

City of Inverness Area Committee

Briefing Note on the **Events and Festivals Working Group** held remotely on Monday, 20 December 2021 at 1.00 pm.

Present:

Highland Council:

Mr I Brown
Mr D Macpherson
Mr R MacWilliam (Non-substantive member)

Other Representatives:

Ms R Bell, Eden Court

Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Mrs 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

Preliminaries

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mrs C Caddick, Mrs I Mackenzie, Mr C Smith and Mr M Smith, Manager, Inverness BID.

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 15 November 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

5. Presentation

Following on from the decisions taken at the Working Group meeting held on 15 November matters have been progressed. A presentation was given by the Inverness Events Development Manager on the updated plans for an Events Programme. Members were asked to note the Programme is subject to change depending on the nature of COVID-19 Guidance and Council Policy in force at the time.

Christmas Lights – Bellfield Winter Garden

The Bellfield Garden event had been more popular than anticipated although still manageable under the Covid guidance. There had been very good media coverage and a tiktok video had been produced and circulated on social media and had gained a great deal of positive feedback.

Feedback from people at the event had been very positive and several had commented that they would have like to have given a donation. In the future there could be donation buckets or a form of donating to either the Common Good Fund or a charitable cause.

The Bellfield Garden would run to the 28 December as the cost implications of running this event to the 2 January were significant . Provided there was no guidance from the government to the contrary, it was understood that Eden Court would run the pantomime and only close for Christmas Day and on 1 January 2022. Eden Court were commended for their external lighting this year, which had been excellent. (***Note** -Following Covid-19 guidance from the Scottish Government immediately following this meeting both Bellfield Garden and Eden Court would close on 26 December 2021*).

At the close of the Bellfield Garden a further tiktok video on social media would publicise the success of the event.

Members highlighted the benefit to people of having the area at Bellfield lit especially when the government were trying to encourage people outdoors. A well-lit area allowed people to go for walks, cycle and for children to play in parks during the dark winter nights.

The Inverness City Manager stated that there had been clever investment in infrastructure and kit for the Bellfield event. As there would be an underspend this year on Events and Festivals, the City of Area Inverness Area Committee would look to use some of that underspend for lighting areas of Inverness through the winter months.

The area at the Bught Park side of Ness Islands had been very dark. It now had lighting and it had made a difference to the amount of people out walking at night. It would be beneficial to have some form of permanent lighting for parks and for walkways across the City.

Hogmanay

An event had been planned at Torvean but following the escalation of Covid cases and possible guidance from the Scottish Government this event had not been taken forward. It was a good decision to stop work on the event before any publication of the event had occurred.

The Inverness City Area Manager indicated that the remit of the working group was for Events and Festivals and while continuing to work with the Inverness Events Development Manager he would look at the budgets and focus on the areas highlighted by Members to make the best use of the money available. As a second package of work he would liaise with the Principal Project Manager, Mr J Kelman on a project to improve festive lighting in the City Centre and Riverside and would take on board the need to be able to access walkways at night. He would also look at the broader aspect of lighting and at what the Council intended to do in the LED replacement programme, noting agreement that brightness was very important during the long winter months.

The lighting proposed for Inverness Castle was excellent. The key thing to come out of lockdown should be that the City was brightened in the darkest of times.

With the likely increase in Covid restrictions the Events Development Manager would look to move forward with planning for the Highland Games and this would now be her focus. One thing that would have to be looked at would be the ticketing for the games as an alternative to cash was required.

The Director Inverness Castle Project stated that another project in development was a trail from Inverness Castle to the new Ness Hydro with the creation of an illuminated trail between the two to encourage people to walk not only through the day but also at night. This would encourage both people in the City and visitors to go for a walk on the trail.

Although Members would like to be positive the likelihood of more Covid restrictions was imminent and the Events and Festivals Working Group did not want to risk arranging events that would encourage gatherings and as a result there would be no events planned for the immediate future.

Members **NOTED** the changes to the Programme due to the nature of COVID-19 Guidance and Council Policy.

6. Financial Monitoring

A financial report from the Working Group would go to the next meeting of the City of Inverness Area Committee on 17 February 2022. The financial report would come to the Working Group prior to the Area Committee.

Members **NOTED** the presentation given highlighting the expenditure to date.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Members **NOTED** that the date of the next meeting will be Monday 31 January 2022 at 2 pm by Microsoft Teams.

The Chair thanked High Life Highland and their team from the Working Group for the three successful events that had been produced.

The meeting ended at 2.15 pm.