

Report to Dumfries & Galloway LEADER Programme

Project Title: Festival Programme Planning and Development Post

Project reference: DG8; Applicant reference: 2

Introduction.

This report covers the two years of this project ending on 31 December 2010. The LEADER programme offered 50% of the total estimated cost of the Festival Planning and Development post and the Festival was able to secure substantial match funding from the Hollywood Trust, with the balance coming from the Festival's own resources

A job description was agreed with the LEADER programme and targets were set for the development of the Festival in a number of key areas. Additionally, the Hollywood Trust agreed a similar range of targets which were defined in the Project proposal submitted by the Festival to the Trust in the autumn of 2008.

1. How was the idea for the project developed?

In 2008 the Festival Board began to recognize that there was a lack of capacity and scarce financial resources for the future development of the Festival and decided to seek support in recruiting a Programme Planning and Development Officer. (PPDO)

2. Who was involved in the project? Individuals and Organisations.

The Festival Trustees approached the D & G LEADER programme to explore the possibility of co-operating. The Local Authority Arts Advisory Team gave guidance and talks were held at an early stage with the Hollywood Trust seeking match funding.

The project, when agreed, was supervised and delivered by the Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival Board, by our two members of staff and by working alongside our partners and volunteers.

3. What were the aim and objectives of the project?

Aim.

- To appoint an individual who would plan the Festival programme each year against agreed targets and put forward ideas for the innovative future development of the Festival.

Objectives.

- To develop the Festival's audience base, particularly focusing on young people and other specific minority groups.
- Identify and work with the local rural communities wishing to host events in village halls etc.
- Grow the Festival's national and international network of artists and performers
- Contact other Festivals nationally and internationally and seek ways to cooperate and exchange events.
- Develop an effective marketing and publicity strategy.

4. How was the funding package assembled?

It was agreed that the project should create a p/t post for two days per week costing approx £20,000 in total. The LEADER fund agreed to cover 50% of the costs. The Holywood Trust gave £2,000 per annum and the Festival Trustees agreed to contribute up to £3,000 per annum from its small reserves.

5. How much money did LEADER provide?

Over the two years of the project LEADER contributed £8,562.13.

6. When did the project take place?

After approval by LEADER in October 2008, the Festival advertised for a suitable person. Interviews were held in January 2009 and the post holder Mr. Peter Renwick (PR) was selected. He started work on 11th February 2009. The project ended on 31 December 2010.

7. What actually happened?

Once PR was in post he was briefed as to the position with the 2009 Festival which ran from 22nd - 30th May 2009. Since the programme for that year was already finalised he concentrated on rationalising and developing the press and publicity for the events and the development of an updated website. He also began to make contacts with rural communities where events would be held; began to build a relationship with the other partner arts organisations with whom the Festival works and started to identify the potential partners for the development of young audiences, special needs and special interest groups identified in our core objectives.

Project achievements

- Increased number of small villages who, by helping to host events, are improving community spirit and civic pride. From 2008-2010 there was a 27% increase in the number of events held in rural areas outside Dumfries.
- The quality of music and drama events which are being programmed in communities which have hitherto had to travel out to events.
- Outcomes include programming 48 events in rural towns and villages, going to 10 village halls, 5 rural theatres, town halls, visitor centres, an independent café and a famous local garden.

The 2010 Festival programme was the first full Programme managed and developed by the PPDO. It was generally accepted that the Children's programme was one of the strongest for some time with events happening in Beeswing, Summerhill, New Galloway and Shawhead. (See 2010 Programme.)

The programme included:

- The Frog Princess. A Puppet Lab production

- Circomodo Workshops - An exciting opportunity to learn tricks like juggling. Workshops were designed for all abilities and were suitable for anyone age 5+
- James Campbell's Comedy4 Kids
- Small Worlds Mimika Theatre. Visual theatre fusing computer generated animation and digital projection with miniature landscapes, puppets and soundtrack.
- The 2010 Film programme was designed in conjunction with the D & G Multicultural Association and is an example of a new collaboration with minority groups. In addition significant numbers of children and young people from outside Dumfries benefited from the Workshops created for the Big Man Walking visit.
- The 2010 Festival had a strong group of national and international artists including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra with Nicola Benedetti, the Parma Brass plus three Italian Tenors in 'Italy comes to Dumfries'; Australian Fraser Hooper in Funny Business; Lucy Porter in Fool's Gold; Brute Farce in Around the World in Eighty Days.; Happy Jack by John Godber; and an Evening with James Kelman.

During the autumn of 2010, plans were developed for the 2011 event with a full programme for children when it is planned to visit more new rural venues including Cream o' Galloway, Gatehouse of Fleet, and Mersehead.

Building on our efforts to attract teenage audiences Ignite - a street dance project specifically for boys and young men has been booked. This project has attracted significant grant funding. It offers tailored workshops to one of our hardest to reach groups. The company will be resident in the region for five days and will visit Kirkcudbright, Castle Douglas, New Galloway, Annan and Gretna.

8. How was the project delivered?

The project was managed, supervised and monitored by the Trustees. PR worked closely with the Festival Programme Planning Group whose responsibility it is to gather and co-ordinate the events for each annual programme.

He also worked closely with DGArts to build contacts and partnerships for the expansion of arts events round the area.

9. What marketing was undertaken?

The 2010 event had an extended publicity budget and included substantial coverage on both local and national TV and radio news. 10,000 brochures were distributed around the region, across Scotland and the North of England. Poster and leaflet advertising was strengthened in local towns and villages where events were taking place.

The Arts Festival has successfully persuaded the various arts initiatives within the region to cooperate more effectively on publicity thro exchange of advertising and joint working on events including Spring Fling, Catstrand, DGOne and the Buccleuch Centre, Langholm.

The Festival has invested significant funds in the development of a new website successfully launched last February in time for the 2010 Festival. This has been welcomed with much positive comment and will be a major tool in further increasing our coverage, (See dgartsfestival.org.uk)

10. Who benefited from the project?

The communities into which the Festival has taken quality events such as drama and music have built local self esteem and community confidence and developed a willingness to explore and sample new genres.

In difficult times, when travel costs are soaring, the fact that our audiences did not have to travel outwith the community has given significant environmental and social benefits.

The special interest groups targeted included the multi ethnic community, special needs groups and young people in deprived areas all of whom have benefited by the recognition that they are equally valued in the programming of the Arts Festival.

The Festival benefited in reputational terms as it was seen by funders and partners to be committed to developing and encouraging new audiences.

The region has benefited as a tourist destination where a quality programme of arts events is available for visitors over one of the busiest holiday weeks in the year.

Local businesses and traders have benefited from increased footfall.

11. How did the final budget turn out?

The total spend over the two years, £17,124.21 was less than the amount originally offered by LEADER £19,488.

12. What lessons have been learnt?

- The impact of the LEADER funded Festival Development Post has had a major effect on the work of the Festival, strengthening our links with local communities, internationalizing the programme, improving publicity and marketing and focusing more effectively on new audiences.
- Through our careful monitoring, lessons have been learned about the most effective ways to engage with communities and developing new methods of partnership; how best to get value for money in our publicity and marketing; the critical importance of good co-operation and partnership with the stakeholders in the arts in the SW.
- It is clear from the experience gained that there is a limitless opportunity to develop individual partnerships with the small communities of D and G. Each requires a tailored approach since no two are the same. The Festival will seek to find further new ways of partnering community councils, hall committees and small businesses to further arts provision.
- Through the delivery of the Festival's aims and objectives, the region's reputation as a quality destination can be further developed.
- In a very rural area with very limited resources to apply to the arts, partnership between the key players is absolutely vital to our capacity to continue and grow quality arts provision.

13. Will the project be mainstreamed or transferred?

It is intended that the Festival should continue to grow its partnerships with small communities and businesses, finding further new ways of working.

14. Detail the sustainability of the project and/or exit strategy.

In a very sparsely populated community, distant from main centres of arts activity, the Festival is reliant on continued support from the local authority, from Creative Scotland, from commercial business sponsorship and from our subscribers. The Festival depends on that support for its sustainability.

Efforts are ongoing to expand our audience base, attract new business sponsorship and grow our subscriber income. Our Exit strategy is simple. We will continue to programme the Festival tailored to our reserves and annual income.

15. Detail how the project has addressed the LEADER issues selected in the application.

The LEADER issue under which the application was made was: **Strengthen community spirit and civic pride.**

By working with small rural communities the Festival has encouraged pride and ownership of events in village halls, schools, and business premises .

It has also encouraged those communities to take courage and sample the different genres, e.g. touring drama, and has boosted the village economies by bringing in audiences for events.

Dame Barbara Kelly,
Chairman, Dumfries & Galloway Arts Festival