

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	20 April 2010
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	City Events – Winter Festival 2009/2010 – 2010/11
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/10/083

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides a summary of the Winter Festival programme of events that were planned, co-ordinated and delivered by the City Events team from 5 November 2009 to 25 January 2010. It also outlines the proposed programme for 2010/2011.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The Committee is asked to note the 2009/2010 Winter Festival programme and to approve the proposed programme for 2010/2011.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The annual budget for the winter festival and hogmanay event comes primarily from the revenue budget. In 2009/2010 the total budget was £370,000, £250,000 was allocated for Hogmanay and £120,000 for the winter festival. Following the decision taken to reduce the scale of the Hogmanay event a saving of £100,000 was realised. The remainder was spent on a smaller scale Hogmanay event, community Hogmanay events and community festive lighting. In 2010/11 the total budget is £270,000 and it is planned to deliver a broadly similar programme of events to those that took place in 2009/10. The reduction in budget is 27%.

### **SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT**

The winter festival programme assists in fulfilling the ambition within the Council's policy statement for Aberdeen to be a culturally vibrant city with a range of excellent festivals and events that promote the City as a tourist destination. In addition the events team continue to support the City's best festivals and work with sport and culture officers to ensure the contribution of Sport, Culture and Arts is recognised when promoting the area as a tourist destination as stated under the Single Outcome Agreement. The festivals and events that are delivered also assist in presenting a strong positive image of Aberdeen both nationally and internationally.

It is vital for cities to offer a range of activities to attract visitors during the winter period. This is a traditionally quiet time of year for visitors and it is therefore necessary to offer interesting activities to attract extra visitors. A significant number of Scandinavian visitors, particularly Norwegians choose to visit Aberdeen during the winter period primarily for shopping. The winter festival is a

key element in ensuring those visiting the city centre during the winter period have an experience to remember. The marketing activity to promote the festival extended across Scotland through the Tourist Information Centres, this assisted in attracting additional visitors from other parts of Scotland. The opening of Union Square prior to the festive period also assisted in retaining local shoppers and will have reduced the leakage to other cities.

Many of the events delivered have significant economic impact by increasing visitors to the city, other events offer an opportunity to promote civic pride.

#### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

The events programme is delivered by a 3 full time events officers with part time administrative support. All council policies and procedures are adhered to in the safe delivery of the events programme.

#### **5. REPORT**

Aberdeen's Winter Festival ran from 5 November 2009 to 25 January 2010. The Festival contributed to an increase in the economic activity in the City and created a buzz for visitors and residents alike.

The major events featured in the festival were:

##### **Thursday 5 November – Fireworks Night**

Aberdeen's Winter Festival commenced with the City's annual Fireworks Display at Aberdeen Beach. It featured a spectacular 20 minute high aerial fireworks display full of colour and noise. Prior to the start of the fireworks, CLIC Sargent organised a firewalk to raise much needed funds to help children with cancer. The display vantage points were around the Beach Boulevard, Beach Esplanade and Torry Battery. Catering, toilet, park and ride and medical facilities complemented the event.

##### **Thursday 5 November – The Lord Provost's Variety Show**

Starring George Donald and Steve Robertson of Scotland The What, the show celebrated the best professional entertainment from the Granite City in a fast moving feast of music, comedy and dance. Held at His Majesty's Theatre.

##### **Friday 13 to Sunday 15 November – Aberdeen's Ghost Walks**

Taking a walk through the streets of historic Aberdeen exploring the dark events that left a ghostly footprint. Started at the Castlegate. These events were fully booked

##### **Sunday 15 November – Christmas Lights Switch On**

Over 15,000 people joined Aberdeen's Lord Provost who led a 12 days of Christmas themed parade on Union Street. The parade included of Notting Hill Carnival style characters, a pipe band, musical and street entertainers and community groups along the main thoroughfare in the city to celebrate the switching on of the City's Christmas Lights. This event drew a significant number of additional visitors to the city centre.

### **Sunday 15 November – Santa and his Reindeer Parade**

Santa arrived in his sleigh at the Castlegate. Thousands watched him travel up Union Street pulled by his real reindeer to The Mall Aberdeen Shopping Centre where children could get up real close to Rudolph and his friends. This event drew a significant number of additional visitors to the city centre.

### **Wednesday 18 November – Aberdeen's Singing Chorus Concert**

A packed Music Hall saw the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert by Aberdeen's Singing Chorus who performed songs over the past 10 years.

### **Friday 20 to Sunday 22 November – International Street Market**

This hugely popular market attracted thousands of visitors over the weekend. It offered a wide range of products from around the UK and Europe including crafts, leather, foods, fruit and vegetables.

### **Saturday 21 November to Thursday 24 December – Aberdeen's Snow Globe**

The first ever giant snow globe came to Aberdeen where children and adults went inside to enjoy a snowball fight and pose for a photo. Sited at The Academy Shopping Centre, Schoolhill. The first snowball exchange was held between the Lord Provost of Aberdeen Peter Stephen, Santa and characters from Aladdin, this year's panto by the Attic Theatre Group. There was also a weather forecast done by Sean Batty from the globe.

### **Sunday 29 November – Christmas Tree Switch On**

The Lord Provost and a representative from The Royal Norwegian Consulate joined together to switch on the City's Christmas tree at the Castlegate. Once again, the tree was very kindly donated by the people of Stavanger, one of Aberdeen's twin cities.

### **Saturdays 5, 12 and 19 December – Aberdeen Country Fair**

The fair provided local farmers and crafters the opportunity to showcase quality home-grown and handcrafted products on Belmont Street.

### **Saturdays and Sundays 5,6,12,13,19 and 20 December – City Centre Entertainment**

Festive entertainment featured in and around the City Centre – Union Square, Bon Accord Shopping Centre, St Nicholas Street, The Mall Aberdeen and the Academy courtyard. Acts featured were Pipe Bands, Drumming Group, Punch and Judy, balloon modellers, magicians, singing groups and Scottish Cultural and Traditional music. This activity helps to improve the shopping experience for those visiting the city centre at this busy time.

### **Sunday 6 December – Aberdeen Santa Run**

This annual festive and charity run featured hundreds of Santas leaving Aberdeen FC's stadium and along the beach front.

### **Monday 7, Wednesday 9, Monday 14 and Wednesday 16 December – Provost Skene's House Candlelight Tours**

Experience the magic of this historic house by candlelight and find out how Christmas was celebrated in the past. A special tour for children was held on Wednesday 9 December. These events were sold out.

### **Wednesday 9 December – Christmas Tea Dance**

A full house listened and danced away the afternoon to the sounds of The Garioch Blend in Aberdeen's renowned Beach Ballroom.

### **Thursday 10 and Sunday 13 December – New Winter's Trails**

This tour explored the dark history of the Tolbooth, Aberdeen's 17<sup>th</sup> century prison and a chance to meet in person the Tolbooth gaoler and the Town's minister. These tours were sold out

### **Thursday 2 December to Tuesday 5 January – Nativity Scene**

A traditional nativity scene was unveiled by Vice Convener of Education, Culture and Sport Councillor Martin Greig and Councillor Jennifer Stewart at the former site of The Pier at The Academy Shopping Centre. The nativity scene included Jesus in his crib, Mary, Joseph, the Three Kings, an observer and a shepherd. There was a reading by Captain David Alton, of the Salvation Army and Chair of the Regional Ecumenical Team [RET], a blessing of the crib by Right Reverend Robert Gillies, Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney and Benediction by Reverend Stephen Taylor, Minister Kirk of St Nicholas Uniting.

### **Friday 11 to Sunday 13 December – Aberdeen's Ghost Walks**

Taking a walk through the streets of historic Aberdeen exploring the dark events that left a ghostly footprint. Started at the Castlegate. These walks were sold out.

### **Saturday 19 December – Christmas Carol Concert**

The annual popular Christmas Carol Concert returned to the David Welch Winter Gardens. All the favourite carols were sung to the accompaniment of the Bon Accord Band and rounded off with a visit from Santa. This year, because of high demand, there were 2 concerts at 1.00pm and 4.00pm. Both concerts were free to attend and despite the weather were well attended.

### **Wednesday 31 December – Hogmanay Ceilidh**

The New Year was rung in at our ever popular Hogmanay Ceilidh at the Beach Ballroom. The well known ceilidh band Shindig entertained a capacity audience.

### **Wednesday 31 December and Thursday 1 January – City of Aberdeen Hogmanay Fireworks**

Once again the City of Aberdeen celebrated the coming of the New Year by providing a 15 minute high aerial display of fireworks off the roof of His Majesty's Theatre. Despite the snowy conditions and bad weather in the run up to Hogmanay, a healthy crowd turned out.

### **Community Hogmanay/Festive Events**

Funding including £4k from the Common Good Fund was also provided to communities throughout Aberdeen who wished to arrange and celebrate the Festive and/or Hogmanay period. Grants of up to £500.00 were awarded to help with costs towards hire of buildings, entertainment, food (no alcohol) and staffing. 29 communities covering community centres, community councils, youth projects, community associations, church groups and individual streets were

awarded grants. All communities were very appreciative of the grant and helped to raise spirits within their community.

### **Marketing and Publicity**

In order to successfully deliver Aberdeen's Winter Festival, an intensive marketing campaign was required and was implemented by the Economic Promotions team. The purpose of the campaign was to attract those visitors from Aberdeenshire, Moray and the rest of Scotland to the City at a time when they might otherwise choose to visit Edinburgh or Glasgow for shopping. In addition efforts were made to attract overseas visitors from Norway.

Central to the campaign was a website competition with monthly prizes running over the length of the Festival in conjunction with our City partners such as Aberdeen City Centre Association, Aberdeen Hotels Association, Shopping Centres and Attractions. Information was gathered from visitors and participants to the Festival and comments invited on the success or otherwise of the festival. This information will allow the Economic Promotions team to use as a database for future campaigns and marketing and events activity. Appendix 1 lists a selection of comments received.

A media campaign using publicity tools such as press releases, magazine editorials, newspaper adverts, TV and radio adverts, lamp-post banners, posters, leaflets and City dressing for particular events was also implemented.

The City was also promoted within the Aberdeen City and Shire Winter Festival Guide. The Guide is a fundamental part of ensuring that citizens and visitors alike are fully aware of all that is on offer. It highlighted all the Winter Festival events and retail shopping throughout the region. The Guide was distributed all over the region plus the rest of Scotland and in particular all VisitScotland outlets. Appendix 2 highlights some of the testimonials received from an invitation to comment on the effectiveness of the Guide.

### **2010/2011 Winter Festival Programme**

In line with agreed budget lines for the 2010/2011 financial year, it is proposed to deliver the following programme:

#### **November**

5 November	Fireworks Night at Aberdeen Beach.
21 November	Christmas Lights Switch On and Santa and his Reindeer Parade at Union Street. Based on feedback, the switch on date has been moved to a week later than in previous years
24 November	Aberdeen's Singing Chorus Concert at the Music Hall.
26 to 28 November	International Street Market at Union Terrace.
27 November	Unveiling of Nativity Scene for display until 5 January. Venue to be confirmed
27 to 28 November	St Andrew's Day Celebrations. City Centre entertainment and ceilidh at the Beach Ballroom.
28 November	Christmas Tree Switch On at Castlegate. The switch on is planned on the nearest Sunday to the start of Advent.

## **December**

4 December	Aberdeen Country Fair at Belmont Street.
4/5 December	Weekend Street Entertainment in City Centre
9 December	Christmas Tea Dance on at Beach Ballroom
11 December	Aberdeen Country Fair at Belmont Street.
11/12 December	Weekend Street Entertainment in City Centre
18 December	Aberdeen Country Fair at Belmont Street
18 December	Christmas Carol Concerts at Winter Gardens
18/19 December	Weekend Street Entertainment in City Centre.
31 December	Hogmanay celebrations will include a fireworks display from the roof of HMT and street entertainment.

Winter Trails will also be included in the programme. Dates and venue to be confirmed.

It is intended to repeat the Festive and Hogmanay Community Fund where grants will be awarded on the same basis as in 2009/10 to help provide financial support to individual community groups within the City who wish to organise a festive or Hogmanay celebration for their local community.

## **6. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers were used for this report.

## **APPENDIX 1 WINTER FESTIVAL COMMENTS**

### **1. Comments on what you would like to see in the future**

- ICE SKATING PROVISIONS, FOODIE TYPE EVENTS
- CHRISTMAS MARKET
- OUTDOOR ICE RINK
- BETTER STREET MARKETS SELLING GIFTS & CHRISTMAS THINGS NOT FOOD
- ICE RINK!
- ICE SKATING IN UNION TERRACE GARDENS
- MORE EVENTS SUITABLE FOR UNDER 5s
- MUSIC AND MORE EVENTS DIRECTED AT TEENAGERS/YOUNGER
- HOGMANAY STREET PARTY AND MORE USE OF UNION TERRACE
- ICE SKATING
- ICE SKATING AND FERRIS WHEEL
- ICE SKATING FOR FAMILIES
- UNION STREET CLOSED OFF WITH MARKET AND STREET ENTERTAINMENT EVERY THURS EVE AND SAT
- GERMAN MARKETS
- CRAFT MARKETS
- IT IS GOOD THAT THERE ARE NUMEROUS EVENTS IN ABERDEEN CITY, IT BEING SO CENTRAL. HOWEVER, IT IS EXPENSIVE TO GET THERE AND PARK FOR THE DAY. IN THIS ECONOMIC CLIMATE. IT WOULD BE NICE IF THERE WERE MORE EVENTS IN RURAL AREAS
- OUTDOOR SKATING
- COUNTRYSIDE WALKS (WITH DOGS, LOCAL FAIRS)
- OUTDOOR SKATING RINK AT CASTLEGATE PERHAPS? SOME SMALL KIDS RIDES-MERRY GO ROUND, CHRISTMAS FOOD VENDORS-ROASTED CHESTNUTS ETC SIMILAR TO PRINCESS STREET GARDENS IN EDINBURGH
- JUGGLING, A PROPER BONFIRE ON GUY FAWKES NIGHT
- HUSKY DOGS, MAYBE A CHANCE TO TRY DOG-SLEDDING?
- HOGMANAY CELEBRATIONS BACK ON! I WILL REALLY MISS THEM THIS YEAR
- WE ENJOY WHAT THERE ALREADY IS IN PLACE
- ICE RINK
- SLEIGH RIDES ROUND DUTHIE PARK
- SKATING RINK
- ICE SKATING RINK
- EVENTS THAT CATER TOWARDS PARENTS AND YOUNG FAMILIES TO ENABLE US TO SHARE THESE TRADITIONAL EVENTS WITH OUR CHILDREN AND MAKE THEM FEEL INCLUDED
- EVERYTHING IS WELL COVERED A TOURING CIRCUS ACT MAYBE
- MEET AND GREET WITH SANTA
- ICE SKATING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
- FAMILY EVENTS AND SOME FOR ADULTS TOO. FOOD EVENTS WOULD BE NICE AND TRADITIONAL SCOTTISH THINGS-
- MORE LARGER EVENTS FOR HOGMANAY

- MORE FOR THE CHILDREN...REALLY LIKED THE REINDEERS ON THE SANTA PARADE. MORE DURING THE DAY FOR THE LITTLE ONES. THANK YOU.
- EVENTS FOR CHILDREN
- ICE RINK
- MORE LOCAL TALENT SHOWS
- RETURN OF THE SKATING RINK AT CASTLEGATE CHRISTMAS MARKET STALLS/FAIR
- A BIT MORE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN (UNDER 5s)
- MORE CHILD RELATED EVENTS. MAYBE A STREET CARNIVAL LIKE THERE USED TO BE ON UNION STREET. TAKE A LOOK AT EDINBURGH, PRINCES STREET GARDENS ARE FANTASTIC AND FULL OF CHRISTMAS SPIRIT
- ICE SKATING
- MORE TRADITIONAL SCOTTISH EVENTS FEATURING TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND DANCE BUT WITH A FESTIVE THEME
- OUTDOOR CONCERTS, PREFERABLY IN UNION TERRACE GARDENS. OUTDOOR SKATING RINK. LARGE HOGMANAY STREET PARTY
- WHY NOT BRINGBACK THE ICE SKATING OR EVENT ROLLER SKATING. ALSO MORE USE OF THE GARDENS FOR ACTIVITIES WHY NOT HAVE A XMAS CAFÉ
- HOGMANAY PARTY IN THE CASTLE GATE WITH LOCAL BANDS TO GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE A SAFE VENUE TO BRING IN THE NEW YEAR- DOESN'T HAVE TO COST THE EARTH! OR TEEN DISCOS OVER THE FESTIVE TIME. THE LASER SHOW A FEW YEARS BACK WAS POPULAR. ICE SKATING AT THE CASTLE GATE.
- WHEN ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL IS MORE FINANCIALLY SECURE, I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE RETURN OF THE HOGMANAY CELEBRATION AT THE CASTLEGATE
- MY KIDS LOVE THE SNOW GLOBE - IT'S A GREAT IDEA AND ONE THAT SHOULD DEFINITELY RETURN IN THE FUTURE
- CHRISTMAS MARKET, OUTDOOR ICE RINK
- RETURN OF ICE RINK TO ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE
- CHRISTMAS MARKET WITH STALLS- SIMILAR TO ONE IN EG EDINBURGH IN PRINCES STREET GARDENS. CHRISTMAS THEME AT THE ART GALLERY SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN- HANDS ON

## **2. Additional Comments**

- I think a festival such as this is a great thing both for city and shire residents and for those visiting from further field
- It is good that there are Festivals as this gets people together socially
- I attend every year I can and post pictures on my website for the whole world to get a chance to see the beauty that is Aberdeen!
- I feel that Aberdeen City and Shire are pretty well catered for within the existing Winter Festival. We are very lucky.
- So excited to attend some of the winter festivities! Sounds like a good year!
- Good to see a collective publicity for a main holiday period



- My daughter adores the life size seagulls, dog and princess that went about the City last year. Any amount of money could not have equalled the expression on her face: wonder/awe was amazing and allowed us to talk about so many traditional values which unfortunately are so lacking in modern society. Please! Please! Keep this theme up
- The kids loved the Santa parade
- Loved the inflatable Snow Globe
- Great to see things going on in this corner of Scotland
- I had a great time so far. Got the whole family especially Thank You I would like to be involved more in the festivities next year if possible. Kind Regards.
- Praise to the Council for continuing to provide these events in the current economic climate
- The lights being turned off overnight is a smart idea
- Attended the Xmas lights switch on parade last night and thought it was very colourful and enjoyed the music from the pipe band, drums(walking) and the lorry with the steel drums. The decorated Minis and dogs were a fun inclusion also
- The lights switch on parade was lovely, we really enjoyed it
- Good effort on such a low budget
- All events were well organised
- It's really good to see Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire promoting the area and giving locals and visitors things to do!
- Change the location of the fireworks to other areas on a rotational basis as the Beach is a nightmare to get to, especially if you can't make your way there until after work

## APPENDIX 2 WINTER FESTIVAL GUIDE TESTIMONIALS

### ***What was your general opinion of the overall appearance and layout of the guide?***

- Very good and informative. Colourful and eye-catching.
- Very good well presented and produced
- Very good and looked interesting so would be picked up.
- The guide was clear and concise with enough information
- Good
- White cover did not attract enough attention.
- Excellent and a top quality publication and design
- Very good, bright and looked very design led.
- It looked good, but we needed more information to be included.

### ***Did you find the guide useful? Why was this the case?***

- Excellent for guests visiting the area as all the information in one booklet
- Yes, very good for advertising our own event and for our regular clientele to know what other events were on.
- Useful for guests & staff to ensure the hotel were aware of what's going on.
- Yes, we handed it out to all visitors and telephone enquiries.
- Yes, a big improvement on previous City Christmas Festival guides. It benefitted greatly from being widened to include Aberdeenshire events.
- It was useful because it was the only publication that showed what's on over the Christmas and new year period.
- The guide was a good reference guide, and residents used it as a valuable source of information.
- I am sure our guests found it useful.
- Not really – because more information needed to be included on items.

### ***Would you like a similar guide to be produced next year? If not, what would you like to see produced instead?***

- Yes
- Same/similar next year
- Yes another guide would be useful, but also one for the summer listing all events – we had a Homecoming guide this year so it could replace that for the high season.
- Similar guide, but produced a month or two in advance.
- Yes
- Something similar but more local advertising
- Yes, publish next year and have an enhanced distribution plan linked to a PR campaign.
- Yes – it would be great.
- Yes, but a corresponding website too, linked by the area of the City and Shire.
- Yes

### ***Question 6. If available, would you be interested in advertising in the guide in future years?***

- No
- Yes

- Possibly
- Yes
- Possibly
- Yes
- No
- Up to our management
- Yes, depends upon costs and contract deals as a hoteliers association we could help to promote Aberdeen in December and January by allocating sponsored accommodation or prizes.
- Possibly not (internet and website is a preferred source)
- No

***Do you have any suggestions or changes for future guides that you feel would make it better?***

- Produce in a smaller size so easier to carry
- Just on timing (produce earlier), presentation was very good.
- Notify ACSHA earlier of advertising opportunities so they can sell w/e breaks to coincide with their winter promotion.
- Do not use generic Christmas and Festive photos, could be anywhere in the world.
- Add vouchers and promotions to get improved value and interaction – this will also assist in monitoring the effectiveness of the initiative.
- Earlier production would be better.
- They should include more information on events. They could include glossy covers but have cheaper inside pages.