

**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 8 DECEMBER, 2009**

SUBJECT: MORAY FILM LIAISON SERVICE

BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To consider the benefit of continuing The Moray Council's commitment to promote Moray as a film location by creating a Moray Film Liaison Service and seek approval of a budget to fund the Service.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to forward funding of projects from the Economic Development budget.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The committee is recommended to approve the sum of £4,000 in total over the next 3 financial years, subject to budgetary consideration.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Moray Council has been a member of the Scottish Highland and Islands Film Commission (SHIFC), since 1997. SHIFC is run by a partnership of 5 local authorities comprising, the Moray Council, Highland Council, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council and Argyll & Bute Council. Comhairle Eilean (Western Isles Council) ceased their membership in 2008.
- 3.2 The current services provided by SHIFC includes:
- Access to a locations database system where digital images and associated information can be stored.
 - Film enquiries received by SHIFC for each area which originate from Scottish Screen are sent via a blanket e-mail for action by the relevant partners.
 - Property-landowners can register their property details which are held on the location database which can also include a selection of location photographs.
 - Production Guide - this is an online guide where businesses who can provide services related to the film industry can register their business or service free of charge.
 - Marketing – limited marketing is produced in paper form with SHIFC logo items such as keyrings, pens etc., being produced for distribution at

festivals and events. Most of this budget is used for the Film Commissioner to attend festivals.

- The Film Commissioner represents SHIFC at a range of industry linked meeting held by Scottish Screen, UK Film Office and UK Film Location Network with very limited feedback being available.
- 3.3 Each Partner has access to the locations database which stores photographs and records etc. The work undertaken by SHIFC no longer includes the servicing of film enquiries, and processing of information on locations, i.e. making available photographs etc to film companies and location managers directly. SHIFC staff had handled the servicing of enquiries originally and all administration relating to this was carried out. However, over the past few years, each partner area is passed the enquiry and is expected to liaise directly with the Film/TV Company, location managers etc. The database system, although it provides many technical features, is difficult for untrained officers (i.e. SHIFC partners) to operate. This has been an issue for a number of years and officers do not have the resources to carry out and update the database system which also includes enquiry tracking, having to obtain spend sheets and general statistics which are required for SHIFC's overall targets. This would require regular in-depth training as development of the system is upgraded.
- 3.4 Each partner is also responsible for in-house liaison with departments such as Roads, Legal etc. and has to co-ordinate permissions such as road closures.
- 3.6 Although Festivals are important for networking and promoting SHIFC in general, there is no evidence that these events focus greatly on one particular area. For example when Moray was represented at Cannes, sponsorship was provided by local Moray businesses with Moray Council staff travel costs for attendance at the event being met by the Moray Council. All publicity relating to the event making reference to Moray was organised by the Development Services Team with little or no input from SHIFC.
- 3.7 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 20th October 2009, the committee agreed to cease membership of the Scottish Highlands and Islands Film Commission on 31st March 2010 and to continue as an independent Moray Film Liaison Service.

4. THE PROPOSALS

- 4.1 When The Moray Council joined SHIFC in 1997, it was relevant to Moray as it had not developed its film service. However, the benefit of The Moray Council continuing to be a member of SHIFC does not reflect value for money as a result of reduced service provided by the organisation. SHIFC as a whole is also being reviewed and cannot operate on existing budget, it is likely to be looking for increased contributions from partner areas.

- 4.2 In general terms many of the film companies contact the Moray Council directly and over the years, this has included the Channel 4's popular series, Location Location which this has been filmed twice in the area and most recently the BBC2 production, Hairy Bikers which had a series of programmes running from 5th October 2009. Moray Council often receive initial enquiries regarding various locations and it can sometimes take from one year onwards for the production to be completed. Smaller productions such as documentaries, fashion shoots and commercials have also been filmed in and around the area.
- 4.3 Moray held its first film festival in 2009, which created good working relations with Moray College and other partners, and as a result it has attracted interest from industry professionals to support future events.
- 4.4 A Moray Council "Film Liaison Service" would provide a 'one stop shop' service to the film industry and provide them with featuring locations throughout Moray are per their requirements. The updating of records of owners/tenants and landowners would be carried out on a regular basis and stored on a simple system. Any funding allocated to a "Moray Film Liaison" service, would be concentrated on promoting the area and compiling information in order to meet a quick response to enquiries. In addition, liaison with Scottish Screen will include promotion of Moray through their dedicated website.
- 4.5 The Moray Council receive all enquiries and network meetings directly from Scottish Screen, the general service SHIFC provides no longer meets the requirements.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

The proposals contribute to the Single Outcome Agreement of the Community Planning Partnership with the Scottish Government in respect of the 'Outcomes' allocated to the 'Wealthier and Fairer' Group and the stated priorities of the Council's Plan for 2008-2011 in relation to the economy, jobs and tourism. The proposals will contribute to the Council's priorities of economic development and tourism.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

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

Financial

Total project cost:

The cost of providing promotional marketing and website page and providing and maintaining the replacement location photo database to promote Moray to the film industry is:

2010/11 £2,000

2011/12 £1,000

2012/13 £1,000

Subject to budgetary consideration, the project costs of £4,000 over 3 years can be met from the existing Economic Development budget.

Risks

The Moray Council will take steps to assess and minimise any risks whether financial or otherwise by monitoring and evaluating productions carrying out work in the area, through a monitoring and evaluation system.

Staffing

The Moray Council Development section will work with Scottish Screen to promote Moray as a film location. All the work as described within this report can be carried out within the day to day duties of the Development Services team.

Property

A list of Council properties have in the past been put forward as prospective locations and liaison with other departments are undertaken depending in the nature of the enquiry.

(d) Consultations

Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant has been consulted and agrees with the financial implications. Councillor E McGillivray has been kept apprised of these proposals.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Moray Council continue to provide a free and confidential service to the film and television community by carrying out targeted promotion and building on its excellent track record over the past 12 years.**

Author of Report: Mairi McIntosh, Development Officer

Background Papers: None.

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