

Report to Dumfries & Galloway Leader Programme
Project Title: Festival Programme Planning and Development Post
Project reference: DG8; Applicant reference: 2

This report covers the first period of this project ending on 31 December 2009. The Leader programme offered 50% of the total estimated cost of the 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 full recruitment process was undertaken in late 2008 and Peter Renwick (PR) was appointed to the job in February 2009.

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.

Performance against targets.

1. Develop the Festival's audience base, particularly focusing on young people and other specific minority groups.

The 2009 Festival programme was well advanced before PR's arrival and plans to reach a younger audience were already in place. It was generally accepted that the 2009 Children's programme was one of the strongest for some time with events happening in Castle Douglas, Dumfries, Moffat, New Galloway and Sanquhar. (See 2009 Programme.) The total audience was 461.

In addition as part of the Folk programme, Folk Musician, Lionel McClelland visited four primary schools in Nithsdale running workshops on Songwriting in which the school children participated. The schools were Moniaive, Dunscore, Penpont and Thornhill. Feed back was most positive. Pupil numbers were around 340 in total. The total audience for children's events was approx 800.

Plans are well underway for the 2010 event with a full programme for children plus the opportunity for children and youth projects designed around the Big Man Walking event booked for the final Saturday of the Festival week.

Efforts are also being directed at attracting both a teenage and a young adult audience with new programming and new venues which will include So You Below in Dumfries.

Plans are underway to hold an event with the Locharthur Community and the Multi Ethnic Centre in Dumfries is cooperating with the Burns Film Theatre to produce a special programme of international films during the 2010 week.

2. Identify and work with the local community councils wishing to host events in village halls etc.

The 2009 programme included rural venues in Dundrennan, Moniaive, Colvend, Kirkpatrick Durham and Wanlockhead.

PR has been in contact with community Councils in Middlebie, Colvend, Shawhead, Moniaive and Westerkirk and events are being prepared for the 2010 programme.

3. Grow the Festival's national and international network of artists and performers.

The 2009 Festival had a strong group of national and international artists including Emma Johnstone and Pascal Roge, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Michael Mackinnon, a young Dumfries man singing with the Vancouver Opera, and in our literature series we welcomed four distinguished experts on Aspects of Burns including Prof Alan Riach and Prof David Purdie. The Quawali Sham Sufi Group from Afghanistan played to a packed house a Catstrand bringing an exciting international flavour.

Plans for 2010 include the Scottish Chamber Orchestra with Nicola Benedetti, Fascinating Aida, Derek Paravicini, Liz Lochhead and James Kelman and an international flavor is introduced with an Italian group Pietro Piconi and the Parma Brass group.

4. Contact other Festivals nationally and internationally and seek ways to cooperate and exchange events.

Within the UK we talk to the Perth Festival and on occasion can share performers. It is hoped that we can develop our international links through the international LEADER programme.

5. Develop an effective marketing and publicity strategy.

The Festival is committed to the development of its Publicity Strategy and has successfully negotiated further funding for future Festivals thro the Council's Beacon programme. The 2009 event had stronger coverage than any previous

Festival and included substantial coverage on both local and national TV and radio news.

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 in February 2010 in time for this year's Festival. This has been welcomed with much positive comment and will be a major tool in further increasing our coverage, (See dgartsfestival.org.uk)

6. Commission new work

The 2009 Festival had as one of its major themes the celebration of Robert Burns's anniversary. A new piece celebrating his final eight years in Dumfries was commissioned and played on two occasions at the Theatre Royal, Dumfries and in Moniaive. 2010 will see a great deal of innovative project work being produced as part of the Big Man Walking.

7. Develop and deliver effective monitoring and assessment systems.

The Festival takes very seriously the need for monitoring and assessment and random samples all our events with an Exit Questionnaire.. The results are analyzed and fed into the following year's programme planning and inform our search for funding.

Conclusion

The introduction of this new post has helped the Festival considerably as outlined above. PR has been able to concentrate on several areas, such as publicity and marketing, as well as programme planning, which the volunteer trustees are not able to deal with as professionally and effectively as he can.

Dame Barbara Kelly,
Chairman, Dumfries & Galloway Arts Festival