

1 LOCAL GOV

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Sent: 22 September 2004 14:58
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Please find electronic version attached. Hard copy in post with accompanying literature

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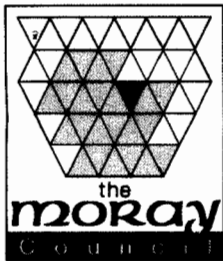
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22/09/2004



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Cultural Commission

I joined Moray Council as Arts Development Officer in 2001. Following the writing of the Arts Strategy (enclosed) it was clear that meaningful development could only be achieved through creating an arts infrastructure. Following successful applications to SAC Lottery, NOF and the Cultural Co-ordinators scheme Moray now has a team comprising: Arts Development Officer, Three Arts Development Workers, Youth Dance Development Worker and a full time Cultural Co-ordinator (leaflet enclosed). As a result there is now a structure whereby the arts, and support for the arts, can reach out into every part of the community (including schools).

Attached below are details of two contrasting projects in Moray that highlight the type of work being carried out by the Arts Development:

- The Hythehill Happening (DVD/Video available)
- Buckie Festival

Both in their own way are solutions to very different 'problems' and both are mechanisms for 'Cultural Entitlement'.

One of the challenges for 'Arts' has been the perception (certainly in local authorities) that Arts are an add on, a (expensive) frill that comes way down the pecking order after schools, road maintenance and grass cutting. However projects like Hythehill have begun to attract a lot of positive attention from other areas – police, youth justice, health etc – which in turn has released funding from none arts sources to improve the quality of life or address issues of community safety.

Arts Development in Moray Council is beginning to be recognised as a service/resource that can impact on a range of services – we have been approached by Planning and Environmental Protection to look at including public art in improvement schemes in harbours and school dining rooms (Hungry for Success). I believe that, from a local authority point of view, the cultural entitlement of local citizens should be enshrined in the community planning process, departmental service plans, policies and strategies. Money spent should be seen as an investment for the health and well being of the population in the future rather than an 'added expense' (in fact it's more likely to be a reallocation of funds rather than addition).

Yours sincerely

Nick Fearne
Arts Development Officer

Hythehill Happening – The Lossie Posse

Hythehill is an area of Lossiemouth, which for some time now has been subjected to much vandalism, in particular the Primary School. The Local Community Network is an interagency organisation, bringing together local housing associations, headteachers, health visitors, social work, community development, arts and sports development and police. The LCN Officer invited Moray Council's Arts Development team to consider introducing a new approach to tackling anti-social behaviour, which previously had not been tried before in Moray.

This led to an experimental evening in November 2003 where an area of this small town, Hythehill, was flooded with the sounds from a live DJ, and a gable end of the school was washed with interactive experimental video art. The purpose of this event was to gauge responses from the young people in their own territory. It was not advertised, relying on the young people to spread the word on the street; over 50 attended the 'Hythehill Happening'. This mainly involved young people deemed "socially-excluded", age 12-16 yrs. Originating in one part of the town of Lossiemouth, it then engaged other young people from other areas throughout the town, allowing these young people to interact with their peers and perceived rival groups.

The art forms of video, dance and music programming proved most popular as a result of the initial event, and all young people wanted to recreate a similar event. We designed a relaxed and informal arts programme, allowing the young people to feel confident enough to develop new skills in an environment they wish to be a part of. Throughout the whole arts programme, adult involvement was kept to an absolute minimum, allowing the young people to realise it was their project. It was essential the arts professionals, employed to lead development in their specialist fields, did so informally and with flexibility, reflecting the needs of the young people involved.

After 5 weeks of workshops, including a residential weekend, the young people then created an event for themselves and their peers. About 25-30 young people of Lossiemouth had been involved in all aspects of video-production and editing, music-making and programming, street and contemporary dance and DJ-ing. The results, on the evening, were the showcasing of the fruits of their labour. This included the 'premier' of their beautiful 10-minute video-dance piece. Thus was born 'The Lossie Posse'.

Significant outcomes of the project include:

- Attendance and engagement of young people who would not normally have participated in 'diversionary' activities
- Considerable reduction in vandalism in the area
- Reduction in truancy
- A greater awareness and better understanding as to who young people are as individuals, and how to communicate with their peers
- New-found self-respect for all involved
- New friendships created between previously rival groups
- Improved relationships with parents and/or guardians
- Less concern expressed by adult residents about young people's behaviour in area
- Continued support from local agencies and services
- A request from the BBC to perform at The Famous Spiegeltent during this summer's Edinburgh Festival Fringe
- Strong desire for the young people involved to continue to develop further their new creative skills in choreography, film-making and electronic music composition

Aware of the positive effect this risk-taking project was going to have, funding was released from several sources including Quality of Life, Local Community Network, and Community Development Youthwork.

In order to continue the successes of using arts in the community in this manner, we are currently creating a part-time freelance post of arts co-ordinator, from additional funds from the above funding partners. This co-ordinator will be responsible for liaising with the young people involved, and supporting them in where

they want to go next. We have learned that engaging with socially excluded young people has to be on their terms, and that any 'activity' must appeal to them. Therefore, it is imperative that social interaction is continued on an informal basis, but by a professional artist who can guide the young people creatively. This work will branch out to neighbouring towns and villages, whereby the young people will be teaching their peers and transferring their skills to other socially-affected teenagers. The aim is to develop and generate a new bigger picture, and it is envisaged that external funding will be secured in the near future so as to detach the work from the local authority, and allow it to become self-sustained within the community.

Jacqueline Bennett
Arts Development Worker (Central Moray)

Buckie Festival

The Moray Firth Coast's industrial fishing port of Buckie, rich in its fishing culture and heritage is fast establishing a reputation as a centre for the promotion of theatre, music and community art events.

The Buckie Festival, now heading into its third consecutive year as a community arts event, has established itself as Moray's premier weeklong June arts festival, attracting local, national and international performers and offering a truly eclectic programme of events. Over the last two years the festival has featured national touring theatre (Walk the Plank, David Benson), comedy (Adam Hills), children's theatre (Blueboat), community and live music events (Liz Lochhead & Michael Marra), as well as a larger than life street parade. It has also established an arts programme for schools and community groups in the Buckie area offering free arts workshops in drama, dance, music and visual arts in the run up to the festival. The festival is now also a local promoter for touring music and theatre throughout the year.

The festival encourages other groups within the community to run events around the festival week which leads to a wider community involvement and sharing of resources such as festival publicity, equipment and the gained knowledge of the group.

The festival has grown in terms of community awareness and participation over the last two years and as a result there has developed a real sense of ownership and pride locally.

The plans for the initial festival saw The Moray Council Arts Development Team as the main driving force, building on previous community events such as the Fish Festival which was mainly a commercial event and ran for three years in the late 1990's. The aim of the Buckie Festival was to act as a catalyst for regeneration of the town, giving local people a sense of place and pride in their community. As interest increased in the event a core group of individuals came forward and formed a steering group. The first Buckie Festival committee was formally constituted in February 2004 and continues to have the Moray Council's Arts Development worker for the area as an adviser. The group has discovered a number of new talents and interests, including press and marketing, funding, working with promoters and most importantly a real enthusiasm for the arts. The festival committee has also become a member of Hi-Arts Festival Forum so that they may gain from the experience of other more established festival organisers.

This year, in order to give their audiences the best possible experience, the committee converted the large, outdated Fisherman's Hall, into a fully equipped, tiered seating theatre and employed a professional stage manager for the week. This generated a lot of positive feedback and highlighted the need for such a facility in the community. The festival committee is now to act as the lead partner in future discussions with the local secondary school and other arts groups to look towards the development of a permanent theatre space.

The committee is made up of a diverse range of individuals, all have an interest in improving their community but almost half had no real experience or prior interest in the arts. Financial support for the festival has largely come from public bodies such as The Scottish Arts Council, The Local Authority and the Local Enterprise Company. Limited funding is available from the voluntary sector, but in the future the festival is to look towards increased investment from private companies.

The festival aims to encourage groups and individuals of all sectors of the community to get involved and to enjoy the experiences both as audience and/or organiser. In planning the festival, the committee aims to endorse the Moray Council's Community Learning Plan by supporting the principals of Life Long Learning, Social Inclusion, Community Capacity Building and Active Citizenship. To support these aims the festival holds regular open meetings, offers free workshops to community and school groups to increase participation and ensures low cost tickets to all of it's events. This approach has largely been possible because of the nature of the funding available to the group, this however becomes more difficult to adopt if public funding is withdrawn or becomes harder to access.

The festival committee feel that the continued success of the festival is very much dependant on continued support from public bodies both in terms of funding and in an advisory capacity. They also feel that to maintain enthusiasm, develop new ideas and ensure the festival's future they may look to employ a temporary/part-time administrator to support them in their efforts.

Fiona Herd
Arts Development Worker (Moray East)