

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

21 May 2009

PROPOSED ARTS PARTNERSHIPS

Report by Director – Education, Culture and Sport Service

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Summary

This report informs Members of two proposed partnerships with arts organisations, Eden Court Theatre and Society of Badenoch & Strathspey Artists, both aiming to create increased arts provision.

1. Background

- 1.1 Eden Court Theatre and the Society of Badenoch and Strathspey Artists (SBSA), on separate proposals, are requesting that the Council works in formal partnership with them to deliver increased arts provision.
- 1.2 Eden Court has asked the Council to formalise a hitherto working partnership to deliver “Body Currents”, an 18 month long dance project, based in four communities throughout the Highlands.
- 1.3 SBSA has asked to take over the management of the Council’s Iona Gallery in Kingussie, with a view to maintaining the current service provided, creating additional arts provision and refurbishing and upgrading the gallery.

2. Eden Court Proposal – “Body Currents”

- 2.1 Eden Court has secured £ 590k funding for this community based dance project, £ 475k from Scottish Arts Council, £ 39k from Highland Leader, £ 36k from Cairngorm Leader, £ 15k from Robertson Trust and £25k from the Council (£20k from the Highland Cultural Programme and £5k from Area Arts Budgets), thus securing significant new resources for the Highlands.
- 2.2 “Body Currents” will consist of four dance residencies, each of 9 months duration, centred on the locations of Dornie, Aviemore, Lybster and Fort William and involving other communities, towns and villages in the surrounding area; these locations were chosen because of their waterside locations and in consultation with local communities. The project plans to involve as wide as possible a range of local people in dance classes and activities. Each residency will culminate in spectacular, outdoor community performances and events. As dance provision has been identified as weak in terms of arts provision and opportunity in the Highlands, this project would offer valuable new access. It also aligns well with the Service’s Youth and Sports strategies and the Highland 2007 legacy.

2.3 As the delivery phase begins, Eden Court have invited Plan B (the Highland based dance company) and the Council to formalise the partnership to deliver “Body Currents”, by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding. Plan B’s role would be to provide artistic direction and expertise and the Council’s to maximise community engagement and particularly the involvement of schools and young people.

2.4 The partnership would involve –

- An active role in the “Body Currents” project and financial management groups.
- Staff involvement in encouraging community engagement, including through our leisure centres, libraries, arts education programme and Active Schools Coordinators.
- Working with Plan B, Eden Court and possibly others to develop a legacy from the project, for example developing a strategy for dance development in Highland.
- Where possible, providing temporary office accommodation for project staff in the four locations.

3. Council contribution and risk analysis

3.1 As Eden Court have secured all the projected necessary funding required to deliver “Body Currents”, the budget includes a 10% contingency budget and robust financial management systems are in place, the shared risk attached to the project are regarded as very low.

4. SBSA Proposal – Management of Iona Gallery, Kingussie

4.1 The Iona Gallery is one of four galleries owned and managed by the Council and one of the venues on the touring circuit of temporary exhibitions provided by the Service. It is a well used local resource, though only open March to October each year.

4.2 SBSA propose leasing the gallery from the Council at a peppercorn rent and managing the gallery on the Council’s behalf. Such an arrangement would be managed by a lease (on a full care and repair basis) and a Service Level Agreement (SLA), whereby SBSA agree to maintain the current service provided as a venue on the Council’s touring exhibition circuit. The SLA would include the Council paying SBSA, annually, the equivalent of costs currently to the Council of running the facility.

4.3 In addition to maintaining current level of service, SBSA would provide year round opening and enhance the programme with additional activities, such as artists’ master classes and talks. They also propose securing external funding, from sources not available to Council, to refurbish and renovate the gallery.

4.4 Both the Council and the community should benefit from this partnership. Benefits would include –

- Increased visual arts provision both in terms of opening hours and the range of opportunities available.

- If fundraising was successful, the community would have a refurbished gallery, with environmental controls that allow certain types of exhibitions to be shown there that it is not currently possible to host.
- The improved service would add to visitor facilities in Kingussie, part-mitigating the closure of Highland Folk Museum's Kingussie facility.

4.5 The lease and SLA would be drawn up to ensure there were no risks or increased resource implications for the Service. Housing and Property Services have been involved in discussions to date and final approval of leasing at peppercorn rent would be subject to satisfactory negotiation of lease and SLA and Resource Committee and Scottish Ministers approval.

5. Recommendation

5.1 Members are invited to -

- i Note the award of £ 590k to Eden Court for the "Body Currents" project.
- ii Agree to formalise a partnership with Eden Court and the Plan B dance company to deliver the project to maximum community benefit; and
- iii Approve, in principle, to enter into a partnership with SBSA, for it to take over management of the Iona Gallery in Kingussie, subject to satisfactory negotiation of lease, SLA, and Resource Committee and Scottish Ministers approval of leasing at peppercorn rent.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 22 April 2009

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