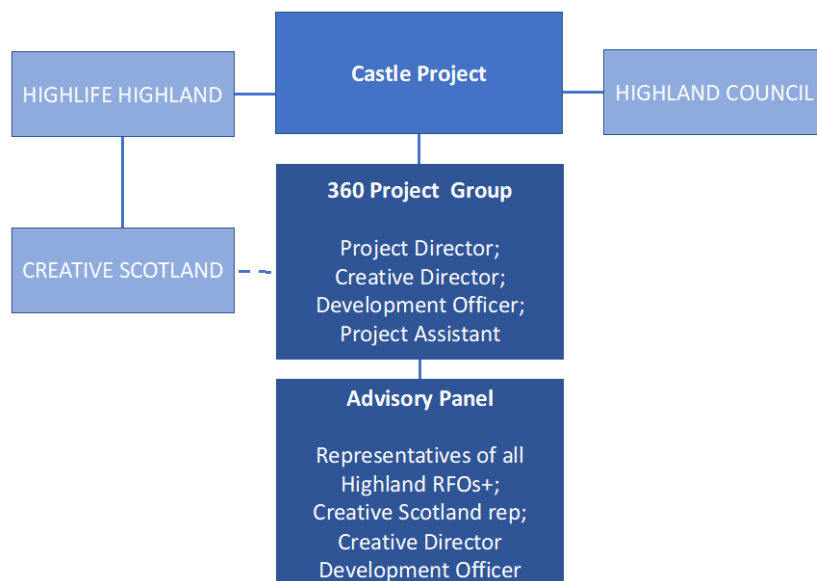
When the Inverness Castle project is realised in 2024 the projects will be incorporated into fixed displays within the building as a daily example of the creativity within the Highlands. It is anticipated that some of the micro-projects will be used as content that is developed further as part of the Castle's 'Spirit of the Highlands in 100 Stories' theme.



Delivery

It is intended to create 360 micro projects – this will require commissions for stories, songs, tunes, photographs, paintings, etc. – and some artists may be commissioned for more than one contribution. Overall coordination of the project will be with a 360 Project Group, with Fiona Hampton as Project Director and Bryan Beattie as Creative Director as the principal contacts, Amy Atkinson as the Development Officer, and a Project Assistant.

Selection and commissioning of artists will be undertaken by a 360 Project Group with the Development Officer responsible for its coordination and administration. An Advisory Panel will be established to provide an overview of the process and offer guidance on disciplines or geographic areas that could be represented. Membership of this panel will come from practitioners and cultural organisations from within the Highlands – it may be appropriate for the existing informal grouping of Highland RFO+ organisations is the best mechanism for this.



Process

The July launch of the Spirit of the Highlands will call for stories to be submitted from the general public. These are being invited to consider all aspects of Highland life - environment, heritage, lifestyle, events – looking at the future of the area through the lens of the past and present. A Project Assistant will undertake a preliminary sift to remove any stories that may be considered ineligible (duplication, decency, not meeting the brief) – the remainder will be made available online.

The Project Group will have an open call to artists working in, or originally from, the Highlands, directing them to the online stories and inviting their initial response to one or more of them (maximum 5 applications from each artist). The Advisory Panel will also make artists within their networks (geographical and by discipline) aware of the process. Creative Scotland and other appropriate regional and national agencies will also assist publicising the process.

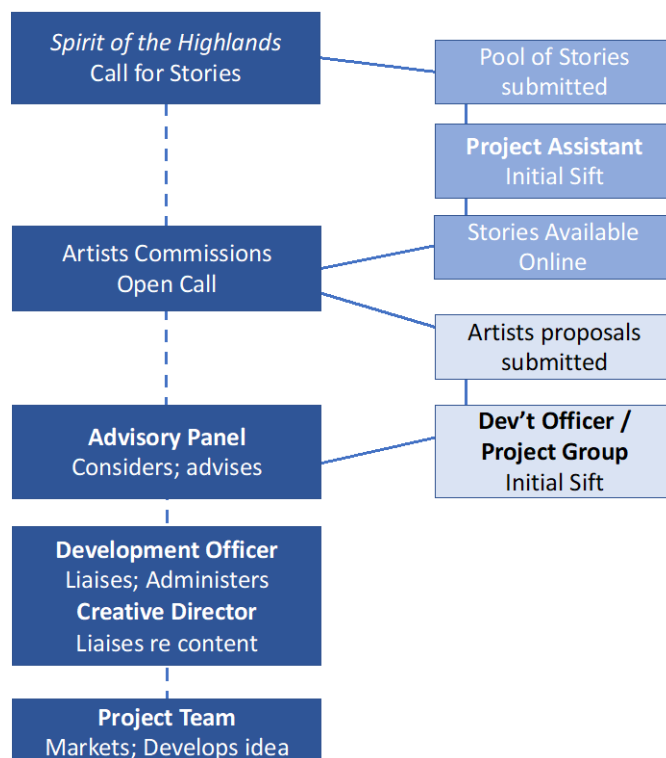
The artists' response to the call for proposals will be through a light-touch online application form that identifies the story, their suggested response to it, and the likely

cost. The forms will be collated by the Project Group, advised by the Development Officer, on an initial traffic light assessment for eligibility and quality, before submission to the Advisory Panel.

The Advisory Panel (including the project group members and a representative/nominee from Creative Scotland) will meet at 2-monthly intervals to consider the applications and to recommend awards (an upper limit per session may be required to ensure capacity for processing is met). A developmental element will be available to the Panel i.e. if they feel certain artists might work well together, or if the artist response might be developed slightly differently, this will be reflected in the feedback. Essentially, the process will be more sympathetic than pure 'pass-fail' – it will aim to see artists being commissioned and matched with the right project and collaborators.

Once commissioned the Development Officer, with the Project Assistant, will be responsible for liaison with the artists over the nature of their work, its delivery, payment of commission fee, copyright and other relevant tasks. The Creative Director will liaise with the Development Officer over the development of the content.

The 360 Project Group and HLH staff will, liaising with the Advisory Group, create a web presence for the finished works. The Project Group will maintain contact with artists during the development of the Castle's 100 Stories and involve them where necessary. The artists' work will be promoted throughout the Castle's development period (three years).



Cost

The bulk of the cost will be in artists commissions. We have allowed for an average of £400 per commission. Overall coordination will be undertaken by the Project Group, as will the creation and maintenance of the new website. These costs will be met within existing budgets – it is anticipated this will provide an in-kind contribution of around £100,000.

We suggest the £150,000 currently set aside by Creative Scotland to support work of the Highland Place Partnership could pump-prime the process and allow it to commence operation in the near future. We would suggest this £150,000 be considered initial seed investment for the project with £140k being allocated for direct distribution to artists and £10k towards additional administrative costs incurred.

A review of expenditure and potential sources of additional income will be undertaken quarterly and, depending on the success of the project, there may be an opportunity to extend its reach.

Timescale

Given the current situation with Covid-19 we believe this project will provide a valuable cash injection into one of the most hard-pressed parts of the cultural sector – the individual artists. It also allows some of Creative Scotland's core-funded clients in the Highlands to maintain and develop their relationship with the sector on a practical basis.

We estimate a preparatory period of around 4-6 weeks to refine the commissioning processes and identify the initial tranche of artists to approach, with 8 weeks for the design and build of the website. We anticipate the first commissions being ready within 4 weeks of commissioning. Therefore, we believe the first projects will be available to the public within 3-4 months of the **Spirit 360** project beginning.