



EAST AYRSHIRE LEISURE TRUST
Programme Development Strategy
2022-2026

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SECTION I: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

I. Introduction

Situated in south west Scotland, East Ayrshire has a varied natural environment, a rich and diverse cultural heritage, a proud industrial history and a range of leisure activities, recreation and hospitality, which attract residents and visitors alike.

East Ayrshire is strategically located between the M77 corridor from Glasgow to the west coast and the M74 from Glasgow to the north of England. Kilmarnock is 20 minutes by car from Glasgow, 40 minutes from Glasgow Airport and only 15 minutes from Prestwick Airport. A half-hourly rail service is provided from Kilmarnock to Glasgow and further enhancements for the rail network are planned. These include ambitions to increase services and stations on the Glasgow to Carlisle route through East Ayrshire, which will improve accessibility and build on the good public transport connections which are already available, including local bus services, MyBus, school transport and community transport.

In addition, we have a good network of walking and cycling routes.

East Ayrshire is a vibrant area which provides the ideal place for hosting a wide range of events and festivals. Events make a contribution to our local economy through tourism, consumer spending in the local area and the development of skills and employment; to the wellbeing of our communities by providing a range of activities and opportunities that give space and time to allow people to 'live their best life'; to the creation of safer communities by contributing to an area where people want to live, work, invest and visit; and where we recognise and celebrate pride of place, local history and community endeavour.

East Ayrshire Leisure manages high quality leisure venues and services on behalf of East Ayrshire Council through our service level agreement, which provide us with the perfect stage for leading on, and supporting, a range of high profile, regional and partnership events that provide a national and international profile.

2. East Ayrshire Leisure's Strategic Vision

This document expands on our Strategic Vision 2020-2030 to give further information on our vision for East Ayrshire Leisure Trust and the events that we organise and support. It provides strong and ambitious objectives, gives specific strategic direction for our events that will contribute to developing the Trust into a more independent, resilient, innovative and inclusive organisation and East Ayrshire into an area recognised for high profile programming. Within the period of this strategy, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust will continue to grow as a leisure provider, facilitator and partner that is recognised on both a local and national stage.

To be successful in our ambitions collectively we plan to:

- Work more closely with local communities and our customers to deliver services that are valued and embedded in local life;
- Engage with local and national partners to develop collaborative approaches to service design that enhance the opportunities for leisure across East Ayrshire;
- Develop facilities that are of a high quality and to support partners across the third, public and private sector in doing the same;
- Contribute to local and national agendas through the provision of an innovative programme that encourages East Ayrshire to flourish;

- Value our people, recognise their skills and talents and empower them to be solution focused;
- Integrate commercialisation and sustainability into our business model in its widest sense and to explore more efficient working practices, governance and leadership arrangements and to look to the market place for inspiration
- Be a responsible member of the community that supports a sense of place and adopts environmental best practice

3. East Ayrshire Community Plan

The Community Plan continues to be recognised as the sovereign planning document for the East Ayrshire area, providing the overarching strategic policy framework for the delivery of services by all partners. The vision for the plan is that “East Ayrshire is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people’s needs”.

Whilst contributing to all three Community Plan outcomes, this strategy sets out principles which will specifically contribute to the Economy and Skills Delivery Plan. The key driver underpinning our future prosperity and the ability to realise the potential of our communities is a local economy which develops and achieves sustainable growth. Delivering economic recovery and growth will contribute to improved outcomes for young and old, improved health, employment, inclusion, and safer and stronger communities.

4. Scotland the Perfect Stage

In 2015, EventScotland published its updated ‘Scotland the Perfect Stage 2015-2025’. This is the national event strategy, which comprises the event and festival aspects of ‘Tourism Scotland 2020’. The Vision in the strategy is “to develop, through a **one Scotland** approach, a strong and dynamic events industry producing a portfolio of events and festivals that delivers sustainable impact and international profile for Scotland.”

*“The revised **Scotland the Perfect Stage** aims to provide the strategic focus for all involved in any aspect of planning, securing, supporting and delivering events of all sizes in Scotland for the next decade. It seeks to resonate with and bring together all parts of the public, private and third sector that have a role in relation to events in Scotland in order to drive further progress for the benefit of people across Scotland.*”

*The successful delivery of **Scotland the Perfect Stage** will allow for the development and growth of a flourishing, innovative and competitive events industry through which Scotland can enhance and sustain an inspirational portfolio of events year on year that generates business, creates jobs and boosts the economy whilst delivering impacts and legacy that benefit all of Scotland’s communities and build on our nation’s strong reputation and international attractiveness.”*

The national strategy will utilise and develop the assets that Scotland has which make it The Perfect Stage for events including:

- Our people
- Our cultural identity and heritage
- Our natural environment
- Our built facilities
- Our signature events

It will also focus on strategic programmes which provide world leading authentic experiences for residents and visitors. The Trust will ensure that this national strategy is used to influence our programming decisions.

5. Our Programme Development Strategy

In addition to our Strategic Vision, we have prepared a suite of Strategies, which explain our priorities, our governance, the processes, and protocols we adhere to and any other relevant regulations or documents that apply. Our Programme Development Strategy sets out the priorities and opportunities for event selection, how events will be managed and how our event development strategy relates to delivery plan themes and objectives for the period up to 2026.

Providing a supportive environment which facilitates the creation, production and development of events is an essential part of the success of this strategy. This means working in partnership with East Ayrshire Council and other partners and event promoters to ensure success.

Not all proposed events can take place. Therefore, in order to make decisions about whether the Trust will commit financial or staff resources to an event, we will assess the measurable impact the event could have.

We believe that our high quality venues and our ongoing investment through our Leisure Facility Strategy provides us with a competitive edge. We will use this advantage to develop and promote our venues to event organisers, promoters, governing and sporting bodies. By working together across all of our services areas, we will provide a unique offer and enable East Ayrshire to be one of the best destinations for events.

The Programme Development Strategy will contribute to delivering the Trust's ambitions, particularly under our strategic theme of 'Living Your best Life'. However, events will contribute to several of our other themes and objectives as outlined below:

5.1 Strategic Vision Theme: Sharing Our Vision

East Ayrshire Leisure will be widely recognised and acclaimed as a leisure provider that is firmly committed to listening to our customers, local residents, visitors and partners and developing facilities and services that meet their needs. In order to achieve this theme, we have established the following Strategic Objectives:

- To create a programme of community engagement activities which includes consultation with our customers and potential customers about existing and future facilities and services and to adopt a positive approach to feedback.
- To ensure our use of creative marketing led activities effectively promote our high quality services, maximise customer engagement and make a real difference to how people view East Ayrshire Leisure Trust.
- To work collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders in the development of programmes and activities whilst exploring innovative delivery models which ensure best value for our customers.

5.2 Strategic Vision Theme: Living Your Best Life

East Ayrshire Leisure will contribute to improving the enjoyment, quality of life, health and wellbeing of communities and visitors to East Ayrshire through an innovative, welcoming and ambitious

programme of cultural, sport and outdoor activities. In order to achieve this theme, we have established the following Strategic Objectives:

- To contribute to a programme of high profile regional and national events, exhibitions, programmes and projects, that are ambitious and outward facing, whilst maximising the impact on our customers and visitors
- To develop activities and services that contribute to the Scottish Government's aspirations for 'A Healthy and Active Nation' and 'A Creative, Open and Connected Nation' and that ensure that East Ayrshire Leisure is at the heart of future trends and initiatives

5.3 Strategic Vision Theme: Creating a Solid Foundation for Growth

East Ayrshire Leisure will achieve continuous improvement in the operation of the Trust and will focus on developing and challenging existing and new business opportunities in order to fulfil our strategic and charitable objectives. In order to achieve this theme, we have established the following Strategic Objectives:

- To develop a collaborative approach with relevant partners to explore wider opportunities that fit within the Trust's vision and values and to explore opportunities to share resources across all of our services internally and with key stakeholders
- To maximise the return from commercial opportunities, especially around retail, hospitality and membership packages, so that we are in a position to fulfil our charitable obligations and become a sustainable organisation

The delivery of each objective is monitored through a supporting 2 year Corporate Delivery Plan and individual Service Delivery Plans, which outline specific actions and outputs.

SECTION 2: OUR VISION FOR OUR EVENTS

6. Categorising Events

6.1 Category 1: Hallmark Events

These will be major events or festivals with a national and international profile. They will bring significant income generation opportunities to the Trust as well as economic benefit to East Ayrshire as a whole. They will usually need substantial operational support from the Trust and will likely need financial support from East Ayrshire Council or other local, regional and national partners. Hallmark events are likely to take place in the Trust's main visitor or sporting attractions including Dean Castle Country Park and Ayrshire Athletics Arena.

6.2 Category 2: Regional Events

These are large one off events with a regional or national profile. They will bring significant benefit to the Trust either through generation of income or through the delivery of other social or wellbeing objectives within our Strategic Vision. Regional events are programmed for a specific purpose and audience with reach beyond the local community. These events are likely to have specific press interest.

6.3 Category 3: Local Events

Local events will be regular but not routine. They will link directly to local celebrations, festivals and programmes. Their primary audience is the local community, but they may attract some passing trade from visitors. The Trust will organise local events within our own venues as well as provide support and advice to events organised by the community groups.

6.4 Category 4: Community Activities

These events will be the regular and routine activities and workshops organised by the Trust through our venues and services. They will make up the regular programming by our teams.

6.5 Category 5: Partnership Opportunities

These will be regional or local events, which could be one off or regular that are organised in partnership with local partners.

6.6 Category 6: Core Programming

This category covers events that could be listed under category 1 or 2, but are part of the core programming within the performing arts or museum and arts teams. These will be restricted to the exhibition programme and the programming of our performing arts venues. Each of these business areas have a unique process in place for programming.

7. Event Opportunities

7.1 2022-24 Opportunities

Hallmark Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cycling World Championships• Year of Stories• Queen's Jubilee Beacon Event• Commonwealth Archery Championships Europe 2022 (CACE)• The Proclaimers
Regional Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reopening of Dean Castle• Reopening of Morton Hall• Opening of Galston Town Hall• Spirit of Christmas• RAW Challenge
Local Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Imprint• Panto• EALT 10th Anniversary• Celebrate Kilmarnock – support various town centre events/ projects• Cumnock History Group• Annanhill Golf Course 65th Anniversary
Community Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn to Swim Programme• Sports Coaching Programme• Rookie Lifeguard Programme• School Swimming Lessons

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School holiday programme • Group Fitness programme • Bookbug • Natural Health programme • Leisure at the Heart of the Community • Community Venue Programming • Summer Activity Programme • Cultural Engagement programmes (schools & community)
Partnership Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tamfest • Roon the Toon • Parkrun • Darvel Music Festival • Holy Fair • Irvine Valley Walking Festival • Dance Shows • Cumnock Tryst • Boswell Book Festival • Community Organisation Shows (LMS, KAOS, Youth Farmers, Choirs etc) • EAC Education Music & Dance Events • Remembering Together Covid Memorial Programme – Greenspace Scotland & EAC Creative Minds • Hilly Billy 10K • Come & Tri • Burns Birthday
Core Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quentin Blake Exhibition • Great and Small Exhibition • Artist Rooms Exhibition (Tate and NGS) • Arts Council Collection Georgia O’Keeffe Exhibition • Palace & Grand Hall Programming • EAYT

7.2 2024-26 Opportunities (ongoing review as part of Strategic Programming Group)

Hallmark Events	
Regional Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of Cultural Kilmarnock
Local Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reopening of Doon Valley Museum • Imprint • Panto
Community Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to Swim Programme • Sports Coaching Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rookie Lifeguard Programme • School Swimming Lessons • School holiday programme • Group Fitness programme • Bookbug • Natural Health programme • Community Venue Programming • Summer Activity Programme
Partnership Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tamfest • Roon the Toon • Parkrun • Darvel Music Festival • Holy Fair • Irvine Valley Walking Festival • Dance Shows • Cumnock Tryst • Boswell Book Festival • Community Organisation Shows (LMS, KAOS, Take a Bow, Youth Farmers, Choirs etc) • EAC Education Music & Dance Events • Hilly Billy 10K • Come & Tri • Burns Birthday in Mauchline

8. Organising Events

8.1 Young People's Programming Board

Our commitment is to engage more young people in the development of our facilities, services and programmes. The establishment of a Young People's Programming Board will involve young people in programme planning and decision making. They will meet quarterly, be provided with updates and reports on potential events and influence the scale, range and added value that events will have. Impact and evaluation will also be reporting through the Young People's Programming Board.

8.2 Strategic Programming Group

The delivery and implementation of our strategic objectives, needs services across the Trust to work together. To ensure consistency, we will establish and operate a Strategic Programming Group. The Group will meet monthly and will oversee decision-making about which events the Trust will lead on, which partnerships we will engage in and which events we will support. The Group will also be responsible for ensuring that all events are properly evaluated. The Group will be led by the Head of Operations and will include officers from all teams. The group will provide reports to the Executive Management Team and the Young People's Programming Group.

8.3 Priorities for Investment

A scoring matrix will be developed to ensure transparency around decision making. This matrix will be used for all category 1, 2 and 5 events. Category 3, 4 and 6 events will be organised at team level and won't need to be presented to the Strategic Programming Group. The scoring matrix will be based on the following investment priorities:

- **Fit with Strategy:** does the event play to our strengths as an organisation and an area; does it celebrate our unique cultural heritage, our sporting talents and our landscape; does it develop our reputation as an excellent event host; does it increase opportunities for higher profile events; does it fit with the vision of the Perfect Stage
- **Attracting Visitors:** does the event have the potential to attract visitors from out with the area; Is there an opportunity to work with East Ayrshire Council and VisitScotland to promote overnight stays and return visits
- **Income Generation:** does the event create a significant opportunity for income generation; will the event have an impact on local businesses
- **Sense of Place:** does the event encourage a sense of place within our communities and contribute to community wealth building
- **Investing in People:** does the event provide opportunities for volunteering, skills and training, pathways to employment and health and wellbeing
- **Profile:** does the event enhance East Ayrshire Leisure's reputation on a regional and national stage
- **External funding:** does the event have the ability to attract added value and external funding to the area
- **Disruption:** are there plans in place to minimise disruption for local communities

8.4 Event Working Groups

Once an event has been presented to the Strategic Programming Board and the decision has been made to deliver the event, a working group will be established. A lead officer will be appointed by the Executive Management from across the Trust who will develop a brief and identify appropriate working group members. Working group members can be any East Ayrshire Leisure employee, as well as external partners from East Ayrshire Council, stakeholder groups and community representatives.

The working group will be responsible for all aspects of the event delivery including completing the pre-events application process, development of event management plans, risk assessments, licencing applications, marketing and evaluation.

The working group lead officer will be the primary point of contact for the event with a designated second should that person be unavailable.

8.5 Safety Advisory Group (SAG)

The SAG is a multi-agency forum that exists in an advisory role and is chaired by East Ayrshire Council's Event and Resilience Officer. It contributes to the safe planning of large scale events. The ultimate responsibility for the safety of any event is the working group lead officer or if appropriate an externally appointed event organiser.

The group comprises key personnel from multiple agencies with experience, competence and technical knowledge to advise on the safe delivery of events. The core membership being:

- East Ayrshire Council Events and Resilience Officer (Chair)
- Health and Safety
- Building Standards
- Licencing
- Roads- The Ayrshire Roads Alliance/Trunk Road Operator Transerve
- Environmental Health
- Risk Management

- Police Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- NHS Ayrshire and Arran
- Ambulance
- Event Organiser
- Emergency Services

While the group has no statutory powers, there are options open to individual members in terms of their own powers and duties.

8.6 Working in Partnership

The Trust will work with East Ayrshire Council and other partners to ensure a joined up approach to decision making about category 1, 2 and 5 events. This joined up approach is essential in the delivery of the Trust's Strategic Vision and the East Ayrshire Community Plan.

8.7 Measuring Impact

In order to ensure that events are contributing directly to the objectives within our Strategic Vision, every event needs to be rigorously evaluated. As well as quantitative reporting, The Trust will use qualitative evaluation to monitor the impact of services, programmes and projects through an Organisational Learning process that will monitor the impact of services, programmes and projects. An organisational Learning Action Plan is developed on a quarterly basis. Evaluation techniques will be dependent on the measurement and information that we need to gather. This will be identified as part of the brief for each event and may include:

- Staff satisfaction surveys
- Marketing campaign evaluations
- Booking and Box Office reports
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Impact Monitoring Surveys
- Business Case Development
- Feedback Systems
- Business Development Surveys
- Website and social media engagement
- Mystery Shopping

In line with EventScotland's recommendation, we will work with local, regional and national partners to implement an evaluation framework for category 1,2, 5 and 6 events based on the following key criteria.

Economic – Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net additional spend in the host economy • Gross Value added • Equivalent jobs created/sustained
Economic – Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and value of contracts issued by event organisers, number and value of these to Scottish and local businesses • Number of businesses engaged, including Scottish and local breakdown • Supported by case studies • Ability to export the business skills and knowledge

Brand, Identity and Reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity of the audience with a brand • Familiarity with brand values • Fit with Event Development Strategy • Fit with Strategic Vision
Media and Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of coverage • How media coverage contributed to the event's objectives • Impact of social media coverage both pre event marketing and during and post event evaluation
Social and Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of volunteers • Number of new volunteers • Volunteer hours • Number of attendees from local authority area • Percentage of attendees from local authority area • Sense of wellbeing in community • Sense of wellbeing in attendees • Case studies of interventions • Impact on creativity/learning • Impact on skills development / employability / resulting new opportunities
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Against British Standard BS8901:2007 on Sustainable Event Management • Meeting Scottish legal requirements • Undertaking Resource Efficient Scotland Pledge • Contribute to East Ayrshire's Climate Change Strategy

8.8 Funding Events

Category 1, 2 and 5 events are likely to need a commitment of resources from the Trust which are either financial or staff based. Therefore, all events will need to be clear about how the event contributes to the strategic themes and objectives. This will inform decision-making. We will continue to explore all opportunities for external and partnership funding to assist in delivery of events.

8.9 Sponsorship

Sponsorship can be effective in assisting with event funding. However, we must be clear with potential sponsors what benefits the opportunity brings them and provide them with robust evaluation of the event impact.

SECTION 3: FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

9. Changing Portfolio

High quality facilities are crucial in the development of an innovative, creative and high quality event programme and strategy. Since our inception in 2013, the portfolio of facilities that the Trust manages on behalf of East Ayrshire Council has changed as some facilities are no longer viable, some have transferred to community ownership or management and new facilities have developed.

In line with our Strategic Vision and the audit and community consultation that was carried out in 2019 and 2020, our Leisure Facility Strategy sets out our vision for the venues that we currently manage that support leisure programming across the area without competing with, or duplicating, other provision in local communities.

In line with the Leisure Facility Strategy, the Trust will consider the current portfolio of venues and the opportunities to develop the service in terms of reaching further and developing our audiences.

10. Growing Partnerships

As well as being a leisure provider with a large portfolio of high quality leisure facilities, East Ayrshire Leisure Trust is also committed to supporting local community, charitable and private sector partners to maximise opportunities for community activity regardless of who the leisure provider is.

Working with key local, regional and national partners across the private, public and third sectors will allow us to deliver projects and programmes that will maximise income opportunities whilst also providing a range of quality, free and affordable activities and services, providing value for our customers and our communities.

Through the continued development of partnerships and the further development of our 4 and 5 star visitor attractions, we will support key regional tourism campaigns. We are also uniquely placed to work in partnership with tourism and hospitality providers to focus on East Ayrshire's unique selling point in relation to arts, heritage, sports and countryside.