



Glasgow City Council

Neighbourhoods, Housing and Public Realm
City Policy Committee

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Item 4

25th January 2022

GLASGOW FILM OFFICE PROGRESS REPORT

Purpose of Report:

To inform Committee on the ongoing work of Glasgow Film Office

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee considers the content of this report and the success achieved by the city in the implementation of Council policy in support of film and television production.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Glasgow Film Office (GFO) was established in 1997, successfully supporting location filming in the city for over 2 decades. In the ten years from 2010 to 2019 inclusive, productions assisted by GFO have delivered an estimated £150m into the local economy. Although 2020 presented a setback, 2021 is looking to be the city's most successful year.
- 1.2 The British Film Institute has recently published its Screen Business Report - <https://www.bfi.org.uk/industry-data-insights/reports/uk-screen-sector-economy> – which provides a comprehensive analysis of the economic contribution of the UK's screen sector tax reliefs and their success as drivers of inward investment. The UK screen sector is booming with Scotland's share of the impact of film and high-end television tax reliefs 2017-2019 estimated at £472.6m. Glasgow's experience as a production centre, coupled with initiatives such as the Kelvin Hall Development and funding towards Warner Brothers latest production, puts the city in a prime position to secure a greater share of UK production activity.
- 1.3 Also established in 1997 was the Film Charter for the City of Glasgow (appendix 1). The charter forms the driving force of the marketing effort to promote Glasgow as an attractive 'film-friendly' city. The charter outlines GCC's five commitments to film and television producers:
 - GCC inter-departmental and ALEO co-ordination;
 - parking and traffic management issues;
 - facilitation of meetings with key external agencies;
 - a 'not for profit' fee structure;
 - a policy of non-interference regarding script content.
- 1.4 This report focuses on the work of GFO over the past 2 years.

2. PRODUCTION

- 2.1 All commercial production ceased in the UK with the imposition of lockdown in March 2020 and a number of large-scale TV dramas in Glasgow were shut down mid shoot. In April 2020, one member of GFO's two-person team was drafted to the Covid Grant Delivery team and remained there until early summer 2021.
- 2.2 Strict guidelines were introduced in July 2020 which allowed resumption of production activity in Scotland under certain conditions. In addition to national guidelines regarding social distancing and hygiene, these included the creation of 'bubbles' within crew departments, regular testing of personnel and contractors, and quarantine requirements for visiting cast and crew. This allowed production to continue throughout periods in late 2020 where Glasgow was under tighter regulations than the rest of Scotland. By the end of the year, several feature films and TV dramas had started shooting on location in the city and many more were planning for shoots in 2021.

- 2.3 Summer 2021 was an exceptionally busy period for the city with two big budget US films selecting Glasgow city centre for a number of logistically complex scenes. The productions shot consecutively in late July and early August, fitting their schedules between planned activities for Euro 2020 and the commencement of preparations for COP 26. Their location footprint was one of the largest seen in the city and could not have been achieved without the co-operation of our colleagues in NRS, particularly the Events and Filming Traffic Manager.
- 2.4 Given their size, both productions presented several challenges in dealing with residents and businesses emerging from lockdown. GFO worked closely with our counterparts in NRS to respond to all issues linked to filming activity, particularly the sensitivity needed in dealing with members of the public who had concerns over what they saw as unnecessary ‘on-street’ activity. This experience became the most common complaint received by GFO and, to a great extent, has continued to inform our approach with current productions. It should be noted that NRS state that complaints related to filming activity remain very low when compared to those from other city events or works.

3. PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 Prior to the introduction of hybrid working patterns in August 2021, staffing and IT issues severely impacted on GFO’s ability to record enquiries on its database. This has resulted in figures that do not reflect the true nature of filming activity over the past 22 months. Every effort has been made to capture information retrospectively and to provide an accurate indication of filming activity and its resultant economic impact but it is likely that some production activity has been omitted. Even with this caveat, the figures for 2021 represent a very successful year for Glasgow.

Table 1: Enquiries, productions and local spend in Glasgow 2018-21

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
No. of enquiries	266	248	264	n/a	150
No. of productions	165	165	167	n/a	75
Direct local spend	£15,129,550	£19,110,139	£12,486,450	£6,500,000 (estimated)	£42,427,581

(Note: Figures sourced from GFO database)

- 3.2 The level of local spend from production activity in 2021 is notable but must be looked at in context and may be explained by three factors. Firstly, the unusually low level of spend reported in 2020 (likely to be underestimated) creates a dramatic increase to 2021 but there are rises and falls in spend of up to £7m in the immediately preceding years which were never cited as extraordinary. Secondly, lockdown in 2020 caused productions to shut down and be delayed for several weeks, incurring substantial costs. When filming resumed this created a backlog of productions in the UK that required completion as soon as possible. Glasgow’s reputation as a film friendly

centre placed it in prime position to field a number of enquiries from productions looking to complete projects quickly and avoid further costly delays. Thirdly, Glasgow has hosted a number of large scale productions over the past decade and developed a strong reputation among production companies, one which leads them to see the city as a viable option in which to locate their productions. 2021 may be viewed as continued aggregation of this reputation.

- 3.3 Given all of the above, Glasgow was presented with the opportunity to further capitalise on its continuing reputation as a UK production centre by securing £150k grant funding for a big budget Warner Bros feature film production. The project is currently filming in the city until March 2022 and we look forward to reporting on the employment and training opportunities provided to local crew.
- 3.4 GFO has responded to enquiries from several large-scale feature films and high-end TV projects seeking key locations for projects shooting in 2022. These enquiries have been spurred by Glasgow's reputation as a film friendly location that can easily double as a variety of other major cities and further demonstrates our standing within the UK production landscape.

4. SUSTAINABILITY

- 4.1 Research from the British Film Institute and Screen Scotland shows that while the industry is aware of the UK's and Scotland's legally binding carbon reduction commitments, there is minimal regulation or impetus to enforce sustainable practices. Albert, the industry consortium tasked with providing information, resources and training on sustainable production practices, has created awareness but stops short of delivering strategic, coordinated leadership to the industry. The issue requires immediate consideration as, amongst other things, Glasgow's Low Emission Zone reaches its final phase in 2023 and will affect current practices of city centre location filming.
- 4.2 BECTU Vision, the educational arm of BECTU (the largest union representing film and TV professionals in Scotland), has recognised the need for direct action in Scotland and has recently appointed Mairi Claire Bowser as Screen Sustainability Manager (SSM). Ms Bowser is an experienced Production Designer who has contributed to several publications on sustainability in production. Predominantly, her role will be to develop a centre of expertise with the aim of reducing the environmental impact of film and television production in Scotland. Accompanying this work will be the creation of a business case for a longer-term Screen Sustainability Hub (SSH), based within BECTU Vision. Initial funding for the project includes £6k from GCC ED.
- 4.3 Glasgow Film Office has a long history of working with BECTU Vision on their entry level training programmes. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Screen Sustainability Manager and to directly help Glasgow based productions in achieving sustainable production practices. We are also keen

to see the objectives of the Glasgow Green Deal incorporated into new strategy for production activity in the city.

- 4.4 The focus on sustainability has also prompted GFO to rethink the disbursement of its small grant funding. We hope to identify sustainable production practices that are currently cost prohibitive for productions and offer subsidies towards them. Developing this grant instrument will be informed by the Glasgow Green Deal, engagement with the SSM and the wider industry.

5. KELVIN HALL

- 5.1 GFO sits on the board of the Kelvin Hall studio development alongside representatives from GCC Economic Development, Screen Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Government.
- 5.2 The studio development, a direct response to the UK wide demand for studio facilities, is set to open in late summer 2022 and will be operated by BBC Studioworks, a well-established company with experience in managing facilities of this size. BBC Studioworks also brings a slate of studio-based entertainment shows lined up to film in Kelvin Hall, all requiring to be crewed locally.
- 5.3 The studio will be a much-needed addition to Glasgow's production infrastructure and will help us to compete with cities such as Manchester, Bristol and Liverpool who have recently opened similar studio facilities. Liverpool City Council have also approved plans to develop a further studio complex, again, demonstrating the high demand for studio space in the UK.
- 5.4 As well as housing productions, the facility will drive training and development initiatives within Glasgow based production companies, focusing on the development of entertainment formats. The first of these is FormatLab, run by TRC, a not for profit charity established in 1998, that delivers high-end training & development to broadcast and digital businesses. FormatLab will enable Scottish (and particularly Glasgow) based screen production companies to recruit and train development talent to enable them to compete for entertainment commissions from broadcasters. As well as a learning experience the recruits will benefit from placements within local production companies. The aim is that commissioned shows will make use of the Kelvin Hall facilities. TRC is currently funded by Screen Scotland, Channel 4 and BBC Nations and Regions and the FormatLab initiative has received £10k from GCC Economic Development (ED).
- 5.5 GFO is working with our business advisor colleagues in ED to ensure that local production and facilities companies can avail of the business opportunities which will accompany the opening of the studio facility. This includes discussions about physical office space available at Kelvin Hall as well as the potential business prospects arising from a steady stream of productions housed in the facility.

6. OTHER ACTIVITIES

- 6.1 Regular sponsorship of and participation in BECTU Vision's 'Hit The Ground Running' (entry level production training course) ceased with the removal of face to face training but we are keen to resume sponsorship when safe to do so.
- 6.2 Similarly, our sponsorship of Glasgow Short Film Festival's catalogue ceased when it moved to a wholly online platform. The 2022 Festival returns as an in-person event and we are in the process of resuming our sponsorship.
- 6.3 GFO remains a member of the Scottish Locations Network and meets regularly with our counterparts in other local authorities and representatives from Visit Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, National Trust for Scotland and the Forestry Commission. The meetings continue to provide a useful forum for sharing of information and best practice.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 GFO has utilised every opportunity to build upon Glasgow's 'film-friendly' reputation and the city continues to perform well in securing large scale film and television production in a very competitive market. The screen sector plays an important role within Glasgow's Economic Strategy and GFO looks forward to continuing work with the screen industry and helping to deliver the city's ambitions.
- 7.2 The achievement of GFO's objectives relies on the continued support and co-operation of GCC departments, ALEOs, and city partners. This will ensure that GFO can focus on providing a first class production liaison service and targeted marketing of Glasgow as a fully serviced filming centre of excellence.

8. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	All costs met from existing budget
<i>Legal:</i>	No direct legal resource implications
<i>Personnel:</i>	No direct personnel implications
<i>Procurement:</i>	No direct procurement implications

Council Strategic Plan: The report supports the themes **A Thriving Economy**

Priority 12: promote Glasgow as a centre of excellence for broadcast and media and make the case for new services to be based here, including a film studio for Scotland

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2017-22

Aligns to key priority to reduce inequality across Glasgow by creating inclusive growth - a thriving economy that we can demonstrate benefits the city, its citizens and businesses. This means a growing economy that creates jobs and investment, builds on Glasgow's position as a world class city, helps us to tackle poverty, tackles poor health in the city and improves our neighbourhoods.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

Positive impact

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

Direct action to promote sustainable production practices through engagement with strategic industry leaders.

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

Aim to include principles of Glasgow Green Deal in strategy devised by BECTU Vision

Privacy and Data Protection impacts:

N/A

8. Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee considers the content of this report and the success achieved by the city in the implementation of Council policy in support of film and television production.