

<b>Title of Report:</b>  <b>Cultural Grant Aid Programmes 2021/22</b>	<b>Officer Presenting: Head of Culture</b>  <b>Author: Arts &amp; Culture Manager, Festivals &amp; Events Manager, Tourism Manager</b>
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## **1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations**

- 1.1 To secure Member approval for the full retention of the budgets allocated to the Cultural Organisation Funding Programme, Access Improvement Programme, Heritage Animation Programme, Headline Events Funding Programme, Community Festival Funding Programme and Artist Award Programme for 2021/22.
- 1.2 To secure member approval in principle for the continuation of the proposed subvention programme for one off national events with detailed paper to follow.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 The proposed cultural funding programmes are focused on the delivery of community planning outcomes as outlined in the Strategic Growth Plan and the aims detailed within the DCSDC Tourism and Arts & Culture Strategies. In 2021/22 it is proposed that the design of these programmes are adjusted to account for the impact of the Covid 19 crisis on the cultural sector and the wider community. The emphasis will be on enabling the cultural sector to contribute to the revitalisation of our civic spaces and an improvement in wellbeing within our communities.
- 2.2 Our cultural partners are faced with a range of unprecedented challenges emerging from the Covid 19 crisis. Council Officers retain ongoing communication with sectoral stakeholders locally and regionally and are engaged in the roll out of initiatives designed to minimise the impact of this crisis upon the sector. At the same time there is an awareness that the revival of our tourism product offering and the rejuvenation of our quality of life can be delivered by a vigorous cultural sector. To this end it is proposed that Council retain the current levels of investment in the creative economy and explore potential opportunities for increased investment where possible.

- 2.3 The Cultural Organisation Fund is designed to support the professional and high capacity organisations within the arts and cultural sector. The 2021/22 Cultural Organisations funding programme will be open to all eligible arts and heritage organisations. Based on the budget for 2020/21 the total available fund will be £206,800 (£192,000 for Arts/Cultural Venues and £14,800 for Heritage/Museum Venues).
- 2.4 The Heritage Animation programme is focused on the delivery of an animation and visitor servicing programme specifically targeting the participation of heritage venues within the Council area. The Total available fund for 2021/22 will be £83,600.
- 2.5 The Headline Events Fund programme includes strategic cultural and sporting events of significant scale. Based on the budget for 2020/21 the total available resource for this fund should be £205,000. This total consists of £175,000 for Arts and Culture events and £30,000 for Sporting events.
- 2.6 The Community Festivals Fund enables local festivals to apply for up to £5,000 to support community festivals that attract up to 500 attendees and for up to £10,000 for events that can attract more than 1000 attendees. Based on the budget for 2020/21 the total available resource available for this fund should be circa £116,200. This total consists of a potential contribution of £30,200 from the Department of Communities (DfC) (based on the 2019/20 contribution) and £86,000 from the Festival and Events budget. It is proposed for 2021/22 that a similar approach be adopted based on the revised process during 2020 to account for the Covid environment. If an organisation is able to meet its objectives outlined in their original application they can draw down 100% of the funding, if due to changeable Covid restrictions they need to move to a more online/remote delivery they can draw down 75% of the funding subject to approval. It should be noted that there was not Department for Communities contribution in 2020/21.
- 2.7 The National Events subvention programme will provide a standardised mechanism for the assessment of one off opportunity events which will require the generation of a subsequent council paper in each instance. Based on the budget for 2020/21 the total available resource available budget for this fund should be £35,000.
- 2.8 The Access Improvement Programme fund, beginning in 2017/18, has utilised an annual budget of £75,000 drawn from member approved budgets. In previous years this resource has been supplemented by external support from the Department for Communities and the Public Health Agency. It is envisaged that further external support will be sought to support the delivery of this round of the Access Improvement Programme.

- 2.9 The Artist Award Programme has been created in order to fulfil action '2k' under Aim 2 of the Arts & Culture Strategy (2019 / 24) to 'Deliver quality programme, product and practice'. The action within the Strategy states the requirement to 'Create a dedicated fund in Derry City and Strabane District to support independent Artists, theatre makers and arts organisations in the creation and dissemination of new artistic work. Commission quality local and international artists to create artworks linked to learning opportunities for programmes and events with the aim of inspiring audiences and practitioners.'

### **3 Key Issue**

- 3.1 In June 2020, B&C committee approved an adjustment to the Cultural Organisation Fund as follows: (a) removal of the previous verification processes associated with the Cultural Organisation Award (consisting of copies of operational related invoices and proof of expenditure) to be replaced by end of year impact report only, (b) immediate allocation of 90% of eligible Cultural Organisation Award, (c) immediate allocation of award specific to the operational costs identified by successful applicants to the Heritage Animation Grant Aid Programme and (d) verification would be in terms of an end of year impact report only. The adjustment to this Fund was well received by the Cultural Organisations at a time when cash flow was a critical issue for many. It is proposed that this process is permanently adopted for this particular programme.
- 3.2 Furthermore, it is proposed that the allocation of the Cultural Organisation Fund in 2021/22 will be for a 3-year period, subject to annual performance review as determined by the applicants end of year impact report submission. The confirmation of a 3-year allocation of support will provide continuity for these organisations.
- 3.3 The Heritage Animation programme has been utilised in the delivery of online programming for the heritage sector during the lock down period and in the subsequent reopening of these venues to the public in recent months. For example, St Augustines Art Arcadia project which moved entirely online and the Siege Museum who delivered online talks. It is proposed that the 2021/22 Heritage Animation Programme continues enabling venues to work with officers to adapt to the new operating environment caused by Covid, as they have done this year. The venues face a very uncertain future with the complete cessation of international visitors and the restrictions which are in place. The Application form will reflect current needs of the sector and allow flexibility. This funding is critical to supporting and enabling them to adapt and recover.

- 3.4 The Headline Events Programme was significantly adjusted in 2020/21 as a result of the Covid 19 crisis. From late Spring 2020 Council and its cultural partners have experimented with alternative delivery models that adhere to social distancing guidelines. This has been a very informative process and saw some great successes, In Your Space delivered Carnival of Colours over two weekends, Celtronic held some world class digital events and the Gasyard Felie delivered a great programme of activity. It is likely that restrictions that impact on festival delivery will be in place for some time. However, rather than reducing the investment in festivals it is recommended that Officers further develop the models of delivery so far demonstrated. As well as a mixture of online and in community engagement it is envisaged that a more concentrated emphasis on animating our civic spaces would be a welcome contribution toward kick starting our local economy through culture. The continued investment in and utilisation of our local festival providers will also contribute to the ongoing sustainability of this vital part of the cultural sector. It is also proposed that for 2021/22 only that the economic weighting on the event be reduced to 25% of overall score with qualitative community based outcomes having a more significant weight in this year. It is also proposed that the minimum spend on the event be reduced to £30,000 from £50,000 and the minimum number of attendees from 1,000 to 500 given that there is still likely to be some Covid restrictions in place.
- 3.5 With Community Festivals fund, as with the Headline Events Council oversaw a fundamental adjustment to this programme as the extent of the Covid 19 crisis became clear. The majority of applicants moved ahead with some version of the event as originally planned and to date there has been great successes in this fund including Foyle Pride, Allegri Community Choral festival and Culmore partnership literary festival. With the experience gained over the past number of months Council Officers are keen to re-engage with Community Festivals to plan for delivery in 2021/22. Community Festivals play a very significant role in bringing communities together, building social cohesion and fostering pride of place, benefits that are of vital importance at this time.
- 3.6 With the National Events subvention programme, early indications show that there is likely to be an application for a national event in 2021 however the main impact with this application will be on TV and broadcast opportunities. It is proposed for 2021/22 that we maintain the existing application process measuring both economic impact and media impact and assess accordingly. As always a future paper will be brought back to committee with the result of any assessment to this fund.

- 3.7 Council Officers are in the process of reviewing the proposed festival delivery model for 21/22. This delivery will need to focus on the priorities detailed above and be cognisant of the social distancing restrictions that will be in force for some time to come. In addition to the adjustment of the festival grant aid programmes to address these key priorities it is envisaged that a portion of the festival grant aid budget will be allocated to developmental work within the sector with a focus on securing long term sustainability and innovation and less on the economic impact as outlined above.
- 3.8 With regards to the Access Improvement Programme, DfC have recently adjusted their own grant aid priorities and in order to continue to utilise this resource the proposed DCSDC Access Programme for 2021/22 will need to reflect these changes including the integration of all cultural organisations (rather than just venues) as eligible applicants and an increase in the maximum award from £20,000 to £30,000. Furthermore, the programme restricts cultural organisations to one successful application only. As the majority of cultural venues within the Council area have now availed of this programme it is proposed that this cycle is restarted so that the revised programme is once again available to all eligible organisations from 2021/22. As before, once successful an organisation cannot apply to this fund again in successive years or until Council agrees to restart the grant aid cycle.
- 3.9 In June 2020 Members approved an increase in the award allocation for the Artist Award Programme from £10,000 to £16,000. The additional resource was to be drawn from the member approved Arts Development budget. It is proposed that this allocation is retained for the Artist Award Programme in recognition of the challenges faced by our artists and cultural practitioners.

#### **4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement, Rural Needs and other Implications**

- 4.1 The proposed Cultural Grant Aid programmes will be drawn from member approved rates based budgets. The Community Festival Fund and the Access Programme may be further supported from external financial resources as outlined above.
- 4.2 With regards to the Community Festivals programme it should be noted that in 2020/21 DfC did not make any contribution toward the Community Festivals budget. At this time there is no confirmation of a potential contribution from DfC for 2021/22.

#### **5 Recommendations**

- 5.1 To approve the retention, in full, of the cultural grant aid budgets as detailed above.

- 5.2 To approve the permanent adjustment to the financial verification process and the adoption of a 3-year award cycle for Cultural Organisations.
- 5.3 To approve the adjustment and relaunch of the Access Programme enabling all cultural organisations in DCSDC to apply for support up to a maximum of £30,000.
- 5.4 To approve the permanent increase in the proposed award allocation of £16,000 outlined in this report for the Artist & Practitioner Fund.
- 5.5 To approve the continuation of Covid adjustments to the Community Festival and Headline Events
- 5.6 To approve the adjustment to the Headline Events fund for one year to reduce the economic weighting to 25% and minimum spend to £30,000.

### **Background Papers**

**None.**