



# Highlands & Islands Audience Development CONFERENCE NOTES

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**AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE  
18<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2005, INVERNESS**

**BREAKOUT SESSION:  
COLLABORATIVE MARKETING FOR FESTIVALS  
DISCUSSION GROUP LED BY DAVE FRANCIS, AFO (ASSOCIATION OF FESTIVAL  
ORGANISERS) AND JILL HENDRY (DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY ARTS ASSOCIATION)**

Dave Francis began with an overview of the AFO:

Membership of AFO is mostly in England, and 95% are folk and traditional music festivals. There are a small number of Scottish festivals in membership, but they have tended to come and go over the years. The organisation was founded in 1987 by Steve Heap, who says “professionalism is an attitude of mind, not an attitude of income”.

AFO represents 120 folk festivals across the UK out of approximately 350. The organisation represents the audience as well as the festivals themselves, and looks closely to local roots and a collective form of expression.

It works as an advocacy body and works with Arts Councils and the PRS. AFO negotiated a deal for festival promoters on PRS levies on ticket sales, and lobbied the BBC for the creation of the *Radio 2 Folk Awards*.

It provides a source of shared information through news letters and conferences, and has constant feed back from an evolving membership. It has a small and flexible secretariat and a simple constitution with few rules.

However, joint marketing is not a key feature of the AFO, mainly as it doesn't want to compete with other forms of advertising which produce revenue, as in *FRoots* magazine for example.

Members are encouraged to use the AFO logo as it represents a badge of quality and participation in a larger movement – it doesn't, however, represent an agreed set of standards.

Jill Hendry gave some background to DGAA:

Jill explained that she was representing Jenny Wilson in her absence.

The Dumfries and Galloway festival forum grew as a communications tool and has been running for 8 years. For the last 4 years, it has produced a Festivals Guide. The Association is run entirely by volunteers and meets quarterly to discuss common issues, as they believe problems can be solved more easily by a collective approach. It is also important to avoid calendar clashes between events.

DGAA was a partner with *Glasgow University* in the production of a research paper (*The Economic, Social and Cultural Impact of Festivals in Dumfries and Galloway*) which produced new data, findings and recommendations, and showed that festivals give communities a sense of belonging. The study also highlighted the benefits to tourism and the economy. Copies of the report were distributed to delegates during the session.

### General discussion:

- It was suggested there might be a Scotland branch of AFO;
- Robert Livingston outlined at this point some recent developments with the *HI~Arts Festivals Forum* which may provide a more appropriate model for the Highlands and Islands;
- It was noted that AOIFE is promoting Irish culture by helping many small events collectively;
- The AFO had helped organisers with issues of safety, legal and insurance requirements – it was agreed everyone has to be aware of these requirements;
- The *Tartan Heart Festival* was mentioned as a good example of a Festival that got its marketing right by being family friendly;
- Robert Livingston and Lara McDonald went on to talk about the *HI~Arts Festivals Forum* in some more detail;
- It was agreed that any representative organisation needs one or two people in a central role to keep things moving with the *Festivals Forum* initiative;
- It was noted a *Festival Forum* in Scotland could have a strong advocacy role in terms of approaching local authorities, for example.