



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members of the Policy and Resources Committee:

- i.

**STRATEGIC EVENTS AND FESTIVALS FUND – ROUND 6 - 2024/25 FUND**

---

**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on Round 6 Strategic Events and Festivals Fund (SEF). The report provides details of the bids submitted, and recommendations regarding the bids being put forward to receive grant funding.
- 2.2 In recognition of the importance of the events sector to the economy of Argyll and Bute the SEF Fund was agreed to be set up by the Council and was firstly taken forward as a competitive fund in 2019/20. A critical element of the application requirement is that the event or festival be held in Argyll and Bute and be of a **strategic nature**, i.e. having the capacity to attract people from outwith the area, with a focus on national and international visitors, and generate significant economic benefits for the local community. To illustrate this, the economic impact in the area from the funded events and festivals in SEF Round 5 was circa £10m.
- 2.3 There is no doubt that Covid, and other contributing factors, have had an unprecedented negative impact on the events and festivals sector. The Council acted promptly to support the industry during this challenging period

- i. Agree to the award of eligible SEF Round 6 grants amounting to £114,700 as detailed in **Table 1**.
- ii. Agree that any SEF Round 6 grant offer only be formally issued upon confirmation from the individual event organisation that the event is formally confirmed as going ahead, any match funding is in place and the event still meets the SEF Round 6 criteria
- iii. Agree to continue delegation of powers to the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth to allow any subsequent amendment to existing grant requests to be made brought about as a consequence of changes to the event/event budget. Any amendment to a current grant request/offer would only be considered if the amendment related to either the same level or a reduction in the request and constitute up to 75% of legitimate and eligible expenditure. Similarly if there was a reduction in the final event costs that would result in delivery of a profit in excess of £10,000 (all of which has to be reinvested) to the organisation and that this was sustained over a 3 year period the final retention (10%) would not be paid on the third year of the grant.
- iv. Agree to recommend to the Council that as part of the budget in February 2023, that they agree £90,000 base funding for Strategic Events and Festivals in order that the application process can commence during 2025/26 (Round 7), and that this fund be augmented by any underspend in Round 5 (23/24).
- v. Agree and recommend to Council that any underspend from SEF Round 6 is earmarked and used to augment a future SEF round.

#### **4.0 DETAIL**

- 4.1 The overarching aim of the Strategic Events and Festivals Fund is to support event organisers to enhance and grow their events with the result that more visitors are attracted to Argyll and Bute, providing substantial economic benefit to the respective areas. It is fully appreciated that the strategic events and festivals sector is still rebuilding itself following the pandemic and some events and festivals are still facing challenging circumstances brought about as a result of his has put a strain on the financial stability of many of the organisations, however the outlook is the events industry in Argyll and Bute. The fund provides critical support in the economic recovery of the area and will hopefully allow events to continue to grow and may prevent organisations and events from ceasing to operate.
- 4.2 SEF Round 6 opened on 16 October 2023 and closed on 20 November 2023. A total of 22 applications were received with a total request of £144,800. The SEF budget available for Round 6 is £115,064 therefore the fund is oversubscribed by £29,700. It is fully recognised that all are important events, both to the applicants and the associated communities within which they take

place however not all applications can be funded. Officers performed a detailed assessment based on the information submitted and assessed eligibility, the viability of the event, how well the events fit the SEF criteria and could demonstrate a clear need for SEF funding, as well as the necessary financial and due diligence checks. As a result of this it is recommended that funding is allocated to 15 applicants as detailed in **Table 1**. It should be noted that many of the applications are good quality however a number of applications would benefit from more thought and time being taken to ensure that they are as robust as possible especially given how competitive the fund now is.

- 4.3 **Table 1** details the range of events and festivals from across the area which are programmed to take place in 2024/2025 and deliver a wide variety of event types, from sports to music, dance and film. The forecast economic impact of these events is £10.4m.
- 4.4 The loss of any event to the area is likely to have significant impact on the local economy, especially those events which are long standing. The impact of SEF Round 6 funding and future SEF round funding is fully ou

is £114,700.

5.2 Whilst the events sector is still fragile due to rising costs and skills shortages, it is hoped that it will continue to rebuild itself this year and carry on its recovery. There is no doubt that the continued support to the sector via future SEF funding will play a key part in this recovery.

5.3 It is also requested that the Policy and Resources Committee recommend to Council that as part of the February 2024 budget, a baseline budget of £90,000 be allocated to allow a SEF Round 7 (2025/26) to be held allowing there to be certainty for the events industry that there will be future funding beyond 2024/25.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Policy festivals for their positive impact on the economy and supporting the hospitality and tourism sectors.

6.2 Financial SEF R6 2024/25 budget is £115,064. Applications totalling £144,800 were received.

6.3 Legal Award letters and grant contracts will be issued as and when a decision is made and confirmation has been received that the event will go ahead.

6.4 HR Resourced from existing staff.

6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: The Fund seeks to support the economic growth of areas.

6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics None

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty The Fund seeks to support the economic growth of areas including a positive contribution to fragile areas.

6.5.3 Islands The Fund seeks to support island economies by supporting increased levels of visitors.

6.6 Climate Change As part of the application process events have to demonstrate how they are limiting their carbon footprint and this is part of the scoring process.

6.7 Risk The full effects of the impact of Covid is still having an influence on the events and festivals industry, however we have seen the beginning of a recovery although the industry is still fragile.

6.8 Customer Service None.

**Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth**

**Councillor Robin Currie, Policy Lead for Strategic Development**

22 December 2023

**For further information contact:**

## APPENDIX 1

<b>Table 1 – SEF Round 6 Grant Applications</b>	
<b>Event</b>	<b>Recommended Funding Award</b>
<b>£2,500 - £5,000 Fund</b>	
Helensburgh Christmas Lights Switch On and Festival of Light	5,000
Tiree Music Festival	5,000
Doon The Watter Revival Music Festival	5,000
Sea Change Powering Women in Film 2024	5,000
Highlands & Islands Music & Dance Festival	5,000
Jura Music Festival	5,000
Bute Noir	4,000
West Highland Yachting Week	3,600
The Sound of Gigha Weekend	3,100
Tarbert Seafood Festival	2,500
Tarbert Music Festival	2,500
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b><u>45,700</u></b>
<b>£5,001 - £15,000 Fund</b>	
Mull of Kintyre Music and Arts Festival	11,000
Tiree Wave Classic	10,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b><u>21,000</u></b>
<b>£15,001 and Over Fund</b>	
Cowal Highland Gathering	30,000
Mull Rally	18,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b><u>48,000</u></b>
<b>Total SEF Round 6 request</b>	<b><u>114,700</u></b>