



Outdoor Events Administration And Management Report For Neath and Port Talbot Council

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Background/Brief

Alpha1 - Outdoor Events Management (Alpha-1) have been commissioned to:

1. Undertake an evaluation and review of the following:
 - i. The current application and administration process for community and commercial events, administered by Neath and Port Talbot Council (the Council) for events on parks, gardens, country parks, seafront, civic spaces and public highways.
 - ii. The charging policy for community and commercial event organisers using council land.
 - iii. The current process for the delivery of outdoor events organised by the Council and the level to which these are fit for purpose.
 - iv. An overview of the Safety Advisory Group (SAG), including the criteria, attendance and process in evaluating event organisers plans.

2. To generate an Events Policy for the Council that has clear transparent processes and decision making which will:
 - i. meet the strategic aspirations of the Council and regional and national partners in encouraging and developing events to take place for the economic and social benefit of the community
 - ii. create a seamless and effective outdoor event administration and management process for events and festivals, which balances the Council's duty of care in relation to events being delivered safely primarily on Council land, whilst at the same time supporting and encouraging events to be organised across the boundaries of the Council (the County)
 - iii. provide an events charging policy that is consistent, transparent, and fair, maximising commercial opportunities and cost recovery and generating forecasts for achievable income generation
 - iv. expand and build on the reputation for attracting local, national and international film production companies

3. To generate thinking around how the Council can work with local, regional and national partners to attract larger events to the area.

Recommendations

4. That the Council considers the contents and proposals of this report which recommends: -
 - i. using the Draft Events Policy as outlined in **Appendix A** as a framework to develop the policy areas as summarised in point 6 Table 1 and then agree and adopt as a Council policy
 - ii. adopting the proposed event application process outlined in **Appendix C**, managed by a centralised Events team, with event management expertise. This team would be responsible for handling all event enquiries primarily on council parks, gardens, open space, seafront, highways, car parks, and town centre civic space. This includes overseeing and potentially chairing the Safety Advisory Group and ensuring that event organisers are given the opportunity to attend either in person or through an online meeting. Consider the amendments to the terms of reference found in **Appendix D**.
 - iii. to replace the event registration form with an application form, asking for initial information without the extensive level of detail currently requested, regardless of the size of the event. To consider making the form an online one (e.g. Zoho or use of a commercial platform).
 - iv. creating an Events team to be responsible not only for the applications and management of outdoor events but also the delivery of events by the council and the operation of a new film office. To consider the proposed structure of the team outlined in points 87 & 88 and the options to resource the team outlined in point 89.
 - v. creating a Film Office that will build on the reputation of the area as a filming destination, maximise revenues as a central hub dealing with all film production enquiries for both indoor and outdoor events, venues and locations across the area. The film office would handle the enquiry for all events on council land and venues, (excluding Margam Park) or for those relating to non-council land or venues - pass it on to the relevant venue/landowner directly.
 - vi. maximising commercial revenues and consider the creation and adoption of a charging policy which provides a clear and consistent framework for charging for the use of land for commercial and

community events and filming as well as ancillary charges for licencing and traffic orders to close roads. There will be an annual charge for student filming levied on respective educational establishments.

- vii. To simplify agreements, particularly for small events for the use of Council land for events for the benefit and better understanding of the event organiser and for the events team to create and organise.
- viii. The further development in thinking of ideas for large scale events in working with partners using -
 - the strategic themes from the National Welsh Events Strategy
 - the Council's Corporate Priorities, Cultural Strategy, Heritage Strategy and Destination Management Plan
 - emerging trends for events and festivals

Executive Summary

Introduction

5. Whilst the administration and development of outdoor events currently lacks collective ownership and thus any co-ordinated strategic approach within the Council on how and why it supports outdoor events in the county, it has recently demonstrated through its adoption of a Culture Strategy and a Destination Strategy, an acknowledgement of the future importance of the benefits of events and festivals to the area. This relates to the value of generating economic and social benefits and provides the foundation to develop a comprehensive and understood Events Policy.

Why an Events Policy?

6. An effective events policy will provide everyone, including councillors, officers, external event organisers, local communities, businesses and regional and national agencies, with a clear and transparent understanding of how the Council administrates, develops and delivers outdoor events. It will also demonstrate the strategic and operational rationale expressed through Corporate Priorities, service specific strategies and policies to manage, deliver and develop a future diverse and vibrant outdoor event management programme in the County.

A draft policy framework has been created and can be found in Appendix A. An analysis has been undertaken to look at the existing procedures and

processes and to identify the current strengths, weaknesses and actions taken to develop the events policy. These are summarised below in Table 1.

Table 1

Policy Area	Strengths, weaknesses and actions
Overview and links to Policy and Strategic Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These can be easily identified highlighting the Council’s Cultural Strategy, the Heritage Strategy, and the Destination Management Plan. Plus, there is the intention to develop an Events Strategy for the area.
Roles and Responsibilities of the Council, its partners and the actions and responsibilities of event organisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific statements about Council roles except for the SAG • There is guidance on what is expected from event organisers • A review has been undertaken as part of the brief to improve the administration process • Proposed roles and responsibilities are outlined in the Draft Policy
Permitted Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some information can be found on the website about the types of events, although there is no specific detail around what is encouraged or is not permitted • Suggested list is found in the Draft Policy
Event Application Approval and Refusal Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an existing Application Approval policy which needs summarising and included with the application process. • Additional information required around <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ need for community engagement /consultation ○ Site availability and types of events encouraged including Margam Park ○ need for post event inspection/debrief
Charging Policy – for hire and other related services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no specific charging policy for events except for Margam Park • Suggested charging policy is developed in Draft Policy with suggested payment and cancellation policy

Environmental policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no policy to encourage organisers to reduce their carbon footprint and meet the aspirations of climate change through its environmental strategy (DARE). • Suggestions are included in the Event Policy
Events development and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content in Draft Policy explains the event development aspirations and potential options to support event organisers. This includes open days for training, being open to feedback on new event ideas, working with colleagues to overcome logistical challenges
Events organised by the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft policy recognises the current events organised by the Council (Neath Fair, Neath Food and Drink Festival, Remembrance Sunday Parades, Margam Park Events) • It suggests moving forward to work with partners to develop and organise existing and new events
Other regulatory requirements and best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other considerations are outlined in the draft Policy (e.g. licencing, events advertising, equality, street trading).

Application/Registration Process

7. An effective and efficient application/registration process for outdoor events on council land is the foundation to be ensure that events are properly planned and delivered safely. This process must also ensure that there is effective support and encouragement for event organisers regardless of the size and complexity of the event. For every application both the event organiser and the Council will have to carefully balance risk reduction against the time, money and effort required to achieve a level of health and safety preparedness. This is a recognised standard in regulatory regimes.
8. Feedback received from council officers involved in events indicates that dealing with event applications is not seen as a core part of their role nor is it perceived as a key priority for the Council, with no one taking responsibility for the strategic and operational policy direction for events. In certain situations, this has led to officers placing conditions on event organisers that

can be seen as 'risk averse' as the officers do not have time to allow them to be more flexible and to dynamically assess the risks and develop specific mitigations. Through initial conversations with an event organiser an experienced events professional can assess any potential issues early in the process and work through approaches and solutions to the benefit of both the Council and the organiser.

9. Currently the application process can be seen by event organisers as protracted, confusing and frustrating, with them having to liaise separately with a number of different holding departments. A smoother assessment process for both the organiser and officer would be achieved through replacing the current registration form with a simpler more flexible application form asking for initial information without the necessity for the extensive level of detail currently requested, regardless of the size of the event. This application form will be assessed by an experienced event professional to identify any potential logistical, legal or programming issues. Where greater detail is required, this will be provided through the Event Management Plan for the event.
10. **Appendix C** outlines the proposed event application process which would be managed by a centralised Events Team responsible for handling all event enquiries except those for Margam Park. The team would require relevant event management expertise and would undertake initial screening of all applications, liaising with holding departments on behalf of event organisers to work through logistical challenges, oversee the running of the SAG, maximise commercial event opportunities, prepare agreements and take on the delivery of events organised by the Council including the running of a Council Film Office.

Delivery of Council run events

11. The Council currently organises events at Margam Park which are co-ordinated by the team working at the Park. Events at Gnoll Country Park were organised through a contractor but there are no arrangements in place at the moment and the feedback is that in the future it would be preferable for them to be managed centrally. Other Council run events, Neath Fair, Neath Food and Drink Festival and Remembrance Day Parades are organised by different council officers, but they do not form part of their main role or fall within

their particular expertise. It is proposed, with the exception of Margam Park, that these events should be the responsibility of the centralised Events Team who would be able to determine the best delivery mechanism and, particularly in relation to Neath Fair, undertake a review on the future development, working with Councillors, businesses and other stakeholders.

Event Development

12. The Council is currently taking a strong lead in events development. This includes seeking funding to develop an Events Strategy and appoint an Events Development Officer to take things forward to achieve an enhanced and varied outdoor events programme. Key elements identified in the feedback include -

- Promoting the region with the potential to develop hallmark events and festivals utilising the Country Parks, Aberavon Beach, Parks and Open Space and Town Centres.
- Developing and creating events that maximise the area's historic and cultural legacy, exploiting the Neath Port Talbot location to attract visitors.
- Promoting the benefit of events to the economy, promoting pride of place and mental health both through participating and spectating at events.
- Being able to be agile and responsive in creating an events programme

13. The events development function needs to be an integral part of the Events Team, linking the importance of having a centralised co-ordinated approach to both event development and events management/administration.

Future Centralised Events Team

14. The proposed Events Team would have the following functions: -

Management and Administration of Outdoor Events

- Dealing with all enquiries for events on Council land from the initial application through to preparation of any agreement.

- Providing advice and support to event organisers and respective departments, liaising with officers who have statutory and regulatory responsibilities to ensure events are safe and enjoyable.
- Managing, administering and potentially Chairing the Safety Advisory Groups.
- Regularly reviewing and developing the Events Policy.

Events Delivery

- Organising and / or contracting out arrangements for the delivery of events currently organised by the Council.
- Preparing specifications /tenders and overseeing the contracts.
- Preparing Event Management Plans and responsibility for all logistical requirements to deliver in-house events safely where required.

Events Development

- Provide advice and support on the feasibility of a new outdoor events policy
- Oversee the development of the Events Strategy, linked to Culture, Heritage and Destination Management plans and strategies and to the Events Policy.
- Co-ordinate a programme of events across the area/region.
- Develop a close working relationship with commercial and community event organisers and promoters and key regional and national partners.

Film Office

- Act as a hub that deals with all film production enquiries for both indoor and outdoor locations with an online library of venues to which enquiries can be signposted.
- Enquiries for Margam Park to go directly to them to administer.
- Manage and administer film production enquiries on outdoor council land/venues including liaison with all relevant departments, preparation of agreements and negotiation of terms including fees.
- Enquiries for non-council land/venues to be passed on to the relevant venue/landowner.

- Maximise the commercial and economic cultural opportunities of film production for local, regional, national and international film producers.

15. It is proposed that initially the Events Team would comprise of: -

- i. 1 x Senior Events Officer - Full time
- ii. 1 x Events Development Officer - Full Time (1 year)
- iii. 1 x Events Coordinator - Full time
- iv. 1 x Film Office Co-ordinator - Part Time

16. The funding of the Events Development Officer and the Film Office Co-ordinator would initially be through external funding. Future options to fund these posts could be through restructuring following a review of current officer roles across departments currently engaged in events administration and development thus maximising commercial income to cover costs and make an operational surplus (e.g. Film Office). The team would require expertise and experience in event administration, development, and promotion across public sector community and commercial settings.

Initial thinking in generating larger scale events, working with partners

17. The National Events Strategy developed by the Welsh Government and overseen by Event Wales provides both context and guidance to generate thinking about larger scale events, revolving around the strategic themes of Align and Collaborate, Authenticity and All of Wales.

18. Aligning and collaborating, could start by looking at key strategic assets with neighbours and how future aspirations could be jointly met. As an example, the Council's Cultural strategy has the ambition to host the Urdd Eisteddfod in 2025. This could be working with partners, including Event Wales, and local authority partners.

19. Further engagement with the national events forums representing promoters, curators, suppliers and event organisers across a number of sectors will help understand the opportunities of how the Council can play a key role in providing an 'All of Wales' events programme

20. The Council's Cultural Strategy has identified a number of events which are of true Welsh authenticity that it would like to see delivered. This includes events to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Richard Burton. There needs to be further exploration looking at other themes that would engage local businesses and major industries (e.g. TATA steel) as well as creative, cultural and sporting communities.

21. This report has identified a number of emerging key trends. This includes offering diverse entertainment options to broader audiences and a local/artisan focus around food and drink experiences. The combination of encouraging and facilitating these types of events, together with offering more diverse, authentic, sustainable and immersive experiences is key in establishing a vibrant programme, engaging local talent and attracting larger scale events including music festivals, and national and international sporting events (International Triathlon, and Tour of Britain).

Development of an Events Policy for Neath and Port Talbot Council

Introduction

22. The brief provided to Alpha-1 highlights potential barriers that do not support an effective and efficient Outdoor Events Service to meet the aspirations of the Council

- i. There is no oversight for managing, promoting and developing outdoor events (either public or private led) within the County.
- ii. Individual country parks are overseen by staff who set their own policies, pricing and procedures around event management.
- iii. There is little ownership of how applications are administered and inconsistency in decision making with some departments/individuals perceived to be taking an overly cautious/risk averse approach to allowing outdoor events to take place particularly in relation to highways.
- iv. Event organisers have expressed frustration at the inconsistent approach and lack of accountability, in addition to an inability to directly contact relevant officers.

- v. There is no specific charging policy for commercial or community outdoor events. The approach for charging for administration is inconsistent with no charge for events on open space, highways and seafront but with country parks making their own charge depending on the commercial nature of the event. In some cases, a charge will be levied on event organisers to cover some direct statutory and other costs (e.g. road closures, premise licence, cleansing).
- vi. The Council's commitment to encourage the development of outdoor events is demonstrated through the adoption of the Culture Strategy and the Destination Management Plan which extol the benefits of events and festivals as a way of generating economic benefit to the area and creating social pride for residents. A programme of festivals and events is therefore a desired outcome for the strategies.

23. Developing an Events Policy is the foundation to achieve the aspiration of effective and efficient outdoor event management and development for the social and economic benefit of event organisers, residents and visitors.

23. An Outline draft Events Policy for Neath and Port Talbot Council can be found in **Appendix A**. There are key areas that need developing and the issues recommendations on how this could be achieved are identified in points 25 to 39 below and are reflected in the draft Policy.

24. Much of the information on the Council's approach to processing applications from event organisers, including details of what is required from them when applying to hold an event, is already in existence and has been adapted and incorporated into the draft policy document.

Overview and links to Policy and Strategic Aims

25. The Council has articulated its strategic alignment to events development, highlighted in funding applications to the Shared Prosperity Fund to develop an Events Strategy. This aligns the benefits of events to the Council's and the National Welsh Government's wellbeing objectives as well as to the Council's emerging destination plan, and Culture and Heritage Strategies and strategic priorities for sustainable growth in the local economy.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Council, its partners and the actions and responsibilities of event organisers

26. There is no specific statement about the Council's roles except for the SAG. The events registration process outlines the process for applying for outdoor events, outlining what is required by the event organiser including timelines. A review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the events application process can be found in point 40 of this report.

Permitted Events

27. There is little information available to identify what is permitted/ encouraged and what is not permitted in general. The Council's website does provide a basic list of events. The draft Events policy provides a more detailed list.

Event Application Approval and Refusal Policy

28. The Neath and Port Talbot Event Application approval process is briefly explained on the website but there is no specific policy statement. This has been developed in the new draft policy.

29. Some additional points have been suggested in the draft Policy in relation to approval/refusal of events. It should be noted that whilst the current policy around this is not explicitly identified at the moment, it is likely that in some cases officers tacitly understand it.

30. Suggested reasons for refusal include:

- Need for Community Engagement/consultation
- Site availability and the development of list of types of events that would be supported and even encouraged. This section needs further development with the Council and would include not only parks, gardens, seafront, highways, town centres and civic spaces but also Margam Park where there are managed facilities in their own right.
- Post event inspection and debrief where relevant.

Charging Policy

31. Developing a consistent and transparent charging policy primarily for commercial and community hire is part of this brief.

32. There are no charges for community events and there are no published charges for commercial events or for filming on public open space and highways, with the exception of statutory charges such as road closures. The only publication of hire charges for outdoor events and filming relate to Margam Park.
33. At the time of writing the report, it has been difficult to know what the total amount the council receives from any events on Council land. The revenue that is known is that for the Neath Fair, and Filming on Council land. There is currently no charging policy or charge for any other events for any hire of council land which is unusual.
34. A suggested charging policy for events and filming can be found in **Appendix A**. Charges such as road closures, and premise licences are included. This along with suggested payment and cancellation terms and conditions.
35. The charging policy assumes that all community events of whatever size, as well as commercial events will be charged a fee. This may be unacceptable, but it is common practice in many local authorities to charge an administration fee for handling applications. Fees start from as little as £25. The charges also try to maximise commercial opportunities, including filming. Based on the very limited information we have the estimated revenue from events would be £2850. This excludes any income from markets and also the income generated from events organised by the Council, including Neath Spring and Autumn Fair and the Neath Food and Drink Festival which between them have income of in the region of £43,000 which goes towards funding the events.
36. Based on the information provided we have estimated that there could potentially be an additional £30,000 to be achieved through filming charges, above what has been made previously. This is a crude estimate as the information provided is limited and our income projections are based on the client base of the filming companies concerned.

Environmental Policy

37. This section recognises the Council's commitment to climate change through its decarbonisation and renewable energy strategy (DARE). It asks event organisers to demonstrate ways in which they will reduce the event carbon footprint.

Events Support and Development

38. This section in the **Appendix A** reinforces the commitment by the Council to develop events and outlines how the Council supports event organisers through the events registration process. The strategy assumes that an Events Development Officer has been appointed and outlines the support in encouraging new events both commercial, cultural and community as well as outlining the development of an events strategy.

39. If charging is included for community events, then there could be exemptions as well as links to suggested sites for funding and organisational support.

Events Organised by the Council

40. The section in **Appendix A** recognises the current situation and the expansion linked to the development aspirations for new events, seeking partnerships with event organisers for both new events and for enhancing existing events.

Other regulatory requirements and best practice

41. This section outlines other matters that need to be considered in organising an event e.g. trading standards/fire safety. It is recommended that certain general council policies should have event specific guidelines.

Review of the Events Management and Registration Process

42. The development of a comprehensive events policy states the Council's intentions to support and develop events and provides clear guidelines for event organisers to plan, organise and deliver events safely. However, to enable event organisers to comply with the Policy, it is essential to ensure that the process, from application through to approval and delivery, is as seamless as possible for the event organiser.

43. The brief identifies that the current process can be frustrating for event organisers with perceptible inconsistent decision making around events with some departments taking a more stringent and inflexible approach.

Feedback from Officers & Event Organisers

44. An internal assessment has been undertaken through meetings with key officers across the Council. This has included officers responsible for the management of Council land where outdoor events take place (Highways, Parks, Gardens, Margam Park, Seafront, Gnoll Country Park), officers overseeing and co-ordinating the events application process and officers responsible for organising events for the Council.

45. These meetings have provided a clearer understanding of how officers in holding departments perceive the events administration process and their interaction with the Health and Safety team and the SAG Chair. They have also identified specific issues they face in dealing with event organiser applications.

46. Further meetings have taken place with commercial event organisers and community event organisers to get their feedback. There was general frustration from the event organiser of a very well-established event for amateur and fun runners. In their view a lot of time was wasted in not being able to deal directly with an officer dealing with highways when trying to resolve road closure arrangements. Added to that was the excessive costs of over £5000 in not only having to pay for road closure orders but also having to employ a preferred council traffic management company to manage closures only for a few hours. They also felt that time was wasted in the organiser not being able to attend the SAG in person so to better understand feedback and clarify issues being raised by SAG members.

47. Feedback from Viva BID was that they were experiencing a lot of frustration in dealing with the Council and the event management process with a lot of time wasted going back and forwards. This is demonstrated by the fact that the process at the moment only involves them submitting a registration form with no requirement to submit an EMP/ RA and no opportunity for the event organiser to attend the SAG. As a consequence, there is only email correspondence with the SAG, often questioning things that are in the EMP if they had looked at it. They find the Emergency Services, particularly the

Police are helpful as are Licencing. However, they perceive Highways to be inconsistent and unhelpful and putting barriers up wherever they can. It is their perception that it is only through their tenacity and stubbornness that they have managed to resolve problems, in particular counter terrorism, but they believe other organisers would be put off and give up. They have organised similar events in Llanelli for a number of years with no similar problems and issues.

48. The BID feel that some council officers are more concerned about the 'letter of the law' to unreasonable levels, than about the safety and protection of the public. Overall, their conclusion is that there is a lack of proportionality in applying legislation and no proper dialogue. The result is that they felt the Council do not encourage events.

49. Feedback from a professional music event organiser with an event that was not held on Council land, and therefore only dealing with the SAG, was that the process was as they would have expected. As a new event it is believed they did attend the SAG in person.

50. The key points and issues raised from a Council Officer perspective were: -

- There is very limited capacity to enable effective management of event requests and provide adequate support to event organisers. As a result, their "Business As Usual" (BAU) work suffers. The exception is Margam Park where there is dedicated support.
- Highways currently run a very 'tight ship' – something that they consider has not been the case historically. There is acknowledgement that this results in a number of complaints, but they feel that it is necessary in order to adhere to the Council's 'duty of care'. There is currently no ownership or support for events within this team.
- There is a particular concern for many officers over not only the lack of the time but also the expertise to deal with experienced event organisers
- There is currently a lack of understanding over when there is a need to consider if counter terrorism measures are required
- Work needs to be undertaken with event organisers on emerging legislation e.g. Protect Duty Bill and the need for experienced event management to support and guide organisers in this area.

- There is no consideration at the start of the application process around any environmental impacts relating to an event (e.g. damage/litter) any potential of restrictions (e.g. byelaws) or any programme/activity clashes.
- There is currently no charge levied for administering community events and no deposit is taken to cover for damage or any costs such as waste collection as result of the events taking place.
- Film requests at Margam Park are managed and achieve significant revenues but elsewhere across the area they seemed not to be managed or coordinated properly.
- Feedback from external groups is that some departments are too risk averse creating friction and the potential for event organisers to ignore advice and organise events regardless on Council land.
- Costs for organisers can be prohibitive in relation to road closure management and hostile vehicle mitigation.
- Officers who are currently organising events for the Council do not have the necessary experience or expertise and are not event organisers. They consider that those events could be delivered and managed much better by experienced event organisers employed by the Council.
- There is general agreement that there is a need for an experienced person /team with the expertise and knowledge to support departments and to develop and take forward a consistent strategic and operational approach in managing event applications.
- The Special Events Administrator within the Health and Safety Department is currently the contact and provides the “hub” to handle event applications, liaise with officers and organising the SAG. However, this is a part time role with other responsibilities which means that there is less time to fully support event organisers and work with other departments to reduce barriers and try and work through solutions.
- Feedback from the Special Events Administrator was: -
 - a. Event organisers were not providing all the information required, resulting in the need to chase them on numerous occasions. The main issues are around road closures and first aid cover.
 - b. Organisers do not read the guidance that is provided to them on the Event Registration Form or the SAG website.
 - c. Organisers often want to change their event dates
 - d. Council departments do not respond to enquiries or queries that are raised on behalf of event organisers

- There is frustration from Council officers that dealing with events is not a core part of their role and is therefore not seen as key priority for the Council. There is no one to take responsibility for strategic and operational policy direction for events and for stronger corporate direction in creating a consistent approach in officers assessing risk and putting in proportionate mitigation. In some cases, officers are putting conditions on event organisers that can be seen as risk averse. They don't seem to have the time to work with event organisers to dynamically assess the risks and work with them to sensibly mitigate against those risks.

51. A framework for administrating and managing events is required to aid decision making and this needs to be led and supported by a dedicated Events team. Early intervention with event organisers by a team of experienced events professionals will help to assess any potential issues and work through potential solutions and approaches early on before planning has started.

52. **Appendix B** is a flow chart of the current event application and approval process. The process is currently confusing for event organisers particularly in relation to the number of different people involved in the process, **Appendix C** presents a more comprehensive and logical step by step process managed through a centralised Events Team including a Film Office.

53. There is information for event organisers on the Council's website that gives information for the event organiser on: -

- a. the types of events that can be held in open space
- b. the events process and notice periods
- c. the need to go to a SAG and the role of the SAG
- d. key things to consider when organising an event
- e. how to register and apply for an event
- f. links to national guidelines and legislation in organising an event

54. This process can be seen by event organisers as protracted confusing and frustrating, with the need to liaise separately with a number of holding departments without any initial overview by an event professional to assess potential logistical legal and programming issues that would help provide a smoother assessment process for the organiser and officers. Even at the end of the process, the Agreement to approve the event goes to another department to liaise with the organiser.

55. The above is in complete contrast to the process at Margam Park where the end-to-end application process is dealt with by one commercial officer who also supports the event organiser in going to the SAG and issues the agreement and agrees the hire fee. This results in a much simpler more productive process whatever size of the event.

56. Feedback also indicated that the current set up does not invite or encourage National events like the recent Tour of Britain. It was identified that a more co-ordinated approach with support across a number of departments, sites and attractions would have made the process easier. An experienced events team of professionals would help address these issues supporting aspirations to attract more National, UK and International sporting events and cultural festivals.

Proposed future events application process and management of outdoor events

57. **Appendix C** outlines the proposed future application and administration process. It would be managed through a centralised events function responsible for handling all outdoor events enquiries and applications on parks, gardens and open space, as well as public highways including car parks, town centres and other civic space. All applications for Margam Park would continue to be handled by their team.

58. The event team would eventually be responsible for all events held on council land, taking on the Council's duty of care to ensure the event organiser has taken reasonable and practical steps to plan and deliver a safe event. The advice given by SAG to an organiser for an event on Council land would also be provided to the Council's events team, representing the landowner, for them to approve the event.

59. It is proposed that the centralised function would also have an events delivery and development function which is outlined in more detail in points 78 - 80. It would also establish a centralised Film Office for the area maximising commercial film production opportunities both for Parks and other attractions and sites across the county. Within that function would also sit

the responsibility for overseeing, monitoring and developing the new events policy in addition to creating and developing an events strategy.

60. The events function would replace the registration form, with an application form, asking for initial information (details of event organiser, date and type of event, site, numbers expected, licensable activities and a list of any infrastructure and amenities required) without the extensive level of detail currently requested, regardless of the size of the event. To consider making the form an online one (e.g. Zoho or use of a commercial platform).
61. The events team would provide initial screening of all event applications and enquiries. This would include looking at site suitability and availability, any key legal and logistical obstacles and suggesting alternative options. There would then be dialogue with the respective holding departments and with the event organiser on progressing the application and working through solutions to overcome any logistical challenges and compliance requirements. Confirmation and agreement for events would also be undertaken by the team including the preparation of any licences and commercial agreements in addition to raising invoices for rentals and deposits.
62. Where a new, more complex event needs to go to a SAG, the Events Team would provide guidance and set up initial meetings with relevant SAG representatives and key stakeholders (Ward Councillors, Residents Associations, businesses, and community groups) to gauge initial views before event organisers progress with their application.
63. It is proposed that the Events team responsibility would be to determine whether an event needs to go to a SAG and to handle all the arrangements for the SAG potentially including acting as Chair. As the majority of applications relate to events on Council land being Chair provides for better engagement and continuity. Event organisers to be invited to attend a SAG either face to face or online. This allows them to seek feedback in a concise and constructive way.
64. **Appendix D** suggests some minor changes to the SAG Terms of Reference. It clarifies that SAG members are there to support the endeavours of event

organisers. It develops SAG objectives that reflect national guidance and acknowledges that the advice is not only to the event organiser but also to the landowners of the site on which the event is located, including the Local Authority. It clarifies the advisory capacity of SAG members to event organisers and the SAG's role in ensuring that the event organisers planning meets legislative and regulatory requirements.

Examples of Agreements/Licences for Events

65. With the diverse types of outdoor events which range in size and complexity, a key objective is to have contractual licences/agreements that are flexible and not to have a 'one size fits all' approach to cover all eventualities. The approach is to ensure the event organiser fully understands the expectations of the Council and that relevant conditions can be easily customised and be put in place to deliver a safe and enjoyable event.

66. The right approach will reduce the need to engage Estates in the production of licences and agreements, particularly for small events (filming, small fetes), which can then be dealt with by an events team. At the same time, there would be a standard set of general Licence conditions for larger more complex events with an operational specification within a Schedule forming part of the legal agreement that reflects the nature of the event and specific requirements. This allows an experienced officer to put together a draft licence with minimal feedback from Legal Services for them to finally sign off.

67. Attached in **Appendix E and F** are draft examples of a Letter of Agreement for a minor event and a Licence for a major event. These would need to be developed with Legal.

Review of the current events delivery and development

68. Below is an overview and assessment of the limited number of events the Council delivers. This includes feedback from three of the officers organising the events. It also includes feedback on the current position in relation to events delivery and development opportunities moving forward, from the Commercial Officer overseeing the application for funding of an Events Strategy and an Events Development Officer through the HCTE Fund.

Margam Country Park

69. Margam Park organises a programme of events activities as well as hiring out the venue to event organisers. Over the years this has included popular and cultural festivals and performances. It has also created a successful reputation as a location for film production which achieves commercial rentals. It has been identified by Event Wales as an event location of national significance. Over the years the site has attracted major concerts and cultural events.

70. Whilst Margam Park is well respected as a visitor attraction, there seems to be nothing in any policy or business plan that explicitly states the role of the park, although this is probably tacitly understood by Councillors, officers and stakeholders. The Margam team determine the programming of events at the park every year with no specific guidance or link to any specific events policy or strategy that the Council wishes to pursue.

71. Any future events policy and strategy must take into consideration the key role Margam Park plays in events development across the area and in the type of outdoor events and festivals it wants to develop and attract moving forward.

Gnoll Country Park

72. The management of small events at Gnoll Country Park, e.g. nature trails, Park runs etc. are overseen by the Park. The large field site has historically been tendered out annually for a period of six months at a minimal rental primarily for holiday activities and rides from Easter through the Summer. The Park also hosts one of the biggest vintage car shows with over 3000 cars across the whole site. In 2023 a successful contractor was not appointed.

73. As a result of the major facility improvements being carried out in 2024 there are no plans for this year. However, future plans are aimed at encouraging and promoting an events programme at the Park moving forward. The improvements include a 3 Phase electrical supply to the big field which will facilitate small to medium size events (max 1000 capacity)

which could include local musical festival, open air cinema, Christmas events to include an ice rink/market.

74. There is currently no dedicated officer managing and developing events and feedback was that the best approach for the future (2025 onwards) would be for events to be managed centrally through the Events Team.

Neath Fair and Neath Food and Drink Festival

75. These are the only other major events the Council organises. Both events are organised by council officers across separate council departments and organising these events does not fall within their key responsibilities

76. **Neath Fair** is a very long-standing event in the town and is co-ordinated and organised by the Council's Estates Team which includes the Principal Estates Manager, Estate Assistants and Surveyors. This forms very small and disconnected part of their roles and they are not event professionals. The Fair has two separate elements with the role of the Estates Team being to organise the stalls for the street fayre. The second element is the funfair on a car park operated through a negotiated agreement with the Showman's Guild.

77. Officers struggled to find sufficient time within their roles to deliver the event. During the event officers were very much hands on and had very little, or no time to engage with businesses and other stakeholders to seek feedback and develop/changes to the event or understand how the Fair benefits the Town. The event seems to be very fragmented with no overall management control or review on its value to businesses and residents. It is proposed that it will be overseen by the events team once they are in place and fully resourced. A full review will need to be undertaken to develop the event and to look at the possibility for it to be contracted out to an external event organiser.

78. **The Neath Food and Drink Festival** is organised by the Town Centres Manager assisted by other members of the Economic Development and Regeneration team. The officer's main role is working with key stakeholders in four town centres, including town councils and the VIVA Port Talbot BID to develop economically vibrant towns.

79. The Festival has reportedly been well received by businesses and residents. The organisation of the Festival is identified as part of the responsibilities of the Town Centre Manager, but events delivery is not a key element of her expertise. It is clear that the event has a role to play in supporting a vibrant Neath Town Centre.

80. It would be pragmatic for the future delivery of this event to be by an events professional, either within the Council or preferably contracted out with the “client” responsibility still remaining with Town Centres Manager. This has the potential to maximise the opportunity to develop and commercialise the Festival further moving forward to the benefit of local businesses and the Council. The approach could apply for any future events that the Manager was considering.

Remembrance Day Parades in Neath and in Port Talbot

81. These were organised for the first time in 2023 by the Council and the Council has committed to organising the events for the foreseeable future. The arrangements were co-ordinated by the People and Organisational Department and delivered with the support of a number of officers across the department. It is proposed that future delivery would be through the Events team.

82. A key part of the development of an Events Policy and Events Strategy will be clearly identifying the range and type of events being encouraged in the town centres and those that the Council do not want to encourage or permit.

Commercial Co-Ordinator and Events Development

83. The commercial co-ordinator has been actively involved in the development of events within their role of identifying commercial opportunities across the Council. They are the lead officer in applying for funding from the Heritage Culture Tourism and Events Fund for an Events Development Officer with a key output to develop an Events Strategy and to reach out to key community groups to organise and develop events.

84. Feedback from the officer has identified some key issues and opportunities in moving forward in developing events and these are summarised below: -

- The need to have a consistent strategic approach by the Council which would be understood by officers.
- Promoting the region, having the potential to develop hallmark events and festivals utilising the Country Parks, Aberavon Beach, Parks and Open Space and Town Centres
- Better co- ordination in programming of events in key sites (e.g. Margam and Gnoll) and being more proactive in developing an events programme
- Having dedicated resources, in addition to grant funding, to deliver an Events Strategy, maximising commercial opportunities both through the Council and with partners, to sustain a future events programme
- Developing and creating events that maximise the areas historic and cultural legacy, exploiting the Neath and Port Talbot location to attract visitors both locally, regionally and from further afield.
- Promoting the benefit of events to the economy, promoting pride of place and mental health both as spectators and through participating in an event
- Being able to be agile and responsive in creating an events programme

85.The overview reinforces the need to have an outdoor event function that not only administers and manages applications from event organisers but can deliver outdoor events for the Council or oversee outdoor events delivered on behalf of the Council by external contractors.

86.It also strengthens the case to have a more co-ordinated approach towards event development and event programming across key sites included within the framework of an event strategy and the event policy. The co-ordination of this element would also be the responsibility of this event function.

Future Events Team

87.A future events team would have multiple functions.

Management and Administration of Outdoor Events

- Act as a central hub dealing with all event enquiries from the initial application through to preparation of any agreement for outdoor events on Council land.

- Provide advice and support to event organisers and respective departments, including on the imminent Protect Duty Law and events on highways, liaising with officers who have statutory and regulatory responsibilities to ensure events are safe and enjoyable.
- Manage and administer, and potentially Chair, the Safety Advisory Group
- Review and develop the Events Policy
- Handle enquiries for events not on Council land and signpost organisers to relevant Council Officers in relation to any legal compliance and attendance at SAGs

Events Delivery

- Organise or contract out arrangements to deliver only outdoor events currently organised by the Council.
- Prepare specifications /tenders and oversee contracts
- Prepare event management plans and organise logistical requirements to deliver in house events safely as required.

Events Development

- Provide advice and support on the feasibility of any new outdoor events.
- Oversee the development of the Events Strategy linked to Culture, Heritage and Tourism plans and strategies and the Events Policy
- Co-ordinate a programme of events across the area and the region
- Develop a close working relationship with commercial and community event organisers and promoters and key regional and national partners.

Film Office

- Act as a hub that deals with all film production enquiries for both indoor and outdoor events with an online library of venues to signpost enquiries.
- Manage and administer film production enquiries on outdoor council land. Negotiate terms including fees, liaise with relevant departments and prepare agreements.

- Maximise the commercial and economic cultural opportunities of film production for local, regional, national and international film companies.

88. It is proposed that the team would include the following: -

i. Senior Events Officer

Would require 5 years plus experience in organising and developing events, working with a range of organisations and stakeholders. They would need to have a comprehensive understanding of all logistical and legal requirements, including experience in running events on highways and knowledge of developing and applying counter terrorism measures and an understanding of the potential new Protect Duty legislation. They would also need to demonstrate experience in commercial income generation, resourcing of events/festivals and marketing of events. The post would be responsible for managing any major outdoor events and major film applications and for contracting out the delivery of existing Council events. Where premise licences for public open space are held then this officer is likely to be the premises licence holder.

ii. Events Development Officer

The responsibilities would be similar to that outlined in the funding application going to the Heritage Culture and Tourism Fund i.e. creation of an events strategy, events programme development, supporting new and existing event's organisers to grow in the local community, develop and deliver a comedy festival. The post requires similar attributes, knowledge and skills to the Senior Events Officer with an understanding of the development of broader policy and strategy related to events.

iii. Events Co-ordinator

This position would be the main point of contact for event enquiries, liaising with council departments, the SAG and the event organiser. They would be responsible for approving or refusing applications, preparing agreements and raising invoices for any charges. The officer would need to have at least 2 years' experience, working in a similar management and

administrative environment, preferably with experience in working in a supportive role in delivering a major event.

iv. Film Office Co-ordinator (20 hours per week).

The officer would be responsible for setting up and delivering a Film Office for Neath and Port Talbot as described and would preferably have had experience in working in a similar role with experience and knowledge in managing and administering filming location requests on Council land.

89. Funding options for the appointment of Event Team officers: -

- a. Restructuring within the Council through a review of the current event administration and management responsibilities of existing officers.
- b. Maximising income generation from commercial events and sponsors including Film production.
- c. External Funds – since the Event Development Officer is intended to be funded for one year through the Heritage Culture and Tourism Fund a further application could be made to support the set-up, development and marketing of the Film Office and either an officer or contractor to administer it. In future years there would be an income target to support the role and provide an operational surplus to the Council.

Initial thinking in generating ideas for larger scale events, working with Partners

90. The starting point is to understand the Welsh national context and ambition for developing events as identified through the National Events Strategy for Wales launched in May 2022. One of the key aspects of the strategy is working together at a national, regional and local level and having a clear understanding of each partners' roles. This is across the private sector, national and local government, voluntary, creative, cultural sporting bodies and regional bodies (tourism authorities, national parks).

91. The National Events Strategy has three strategic themes: Align and Collaborate, Authenticity and All of Wales. Any partnership working must embed the strategic themes to help ensure new events and festivals succeed and are supported.

Align and Collaborate

92. Neath and Port Talbot Council already have a good working relationship with Event Wales, who are responsible for overseeing the delivery of the national events strategy.

93. Event Wales have been setting up events industry forums for business events, culture, live events, sport and local authorities. The involvement in these forums by the Council and other relevant stakeholders can help to understand the national context better and thus work with partners to explore the opportunities for new events.

94. Event Wales are very supportive of the direction in which the Council is moving forward through the development of an events strategy and the positive direction in having more expertise in the local authority to encourage event organisers to the area. Event Wales identify Margam Park as a nationally important strategic events destination. This venue together with other venues within the County and with neighbouring local authorities could provide the opportunity to come together and bid for the Urdd Eisteddfod in 2025. A better understanding of the strategic direction of key private, public, cultural, creative and community partners in both Swansea and Neath and Port Talbot provides the opportunity to strengthen the events and festivals programme.

Authenticity

95. The National Strategy focused the need for events to have a distinct “Welshness” that can reflect language, the Cymru Wales Brand and the Well Being Act goals (prosperous, resilient, healthier more equal Wales; a Wales of cohesive communities; a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language; a globally responsible Wales). This continues the focus on working with local communities, businesses, cultural creative and sporting organisations. It also reinforces the focus on animating through events and festivals, the heritage of the area.

96. The Council's Cultural Strategy and Action plan has identified the development of events and festivals that reflect the heritage and culture of the area. In addition to the bid for UK City of Culture it also includes

- the development of a series of events celebrating the 100th anniversary of Richard Burton, planned for 2025.
- bringing together musical opportunities in the borough that exist to develop a local Eisteddfod
- working with TATA Steel to find ways to tell the story of Port Talbot Steel
- Hosting the Urdd Eisteddfod in summer 2025
- Attracting national and international mountain biking events.

These are examples of the right approach to develop an attractive unique authentic programme of events and festivals across the area reflecting the business, creative cultural and sporting communities as well as the built heritage offer identified in the Council's Heritage strategy.

97. As an example, the use of drones shows and projection mapping on and over the diverse built heritage offer provides the opportunity to tell the story of the area's heritage, engage the community working with digital creatives to tell that story and provide an attraction for both residents and visitors to enjoy.

All of Wales

98. The third strand is spreading events across the whole of Wales, maximising the existing assets across the year to achieve equality, diversity and inclusivity. The assessment of ideas mentioned in the first two strands needs to consider how well it fits/fills a gap within the Welsh national programme of events and festivals.

Events and Festivals - Broad Trends

99. Broad trends in outdoor events and festivals in the UK have been gradually evolving and below are some of the more noticeable trends, many of which have already been reflected in the report.

- Wellness and Mindfulness - Outdoor events now often include wellness and mindfulness activities. From yoga sessions to meditation workshops, there is a focus on providing attendees with opportunities to relax and rejuvenate.

- **Diverse Entertainment Options** - festivals are diversifying their entertainment offerings to cater to a broader audience. This includes a mix of music genres, art installations, food festivals, and cultural performances.
- **Local and Artisan Focus** – There is a trend towards showcasing local talent, whether it is in the form of local musicians, artists, or food vendors. This adds a unique touch to events and supports the local community.
- **Unique Venues** - Events are moving beyond traditional venues. Abandoned warehouses, historical sites, and unconventional outdoor spaces are being used to create memorable and unique festival locations.
- **Food and Drink Experiences** - The focus on culinary experiences is growing, with festivals incorporating food and drink tastings, chef demonstrations, and collaborations with local breweries and wineries.
- **Family Friendly Options** - Some festivals are becoming more family-oriented, offering child-friendly activities, family camping areas, and entertainment suitable for all ages.
- **Immersive Experiences** - people are seeking more immersive and interactive experiences. This could involve virtual reality installations, interactive art installations, or even themed areas that transport visitors to different worlds
- **Inclusive and Accessible Festivals** – organisers are working towards creating more inclusive spaces, considering event better accessibility for people with disabilities, providing gender-neutral facilities, and promoting diversity in their lineups.
- **Sustainability and Eco-Friendly Practices** – there is a growing emphasis on reducing the environmental impact of events. Many festivals are incorporating eco-friendly practices such as waste reduction, recycling initiatives, and sustainable sourcing of materials.

100. These trends reflect a broader shift towards more diverse, sustainable, and immersive experiences. The combination of these broad trends, together with the strategic focus at both local, regional and national level, provide the initial steps in developing larger scale events. Large scale events can develop both from the grass roots upwards, providing more authentic and sustainable events, or by attracting established large-scale approaches - e.g. Rock/Pop Music Festivals, National and International sporting events (e.g. Tour De France Stage, International Triathlon, and Tour of Britain)