Agenda Item	13d.	
Report No	CIA/13/22	

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee:	City of Inverness Area Committee (CIAC)	
Date:	17 February 2022	
Report Title:	Events & Festivals	
Report By:	Interim Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place	

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 High Life Highland (HLH) was asked to assume responsibility for the delivery of the Inverness City Events and Festivals programme in June 2021, following decisions taken at the City Area Committee on <u>18th February</u> 2021 and on <u>27 May 2021</u>. This report updates Members on how this new arrangement has progressed and presents a review of the work and outputs of the cross-organisational Events and Festivals Working Group against the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.
- 1.2 On behalf of the Inverness Common Good Fund (ICGF), The Highland Council and HLH have been working in partnership to better understand how, as a collective, the organisations can continue to help aid City recovery through a refreshed approach to delivering events and festivals and to deliver the objectives of the ICGF.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. note the previously agreed vision, values and objectives detailed in <u>Appendix</u> <u>1;</u>
 - ii. note that the governance arrangements with scrutiny through the Events and Festivals Working Group, with annual reports to CIAC, continue;
 - iii. note the spend profile and underspend (as highlighted in section 5.3) for 2021/22;
 - iv. note the review of the 2021/22 programme;
 - v. agree to preserve the current events & festivals budget in the sum of £0.303m for 2022/23, to support the development of a refreshed events and festivals programme.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource implications: The level of resourcing and associated costings required to develop an events programme is an area of continued focus and whilst it is difficult to quantify an exact amount due to the ongoing negative impact of the pandemic, the

2012/22 cost profile provides a solid financial foundation for future proposals (see <u>Appendix 3</u>). The resources required can be funded from the Inverness Common Good Fund and provision is made in the annual Inverness Common Good Fund budget for consideration later in the agenda. The report suggests that a Members workshop be held as soon as practicable to consider ways in which contributions from the public to the cost of staging this valued events programme can be implemented, without detriment to the ability to allow entry to as broad a cross section of the community as possible.

- 3.2 Legal implications: There are no legal implications arising from this paper.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) impacts: Failure to deliver a successful events and festivals programme would have a detrimental impact on the mental and physical wellbeing of some of the City's more vulnerable residents. Delivering against the agreed vision, values and objectives will help ensure inclusiveness and continued commitment to supporting community engagement and wellbeing.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications: Events continue to be organised and delivered being mindful of their impact on the environment and in-line with appropriate guiding policies.
- 3.5 Risk implications: A simplified risk register can be found in <u>Appendix 2</u>, providing an overview of related risks and proposed mitigation.
- 3.6 Gaelic implications: Events and festivals provide a rich context in which to deliver The Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan and to secure inward investment for public-facing activities that celebrate Gaelic culture and heritage. By continuing to work in greater collaboration with partners, opportunity remains to support the Council's corporate objective to enhance the profile of Gaelic culture and to secure new investment for events that can be harnessed for the economic and cultural benefit of the wider City.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Events and Festivals Programme was the subject of a full review by the Transformation Team in conjunction with the Inverness City Area Manager following the cancellation of the festival programme in 2020. Two reports were presented to CIAC, in February and May 2021 (links provided above). This resulted in a new delivery format being agreed and implemented from June 2021, with HLH leading delivery. Governance remains, as before, through the Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group (E&FWG). Delivery of the events programme is now in partnership with HLH who have appointed an Inverness Events Development Manager to lead this and to provide synergy with the Castlehill redevelopment.
- 4.2 The new arrangements have been embedded within the governance in place through the E&FWG, the minutes of which continue to be presented to CIAC for approval. This intervention, specifically related to the development of a revised events and festivals programme for the City area, with a particular focus on improved crossorganisational working with key partners, is continuing. It should be highlighted that the Inverness Events Forum was overwhelmingly positive in its support for the events programme and the associated benefits it can bring to the City, including improved wellbeing, a sense of pride and community, increased footfall and related economic prosperity.

- 4.3 Work to develop the Events and Festivals Programme continued through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in changes to the traditional events programme. The level of upheaval and disruption to the development and planning of events, and a wider programme, cannot be underestimated and it is a credit to all relevant parties that enjoyable and vibrant events were delivered whilst ensuring public health and safety at all times.
- 4.4 The Inverness Events Forum partners within the private sector remain confident that the collaborative approach being taken by the Council and its public sector partners will see the collective emerge from the pandemic in a strong position to compete with cities across Scotland, further enhancing the City as a destination and encouraging footfall and vibrancy.

5. Review of the 2021/22 Events Programme

- 5.1.1 The ICGF events programme traditionally consisted of the following core events; The Highland Games, Ness Islands Halloween, Fireworks Display, Christmas Lights and The Red Hot Highland Fling.
- 5.1.2 When the new delivery arrangements commenced, in July 2021, there was no planned events and festivals programme due to the COVID-19 pandemic and all the risk and general uncertainty that has accompanied it. The Inverness Events Development Manager, the Director of Inverness Castle Project and the Inverness City Area Manager worked closely with the E&FWG to give clarity to members of the Inverness Events Forum on the opportunity to deliver a flexible events programme that minimised risk and maximised benefit, in line with the vision, values and objectives detailed in <u>Appendix 1</u>.
- 5.1.3 **Halloween –** The Halloween event had been traditionally held within the Ness Islands since 2009. Interest and audience levels had grown over the years and the event format, including large numbers of live performers from Eden Court, was well known to the public. The need to adhere to measures which would allow provision of a COVID19 resilient and safe event, including the control of attendance numbers, whilst taking in to account the impact of the pandemic on the event's previous delivery partners, led the team to consider new options. Time was of the essence and locating the event at Inverness Botanics was decided, noting the unique nature of the space and the ability to manage attendance safely.
- 5.1.4 'Night at the BOOtanics' was delivered at the Inverness Botanic Gardens throughout Halloween week, 27th to 31st October, with attendances exceeding expectations. An extra night was added to the original delivery dates to cope with demand. Tickets were issued on-line to allow attendance numbers to be managed and to ensure adherence with Scottish Government COVID-19 event regulations in place at the time. Importantly, no charge was levied so entrance remained free to all. The event consisted of an immersive light and projection illuminations trail experience that brought the plants, gardens and unexpected features to life. Delivery partners included Arts in Motion, Limelights, Eden Court, Inverness Jnr. Florians and Betty Booth. Over 6000 people were welcomed to the event and crucially, a number of local event sector partners provided with an income opportunity following a prolonged period of hardship. The themed trail and additional family activities were also available during the day across Halloween Weekend, Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st October, to accommodate additional attendees and to provide an offering for those with younger children.

- 5.1.5 Feedback from the Public, including through Social Media channels, was very positive. <u>Appendix 4</u> provides a snapshot of such feedback from this event and the remaining events and festivals programme and provides images of the events as well as examples of associated press and media coverage.
- 5.1.6 **Fireworks Night –** Delivery of the event was impacted by the requirements to carefully manage and monitor large gatherings of people. This meant that, in consultation with the Multi-Agency Safety Advisory Group, an event involving a bonfire and attended firework display at Bught Park was not feasible. Careful consideration was given to balancing the need to provide an event that could be viewed from many locations across the City so as not to attract a large gathering in any one place. This resulted in a closed firework firing site being located at Northern Meeting Park. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and NHS Highland both welcomed the plans which were accompanied by media messaging, ensuring that the public, whilst being encouraged to enjoy the fireworks display, were encouraged to do so from their own space.
- 5.1.7 High-Level fireworks were used and combined with near-perfect weather conditions; the event proved a success. People did gather in family groups and some attended the City centre to watch along the riverside. Stewarding arrangements were in place to assist compliance with guidelines and extra space was provided along Castle Road for pedestrian traffic. The event proved to be the only Council-managed fireworks display in Scotland and received favourable coverage on Reporting Scotland, with BBC Scotland basing a live broadcast unit at Inverness Castle.
- 5.1.8 **Christmas Lights –** The tradition of a 'Christmas Lights' event has been in place again, since 2009. Noting this and, for the same reasons that a traditional fireworks night event could not go ahead, the switching on of our winter lights also had to be reinvented. Bellfield Park was chosen as a new venue, noting its proximity to the City centre and the ability to control the space safely and securely for a prolonged period, allowing for delivery of a COVID-19 safe and resilient experience.
- 5.1.9 'Bellfield Winter Garden' was a new, month long event that delivered the illumination of Bellfield Park between 3rd 28th December 2021. Open daily until 8pm, the event delivered a number of attractions for all age groups including new festive illuminations and décor that highlighted key features within the park including the much-loved bandstand, a Christmas tree maze, festive food and drink offerings working in partnership with the City's new Highland Food and Drink Trail, street theatre entertainment, photo boards, and a giant Advent calendar opened daily by the first children in the park. The event was very well received, welcoming on average up to 500 people per day on weekdays and 1800 per day across weekends. Quality, value and accessibility to all was particularly noted through the excellent, positive feedback received by attendees. Press and Media coverage was also strong and a social media hit of over 24.5k views of the promotional video.
- 5.1.10 In August 2021, a grant application was submitted to the Inverness Common Good Fund from the Highland Hospice looking for assistance towards the purchase and installation (3yrs) of fairy lights for the Falcon Square Christmas Tree. In the absence of a Christmas Lights switch on event on and the City's large-scale Christmas Tree at Inverness Castle, Members of the Events and Festivals Working Group endorsed the inclusion of the tree lighting costs as part of the Events and Festivals programme as opposed to drawing down funds from the Grants Budget. The Events and Festivals

programme has covered the costs required to ensure a decorated Christmas Tree on Falcon Square for 3yrs.

5.2

Partnership Working

5.2.1

The creation of the Inverness Events Forum has provided a platform for improved cross-organisation communication. The Forum met on two occasions and the outcomes focused on joint messaging and collaboration to ensure the best use of resources. The primary message is that event organisers in the Highlands are committed to making the best use of both the natural environment and general resources to deliver the highest standard events, whether they be in the private or public sector

5.2.2

Partnership working has been, and will continue to be, fundamental in delivering a vibrant and inclusive events programme. Gratitude and thanks must be extended to partners for their support and contribution in helping overcome obvious and prominent barriers and ensuring successful delivering of well-received and highly popular events across 2021/22. A key focus for 2022/23 will be to help define partners at both strategic and operational levels to help delivery and identify ah-hoc opportunities that could help shape a refreshed programme.

5.3

2021/22 Events Programme Financial Overview

5.3.1

The aforementioned events were delivered under unique and testing circumstances; however it is testament to all parties involved that a high quality programme of events, arguably more important to public wellbeing than ever before, was delivered whilst also ensuring an underspend of circa. £115,000

5.3.2

A high-level summary of expected final costs, compared with the spend profile of key events delivered in 2019, can be found in <u>Appendix 3</u>. Noting the fluid situation caused by COVID-19, the scrutiny of the E&FWG was appreciated in agreeing changes to the Events Programme which allowed the Budget to be maximised, with sums being transferred between individual event budgets.

6.

Events Programme for 2022/23

6.1.1

Whilst there is still a degree of uncertainty with regards to the re-introduction of events with no restrictions, some confidence and assurance can be obtained through the successful delivery of the 2021/22 programme and the supporting governance arrangements through the E&FWG which have fostered a collaborative and agile approach to the planning and delivery of events. Furthermore, events, where possible, will be 'COVID resilient'; for instance, elements of suitable events may be digitised to make it more widely accessible and to help ensure minimal abortive costs will be incurred during planning stages to further protect the allocated budget. There are a range of events, spanning the full calendar year, that could be delivered across 2022/23 including -

6.1.2

Inverness Highland Games – Work is on-going in collaboration with the Highland Games Committee to ascertain the best way to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Inverness Highland Games and this work will continue under the scrutiny of the E&FWG.

Halloween and Winter Lights – the success of the changes made in delivering events in 2021/22 will be evaluated and we will continue to work with partners to review future delivery of these events.

Bonfire Night – as with Halloween, the team will ensure that the changes applied during 2021/22 will be built upon. This may mean changes to the traditional delivery arrangements in recognition of the changes, partly propagated by the pandemic, but also noting the need to manage our environmental resources more sustainably.

New Year's Celebration "Red Hot Highland Fling" – planning for this event would normally start early in the new calendar year. However, we have to recognise that this event may remain significantly affected by the pandemic. The usual arena, being the car park at Council HQ, is being used for covid testing purposes and restrictions remain in respect of large gatherings. The team are determined to retain as much flexibility as possible in planning this event in order to minimise risk in all areas and especially retain absolute priority for the health, safety and general well-being of the public

6.1.6 public.

6.1.4

6.1.5

Decorative Lighting - There is an expected underspend of £115,000 and it is proposed that an investment programme is undertaken on decorative lighting with a phased series of improvements being applied to the City centre and riverside. New lights would be themed to be decorative rather than wholly focused on traditional Christmas themes so as to allow the lights to remain relevant throughout the darker months. We would not lose the Christmas spirit however and would also minimise the resources required to install the new lights, with as many as possible being left in situ. A proposal to use the underspend for this purpose is contained within the Annual Budget setting report.

6.2 Budget and Governance

- 6.2.1 The annual budget allocation for the events and festivals programme is £303k.
- 6.2.1 It is strongly recommended this amount is retained to deliver events for the upcoming financial year (22/23). The aforementioned positive feedback on delivered events further reinforces the belief that this operating model works and also helps highlight the public eagerness to see events, regardless of the scale, re-introduced. Furthermore, due to COVID-19 implications and the associated cost, this budget is of even more paramount importance to help showcase the City and to ensure safe and well organised events are delivered.
- 6.2.3 Governance, as before, will continue through the E&FWG. It is vitally important the E&FWG and our partners continue to have increased creative autonomy to develop and deliver events. They continue to be tasked with translating the broad strategic goals (vision, values and objectives) into deliverable work packages (events). The level of delegated authority granted continues to allow for the development of a streamlined and autonomous operating model. This allows greater flexibility to react to changing landscapes and finite opportunities, all whilst delivering against the agreed vision.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 As previously mentioned, the immediate priority will be to arrange a workshop with Inverness City Members to discuss what and how future events can be delivered through this agreed operating model. This will also allow subject matter expertise to input and help ensure events are planned with cognisance of, and in accordance with, the most recent Government guidelines.
- 7.2 This session will be vital in laying out the outline of a programme and will help aid discussions with the creative forum and partners as we look to further stimulate economic recovery and City vibrancy through high quality and high footfall events in and around Inverness.

Designation: Interim Executive Chief Officer - Communities and Place

Author: David Haas, Inverness City Area Manager Martin Macdonald, Corporate Improvement Project Manager

Date: 31/01/2022

Appendix 1: Vision, Values and Objectives

ICGF Workshop Output 14th December 2020



Inverness Common Good Fund Events & Festivals

Workshop objective: To discuss and agree the Vision, Values and Objectives that will enable and support improved partnership working that will act as the vehicle for any future Events & Festivals programme for the Inverness City area.

Vision

We will spearhead the development of a vibrant, inclusive and iconic programme of Events and Festivals that celebrate the unique identity and culture of our City and Region. We will build on previous successes, striving to utilise expertise and talent from across the Highlands and attract additional sources of external funding to help support economic prosperity and encourage physical and mental wellbeing for the City, its residents and visitors.

Our vision is a point of reference. It will inform future events and working practices and serve as a high-level document we can use to build confidence with our delivery partners and potential funders.

Values

Inclusive: We will remove barriers to ensure that all activity is inclusive and accessible, enabling participation and engagement with the City of Inverness's most vulnerable residents.

Ambitious: We will be ambitious and aspire towards producing an iconic programme of events and festivals that profile the Highland's cultural excellence.

Collaborative: We will work collectively to maximise the expertise and capacity of a broad network of Highland cultural organisations and individuals, striving to ensure value for money.

Dynamic: We will build upon past success by producing a programme that adapts and responds to changing cultural contexts and to opportunities that arise.

Responsible: We will adopt strong and clear governance to help ensure events and festivals will be conducted in a safe, secure and compliant manner that recognises the wider environmental and community impacts.

Our values set out core beliefs that are shared and embraced across the cross-organisational group and our partners. They reflect the behaviours and considerations we promote that will help us achieve our vision.

Objectives

To deliver a **dynamic approach to producing events** that is flexible and responsive to opportunities to attract new funding and develop mutually beneficial partnerships.

To develop a programme that is **outcomes-driven** and that embeds processes of monitoring and evaluation that enables evidence-based future decision-making.

To demonstrate **value for money** by supporting activities that have the potential to leverage additional funding and attract earned income and mitigate the need for additional public funding.

We will support events that **value**, **trust and strengthen individual and organisations** engaged in cultural activities that make a unique contribution to society and economy.

To enable a **year-round programme of activity throughout the seasons** with a co-ordinated approach to marketing and promotion.

To curate an events programme that is rooted in **the characteristics of the City and its people**, acknowledging the City's past whilst looking to its future.

Our objectives outline what we want to achieve through this intervention. They are high level statements of intent that will help shape programme and help inform the expected outcomes from individual events.

Appendix 2: Overview of Risks and Mitigation

Risk	Risk	Risk	Risk Mitigation(s)		
ID	Category				
EF1	Financial	The proposed arrangement may result in delivery of core events being more costly	 Further analysis to understand potential cost increase/variation Appraise operating models (including defined roles and responsibilities) to define expectations Continued strong governance and budgetary monitoring Increased use of partners commercial knowledge/experience Ongoing reporting and sign-off through CIAC 		
EF2	Resourcing	Partner organisations may have insufficient available resource to develop proposals	 Use analysis to substantiate resource requirements and agree resource implications in advance of sequencing Future development of events (or any programme) will reflect available budget and project resource Ongoing area of focus – as restrictions ease and the number and scale of events increases this will provide some certainty 		
EF3	Reputational	Reputational fallout due to lack of popular and longstanding events being delivered (as currently no programme or resource to deliver)	 Work to better understand ICG appetite for continuing with events and agree initial operating model 		
EF4	COVID-19	Restrictions, and isolation protocols, could negatively impact planned or active events	 Continue to adhere to Government policy Ensure planned events incur minimal abortive costs during uncertain periods or instances where local cases are on the rise 		

All emerging or continuous risks will be monitored and managed using a robust Project Management approach and reported, as appropriate, through the agreed governance route(s).

Appendix 3: 2021/22 Events Programme Spend

As detailed in section 5 of the report, a cost breakdown of the delivered events, cross referenced with the 2019 costs, can be found below. Costs are accurate and based on invoices and fees processed as of 01/02/22.

Event	Detail	2021/22 Spend	2019 Spend
Halloween	Inclusive of –	£37,000	£50,000
"Bootanics"			
	Audience Welfare, Safety & Security		
	Production Costs		
	Entertainment		
	Marketing		
Fireworks	Inclusive of –	£9,000	£28,000
	Audience Welfare, Safety & Security		
	Entertainment		
Christmas	Inclusive of –	£100,000	£32,000
	Audience Welfare, Safety & Security		
	Production Costs		
	Entertainment		
	Marketing		
New Year	Inclusive of –	£1,500	£120,000
	Audience Welfare, Safety & Security		
Resource	Proportionate cost of Inverness Events	£38,000	N/A
	Manager salary*		
	TOTAL	£185,500	£230,000

*this is due to salary costs not being incurred until July 2021. The figure of £38k covers Manager resource until the end of FY 2021/22.

Appendix 4: Event Profile Summary





Ghoulish goings-on galore at the 'Boo-tanic' Gardens

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Hilary Prosser

Excellent event, we had a great time with Grandchildren, well organised and staff were all lovely 😄 🛫

Love - Reply - Hide - 2 w

Zoe Armes We had the best time tonight. The actors were a brilliant touch, very professional. I think my husband and I enjoyed it just as much as the kids.



enjoyable night at Bootanics 👷. We really enjoyed it. Thanks for all your hard work that you have put it in.

Tickets for BOOtanics spooky spectacular in Inverness 'sold out' in one hour – after an extra thousand free tickets released by High Life Highland at 10am this morning – organisers said people can still visit this weekend for free



Brace dealt enjoys Halloween fun with the bloodthirsty Count at this year's Boltanics at the Braze Colum Moday Frightful fun for all the family nkDSo



https://www.youtube .com/watch?v=IVjr2t

Alest evening Ide extra date due to





Delight after city's fireworks display

SPONTANEOUS cheers and applause from viewers of Friday's Inverness fireworks

Friday's Inverness fireworks display have delighted organisers of the event. High Life Highland, with expert support from external event planners, was behind the 10-minute display which lit up the sky above the city. Instead of the traditional gathering at Bught Park, organisers decided to launch fireworks from inside a closed

organisers decided to lattice fireworks from inside a closed Northern Meeting Park and encouraged viewers to find vantage points across the city which avoided gatherings and were Covid safe.

Hundreds of people found spots, with family, around the castle and riverside, while



others watched from gardens and buildings, with the show visible from miles around.

A spokesman for the organisers said: "High Life Highland is delighted to have delivered the only local authority-funded firework displaying Scatland

responsibly enjoy the event - made all the more special when it ended with a massive rapturous applause from the onlookers along the river and at the castle. The event was brought by the city's events and festivals working group and financed by the Inverness Common Good Fund."

display in Scotland. *So great to see so many people in every corner of the city turn out to safely and responsibly enjoy the event



Stephanie O'Connell It was absolutely amazing; the kids (and us grown ups) loved it! Thank you so much for putting on the event. Like - Reply - Hide - Message - 5 d

Erica Anne Davidson It was so great to go out with my son and watch them tonight. Thanks to everyone involved. 02 Like Reply Hide Message 5 d

Gail Naim They were really amazing Like - Reply - Hide - Message - 4 d

Delight after last night's Inverness fireworks display





and and so lovely that everyone apprec 00 ge Sd

Fireworks get firm support

Businesses are backing the upcoming Inverness city fireworks display





Bellfield Winter Garden https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tTOpFYC5U99RC TItJ42IA6k- Mt4Et5b/view



Inverness Courier



Hilary Prosser

Fabulous display, we took our 5 Grandchildren over 3 trips, they are aged from 10yrs to 1yr and all loved it.

Well done

3 w Like Reply

Kirsten McCulloch

We loved it. It felt really magical. Our 4 year old really enjoyed the Christmas tree maze and lighting up the teddy bear. Would love for it to run again next year.

Mi Chelle

This was a great family event .. well needed in our city. From all the photos I've seen everyone of all ages loved it .. here's hoping it comes back year after year 🤞 3 w Like Reply 10

Sarah-Jane MacPherson

Great display, we all throughly enjoyed it. Well done

3 w Like Reply

Joanna Clarke

We thought it was absolutely brilliant. We travelled in from the west coast and made a weekend of it. I loved that it was on for a long time so we had plenty of time to make it in from further afield. It was just wonderful.

The

Festive fun for the family

at city park

Park becomes winter garden





3w Like Reply Ryle Jayne Desend This was a fabulous display. Was lovely to walk round and admire in the dark so beautifully lit up. Well done to all involved and hopefully it is a regular thing 🛃

Megan Campbell Our 13month old absolutely loved this!

3 w Lika Reply

10

Lauren Pearson We thought it was great and liked that it was up for so long so we could visit at quieter times 😃 10

10