

## **Overview of work undertaken by the Bournemouth Air Festival Task & Finish Group**

### **Representation:**

#### **Members**

Cllr Vikki Slade	Leader, BCP Council
Cllr Millie Earl	Deputy Leader, Cabinet member for Connected Communities
Cllr Andy Martin	Cabinet Member for Customer Communications & Culture
Cllr Mike Cox	Cabinet Member for Finance.

#### **BCP Council Officers:**

Amanda Barrie	Director of Commercial Operations
Jon Weaver	Head of Events
Adrian Trevett	Head of Economic Development
Andrew Emery	Strategic Development Manager
William Zellerbach	Finance Manager, Operations
Simon Langford	Management Accountant, Operations
Amy Orchard	Economic Development
Stephanie Sainsbury	Events Development Co-ordinator
Julia Bullas	Corporate Comms

#### **External representation:**

Craig Mathie	DMB/South Coast Events Forum
Andy Lennox	DMB/Hospitality
David Bailey	DMB/BAHA
Tim Seward	BAHA
Paul Kinvig	Bournemouth Town Centre BID
Fiona McArthur	Bournemouth Coastal BID
Simon Brooks	Seventa Events
Peter Tisdale	THAT Group
Ian Vincent	Red Arrows Association

### **Scope**

The group was set up to look at how the challenges facing delivery of the Air Festival can be addressed and consider what a future Air Festival or replacement event might look like. Membership was to include Members, Council Officers and representatives from local businesses and organisations. This group has been meeting since July 2023 and has focused on understanding the options available and exploring interest from external businesses to deliver some form of Festival in 2024 and beyond.

If Bournemouth is to retain its reputation as a world-renowned tourism destination, it is essential that it continues to offer significant, vibrant events/festivals which contribute to ensuring that it remains an attractive place in which to invest, visit and live. Currently Bournemouth Air Festival makes a significant contribution to keeping Bournemouth on the world map, but the financial challenges faced by BCP Council mean that there need to be some significant changes to the delivery and funding of the Air Festival and /or

event(s) with a similar profile. Alternative sources of funding will need to be secured moving forward with the goal of becoming cost neutral in relation to Council funding, post 2024.

Following the first meeting two smaller sub-groups were established with some additional external input:

- Financial and Commercial Income
- Events & Festivals Content Development

### **Site Visits**

All members of the group were offered the opportunity to have a 'behind the scenes' site visit during the 2023 Air Festival. These took place on the Thursday and Friday afternoon. Feedback from those who participated was that they were useful and informative particularly in relation to development of opportunities around the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) offer and revenue sources.

## **Financial initiatives and commercial opportunities considered:**

### **Accommodation Sector Support**

Support from Bournemouth Area Hospitality Association (BAHA) & the Accommodation Sector in relation to accommodation for pilots and crew. As one of the major beneficiaries from the Air Festival the sector needs to cover the cost of accommodation and provide additional support to wider logistical elements of the festival such as provision of meeting space for the festival briefings. Accommodation provision was discussed at the September BAHA meeting.

### **STEM development**

Building on the success of the STEM marquee, pursue options for developing business to business opportunities linked to marine & aviation technology and other related technologies. eg. larger, more visible exhibition areas with better looking structures on the East Overcliff and Seafront developed by local, regional and national companies and brands. This provides the opportunity to link to increased sponsorship options for the Festival and dedicated hospitality areas for companies to invite their clients.

This approach would help to progress the event moving forward as a Festival of Innovation and Inventions.

STEM could also be developed to include an Arts element (STEAM) incorporating culture into the offer. Events team to work with Economic Development to see how this can be progressed once there is a decision on the format of a future event.

### **Hospitality**

Look at options to have several key hospitality area tents, each run by brands/local restaurants/etc. There could also be smaller units, that companies could rent for the day. Possibly a stretch of Chinese hat marquees, each with their own little bit of beach and seating out front, (similar to beach huts) rented out by the day.

This to be led by external organisations rather than a Council provided hospitality offer

## **Military Support**

There need to be conversations with the Military around possible financial support based on the fact that they have acknowledged the importance of the event as key to their recruitment calendar. This relates more to the RAF than to the RN or Army. Initial discussions have taken place but these need to be at a higher level. However, it is acknowledged that the RAF contribute towards the event through the significantly reduced costs of the assets they provide. This is the case for all UK Air Shows. Some RAF display teams also cover their own accommodation and transport costs for the event. (Red Arrows & BBMF).

## **Car Park Income & premium pricing**

Income from car parks brings a direct financial benefit to the Council during the Air Festival and this needs to be taken into consideration when looking at the net cost of any future event.

There is the potential to look at premium pricing for seafront and Town Centre car parks during any future event. There is a mechanism to achieve this via a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). Work needs to be carried out to develop this with the Transport team and also consider pre-booking opportunities. This could be a mix of pre-booked and first come first served with links to Hospitality offers.

## **Seafront trading**

The Air Festival generates considerable seafront trading income. Comparisons have been carried out for 2015,2018 and 2022 which all show that seafront trading during the Air Festival exceeded that achieved over the bank holiday weekend. 2023 saw their best trading days on record. As with car park income this needs to be taken into consideration when looking at the net cost of any future event.

## **Transport for display teams**

The provision of transport to and from the Airport for some, although not all, display teams is essential. Need to look at opportunities to secure a specific transport related sponsor to cover the cost of this transport, eg: car dealerships. Deals have been secured in the past but in recent years have not been successful.

## **Donations**

Research has been carried out into possibilities around donations from the public which has proved successful for Blackpool Illuminations and also Eastbourne Air Show. There are a number of different options including donations via the website, handheld devices onsite during the event, QR codes (website/around the site/in programme).

The hardware technology is available for onsite/ in person donations through the Council contract with Global Pay which would involve staff costs. An alternative would be support from at least one partner charity to staff the onsite collections with volunteers in exchange for a percentage donation to the charity. Blackpool use hand held devices successfully, but they are collecting over a number of weeks not days. Eastbourne have had success with cash collection in the past using charity partners. This could be looked at in conjunction to tap and donate systems but would also require staff/volunteers to manage.

## **Crowdfunding**

Potential of launching a crowdfunding campaign to support the delivery of the Air Festival. This would need a strong marketing campaign connected to it. It would require progressing conversations on the legalities and financial arrangements from the Council's side and looking at the option of this being led by another organisation such as the BIDs or BAHA.

Desk Research has been carried out around the viability of Councils raising funds through donations based crowd funding and feedback from other Air Show organisers and Local Authorities is that it is unlikely to be successful. This is further supported by the LGiU Guide to Crowdfunding for local authorities which advises that "*Crowdfunding involves getting the public excited and engaged enough to support campaigns. If the council was running a campaign asking the public for direct donations, the public would most likely see it as giving the council more money, on top of council tax, and would be turned off by the prospect.*"

## **Community Interest Company (CIC)**

There was discussion around the possible benefits of looking into the creation of a CIC which it was suggested could be set up very quickly and could potentially incentivise people to donate and make collection of donations easier than through the Council. Recent Council experience however has shown that although technically a CIC can be set up in a couple of days via an online application, in practice this is only possible if a great deal of work has been undertaken in advance. It would require someone to step forward as the Director of the CIC and both the Council Legal and Finance departments would have to be involved to look at the implications and viability of going down this route.

If in the future a commercial company is found to take on the direct delivery and funding of the Air Festival then a CIC may be an option that they would want to consider taking forward. Further work is being carried out to better understand the resource requirements to deliver a CIC.

## **Options considered for a future Air Festival**

### **Continue with the current 4-day Air Festival**

The group did not consider that this would provide a suitable response to current aspirations and demands, nor did they consider it to be a viable or sustainable option achievable within the current £200,000 budget allocated for 2024.

### **Cancel the Air Festival for 2024 and beyond.**

The group did not consider this to be the immediate response to the current situation and felt it was important to look at all possible options to avoid complete cancellation of the Air Festival moving forwards.

### **A two-day Air Festival in 2024**

Initial estimated calculations indicate that this could potentially be delivered for around £275K with a budgeted Council contribution of £200K. This funding gap excludes the benefits of income from seafront trading/car parks and the direct costs of staffing. This assumes that BAHA members fund display team accommodation. Other approaches to respond to the reduced budget could include no Park & Ride, a local sponsor/car

dealership being found to cover display team transport requirements, premium car parking, donations and increased sponsorship through extending the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) elements to introduce business to business initiatives and dedicated hospitality areas. In order to maximise the above funding opportunities, the event would need to take place on the Friday and Saturday, not over the weekend. The impact of bad weather is greatly increased with a two-day event increasing risks.

Whilst planning and delivering a festival for 2024 work would be undertaken to secure an external partner/operator for the festival from 2025 onwards resulting in no cost to the Council beyond 2024.

### **A 3-day Air Festival in 2024**

This was considered by the group to be a more viable option than a two-day festival providing less risk in relation to the loss of one of the days and presenting a more positive message. It would need to be Thurs/Fri/Sat in order to capitalise on the business to business and extended hospitality opportunities. However, it would increase the shortfall that would need to be made up, to around £100K based on a Council contribution of £200K. There would need to be similar initiatives to make up this shortfall as discussed for a two-day Air Festival including BAHA funding pilot/crew accommodation. Whilst planning and delivering a festival for 2024 work would be undertaken to secure an external partner/operator for the festival from 2025 onwards resulting in no cost to the Council beyond 2024.

### **Air Festival paused for 2024 and a 3-day Air Festival in 2025.**

This would be similar to the current offer but would provide the time to work with the industry, businesses, sponsors and investors to secure the funding required to deliver a successful 3-day event in 2025 and beyond. It would also provide the time to get the best value through procurement of contractors. Messaging for what was planned for 2025 would need to be very positive in order to mitigate against negative impacts from the decision not to have anything in 2024. This would also provide time for the Bournemouth Town Centre BID to work with local communities and community event organisers to develop a Family Fun Day (see below) on the Sunday following the Air Festival to encourage visitors to stay the extra night and extend the benefit of the long weekend to town centre businesses helping to revitalise the town centre area.

### **A bi-annual Air Festival**

This was not considered a preferable option by the group as there is increased financial risk and assets would be allocated elsewhere in the missed year which could be difficult to get back the following year. A bi-annual event could prove confusing for visitors and would inevitably be more challenging for hotels in relation to repeat bookings

Significant financial support from a commercial partner(s) but the Air Festival is still delivered and underwritten by the Council. There have been conversations with a couple of interested parties but these are at a very initial stage. This could be linked to dedicated Corporate VIP viewing spaces / premium hospitality offer for local businesses and organisations.

A commercial company to run and fund the Air Festival through a partnership with the Council, initially potentially allowing for the sharing of some costs, eg. loss of car park income/ sunk staffing costs. A proposal has been received and a couple of meetings have taken place but again these conversations are at a very initial stage. Timescales for

bringing in commercial partner for 2024 are extremely challenging and realistically unlikely to be achieved for 2024

### **An Air Festival funded and delivered through a partnership approach**

A commercial company to run and fund the Air Festival, underwriting the financial risks, through a partnership with the Council. Initially this option would potentially allow for the sharing of some costs, eg. staffing, Timescales for securing a major commercial partner/joint venture for 2024 would be extremely challenging. Understanding the requirements of an external organisation interested in taking this on and what resource they would require from the Council to assist with delivery would need time to work through and would involve both legal and procurement processes to achieve. This option might therefore be considered to be more realistic for 2025 and beyond, allowing more time for full consultation and planning with a potential partner. The Council's ambition is for this to be taken forward for 2025 if the option for a 2 or 3-day festival is progressed.

## **Other Content development considered**

### **Community Fun Day**

Both a 2-day and 3-day Air Festival would provide the opportunity to develop a community festival, Family Fun Day, on the Sunday funded by local communities, businesses and BIDs focused on the Town Centre(s). This would build upon the attraction of the Air Festival and persuade people to stay in the area on the Sunday benefitting the Town Centre, local businesses and hotels. These discussions were based around the premise that the Air Festival does not benefit the whole town in its present format – the benefit is very much centred on the Seafront, East Overcliff and the Lower Gardens. The extension for a Family Fun Day focused on the Town Centre would help to redress this imbalance. This Community Festival could also be extended into Poole and Christchurch encouraging people to visit the wider conurbation and possibly extend their stay further. This additional day would need to be supported financially by external organisations. Bournemouth Town Centre |BID have confirmed that they would be happy to put funding into this initiative.

### **'Festival of Air'**

Gradually develop the Air Festival into a 'Festival of Air' – with balloons, kites, drones etc. as well as some aircraft content. This could potentially pull in a sea element as well. Could be very impactful and perhaps culminate in a display by the Reds or Typhoon. Content could take place across the whole area as some elements eg. balloons could not be near the Seafront and there could also be an evening element. This would only be viable with external funding.

### **80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day Normandy Landings**

2024 is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day Landings in Normandy (6<sup>th</sup> June) which could possibly be linked to an event later in the year particularly given the already established association that Poole, Christchurch and the New Forest have to the D Day landings.

### **Scaled down offer centred around the Red Arrows**

With the Red Arrows not available for 2024, consideration be given to having a scaled down rebranded event in partnership with the Red Arrows Association to bring the Red Arrows in to display over Bournemouth before they go abroad. This has been done in

the past. There would need to be initial discussion around insurance as if required at the same level as for the Air Festival then that would be prohibitive.

A bid has been submitted by the Bournemouth Red Arrows Association for this display but success of the request cannot be guaranteed, and no funding has been secured

### **Other suggestions**

Develop more experiential areas, similar to the Boursin experience this year, targeting in big brands, Motor trade, Drinks companies, Retail brands. Success is based on finding brands who have invested significantly in experiential infrastructure to tour around events in the UK which recently have been difficult to find. In the past this has included Lidl, Audi, Sainsburys, Haribo.

An alternative offer which could be centred around just one of the 'big three' assets. It would need to be sponsored and take place when the chosen display was available

Retain a four-day festival but with only 2 days Air. Could scale down assets with just high interest ones (eg. Reds/Typhoon/BBMF) In 2024 Red would not be available.

Build other elements into a 2 week offer culminating in a 2-day Air Festival at the end. Culture would need to be an important part of the offer