



Report to Policy Committee

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Report of: Diana Buckley (Director of Economic Development, Skills and Culture)

Report to: EDS Committee

Date of Decision: 20th December 23

Subject: 3 year grant funding agreement for DocFest from 2024 to 2026

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 2483				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				

Purpose of Report:

To seek approval to grant International Documentary Festival Sheffield (**DocFest**) with a total of £100,000 per year to be expended over a 3 year term to support the delivery of the 2024, 2025 and 2026 DocFest events in Sheffield, the detail of which will be agreed and signed by way of a grant agreement.

Recommendations:

The Economic Development and Skills Policy Committee is recommended:

- a) To award a 3-year grant to DocFest for the sum of £100K a year for 3 years to support the delivery of DocFest in Sheffield in 2024, 2025 and 2026; and,
- b) To note that the funding will be drawn from the Strategic Major Events Fund

Background Papers:https://issuu.com/sheffielddocfest/docs/sheffield_docfest_festival_report_2023

DocFest economic value evaluation from the Major Events Team Nov 23

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: Adrian Hart
		Legal: Rita Collins
		Equalities & Consultation: Ed Sexton
		Climate: Kathryn Warrington
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Kate Martin</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Martin Smith</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Diana Buckley</i>	Job Title: Director of Economic Development, Skills and Culture
	Date: Draft 301123	

1. PROPOSAL

1.1 Background

Sheffield DocFest (the **Festival**) is the UK's leading documentary festival and one of the world's most influential markets for documentary projects, celebrating the art and business of documentary and all non-fiction storytelling. 2023 saw the 30th edition of DocFest. The festival has significant impacts, this 30th edition:

- Attracted 2272 industry delegates from 69 countries to Sheffield for a 10-day period.
- Is estimated to deliver an economic impact of almost £2 million to Sheffield (this figure is calculated using the SCC tool below whereas DocFest estimate £1.8 million).
- Is spread over multiple venues, the Festival provides a valuable contribution to Sheffield's cultural offer and achieves almost 40,000 public admissions (60% of which were from Sheffield/SY).
- In 2023 there were 114 films premiered in Sheffield (37 of which were world premieres).
- The Festival includes a marketplace (the Meet Market) where typically over £7,000,000 of deals are done.

Sheffield DocFest also has a year-round programme of training, workshops, mentoring and networking as well as internships and volunteering opportunities for young people giving Sheffield a year-round profile on the national and international stage. DocFest has showed great recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

The Council does not have a statutory duty to provide funding for DocFest and sponsorship of Sheffield DocFest is therefore discretionary. Funding will support Sheffield DocFest to maintain a programme of international significance, in an environment of reduced funding from national bodies. It will support Sheffield DocFest to unlock further funding to directly benefit local filmmakers and audiences, as well as providing the resources to secure commercial funding. It also secures an impressive return on investment for the Council's investment.

The £100K grant funding is budgeted for from the Strategic Major Events fund.

1.2 Evaluating the value of DocFest

Sheffield City Council has 5 core principles for evaluating support given to events (agreed with EDS Committee).

Economic Impact

Increases volume or value of the visitor economy: DocFest brings in almost £2 million in economic impact to Sheffield. This is a 2000% ROI on SCC investment of £100k and also means that overall, every £1 of

Festival budget (of £1.4m in 2023) spent results in £1.42 benefit to Sheffield.

Supports a key business/ investment priority: DocFest has a clear benefit to the visitor economy and the growth of this sector. More than 45% of public audiences are from outside Sheffield (40% outside S Yorks) and more than 90% of professional delegates (2272 in 2023) from outside Sheffield. 24% of delegates in 2023 were international.

Supports supply chain/local spend: Events such as DocFest provide much needed footfall for our hospitality businesses and hotels. In addition, DocFest also hosts some of its events in some of our independent venues and cafes: DocFest used 36 venues in Sheffield in 2023. They supported our restaurant sector in 2023 by creating an informal guide for delegate visitors to highlight good food and drink places locally. They also support the events supply chain in things such as tech hire and transportation.

Brand and Reputation

DocFest is a globally recognised event and engine for documentary film worldwide, regarded in the top 5 in the world.

Achieves national and/or international press/reach: DocFest is the 3rd largest documentary market and festival in Europe with a globally recognised marketplace. 24% of industry delegates in 2023 were international, as were 4% of the 37,000 public audiences. They doubled press reach in 2023, achieving National, International, and local broadcast, print and radio coverage of the Festival and films. Internationally, in the film community, people refer to the Festival as simply 'Sheffield'.

A conservative estimate for press reach is over 2m combined circulation and unique website impressions for 3 months of the 2023 festival topped 140,000.

Social media reach of X (formerly Twitter) is in the region of 51.7k, Facebook 24k and Instagram 19.8k.

The Festival report details the large amount of media coverage. Some highlights include:

- A 100% increase of filmmaker/film team interviews which raises awareness.
- Reviews during the Festival ran across key trades and newspaper outlets including Business Doc Europe, Cineuropa, Screen Daily and The Guardian Online, and other online outlets including Close-Up Film, Eye For Film, Eastern Kicks, Film Carnage and HighOn Films.
- Previews and features ran in national news including The Guardian, The Observer, The Economist, Guardian Online, BBC

News Online; and broadcast including BBC Radio 4 Front Row and BBC Radio 3 Free Thinking.

- International coverage appeared in Cineuropa, The Film Verdict, and US outlets Filmmaker Magazine, plus other international countries such as: WNP (Poland), Hindustan Times (India), NewsES Euro (Spain) and Ukrainian outlets Kino 24, 1 News and Suspline Media.
- Local coverage appeared in BBC Radio Sheffield, BBC Yorkshire Online, Now Then and Exposed Magazine.

Links to inclusive events programming and REC outcomes:

- 4 free community workshops in 2023, responding to festival themes of bodily autonomy, nature, Deafness and the trans diasporic experience.
- 30 local community groups engaged in the programme, offering complimentary tickets to opening night and other films.
- a female and non-binary creators meetup for immersive creators and a filmmakers of colour meetup in our industry programme.
- 'Docs For All' concession, offers £6.50 tickets as a trust-based concession responding to the cost of living crisis and other hidden barriers to participation.
- Alternate realities exhibition at Site gallery is free, open to all and was extended for the month of June/July to allow Sheffield residents to explore and experience the works.
- Youth Jury programme selects, trains and develops 5 emerging programmers/critics aged 18-25, helping them to award a prize at the festival, access peer learning and professional development.
- BSL interpretation for the summit and BSL and/or open captions for all films in the crucible theatre.
- DocFest team is co-directed by a person of colour; two full time curatorial position are held by persons of colour, more than 30% of the team and trustees' roles are held by persons of colour.

Community benefits

Clear contribution to pride of place and community engagement: Local audiences are very important to DocFest. They have been committed to Sheffield for more than 30 years. They ensure that they brand buildings and flag sites around the city centre, train station and showroom, as well as having box office presence in Tudor Square to achieve a city takeover feel and bring the city to life. DocFest's core permanent team are Sheffield based, and four of them came through trainee programmes and have now progressed to producer and manager roles with decision making responsibility.

DocFest work with SHU to deliver work placements and training so that students know about vibrant career options in film/film exhibition before they graduate. Their filmmaker challenge asked six emerging UK doc filmmakers to create short films about Sheffield.

Volunteers programme engaged more than 450 people from students

around the country to locally-based adults wanting to engage with the Festival, they have 4 free community workshops and a local advisory group of six South Yorkshire residents (to advise on and engage with our festival and year round programmes).

Inclusion and diversity: DocFest has significant diversity in organisation makeup / audience focus / programming. Their co-leadership model means that they are led by female, queer and ethnically diverse co-directors. More than 30% of their core team and trustees are persons of colour, the majority of their core team (58%) identify as queer / LGBTQI+ and they are all local - they provide real and meaningful creative jobs in a region where these are not plentiful.

DocFest also operate an advisory panel model for programme selections - arts, films, and industry - to ensure gatekeeping of opportunity is diverse, international and representative.

They reach a range of public audiences: 56% female, 16% ethnically diverse, 32% LGBTQI, 19% under 30, 11% disabled, 10% identify as disadvantaged.

This diversity in mirrors in the Industry attendees: 57% female, 28% ethnically diverse, 24% LGBTQI, 26% under 30, 12% disabled, 22% identify as disadvantaged.

Accessibility: All screenings at Crucible theatre captioned, 39% of all films captioned or audio described, 68% of programme subtitled, carers attend for free. There is a strong deaf and disability focus in the programme. They had a disability meetup, a disability training session and Deaf filmmakers presenting work in the marketplace.

Supports key strategies

DocFest directly contributes to our Destination Management Plan priorities and our emerging Culture Strategy.

The economic impact of Festival attendees and industry delegates is estimated at £2 million and the international reputation of DocFest (and the Sheffield association) is also vast. Around 40,000 visitors are experiencing all that our city has to offer.

In the film/screen/creative industries sector, DocFest as an anchor organisation has a direct impact on jobs and as a training provider as seen through university partnerships, festival placements, volunteers programme and 70 temp roles available each year in a world class creative event. They are actively working with Rotherham to expand community outreach into SY.

Why does DocFest need this grant support?

There is still a need for public funding for events like Docfest. Despite an extremely successful year with audience growth above 40% and sales income growth of +20%, the festival remains challenged, as does much of the events and cultural economy, by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, reduction in public funds across cultural funders and local authorities and rising costs.

The festival raises more than 65% of its annual budget from scratch each year, through earned income (ticket sales, passes, submissions) and through project grants and private sponsorship. Project grants often require new activity to be developed while sponsors cultivation and negotiation, as well as grant applications, require year-round resource.

Multi-year funding agreements like these go a very long way to support the stability and sustainability of the organisation, enabling outreach, programme development and income generation activities as well as effective planning for the future e.g. increased visibility in the city centre and expansion of community outreach programmes. They are the foundation of leveraging other sources of funding, particularly from the Arts Council.

Post-pandemic, the charity is in a weakened unrestricted reserves position, holding approximately 10% of annual operating costs against a recommendation of minimum 25% and operating on extremely lean margin. Festival turnover in 2023 was £1.43m, with a positive operating margin of £30k, or 2%. 2022 turnover was £1.48m with a positive margin of 3%. Compared to pre-pandemic years, 2023 turnover was 77% of the 2019 festival, before factoring in significant inflationary pressures affecting all budget lines, in particular venues, energy and staffing cost.

SCC support is vital in supporting the festival team as they re-stabilise the organisation and develop new, impactful, and growth oriented activity, that further diversifies its income streams, and impacts.

The £100,000 core investment gave a 2000% ROI in 2023 and is likely to generate higher impact in future years as the festival expands its footprint, budget and audiences. Loss of this vital support would severely impact the charity's ability to plan, to be ambitious and to absorb the risks associated with cultural event provision year-on-year.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

- 2.1 Providing a grant towards Sheffield DocFest ensures that the Festival, which brings in almost £2,000,000 delegate spend per year to the city, takes place. This supports all work around strong economy and external reputation.

In addition to the delegate spend, the Council's grant contributes to DocFest's ability to develop its programme so that the Festival continues to maintain and develop its international standing. It supports the stability and sustainability of the organisation, enabling outreach, programme

development and income generation activities as well as effective planning for the future.

Hosting the Festival adds to the city's reputation as a cultural and creative destination, enhancing its appeal both to visitors, businesses and those who may wish to move to Sheffield to work. It supports some of the key objective the Destination Management Plan and emerging Culture Strategy.

DocFest is one of Sheffield's largest and most high-profile events and is used as a showcase to encourage other conferences to come to Sheffield. Additional work is taking place with DocFest to maximise the marketing opportunities and promotion of Sheffield through linking in with Sheffield branding. Increased PR activity is also proposed to bring relevant press into Sheffield.

As well as contributing to the city's economic well-being, the grant towards the Festival provides direct benefits to Sheffield residents. Public audience figures for Sheffield DocFest held in 2023 were almost 40,000 and the proposed grant funding will support DocFest to reach out and increase their audiences.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

All internal SCC consultation has taken place. There are no requirements to consult externally on grant funding decisions and therefore there has been no external consultation. DocFest continue to research audience preferences to enable them to continue to increase inclusion.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

4.1.1 An EIA has been completed. As this is not an SCC event this has been assessed as having minor impact.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 The grant will be met from the existing Strategic Events Budget.

The grant is exempt from Contracts Standing Orders if it does not result in the provision of services on behalf of the Council, which is the case for this grant.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 Encouraging the continuance of Sheffield DocFest accords with the provisions of the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy (the Sheffield City Strategy) prepared pursuant to Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000. One of the key ambitions of the City Strategy is

that Sheffield should be a “vibrant” city, “celebrating the diversity, creativity, energy and innovation in Sheffield and ensuring that the City continues to be an international destination of choice, offering the highest quality cultural, shipping and sporting activities.”

The Council has a general power under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that an individual may generally do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation and the power is exercised in accordance with the limitations specified in the Act which enables the Council to allocate the grant funding as set out in this report.

The grant will be made pursuant to a grant agreement which will include key provisions around the purpose of the grant, monitoring, reporting and auditing and withholding or suspending payment of the grant and/or require repayment/clawback of all or part of the grant funds already paid where the terms of the grant agreement have been breached. The grant agreement will also include provisions to ensure that DocFest comply with the provisions of the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

4.4 Climate Implications

4.4.1 It is deemed not appropriate to have a CIA. However, SCC is working with DocFest around some agreed principles.

- DocFest have a sustainability policy which is reviewed annually. They work towards embedding environmental sustainability into all practices and operating as a digital-first event.
- Their Head of Operations and Production has recently undertaken training with BAFTA Albert and Julie’s Bicycle and convenes a quarterly sustainability group within DocFest.
- They have eliminated production of wasteful merchandising, bags and consolidated print materials. They use vegetable dye and locally based printing and distribution services, and lanyards are now recyclable.
- They re-use and upcycle materials such as furniture, exhibition technology.
- They limit sponsors materials, flyers etc and focus on digital visibility such as QR codes.

SCC is working with DocFest using the Visit Britain industry guidance around sustainability to document how they sustainable venues, local supply chain and support reducing food waste.

DocFest are also working on offsetting the impact of delegates travelling to Sheffield. They encourage the use of train first and foremost. SCC are supporting on this.

4.4 Other Implications

There is a risk that Sheffield Doc/Fest fails to meet its aims and objectives or the anticipated key performance indicators. SCC Event Group will mitigate this risk by monitoring Sheffield Doc/Fest closely.

The grant agreement requires Sheffield Doc/Fest to take out appropriate insurance to protect against itself and the Council.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Providing no grant for Sheffield DocFest would likely result in the permanent withdrawal of DocFest from Sheffield or a significant reduction in the quality and breadth of the Festival, risking its international reputation, community outreach and/or future relocation to an alternative city. This would result in the approximate £2,000,000 delegate spend per year being lost, and would also have the effect of reducing the city's profile and reputation within the creative community inside and outside of Sheffield.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Providing a three-year grant agreement ensures stability and certainty for Sheffield DocFest and the Council whilst DocFest continue to grow. It ensures that the new senior team at DocFest are in a position to plan ahead and develop the Festival. The grant supports DocFest in being able to lever more external funding from national bodies to ensure its long-term viability. It also ensures Sheffield continues to benefit from the economic impact the Festival delivers to our various organisations and businesses (including vulnerable sectors such as hospitality). The timing of DocFest 2024 in June provides a fantastic platform to showcase the regeneration and developments in the city centre to this diverse and 'out of town' audience.

The Council will be able to review its position in 2026.