

FLEXIBLE FUNDING ASSESSMENT

Applicant name:	Hebridean Celtic Festival	
Application Reference number:	G201001061	
Amount Requested (Year 1/Year 2)	£30,000	£30,000
Officer's recommendation		
<p>Summarise the key points of your assessment and draw out the strengths and weaknesses of the application taken together with any comments you have received from source evidence (portfolio of evidence/ internal / external consultation). Highlight any specific risks <i>Note: The amount of information you provide here should be sufficient for the decision maker to reach a decision. As with all previous commentary boxes please do not exceed 250 words</i></p>		
Comments:		
<p>Hebcelt has a good track record and has developed organically to become one of Scotland's key music festivals.</p> <p>The artistic programme has been impressive and of a very high performance standard. Hebcelt have attracted major international artists to the event and it is great for audiences to be able to see them in the Hebrides. The commissioning strand that has developed is very interesting one and the project this year has received very good reviews. This is something the Music Department would like to festival to continue to explore.</p> <p>The festival is very supportive of Scottish and Scottish based artists the event has become one of the key-events in the Traditional Music Calendar and acts a locus for the industry and the musicians.</p> <p>Despite suffering a down-turn in audience and ticket income in 2006 & 2007 the festival has a strong record in developing audiences and providing participatory, education and outreach events for locals and visitors to the festival.</p> <p>The festival has amazing local links and exemplary partnership working.</p> <p>The proposed budget is realistic and achievable.</p>		
Officer's overall priority recommendation		HIGH
Lead Officer signature:		Date: 24/1/2008 Revised: 20/3/08
Print name:	Stuart Thomas	

Stage 2: Heads of Departments prioritise applications with advice from Specialist Advisors

1. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the application identified by the Specialist Advisors? Please summarise their comments below. What were their ratings of the importance of the application in being supported?

The panel consisted of Murray Buchanan, Paul Bream, Jim Gaitens, Rachel Nelken and Susan Nickalls, with ratings received from Marie Fielding by email.

Comments:

- The panel felt that this application offered good value for money.
- The panel felt that the application displayed real strengths in the organisation's operation, such as excellent investment in electronic marketing.

The panel rated the importance of the application in being supported as **High**.

2. Summarise the role of the organisation within the infrastructure of the sector. Assess to what extent the organisation's vision will contribute to the department's and to Scottish Arts Council's aims: (to fulfil artists' potential, to increase participation, to place creativity at the heart of learning)

Comments:

The Hebridean Celtic Festival (Hebcelt) is one of the exemplar events in the Scottish festival calendar and is of the highest strategic importance to the music department. Hebcelt joins St Magnus and Blas in successfully engaging with the highest quality professional input in performance with a critically and equally important community benefit.

The community input to the event is significant, not least in the number of local volunteers without whom festivals like Hebcelt would simply not exist. This extends to the festival's ability to involve locally based young musicians in workshop, outreach and performance-related opportunities. Access and participation is wholly inclusive and the full utilisation of An Lanntair as the main venue, to compliment activities around Stornoway is very important.

The festival sits in both the Key Promoters, Festivals and Venues priority and within traditional music with a strong remit for promoting the indigenous Gaelic language and culture, which Hebcelt does to great effect. The festival has to compete in a market place which is becoming ever more crowded with alternative promotions and events, such is the popularity of live music, but I have every confidence that Hebcelt will embrace every challenge presented and continue to provide such an open and inclusive experience in a very special location in the Western Isles that must continue to be supported as a high priority.

1. Fit with FXO criteria: Fully.

1.1 Excellent artistic vision and leadership; role within sector/support to artists: Hebcelt exemplifies what a more geographically remotely centred event can achieve and in this case, an international reputation with a key community involvement for the Isle of Lewis, Stornoway and the Western Isles. Hebcelt is a real market leader with an increasingly strong brand for quality.

1.2 Improving your engagement with the public: Excellent engagement with the public, many of whom visit the western isles because of this event, so cultural tourism features highly.

1.3 Good practice in the governance and management: An excellent board demonstrating sound government that compliments the creative vision demonstrated by the festival director.

1.4 Practical implementation of your equal opportunities policy; widening access: This festival has adopted sound equal opportunities policies and continues to widen access to the communities it serves, both in the education/outreach programme and in the core performance activities.

1.5 Raising other income at least 25%: Yes.

2. Fit with Departmental priorities: As clearly stated above, Hebcelt is a key event for the music department, as a major festival, promoter of the traditional music sector and of the highest performance across a wide range complimented by excellent community involvement and education programmes.

Fit within Scottish Arts Council aims: Fully meets all three aims.

3. Based on the lead officer's assessment and the subsequent meeting with Specialist advisors, please rate the application (High, medium, low) summarise your reasons for assessing the application as you have (drawing out the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and highlighting any specific risks)

Comments:

The assessing officer's (Stuart Thomas) report echoed the ensuing positive feedback from the Specialist Advisor's panel. I have made it clear in my earlier comments that Hebcelt is a high strategic priority for the music department. It is well run by a small but effective team, directed by Caroline MacLennan. The event has almost cult status amongst the many high quality performing artists who regularly play Hebcelt and that is much to do with the way they are treated both in terms of the volunteer-led hospitality available but as importantly, because of the quality of the creative experience at this event. To be able to attract the calibre of artists Hebcelt does underlines the quality of the event.

Hebcelt has also been successful in using innovative web design to promote the event and to utilise for on-line ticket sales which are now significant. The site is regularly updated and is fully interactive. In many ways Hebcelt does what many larger events should be doing in terms of that interactive ability. They regularly update their key subscribers on the programme, so the event is extremely user/customer aware and friendly and this is reflected in the consistently high audience figures. The slight decrease in 2007 was unfortunately due to the full commercial promotion of Elton John in a nearby Highland location at the same time. This will not happen in 2008.

The application, as already noted by the Specialist Advisor's panel would have been seriously considered at a higher level of requested funding, so I have no hesitation in recommending Hebcelt as a high priority at the level requested.

1.1 Application rating: High

I absolutely agree with the assessing officer and Specialist Advisor's panel that this is clearly a High rating.

1.2 Reasons for assessing at this rating: "Cult Status" would not be an inappropriate descriptor for Hebcelt and this festival deserves its place amongst Scotland's finest examples of cultural tourism that directly impacts positively on island communities. Their marketing and e-promotion is also worthy of special mention as an exemplar for others, far more heavily subsidised, to follow..

1.3 Strengths of application: The high quality of the programme alongside community and education benefits. Also the budgets are modest, balanced and absolutely achievable.

1.4 Weaknesses of applications: None.

1.5 Specific risks associated with the application: None.

1.6 Development areas identified: Continue to do what they do.

1.7 Recommended level of support: As requested at £30,000 for both years.

4. Please comment on the geographic reach of the programme

Comments: The community involvement includes the archipelago of the Western Isles and not simply the Stornoway (Lewis) mainland island. Also the geographical spread of participating artists is potentially world-wide and is wholly interactive with the local communities.

1.1 Where will the activity/programme take place? The archipelago of the Western Isles.

1.2 Where will the audience come from? Local and international, together with a significant local community input.

Head of Department's overall priority recommendation		HIGH
Head of Department's signature:		Date: 15 February 2008 Revised 23 March 2008
Print name:	Ian Smith	

Stage 3: Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) make recommendations to Directors (Acting Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive and Co-Directors of Arts)		
1. Summarise the reasons why the final rating has been made.		
Comments: Strong overall fit with FXO criteria. Fund at the level requested. Support of £30,000 annually is proposed.		
Collective Heads of Department (Arts Development Managers) priority recommendation		High
Chair of Meeting signature:		Date: 2 April 2008
Print name:	Iain Munro	

Stage 4: Directors make recommendations to Joint Board (strategic fit)		
Record the Directors' recommendation and confirm the suggested level of support. If the recommendation differs from Stage 3, please summarise the reasons why.		
Comments: Agree with Stage 3 recommendation. Support of £30,000 annually is proposed.		
Directors recommendations to Joint Board		High
Acting Chief Executive signature:	Jim Tough	Date: 10 April 2008

Stage 5: Joint Board's decisions		
Record the Joint Board's recommendation. If the recommendation differs from Stage 4, please summarise the reasons why.		
Comments: The Joint Board accepts the Stage 4 recommendation.		
Joint Board Final Decision		APPROVE
Date: 24 April 2008	If approved for support, enter sum awarded	£30,000

End of Assessment