

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Tourism Event Programme 2021</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	The Leisure & Development Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	16th March 2021
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	For Decision

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Promote our tourist offering locally and internationally
Outcome	Improve prosperity To provide a balanced portfolio for major events across the Borough and facilitate partnership with other event promoters
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	£140,720
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES</b>
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

**The purpose of this report is to present Members with an update on the Covid 19 constraints related to the delivery of events in 2021, and a recommendation specific to Council's Event Programme.**

## **2.0 Background**

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has a significant remit with regard to the support, delivery and facilitation of tourism events within the region. The past 12 months have been extremely challenging and have significantly impacted on both Council-led events and the support provided to the third sector.

In December 2021 the Council approved the establishment, for one year only, of a Tourism Events Recovery Fund. This fund is designed to support existing event organisers who have benefited from the Tourism Event Funding Programme in the past two years (see separate Leisure and Development report).

The Coronavirus pandemic has severely curtailed the Council led event programme over the past 12 months, with the majority of events being cancelled in 2020. Halloween and Christmas took place in a reduced format, and mostly through a virtual medium.

## **3.0 Challenges for Delivery of Events in 2021 – Government Restrictions**

The current Government advice on Indoor and outdoor gatherings allows up to **six people** (including children of all ages) from a maximum of **two households** to meet outdoors, or in non-domestic indoor settings for a permitted reason. These regulations will be reviewed on 16 March 2021 as part of the NI Executive's planned pathway out of current restrictions.

Published on 3 March 2021, the NI Executive's pathway states that strategic priorities remain with the health and wellbeing of citizens, societal, and community wellbeing, economic wellbeing and revitalizing the economy.

Nine pathways (sectors) have been developed by the NI Executive, each having five phases through which the objective is to reduce and remove the restrictions that are currently in place. Events are included in the 'Culture, Heritage and Entertainment' pathway.

Progress through the five phases will vary and will be dependent on updates on evidence that allows a balance of the benefits to society with the potential impact on the transmission of the virus (COVID 19).

Due to the unpredictable course of the pandemic the NI Executive has not issue a timetable linked to the recovery pathway. They have however detailed review dates i.e. 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

Without a timetable event planning for 2021 is simply speculative.

## **4.0 Implications for Planning Council-led Event Programme**

Many of the Council's managed events require significant lead-in time and committed resources. Event management, planning, outsourced suppliers, professional services, marketing activities and traffic management consultants, mostly need to be procured and contracts agreed months in advance of the event taking place. Safety Advisor Group (SAG) consultation for events such as the Auld Lammas Fair starts 7-8 months in advance, with tender documentation and pyrotechnic licences applied for several months in advance.

The absence of a recovery programme makes it very challenging to curtail existing furlough arrangements, initiate planning, commit resources and enter into contractual agreements for the Council event programme.

## 5.0 Proposed Approach for Delivery of Council Event Programme 2021

With the unpredictable course of the pandemic, the Tourism Events Team has been investigating a revised approach for delivery based on the planning implications and restrictions in place currently and in the foreseeable future.

A summarised proposal is detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Outline Proposal or Rationale for Cancellation</b>	<b>Budget Requirement 2021-22</b>
Ballymoney Spring Fair (Virtual Event)	29 <sup>th</sup> March – 3 <sup>rd</sup> April (dates of exact virtual content TBC)	Historical footage of past Ballymoney festival's to the present day Spring Fair.  Showcase of local food and fashion demonstrating the Spring offering from the town.  Agricultural / Horticultural behind the scenes footage of local suppliers.	£4,500
Easter Seasonal Programme	CANCELLED	Cancelled – Open space performances not recommended with associated risks – no certainty of permission to run.  Minimal impact on delivering virtually.	£0
Rhythm of the Bann (Virtual Event)	Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> - Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup> May	Virtual Event: Online Musical Performances  Reduced Scale, Physical: Buskers (if Covid restrictions permit) in empty shop windows and in quiet zones of town such as Kingsgate St.  Coincide with Speciality Market	£6,000
NW200 Race Week Festival	CANCELLED	Cancelled – content does not lend itself to virtual delivery.  NW200 has been cancelled by the event organiser's.	£0
Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival	Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> May - Saturday 6 <sup>th</sup> June	Past footage of the festival's celebration of maritime heritage to the present day	£4,500

(Virtual Event)	(dates of exact virtual content TBC)	Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival.  Showcase of boats on the water and local food and tourism offering. (Content TBC and subject to Covid restrictions)	
Seasonal Summer Programme (Summer Theatre Programme)	CANCELLED	Cancelled – Open space performances not recommended with associated risks – no certainty of permission to run.  Minimal impact on delivering virtually.	£0
Summer Fireworks Evening (Finale of Red Sails) Portstewart	CANCELLED	Cancelled – Open space performances not recommended with associated risks – no certainty of permission to run.  Minimal on delivering virtually.	£0
Summer Entertainment and Fireworks Evening Portrush	CANCELLED	Cancelled – Open space performances not recommended with associated risks – no certainty of permission to run.  Minimal on delivering virtually.	£0
Auld Lammas Fair (Virtual Event)	Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> - Tuesday 31 <sup>st</sup> August  (dates of exact virtual content TBC)	Physical event delivery extremely challenging due to the open nature of the mass gathering.  Proposed to feature historical footage highlighting the people, places, heritage and culture of the Auld Lammas Fair to where it is today.  Ask for historical archive material from members of the public and create virtual gallery.  Encourage the public to visit local artisan's websites via Visit Causeway Coast and Glens.  Video to showcase the Agricultural and Artisan offering elements of the fair.	£12,000

<p>Salmon and Whiskey Festival</p> <p>(Hybrid approach TBC, possible Virtual and Physical event)</p>	<p>Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September <b>TBC</b></p>	<p>Virtual Event: Showcase of STEM (the science of food and drink), Taste Causeway, possible features from the Bushmills Banquet team.</p> <p>Short videos from the Bushmills Distillery and Salmon Fisheries (DAERA).</p> <p>Reduced Scale, Physical (Content TBC and subject to Covid restrictions):</p> <p>Deliver a small artisan market by NNC&amp;G.</p> <p>Possible showcase of STEM on a reduced scale.</p>	<p>£8,500</p>
<p>Seasonal Halloween Events x 4</p> <p>(Delivery approach to be reviewed, Summer 2021 in line with Covid restrictions)</p>	<p>Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> - Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October <b>TBC</b></p> <p>Ballymoney - Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Limavady - Thursday 28<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Coleraine - Friday 29<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Ballycastle – Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October</p>	<p>Approaches may include:</p> <p>Delivery as close to 2019 levels as possible and/or hybrid or blended approach to include virtual and reduced scale physical events that fit with the event theme.</p>	<p>£32,220</p>
<p>Atlantic Sessions</p> <p>(Delivery approach to be reviewed, Summer 2021 in line with Covid restrictions)</p>	<p>Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November <b>TBC</b></p>	<p>Approaches may include:</p> <p>Delivery as close to 2019 levels as possible and/or hybrid or blended approach to include virtual and reduced scale physical events that fit with the event theme.</p>	<p>£18,000</p>
<p>Seasonal Christmas Light Switch On's (to include Festive Fund)</p> <p>(Delivery approach to be reviewed, Summer 2021 in line with</p>	<p>November and December <b>TBC</b></p> <p>Ballymoney - 18<sup>th</sup> November</p> <p>Limavady - 20<sup>th</sup> November</p> <p>Ballycastle - 25<sup>th</sup> November</p> <p>Coleraine - 26<sup>th</sup> November</p> <p>Portstewart - 27<sup>th</sup> November</p>	<p>Approaches may include:</p> <p>Delivery as close to 2019 levels as possible and/or hybrid or blended approach to include virtual and reduced scale physical events that fit with the event theme.</p>	<p>£55,000 (includes Festive Fund and Management Costs £5,000)</p>

Covid restrictions)	Dungiven - 27 <sup>th</sup> November Garvagh - 29 <sup>th</sup> November Portrush - 3 <sup>rd</sup> December Kilrea - 4 <sup>th</sup> December		
<b>Total Request</b>	<b>£140,720</b>		

## **6.0 Consultation and Assessment of Event Delivery Options**

Officers have continued to liaise and seek advice from various agencies in relation to the potential planning opportunities for events in 2021/22. Whilst the NI Executive's 'pathway out of restrictions' details five phases for 'Culture, Heritage and Entertainment', dates have not yet been issued. Regarding entertainment and recreational gatherings, Council has not yet received definitive advice on the assessment and requirements for reasonable measures to mitigate for the risks. To date, the only advice is that event organisers must adhere to the Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000. Council Officers have sought clarification and guidance on how to achieve this in relation to mass gatherings and events.

The Tourism Events Team has attended regular meetings with colleagues from other Local Authorities. Feedback and benchmarking has shown that all other Councils are planning to reduce their event programme and carry out, where possible, virtual delivery where applicable. Derry City and Strabane and Belfast Council has stated that they don't plan to deliver events 'in the physical world' prior to Halloween. Local Authorities continue to monitor the regulations and await NI Executive guidance on events, mass gatherings and timings.

The Tourism Events Team has consulted with community partners and agreed with the recommendations for delivery in Table 1, for Ballymoney Spring Fair, Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival and the Salmon and Whiskey Festival.

Consultation has also taken place with multi agencies, including the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS), St Johns Ambulance, the Council led Safety Advisory Group (SAG) and Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS). This consultation assessed the potential for deployment of these services if required and possible constraints on delivery.

For each event, Officers looked at the type of delivery that is possible, based on information, advice, Government restrictions and timings. Internal and external risks have been assessed and these have influenced the type of proposal for each event, as detailed in **Table 1**. For information, **Annex A** details the risks identified with the Auld Lammas Fair.

## **7.0 Budgetary Position**

The budget allocation for the delivery of Council events was prepared at the end of 2020 and was based on the delivery of Council-led events, where COVID19 was not an impediment. The revised proposals for delivery offer revenue savings against the agreed allocation within the Tourism and Recreation budget.

## **8.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee gives consideration to the current situation and approves the revised approach for the delivery of Council-led events in 2021 as detailed in Table 1, within the report.

## ANNEX A

Internal Risks – Lammas Fair Planning	External Risks – Lammas Fair Planning
<p><b>Council would be proceeding ‘at financial risk’</b> - currently no guarantee that government will allow events and ‘mass gatherings’ to take place in near future.</p> <p><b>Contractual position with event suppliers</b> - internal legal and external barrister advice has indicated that Council can no longer rely on Covid - 19 as a 'Force Majeure' in relation to tenders / contracts moving forward - therefore Council proceeds 'at risk' with any new contracts - this has also potential financial implications.</p> <p><b>PR / Reputational risk</b> to Council of proceeding - this is multi-faceted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-event Marketing of and encouraging ‘mass gatherings’ - not appropriate at current time</li> <li>• ‘Host’ communities of these events may have reservations about attracting large crowds into their areas - potential negative publicity for Council</li> <li>• Public expectation that events are not a priority at this time</li> <li>• Attracting visitors and participants from beyond the Borough - again, not appropriate at this time</li> <li>• Visitor Experience impacted - if key elements of programming cannot be delivered - resulting in an event which is below visitor and participant expectations</li> <li>• Potential late cancellations to suppliers - damaging to relations between Events Team and suppliers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timing of any further NI Executive Guidance</b> - does not account for the long lead-in time to deliver events e.g. issue of statutory road closures and licenses (8 - 12 week processes, dependant on other Government bodies).</p> <p><b>Lack of internal capacity / resources to deliver events</b> eg. Environmental Services, Estates and Operations Teams are all at this time currently engaged in Emergency Planning and other statutory services required by Council.</p>	<p><b>Events and ‘mass gatherings’ are currently in breach of government legislation</b> and there is a high probability they will continue to be restricted through 2021. Currently only up to <b>six people</b> are allowed to gather outdoors which will restrict how the Events.</p> <p><b>Lack of NI Executive guidance</b> on Events and Mass Gatherings and no timeframe for issue of this forthcoming. Advised ‘not a priority at this time’.</p> <p>Risk that <b>multi-agencies eg. PSNI, NIAS do not have adequate resources or capacity</b> to support events at the present time due to the impact of the on-going pandemic. Events cannot be delivered by Council in isolation.</p> <p><b>Inability to hold Safety Advisory Group meetings</b> due to lack of guidance and pressures on multi-agencies.</p> <p>Possibility that <b>travel restrictions</b> will still be in place throughout the summer impacting on the capacity of both visitors and participants to attend events.</p> <p><b>Impact of Covid-19 on event suppliers-</b> these organisations will need time to readjust when restrictions are lifted eg. Impact of Furlough etc.</p> <p><b>Possibility of further ‘waves’</b> of pandemic and having to pull back from all event planning.</p> <p><b>Concern that the general public will avoid mass gatherings,</b> even If government restrictions are lifted - it may take some time for public confidence to rise. Future market testing and public consultation will be needed to ascertain public appetite for events.</p> <p>Government restrictions in relation to Covid-19 may be lifted in a phased approach, with events and ‘mass gatherings’ - due to their deemed higher risk in adhering to <b>‘social distancing’</b> - being one of the last restrictions to be lifted.</p> <p><b>Benchmarking</b> has shown that no other Councils are planning for such a large scale event in Northern Ireland pre-Halloween 2021.</p>

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<p><b>Insurance and Liability</b> concerns of delivering events at the current time - inability to secure pandemic cover.</p> <p><b>Tenders and procurement need to be issued to market now</b>, however Events Team cannot predict specification requirements as no advice on type / scale of event which can be operated – situation is too fluid.</p> <p><b>License applications need to be issued to stall holders now</b> by Environmental Services (normally would take place January / February) - due to ongoing uncertainty around events this has not happened.</p> <p><b>Cost of event is likely to increase significantly</b> with reduced income likely, if there are ongoing restrictions on visitor numbers(stall holders , amusements etc) and safety measures needing significantly enhanced (PPE, cleansing, stewarding and security social distancing measures, track and trace systems etc)</p> <p><b>Risk that the event may not be the social / visitor experience</b> that Lammas Fair is synonymous with, instead it may be very restricted eg. due to social distancing and that this has a negative effect for Council</p> <p>Lammas Fair also presents a number of operational risks that Council staff cannot mitigate against at this time, therefore presenting challenges to run a safe event:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The size and scale of the Lammas Fair does lend itself to a reduced scale or ticketed event</li> <li>• Multiple entry and exit points so visitor numbers cannot be controlled</li> <li>• Multiple touch points for cleansing.</li> <li>• Social Distancing - very difficult to ensure</li> <li>• Licensing applications (Road Closures / Fireworks) take up to 3 months - some licenses are not being issued at this time due to restrictions on mass gatherings</li> <li>• Business and Resident engagement may be negatively received at this time</li> </ul>	



## ANNEX A