



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13TH DECEMBER 2021

**UPDATE ON THE RCT NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD 2024 –
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

REPORT OF DIRECTOR - PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION, AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AND DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR. RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELLBEING AND CULTURAL SERVICES, AND CLLR. ROBERT BEVAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on the work currently being undertaken in collaboration with National Eisteddfod officers in preparation for the 2024 Eisteddfod in Rhondda Cynon Taf specifically in relation to community engagement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Notes the content of the report.
2.2 Considers whether further information is required.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The report is to inform Cabinet Members of the approach being adopted to engage with communities to ensure that the National Eisteddfod in Rhondda Cynon Taf is a success not only during Eisteddfod week and the weeks and months leading up to that week but that there will be a significant positive legacy that remains for the longer term.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The National Eisteddfod of Wales is one of the world's largest festivals attracting 175,000 visitors annually. It is notable that the first modern National Eisteddfod was held at Aberdare in 1861 but it was in 1956 that it last visited Rhondda Cynon Taf when it was held at Mountain Ash.
- 4.2 An expression of interest to host the festival was made in 2017 and in March 2019 the National Eisteddfod Committee ratified Rhondda Cynon Taf as the host county for the festival in August 2022. Unfortunately, due to the impact of the Covid pandemic on the planned National Eisteddfod at Tregaron and then at Llyn and Eifionydd the following year, the date for the National Eisteddfod in Rhondda Cynon Taf has had to be postponed until August 2024.
- 4.3 However, preparatory work and discussions have been on-going and the Council appointed an Eisteddfod Project Officer at the end of 2019 to work closely with National Eisteddfod Officers to promote the festival and engage with communities. The pandemic limited the opportunities to engage directly with communities but during this period National Eisteddfod Officers applied for funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to pilot a new strategy for community engagement in Rhondda Cynon Taf that will form the blueprint for future Eisteddfodau.
- 4.4 The partnership between the Local Authority, the National Eisteddfod and communities will be vital to the success of the festival. Now that Wales is at Alert Level 0 it will be possible to start engaging directly with communities.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 As part of the project to develop a community strategy the National Eisteddfod has appointed a Community Development Officer (Katie Hall from Aberdare) whose role is funded by the NLHF. The aim will be to use culture and heritage to bring people together and to create opportunities through events and activities to engage with local people. She will work closely with the Council's Eisteddfod Project Officer (Scott Thomas).
- 5.2 The focus on heritage and culture aligns with the themes identified by the Council as integral to the Rhondda Cynon Taf National Eisteddfod which will provide an opportunity to showcase the unique cultural heritage of the county borough and the cultural importance of the language as the Council works to contribute towards the Welsh Government's vision of growing a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 5.3 The National Eisteddfod's NLHF project is divided into 2 parts:
- Phase 1 of the project will target young people aged 16- 25 to make the Welsh language and the Eisteddfod relevant outside of the classroom and

school – music will form an important element of this engagement. During Phase 1 older people will also be targeted as they often influence family decisions. Events and activities celebrating the local area’s heritage and culture using Welsh will be developed to attract this group. 5 events will be delivered between December 2021 and April 2022.

- Phase 2 of the project will see the delivery of a further 5 events between May and August 2022. At the end of this period, it is envisaged that the National Eisteddfod’s Community Strategy will be finalised and that these events will help shape the National Eisteddfod in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

5.4 A community forum is being established – an inaugural meeting took place on 3rd November - and there is a clear commitment to work with a wide range of officers and Elected Members to ensure that they engage with different communities and groups.

5.5 Presentations have already been made by the National Eisteddfod Chief Executive Officer and her team to the Cabinet Welsh Language Steering Group and the Strategic Arts and Culture Committee where they were very well received. One of the key messages was the need to be inclusive ensuring that people understood that there was something for everyone in the Eisteddfod and it was not just for people who could speak Welsh.

5.6 The Council’s Eisteddfod Officer has been supporting the National Eisteddfod Officers:

- By researching and sharing information on community groups;
- Working with the Youth Engagement and Participation Service to explore ways of engaging young people in the Eisteddfod;
- Organising and facilitating meetings with Council services as they start to consider a wide range of issues in preparation for 2024, for example, the infra-structure group that is due to meet in December 2021;
- Linking with community members who are keen to contribute to the promotion of the Eisteddfod for example, supporting a local historian (formerly a Reference Librarian in the Library Service) who is writing a book about previous National Eisteddfodau in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Contact has also been made with other Local Authority Officers, for example in Monmouthshire, to learn from their experiences of preparing for the coming of the National Eisteddfod.

5.7 Relationships are also being developed between the National Eisteddfod’s Artistic team and Rhondda Cynon Taf’s Arts Service and a meeting is due to take place on 15th November to start discussing the artistic programme.

6. LEGACY

6.1 The National Eisteddfod’s aims in relation to legacy for Rhondda CynonTaf are:

- Community legacy – more Welsh and bilingual activities and events locally;
- Cultural legacy – increase in interest in local culture and heritage and more people interested in the story of RCT at a national level;
- Linguistic legacy - more people choosing to learn Welsh and choosing to use the language as part of their daily life;
- Economic legacy – effect of around £15.9 million on the local economy during Eisteddfod week;
- Digital legacy - community project aims to improve people’s digital skills;
- Inclusivity legacy -people of all backgrounds feeling more confident about Welsh and feeling that the language and culture belongs to everyone, and choosing to come to Welsh and bilingual events;
- Volunteering legacy – a bank of volunteers of all ages with the skills to continue volunteering bilingually in local groups and organisations following the Eisteddfod.

6.2 The above align to Council priorities as identified in the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Action Plan and the Corporate Plan.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

7.1 This is an information report and therefore no equality and diversity screening is necessary.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 This is an information report and therefore no Welsh Language assessment is necessary.

9. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

9.1 This is an information report therefore no consultation is required.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

10.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

11.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report.

12. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

12.1 The Welsh language is a cross-cutting theme in the Council’s Corporate Plan and the Council has a Strategy and Action Plan for the Promotion of the Welsh Language which includes a focus on increasing the use of the Welsh

Language within communities by working with partners to deliver and/or facilitate events and activities. The work undertaken in partnership with the National Eisteddfod will support this as well as contributing to Cymraeg 2050 – the Welsh Government’s Strategy to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

- 12.2 The Corporate Plan recognises the important role that culture and heritage plays in supporting the wellbeing of residents enabling them to be independent or maintain their independence for longer. Supporting the development of events to engage with residents of all ages will contribute to the Council’s aim of increasing participation in arts and culture.
- 12.3 The success of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Eisteddfod is dependent on a partnership between the National Eisteddfod, the Council and local communities. This report highlights how the National Eisteddfod and the Council are working together to ensure that communities across the county borough are involved in the preparations for the festival, that no one feels excluded, and that they have an opportunity to shape the events and activities that will be developed so that there is a longer-term legacy after 2024.
- 12.4 The main well-being goal being addressed is goal 6 – a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. However, as recognised in the Corporate Plan, participation in arts and culture has a positive impact on promoting health and well-being and brings people together, thereby increasing community cohesion.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 The successful application by the National Eisteddfod team to the NLHF for funding to pilot a new approach to community engagement in Rhondda Cynon Taf will ensure that communities across the county borough will be involved in shaping the events that take place in the run-up to, and during Eisteddfod week.
- 13.2 The Council’s Eisteddfod Project Officer and other Council Officers will continue to work closely with the National Eisteddfod team especially in relation to their work of engaging with communities across the whole of the county borough. Our common aim is to ensure maximum involvement by communities and to promote the message that the Eisteddfod is for everyone and you do not need to be able to speak Welsh to enjoy and participate in its activities and events.
- 13.3 The importance of this work cannot be under-estimated as it will be central to the success of the festival, and its legacy, in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 13.4 Further reports will be prepared for Members in the period between now and the 2024 RCT Eisteddfod updating Members on a range of issues associated with the event in addition to the ongoing community engagement work.

Other Information:

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers:

None

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