

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 20 August 2020

Update on Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2020/2021

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All especially City Centre 43 and 46
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
 - 1.1.1 approve the headline approach for delivering Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay in 2020/2021;
 - 1.1.2 note that the Big Wheel and Star Flyer in East Princes Street Gardens will require Planning Permission and are subject to approval;
 - 1.1.3 note that the proposed programme will be developed fully through the Event Planning Operations Group and will be subject to licences being approved by Council officers;
 - 1.1.4 note that the delivery of any events for Christmas and Hogmanay will be dictated by, and depend on, the public health position at that time; and
 - 1.1.5 note that a full programme launch will take place later in the year for both events.

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Report

Update on Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay 2020/2021

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The impact of Covid-19 has required the producers of Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay to significantly alter plans for both events to meet public health guidelines while still delivering events to celebrate Christmas and Hogmanay. This report provides an update on the headline approach for both Christmas and Hogmanay 2020/21. A full launch for both events will take place later in the year. All permissions for Christmas and Hogmanay events will be dictated by the public health position at that time and events may be subject to alteration or cancellation if the public health guidance changes.

3. Background

- 3.1 Edinburgh's Christmas takes place over a six-week period from around the third weekend in November to around 6 January, at locations in and around the city centre of Edinburgh. The activities that form Edinburgh's Christmas include a market offer, family attractions and, until 2018, an ice rink and a Spiegel tent.
- 3.2 Edinburgh's Hogmanay is an internationally renowned New Year festival in its 28th year. The festival centres around celebrations on 31 December. The festival provides international promotion for the city and images of the midnight fireworks display are broadcast around the world, attracting significant international audiences as well as providing managed city centre celebrations. Activities include a street party, concerts in Princes Street Gardens, a torchlight procession and an open-air ceilidh.
- 3.3 In light of Covid-19 it is clear that the traditional format for both events will need to change.

4. Main report

Impact of Covid-19

- 4.1 On 23 March 2020 lockdown was introduced in Scotland to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus. The restrictions in place are reviewed a minimum of every three weeks.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government have published a route map through and out the crisis which sets out the phases at which events can take place.
- 4.3 On [20 July 2020](#) further guidance was published for the events sector which recognised the importance of the sector to help drive economic recovery and focused mainly on workplace and workforce. This guidance is expected to be supplemented with specific industry guidance.
- 4.4 The public health guidance is regularly updated.
- 4.5 In developing the proposed programme, the safety of the public has been paramount and the organisers, Council officers and public sector partners are working in partnership to ensure that these events will be safe and can be safely attended and with confidence.

Proposed Programme for 2020/2021

- 4.6 In response to the current public health advice Underbelly Ltd (Underbelly), the producers of Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay, have devised a programme for both events that allows the city to celebrate the winter period while observing public health guidelines.
- 4.7 Underbelly presented their headline plans to the Festivals and Events All Party Oversight Group (APOG) on 21 July 2020. Feedback from that session has helped to shape the proposed programme and the APOG will be kept updated during the development of the events.
- 4.8 In developing both events the following strategic objectives have been used:

Edinburgh's Christmas

- To produce a festive celebration for Edinburgh;
- To put Edinburgh first – local businesses and residents – and to maintain and promote public health;
- To promote Edinburgh as a capital of local makers and producers, across already established local markets;
- To disperse the central Edinburgh offering from the main focus of East Princes Street Gardens and to create a trail through the city that attracts people in to the city and its businesses;
- To continue to provide an offer for families in Edinburgh at a time of festive celebration when other amenities may be closed (e.g. Christmas pantomimes);

- To continue the tradition of free to attend events in celebration of Christmas; and
- To prioritise public health.

Edinburgh's Hogmanay

- For Edinburgh to enhance and retain Scotland's global reputation as the home of Hogmanay;
- To create events that give Edinburgh and Scotland positive and impactful media moments;
- To create a series of events that allow people in Edinburgh to reflect on 2020 and to look forward positively to 2021;
- To create events that thank those who have contributed during the response to the pandemic; and
- To prioritise public health.

Edinburgh's Christmas

- 4.9 The proposed programme for this year's Christmas programme will spread the footprint of the events further across the city with less of a focus on East Princes Street Gardens than previous years. A City Centre Trail (21 November 2020 to 3 January 2021) comprising a number of sites across the Old Town and New Town is being developed. At this stage, sites identified for Edinburgh's Christmas City Centre Trail include the High Street, East Princes Street Gardens, Mound Precinct, Castle Street and George Street with the potential for a further site on the south of the city centre. All sites may restrict capacity to allow for physical distancing and sufficient circulation space.
- 4.10 The Christmas markets will firmly focus on Edinburgh-based makers and producers to create an Edinburgh's Christmas Makers' Market. Last year's Christmas market saw 33% of stallholders from Edinburgh and the Lothians and the producers are working to a target to extend this to over 50%. As the restrictions of Covid-19 have had a serious impact on the city's makers and producers, this year's Christmas will give a much-needed boost to local businesses. Wider city centre activation will help those businesses on Princes Street and the surrounding city centre area by providing a further reason for visitors to come to the city centre. Underbelly are also working with officers within the Council's Business Growth and Inclusion service on a campaign to promote local businesses, makers and producers and existing markets outside the city centre.
- 4.11 The event site in East Princes Street Gardens will be significantly reduced and limited to the top path of the gardens only. There will be no infrastructure or activity south of this area. The Gardens will be host to the Big Wheel and Star Flyer only. While the summer wheel opportunity has been paused due to concerns over the

impact of large structures on this area of the gardens, the Christmas Big Wheel and Star Flyer are supported by existing and bespoke deep pile caps, which allow these attractions to sit above the ground surface, reducing their impact on the Gardens. Crucially, the pile caps prevent any slippage of the soil in that part of the gardens and were installed after a risk to the integrity of the bankings from large installations was identified in 2013. The pile caps allow these attractions to rest against bed rock rather than the soil of the gardens, eliminating the risk of soil slippage. The caps are specific to both the Star Flyer and Big Wheel.

- 4.12 Both these attractions will require Planning Permission including a full Environmental Impact Assessment, which will be submitted following this Committee, if this report is approved.
- 4.13 The Garden of Remembrance will be installed and removed by Poppy Scotland and the Royal British Legion Scotland (RBLs) from 19 October to 12 November 2020. While the usual moratorium on site activity will be observed on both Remembrance Sunday and 11 November, no height construction work on the Big Wheel or Star Flyer will take place until 12 November, after Poppy Scotland and RBLs have completely removed the Remembrance Garden.
- 4.14 Access to East Princes Street Gardens will be restricted to a limited capacity agreed with the Council and partners to ensure there is no crowding and that physical distancing can be maintained. A number of options including pre-booking and virtual queuing via an app are being explored with Council officers and partners.
- 4.15 The Mound Precinct will once again host market stalls but with a reduced, controlled capacity to allow physical distancing and more circulation space. Underbelly are in discussions with Essential Edinburgh regarding activity on George Street, including to return the popular ice rink, which was absent in 2019. Further details on George Street will be announced in due course.
- 4.16 Officers and Underbelly are working to identify space for family focussed attractions. Audience data from the 2019 event shows that one-third of all visitors attended that year's family attractions. Such space will be on hard standing. As an earlier report to Culture and Communities Committee outlined, options are limited and transport and mobility issues would need to be addressed in any preferred option. Final detailed considerations would be presented to the Festivals and Events APOG.
- 4.17 Other free events will mark the switch on of the Christmas tree; the Nativity Carol Concert and community events will also return including the Edinburgh primary schools' stained-glass window competition 'Winter Windows'.
- 4.18 All necessary permissions and consents, including Planning Permission for any structures in place over 28 days, will be in place prior to opening to the public.

Edinburgh's Hogmanay

- 4.19 As publicised earlier this month, the Edinburgh's Hogmanay Street Party is unable to proceed this year due to Covid-19 restrictions. While the city is unable to host its official party, it is important that Edinburgh retains its prominence in international new year celebrations. This year's events will mark the close of an extremely difficult year and allow the city to look forward to a fresh start in 2021.
- 4.20 It is proposed that this year's programme will start with a torchlit event in central Edinburgh, which will thank key workers during the pandemic. Current guidelines require physical distancing to be observed and, as such, the processional element has been removed.
- 4.21 To mark Hogmanay itself, the 31 December and the days leading up to it will be marked by a series of visually spectacular moments across the city, which will be developed in collaboration with Scottish artists. Details will be announced as part of the Hogmanay launch later in the year.

Implementing Public Health Guidance

- 4.22 The programme outlined will be adapted in line with the latest public health guidance from the Scottish Government. Any changes in this guidance, especially any increase in restrictions, will be observed and implemented. In addition, special hygiene measures will be in place for boot hire at the ice rink (as proposed for George Street).
- 4.23 With the exception of those events where physical distancing can be implemented, the Council and its partners are working to discourage unofficial mass gatherings or spectator points and will communicate this through the official Hogmanay and Christmas channels.
- 4.24 Visitors to Edinburgh's Christmas may be required to pre-register for specific times to ensure that site capacities in certain areas are not exceeded and that physical distancing can be maintained. Where appropriate at both events, 'Track and Trace' measures will be implemented and strict hygiene measures observed across all sites.
- 4.25 While this report covers headline plans for both events, there is a significant amount of work required to finalise the detailed planning. The event proposals have been shared with the emergency services and other stakeholders and will be developed over the coming weeks to the satisfaction of all partners. All events are subject to licences being approved by Council officers. Work on this detailed planning will continue through the Council's Event Planning and Operations Group.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 An initial meeting of the key stakeholders and wider partners required to deliver these events has been held to help shape these proposals. If approved, officers in Public Safety will convene an Events Planning Operation Group for both events to further refine plans.

- 5.2 A full media launch for both events will be held later in the year.
- 5.3 Should public health guidance require a change in format for either of the events, the APOG on Festivals and Events will be updated and any changes communicated.
- 5.4 Parallel to this year's events, the consultation on the future of Edinburgh's Winter Festivals, from and including 2022, will be taking place once public consultations are recommenced. The findings of the consultation are expected to be published in Spring 2021.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The Council receives a Fixed Fee Rental Income from Underbelly for Edinburgh's Christmas (Lot 1) but provides no budget to the event producer.
- 6.2 Edinburgh's Hogmanay (Lot 2) has a budget allocation of up to £813,000. The values of both Lots are commercially sensitive and were reported to Finance and Resources Committee on 23 March 2017 as part of the B agenda.
- 6.3 Both events can be delivered within existing budget provisions. The event organisers are responsible for any costs that exceed the agreed budget provided.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Proposals have been taken to the APOG on Festivals and Events, which welcomed the focus of Edinburgh's Christmas on Edinburgh's makers and producers. Work will continue with officers from Business Growth and Inclusion to engage local businesses for Edinburgh's Christmas.
- 7.2 The supplier is expected to ensure that the two programmes remain attractive to Edinburgh residents. Edinburgh's Christmas in particular must remain accessible to families, and accessible to community groups.
- 7.3 The supplier is engaging with local businesses; stakeholder agencies and organisations as well as community groups, schools, other groups and individuals in the planning, delivery and assessment of events and attractions.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Motion to Culture and Communities Committee on [18 June 2019](#)
- 8.2 Report to Culture and Communities Committee on [28 January 2020](#)
- 8.3 Report to Policy and Sustainability Committee on [25 February 2020](#)

9. Appendices

9.1 None.