



Title of Report:	Tourism Event Recovery Fund
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	15th December 2020
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Accelerating Our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity
Outcome	Development of visitor economy.
Lead Officer	Head of Tourism and Recreation Tourism Events

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Maximum budget allocation £400k.
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
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 outline a proposed approach for supporting the Borough's established event organisers who have received funding from the Tourism Events Funding Programme (TEFP) in the last two financial years.

2.0 Background

The Council's Tourism and Recreation service, in conjunction with the Funding Unit, administer a Council financed funding programme to provide financial assistance to events taking place throughout the Borough. The fund targets tourism and recreation event organisers under two separate packages, the Large Events Fund and the Tourism Events Growth Fund.

3.0 The Impact of COVID 19 on the Tourism Event Funding Programme

Following Government direction, much of the event programme in Causeway Coast and Glens has been curtailed during 2020. All of the events organised and funded by the TEF have been cancelled and the Council has cancelled all of its own managed events, with the exception of the delivery by virtual form of Halloween, Atlantic Sessions and Christmas festivities.

Consultation with the event organisers, who normally benefit from TEF, has highlighted many concerns regarding the future sustainability and survival of the events from 2021 onwards. There is a recognition that for many a resumption of the 2019 approach for delivery may not be possible for 2021. There has also been consultation on the difficulty to deliver the outputs set out as part of the funding programme with regard to visitor numbers, overnight stays, economic return and target markets.

Many of the event organisers are concerned about financial sustainability particularly those who rely on several funding sources including sponsorship from the commercial sector. Sponsorship is likely to be significantly reduced, as well as other income streams such as ticketing, retail and corporate & hospitality expenditure.

In recognition of the potential damage to the range of events, delivered across the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area through the TEF, Officers have developed an alternative approach to delivery for 2021-22. This takes an adaptive and more flexible approach to the programme delivery for the incoming year and make allowances for the difficulties that event organisers have and are likely to experience.

Key features include:

- A non-competitive approach to the application process.
- A reduction in the economic outputs required at assessment.
- Definition of core costs widened.
- Application restricted to successful applicants within the past two years.
- An increase in percentage funding on total project costs.
- A single application process for both the previous Growth Fund and Large Events Fund applicants.

4.0 Government Guidance / Restrictions

COVID 19 related regulations, guidance and restrictions have been subject to many changes since March 2020.

A condition of funding through a Tourism Event Recovery Fund will be that Government regulations and special restrictions may apply. There is a reasonable expectation that such restrictions could impact and potentially cancel any event taking place in 2021/22.

To date Government has given guidance that relates to indoor and outdoor gatherings that are organised or operated for cultural, entertainment, recreational, outdoor sports, social, community, educational, work, legal, religious or political purposes. It has stipulated that the event or gathering must have a **recognised person** responsible for organising or operating that event or gathering (i.e. the applicant to the funding programme). The recognised person or organiser/applicant are responsible for carrying out risk assessments which meet the requirement of the Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000, and take all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the Coronavirus. The Government has yet to issue information or guidance on how event organisers can meet the above requirements where it relates to events or mass gatherings.

The assessment process on any event planning to take place next year would normally include a section on health and safety that would detail risk assessments etc. At this time Council Officers have no Government guidance on how to assess whether or not an event organiser meets the requirement of the Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000 and take all reasonable measures to limit the transmission of the Coronavirus. This issue needs to be addressed prior to approval of funding for any events taking place in 2021/22.

5.0 Consultation

The Tourism Events Team has met with the previous successful applicants from the last two years of the TEF. They have recorded details of scenario planning for 2021/22 and assessed the viability of running an event and the resources needed. This was a useful exercise and has helped to form the design of the recovery fund.

After analysis of the consultation, Officers believe that there are two key scenarios that are likely to take place in 2021/22:

- Events planned to be delivered either in full or with reduced programming.
- Events postponed for 2021/22 and plans made for the following year 2022/23.

With both these scenarios there is likely to be associated costs. With events not happening in 2021/22, organisers will still have core fixed costs. These may include communications, administration, insurance, equipment, costs of premises and consultancy costs that relate to health and safety in a COVID 19 environment. With events that are taking place in a full or reduced form, the above costs apply, with additional programming costs as well.

The enduring COVID 19 pandemic has meant that many event organisers remain uncertain as to what they are able to deliver in 2021/22.

6.0 Tourism Event Recovery Fund

6.1 Overview of Fund

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is committed to supporting existing event organisers who in the past two years have benefited from TEF funding and have been significantly impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic.

The purpose of the programme is to support successful TEF applicants to assist with core running costs for those event organisers who wish to 'moth ball' their event for one year, or to assist organisers who wish to run their event in full or in a reduced format in 2021/22.

Only event organisers previously funded through TEF in the last two financial years (2019/20 and/or 2020/21) can apply. The Tourism Event Recovery Fund is for one year only (2021/22) after which it is anticipated that the TEF will be reinstated as per its previous format.

6.2 Funding Parameters

The lower event budget range set out in the previous Tourism Events Growth Fund and the Large Tourism and Recreation Events Fund no longer applies (this allows for small levels of expenditure to take place if appropriate). The maximum grant award is £100,000.

6.3 Visitor Numbers

The need to demonstrate that the event attracts visitor numbers has been removed (previously the Growth and Large Funds required 1000 and 5000 visitors respectively).

6.4 Number of Days

Applicants must demonstrate that the event still takes place over a minimum of 2 days although these are no longer required to be consecutive.

6.5 Economic Benefit

No requirement to demonstrate return on investment. (In previous years a 5:1 return for the Large Tourism Event Fund and 3:1 return for the Growth Fund on Council funding was expected).

7.0 Levels of Award

Up to 75% of total project costs can be offered (previous levels were up to 50%).

8.0 Marketing and Communication

Events will be expected to ensure that any marketing or communications showcase the Causeway Coast and Glens as a destination for visitors. This applies to the domestic market only.

9.0 What Can Be Funded

Eligible costs include:

- Insurance.
- Programming Costs including virtual.
- Venue Hire.
- Performance/Artist Fees.
- Transport.
- Equipment Hire/Purchase.
- Consultancy Costs (that relate to health and safety planning in respect to COVID19).
- Advertising/Communications.
- Premises/Rent.
- PPE and social distancing equipment.
- Administration (stationery, postage etc).
- Utilities.

Officers do not recommend staff costs being deemed as eligible under this fund. (To date and up until March 2021 the Government Furlough scheme has provided financial assistance for salaries and wages).

10.0 Application Process

Each of the 15 successful applicants from the last two years will be given an application pack with guidance notes. They will be asked to attend a mandatory workshop with Council Officers to determine whether or not their event is likely to take place in some form during

2021/22 or whether it requires to be 'moth balled' for this period. A decision will be required prior to the end of January 2021 and arising out of this organisers will be given choice to either complete:

- Option 1 – Application to seek financial assistance to cover core costs for an event that will not run.
- Option 2 – Application to seek financial assistance to cover eligible costs for events that can run either in full or in a reduced format.

The application process will then be a single stage with a reduced number of questions from previous years.

- Option 1 Applicants will be asked for information on financial sustainability for 2021/22 and plans for 2022/23.
- Option 2 – Applicants will be asked for information on event management plans and financial sustainability for 2021/22.

Application Questions (Option 1) for events that will not run in 2021/22:

Applicants will be asked to respond to questions on the following:

- Event Position for 2021 / 2022 including reason(s) for cancellation decision.
- Event Budgetary position (sponsorship / funding etc).
- Details of request for Council support - Breakdown of Core Fixed Costs.
- Details of how Council funding on fixed core costs will assist with event sustainability and skills retention within the organisation for 2021 / 2022.
- Details of how Council funding for 2021 / 2022 will assist with planning for event delivery for 2022 (eg. Early Development of Marketing Campaign, Event Development).

Application Questions (Option 2) for events that will take place in 2021/22:

Applicants will be asked to respond to questions on the following:

- Event Position for 2021 / 2022 including reasons (s) for wishing to proceed.
- Event Budgetary position (sponsorship / funding etc).
- Outline Proposal of the various event delivery options (scenario planning) including costs and grant request associated with each (in line with Covid-19 restrictions).
- Details of how Council funding will assist with event delivery, sustainability and skills retention within the organisation for 2021 / 2022.
- Details of how the event would support local artists and suppliers in their Covid-19 recovery.
- Details of how the event will promote a quality visitor experience and be promoted to the domestic market.
- Details of how Council funding for 2021 / 2022 will assist with planning for event delivery for 2022.

The proposal for the Tourism Event Recovery Fund reduces the parameters and outputs required from the previous years' Tourism Event Funding Programme, reducing the time and information requirements on applicants. It provides an accessible and straightforward way of benefiting from financial assistance and advice from Council to sustain events that may take place in 2021/22 or be deferred 2022/23.

11.0 Summary

Council understands that our much valued external event organisers need support in order to recover from and develop post Covid 19 Pandemic.

Consequently and subject to Council agreement:

- The established events in the Borough will be financially supported in 2021 whether the events proceeds or not (subject to cost verification).
- Eligible costs are no longer restricted to the cost of the event, but are widened to include the costs associated with the organisation.
- Up to 75% of total project costs can be offered (previous levels were up to 50%).
- The process is non-competitive.
- The maximum grant award is £100,000.

In order to budget for the increased grant awards for the 2021/22 financial period, the necessity for a £400k 'pot' is required.

Based upon the extraordinary circumstances created by Covid 19 pandemic, it is not possible to create a 3 year arrangement whilst the uncertainty associated with the mass gathering of people prevails.

12.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee approves the proposals detailed in this report which allows for the replacement of the Tourism Event Funding Programme (TEFP) for one year only, with a Tourism Event Recovery Fund.