

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REPORT

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| To: LEARNING AND LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE | Subject: VENUE PROGRAMMING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – UPDATE AND FUTURE PROPOSALS |
| From: HEAD OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND LEARNING | |
| Date: 20 November 2007 | Ref: LMCM/JF/LC |

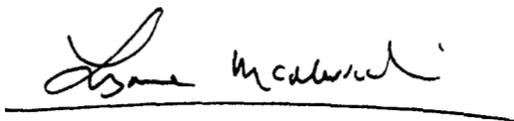
INTRODUCTION

This report firstly updates committee on the progress made to date in terms of the implementation of the venue programming strategy and action plan and secondly seeks approval for further changes required to the strategic approach to the programming of venues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the learning and leisure services committee:

- (i) approve the ongoing development of the venue programming strategy action plan and endorse proposed new events
- (ii) refer this report to the local area partnerships for consideration



Members wishing further information should contact

Lizanne McMurrich, Head of Community Information and Learning on 0141 304 1820
Jillian Ferrie, Creative Services Manager on 0141 304 1957

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL – LEARNING AND LEISURE SERVICES
VENUE PROGRAMMING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – UPDATE AND FUTURE PROPOSALS

Report by Head of Community Information and Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

This report firstly updates committee on the progress made to date in terms of the implementation of the venue programming strategy and action plan and secondly seeks approval for further changes required to the strategy approach to the programming of venues.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 North Lanarkshire Council's Creative Services section manages Motherwell Concert Hall and Theatre, Sir John Wilson Town Hall in Airdrie and Bellshill Cultural Centre, whilst also managing the Community Arts team who utilise each of the venues. Each venue is unique with it's own history and reputation. Work to improve the building's structure and fabric is proposed as part of the council's capital investment plan. Correspondingly, improvements to the successful entertainment programme within each facility must also be prioritised.
- 2.2 The commitment to deliver a strategic programming policy for the venues was established in 2004 and an action plan produced. At that time it was recognised that to deliver an appropriate standard of service within the budget available, a more formal approach to the programming of each venue was required.
- 2.3 The current programme is made up of a variety of events covering drama, music from different eras including up-and-coming local bands and a host of different musical styles, tribute bands, opera, ballet, dance, children's and family entertainment and amateur dramatic groups.
- 2.4 Between 2004 and 2006 the number of events programmed has increased by 27% and attendance at these events has increased by 33%.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Progress Made on Implementation of Action Plan

In 2004 we identified that tribute bands and star names from previous decades were taking up too much of the programme. We reviewed the frequency of repeat bookings and as a general rule we now allow a minimum of 24 months to elapse before an act is rebooked. The National Companies – National Theatre, Scottish Ballet, Scottish Opera, RSNO, Scottish Chamber Orchestra – have been encouraged to utilise the venues with Scottish Opera already programmed for 2008 and discussions ongoing with the National Theatre.

- 3.2 Popular music has developed with both The Proclaimers and Ian Brown featuring in our current programme. A consortium of mid-sized venues should be further progressed and approaches made to experienced promoters to secure popular, current bands for the circuit.
- 3.3 The North Lanarkshire Comedy Knock Knock event has now become established at Motherwell Theatre and we are committed to growing and further developing this type of activity.

- 3.4 The relationship with the numerous talented amateur companies has strengthened with NODA (the amateur companies governing body) complimenting the venues team on changes made with regard to both Child Protection and stewarding whilst welcoming proposed redevelopment of our buildings.

A full list of the actions identified together with progress to date against each action is outlined in table 1 below.

Table 1

| ACTION PLAN | COMMENT |
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| Encourage more Community Arts use of venues | Performing arts groups annual shows held in venues |
| Implement 'Go and See' policy | Identify budget 2008/09 |
| Develop Tea Dance programme | Established dances in Airdrie and Cumbernauld |
| Further develop partnership with Motherwell College | Pantomime and regular shows now held in venues |
| Research funding opportunities | Funding sources identified for venue development |
| Monitor family and children's events | Evaluation system in place for each event |
| Develop comedy programme | Further development of comedy nights required |
| Progress refurbishment and maintenance programme in all venues | Funding applications to be submitted; capital funding identified |
| Implement marketing review and develop specific audience development campaigns | Review planned to commence in April 2008 concluding in August 2008 |
| Introduce new web site | Discussions ongoing with IT regarding isolating our activities/information on web site |
| Develop music festival concept | Committee approved sought |
| Implement Musical Theatre groups | Auditions January 2008 |
| Develop partnership with Airdrie Arts Guild, Programming Group and Tea Dance Group | Support forthcoming from these groups; partnerships will develop in line with funding applications for venue refurbishment |
| Develop music venues consortium | with promoters |
| Develop and improve relationship with NODA and amateur companies | Positive feedback received from all parties involved |
| Implement staff training programme | Regular Front of House caretaker training carried out |
| Develop relationships with national companies | Need to further develop, e.g. National Theatre |
| Create tribute season | Regular programme in place |
| Develop summer schools programme | Established in 2006 |
| Produce list of promoters to target | Conclusion in January 2008 |
| Develop corporate business | Increased day time promotion of venues required |
| Develop family/children's entertainment programme | Investigate dedicated season of activity |

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| Implement programme of shared events e.g. Halloween party, St Patrick's Night party, Valentine's party | To be developed |
| Develop schools programme | Joint working group from Learning & Leisure now established |
| Implement programme of research for venues programming | Regular research work undertaken at events |
| Hold public meeting in Airdrie | Need to inform public of any plans to redevelop venue |
| Implement art form quotes (minimum of one dance, drama and opera event per season) | To be further developed |
| Implement annual orchestral concert | Scottish Chamber Orchestra programmed for 2008 |
| Develop daytime events programme and increase number of performances | Develop programmes for children and older audience |
| Develop relationship with TV companies | Proactive throughout 2008 |
| Develop relationship with drama producers | Proactive throughout 2008 |

3.5 Further Proposals and New Events

3.5.1 Whilst continuing to work in accordance with the action plan there are a number of new initiatives and proposals being developed. The venue income target has been increased substantially in this current financial year and every opportunity should be taken to utilise the venues appropriately, generate income and continue to provide a high profile, professional service to the public. The following developments are proposed:

- Music Festival – an opportunity to stage a long weekend music festival has been presented and can be developed within Motherwell Concert Hall and Theatre. The infrastructure of the new festival could lend itself to incorporate a beer festival type of event and it is proposed to move the current October Beer Festival to August for incorporation within the Music Festival. Working with a third party promoter, the festival would showcase new and established local and international music talent over a 3-day weekend, taking place just a few weeks after T in the Park. A commercial sponsor would be sourced to deliver the event and the festival content would evolve to mirror current music trends. The current structure of the Beer Festival event is over complex, expensive and ill timed. Events such as a Beer Festival should be staged outwith busy periods in the venue's diary in an attempt to maximise commercial gain from other events.
- Consideration should be given to extending events such as the St Andrew's Day Concert (currently only held in Cumbernauld) and relocating them to Motherwell Concert Hall. Involving in excess of 700 people, a bigger, better, more inclusive concert could be staged and by providing transport across the authority we can develop a programme for older people whilst fully utilising the venue and engaging a new audience for mainly daytime events.
- With the proposed redevelopment of Sir John Wilson Town Hall, Airdrie, we hope to engage and involve as many of the local people as possible and it is our intention to

establish a Town Hall programming and development group (including representation from Airdrie Arts Guild) whom we will consult on future programming within the venue and encourage to make funding applications to sources from which NLC as a local authority cannot apply. By involving the public we hope to regain the profile and public ownership the Town Hall had previously and to implement a specific entertainment programme for the venue. Initial contact has been made with Airdrie Arts Guild and Airdrie and Coatbridge Operatic Society, both of whom have expressed interest in the proposal. Other organisations including North Lanarkshire Arts Association, Coatbridge College Performing Arts department and Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser should be approached. A public meeting should be held if refurbishment proposals are accepted, plans should be made public and interested individuals can be invited to join the group.

- We will continue to develop our relationships with producers and promoters whilst also engaging with the public across the authority area in order to develop new audiences along with new product. Further audience development campaigns should be instigated with lapsed audiences and large local employers initially being consulted.
- Ongoing consultation on programme content will continue with both staff and members of the public through evaluation of customer comments at events, research and focus groups.
- A campaign to develop corporate business including exhibitions, fairs, conventions and conferences will be established to fill current quieter periods.
- The success of recent high quality tribute bands e.g. The Complete Stone Roses, will be consolidated into a season of events in March, April and May each year.
- Ongoing evaluation of the programme will be undertaken, although the very nature of an artistic programme makes basic evaluation complex and can be highly subjective, depending on an individual's point of view. It is imperative that the success of the Programming Strategy is gauged through both quantitative and qualitative analysis.
- Evaluation should be undertaken on the successful implementation of event 'quotas' e.g. 6 tribute acts per year with no repeats within 24 months; increased usage at all venues; delivery of the programme within budget; achievement of income targets; increased number of events during holiday periods; increased percentage of higher sales to NL employees; increased Community Arts usage of all venues and maintain and improve levels of customer satisfaction.

4. CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

There are no financial or human resources implications in respect of this report.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is recommended that the learning and leisure services committee:

- (i) approve the ongoing development of the venue programming strategy action plan and endorse proposed new events
- (ii) refer this report to the local area partnership for consideration