

HIGHLAND CULTURE STRATEGIC BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting of the
Highland Culture Strategic Board
held in Committee Room 2, Council
Headquarters, Inverness on
Monday 26 May 2014 at 11.30 a.m.

PRESENT:-

Dr D Alston, Highland Council
Mr D Hendry, Highland Council
Mr B Fernie, Highland Council (by teleconference link)
Mr S Barron, Highland Council
Ms C McDiarmid, Highland Council (CM)
Mr I Murray, High Life Highland (IM)
Mr G Watson, High Life Highland (GW)
Mr P Deveral, Creative Scotland
Mrs M Christie, Events Scotland (by teleconference link)
Mr A Paterson, Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Mr N Ross, Highlands & Islands Enterprise

Officials in attendance:-

Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Highland Council

Dr D Alston in the Chair

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/DECISION</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr C Gosling.	No Action Necessary
2.	MINUTES OF MEETING The Group APPROVED the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 24 February 2014. Arising from the minutes, it was clarified that Comar was the new arts organisation based in Mull.	No Action Necessary
3.	PROPOSED JOINT STRATEGIC INVESTMENT TO SUPPORT TAKE PRIDE; TAKE PART There had been circulated Report by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which gave an update on proposals to create a new investment programme that would support the implementation of the joint cultural strategy "Highland Culture: Take Pride, Take Part".	

The report advised that cultural strategy comprised of the following four themes:-

1. Promoting talent and rewarding improvement in innovation and quality.
2. Expanding an enterprising and sustainable cultural economy.
3. Growing audiences from within and outside the Highland area, and increase access and participation.
4. Encouraging custodianship and interpretation of our place, our living heritages and our built environment.

The report explained that Appendix 1 to the report demonstrated the current support each partner organisation was contributing to the four themes. In addition, the Highland Culture Strategic Board (HCSB) Officers' Group had concluded that the third theme, "Growing audiences from within and outside the Highland area and increasing access and participation", was the weakest and should therefore be prioritised for additional support from the new investment programme. The report proposed that this be progressed through the following steps:-

- invitations for partnership opportunities should be extended to the sector whereby organisations be invited to submit proposals on how, with additional funding, they could contribute to achieving the prioritised theme;
- Priority be given to proposals that aligned to the strategic priorities of the funding partners e.g. prevention and employability (a full list of the proposed brief and criteria had been set out in Appendix 2 to the report); and
- an invitation to submit proposals for strategic interventions should be extended to the sector in early summer, with a submission date to be agreed in the autumn. The Officers' Group could then be tasked with shortlisting proposals with the Board making the final selection by November/December 2014.

The report also recommended that support for the aforementioned process be provided by High Life Highland on the basis of utilising up to 2% of the investment fund, i.e. £6,000, for this purpose.

Prior to discussion, a copy of the joint cultural strategy "Highland Culture: Take Pride, Take Part" was tabled at the meeting for information and thereafter the following main points were raised:-

- The focus around engagement was welcomed but it was felt that the report lacked further information in respect of vision and outcomes and it was felt that this needed to be explored further with a view to identifying opportunities and cultural partnerships;
- The need to enable grassroots opportunities, through supporting small cultural activities such as making venues available at no cost, was highlighted and this in turn would contribute to the overall larger strategic impact;
- It was felt that the theme aligned well with the Highland Council Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee's

overall effort to reduce inequalities and preventative actions;

- It was indicated that the strategy document contained a description of the outcomes and these could be further developed to target disadvantaged excluded people and it was also suggested that there might be opportunities for partnership working and growing the funding, e.g. match funding with LEADER, to help generate a legacy;
- With regard to the criteria set out in Appendix 2 to the report, it was highlighted that there might be an issue around how the fund would be distributed i.e. was this a grant fund, and if not, there might be procurement requirements and this needed to be further investigated;
- Although the proposals were welcomed, concern was expressed regarding the raised level of expectation amongst the cultural community and it should be made clear that 100% funding would not be provided;
- With regard to focusing on one theme, it was felt that it should be made clear that the themes had been prioritised with the third theme being identified as the weakest and therefore receiving initial attention with a view to the remainder being addressed in due course;
- It was suggested that the total sum available within the investment fund should not be specified within the criteria document;
- It was reported that the Officers Group had felt that there was a need for the criteria not to be too prescriptive in order not to be restrictive and encourage a wide range of ideas to be generated. It was further highlighted that the cross-cutting themes were very wide and the Group had expected that it would be a smaller number of larger investments in order to ensure sustainability and there was a concern as to how the smaller projects would be addressed;
- In response to the issue of match-funding and procurement, it was reported that the Fife Creative partnership had generated an extra £500,000 of funding. However, it was highlighted that the emphasis should not be on distributing the funds but on developing partnership opportunities across the Highlands to achieve the strategic aims and the funds were there to support this. It was suggested that there was a need to expand the thinking in terms of the funding, it was felt that this should not be perceived as a grant and how could funds be accessed but rather how to build on the gaps review and maximise networking opportunities. However, although this was welcomed, it was indicated that there was a need to establish a mechanism for bringing partners in and working more collaboratively with the sector and it was suggested that this could be enabled with ideas being submitted through an expression of interest phase, rather than a complicated application process; this could then be reviewed to see how it fitted with the outcomes; the Officers Group could examine growing and bringing in appropriate partners to support the idea with a view to a business case being developed. This approach might also help the smaller projects to be progressed and it was further suggested that this might also be an opportunity for the sector to take on responsibility for generating a full funding package. However, it was felt that this initiative was about eliciting good ideas and focus should be on this and the HCSB should then provide the appropriate support through both partnership working and funding to bring them to fruition;
- This was not just about increasing audience numbers but also about

- reducing inequalities through improving access and participation; and
- A draft project proposal had been prepared but this was very retrospective and this needed to be revised to be more forward looking to ensure the appropriate funds were released from Creative Scotland.

Following discussion, the Board **NOTED** the discussions and proposals from the Officers' Group and **AGREED**:-

CM/IM

- i. the theme 'Growing audiences from within and outside the Highland area, and increase access and participation' be the strategic priority and that further work be undertaken to establish measures to gauge impact/success and develop outcomes, including the need for engagement with smaller communities;
- ii. that this initiative was about generating ideas and using the Board to maximise partnerships opportunities and utilising the investment fund as a basis of support whilst linking to other funding streams;
- iii. the draft brief and criteria as set out in Appendix 2 to the report subject to the removal of the reference to the amount of the investment fund;
- iv. the timescales outlined in the report;
- v. that High Life Highland administer the strategic fund and that 2% of the new funding available be allocated for this purpose; and
- vi. that the Officers' Group draw up a shortlist of the best proposals with the Board making the final decisions by November/December 2014.

4. OPEN STRATEGIC DISCUSSION

During an open discussion on strategy and the potential next steps, the following main points were raised:-

Place Partnership in Highland – next steps

- With regard to what Place Partnership (PP) might achieve for the Highlands at the end of the strategy period, it was felt that this was about addressing the specific local needs and there was not a single transferrable model which fitted all areas. It was felt that PP was about engaging with local cultural communities and using funds to facilitate a stronger creative environment. Therefore, there was a need to tease out the best approach for each area through as wide a consultation and engagement process as possible;
- In terms of existing strengths, it was felt that there was currently some interesting partnership working being developed e.g. the Highland and Islands Creative Communities Programme, and Feis Rois had received funding to develop youth arts hubs. Therefore, it was felt that there was a lot of different pockets of activities across the Highlands which could be tapped into and used as a basis in which to connect and grow creative groups and communities;
- It was recognised that there was not a universal model that could be

transferred across all areas but it was felt that this was more about how to engage and stimulate communities to become involved;

- It was highlighted that the Council had a wide resource base and that teachers, libraries and museums should be used to encourage community involvement; and
- It was highlighted that cultural activities were often being hindered by school letting policies and there was a need to provide accessible and affordable venues for cultural activities, rehearsals and performances.

Inverness Cultural Centre proposal/Regeneration through culture

- A briefing was provided on the preliminary discussions that had taken place regarding a Cultural Centre in Inverness and it was explained that considerable work had been undertaken in 2007 with regard to a new museum, art gallery and library. Although a small amount had been allocated in the Highland Council capital budget for works to the library and museum, it was felt that further discussions were required to establish if these works could be developed in line with the initial aspirational plans from 2007. High Life Highland had been tasked with undertaking a consultation meeting, which had been externally facilitated, and engaged with the creative community and also those partners that had an interest in the regeneration of the city centre. Discussions had also been held with Creative Scotland and Museums and Galleries Scotland and discussions now needed to be widened. Initial feedback from discussions had indicated that, although welcomed, there was a need not to lose sight of applied arts, crafts and design; must not conflict or replicate the V&A Museum of Dundee; and discussions should take place on applied art and design within the overall remit of the need for a science academy within the Highlands.

At this point, Mr B Fernie left the meeting (12.50 pm).

- In general, it was felt that regeneration through culture would be supported but there was a need to further explore the issue of affordability;
- The need for strong outreach facilities was recognised but further discussions were required on how this would be best delivered;
- It was highlighted that this needed to be formally discussed by the Highland Council, and once a view had been taken, this could then be discussed more widely;
- It was recommended that culture should not be separated from tourism and that cross-sector opportunities should be maximised;
- It was suggested that a conference could be held in Inverness looking at the role of regeneration through culture as well as examining local and national examples. This was welcomed but tight outcomes needed to be developed to ensure this would be a direct learning exercise;
- In terms of events, there was a requirement to understand the priority events in the Highlands and the Council's strategic position. It was also stressed that a strategic point of contact with the Council was essential. The Council also acknowledged the importance of providing a strategic lead role and gave an assurance that this would continue to be provided;

- It was stressed that linking to tourism was vital, and three key aspects of doing this was through providing a quality experience; investing in or leveraging existing infrastructure; and working with organisations, social enterprises and communities to deliver; and
- There might be opportunities for partners to take a lead on regeneration through culture learning event for which a set of outcomes could be developed that would be supportive of taking forward a strategy in years ahead.

Following discussion, the Board **NOTED** the discussions and **AGREED** to explore convening a conference to be held in Inverness on the role of regeneration through culture.

IM/GW

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm.