The Highland Council

Agenda Item	**9**
Report No	**G/19/26**

Committee: **Gaelic**

Date: **18 November 2026**

Report Title: **Celtic Media Festival Scotland (Highland) 2028**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive - People**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 To inform the Gaelic Committee that the Council have submitted a bid to host the Celtic Media Festival in Inverness-Highland in June 2028. The submission deadline was 31 October 2026. The Council will be informed prior to the Festive period of the outcome.

1.2 The Celtic Media Festival is one of the leading international peripatetic events celebrating broadcasting, film, digital media and creative content from Celtic-language and lesser used/minority-language Countries and communities.

The current engagement has demonstrated strong support from partners across the creative industries, tourism sector, Gaelic organisations, and public agencies. The event presents a significant opportunity to:

- Showcase Inverness-Highland on an international stage.
- Promote Gaelic language and culture.
- Strengthen Highland's reputation as a centre for creative and digital innovation.
- Support local businesses and visitor economy growth.
- Create learning and development opportunities and legacy areas for young people and media professionals.
- Build long-term relationships with media organisations and creative industry stakeholders.

The event normally brings together broadcasters, producers, creative industry representatives and decision-makers from across the Celtic nations and regions, including Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, Brittany, Galicia, and the Isle of Man. The festival programme normally includes:

- Industry conferences
- Panel sessions
- Seminars
- Masterclasses
- An International Pitching Forum

- The Torc Awards for Excellence.

The CMF in Belfast awarded more than 20 Torc Award categories were presented across screen, radio, audio, and digital media.

The event attracts participation from major broadcasters including BBC, RTÉ, TG4, S4C, France 3 Bretagne, Virgin Media, and Televisión de Galicia. Council Officers have reached out to key partners and stakeholders including HIE, BnaG, HLH, MG-ALBA and other internal funding streams and opportunities continuing to emerge for enhanced collaboration across Council services and with external partners.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

i. Agree to endorse the bid to host the Celtic Media Festival in Inverness-Highland in June 2028; and
ii. Note the work undertaken to date in relation to the bid, application process, and timetable.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource

The Highland Council is committed to supporting the delivery of the Celtic Media Festival 2028. We are also actively seeking funding from key partner organisations, including support for promotional activity and sponsorship support.

At this stage:

- Detailed financial commitments remain under development with festival organisers and delivery partners.
- Opportunities to secure external funding and sponsorship are being explored.
- Economic impact benefits are expected through accommodation bookings, hospitality, transport usage, venue hire, and wider visitor expenditure.

3.2 Legal

The Council will be required to ensure that:

- Governance and procurement processes comply with relevant legislation and Council procedures.
- Agreements with event organisers, sponsors and delivery partners are appropriately documented.
- Licensing, public safety and event management requirements are fulfilled.
- Data protection and information governance considerations are addressed where necessary.

3.3 Risk

- Financial support is currently being explored with key partners therefore the funding commitments have not been agreed.

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

- This would follow the current Health and Safety Policy.

3.5 **Gaelic**

- The festival directly promotes Gaelic and culture on an international stage, as the Celtic Media Festival was established specifically to promote the languages, cultures and creative talent of the Celtic nations and areas.
- The festival reinforces Inverness and the Highlands as a recognised centre for Gaelic culture and media, building on the area's historic relationship with the festival and the presence of major Gaelic media organisations such as MG ALBA/ BBC Radio nan Gaidheal.
- Hosting the Celtic Media Festival would demonstrate Highland Council's commitment to its current Gaelic Language Plan and linguistic and cultural leadership, while contributing to economic growth, skills development, and community confidence in the area.
- Hosting the event would also support the Areas of Linguistic Significance especially if satellite events were held in Skye in conjunction with Sabhal Mor Ostaig.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies, or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified, as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary**

4.3.1 An initial Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been undertaken and a full IIA will be undertaken in relation to the Climate Change agenda should the Bid be successful.

5. Governance

5.1 Governance arrangements will be developed and may include:

- Establishment of a multi-agency steering group and/or Liaison Group, to include Elected Member/s, CMF Management, Council Officers and/or key partners/stakeholders
- Clear reporting routes to Council senior leadership and relevant committees.
- Defined project management structures and accountability arrangements.
- Regular progress monitoring against agreed milestones.

6. Celtic Media Festival – Inverness 2015 and Belfast 2026

6.1 The Celtic Media Festival last took place in Highland in 2015, in Inverness. The festival included:

- 19 staff and volunteers
- 405 delegates
- 45 speakers

Figures for the public events in 2015 are not available.

The 2026 Celtic Media Festival took place in Belfast and included:

- 22 staff & volunteers
- 123 local delegates
- 346 non-Local Delegates
- 74 local and non-local speakers
- 50 CMF-run networking events
- 213 public events

Celtic Media Festival 2026 was reported by organisers as achieving record levels of delegate attendance and competition entries, with all festival passes sold out.

The event attracted broadcasters, producers, and creatives from across the Celtic nations and wider Europe, demonstrating the continuing growth and international significance of Celtic Media Festival, and indicating the potential scale of a future event hosted in Inverness.

Celtic Media Festival has shared findings from their funding partner in Belfast 2026, which indicates that the average spend per non-local delegate in Belfast, including accommodation, was £1021 per delegate. There were 346 non-local delegates, with a total of 1038 bed nights; as well as 123 local delegates, with an average daily spend of £45 per delegate per day.

These figures do not include:

- direct local spend from CMF including venue/s, technical equipment.
- accommodation nights for Celtic Media Festival guests, which totalled 150 bed nights.

The total for direct local operations spend from CMF was approximately £100,000.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 5 October 2026

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