

<b>Tourism and Recreation Event Programme Rhythm of the Bann</b>	<b>12th February 2019</b>
<b>To: The Leisure and Development Committee For Decision</b>	

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)</b>	
<b>Strategic Theme</b>	Promote our tourist offer locally and internationally
<b>Outcome</b>	Improve prosperity  To provide a balanced portfolio for major events across the Borough and facilitate partnership with other event promoters.
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Head of Tourism and Recreation
<b>Cost:</b> (If applicable)	£ 16,500 for Year 1

**The purpose of this report is to present Members with a proposal for the future delivery of the Rhythm of the Bann Music Festival for 2019 and the subsequent development outline for the next five years.**

### **Background**

The Rhythm of the Bann Music Festival was introduced into the Events Calendar in 2017 following Council's decision to introduce Signature Events in both Ballymoney and Coleraine. The core activities were based around music and dance, with themes focusing around Coleraine's culture and heritage. A ticketed event at the Market Yard was not well attended and although there was a good programme of activities throughout the town centre, footfall was well below expectations.

In 2018 the event was merged with Armed Forces Day for one year only and was well received by the public, likely as a result of the draw and publicity of the Armed Forces Day celebrations.

Officers have looked at the potential for developing a sustainable event that has the ability to grow in scale and popularity and bring economic benefit to the area.

### **Key Aims**

The key Aims of the Event Remit are to;

- Arrange recurring events that complement the Council's corporate aims and objectives.
- Create a core number of signature events which are unique and embedded in the character of the area.
- Hold events that take place throughout the calendar year.
- Work in collaboration with public, private and voluntary sectors to ensure event delivery.

Coleraine has a strong daytime retail product and numerous coffee and food outlets, however it does not cater for a wide range of activities to suit the night-time economy. With close proximity to Portrush and Portstewart, the town hasn't attracted the same range of

summer and seasonal events that have been enjoyed in the past by the two resort towns. In developing a signature event for Coleraine it is important that the correct 'fit' is found between the type of event being presented and the audience/participants that it can attract.

The Events team is keen to develop an event that fits with the character of the town and helps to drive the local economy. It must be recognised that to build an event to a level where it provides strong economic return, requires either significant early financial investment or an approach that allows it to develop and grow over a number of years. With a budget of £16,500 the latter is seen as the most realistic approach. Also, with restricted financial resources, the infrastructure and programming elements are likely to be limited, making it difficult to bring in headline attractions drawing large crowds, income and overnight stays. Officers believe that a more sustainable approach is to grow an event that is initially participant-led, attracting like-minded people to come for an event based around a shared interest. This approach generates participants to stay in the area and in time this number can increase to a level that can bring significant benefits to the town.

### **Proposal**

Officers are proposing to develop Rhythm of the Bann by featuring a Choral Festival element which, when developed, will be an international competition attracting in excess of 800 participants. To provide maximum benefit for the local economy the timing for this is suggested as early Spring.

The demand for Choral based music is strong across Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. It is estimated that within the UK 2.1 million people are now singing regularly in choirs and across the country there are now over 40,000 Choral groups. Within Northern Ireland, there are two other festivals in existence, at Derry/Londonderry and Bangor, both popular events in the calendar year. Coleraine has previously hosted a Choral festival (1998 – 2008) which was a successful annual event.

### **Key Project Objectives**

- To attract in excess of 800 participants by Year 4.
- To attract family and friends of participants and a visiting audience to the area for the Choral festival.
- To achieve international status for the event.
- To drive visitor expenditure and bed nights to Coleraine and the surrounding area.
- To flatten the seasonality curve for the area.
- To establish Coleraine as a quality music festival venue.
- To promote a working partnership from within the local community for culture and arts.
- To develop Coleraine's retail and night time economy offering.

### **Potential Programming**

It is proposed that the Rhythm of the Bann Festival is developed as a choral singing festival and integrated competition. This would be a two-day event taking place on 26 & 27 April 2019 and the intention would be host this event in March in 2020. This is to accommodate the choral festival calendar in Northern Ireland and to bring bed nights to the area early in the year. There is an opportunity to:

- a. Develop the event as part of a 5 Year Plan and link the 'Kitty of Coleraine' concept as a fringe event to the choral festival. It is hoped that the two elements will grow together.

- b. Use the event to showcase buildings in and around Coleraine for 'hubs' of activity e.g. shopping centre, churches, community halls, Town Hall and outdoor spaces.
- c. Use the event to develop a visitor trail around Coleraine (from one choral hub to another) - to increase visitor dwell time.
- d. Showcase Coleraine as the event centre (eg. Opening Gala concert) but to also drive PR through choral performances in iconic sites – eg. Mussenden Temple.
- e. Build event e.g, 2 days in Year 1 up to 3 days in Year 4.
- f. Use the event to develop itineraries for participants – showcase tourism destination (develop packages and experiences for participants / visitors during their stay).
- g. Develop masterclasses and workshops / mass participation events for participants and visitors e.g. 'Try it' sessions with Choirs - maximise visitor experience and dwell time.

### **Estimated Economic Return on Investment**

1. Aim for 800 participants by Year 4. If we started with 200 participants in 2020 for a two day event, this would conservatively equate to 100 rooms x £55 (overnight accommodation) and 200 x £18 (daily spend) x 2 days = **£9,100**. **If the event attracted 500 day visitors in 2020, this would bring in an additional £9,000 in daily spend. Total for 2020 = £18,100**
2. By Year 4, based on **800** participants, this would increase to £72,800 (accommodation and daily spend). If visitors increased x 8 by Year 4 this would increase visitor daily spend to 4000 x £18 = £72,000. By year 4, this would be a return on the £16,500 council funding of **£144,800**. (Figures for indicative purposes only)
3. This demonstrates a return on investment of 9:1 on Council monies in terms of Economic Impact by Year 4.

Note: £55.00 per night Accommodation Spend and £18.00 daily spend are the standardised figures used by Tourism NI / Economists when analysing the Economic / Tourism benefits of an event.

(Derry Choral Festival attracted 12,000 visitors last year and 70 Choirs – this was in Year 8 of the event)

### **Non-monetary Return on Investment**

1. Event will:
  - a. Increase Civic Pride.
  - b. Enhance the Destination Image.
  - c. Drive event participation - engage crowds in 'try it' sessions.
  - d. Increase the capacity and reputation of Coleraine to host major events.
  - e. Social and Community Cohesion.
  - f. Positive Social Impacts - skills development / volunteering.
  - g. Generate signification AEV and Media Impact.
  - h. Showcase Tourism assets - link performances into tourism assets.
  - i. Event will act as a visitor 'driver' around which visitor experiences can be developed.

## **Constraints / Risks**

1. USP of this event needs to be established - how does this event differ from established events such as Derry City Choral Festival.
2. 2019 will be used as a launch year and strong marketing efforts must be made to promote for the 2020 event.
3. The calendar of choral festival events is already established - this must be mitigated through using 2019 event as a launch for 2020. It is proposed to run the two - day event in April 2019 featuring a gala evening and smaller events throughout Coleraine promoting the 2020 event.
4. Requirement to market to potential participants throughout 2019 /2020.
5. Venue restrictions - Coleraine does not have a large capacity venue in the town - therefore the use of Churches, shopping areas, communal spaces needs to be maximised.
6. Budgetary restrictions.

## **Supporting Activities**

1. Kitty of Coleraine Fringe - feature throughout hostelrys in Coleraine traditional Arr music that includes Tenor Acts, Barber Shop, and Folk. This element will help with the establishment of the Rhythm of the Bann Choral Festival and potentially could annex into a weekend event in its own right for Coleraine.
2. Itineraries / Tours / Trails can be developed around the town to engage the visitor and increase dwell time / spend.
3. Opportunities for business / town centre engagement.

## **Recommendation**

**The Leisure and Development Committee is asked to consider the proposal for the development of the Rhythm of the Bann Festival adopting a core approach based on a choral singing competition that draws participants into the Borough. Approval is sought for a two-day event on 26 & 27 April 2019 to showcase the choral festival which will feature a gala evening. In addition the Kitty of Coleraine Fringe in bars, cafes etc. will be introduced for Coleraine on the same weekend.**