



Operational Officer Decision Record

Where the decision has a financial value of between £100k - £350k and does not have a **significant** impact on two or more wards

1. Subject and details of the matter (to include reasons for the decision and detail of any previous cabinet decision)

Building on the legacy of multi award-winning Festival of the Sky (FOTSky) which took place in Cleethorpes in 2019, North East Lincolnshire Council (NELC) submitted a successful application to Arts Council England (ACE) for £90,561 to deliver Festival of the Sky Presents 'The Witching Hour'. The application was developed in partnership with From the Fields, who delivered the festival in 2019.

The Witching Hour is a site-specific spectacle which will tell stories of Cleethorpes heritage to large audiences at the Meridian Showground over two evenings in early Autumn 2021 and in doing so extending the summer offer in Cleethorpes.

The event will be free to attend.

2. Decision being taken

Approval is being sought to

- a) Receive the Arts Council England grant of £90,561
- b) Enter into contracts with From the Fields and Periplum to deliver the project as per the application to Arts Council England.

3. Anticipated outcome(s)/benefits

From The Fields and Periplum will build on the critical acclaim of FOTSky 2019; continuing NELC's investment in arts, developing underserved, regional audiences and developing Cleethorpes as a place where the arts, and artists, can thrive.

The Witching Hour is a critically acclaimed bold piece of outdoor art described as 'a truly brilliant spectacle...mind-blowing...never seen anything like this before' (The Guide, Liverpool) and its production will engage with residents and tourists alike providing an opportunity to enjoy a unique, striking and visually impactful performance in Cleethorpes.

It is anticipated that a crowd of up to 8,000 (4,000 per showing subject to prevailing public health guidance) will be able to enjoy the show developed with local heritage groups and who will help amplify local voices and stories. The project will also work with Grimsby Institute (GIFHE) providing opportunities for students to develop their theatrical skills through performing in the show and provide high quality training experiences. From the Fields will also deliver community engagement initiatives including a volunteer programme for 20 participants and a creative response programme to support 45 local photographers, writers and film artists to experience and respond to the spectacle.

To help guide the project a Festival Steering Group will be formed, in doing so developing new networks and skills to build the capacity of local organisations to deliver high quality ambitious artistic programming in the future.

The above will develop North East Lincolnshire's reputation as a creative place, celebrating its unique heritage in new and engaging ways. This will build upon initiatives such Take Part NEL, Grimsby Creates and Cleethorpes Townscape Heritage programme.

4. Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the officer when making the decision

The Council could choose to not deliver Festival of the Sky Presents 2021. However, this would significantly undermine its reputation with ACE, during an important period of delivery for NEL and socio-economic recovery following Covid-19. Reputation with national events providers will also be compromised in terms of their confidence in partnering with NELC and developing performances in NEL in the future.

A 'do nothing' option would also generate negative reputational impacts with local stakeholders in the cultural sector who have been engaged extensively during the development of wider cultural programmes in NEL.

A larger scale festival could be delivered with additional financial resources provided by NELC, this was rejected as this scale of ambition is deliverable, innovative and engaging without further investment.

5. Background documents considered (web link to be included or copies of documents for publishing)

Information relating to Festival of the Sky 2019 can be seen here: [Festival of the Sky - From the Fields](#)

6. Does the taking of the decision include consideration of Exempt information? If yes, specify the relevant paragraph of Schedule 12A and the reasons

No

7. Details of any conflict of interest declared by any Cabinet Member who was consulted by the officer which relates to the decision (in respect of any declared conflict of interest, please provide a note of dispensation granted by the Council's Chief Executive)

No conflicts of interest have been identified.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments (Monitoring Officer or nominee)

The agreements and contracts for Festival of the Sky will be supported by Legal Services colleagues. The Council will be concerned to ensure that all terms and conditions of the grant funding are adhered to. The proposals illustrated above appear to be consistent with the expectations of the funder.

9. Section 151 Officer Comments (Deputy S151 Officer or nominee)

A total commitment of £154k is planned to be covered from a specific earmarked reserve (£35k), Arts Council grant (£91k), National Lottery Heritage Fund grant (£10k), sponsorship (£5k) and in-kind support (£13k).

10. Human Resource Comments (Head of People and Culture or nominee)

None

11. Risk Assessment (in accordance with the Report Writing Guide)

This is a major opportunity to enhance the events and cultural offer of NEL once again, in response to pandemic recovery and a year of very limited programming activity. Inevitably, protocol related to the pandemic is paramount to the delivery of the Festival of the Sky, including detailed health and safety planning and risk assessments. Additionally, risks such as overspend, failure to deliver and poor reception to the festival will be mitigated by close monitoring of the spend, a strong relationship with From the Fields, with all appropriate checks being made on contracted organisations and From the Fields' exemplary track record in producing projects and NELC's understanding of the core audience respectively. Public expectation in comparison to previous festivals will be mitigated through engagement with local media and community to clearly highlight the aims and objectives, with clear communication of a gradual increase in size and scale of events following Covid-19.

12. If the decision links to a previous one taken by Cabinet, has the Cabinet Tracker been updated?

N/A

13. Decision Maker(s):

Name: Sharon Wroot

Title: Executive Director Environment,
Economy and Resources

Signed: REDACTED

Dated: 26.07.21

**14. Consultation carried out with
Portfolio Holder(s):**

Name: Councillor Callum Procter

Title: Portfolio Holder Economy,
Tourism and Housing

Signed: REDACTED

Dated: 30/07/2021