

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance and Resources
DATE	5 th November 2025
EXEMPT	No, but the Appendix C is exempt under paragraph 6 of schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority)
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	World Rally Championship Bid
REPORT NUMBER	CR&E/25/252
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	David Dunne
CHIEF OFFICER	Julie Wood
REPORT AUTHOR	Matthew Williams
TERMS OF REFERENCE	3.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on the progress and next steps on a Partnership bid to host the World Rally Championship (WRC) and to seek approval to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with Motorsport UK.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the support for the North East of Scotland to host the World Rally Championships (WRC) by regional partners and Tourism Levy development partners, and the associated benefits. Appendix A;
- 2.2 Notes the competitive bidding process and timeline partners are following to apply to host this event in the North East of Scotland;
- 2.3 Agrees that Aberdeen City Council will contribute to the costs outlined by Motorsport UK for three Councils at £3M over three years, with the intention that Aberdeen City's share will be reimbursed by the Visitor Levy;
- 2.4 Instructs the Chief Officer – City Development & Regeneration to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with Motorsport UK, Appendix B, which will allow Motorsport UK to submit an application to host the World Rally Championships in Aberdeen City Boundaries; and

- 2.5 Should the bid be successful, instruct Chief Officer – City Development & Regeneration to provide an update on planning proposals and council governance at a future Finance and Resources committee.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) is a globally recognised motorsport series. Motorsport UK, in partnership with EventScotland and the WRC Promoter, has identified the North East of Scotland as a preferred host location for a UK round of the WRC for an initial three-year period (2027–2029). The event would be headquartered at P&J Live in Aberdeen, with stages across Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, and Moray.

- 3.2 A competitive bidding process is underway, with partners working to a strict timeline to submit a comprehensive application to the WRC Promoter and FIA. Securing Scotland's inclusion on the WRC calendar is subject to a sustainable business model, robust partnership, and demonstration of regional and national support.

- 3.3 In order to submit a bid, Motorsport UK are seeking the agreement of funding and support from all partners in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding. Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council and the Scottish Government have also been approached for funding and are considering the opportunity. The Scottish Government recognises that Local Authority funding would be contingent on Scottish Government funding being agreed.

3.4 Timeline:

- Aberdeen City Council Committee: 5th November 2025
- Aberdeenshire Committee: 20th November 2025
- Moray Committee: 6th November 2025
- Scottish Government: November 2025
- Motorsport UK Board: 25th November 2025
- Submission of bid: Nov/Dec 2025
- Decision by WRC Promoter/FIA: Expected early 2026
- Event delivery: 2027–2029

3.5 Roles and Responsibilities:

- Motorsport UK: Lead organiser, responsible for event delivery, safety, finances sponsorship, and compliance.
- Aberdeen City Council and Partners: Provide financial support (up to the agreed amount), infrastructure, communications, community engagement, and access to public assets.

- 3.6 The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Appendix B) sets out the anticipated expectations for Aberdeen City Council. Spanning across Council Clusters Services, officers have had the opportunity to comment on

deliverability and resource. Learning has also been taken from the recently completed Tall Ships 2025.

	MOU	Response
3.7	The three local authorities to contribute £3,000,000 plus inflation to the events budget to secure the event for three years	Should committee agree Aberdeen City's contribution, it is intended that this will be paid back from the Visitor Levy. This proposal has received support from the Visitor Levy Development Group Partners recognising the need to bid years in advance for major events.
3.8	Support in developing and amplification of annual communications plans around the event and its core themes	This would be led by Motorsport UK. ACC role along with City partners would be to promote the comms on existing channels and partnerships. ACC partners, businesses and key media outlets would be invited to support communications in the form of a city wide- communications working group.
3.9	Support in socialisation of the event to local communities and communication of event details and benefits that the event offers residents and local businesses including any community consultations	This would be led by Motorsport UK. ACC role along with City partners would be to embed WRC into existing and planned consultations with communities and to socialise and gain support/sign post communities into the event through existing forums and groups.
3.10	Support liaison with authorities in communication and co-ordination with the local councils, police, safety, emergency services throughout the planning process.	This would be led by Motorsport UK and additional costs would be covered by Motorsport UK. ACC role would be to attend as a category one responder – offering support and learning to the planning process.
3.11	Co-ordination with roads authorities on traffic management strategies, signage, parking plans, and coordinating with highway agencies and the lifting of any road works around the event geographies to facilitate ease of access for event traffic, including competitors, officials and spectators	This would be led by Motorsport UK and additional costs would be covered by Motorsport UK. ACC role would be to attend as a Roads authority and support in the planning and coordination including any requirements for additional bus provision and Park and Ride. ACC will support with applications to existing or new funding streams for example sustainable transport, from Bus Priority Lane Funding.
3.12	Support with social impact and EDI projects to inspire communities	It is anticipated that external funding would be sought for communities to bid into to support the event. Recent success includes UKSPF for this type of event. Education and

		employability teams along with partners, including local businesses would be required to maximise engagement with STEM activities. This is additional activity and not core to event delivery.
3.13	Support with infrastructure for crowd control: With thousands of spectators expected, local police and other authorities are vital for managing crowds and traffic. This can include directing traffic, providing security, and enforcing rules in spectator areas	This would be led by Motorsport UK with assistance from City Events and oversight from Emergency Planning and multi-agency partners. Additional costs for stewards would be covered by Motorsport UK. ACC would support the call-out for volunteers where appropriate. This would involve the Safety Advisory Group
3.14	Access to publicly owned spaces and facilities required in execution of the event or venues including event infrastructure	This would be facilitated by City Events in line with other events. It would involve resource from Roads team, street cleansing, etc, as appropriate.

3.15 The financial ask from Motorsport UK from the Council over three years will be between £1.2m and £1.5m depending on the final agreement, there is a direct ask of staff time to contribute to working groups. These working groups will develop opportunities arising from the event to maximise benefits to the city. As, Motorsport UK are the lead organiser of the event, plus the delivery will be in-venue at P&J Live for much of the programme, this would be less resource intensive than, for example, Tall Ships.

3.16 An initial workshop with relevant council teams explored the resources needed at this stage, and it was agreed that resource support could be offered to working groups to develop proposals, alongside the employment of a project team to oversee the event for three years. Noting the opportunity to accelerate many of the city's strategic objectives, and local outcomes, officers and partners would seek opportunities to embed WRC planning into delivery plans to maximise impact and seek external funding and sponsorship opportunities to maximise benefits of hosting the WRC in this region. The total cost additional activities and staffing would be in the region of £700,000 over three years.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The indicative ask is £1 million per year for three years, shared between Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, and Moray Councils. This share may not be equal but dependent on the weighting of economic benefit to each Council from hosting the event. The preferred funding mechanism is the Visitor Levy, but Aberdeen City Council may need to underwrite the contribution if revenues are insufficient or delayed. Cost-sharing by partner councils is a condition of underwriting.

4.2 External funding and sponsorship will be sought for maximising community involvement.

- 4.3 Staff resource should align to delivering existing strategic objectives and outcomes for the city residents as outlined in Section 8 below.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Memorandum of Understanding (“MoU”) sets out the mutual intentions of Motorsport UK with Aberdeen City Council to collaborate on a bid to host the World Rally Championship. It is a statement of intent and does not create legally binding obligations.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The event racing vehicles will use sustainable fuels (P1 Fuel) and promote low-emission technologies, aligning with Aberdeen’s Net Zero Route map. A carbon planning framework will be implemented, and environmental assessments will be undertaken.
- 6.2 The event should be used to promote Aberdeen as a world energy leader and showcase the cities leading sustainability projects and infrastructure.
- 6.3 The city could create the opportunity for a renewable fuels conference or similar to highlight existing hydrogen projects in addition to research and development in other areas, such as hydrogen-powered generators for events.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve. Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *Taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Formal approval to submit bid required across all 3 councils and partners is required to proceed.	Formal meetings have been positive, agreed timelines for seeking approval, continued regular partner meetings. However, this is still subject to agreement from all partners committees and board by a Dec deadline.	H	Yes
Compliance	Event does not adhere to Council guidelines /risk appetite	Officers will attend working groups and share best practice. All statutory and compulsory legislation will be adhered to.	L	Yes
Operational	Complex logistics, multi-location event	Experienced partners, event frameworks	L	Yes

Financial	Funding shortfall if Visitor Levy delayed	Underwriting, phased agreements,	M	Yes
Reputational	ACC is not leading deliver of event	Experienced teams with proven track record delivering event.	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	Misinformation is perceived as a negative.	Opportunity to showcase sustainable fuels, transport models and Aberdeen's clean energy mix as well as driving forward campaign and environmental/climate messaging	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2025-26	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	Partnership Working Multi-agency stakeholder group, broad consultation, shared delivery. Community Engagement & Empowerment , Volunteering, STEM, diversity, co-design, local legacy Economic Growth & Sustainability €100m impact, tourism, jobs, Net Zero, sustainable fuels Maximising Resources & Best Value , Underwriting , diversified funding, cost-sharing, multi-year model Innovation & Continuous Improvement STEM, skills, legacy, robust governance, outcome measurement
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	4.4 Increase by 5% the number of S1-S6 pupils who report that they feel confident by 2025. 6.4 Increase the percentage of learners entering a positive and sustained destination to be ahead of the Virtual Comparator for all groups by 2025 -Deliver accredited training and upskilling for volunteers. - Provides STEM outreach and education programmes for schools and colleges. - Partners with Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH) for wellbeing initiatives. - Implements diversity and inclusion programmes (Girls on Track, Race for Diversity).

Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	14.3 Reduce car kms by 5% by 2026 Provision of effective public transport to/from event sites and promote walkability of P&J Live to/from Aberdeen Airport and local hotels
Community Empowerment Stretch Outcomes	15.1 Increase to 65% the proportion of people who feel they can regularly experience good quality natural space by 2026 - Major parts of the event will take place outdoors in Aberdeenshire, with local people expected to spend time in those woodland areas and green spaces.
Regional and City Strategies	Regional Economic Strategy The feasibility study demonstrates strong alignment with the Regional Economic Strategy by projecting over €100 million in economic impact for the North East, attracting international investment, and creating jobs in tourism, hospitality, event management, and supply chain sectors. The event supports Aberdeen's designation as an Investment Zone and major events hosting, driving economic transformation and diversification for the region. References: Executive Summary (p.9), Economic Impact (p.49), Investment Zone (p.50), Stakeholder Support (p.10), Recommendation (p.13) Regional Transport Strategy WRC Rally Scotland leverages Aberdeen's transport infrastructure, including P&J Live and regional connectivity, and requires coordination with local transport providers. The event promotes sustainable travel, improves accessibility for visitors and residents, and shows how major events can be integrated into regional transport planning, supporting the aims of the Regional Transport Strategy. References: Event Operations (p.28–31), Central Hub & Event Layout (p.30), Transport & Logistics (p.54)

Regional Skills Strategy

The feasibility study supports the Regional Skills Strategy by delivering accredited training and upskilling for volunteers, providing STEM outreach and education programmes for schools and colleges, and creating a legacy of expertise for future events. These activities contribute to workforce development and skills enhancement across the region.

References: Skills Development and Legacy (p.37), STEM Showcase (p.24–25), Education Programme (p.44)

Local Development Plan

The event invests in local infrastructure, venues, and environmental legacy projects, supporting sustainable development and enhancing Aberdeen's appeal as a vibrant, attractive city. By improving public assets and promoting regeneration, the WRC aligns with the ambitions of the Local Development Plan.

References: Legacy Infrastructure (p.43), Event Operations (p.28–31), P&J Live Venue (p.31)

Local Housing Strategy

By attracting international visitors and investment, WRC Rally Scotland can stimulate demand for housing and regeneration, supporting the city's goals for inward investment and sustainable growth. The event's economic impact and legacy infrastructure contribute to the wider housing strategy.

References: Economic Impact (p.49–50), Investment Zone (p.50)

Children's Services Plan

The feasibility study includes optional STEM outreach and education programmes, partnerships with schools, and initiatives to inspire young people to pursue careers in engineering, digital media, and event management. These activities could support positive destinations for children and young people, in line with the Children's Services Plan.

	References: STEM Showcase (p.24–25), Education Programme (p.44), Diversity & Inclusion (p.46–47) Net Zero Routemap for the City WRC Rally Scotland showcases Aberdeen’s Net Zero ambitions and sustainable event practices, implements a carbon planning framework, promotes sustainable fuels, and achieves FIA Three-Star Environmental Accreditation. The event’s environmental commitments directly support the Net Zero Routemap for the City. References: Sustainability Leadership (p.9, p.26), Environmental Sustainability (p.32, p.42–43), Net Zero (p.26) Medium Term Financial Strategy Motorsport UK will underwrite the event, protecting public funds and ensuring financial security. The funding model is diversified, with revenue from sponsorship, ticket sales, and host support, reducing reliance on council budgets. Multi-year agreements and cost-sharing across partners support best value and financial sustainability, in line with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. References: Financial Security (p.10, p.52–54), Funding Model (p.13–14), Financial Assessment (p.52–54) Estates and Assets Strategy The event maximises use of existing public assets (e.g., P&J Live, roads, venues), demonstrates flexible, multi-use asset planning, and supports the Council’s ambition to optimise estate use for economic and social return. The legacy infrastructure and venue improvements align with the Estates and Assets Strategy. References: Event Operations (p.28–31), P&J Live Venue (p.31), Legacy Infrastructure (p.43)
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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Required
Other	

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 6 August 2025 - Finance and Resources Committee Report:- Opportunity To Host The World Rally Championships In North East Scotland - CR&E/25/184

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A: Partner Support
Appendix B: Memorandum of Understanding
Appendix C; **Exempt** Feasibility Study
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12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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