



## CABINET

Tuesday 3 September 2020

### FIRST LIGHT FESTIVAL

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In January 2019, cabinet approved the festival and ringfenced £120k to support the festival over three years. In September 2019, cabinet approved funding to a maximum of £200k for the First Light Festival 2020, to be taken from the 2019/20 Business Rate Retention Scheme.
2. This paper seeks approval for East Suffolk Council to support the delivery of the First Light Festival 2021.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Kirkley
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Craig Rivett, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development
<b>Supporting Officer:</b>	Kerry Blair Head of Operations 01502 523307 <a href="mailto:kerry.blair@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">kerry.blair@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

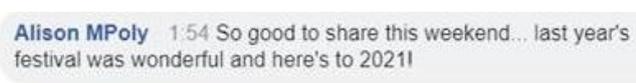
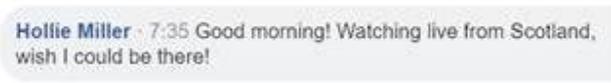
- 1.1 In January 2019 Cabinet gave approval to develop plans for a Festival in support of its strategic objectives.
- 1.2 The festival was organised and delivered by a Community Interest Company (CIC) with membership drawn from a number of arts organisations from Suffolk and Norfolk, with

Wayne Hemingway as the creative lead. The festival was held on council land and where possible to keep costs low, using council buildings and supported by council partners.

- 1.3 Following the success of the First Light Festival 2019, in September 2019 Cabinet approved supporting the First Light Festival 2020. Funding to a maximum of £200k was agreed to be taken from the 2019/20 Business Rate Retention Scheme.
- 1.4 Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the First Light Festival 2020 was unable to go ahead. Financial support for 2020 was therefore limited to £58,844.

## 2 FIRST LIGHT FESTIVAL 2020

- 2.1 To celebrate the summer solstice weekend and keep momentum going, the First Light Festival CIC planned a programme of events for 2020 to be live streamed through Facebook and Instagram.
- 2.2 Across the weekend the 15 events achieved the following engagement:
  - Videos were viewed 16,747 times
  - 49,456 people were reached
  - 184 Facebook page likes
  - 11, 988 engagement on posts
  - 3,391 Facebook page views



- 2.3 The online engagement around the sunrise has huge potential to grow into its own event alongside the actual sunrise celebration on the beach – and potentially reach enormous audiences.

## 3 RECAP OF IMPACTS FROM 2019

- 3.1 The festival delivered the following results. It should be noted that in most cases, actual results overperformed the expected outcome.

Benefits / Hard Outcomes	Number (Planned)	Number (Actual)
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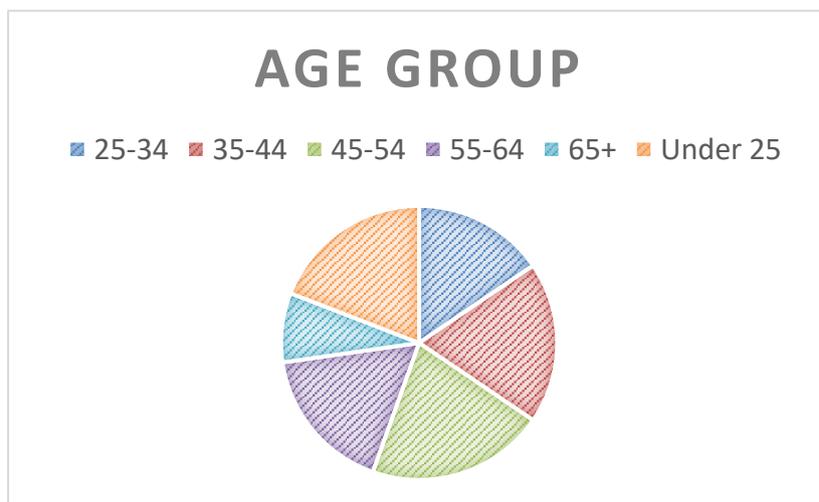
Jobs Created	4	4
Jobs - contract	40	115
External Investment	£171,659	£172,400
Sponsorship and other income	£32,000	£26,301
Volunteering opportunities	200	200
Links with schools and colleges	7	9
Hours of outreach delivered	120	150
Other Arts organisations involved	5	16
Number of Arts Professionals involved	130	248

3.2 The festival enjoyed considerable media coverage, both regionally and nationally, and the event also received positively on social media, with near universal praise for the event.



3.3 From an East Suffolk perspective, our social media activity was among our most popular ever on any topic. Across the weekend, there were more than 1,000 separate, individual posts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram using the hashtags #firstlightfestival and #firstlightlowestoft and over 2,300 using #lowestoft.

3.4 In the lead up to the Festival, we expected crowds of 10,000. After the event, the police estimated that this figure reached 30,000.



3.5 Other positive impacts of the festival are shown in the infographic below:



#### 4 EAST POINT PAVILION

- 4.1 In April 2020, Cabinet approved proposals for the refurbishment and repurposing of the East Point Pavilion (EPP) on Lowestoft Seafront. In July 2020, as part of the Towns Fund Programme released by the MHCLG, ESC was awarded a £750,000 grant for shovel ready capital projects. The EPP project was put forward to receive the funding, which was accepted.
- 4.2 This building has the common objective of using a structured, supervised programme of events in a well-designed setting, to help promote and revive interest in Lowestoft's South Beach area.
- 4.3 As part of the conditions for the MHCLG grant, the funding must be spent by March 2021, ensuring this project is complete by the Spring 2021. This key seafront building will therefore be up and running in time for First Light Festival 2021.
- 4.4 The building will be utilised for festival activities to engage local people and contribute to community cohesion and will also provide a venue during First Light Festival
- 4.5 First Light Festival CIC are based in the office space within the building and will hold lead-in workshops and activities for the festival and would have box office/information presence there in the run up to the festival.

#### 5 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?

- 5.1 By increasing the number of visitors to the town, the festival will support local businesses, and increase the contribution that tourism makes to the local economy.
- 5.2 Making people feel proud of where they live. The festival is a celebration of Lowestoft's position as first place to see the sun each day. The programme will include innovative and engaging work about the town's relationship to the sea, both past and future.
- 5.3 Delivering cultural activity as a way of increasing the number of visits to East Suffolk.

#### 6 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In 2019, £90,000 invested by East Suffolk Council through retained business rates delivered approximately £900,000 of direct local financial benefit. This is a 10:1 Return on Investment.
- 6.2 The cost of delivering an expanded festival programme for 2021, which will include activity both before and after the main festival event, is £424,703.
- 6.3 Confirmed public funding to date totals £119k, made up by the Arts Council (£99k) and Suffolk County Council (£20k).
- 6.4 In addition, a total of £67k will come from other grants (including Sport England and Kirkley People's Forum) and fundraising.
- 6.5 First Light CIC, the organisers of the festival have prepared a budget schedule which anticipates £38,705 of earned income for the event.

- 6.6 There is a carryover from money committed for First Light Festival 2020 totalling £41,156 and the grant of £21,400 received from New Anglia LEP.
- 6.7 The total budget is therefore £287,261.
- 6.8 The proposal is that the Council supports the gap in funding – meaning the commitment for ESC would be a maximum of £137,442k.
- 6.9 A total of £139,262 remains available from the 2019/20 Business Rates Retention Scheme, therefore we are not asking members to commit any new money to this festival.
- 6.10 If the same level of return on investment (in terms of local economic benefit) was seen in 2021 as in 2019, then the Return on Investment to local traders would be in the region of £1.4m.
- 6.11 Clearly the Council needs to be sensitive to the way it supports Arts organisations that may be under pressure as a result of coronavirus. As noted above, this decision does not commit any new money however it will benefit local Art organisations as they will be commissioned to produce pieces of work for the festival.

## **7 OTHER KEY ISSUES**

- 7.1 This report has been prepared having taken into account the results of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 7.2 Following informal feedback from the 2019 Festival and based on the results of the EIA, organisers will ensure improved wheelchair access to the beach for the 2021 Festival.
- 7.3 In addition, the content of the Festival will be reviewed to ensure that it reflects and engages with all community groups.

## **8 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 8.1 It is proposed that Cabinet agrees to support the festival for 2021 on the basis that it will:
- Attract 40-50,000 visitors, with a focus on people from outside of Lowestoft's traditional visitor base.
  - Brand Lowestoft as a desirable and attractive tourist destination
  - Extend the area from which people travel to Lowestoft to include the growing populations of Norwich and Ipswich
  - Contribute directly to the local economy during the festival including increased hotel stays
  - Position Lowestoft as a venue for contemporary arts and events – with the potential for significant financial support from the Arts Council
  - Identify Lowestoft as – uniquely in the UK – the first place to see the sunrise, allowing the town to trade on its geographical position

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That Cabinet notes the impact of the First Light Festival to the local economy and the positive response to the online events for 2020.
2. That Cabinet agrees to support the festival to a maximum of £140k in 2021, which remains available from the 2019/20 Business Rates Retention scheme.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS** (List below those documents for which the report author has materially relied upon to produce the report and which are available for the public to view. This is not necessary for confidential/exempt reports so, for these reports, this box can be deleted altogether).

For CABINET, CABINET MEMBER, CABINET SUB-COMMITTEES OR A JOINT COMMITTEE COMPRISED OF CABINET MEMBERS EXERCISING EXECUTIVE POWERS only – The following wording must be included. For any non-Cabinet reports, delete the wording (except where the report will progress onto the Cabinet).

Please note that copies of background papers have not been published on the Council's website [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk) but copies of the background papers listed below are available for public inspection free of charge by contacting the relevant Council Department.

Date	Type	Available From
19/08/2020	Equality Impact Assessment	Democratic Services