

MEMBER-SPONSORED EVENTS: NORDIC HORIZONS

Executive summary

1. This Paper seeks the SPCB's views on whether Nordic Horizons should be given dispensation to host three or four Member-sponsored for events in any 12 month period.
2. Under the SPCB's current guidance external organisations are allowed to host two Member-sponsored events in any 12 month period.

Issues and Options

3. The Events and Exhibitions Team have received a request from an external organisation, Nordic Horizons, to be allowed to host more than two Member-sponsored events in any 12 month period.
4. Nordic Horizons is an informal 'think tank' established and run by writer and broadcaster Lesley Riddoch. Its main aims are to promote discussion of Nordic approaches to policy and how policy-makers and practitioners in Scotland (and the UK) might learn from them; to facilitate networking between Scottish (and UK) policy-makers and practitioners and their counterparts in the Nordic countries.
5. Nordic Horizons has run nine events to date over the past five years and has received wide ranging cross party support from both past and present Members. In addition to support from Members, the organisation has support from a wide range of organisations across Scotland and the UK including academics; the Swedish and Norwegian Consulates in Edinburgh; the Danish Cultural Institute; the Icelandic Embassy; policy makers; businesses; trade unions; the Centre for Scottish Public Policy; NGOs; and a cross section of members of the public.
6. Nordic Horizon's events are popular amongst both Members - with many Members attending as both guests and speakers - and external guests, and are now frequently oversubscribed with hopeful attendees adding their names to a waiting list. Nordic Horizons has also run a number of events as part of the annual Festival of Politics.
7. Subjects covered by Nordic Horizons include: local government; education; the Norwegian outdoor experience; childcare; localism and regionalism in Scotland: lessons from the North; and economics.
8. Nordic Horizons have done a lot of work to raise their profile amongst Members and policy makers both in Scotland and in the Nordic countries with strong relationships being forged with both the Consular Corps and Ministers both in Scotland and abroad.

9. There is a great deal of interest in the work of this organisation and they seem to be gathering strength in terms of their influence both in Scotland and in the Nordic countries. An on-going working relationship with them and their work will undoubtedly be of benefit to Members.
10. All Nordic Horizon events to date have met the SPCB's criteria for events in that they provide an engagement opportunity for Members raising issues that are important to them whilst providing an opportunity for a wide range of people to engage with the Parliament.
11. The number of organisations hosting more than one event per year is relatively small. In 2010-11 there were 25 organisations that held more than one event. We feel that giving permission for Nordic Horizons to host more than two events per year is unlikely to influence this trend.
12. The SPCB has approved a number of themed weeks as part of the Major Events and Exhibitions Programme that will be taken forward during the Parliamentary session. These include Environment Week, Trade Union Week and Scottish Food Fortnight. During these weeks the host organisations have been known to host six to eight events. If Nordic Horizons were given permission to host up to four Member-sponsored events in any 12 month period this would not exceed the number of events that take place as part of the themed weeks and would in fact generally be much less.
13. Although Nordic Horizons, as an external organisation, is limited to two Member-sponsored events in any 12 month period the Events and Exhibitions Team feel given the support for them and the wide ranging issues they discuss and bring to the attention of Members – no issue has been discussed more than once - that they should be allowed to host three or four Member-sponsored events in any 12 month period. This is comparable with access given to other organisations for themed weeks.

The SPCB is asked to consider this and to agree that Nordic Horizons be allowed to host three or four Member-sponsored events in any 12 month period.

Resource Implications

14. These events will form part of the agreed number of Member-sponsored events to be facilitated annually by the Events and Exhibitions Team. All costs associated with these events will be met by the organisers.

Governance issues

15. All governance issues associated with this proposal such as equalities and Health and Safety issues are mainstreamed through the planning and delivery of the individual events.

Publication Scheme

16. This Paper can be published.

Next steps

17. If agreed by the SPCB the Events and Exhibitions Team will work with Nordic Horizons to agree dates for their events over the next 12 month period.

Decision

18. The SPCB is asked to consider this Paper and to agree that Nordic Horizons be allowed to host three or four Member-sponsored events in any 12 month period.

EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS TEAM

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