

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE - 20 JANUARY 2009

SUBJECT: ANGUS & DUNDEE ROOTS FESTIVAL 2008/09

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

Abstract: This report asks the Committee to note the outcomes of the Roots Festival 2008 and agree the planned activity for 2009 – Scotland's Year of Homecoming.

1 RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee
- a) Note the outcomes of the Angus & Dundee Roots Festival 2008 in section 3 of this report.
 - b) Agree the provisional arrangements proposed (subject to consultation with partners) for the 2009 Roots Festival in para 4.5 of this report.
 - c) Note the financial support for the Roots Festival 2009 event secured via the successful ERDF application (in conjunction with VisitScotland) and a parallel successful application via Events Scotland.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Members will recall that an update of the Ancestral Tourism Initiative was approved at Infrastructure Services Committee on 14 June 2007 (Report 539/07). This Report now updates the Committee on the outcomes of the festival staged between 6-13 September 2008 and the progress in securing support through a successful application for European Regional Development Fund grant and support from Events Scotland for the 2009 Roots Festival during Scotland's 'Year of the Homecoming'.

3 OUTCOMES – ROOTS FESTIVAL (PILOT) 2008

- 3.1 The aim of staging a Scottish (pilot) 'Roots Festival' in 2008 was to gauge enthusiasm in the public sector, community groups and tourism businesses for a specialised festival focussing on attracting visitors from across the globe with ancestral connections to Angus & Dundee. The objective is to promote a 'core package' of conducted tours, activities and workshops, and to showcase the area's rich heritage and culture. This was seen as a highly ambitious project given that Angus & Dundee is not normally viewed as a 'holiday destination' instead being regarded by tourism agencies as a place for 'visiting' friends and relatives.
- 3.2 The overall aims and objectives were achieved as follows:-
- Some 36 people from North America, Canada, Australia and England bought into the package (either in full or in part) and the experience was seen by many of them as a 'once in a lifetime experience', giving the delegates access to their roots in a way that a normal visit to the area could not have given them.

Appendix 1 to this report summarises feedback from delegates on the whole week.

- The pilot demonstrated that Angus & Dundee can be a niche holiday destination for the Scottish Diaspora across the globe with connections to this area. Many of the delegates indicated that they would pass on recommendations to their friends and relatives in North America and elsewhere.
- The model of using a bonded tour operator to manage/promote the package does work – and 'Scotia Travel' has indicated a willingness to continue its involvement for 2009 in the first instance.
- Promoting the event will encourage tourists to visit the area at other times of the year.

3.3 The 2008 event was the first time such a programme has been held and a number of lessons were learned from dealing with the complexities of accommodation, transportation and age profiles of the delegates. The main areas of concern from feedback from delegates, partner organisations, volunteers (19) and venues related to:-

- Booking and travel arrangements (more clarity needed)
- Better pre-event communication with delegates
- Simplifying the complex accommodation (6 providers) and coach travel arrangements across Angus & Dundee
- An overly full festival programme plus fringe events proved too much for some of the more elderly delegates who would prefer more workshops and less travelling
- Role of volunteers and blue badge guides (more clarity needed)

3.4 The wider Ancestral Tourism Initiative (apart from the Festival Event), has achieved a great deal in raising the profile of the area, particularly through www.tayroots.com. An effort will be made to achieve even greater co-operation between the various partners (the local authorities, other public sector organisations and Tay Valley History Society) Tayroots.com is acting as the single gateway (or Portal) to everything ancestral in the wider area. There is scope to expand the geographical focus of tayroots.com into Perthshire given the synergy with Angus and Dundee. It is clear that festival visitors have ancestors all over the North East of Scotland and therefore the event will have an even wider appeal if a wider choice of experience is included.

3.5 Appendix 2 to this report gives a more detailed breakdown of the income and expenditure producing a total net cost to the Council of £1,731 (including ERDF grant).

4 ROOTS FESTIVAL 2009 (YEAR OF HOMECOMING)

- 4.1 In a strategic context Scotland's year of Homecoming will be an important initiative that hopefully, despite the growing global recession, will bring more visitors to Scotland. The current exchange rates are favourable for overseas visitors especially from the US and Canada. The Angus event is being promoted by VisitScotland as part of The Homecoming programme and in this context a number of actions are required as follows:-
- Branding local heritage type events with a 'Homecoming' theme and encouraging other organisations to do this also.
 - Putting information about Angus in relation to relevant events happening anyway on the national Homecoming web site and ensuring that our web-sites have links there.
 - Launch of Angus Burial Records on-line.
 - Angus related events to date include Tartan Day Scotland in the Year of Homecoming (April 2009) with international golf challenge; Angus Glens Walking Festival (May 2009); Angus Summer Festival events; Angus Accordion & Fiddle Festival (July 2009); Angus & Dundee Roots Festival (26th September – 5th October 2009).
- 4.2 The timescale for submission of funding support bids for the Roots Festival from 'Events Scotland' and the VisitScotland ERDF Homecoming Bid (under the ERDF Lowland & Upland Scotland Programme 2007-2013) preceded the staging of the 2008 Roots Festival. Given the importance of 'ancestral tourism' to rural areas outwith the central belt of Scotland, priority was given to pursuing these sources of funding. Also since 2009 is Scotland's Year of Homecoming, it is considered that a re-staging of the Roots Festival would be a significant Angus contribution to the Scotland wide product.
- 4.3 Expenditure in the current financial year for the pilot Roots Festival in September 2008 is included in a claim under the approved VisitScotland Homecoming bid – the only Scottish Local Authority involved with this ERDF application.
- 4.4 For 2009, the Roots Festival bid to Events Scotland was also approved (a one year programme only) and being fully financed by the Scottish Government, can be used as part of the Council's match funding for the VisitScotland ERDF Homecoming programme.
- 4.5 On this basis given the success of the pilot Roots Festival and with support funding in place for 2009, the Roots Festival 2009 has been included in the Homecoming Scotland national events programme (both hard copy brochure and website) for the time slot 26 September – 5th October 2009. This report therefore seeks the approval of the Council to commit to the staging of the 2009 Roots Festival on the basis that a provisional program is being developed in conjunction with partners.

- 4.6 Work is already being scoped out for the Roots Festival 2009 and the 'lessons learned' from this year's event are to be the subject of a workshop session in January 2009 via the Ancestral Steering Group chaired by the Marketing and Special Projects Manager. This workshop will, in addition to reviewing the future direction of the wider ancestral tourism initiative, seek to scope out the content and framework for the Roots Festival 2009 event.
- 4.7 Provisionally it is felt that a tour operator core package be repeated for the 2009 festival/core event, although in practical terms the global recession may present higher risks to the tour operator. Consideration may have to be given to the issue of underwriting the event (to some extent) by the Council/and or partners.
- 4.8 The direct costs to Angus Council for the 2009 event will relate to the following:-
- On-line and other marketing/promotional activities (e.g. advertising/leaflets)
 - External PR & Event Management Support costs
 - Attendance at consumer exhibitions to promote the Roots Festival
 - A gala event hosted by Angus Council during the Festival
- 4.9 While there is budget provision of £18k for ancestral tourism, it will not be possible at this stage to finalise the net cost of the event which is partly self financing, pending detailed discussions with partners via the Ancestral Steering Group both on content of the Festival and financial and linked in-kind contributions. However Angus Council has already secured funding support (see paras 4.2 – 4.4 above) in conjunction with two Dundee related events "Fest'n'Furious" and "Roots Literacy Day". An Events Scotland award totalling £19,000 was approved with the 'core' Roots Festival having £11,000 of the total award.
- 4.10 A further committee report will therefore be brought forward when these discussions and detailed content has been agreed with partners hopefully by February 2009.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report at this stage and a further report will firm up the financial implications utilising financial support from Events Scotland and the Visit Scotland Homecoming (ERDF programme). The budget requirement of £18,000 for 2009/10 has been allowed for in the Economic Development provisional base budget.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

8. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

- 8.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus.

- Growth in Tourism in Angus is achieved.
- Sustainable business growth is achieved.

9. CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Law & Administration and Head of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Year of Homecoming 2009 will potentially bring more visitors to Scotland. The main contribution from Angus Council (in conjunction with Dundee City Council and other partners) would be from a repeat of the 2008 Angus & Dundee Roots Festival regarded as a successful pilot.

ERIC S LOWSON
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

ECDEV/DV/SMW/FM
14 January 2009

APPENDIX 1

FEEDBACK; ANGUS & DUNDEE ROOTS FESTIVAL (6-13 SEPTEMBER 2008)

- Sat pm Opening Gala Dinner – Guthrie Castle – generally seen as an excellent evening with keynote speaker Dr Nick Barratt (“who do you think you are” – television show) – repeat in 2009 at similar historic venue.
- Sun Workshop (Webster’s) – excellent venue ‘placenames workshop’ and catering greatly enjoyed by the delegates (repeat in 2009)
- Sun Pictavia – successful event – repeat 2009 but allow more time.
- Sun pm Monikie – Byzantium – while weather was a problem – this was a good value event worth repeating in 2009.
- Mon Tracing your Ancestors – delegates would want more time for this crucial activity in 2009.
- RRS Discovery – well received but lack of a tour guide must be addressed.
- Stepps Theatre/Whaling Talk - excellent/interactive with delegates, despite mix up between RNLI and Dundee Council with venue shifted to Stepps Theatre.
- Tues Verdant Works – of particular interest to delegates whose ancestors had worked in the jute mills – excellent talk and tour.
- Graveyard Tours, Monikie and Dundee – ran like clockwork despite poor weather and very interesting to guests.
- Tues pm Gateway to Glens – despite coach delay guests spent some time in the venue.
- Traditional Music Workshop – venue and service was poor compared to others but the musicians saved the evening with good interaction from delegates – arrange an alternative venue for 2009.
- Wed Glamis Castle and Folk Museum – excellent tour, good interaction with delegates some of whom had ancestors that had worked on the estate – also spent significant time in the museum, which was greatly enjoyed – essential to repeat for 2009.
- Wed pm Civic Reception – Dundee City Council hosted by both Provosts – enjoyed by participants with good buffet - will be repeated.
- Thurs Free day for delegates
- Thurs pm Film Night at Stepps Theatre – oversubscribed but almost 200 attended being free/open to public, Lack of film archive footage of Angus. 10% sample survey showed 75% were very positive and all would attend again in 2009. Favourite films were Ploughman, Ministry of Food and Dundee Playhouse – all archive footage. Need to rethink registration process because some did not get tickets

despite there being a few spare seats.

Fri Arbroath – Trip to Bell Rock – smaller group turned out and although they felt queasy – they enjoyed it very much.

Signal Tower – not guided but delegates enjoyed a leisurely pace.

Abbey – Pageant Society pulled out the stops – characters in costume posed for photos with delegates – good experience for them. This was very much enjoyed.

Fri pm Farewell Ceilidh Unicorn – nice venue and Ronnie Cockburn show well received by many of the delegates. Dundee College catering was excellent/good value for money.

This and other detailed feedback will be reviewed by the Steering Group in finalising the programme for 2009 event. The Steering Group comprises officers from Angus Council, Dundee City Council and Tay Valley Family History Society.

Roots Festival (pilot) 2008

Outturn Income & Expenditure

Total Expenditure	£ 21,086
Income (from sponsorship/other income)	8,424
Balance (being eligible expenditure for ERDF grant claim)	12,662
Less	
ERDF Grant @35%	4,431
Net Cost	8,231
Less	
DCC contribution to Ancestral Tourism Initiative*	6,500
TOTAL NET COST TO ANGUS COUNCIL	1,731

* note: this contribution by Dundee City Council to the overall Ancestral Tourism Initiative was set against the Roots Festival to offset the additional costs of external PR support before and during the festival.