Dumfries and Galloway
The Natural Place for Major Festivals and Events

Introduction

This pdf file outlines the diversity and quality of Dumfries and Galloway’s festivals and events, and the proactive work Dumfries and Galloway Council undertakes to make major events successful here.

The new Regional Major Festivals and Events Strategy, 2014-2017, will strengthen the events sector and should in time lead to a higher number of nationally and internationally significant events being delivered here, on a long-term sustainable basis.

For commercial events organisations across the UK and further afield, there has never been a better time to consider investing in Dumfries and Galloway.
Dumfries and Galloway Successfully Hosts Great Events

Dumfries and Galloway is a fantastic destination to visit, and has become renowned in recent years for the quality, diversity and high profile of our region’s leading festivals and events.

The Region’s Theme Towns Provide a Great Backdrop for Festivals and Events

Dumfries and Galloway has three theme towns; Wigtown, Scotland’s Book Town, Kirkcudbright, the Artists’ Town and Castle Douglas Food Town.

The three Galloway towns are charm personified. Wigtown’s bookshops are clustered around the attractive town square, overlooked by the Gothic, impressively large Town Hall. The Book Festival is Scotland’s largest rural literary event each year, and is characterised by its superb programme, relaxed vibe and stimulating debates led by renowned authors and journalists. The Festival lasts ten days, and is enormously important to the area.

Kirkcudbright each summer hosts a major art exhibition, held in partnership with either the National Galleries of Scotland or Glasgow City Council’s Cultural Services. The artists’ town has many fine galleries and visitor attractions and an attractive working harbour that provides a splendid backdrop for the art exhibitions, Scottish Tattoos, traditional jazz festival and much more. An undoubted highlight was the Monet Exhibition that took place in 2006; however the annual art exhibitions are always of a high quality, as Kirkcudbright moves closer to securing a permanent, nationally significant public Art Gallery.

Castle Douglas is a vibrant market town with a much loved and visited traditional High Street. Perennially busy, the Food Town organisation hosts frequent cookery events and workshops and the annual Food Town Day in June.
The Region Hosts World Class Sporting Events Each Year.

The Council’s investment in ice hockey development and the Ice Bowl in Dumfries has been rewarded with three separate ice hockey world championships having taken place at the venue or scheduled to take place in 2014. These world championships include the Men’s Under 20’s Category 1B tournament in December 2013, where the action was fast and furious and the world famous Stanley Cup made an appearance.

The Ice Bowl has a curling pad as well as ice rink, which makes it a perfect venue for indoor winter sports. The new Olympic Sport of Curling Doubles and Mixed Doubles is coming to Dumfries in April 2014 when the first ever World Curling Doubles, Mixed Doubles and Seniors Doubles championships are held. An integral part of the 2014 Year of Homecoming, more than 25 nations are expected to compete in the world championships.

The region is a cycling heaven, for residents, visitors and the Tour of Britain, which has visited Dumfries and Galloway eight times since 2005, and is delivered in partnership with the Council.

Motor sports are well represented in the region too with the Scottish Rally – now properly reinstated as a stage of the British Rallying Championships, and the Merrick Stages Rally, based in Newton Stewart, being based here. It’s understandable, with nearly 25% of the region being forested, that rallying finds a natural home here!!

The region also boasts 5 of the international, top in their class, 7stanes mountain bike trails. All have their own distinctive character; all provide the perfect blend of respite from everyday pressures and access to exhilarating landscapes. From the flowing single track of Kirroughtree and Mabie, to the gritty, granite features of Dalbeattie, to the wide open spaces of Glentrool and Ae, the 7stanes trails offer the best mountain biking possible. They have strong commercial potential for events organisations wishing to develop new events in South West Scotland.

Cavendish wins the Scottish Stage of the Tour of Britain, Dumfries, 2011
Dumfries and Galloway is a Cultural Delight

It has been calculated that Dumfries and Galloway is home to more working artists’ and craftmakers per head of the population than any other part of Scotland/the UK. One clear manifestation of this is the superb Spring Fling. Spring Fling is an Open Artists’ Studios Weekend, held over the late May Bank Holiday each year. More than 90 artists and craftmakers open their homes and studios to the public, which is a great incentive to explore many nooks and crannies of Dumfries and Galloway and find art, pottery, furnishings and photography that inspires and delights.

Music Festivals include the incomparable Wickerman, which is set on rolling farmland above the gorgeous Solway Coast, and is based upon an eclectic programme of live music across multiple stages and marquees and great entertainment, overseen by the iconic, doomed Wickerman. Two other notable outdoor music festivals with large followings are the World Ceilidh, which takes place in the remote and beautiful uplands of the region, at Knockengorroch. The Eden Festival is emerging fast as a fabulous annual Festival, which takes place at Raehills, between Moffat and Dumfries, in June, and has a similar format to the Wickerman and the World Ceilidh with an equally important emphasis on the environment and sustainability.

The Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival and Big Burns Supper are multi-arts festivals with strong programmes and community support which add to the cultural life of the region. The Globe Theatre, London has been regular visitors since 2008 with their productions of Shakespeare’s classics.

The quality of community and cultural life in the region inspires many smaller towns or large villages to run excellent events programmes; Moniaive hosts good quality folk and Grassroots music festivals on a regular basis and Langholm, Portpatrick and New Galloway utilise festivals and events well to attract visitors.

Common Ridings remain a staple of civic pride and the sports clubs, theatres and community associations of the region contribute a huge range of festivals and events to the year round Events Calendar of Dumfries and Galloway.
The Major Festivals and Events Strategy, 2014-2017

Dumfries and Galloway Council is proactive and proud of the support it offers to events organisations to host their events in our part of Scotland. The Council has great experience too, in leading on the delivery of major events, including world championship ice hockey and world curling tournaments at Dumfries Ice Bowl, the renowned Original Bicycle Festival in 2009 and a plethora of sporting and cultural events. Partnership working on an on-going basis sees the Scottish Rally and the Tour of Britain take place in the region year upon year, and some notable festivals and events have started life as Council initiatives e.g. Spring Fling.

The Council, with regional partners, has now adopted a Major Festivals and Events Strategy, 2014-2017 (MFES 2014-2017). Believed to be unique within Scotland, the MFES 2014-2017 identifies that the most significant economic, community, cultural and sporting benefits and outcomes derive from major festivals and events, and that our rural economy can best attract visitors through an on-going and sustainable investment programme in our major events.

To deliver the MFES 2014-2017, the Council has established the new post of Principal Officer, Events.

A regional partnership will be created to oversee the delivery of the Strategy, which has a series of key, inter-related actions. The partnership will comprise the Council, VisitScotland, Destination Dumfries and Galloway, Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of Commerce, Wigtownshire Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of the Arts.

Significant new investment for the events sector will be provided via the introduction of the Major Events Strategic Fund. The Fund is open to existing and new events which meet the criteria of a Major Event under the terms of the MFES 2014-2017. The criteria is;

- Events that attract in the region of 1000 or more unique visitors;
- That operate on a net budget that exceeds £30,000;
- That are marketing to a quantifiable target of out of region visitors
- That can demonstrate a good return on public sector investment.

The Strategy will also take forward plans to identify new Beacon Events for Dumfries and Galloway. The Beacon Events Advancement Programme is unique in Scotland, and identifies through a thorough, transparent process which growth festivals in the region should receive priority funding for three years to support their development into nationally and internationally significant events.

Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival
Youthbeatz

Rob's Fish & Chips
The MFES 2014-2017 also has measures to:

• Increase the availability of regional food and drink at major events in Dumfries and Galloway and;
• Increase the numbers of volunteers who contribute to the delivery of major events in Dumfries and Galloway and;
• Support Homecoming 2014 in order to maximise its impact in Dumfries and Galloway and;
• Support the events diaries published by VisitScotland and increase the numbers of events listed
• Identify the best approaches to attract more business sponsorship to the region’s major events

and an Events Toolkit has already been prepared to provide support and guidance to events organisers delivering voluntary sector events across Dumfries and Galloway.

Funding Information

There is a range of funding opportunities available to events organisations planning, or thinking of planning, events in Dumfries and Galloway.

A primary source of funding is the competitive Major Events Strategic Fund, which is only open to festivals and events that meet the criteria of a major event as defined by the MFES 2014-2017. The Fund distributes funding of £200,000 p.a.

Area Committee funding, SportsCouncil funding, Chamber of the Arts funding and some specific and unique local funding sources that can make a big difference to events projects are also available in Dumfries and Galloway.

Regional events, including Council events, have a superb record in drawing down EventScotland funding, and the Council enjoys a long-standing productive relationship with the national events agency.

Dumfries and Galloway Council Events Contact

If you want to consider developing your event/s in Dumfries and Galloway please contact;

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Common Ridings are part of the fabric of regional life