

Agenda Item	7
Report No	G/20/23

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Gaelic Committee

Date: 8 December 2023

Report Title: Blas Festival 2023

Report By: Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report sets out general information for Members regarding the annual Blas Festival. The festival took place between September 1st and 9th this year. This is the 19th Blas Festival that The Highland Council has supported. The Council works closely with Fèisean nan Gàidheal (FnanG) in relation to the event.
- 1.2 A detailed Blas Festival report and video was presented to the Gaelic Committee in March 2023. FnanG are currently compiling a detailed Gaelic, cultural and economic report on the festival.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Discuss and note the report.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource
The Highland Council's support to the Blas Festival has enabled FnanG to attract additional funding from other organisations including Creative Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and other key agencies and organisations.
- 3.2 Legal
There are no legal implications.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)

The Blas Festival takes place in community halls and venues across the Highlands and Islands and they also engage with local event promoters and volunteers who assist with the promotion and the logistics of the Blas events in communities.

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

Several of the Blas festival events took place online, and the much of the promotional material was issued digitally. FnanG maximise the use of all the social media platforms when promoting the events.

3.5 Risk

The reduction of Blas concerts, events and workshops will affect the delivery of quality Gaelic and cultural events in the Highland area. The Blas Festival is a linguistic and cultural economic driver within many communities across the Highlands where events are based and take place.

3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)

There are currently no implications.

3.7 Gaelic

The festival promotes and includes Gaelic in all concerts, events, and activities. Blas is a programme of important events regarding the promotion of Gaelic and its associated Culture. Events also provide a platform for Gaelic speaking performers of all ages to use and speak Gaelic. Some of the Blas events are also performed at the world-famous Celtic Connections Festival in Glasgow.

4. Blas Festival Programme

4.1 Blas had a programme of:

- 25 concerts and cèilidhs
- 2 school music presentations
- 3 online workshops
- 4 livestreamed concerts
- streamed events on FèisTV

The festival included a Gaelic drama tour and traditional music workshops which took place in schools across the Highlands. The festival finale was a Ceòl nam Fèis concert in Lochaber featuring over 50 young musicians from across all the Fèisean.

4.2 The Blas Programme also included a commission awarded to Eòghann MacEunraig, 'Lèirsinn' which was played and exhibited 3 times.

4.3 Concerts for well-known and talented musicians and tradition bearers to mark significant birthdays included Dr Aonghas Macdonald, Calum Màrtainn, Rita Hunter and Murdo John Mackenzie.

4.4 With support form Cholmcille funding, An Gineal Òg (Young Generation) took young singers and musicians from Scotland and Ireland from both Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaeilge heritage together to perform concerts in communities and also to perform and visit a number of schools in the Highlands.

4.5 The 'An Tinne' event produced and performed by well-known Skye singer Anne Martin and a group of quality musicians which informed audiences of a family from Kilmuir in Skye who emigrated to Australia during the Clearances – mid 19th century.

4.6 There was a specific Cèilidh which celebrated Gaelic songs collected by Frances Tolmie: 'Gun Sireadh Gun Iarraidh'. There were also 4 community cèilidhs.

5. Blas Festival Impact Report

5.1 Fèisean nan Gàidheal have received feedback which has been very positive. They are currently compiling a full report ahead of the FnanG Board meeting in December. The report will be submitted to a future Gaelic Committee.

Designation:

Date: November 23rd 2023

Author: Morag Anna MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer

Background Papers:

Appendices: