

SNP want partnership with company delivering winter festivals

Ahead of the meeting of the Culture and Communities committee on Thursday the SNP group on the council have lodged an amendment to the proposal to offer one contract for both winter festivals.

The group say that their plans will maximise public benefit of Edinburgh's Winter Festivals, by setting up a company in partnership with a major delivery partner to ensure profits are shared equally with the city to reinvest for residents.

The SNP Group Leader, Cllr Adam McVey said that this is a "hugely lucrative opportunity" and it is realistic to expect a 50/50 return between the council and any producer of the winter festivals. He did not envisage that councillors would become directors of any joint venture company but suggested it could be run in the same way as the "very successful Midlothian Energy Company". That has a board of two – one of whom is a senior council officer, with both parent companies creating the governance structure behind the board.

Cllr McVey said : "We are trying to create a model to have more control over and to benefit from the opportunity where Edinburgh is essentially letting out the site. It would be a seconded model between a creative company and the council. Many companies have made a lot of money to the detriment of

local companies – ours would be a more rounded model.

“When I was Council Leader I inherited a contractual set up. Now we need to ask how do we get a contract that works? If we allow private companies to run events, then on the face of it the council had little risk – but as we saw last year the reputational risk is huge.”

The group says that their proposal would allow the Council to maintain much more control over events than in previous years, with a more active role in delivery beyond contract management and regulatory controls.

SNP Culture Spokesperson Cllr Amy McNeese-Mechan said: “Like so many, I love Christmas time in Edinburgh, but we need to ensure that what is on offer is both more inclusive and that benefits are more widespread. We all need to accept things haven’t gone to plan in previous years and learn lessons from that. We can’t keep on doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

“Our new proposal can allow us to have more small community events across our local neighbourhoods, with more community-led and community-focused activities.

“New Year’s Eve is celebrated around the world. But Hogmanay belongs to Edinburgh and that’s why in our plan we have the Council, on behalf of the city, taking real ownership of our winter festivals.

“Our plan offers a way forward to protect the city’s reputation, deliver events for the benefit of the city and get amazing, affordable activities for everyone in Edinburgh to enjoy.”

City Centre Ward Cllr Finlay McFarlane added: “My constituents know better than anyone how bad the impact of some of these events can be and are rightly asking themselves who’s benefiting? Certainly not some of the small businesses in my

Ward who struggled to get access to some of the opportunities they should've had in years gone by.

“If we're asking residents to live through major events at their front door, the least we can do is deliver them in a way which maximises public control and the SNP offers that.”



Edinburgh's Christmas 2022 produced by Unique Assembly opened on Friday 25 November and on Saturday welcomed 80,000 visitors
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