

City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the **Events and Festivals Working Group** held in Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Thursday, 15 January 2026 at 11.30am.

Present:

Highland Council

Mr I Brown

Ms K MacLean (Remote)

Mrs J Hendry

Officials in Attendance

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager Inverness & South
Ms G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Ms K Rait, Inverness Events Manager (Independent sub-contractor, Remote)
Ms E Fogel Walker, Visit Inverness Loch Ness

Mrs J Hendry in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair and Mr R MacKintosh.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Working Group **NOTED** the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 4 December 2025.

4. Exclusion of the Public

The Working Group **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

5. City Area Community Events Programme 2025/26

The Events Manager and Senior Community Development Manager gave a presentation on the plans for the Community Events Programme extending to

31 March 2026 and beyond.

Inverness International Blues Festival

Event preparations were well underway and an update of the work undertaken since the last meeting was provided.

Tickets were selling well via the event's dedicated website and the early bird offer had been successful. Promoted social media posts were live and marketing campaigns were underway, with support from various external partners and the Council's Corporate Communications Team.

During discussion, clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the operational arrangements for the event on the day, which included alcohol sales and security provisions.

A promotional media event would be held on Thursday 22 January, at the Northern Meeting Park. Details of this event were shared and the Working Group was invited to attend.

The Working Group **NOTED** the update.

Royal Air Force (RAF) Proposed Event

The RAF had expressed a wish to hold a 3-day open event at the Northern Meeting Park from 19 to 21 June 2026. Since the last meeting of this Working Group, it had been agreed that the event could proceed and preliminary discussions had commenced. It was hoped that this would prove to be a successful event.

The Working Group **NOTED** the update.

Inverness Highland Games 2026

There had been significant interest in tickets for the 2026 Highland Games, which would go on sale as soon as possible.

The Highland Games Committee were due to meet in February and the Events Manager had already met with them.

During discussion, it was suggested that making greater use of pre-sold tickets, along with opening additional entrance gates during peak periods, could help reduce queueing.

Fireworks

During the Meeting of the Highland Council on 11 December 2025, the Council resolved, amongst other points, to investigate the use of quieter or silent fireworks at displays organised directly by the Highland Council.

The Senior Community Development Manager and Events Manager would liaise with the Strategic Lead (Environmental Health), Scottish Fire and Rescue

Service and NHS Highland, and this was **NOTED** by the Working Group.

6. Budget – Update – 2025/26

There had been circulated an overview of the operational working budget by the Senior Community Development Manager.

An update was provided regarding the Blues Festival's expenditure, expected income and sponsorship.

The Working Group **NOTED** the budget position.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group **NOTED** that the date of the next meeting would be Thursday, 19 February 2026 at 2pm.

Meeting ended at 12.40pm