

City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the **Events and Festivals Working Group** held remotely on Monday, 15 November 2021 at 1.00 pm.

Present:

Highland Council:

Mr I Brown
Mr D Macpherson
Mrs I Mackenzie
Mrs C Caddick
Mrs G Sinclair (Non Substantive Member)
Mr C Smith

Other Representatives:

Mr M Smith, Manager, Inverness BID

Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Ms F Hampton, Director Inverness Castle Project HLH (Management and Admin)
Ms A MacLeod, Events Development Manager HLH (Management and Admin)
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance
Ms J Murray, Victorian Market Manager

Preliminaries

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Ms J Cuddy, Manager, Eastgate Shopping Centre and Mr M Golding – Visit Inverness and Loch Ness.

2. Exclusion of the Public

Members **RESOLVED** that the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There had been circulated minutes of the previous meeting held on 20

September 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

5. Presentation

Following on from the decisions taken at the Working Group meeting held on 20 September, matters had progressed. A presentation was given on the updated plans with costing for an Events Programme by the Inverness Events Development Manager, as detailed below.

Halloween - Night @ the Botanics

The feedback from social media and the press coverage had been excellent with no negative comments. An additional date was added due to the popularity of the event and the flow of people at the event had worked very well. However, on the Friday there had been heavy rain and as it had been impossible to deliver the event on that day. All those due to attend were given alternative times on Saturday and Sunday. The half hour slots had worked well with nobody waiting for any length of time. There had been 6000 attendees over the five days throughout the evening and daytime activities.

It had been a well-run event and although it was busy there had not been a feeling of overcrowding. The Betty Booth, photograph booth, providing a free photograph, had been a highlight with families. There was scope within the Botanic Gardens to expand the event.

The cost for this event was lower than Halloween at Ness Islands in 2019.

Fireworks Night

The fireworks had been organised at the Northern Meeting Park with a high-fire display and people had been advised to watch the fireworks from a vantage point of their choice. Police Scotland had said that there had been less call outs for firework and bonfire events in the area than they had had in previous years.

Crowd Safety at Riverside and Castle Hill had been monitored during the event. Two formal complaints and one formal compliment had been received by THC/HLH.

Positive social media comments and images had been posted from around Inverness at Kinmylies, Inshes, Slackbuie, Lochardil, Ballifeary, Milton of Leys, North Kessock, Rose Street car park, Riverside and Castle Hill. The fireworks had been enjoyed from a range of locations and by a wide range of people. The huge cheer and applause for the finale could be heard across the city.

There had been no marketing costs for the event as the event publicity was managed through the press and social media.

The event was safe and in keeping with current Covid restrictions. The BBC live set for Reporting Scotland had corroborated that it had been a safe event.

Christmas Lights – Bellfield Winter Garden and Hogmanay

Event proposals include:

- Christmas Lights from 3rd December 2021 to 2nd January 2022;
- scenic lighting of trees, bedding plants and path areas;
- fairy light canopy of pavilion and a feature of the bandstand;
- festive illumination decoration;
- festive scene surrounding the paddling pool;
- Santa train;
- Christmas tree maze;
- festive food and drink – working in partnership with HFDT and Exclusively Highland;
- Street Theatre Entertainment
- photoboards; and
- a giant advent calendar.

An update was given on:

- investment in lights for the city centre;
- trails/illumination/building projections; and
- Eastgate Hospice Christmas tree.

Other events happening across the City:

- Highland Hospice and Eastgate Centre, Falcon Square Christmas Tree and Santas Grotto – City centre;
- Rotary Inverness Santa Sleigh Rides – City wide;
- Inverness BID Elf Adventure Hunts – City centre;
- Inverness BID Santa Post Box – City centre; and
- Santa Stroll – Bellfield Park/Ness Islands.

It was also hoped to have an early evening event at Hogmanay including:

Tartan Torch Light procession, live entertainment, and family fireworks.

During discussion, the following proposals were considered:

- an overall map of the city area with events marked to get some perspective of the varied events;
- engagement with the scouts for the Christmas posting of cards;
- volunteers to help from local organisations where possible;
- potential to include talented local school children in the events;
- promotion of parking in the city centre and then walking to the event at Bellfield Park with parking discouraged at Bellfield Park;
- lights for Abertarff House would be explored;
- possibility of a craft fayre/market at the tennis courts at Bellfield. It was highlighted that stall holders at fayres/markets tended to want somewhere with a high footfall and there was also an issue with the size of the entry gate;
- Salvation Army band;

- safety of the torch light procession with one torch per family and possibly late afternoon rather than night;
- women's safety – this would be taken very seriously with work done through Operation Respect, the area between the City Centre and Bellfield Park would be well lit;
- key local musicians to lead the procession;
- safety concerns in view of the Caledonian Canal – sand bins would be provided along the route to safely dispose of the torches;
- the possibility of purchasing lights rather than paying to have them supplied every year, any infrastructure investment would have to be approved by Inverness City Area Committee and then an application could be made to the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee;
- CCTV for Bellfield Park – although extra security would be welcomed. As there was a lot of equipment it was preferable to have security personnel on site ready to act if there were any problems or active damage.

It was highlighted that Bellfield Park had been chosen as the city centre couldn't be used this year in view of the Covid-19 situation. Safety concerns would be addressed by the Safety Advisory Group.

The Working Group:

- i. **AGREED** to the above proposals being developed while taking into account the concerns raised in relation to the viability of a torch light procession at Torvean with regard to health and safety; although largely supportive concern relating to the events at Bellfield namely: parking; the safety of the access route, monitoring of parking and message to the local community; transport arrangements to the city centre with people being encouraged to walk to the venue; and disabled parking with adequate parking locally to be taken forward to the Safety Advisory Group. If there were any issues of concern that could not be resolved through the Safety Advisory Group before the next set meeting an additional special meeting of the Working Group would be called in consultation with the Chair.

6. Financial Monitoring

Members **NOTED** that future financial monitoring would include spreadsheets with details of the costs incurred for each event and the estimated costs for future events. A financial report would be brought to the Inverness City Committee in February 2022.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Members **NOTED** that the date of the next meeting will be Monday 20 December 2021 at 1 pm by Microsoft Teams.

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm