the moray Council

REPORT TO: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE 3 FEBRUARY 2009**

SUBJECT: **SUPPORT FOR "HOMECOMING 2009" PROJECTS**

BY: **DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To invite the Committee to consider a request from the Spirit of Speyside Company to contribute £20,000 to the 2009 Whisky Festival, as part of "2009: Year of Homecoming".

1.2 To invite the Committee to consider setting up a grant scheme to support community groups to put on events celebrating "2009: The Year of Homecoming".

1.3 To invite the Committee to consider providing a marquee for a reception during the RAF Kinloss Homecoming day in Forres.

1.4 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section D(9) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the provision of assistance to those engaged in industry or commerce.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

2.1 The Committee agrees to award the Spirit of Speyside Company a grant of £12,000 to support the 2009 Whisky Festival (subject to presentation of detailed accounts and an evaluation) on the understanding that the festival will be self-financing hereafter; and

2.2 The Committee agrees to allocate £5,000 to a Homecoming Community Grant Scheme that will provide grant assistance to community groups putting on Homecoming themed events during 2009, and to note that an application to match fund it will be presented to the LEADER Programme.

2.3 The Committee agrees to fund the cost of providing a marquee, to a maximum cost of £2,000, for a reception by RAF Kinloss in Forres during their Homecoming day event in June.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival

3.1.1 The Council has received a request from Spirit of Speyside Ltd to assist in the funding of the 2009 Whisky Festival.

The 2009 event will be a double celebration:

- The 10th Anniversary of the Whisky Festival
- One of the signature events of the Year of Homecoming.

3.1.2 The Council has previously indicated to the company its intention to withdraw from funding the Festival and that the industry should contribute more.

The Council has provided financial support for the last 9 years. In 2008 a contribution of £8,000 was awarded.

The figure sought for the 2009 festival has increased to £20,000, reflecting a much enhanced event.

At the December meeting of this Committee, the Chairman of the Spirit of Speyside gave a presentation on the 2009 Festival, which is to run over 10 days instead of 4 as in previous years, and that it will be one of the signature events of Moray's Year of Homecoming.

The 2009 Festival will provide a wider range of events appealing to a larger audience. It will also have a greater community involvement and a major family orientated event as the climax on Saturday 19 May in Aberlour.

3.1.3 The Festival brings additional visitors to Moray during the month of May. The 2008 Festival evaluation showed that:

- 17,000 visitors attended, up 6% from previous year;
- it generated over £650,000 of revenue for the area;
- direct spend by visitors was £253 per person, up 18%; and
- 99% of those interviewed rated the Festival as very good or good.

3.1.4 Whilst public sector funding is mainly for pump priming projects with an expectation of withdrawing as soon as possible, the Whisky Festival has always sought public sector funding, and the Council has each year provided financial support, because it saw it as important to the economy. 2009 is a special year. The Festival is bigger and more expensive to run, with new elements and it is also at the centre of Moray's Homecoming activities. The Council is committed to a strong participation in Homecoming 2009 as part of its Single Outcome Agreement with the Government.

3.2 **Homecoming Community Grant Scheme**

3.2.1 The Council is also actively involved in promoting The Year of Homecoming:

- **"From Rail to Space"**, a 4 day programme of activities in October, celebrating Moray as the birthplace of the Canadian Pacific Railways, (two of the founding members are from Dufftown and Forres), and Moray as a possible location for Virgin Galactic Space Tourism Project. Details of the programme of activities will be published shortly.

- **"Moray Connection"**, a partnership between the Council and a number of heritage organisations throughout Moray will contribute to Homecoming and organise events from "Discover Your Ancestors" to celebrating famous Moravians. The project is currently under assessment by Heritage Lottery for funding and a decision is expected shortly.

3.2.2 There is evidence that other community groups want to be involved in the Homecoming celebration, and a number of them have approached the Council for financial assistance.

3.2.3 It is therefore suggested to set up a small and short lived grant scheme to provide funding to such groups. It is also proposed to make an application to the LEADER programme for match funding.

3.2.4 The proposed scheme rules would be:

- Applicants to be constituted community groups with a bank account.

- Events to be funded must relate to the 5 themes of Homecoming:

  - Robert Burns
  - Scottish Ancestry
  - Whisky
  - Golf
  - Innovation and the Scottish Enlightenment

- Applicants to provide a minimum of 25% of the project cost either in cash or in kind.

- The application to include both a detailed summary of the proposal and a detailed costing

- A statement on how the project will be evaluated

- Applications will be assessed as and when received by officers of the development team in consultation with the Chair of the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committee, and the elected members of the ward in which the event will take place. Appraisal criteria will

reflect the 'rules' above and will form part of the guidance given to applicants.

3.3 **RAF Homecoming Day**

Discussions have taken place between RAF Kinloss and RAF Lossiemouth and the Council regarding a partnership approach to Homecoming celebrations.

3.3.1 RAF Kinloss will have a Homecoming day on June 24th, inviting back ex Kinloss based servicemen and women. The Red Arrows have been booked and will fly over Forres that day. To close the day they will host a cocktail reception for both local and service people as invited guests. Rather than hosting it in the base, they would like it to be in Forres as a "thank you" to the people of Forres.

The RAF are seeking the Council's assistance in finding a suitable venue for the reception, but in the absence of suitable public buildings, the suggestion is to hire a marquee and install it in Grant Park, which the Council would fund.

3.3.2 RAF Lossiemouth will run a bigger "Family and Friends Day" than usual, and has offered to open the base during the October "from Rail to Space" event, adding greatly to the visitor attraction.

It was also agreed that the Council can have a presence during the "Family and Friends" Day to promote Moray as destination for tourism and for business.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

Corporate
Support for tourism is one of the main priorities of the Council.

(b) Policy and Legal

Not applicable

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

Financial
It is proposed to contribute £12,000 to the 2009 Whisky Festival and £5,000 to a Homecoming Community Grant Scheme and up to £2,000 for the hire of a marquee at Forres from the 2008/09 Economic Development. This budget has currently £42,000 remaining as uncommitted.

Staffing
Officer time to set up the scheme and operate it over the next few months, will be incorporated within the existing workload.

(d) Consultations

The Principal Accountant has been consulted and her comments have been incorporated.

The Tourism Steering Group has been made aware of the Spirit of Speyside request and the recommendation reflects their discussion on it.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The Whisky Festival is a major event in Moray. Not only does it bring new visitors to the area and contributes to the economy, but it is also an ambassador, promoting Moray as a destination throughout the world. It has always been the Council's intention to progressively reduce its funding until self-financing is achieved. However, 2009 is a special year and the Festival is much bigger, with some major events spread over 10 days instead of 4; in view of this it is reasonable to increase the funding contribution from £8,000 in 2008 to £12,000 for 2009, a similar ratio request/award to 2008, the funding will be allocated to transport, community involvement, promotion, flags and banners and evaluation costs. The organisers will also be made aware that the Council expect the event to become self-financing in the future.

5.2 "Homecoming" will be important for the tourist industry in Moray in the current economic downturn. "Events" are one of the contributory factors which persuade visitors to come to Moray, and the wide choice of quality events throughout the year should result in visitors both coming to Moray and staying longer. Some community groups are keen to participate in "Homecoming"; they have the ability to provide a local experience that visitors enjoy; however such groups usually do not have the finance to organise special events and the proposed scheme will assist.

5.3 The RAF is celebrating its 90th Anniversary, and to mark the many decades of good community relationships, and economic benefit to Moray from its two bases, the Council should participate with the RAF in the proposed event in Forres, and offer, in place of providing a building venue in Forres, to fund the hire of a marquee in Grant Park up to a maximum cost of £2,000.

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Background Papers:
Ref: PM/JC