

Argyll and Bute Council submission of 18 February 2022

PE1912/E - Funding for Council Venues Submission by Argyll and Bute Council

Like many other Scottish Councils, Argyll and Bute has established an organisation to run venues and provide some of its essential services – Live Argyll.

Community Leisure UK (Scotland) is the representative body of Scotland's public leisure and culture charities have stated -

'Scotland's public leisure and culture charities have weathered the storm of the last 21 months of the pandemic due to support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and from local authority partners. Prior to the discovery of the Omicron variant, recovery after reopening has been slow and community return to public leisure and culture facilities had plateaued, both sectors reporting a 60-80% return rate.'

'We fully support the Scottish Government's focus on public health and safety, and have seen our members across the country support vaccination centres, testing sites and ensuring they go above and beyond the requirements to ensure safe and welcoming environments for their customers. However, the lack of clarity from the Scottish Government in terms of messaging, particularly around reducing social contact while venues remain open is creating confusion and anxiety, both for the public and for operators.'

Argyll and Bute Council would generally agree with these sentiments.

As an operator of facilities reliant on public subsidy Argyll and Bute Council and Live Argyll would support any request for additional resources which are targeted at ensuring the longer term sustainability of our facilities and venues.

Throughout the pandemic Live Argyll have been able to access support via the UK Government furlough scheme as well as successfully accessing support funds via Creative Scotland's performing arts venue relief fund. Whilst this support is very much welcomed it should be noted that the financial outlook remains uncertain with consumer confidence adversely impacted and changing user behaviour thus directly impacting income generation levels.

Like many businesses and organisations Argyll and Bute Council and Live Argyll are exposed to significant cost pressures and income risks. Local Authority resources are under extreme pressure and there are many competing priorities. Public leisure and cultural services will play a crucial role in post pandemic physical and mental health well-being recovery therefore it is essential that Councils are adequately resourced to be able to deliver and meet public expectations.

In conclusion, Argyll and Bute Council supports the principle that adequate revenue funding is provided to Councils to permit the ongoing delivery of these important services, which contribute in many different ways to the wellbeing of individuals and communities.