



Highland 2007
Evaluation Report
Executive Summary

Gaidhealtachd 2007
Aithisg Mheasaidh
Geàrr-chunntas Gnìomhach

"...one of the most
ambitious and complex
cultural projects ever
staged in the UK."



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- ✦ This report evaluates the impact of Scotland's Year of Highland Culture 2007 (Highland 2007), a tri-partite partnership project funded principally by the Scottish Government, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and The Highland Council, and one of the most ambitious and complex cultural projects ever staged in the UK. Highland 2007 brought together major agencies to deliver a year-long set of events and projects aimed at promoting and celebrating the Highlands and its culture.
- ✦ The evaluation was carried out over a three-year period, from May 2005 until June 2008, and examined what happened before, during and immediately after Highland 2007.
- ✦ The funders wished to measure the success of Highland 2007 in achieving its aims and objectives, with a particular focus on: Process (the effectiveness of planning events and projects; development and marketing activities; and of visitor management); Accountability (the effective use of government and regional funds); Impacts (both cultural and economic); and Legacy (the sustainability of projects and initiatives arising from Highland 2007).



“...this was exemplary public sector partnership working.”

“BBC reported 27million hours of audience viewing and listening to Highland-related material during 2007.”

Key Findings

Prìomh Thoraidhean

Process Pròiseas

- ✧ A board comprising the key public sector agencies, The Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and the Scottish Government, planned and led Highland 2007. This was seen as a positive and effective partnership. The only criticism of this approach was the lack of private sector involvement at this level. However this was outweighed by the view that this was exemplary public sector partnership working.
- ✧ The staff of Highland 2007 were viewed as having worked effectively to manage a huge range of demands and expectations and were widely praised for their helpfulness.
- ✧ Funding for Highland 2007 came from a range of sources, public and private, the largest contributors being the public sector organisations on the board. In addition to funding the Highland 2007 organisation in Inverness, the three main partners also provided cash support for the main funding streams for events and activities, and for some of the major events in the programme. Additional significant funds were invested in capital projects as a result of Highland 2007.
- ✧ Highland 2007 also developed a relationship with 33 Concordat partners from the public and private sectors, and 17 commercial sponsors, which assisted in leveraging funding for strands of activity. To ensure all of the Highlands and Islands was involved, Highland 2007 set up partnerships with the local authorities in the areas not on the board: Argyll & Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Moray, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and, with funding from HIE, developed a programme for these areas.
- ✧ A total of £6.4million was invested directly in the Highland 2007 organisation; £3.1million directly into Highland 2007 supported projects (not through the Highland 2007 office); and £3.6million of in-kind support including £1million from The Highland Council to the administration of Highland 2007. £31.6million was invested in related capital projects.
- ✧ Highland 2007 commissioned a series of 'flagship' events for the programme. The rest of the funding was distributed to groups and organisations that applied to Highland 2007, with the funding tied to criteria set by the funders.
- ✧ There was criticism from some promoters of the lack of a commissioning fund and the need to tie applications for activity to what were seen as 'non-cultural' criteria. The requirement to demonstrate how the event was new or had developed on previous years also provoked negative comment.
- ✧ Despite these criticisms of aspects of the funding process, Highland 2007 made its decision-making transparent and expenditure was properly accounted for.
- ✧ £2million in-kind support for marketing was committed by VisitScotland to Highland 2007. While some difficulties were encountered between Highland 2007 and VisitScotland around the issue of how this funding was allocated, this relationship did deliver an increase in visitors to the Highlands in 2007. Marketing activity carried out by VisitScotland on behalf of Highland 2007 had a reach of over 19million people around the world and was valued at £4.7million. UK and international PR activity on behalf of Highland 2007 was valued at £1.4million and included regular contact with over 1400 media contacts.
- ✧ The impact of this activity saw an increase of 1.3% of visitor numbers (in 2007 from 2006) to visitor attractions in the Highlands of Scotland. Accommodation across all sectors saw growth: hotels by 3.4%; guest houses/B&Bs by 5%; self-catering by 1.7%; and caravan/camping by 34.8%.
- ✧ Marketing of Highland 2007 included the development of a website (which recorded 327,000 unique visits across the year); the production of a range of print material – particularly a full colour brochure four times in the year which listed all events and was sent to all homes in the area; media relations; and a range of PR events intended to promote Highland 2007 to businesses and to politicians. All projects funded by Highland 2007 were required to include Gaelic as part of their marketing; Highland 2007's own marketing was produced in Gaelic as well as other languages.
- ✧ The marketing team of two was under resourced and therefore prioritised its effort on promoting the Highland 2007 brand, directing the public to the brochures and website, while offering advice and guidance to individual promoters. Direct event promotion was reserved for the large scale events that Highland 2007 commissioned.
- ✧ Several large events including the UCI Mountain Bike World Championships & Trials and Adventure Racing World Championships achieved international TV coverage and the BBC reported 27million hours of audience viewing and listening to Highland-related material during 2007.
- ✧ While there was a good level of participation, attendees of individual festivals and events did not always connect them to Highland 2007. There was also negative critical comment from promoters about the effectiveness of the website and the brochures.
- ✧ There was a gap in promoting the Highland 2007 brand across Scotland and a lack of PR activity specifically targeted at other parts of Scotland. 60% of those surveyed living outside the Highlands and Islands had no awareness of the year's programme, and there was no significant impact on the press coverage which might have been expected to influence opinion-formers and potential visitors.

Key Findings

Prìomh Thoraidhean

The Programme

Am Prògram

- ✦ The scale of the programme was far greater than originally anticipated and included 500 events or projects, 136 capital projects and a series of events and activities in schools. Figures suggest that overall attendances were high with a significant level of visitors to the Highlands and Islands participating in events.
- ✦ Programme funding was distributed across the communities of the Highlands and Islands and across a wide geographic area. The programme was focused on the Highlands and Islands. With no additional commissioning budget and a stretched staff resource, even with political backing it proved difficult to achieve events in the rest of Scotland with a Highland theme.
- ✦ The programme embraced each of the six strands. Of the projects and events that comprised the programme 64% were arts-related, 49% involved heritage, 23% were language-related, 22% environmental, 18% sports, and 5% science-related.
- ✦ While there were criticisms of aspects of the programme, in the main the range of events sat comfortably within most people's understanding of Highland culture. New projects which came into being or were enhanced by Highland 2007 helped to re-define Highland culture. Environmental projects represented 22% of the total number of events of Highland 2007, and the landscape went on to define many of the other events in the programme.
- ✦ Gaelic was an underpinning theme of Highland 2007. Language-based projects attracted 13% of the project funding available – major events supported included Blas and The Royal National Mòd: Am Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail; new ongoing developments included a fèis in Moray. Highland 2007 supported Air Splaoid! (an online resource developed by Cànan) for beginners.
- ✦ There were criticisms of the Gaelic community itself from within about its failure to capitalise more on the opportunities offered by Highland 2007. Many who took part in Highland 2007 events with a Gaelic theme, did not recognise them as being part of Highland 2007.
- ✦ Festivals were one of the biggest successes of the Highland 2007 programme and a particular source of enthusiasm amongst young people living in the Highlands and Islands. While audience figures generally held up in an expanded market, there is evidence that longstanding festivals had to work harder at attracting and retaining audiences, in some cases assisted by Highland 2007 funding.
- ✦ Benefits for young people of being involved in Highland 2007 projects included increased self-confidence, increased access to and awareness of local culture, heritage and environment, and new skills.
- ✦ The Highland Promise – An Gealladh Mòr, a raft of activities co-ordinated by schools around the six strands, was a positive experience for many schools and shows what is possible when resources are provided to invest in culture. The opportunity to work together in Associated School Groups appears to have been beneficial for the schools involved and the majority of Head Teachers felt that pupils had benefited by learning something new about Highland culture.
- ✦ The approach of allocating all schools the same budget and asking them to deliver a new strand of activity was, on reflection, not entirely successful. Some teachers felt that supporting this additional activity, within an overcrowded year, and for schools undergoing major changes, was just too much. On the other hand many welcomed the chance to be part of a larger series of events, and responded with enthusiasm to the opportunity to enhance their cultural curriculum.



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Key Findings Prìomh Thoraidhean

Economic Impact Buaidh Eaconamach

- ✧ Adjusting for so-called 'leakage' of expenditure outside the region, and allowing for some projects and event activity which would have happened in any case, net employment impact was 326 Full Time Equivalent posts (FTEs) and an income of £6.6million. These figures include multiplier impacts throughout the Highlands and Islands, which allow for further rounds of expenditure via suppliers and spending of wages.
- ✧ A further 213 FTEs (net) were supported on a voluntary basis.
- ✧ Promoters reported business and tourism benefits, including the formation of new business ideas and opportunities created for repeat visits. New specialist posts were created and skills enhanced, particularly in the creative industries. However most employment opportunities created were casual or short-term.
- ✧ An estimated 520,000 additional day visits and 43,000 additional overnight stays in the Highlands and Islands were made by non-residents of the Highlands and Islands as a result of Highland 2007. Among the additional overnight visitors, 58% were from the rest of Scotland and the remainder were from the rest of the UK or overseas.
- ✧ The expenditure on accommodation, tickets, food and drink etc. associated with these additional visitors to the Highlands and Islands was an estimated £4.5million.
- ✧ Adding multiplier impacts brings a total visitor expenditure impact of £6.1million to the economy of the Highlands and Islands, which would sustain around 133 FTE jobs and generate an income of around £2.1million.
- ✧ Visitor impacts were spread very widely throughout the Highlands and Islands, with only around 16% being captured in the Inverness area.
- ✧ Around 55% of the visitor impacts fell in the third quarter (July to September), which is broadly in line with the usual annual pattern of visitor trips to the Highlands and Islands. Tourism providers in the Highlands and Islands welcomed Highland 2007 as an important way of stimulating the industry, but were disappointed with the lack of events outside the tourist summer season. They felt that there was a need for closer communication between event planners and the industry.
- ✧ Over time there is likely to be a continuing positive impact from repeat visits by people who otherwise might not have considered coming to the Highlands and Islands had it not been for Highland 2007. A conservative assessment of this impact is £260,000.

“The scale of the programme was far greater than originally anticipated and included 500 events or projects, 136 capital projects and a series of events and activities in schools.”

“Gaelic was an underpinning theme of Highland 2007.”



Key Findings Prìomh Thoraidhean

Cultural Impact Buaidh Chultarail

- ✧ The programme of community-based events was regarded as a major success of Highland 2007. Promoters reported many benefits related to the social capital of the Highlands and Islands, including, for example, the increased involvement of young people in community life, and a stronger sense of collective achievement and potential.
- ✧ Investment in capital projects, large and small, was important for strengthening the cultural infrastructure, providing resources and equipment and improving access. Views about the benefits and impact on existing organisations and promoters in the areas were divided. While some positive assessments were made, reviewing the full range of responses, there is evidence to indicate that a significant community of those involved in developing and promoting events in the Highlands and Islands either did not find it possible to engage with Highland 2007, or if they did, did not find it a worthwhile experience.
- ✧ The majority of people, both at home and across the rest of Scotland, hold a positive, but largely traditional, view of the Highlands and Islands. There was little change in people's views and perceptions between 2006 and 2008.
- ✧ Residents generally feel there has been more change in the culture of the Highlands and Islands over the past few years than non-residents. However, other Scots perceived more change in 2008 than they did in 2006, bringing their perceptions more into line with those of residents.
- ✧ In terms of the perceived impact of Highland 2007 itself, when asked what effect the year's events had for the identity and prosperity of the Highlands and Islands, a total of 80% of The Highland Council residents perceived an impact, more than a quarter believing it to be a major impact.
- ✧ Residents of the Highlands and Islands claimed to have a greater level of familiarity with the Highlands and Islands and also with its culture post-Highland 2007. Non-residents showed no change. Both residents and non-residents of the Highlands and Islands agreed strongly that Highland culture is something of which to be proud. Strong agreement was also expressed for the statement that Highland culture is important for the Highland economy.
- ✧ While the majority (76%) of press stories on Highland 2007 had a positive tone, most of this press coverage originated from newspapers based in the Highlands and Islands area. Highland 2007 made little impact generally in the Scottish or UK wide press. When it was mentioned, around half of all coverage in national broadsheets and tabloids was made up of *marginal* references to Highland 2007 only, while the year was *central* to only 23.5% of coverage in national broadsheets, and 19% of national tabloids. This indicates that the impact of Highland 2007 was very much Highland-based, with little wider reach.
- ✧ The most consistent and significant finding of the press analysis of the year was the question of how far events were identified as being part of Highland 2007. There were examples of significant stories in the Scottish press concerning high profile Highland 2007 supported events which did not make reference to the year. To attempt to redress this would require additional, focused expertise in brand marketing, PR and online/web marketing.



“The Highland Promise – An Gealladh Mòr... was a positive experience for many schools and shows what is possible when resources are provided to invest in culture.”

“The programme of community based events was regarded as a major success...”

Key Findings Prìomh Thoraidhean

Legacy Dileab

- ✦ There is a willingness to sustain the partnerships of agencies involved in delivering Highland 2007.
- ✦ The engagement of a large number of communities across the Highlands and Islands stimulated a positive interest in promoting and developing cultural events in the future. Some established promoters in the Highlands and Islands were critical of the funding process, marketing and that an external provider was contracted to produce the flagship events. This has to be addressed to avoid undermining future initiatives.
- ✦ Highland 2007 has identified a broader and more contemporary definition of Highland culture and encouraged the re-interpretation of traditional Highland icons.
- ✦ £31.6million was invested in ten major capital projects as a result of Highland 2007. Funding came from The Highland Council, HIE and the Scottish Government to enhance funding which had already been pledged. Projects include Eden Court Theatre, Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre and Fàs at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig College and are designed to enhance the physical infrastructure for culture in the Highlands.
- ✦ The Highland Promise – An Gealladh Mòr enhanced opportunities, developed skills and brought in new ideas. However, without continued funding, it is unclear how The Highland Promise – An Gealladh Mòr will benefit schools in the future, as opposed to the individual pupils who took part. The ending of the Cultural Co-ordinators programme does undermine future plans.
- ✦ Highland 2007's appointment of one of the UK'S leading Event Management agencies to deliver the key flagship events was anticipated by some as an opportunity to enhance the skills of those living and working in the Highlands and Islands. While there is evidence of an ad hoc engagement of local people, a case was made for a more formalised and sustained approach.
- ✦ Concerns were expressed by promoters about there being too many events – particularly festivals. While there was no evidence of significant displacement in terms of attendances between 2006 and 2007, any future developments would be advised to work closely with these promoters – large and small – to ensure no damage to the existing infrastructure.

“...there is likely to be a continuing positive impact from repeat visits by people who otherwise might not have considered coming to the Highlands and Islands had it not been for Highland 2007.”

“Promoters reported business and tourism benefits...”



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