

Title of Report:	Council Managed Tourism Event Programme 2023/24
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 February 2023
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
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

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£527,895 to £573,895
Included in Current Year Estimates	
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Screening Requirements	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 updated proposals for a Council-led event programme for 2023/24, as a result of recommendations made by Elected Members at the Leisure and Development Committee Meeting on 17 January 2023.

Outline details of dates and budgetary requirements are provided for Elected Members consideration, in advance of budget finalisation.

2.0 Background

At the January Leisure and Development Committee Meeting, Elected Members were presented with proposals for the Council-led Tourism Event Programme for 2023-24, including consideration of a 2024 air show. After consideration it was recommended that an Options Report is brought to the February Leisure and Development Committee Meeting, that includes all tourism events listed in January, but makes specific additional reference to Halloween and Christmas events with alternative options for delivery. It was also recommended that the air show does proceed.

At the Full Council meeting on 8 February 2023, this Report was further discussed, and it was agreed to further consider at the February 2023 Leisure and Development Committee meeting.

The Council's 10-year strategic approach for the Tourism Event remit recommends that the Council need to provide a balanced approach to event development, facilitation, and delivery. With an increasing number of external event providers, the role of Council is more important than ever in terms of being supportive and allowing other event providers to develop the sector. The strategic approach recognises that Council will still be an event provider but recommends that to achieve a balance, Council delivered events should be fewer, better resourced and promoted more effectively.

In May 2021 Council approved a new Tourism Events Organisational design. Officers from Tourism and Recreation, in conjunction with HR colleagues, are working through completion of the structure. The Tourism Events Manager has been appointed and interviews/Matching are taking place in this year.

The Tourism Events team will continue to work with key stakeholders, including Elected Members to assess the viability of Council's current portfolio of tourism events and agree opportunities for adjustment, growth and the introduction of new projects that fit with current market demand, whilst reflecting the key characteristics of our area. In advance of the rates setting process, the Council's Tourism Events budget has been calculated and this report details the events that are proposed to be delivered by Council in 2023/24.

During the 2022/23 year the Council's Tourism Events team has delivered on all the scheduled event programme and continue to support and liaise with other event providers, including the administration of the Tourism Event Funding Programme.

3.0 Air show 2024

In January 2021 Council approved a Notice of Motion to develop a new International Air show for 2022 (marking the Queen's Platinum Jubilee) and explore holding the event every 2 years thereafter:

'That this Council would develop a new International Airshow for 2022 to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and explore holding the event every 2 years from 2022. We should make this a key regional event not just for the Borough but for Northern Ireland and therefore explore working in partnership with key partners like the Northern Ireland Office, Ministry of Defence, Department for the Economy, Invest NI and Tourism NI. A project Board involving elected members of no more of 6 by d'hondt should be set up to shape and develop this event along with experts and other key stakeholders'

Council is requested to consider the above motion accordingly.

For the September 2024 scheduled air show to occur, planning would need to start early in 2023, and in line with the existing model for planning and delivery, the Tourism Event team would require additional specialist resources.

This includes the procurement of the Air Display Director and the employment of a Sponsorship / STEM / Industry liaison consultant. Without these event specific specialists, the Air Show is not viable. Subject to approval, this activity has been scheduled into the Tourism Events planning process for 2023/24.

Table 1 includes a £50,000 expenditure allocation within the 2023/2024 financial year to allow for costs associated for the preparation of this event taking place in September 2024.

Annex A details the projected income and expenditure summary for the 2022 Air Show which would be the basis for budget planning in 2024.

3.1 Consideration of cost reductions for air show 2024

Officers have assessed the budgeted income and expenditure for the 2022 air show event and are unable to find savings against a 2024 event proposal.

4.0 Delivery of Council Events in 2023/24

Table 1 – Tourism Events schedule detailing summarised costs.

Events 2023	Date(s)	Budget Requirement 2023/2024
Ballymoney Spring Fair	Fri 7 th & Sat 8 th April	£24,000
NW200 Race Week Festival	Sun 7 th - Sat 13 th May TBC	£31,395
Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival	Fri 26 th May- Sun 4 th June	£41,500
Seasonal Summer Programme (Summer Theatre Programme)	Mon 10 th July - Fri 25 th August	£9,775
Summer Fireworks Evening Portstewart (Finale of Red Sails)	Sat 29 th July	£11,960
Summer Entertainment & Fireworks Evening Portrush	Sat 12 th August	£10,465
Ould Lammas Fair	Sat 26 th - Tues 29 th August	£144,000
Salmon and Whiskey Festival	Sat 7 th - Sun 8 th October or Sat 14 th – Sun 15 th October TBC	£52,800
Atlantic Sessions	Fri 17 th Nov – Sun 19 th November	£26,160
Seasonal Halloween Events x 4	Coleraine - Friday 27 th October Limavady - Saturday 28 th October Ballycastle - Monday 30 th October	£75,840

	Ballymoney - Tuesday 31st October	
Seasonal Christmas Light Switch On's	<p>Ballymoney Thursday 16th November</p> <p>Limavady Saturday 18th November</p> <p>Ballycastle Thursday 23rd November</p> <p>Coleraine Friday 24th November</p> <p>Portstewart Saturday 25th November</p> <p>Garvagh Monday 27th November</p> <p>Dungiven Wednesday 29th November</p> <p>Portrush Friday 1st December</p> <p>Kilrea Saturday 2nd December</p>	£96,000
N.I. International Air Show	September 2024	£50,000
Total Request		£573,895

The above table does not include the additional cost of the partnership with the Coleraine and District Motor Club in which Council resources the NW200 Course Build and provides dedicated office accommodation (subject to conditions).

5.0 Further Options for Christmas and Halloween

Further to the Council's recommendation on the January Leisure and Development Report, Officers have presented below options to revise the format for delivery with cost savings.

5.1 Halloween

The January report proposed, as in previous years, 4 Halloween events in Coleraine, Limavady, Ballycastle and Ballymoney at a total cost of £75,840.

An option could be introduced whereby one centralised event venue could be agreed with a higher level of investment than previously allocated to individual towns, creating a greater spectacle and still offering overall cost savings of £26,000.

Officers are currently having initial discussions with the University of Ulster Coleraine, which could potentially accommodate a large event for Coleraine with between 15,000 – 20,000 attendees. To provide a high quality event and to accommodate larger attendees, enhanced provision would be required in terms of infrastructure, entertainment displays, traffic and transport provision etc. The estimated budget for the scale of the event is £50,000 to allow a quality visitor experience.

5.2 Christmas

The January report proposed, as in previous years, 9 Christmas events in Ballymoney, Limavady, Ballycastle, Coleraine, Portstewart, Garvagh, Dungiven, Portrush and Kilrea at a total cost of £96,000.

The option to reduce from 9 to 4 towns could provide a cost saving of £30,000 initially (without adding to the quality for the 4 events remaining).

In 2022, none of the 5 smaller towns had an attendance greater than 500 attendees, with each of these events costing approx. £5,500 to deliver.

If Elected Members decide to reduce to 4 towns, Officers would recommend investing a further £10,000 into these towns to increase the quality of the events.

The reduction to 4 towns is likely to increase demand on the Council's Christmas Festive Community Fund, which is currently capped at £250 per successful applicant. Consideration may need to be given to increasing the budget for this in the 2023/24 financial year.

6.0 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 Advisory Group (SAG) consultation for events such as the Ould Lammas Fair starts 7-8 months in advance, with tender documentation and pyrotechnic licences applied for several months in advance.

Over the last number of years, the Tourism and Recreation remit continues to experience an additional burden on resources coming from external influences. Greater scrutiny around Traffic Management and Health and Safety have impacted on the resources required to deliver events.

7.0 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 Council Managed events in 2023. This includes the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS), St John Ambulance and the Council led Safety Advisory Group (SAG).

For each event, Officers will continue to look at the type of delivery which is possible based on information, advice and timings, while considering both internal and external risks.

8.0 Budgetary Position

The Leisure and Development Committee is asked to consider the budget allocation for the delivery of Council Managed events (as detailed in Table 1 at a total budget requirement of £573,895). Elected Members are asked to consider further options for making savings at Christmas and Halloween which based on the detail provided in section 5.0, will make savings of £46,000, reducing the total budget to £527,895.

9.0 The 10 Year Strategic Approach – Possible Adjustment for Council-led Events

The 10 Year Strategic Approach to the Tourism and Event remit, recommends a more balanced approach to event development, delivery and facilitation. Officers from the Tourism and Recreation Team plan to carry out assessments of events within the Council portfolio and make recommendations for future adjustments within the terms set out for a strategic approach. Elected Members will be invited to participate as part of the consultation process.

10.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee considers the following options for the delivery of Council-led tourism events:

Option 1

Recommend the approval of the proposals detailed with Table 1 of the Report.

Option 2

Recommend the delivery of proposals as detailed in Table 1, with an amendment for Halloween and / or Christmas events.