

Title of Report:	Impact of Covid- 19 on the delivery of Council's Halloween Events Programme
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	18th August 2020
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Promote our tourist offer 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	£10,000
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES within 2020/21 budget
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	TBC	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	TBC	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	TBC	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	TBC	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	n/a	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	n/a	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to outline delivery options for Council's Halloween Events Programme.

2.0 Background

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has within its Tourism and Recreation remit a policy to deliver quality events across the area, inspiring visitors to stay and spend within the economy.

During the week commencing 23 March 2020, the Events Team cancelled all Council managed events scheduled to take place between April and June 2020. This was a direct result of Public Health Agency (PHA) guidance in relation to Covid - 19, and in particular as a result of a government ban on events and 'mass gatherings'. The events affected were Ballymoney Spring Fair, Easter Seasonal Programme, Rhythm of the Bann, NW200 Race Week Festival, Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival and Salmon and Whiskey Festival.

At the May Leisure and Development meeting, the decision was taken to further cancel all Tourism and Recreation Events due to take place between June and September (namely Seasonal Summer Street Theatre Programme, Summer Fireworks Evening (Finale of Red Sails) Portstewart Summer Entertainment and Fireworks Evening Portrush and the Auld Lammass Fair).

Table 1 below details the Council managed events programme for 2020/21 and shows those that have been cancelled as a result of COVID19.

Table 1:

Events 2020	Date
The following events were cancelled	
Ballymoney Spring Fair	Friday 10 th - Saturday 11 th April
Easter Seasonal Programme	Saturday 11 th - Monday 13 th April
Rhythm of the Bann	Friday 8 th – Saturday 9 th May
NW200 Race Week Festival	Sunday 10 th - Saturday 16 th May
Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival	Friday 22 nd May - Sunday 31 st May
Salmon and Whiskey Festival	Saturday 13 th - Sunday 14 th June
Seasonal Summer Programme (Summer Theatre Programme)	Monday 6 th July - Friday 21 st August
Summer Fireworks Evening (Finale of Red Sails) Portstewart	Saturday 25 th July
Summer Entertainment and Fireworks Evening Portrush	Saturday 15 th August
Ould Lammass Fair	Saturday 22 nd - Tuesday 25 th August

The following events remain scheduled	
Seasonal Halloween Events x 4	Wednesday 28 th - Saturday 31 st October
Atlantic Sessions	Thursday 12 th - Sunday 15 th November
Seasonal Christmas Light Switch On's (to include Festive Fund)	Thursday 19 th November – Saturday 5 th December

3.0 Latest Government Advice/Guidance

The legislation on permitted activities has seen a significant degree of alteration in recent weeks. This legislation and related advice has been fluid and at the time of writing a further relaxation on the numbers of people permitted for indoor and outdoor gatherings has changed.

The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) was updated on Friday 24th July by the NI Executive. The legislation states that *'the 30 limit for both indoor and outdoor gathering does not apply where 'a gathering which is organised or operated for cultural, entertainment, recreational, outdoor sports, social, community, educational, work, legal, religious or political purposes and which fulfils the conditions in paragraph (4). The focus is very much on the event organiser carrying out the relevant risk assessment processes, taking into account venue capacity and also complying with departmental guidance.'*

In respect of this 'departmental guidance' as detailed above, Council is, as of 29 July awaiting receipt of this, with no timeframe detailed by the Department for dissemination as yet.

Furthermore, Departmental guidance in respect of events currently states that 'singing, music and dancing are not advised. The scientific understanding continues to develop and further guidance will be issued when possible.'

Council Officers are keen to plan for the autumn scheduled events in a manner which reduces the potential impact from large gatherings whilst COVID 19 presents a threat to the community. Halloween traditionally attracts large crowds and in the absence of Departmental advice Officers believe a cautious approach is prudent.

4.0 Approach for Delivery

The Tourism Events Team have been investigating a fresh approach for the delivery of Halloween festivities that fits with the Destination Management approach of encouraging bed nights and visitor spend whilst accounting for the potential restriction on large gatherings of people at cultural/tourism festivals and events. In previous years Halloween attracted crowds varying between 3,500 – 10,000 visitors.

As of late July, Government guidance states that *'the 30 limit for both indoor and outdoor gathering does not apply where a gathering which is organised or operated for cultural, entertainment, recreational, outdoor sports, social, community, educational, work, legal, religious or political purposes'*.

However, the focus is very much on the event organiser carrying out the relevant risk assessment processes, taking into account venue capacity and also complying with departmental guidance'. Council currently awaits the issue of this guidance to assist the health and safety planning and risk assessment of all events moving forward.

Under normal circumstances, the lead-in time for the delivery of Halloween events is between 8-12 weeks for event programming, health and safety planning, public and statutory consultation. When Departmental guidance is issued in respect of entertainment events, Council Officers will require additional planning time to make the necessary changes to event planning and delivery processes to ensure compliance with the legislation.

Events planned beyond October 2020 (namely Christmas Light Switch On's and Atlantic Sessions) will be subject to ongoing review and a further report for Christmas will be brought to Members for decision in the coming months. Atlantic Sessions is currently being planned to take place within the scheduled venues (adhering to guidelines, advice and legislation) and additional pre-event activity will allow for a virtual roll-out via social media and other channels to ensure a successful festival weekend.

5.0 Halloween Delivery Options

Elected Members are asked to consider the following options with regards to Halloween festivities:

Option 1: Cancel delivery of Council managed Halloween festivities.

This option will mitigate for ongoing and potential future Government guidelines and restrictions. It will also represent a saving in the Tourism and Recreation budget. It does not however assist with the Council's efforts to support the local tourism and hospitality sectors by the promotion and delivery of events and hence assist the local economy.

Option 2: Deliver revised format for Halloween focusing on a wider cultural and living history approach across a range of activities

This proposal would entail running a ten day programme of Halloween events in a restricted venue and virtual form. Proposals include the following:

- Halloween 'storytelling sessions' with a 'Myths and Cultural' flavour from within the Borough.
- Halloween theme evening/town/village walking tours.
- Packaged 'Who Done It' in conjunction with hotel and self-catering trade.
- Halloween themed food trails.
- Virtual tour of the 10 'most haunted locations'.
- School and community involvement with arts and crafts.

This approach will allow the Council to reinstate its event programme with a view to supporting our visitor economy into the autumn/winter period. This will compliment Council's marketing initiatives to promote the area as a short break destination to key segments in the Northern Irish and Republic of Ireland markets.

Council will be able to maintain the reputation for delivery of Halloween events in the Borough, albeit in a varied form for 2020. This proposal will also allow residents within the Borough to benefit from a Halloween event schedule that shares local stories from the past and the joint heritage of the Council area. This approach also allows Officers to test the viability of a changing approach around traditional mass gathering events for future years.

(Further information on the suggested schedule of activities will be presented at the Committee meeting).

6.0 Recommendation

Elected Members are asked to give consideration to the options presented within the body of the report:

- Option 1: That for 2020 the Council Halloween celebrations are cancelled.
- Option 2: Deliver a revised format for Halloween focusing on a wider cultural and living history approach across a range of activities.