



ABERDEEN WINTER FESTIVAL



2016



Aberdeen Inspired Report: Aberdeen Christmas Village 2016/17

Overview

Following a pilot year in 2015/16, the Aberdeen Christmas Village 2016/17 was again located on Union Terrace and included multiple festive offerings including an ice rink, festive street market, food and drinks, an entertainment marquee and a range of fairground rides.

Key Objectives

Provide residents of Aberdeen with a festive offering on par with other UK cities, to create pride in Aberdeen and general festive cheer.

Increase footfall and dwell time in Aberdeen city centre over the festival period.

Provide a positive economic impact to Aberdeen city centre by encouraging additional use of city centre businesses.

Key Dates

Building for the Aberdeen Christmas Village took place from 12th November, with Union Terrace closing on Friday 18th November. The live event ran from Friday 25th November 2016 – Sunday 8th January 2017, only closing for Christmas Day. Derig of the village ran from Monday 9th January to Friday 13th January 2017 when Union Terrace was reopened.

Event Organisers

The event is run as a tri-partnership between Aberdeen Inspired, Codona's Pleasure Fairs Ltd and Aberdeen City Council.

Aberdeen Inspired contracted John Codona's Pleasure Fair's Ltd (JCPF) to manage and deliver the event on their behalf and worked closely with partner agencies including Aberdeen City Council, Police Scotland and Fire Scotland.

Codona's ran daily operations, with project team meetings with key partners taking place weekly through the live event.

Aberdeen Inspired Community Initiatives

The market featured 3 rotating stalls dedicated to 'Inspired at the Village' which gave local businesses/artists a chance to sell their products for a short period of time and increase the overall quality of offering at the village.

Community Entertainment ran in Moose Marquee throughout December and performances included several primary and secondary school groups, highland dancers, a ukulele band, acapella singers, a poetry evening and a gospel choir – all saw increased audience numbers in the marquee attending to watch performances. Codona's arranging additional entertainment during peak times.

A 'Festive Fun Day' took place on Tuesday 6th December. Arranged by Aberdeen Inspired with the specific aim of giving local charitable and social inclusion organisations a chance to experience the event. Over 350 attendees from organisations such as Befriend a Child and Children First were treated to free access to ice rink/rides, a disco and refreshments.

Attendance

Overall, general numbers are comparable to last year which is excellent considering the current economic climate in Aberdeen. Numbers were healthy over weekends and slower during the week as expected.

All aspects of the event will be fully branded and themed under the Aberdeen Christmas Village banner. This will include a themed entrance archway at the Union Street end of the terrace and various seasonal displays on the terrace.

Feedback

Feedback on the event was collected in the following ways:

- Attendance numbers
- AGCC evaluation (on street surveys)
- Written and verbal feedback before, during and after event (mainly collected through social media)
- Full partners debrief meeting on 31st January 2017

Highlights from AGCC Evaluation

- 54% of respondents were visiting for the first time when interviewed
- 67% rated the Christmas Village as either ‘good’ or ‘excellent’
- 41% thought the Aberdeen Christmas Village was ‘better’ or ‘much better’ than last year (47% reported it was about the same)
- 80% strongly or tended to agree that the Christmas Village had a positive impact on their perception of Aberdeen (17% neither agreed nor disagreed)
- Net additional economic impact for the region: £1.7m
- Gross spend per head during visit: £40.87

Moving Forward

A full partners debrief session took place on 31st January 2017, with the output being used to inform the project plan for Aberdeen Christmas Village 2017/2018.

Some of the key actions from this meeting were:

- Adrian Watson, Aberdeen Inspired CEO has written to the Leader of the Council to ascertain where the event is likely to be staged for 2017/18 following redevelopment of the Marischal Square area. In addition, he requested ACC Project Management support, that was gratefully received the previous year.
- A Working Group be set up, in very early course, with key strategic partners to oversee the event planning process and to reach out to business in the city and wider North East to develop and expand on the offering for this coming year in a coordinated fashion.