

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**  
**12 MARCH 2009**

Agenda Item	<b>10</b>
Report No	<b>ECS 13/09</b>

**EVENTS AND FESTIVALS STRATEGY FOR THE HIGHLANDS – 2009 to 2012**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport**

**Summary**

The purpose of this report is to present a proposed Events and Festivals Strategy for the Highlands of Scotland for the period 2009 to 2012 for Members' approval.

**1. Background Information**

- 1.1 In December 2008 EventScotland published 'Scotland – The Perfect Stage', a national strategy for the events industry in Scotland for the period 2009 to 2020. The strategy has been developed in recognition of the role that events can play in helping Scotland to achieve sustainable economic growth and in the belief that events can yield significant benefits even during times of financial challenge. EventScotland will work with partners across Scotland to develop a portfolio of international and national events that aims to deliver a clear and lasting impact for Scotland and to enhance our international profile and reputation.
- 1.2 In parallel with the development of the national events strategy, the former member organisations of the Board of Highland 2007 have been considering the development of an Events and Festivals Strategy for the Highlands for the period 2009 to 2012. The development of the draft strategy for the Highlands has been undertaken in collaboration with EventScotland to ensure the alignment of both, while reflecting the unique contribution that the Highlands can make to the national events calendar. At the same time, the findings of the independent evaluation of Highland 2007 have been used to shape the draft strategy for the Highlands and, in particular, to account for the feedback received from event organisers and promoters across the region.
- 1.3 Many of the findings within the evaluation of Highland 2007 have reinforced the belief that events and festivals can play an increasingly positive role in enhancing the economic and social prosperity of Highlands. The researchers maintain that 'festivals were one of the biggest successes of the Highland 2007 programme and a particular source of enthusiasm amongst young people living in the Highlands and Islands', and estimate that the specific activity undertaken as part of Highland 2007 generated 520,000 additional day visits and 43,000 additional overnight stays in the region by non residents of the Highlands and Islands. The same report estimates that Highland 2007 activity alone added a net employment impact of £6.6 million and a further £6.1 million from additional visitor expenditure.

1.4 These figures relate only to the additional activity stimulated by Highland 2007 and do not account for the ongoing contributions of individual events such as those shown below. While no figure has yet been calculated for the economic impact of the full events and festivals programme of the Highlands it is apparent that our cultural calendar is an asset worthy of continued investment.

- Baxter's Loch Ness Marathon - £1.87M in 2008
- Tulloch Inverness Highland Games - £1M in 2006
- Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival - £1.5M in 2006
- UCI Mountain Bike World Champs - £1.9M in 2007
- Adventure Racing World Champs - £180K in 2007
- Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival - £650K in 2008
- O'Neill Highland Open - £150K in 2008

## **2. Events and Festivals Strategy for the Highlands of Scotland – 2009 to 2012**

2.1 As part of the ongoing commitment by the former member organisations of the Board of Highland 2007 to maximise on the positive legacy of the project, a proposed Events and Festivals Strategy for the Highlands has been devised and is presented in Appendix 1 for Members' approval. In formulating this strategy with key partners, the Council aims to work towards the creation of a 'one door' portal for companies, groups and individuals approaching the public sector agencies in the Highlands to seek their support in hosting events in the region and to develop a co-ordinated set of criteria with those partners that will guide the level of public sector intervention. This approach seeks to maximise on the potential economic and social benefits for the region as a consequence of the collective public sector investment in events and festivals in the Highlands.

## **3. Events and Festivals Promotion**

3.1 In its ambition to enhance the cultural calendar of the Highlands, the strategy seeks to ensure that its outputs make the maximum contribution to the national target to increase tourism revenues by 50% by 2015. In addition, the strategy will feed into the Council's Partnership Agreement with VisitScotland and seek to identify ongoing opportunities to use the region's events, festivals and cultural calendar to promote the Highlands nationally and internationally.

3.2 To support this aim work is ongoing to channel local and visitor interest in the events and festivals calendar of the Highlands, as evidenced by the volume of online traffic to the Highland 2007 website, to an updated and more permanent portal. In December 2008, the Highland 2007 website received 178,000 unique visits, with the vast majority of traffic focusing on the events calendar, despite this feature of the site being 'archived' at the end of 2007. This interest is now being channelled to [www.highlandeventsandfestivals.com](http://www.highlandeventsandfestivals.com) where users can access information on our calendar of events, festivals and ongoing cultural clubs and activities, in addition to finding out about the Homecoming Scotland events in the Highlands.

- 3.3 To maximise the positive exposure of the Highlands through its calendar of events, a portfolio of promotional material has been developed to be used as a part of the Council's support for major events such as the Mountain Bike World Cup in Fort William, The Outsider in Badenoch and Strathspey or the Senior Open Golf Championships in Nairn.

This portfolio includes materials that can be used to brand a range of venues, provide information to event audiences and the media about the Highlands and to create a sense of 'place' to leave viewers and participants in no doubt as to the unique location of the event.

#### 4. Homecoming Scotland

- 4.1 Work has been ongoing during 2008 to capitalise on the immediate opportunities to create a positive legacy from Highland 2007 and, in particular, to maximise on the potential benefits to the Highlands of being involved in the national Homecoming Scotland celebrations. More than 60 % of the proposals supported during round 1 of the Highland Culture Programme related to events or projects that will form part of the Homecoming Scotland programme in the Highlands in 2009 and work is now underway to collate this information and to highlight it on [www.highlandeventsandfestivals.com](http://www.highlandeventsandfestivals.com).
- 4.2 In addition, the Highlands will host one of the Homecoming Scotland flagship events in October 2009 when 'Highland Homecoming - ur beatha dhan dùthaich!', will offer international visitors and locals alike the opportunity to experience the unique culture of the Highlands. Many of the partnerships and experiences derived from delivering Highland 2007 – Scotland's first themed year - are now being built upon to ensure that the Highlands is well prepared to capitalise on the economic and social potential of being part of Scotland's second themed year – Homecoming Scotland 2009.
- 4.3 The events and festivals strategy will aim to capitalise on such partnerships to best effect in implementing its methodology and fulfilling its critical success factors. Through Highland 2007 The Highland Council has demonstrated its ability to lead ambitious and complex cultural projects and to do so in a manner that shows exemplary public sector partnership working in practice. The Highland Council has adopted the lead role in the multi agency partnership that will devise and deliver 'Highland Homecoming' and has succeeded in galvanising the efforts and resources of the following agencies in ensuring that our flagship Homecoming Scotland event will feature as one of the highlights in Scotland's events calendar in 2009.

The Highland Council	£60,000 confirmed
Scottish Government	£60,000 confirmed
Homecoming Scotland	£60,000 confirmed
HIE	£60,000 approval pending
Bòrd na Gàidhlig	£60,000 decision pending
LEADER	£60,000 decision pending
Scottish Arts Council	£25,000 decision pending
UHI	In kind support
University of Aberdeen	In kind support
University of Edinburgh	In kind support
University of Glasgow	In kind support

4.4 Similar partnerships are being fostered with the private sector to support the region's Homecoming Scotland events in 2009 and to contribute to the aims of the events and festivals strategy in the longer term. The Scotsman has come on board as the official media partner for the international conference – 'Scotland's Global Impact - Buaidh Chruinneil na h-Alba' and dialogue is ongoing with the BBC and Highland based media contacts to similar effect. Positive negotiations are also underway with two potential sponsors within the Highlands who have indicated an interest in supporting the Council's lead in enhancing the region's events and festivals calendar.

## **5. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Members agree the Events and Festivals Strategy proposed for the Highlands of Scotland for the period 2009 to 2012.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 3 March 2009

Author: Fiona Hampton, Director Highland 2007

Ref: HF/IM/FH

# **Appendix 1 - An Events and Festivals Strategy for the Highlands of Scotland - 2009 to 2012**

## **1. Vision**

Our year round events, festivals and cultural calendar helps to position the Highlands of Scotland as an exceptional place to live, visit and do business.

## **2. Mission**

We will provide the focus for local and national stakeholders to develop the year round calendar of events, festivals and cultural activity to motivate people to live, visit and do business in the Highlands.

## **3. Strategy**

Our calendar of events, festivals and cultural activity will make the most of the unique and special nature of the Highlands of Scotland. Our focus will rest on the following:

- i) Our natural environment
  - as the arena
  - as the stage
  - as the programme
- ii) Our traditional and contemporary culture
  - through the arts
  - through sport
  - through innovation and science
- iii) Our rich heritage
  - in our Highland icons
  - in our history
  - in our buildings, artefacts and monuments
  - through our ancestors
- iv) Gaelic language and culture
  - as our indigenous language
  - in its place in our heritage
  - in its modern face
- v) Highland hospitality
  - from our people
  - with our food and drink
  - through our unique entertainment
  - in our communities

## **4. Rationale**

Our Mission is aligned with the development of 'Scotland – The Perfect Stage', the national events strategy being devised by EventScotland and is based on a firm belief, supported by clear evidence, that events generate economic and social growth through positive impact and their subsequent legacy.

## 5. Impacts

In collaboration with key partners, this strategy will contribute to the delivery of the following impacts:

- i) Social benefits
  - Enhancing community confidence
  - Building community capacity
  - Skills development
  - Encouraging in migration
  - Reducing out migration, especially of young people
- ii) Economic benefits
  - Creating employment
  - Developing the creative industries
  - Achieving tourism growth targets
  - Enhancing the reputation of the region as a great place to work and do business
- iii) Regional Profile
  - Increasing sense of local pride and confidence
  - Increasing levels of positive coverage of events in the Highlands through close working relationships with local and national media
  - Increasing exposure of Highland events and festivals by VisitScotland
  - Increasing support for Highland events and festivals by EventScotland
- iv) Gaelic Language and Culture
  - Improving the positive perception of the language
  - Increasing the number of learners
  - Increasing exposure of the language and culture to new audiences
- v) Health and Wellbeing
  - Increasing interest in local cultural activities
  - Increasing participation in cultural activities
  - Creating a feel good factor

## 6. Partners

We will work with the following partners to deliver this strategy:

National and local event promoters, cultural organisations and community organisations  
Highlands and Islands Enterprise  
The Scottish Government  
EventScotland  
VisitScotland  
Scottish Arts Council / Creative Scotland  
Homecoming Scotland  
Bòrd na Gàidhlig  
Scottish Natural Heritage  
Forestry Commission, Scotland  
Sportscotland  
Historic Scotland  
National Health Service  
Skills Development Scotland

## 7. Methodology

To achieve our mission we will concentrate our resources and attention on the following tasks:

- i) Providing the focus for local and national stakeholders in co-ordinating the development of and investment in the events, festivals and cultural programme of the Highlands.
- ii) Supporting event organisers in the development, delivery and promotion of a programme of events, festivals and cultural activity each year that enthuses its target audiences and leaves them with positive images and memories of the Highlands of Scotland.
- iii) Working towards the creation of a 'one door' portal for companies, groups and individuals approaching the public sector agencies in the Highlands to seek their support in hosting events and festivals in the region.
- iv) Developing a co-ordinated set of criteria with key partners that will guide the level of public sector intervention in events and festivals in the Highlands.
- v) Presenting clear guidance on the availability and criteria to access funding support for events, festival and cultural activity.
- vi) Developing clear information on the focus and priorities of funding support for events, festivals and cultural activity.
- vii) Developing a calendar of major events that generates sustainable economic growth for the region and increases the positive profile of the Highlands.
- viii) Developing a programme of community events that showcase the quality, diversity and appeal of the traditional and contemporary cultural landscape of the Highlands.
- ix) Identifying and securing events to the region that would add value to the events and festivals calendar, enhance the profile of the region and generate a positive economic return.
- x) Ensuring that the calendar of events festivals and cultural activity is year round and region wide.
- xi) Developing an anti-clash diary to promote additionality and avoid displacement.
- xii) Supporting the work of other Council services and cultural organisations in providing opportunities to increase confidence, to develop capacity and to enhance the skills of individuals and community groups involved in hosting events and developing cultural projects across the Highlands.
- xiii) Supporting the work of other Council services and cultural organisations in developing the creativity, talent and excellence of artists and performers based in the Highlands.
- xiv) Contributing to the enhancement of the physical cultural infrastructure of the Highlands through targeted allocation of capital funding.
- xv) Supporting the work of Gaelic development agencies and initiatives in the aims of promoting Gaelic language and culture and increasing the number of Gaelic speakers.
- xvi) Encouraging young people to take part in cultural activities through their involvement in planning, choosing and participating in a diverse range of cultural projects and events.
- xvii) Developing a marketing and communications strategy to promote the events, festivals and cultural programme of the Highlands to key target audiences.
- xviii) Increasing the level of promotion of Highland events, festivals and cultural activity by VisitScotland.

## **8. Resources**

The resources required to implement this strategy will be sought from the following sources:

- i) Highland Culture Programme
- ii) Homecoming Scotland
- iii) The Scottish Government
- iv) Scottish Arts Council / Creative Scotland
- v) Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- vi) Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- vii) LEADER
- viii) Private Sponsorship

## **9. Review**

Proposals to assess the success of the strategy will be devised by the partners within the Highland 2007 Legacy Group as part of their remit to develop and implement plans to maximise on the long term legacy of Highland 2007.

## **10. Critical Success Factors**

If the Highlands' cultural partners are successful in delivering the Events and Festivals Strategy, the following will characterise the Highlands' events scene in 2012.

- i) The Highlands will be recognised nationally and internationally as a unique and special host of high quality events.
- ii) Events will take place in the Highlands throughout each calendar year and across the region.
- iii) The events and cultural sector will be regarded as significant contributors to the Highlands' economy.
- iv) The portfolio of events delivered annually will comprise a core of events that are unique to the Highlands and are embedded in Highland culture, with this core including all aspects of arts, sport, heritage, science, language and the environment.
- v) The core portfolio will be complimented by a range of high profile one off and recurring events that have been attracted to the Highlands by our unique appeal as a location and through our reputation as a region that delivers high quality events.
- vi) The roles of all agencies, public, private and voluntary, within the events and cultural sectors will be clearly identified and understood, with partnership being an underpinning principle.