



Carlisle City Council

Report to Place Panel

Report details

Meeting Date: 19 January 2023

Portfolio: Leader

Key Decision: No

Policy and Budget Yes

Framework

Public / Private Public

Title: UPDATE ON PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND MAJOR EVENTS

Report of: The Deputy Chief Executive & The Director of Economic Development

Report Number: CS 04/23

Purpose / Summary:

This report summarises activities and major events in the past year in Carlisle City centre and an update on planned events and activities for 2023 to help stimulate economic recovery.

Recommendations:

To consider the contents of the report and contribute to emerging thinking regarding economic recovery and renewal of Carlisle City Centre.

Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	19/01/2023
Council:	

1. Background

- 1.1. The Covid Pandemic has significantly impacted the ability to hold events within the City Centre due to government restrictions on gatherings.
- 1.2. The pandemic has also driven a significant increase in online shopping, which has in turn hastened the decline of high street retail.
- 1.3. The Re-opening the High Street Safely Fund (2020) and Welcome Back Fund (2021) was the government response to supporting high streets by putting in place additional measures to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and tourism and respond to the impact of COVID-1.
- 1.4. Both funds were fully utilised by the Council to encourage footfall and support local businesses through putting in place measure to ensure the safety of city centre users, running Covid safe events and implementing measures to encourage footfall.

2. 2022/23 events and activities

- 2.1. Year 2022/23 has had a strong programme of activity and events. The annual programme has been fully re introduced and also contained new events and one-off events.

2.2. International Markets (Easter and August Bank Holiday)

The year began with the annual Easter International Market in the city centre. This event has been part of the annual events programme for over 20 years and is a huge draw encouraging people to visit Carlisle and the city centre. The International Market is also held on the August Bank Holiday weekend each year.

- 2.3. In 2021 an economic impact assessment of the Summer International Market was commissioned. This revealed that the International Summer Market in Carlisle in August 2021 provided a significant draw and motivation for people to visit the city. Dwell times were high, and the majority of people said they would be spending longer in Carlisle as a direct result of the market. The longer times people spent in the city in turn generated additional expenditure in shops, pubs, restaurants and cafes.
- 2.4. The International Markets are an income generator and comes at no cost to the Council. Economic impact of the event is estimated at just over £2.1m.

- 2.5. **Carlisle Hawker Festival** In 2021 the Carlisle Hawker Festival was introduced to the City Centre. Held in June, this new event features street food, drink, a central seating area and live music stage. This event was very well received by visitors and residents and returned for 2022.
- 2.6 **Christmas Events** The Town Deal has allowed for the provision of new and enhanced Christmas Lighting in the city centre. The Christmas Light Switch On also provided a significant draw to the city centre. It is estimated that in 2022 the Switch On was the busiest ever with around 14000 people in attendance.
- 2.7 In 2022 a new Christmas Market was introduced to Carlisle. The event was held over 10 days in the city centre and featured local traders as well as traders from around the UK. This was the first Christmas Market of significant scale. The event was designed to anchor a significant and high profile marketing campaign encouraging visitors to come to Carlisle and local to use the city centre at a critical time of year for the retail industry.
- 2.8 An economic impact assessment was carried out which showed that the Christmas Market in Carlisle in December 2022 provided a significant draw and motivation for people to visit the city. Dwell times were high and 45% of people interviewed said they would be spending longer in Carlisle as a direct result of the market. The longer times people spent in the city in turn generated additional expenditure in shops, pubs, restaurants and cafes.
- 2.9 Overall the event had good satisfaction rates and feedback to improve the event included; increasing the size of the market, making the market more “Christmassy” and a wider variety of stalls. People suggested Christmas music or carol singers, and lights, more for children and also heated seating areas.
- 2.10 Compared to the audience at the summer International market in 2021, there were more people from further afield at the Christmas market – 19% from outside of Cumbria compared to 9% for the summer event. 55% of the people at the event were local to Carlisle (65% in the summer), and 26% were from elsewhere in Cumbria.
- 2.11 The total economic impact of the 2022 Carlisle Christmas Market is estimated at just over £3.8m. With the event being on at Christmas-time, when retail spend levels are significantly higher, some of the spend may have occurred in the town at some point anyway, but the Christmas market provided a strong motivation to draw people into the city – who may otherwise have spent online or elsewhere.
- 2.12 Estimates of visitor numbers were 91,191 in total across the ten days of the event.

- 2.13 Support for local businesses taking part was provided by offering a 50% discount on pitch fees which accounted for just over £7000 spend on the event.
- 2.14 To see the Christmas Market in 2022 visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kIETnBNskc>
- 2.15 Significant work has been done around Christmas with the market acting as the anchor for marketing and promotional activities. Other festive events included the Quirky Eclectica Local Craft Producers Market and Carlisle Farmers Market.
- 2.16 **City of Lights** In February 2020 Carlisle City of Lights was piloted in collaboration with Cumbria County Council. City of Lights aimed to highlight Carlisle's historic buildings and architecture as well as a Son et Lumiere style event at Carlisle Cathedral. The ticketed event at Carlisle Cathedral completely sold out.
- 2.17 An economic impact assessment was carried out which showed that the inaugural City of Lights event in Carlisle in February 2020 provided a significant draw and motivation for people to visit the city. The event was instrumental in bringing people into the city, both locals and visitors from further afield.
- 2.18 The event had a widespread appeal – across all age groups, and party types (couples, families, friends) as well as attracting people from outside of the city (27%). The event was extremely well received, with high satisfaction rates across all aspects, and very high percentages of people who would return to another, similar event, and recommend the event to others.
- 2.19 Economic impact of the event is estimated at just over £166,000. In addition to the economic benefits, the event also played a part in changing perceptions of the city – people described it as 'modern' and 'exciting', saying it gave them a sense of pride in the city, and changed the way they viewed the cathedral.
- 2.20 Due to COVID restrictions in 2021 the event was moved outdoors. This allowed the event to grow and incorporate not only the Cathedral, but also Tullie House Museum and Carlisle Castle. To see the City of Lights 2021 visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48XJOU4xzG4&t=14s>
- 2.21 In 2022 with the support of Town Deal, the Discover Carlisle Team were able to produce projected artwork specific to Carlisle taking visitors from present day to Roman times. This event was part of the Hadrian's Wall 1900 celebrations. To see City of Lights 2022 visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEEEXGvEcTs>

2.22 The next City of Lights event will be held 23, 24 and 25 February. The event is themed on science and will see the event grow once again taking in the interior space of the Cathedral, the Fraternity, Tullie House Museum and Carlisle Castle. Tickets are on sale now at Carlisle Tourist Information Centre and at DiscoverCarlisle.co.uk

2 High Streets Task Force

2.1 The High Streets Task Force ('HSTF') was commissioned by the government to respond to the accelerated change in the high street and support communities, partnerships, and local authorities to identify the steps and activities that could be taken to make transformation happen.

2.2 The HSTF carried out diagnostic visit to the city centre in July 2022. Following the visit, an 'Unlocking Your Place Potential' report ('the UTPP Report') was produced that outlines Carlisle's strengths and a diagnosis of the main barriers to transformation. It then outlined recommendations to drive and catalyse the transformation process.

2.3 One recommendation was to increase the "activation" of the City Centre to sit alongside existing activities:

- - Trialling new events, pop up and meanwhile uses
- - Experiment with the art and culture offer
- - Using empty units for temporary incubation hubs or community uses.
- - Engagement with younger people
- - Activities around developing the evening economy.

2.4 The full report on the HSTF was presented to the Place Panel (13/10/22)

3 Carlisle Market Square and the Greenmarket

3.1 Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council are working to prepare a vision for Market Square and the Greenmarket.

3.2 The project aims to deliver a re-imagined public square with improved infrastructure that puts people first, prioritising pedestrian movement and encouraging residents, workers and visitors to stay longer in the city centre.

3.3 The funding for this project is provided by the Government's Future High Streets Fund - £2.7m is available to deliver the scheme with the aim to implement works by March 2024.

3.4 The new space will support the diversification of the retail core facilitating events and bringing new leisure and cultural uses to the heart of Carlisle.

3.5 Carlisle residents and businesses have been consulted ahead of final plans

3.6 The project is part of a wider city centre plan which includes investment in the Citadel, Caldew Riverside and Carlisle Railway Station.

3.7 Together with the Market Square and the Greenmarket, these projects aim to rejuvenate the city centre and improve the visitor experience.

4 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

4.1 Events and activities play an important part in enhancing the vitality of the city centre driving footfall to existing businesses and encouraging new business start-ups.

4.2 Events have a key cultural and social value alongside the economic benefits.

4.3 Events are an instrument for the development of the visitor economy and to extend the visitor season.

5 Contribution to the Carlisle Plan Priorities

5.1 Contribution to the Carlisle Plan priorities of Economic Growth and Health and Wellbeing.

Contact details:

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Appendices attached to report:

None

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

None

Corporate Implications:

Legal -

Property Services -

Finance -

Equality -

Information Governance-