LEADERSHIP GROUP

OPENING OF THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Executive Summary

1. This Paper seeks to update the Leadership Group on the organisation and the outcomes of the events organised to mark the Opening of the Fourth Session of the Scottish Parliament. The Leadership Group is invited to review and discuss the Paper.

2. The event to mark the Opening of the Fourth Session of the Scottish Parliament took place on Friday 1 July and comprised five constituent parts including: a procession of the Crown of Scotland down the Royal Mile; an Address by Her Majesty The Queen in the Debating Chamber supplemented by poetry and song; a Main Hall reception hosted by the Presiding Officer with the Moving Stories Sitters; a Riding down the Royal Mile including local heroes; and an Open Afternoon of entertainment that showcased the best of young Scottish talent.

3. This high quality event maintained and built upon the tradition that we have established in previous Opening Ceremonies bringing together the people of Scotland, Parliament and the Palace in a ceremony that reflects Scotland’s history and traditions whilst setting the tone of a modern outward looking Parliament engaging with Scottish citizens, promoting and celebrating culture and politics; and as far as possible engaging with a wider range of groups and individuals from across civic Scotland.

4. The overarching theme of the event was to convey a nation looking forward to its next Parliamentary session. This was reflected throughout the day’s proceedings providing a snapshot of modern Scotland, with specific focus on organisations and key milestones within the next session themed under the auspices of the 4 words inscribed of the Parliament’s Mace – Wisdom, Justice, Compassion and Integrity.

5. Overall the event was a huge success for the Parliament with positive feedback received from Members, performers, participants, visiting dignitaries and guests along with over-riding positive media coverage at national but especially at local level. Turnout from Members was the best to date for an Opening – 128 Members.

Issues

Staffing

The Project Team

6. The core team tasked with delivering the event was managed by the Events Team and comprised of one grade 4 Events Co-ordinator, three grade 3s (two of
whom were brought in on t/p from other offices) and one grade 2 Events Administrator, with other staff coming on board near to the date of delivery.

The Project would benefit from staff supporting the Events Team being brought in earlier in the process allowing a greater period of training and integration.

Staff support

7. All Heads of Office were asked actively to encourage those staff in their areas who did not have an official role on the day to volunteer to assist and support the event. The event was staffed by 119 people of whom 101 were Scottish Parliament and MSP staff. The remaining 18 were from the Scottish Parliament Retirement Association and agency brought in for the day.

8. All staff worked extremely hard to ensure the success of the event and whilst the numbers of staff may on the face of it seem relatively high the event would have benefitted from at least a further 30 to 40 staff. This would have allowed the project Team to split the day into two shifts – morning and afternoon. The event did however have good buy in from those staff who worked over the course of the day.

9. It is suggested that for similar future events, those staff do not have an official function within the day are openly encouraged by senior management to support the event.

The Project would benefit from more staff being involved from across the Scottish Parliament encouraging inter-office working providing an opportunity to engage with new Members and the public and supporting a major event at the start of a new session.

Media

10. The Media Relations Office carried out an extensive media campaign and the overall strategy was successfully delivered. There were four main aims as follows:

➢ Aim 1 - Secure a strong Scottish Parliament presence in local, national and specialist media markets through news promotion and appropriate media access to the activities.

The coverage spanned a 2 ½ month period from the middle of May to the end of July, spiking over the 10 day period from Wednesday 29 June to Friday 8 July. MRO collated 187 articles relating to the event from local (74%); national (17%); and online (9%) media.
- **Aim 2** - Support all Members in communicating the event to their local audiences.

  Around 2/3 of all the Members who nominated local heroes enjoyed coverage in their local newspaper. Photographs were taken of 102 Members with their local heroes, a significant improvement on Session 3 when only 32 were taken.

- **Aim 3** - Raise the media profile of the new Presiding Officers.

  Commentary relating to the tone of the event was positive, as was opinion of the role of the Presiding Officers.

- **Aim 4** - work with colleagues to deliver direct engagement with the public and ensure media products take account of practical information which must be in the public domain.

  MRO worked with City of Edinburgh Council to ensure information about the day was promoted alongside practical information regarding road closures. MRO also provided briefings for colleagues to use with Members, the website and Twitter to ensure public information was broadcast as widely as possible.

  **The Project Team would recommend this type of approach for future opening ceremonies and major events involving members, guests, public and others from across Scotland.**

**Guests and participants**

11. In addition to Members and their guests, the guest list included the Speakers and Presiding Officers of the other UK legislatures; the Scottish Consular Corps to provide an international perspective for the event; the Lord Provosts and Provosts of Scotland’s local authorities to ensure coverage from across Scotland at a local government level; the principals of Scotland’s Universities; religious leaders; the Chief Constables of Scotland Police Forces; the Heads of the Fire Brigade, the Scottish Ambulance Service and the Armed Services in Scotland; along with Chief Executives and representatives of NDPBs and NGOs to provide a broad reflection of Scottish organisations that the Parliament engages with; and 20 seats made available for members of the public through a ballot.

  The Public Ballot was highly successful with over 300 people from all regions of Scotland applying for a seat.

12. The full day of events involved **over 5,500 people** including:

- 1,200 participants and performers assembling at East Market Street to form the Riding
700+ people including 128 Members and their guests viewing the formal Address by Her Majesty The Queen, seated in either the Debating Chamber or in Public Viewing Rooms: this group subsequently joined the Riding at Queensberry House

1,850 members of the public attending the Open Afternoon

1,500 members of the public viewing from the perimeter of the Event Arena as the Riding passed

500 staff directly supporting the event – armed services, Scottish Parliament staff, first aiders, Lothian and Borders Police and Military Police

Riding Participants

13. The Riding down the Royal Mile reflected the rich diversity of the people of Scotland, with school children, community groups, local heroes, performers and representatives from all corners of Scottish society joining Members and guests. Those involved included Youth organisations to celebrate the UN Year of Volunteering and the International Year of Youth; past, present and future Commonwealth medal winners to highlight Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games; and a range of voluntary organisations from across Scotland highlighting key issues to be addressed in the next session. The Riding also included the children who share an historic link with the Scottish Parliament being born on the day it was established, 1 July 1999; nominees from across Scotland put forward by Scottish Parliament committees; and Chief Executives from Scotland’s Local Authorities.

The Project Team would recommend this approach to developing the Riding for future opening ceremonies as it provides a clear focus for the Riding looking forward for the new session.

14. In partnership with Historic Scotland all Riding guests were given the opportunity to take up a half price offer that day to visit Edinburgh Castle or join a Ranger on a free guided walk of Holyrood Park.

Local heroes

15. Following the tradition of previous Opening Ceremonies, Members were invited to nominate local heroes from their constituencies and regions to participate in the Riding. A total of 106 heroes took part. A teenage para-Olympian, a children’s play campaigner, a writer and a fire-fighter are just few of the local heroes nominated by Members. The Project Team organised all travel and accommodation for the local heroes.

The Project Team would recommend that we continue with this tradition of Members nominating local heroes for future opening ceremonies.
Public Engagement

16. All guests and members of the public were able to view the Parliament building whilst enjoying various musical performances across the campus during the Open Afternoon. This included tour guides and staff located around the building to provide information and a programme of music reflecting Scotland’s young talent, providing an event with openness and accessibility for the people of Scotland. The Open Afternoon provides an ideal opportunity for the Scottish Parliament not only to engage with a wide audience but also a platform to highlight Scotland’s talented musicians.

17. The Project Team worked in collaboration with various musicians and musical groups from across Scotland such as the National Youth Choir of Scotland; National Youth Orchestra of Scotland; and Plockton School of Excellence to develop a programme of music within the Garden Lobby and Main Hall of the Parliament. Opera Singers, choirs, harpists, drummers and Samba bands added to the overall programme.

18. The Team also worked in partnership with music business departments at both Jewel & Esk College, Edinburgh and Stow College, Glasgow to programme an afternoon of rock bands within Committee Room 2. This part of the day in particular was very popular on social media sites with a live webcast taking place. Guests and performers Tweeted throughout 1 July in addition to in the run up to the day.

The Project Team would recommend something similar to an open afternoon showcasing young musicians as part of future opening ceremonies to ensure as wide engagement with the public as possible.

Budget

19. The budget allocated to the event was substantially reduced from previous openings. However, with continued support of key partners – City of Edinburgh Council; Lothian and Borders Police; Historic Scotland; and the Armed Services – and with sponsorship in kind from a number of Scottish companies the Project Team were able to deliver a very successful event on time and within budget at just over £50k. The majority of these costs were for travel and accommodation for local heroes and participants attending the event along with costs for printing, marketing and broadcasting.

Quality indicators

20. Indicators of quality for the event were the delivery of each element to time and to budget; the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders both in the development and as part of the guest and performer groups; the positive feedback that was received from Members, performers, participants, guests, staff and sub groups; and the interest from the people of Scotland both in the Riding and in the Open Afternoon. In addition the over-riding positive media coverage attained at national but especially at local level clearly indicated a hugely successful event.
21. The Opening of the Fourth Session of the Scottish Parliament had the best turnout of Members to date for an Opening – 128 Members. Letters from visiting dignitaries were also received congratulating the Parliament on a successful event.

Dependencies

22. As this Paper is reporting on a project which has already completed there are no dependencies to report.

Governance

23. The SPCB agreed the overall budget and parameters for the event but passed oversight and day-to-day running to Gold Group supported by the Project Team. The establishment of Gold Group chaired by the Parliament’s Clerk/Chief Executive with top level attendance and decision making powers aided project delivery with complete buy in from all stakeholder organisations including - City of Edinburgh Council, Lothian and Borders Police, the Palace, Armed Forces and Historic Scotland.

24. The Gold Group agreed the overall Programme and its aims and objectives and established five Sub-Groups deemed necessary for the successful delivery of the events including a Sub-Group Co-ordinating Group chaired by the Head of the Events and Exhibitions Team with the chairs of the other Sub-Groups – Communication and Media; Event Planning and Operations; Programme and Protocol; and Security.

25. The Sub-Groups consisted of appropriate representation from organisations that were particularly involved in aspects of opening events along with representatives from each of the three key organisations – Scottish Parliament, City of Edinburgh Council and Lothian and Borders Police – and were chaired by the most relevant organisation represented on Gold Group which ensured further buy-in from each of these key partners for the successful delivery of the events.

26. The Sub-Groups met on a regular basis and lead by the Project Team drew up proposals on specific aspects of the event and assisted with logistical arrangements for the event.

The governance arrangements worked well and the Project Team would recommend their repetition for any future opening ceremonies.

Publication Scheme

27. This Paper may be published in line with the SPCB Publication Scheme.

Next steps

28. The Leadership Group is asked to note the contents of this Paper and to highlight any issues that it feels should be taken forward in the organisation, planning and delivery of future opening ceremonies or similar major events.
Decision

29. No decisions are required. The Leadership Group is asked to note the content of this Paper, and highlight any issues that it feels should be taken forward in the organisation, planning and delivery of future opening ceremonies or similar major events.

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