



Berwick upon Tweed Town Council

People and Communities
Committee

08 February 2022 Appendix A

Report of Town Clerk

Future Festivals / Events

Access Public

Background

1. Council has, for at least five years, sponsored a range of events and festivals intended to:
 - a. Provide cultural entertainment and activities for residents,
 - b. Boost tourism by attracting visitors, both directly and via place recognition, and
 - c. Provide training and education opportunities for residents.
2. Council has decided to review this programme of provision via the People and Communities Committee. It is appropriate for officers to provide a background report both on proposed events that have not come to fruition, and current projects that might progress to the delivery stage.
3. For the purposes of this report the existing events are:

Title	Season	Organisers	Funded by BTC?
Riding of the Bounds	Spring	Berwick Riders Association	Yes
May Fair	Spring	BTC	Yes
Tweedmouth Feast	Summer	?	Yes
Spittal Seaside Festival	Summer	Spittal IT	In Part
Minden Day	Summer	KOSB Association	No
Curfew Run	Summer	?	No
Berwick Music Series	Summer / Autumn	BEA	Yes
Heritage Open Days	Autumn	HODS	Yes
Berwick Film and New Media Festival	Autumn	Berwick Film Festival	In Part (arts Council funding)
Berwick Literary Festival	Autumn	Berwick Literary Festival	In Part
Berwick Slow Food Festival	Autumn	Berwick Slow Food	In Part
Christmas Lights Event	Autumn	BTC	Yes
Dickensian Market	Autumn	Rotary	No

How are events proposed?

4. Approaches may come from organisations, from individuals, or from officers 'horizon scanning' and spotting trends elsewhere. Examples of events proposed that have not been delivered and where officers no longer have a realistic expectation of their being delivered appear in the table below:

Event	Proposer	Outcome
Berwick in a new light	Officers of a third sector organisation	Funding withdrawn by council after no realistic proposals came forward
Berwick tapestry based heritage event	Former councillor and others	Rejected by council
Berwick trumpet festival and fanfare competition	Individual known to council	No realistic proposals

What proposals are outstanding?

Event	Proposer	Status
Poetry festival / independent publishing / small press event	Various individuals and Town Clerk	See below
Folk music / world music festival	Various individuals and Town Clerk	See below
Cycling event / criterium or sportive	Berwick Wheelers and others	No progress due to pandemic
Dinghy racing event	Yacht Club	Awaiting guidance from committee
Open Gardens Festival	Friends of Castle Vale Park	Awaiting guidance from committee
Park Run	Various	No knowledge of progress

a. Poetry Festival

The Literary Festival covers mainstream poetry (the Poet Laureate took part in last year's festival). Discussions have been had, over 12 months or more, as to whether a complimentary event, focussing on the spoken word and independent publishers, might be a suitable weekend or week-long event, focussed on informal events in multiple venues and workshops for new creators and publishers. The style and target would resemble that of Gutter Press, from Glasgow, or Newcastle's The Echo Room, mixing established and new writers. Council's consent is needed for further work on this proposal.

b. Folk / world music

The Town Clerk has met with individuals previously to discuss a folk music event; no further work was undertaken because the Town Council was being asked, in effect, to underwrite a commercial event.

As a town with a European history in a British context it is easy to argue that Berwick could host an event that sits on the intersections of folk, classical music and jazz, and which provides an opportunity for musicians developing their repertoire or experience to perform for audiences. A meeting has taken place with individuals who have significant connections to Scottish educational institutions and a wider group of artists that suggests there is scope for such an event, provided a suitable venue can be identified. Permission from council would need to be sought for officers to commit to further work on this proposal.

c. Cycling events

Previous proposals have focussed on a circuit event in Berwick Town Centre, which would involve significant investment in road closures and temporary infrastructure. The Town Clerk has not proposed this work because, in their view, there was only a low probability of the funding becoming available for such an event. However, there are many successful community cycling events in the north-east, and such an event might provide an anchor for activities focussed around promoting modal shift. Permission from council would need to be sought for officers to commit to further work on this proposal.

d. Dinghy racing event

Correspondence concerning this event will be shared with committee.

e. Open Gardens Festival

An approach has been received from Friends of Castle Vale Park / the Open Gardens Festival regarding the inclusion of Open Gardens in the Festivals season; the correspondence suggests that the other Autumn festivals have been approached about this, and have indicated acceptance. This correspondence will be shared with the committee.

f. Park Run

Officers have been approached at various times about the establishment of Park Run in Berwick, but have taken no action since there is a well-funded national organisation capable of setting up such an event if there is sufficient demand.

Issues

5. Officers believe that there is an opening in the events calendar for spring events, grouped around the traditional shoulder to the holiday season between Easter and the late May Bank Holiday, which would help make the most of the Riding of the Bounds and a rejuvenated May Fair. Officers also believe that there is a gap in the calendar for more musical events throughout the season, provided venues can be found, and a gap for cultural activities with a strong element of participant creativity and innovation.
6. Officers acknowledge the potential of large or national sporting events to contribute to tourism, but believe there should be more input from local sports and leisure providers, including Active Northumberland, towards the creation and regeneration of mass participation sports events.

Recommendation

1. That committee provide guidance to officers and make appropriate recommendations to council.

Author	GD	Town Clerk sign off (if required)	GD
Checked by	SC	Finance Officer sign off (if required)	N/A