

South Ayrshire Council

Report by Director of Communities and Transformation  
to Service and Partnerships Performance Panel  
of 14 January 2025

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**Subject: The International Ayr Show – Festival of Flight 2024**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Service and Partnership Performance Panel regarding the delivery of The International Ayr Show – Festival of Flight 2024.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Panel:**

**2.1.1 notes the progress made by officers in the delivery of The International Ayr Show – Festival of Flight 2024 (a detailed report is outlined in [Appendix 1](#));**

**2.1.2 notes the Economic Impact Assessment Report for the International Ayr Show - Festival of Flight 2023 (this report is outlined in [Appendix 2](#)); and**

**2.1.3 notes the income and expenditure report contained in [Appendix 3](#).**

**3. Background**

3.1 In March 2022, the Leadership Panel approved the [Tourism and Events Strategy](#). The strategy is driven by a clear focus on eight key offers, one of which is events and festivals.

3.2 In March 2023, the Council agreed a budget which included funding to deliver The International Ayr Show – Festival of Flight. We also attracted a range of sponsors who provided funding and in-kind support for the event.

3.3 The inaugural International Ayr Show - Festival of Flight, was delivered successfully on Friday 8, Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 September 2023. The event was well attended, with around 240,000 visitors in total across the three days.

3.4 A report was presented to Cabinet in November 2023 which recommended that an annual report on The International Ayr Show would be presented to the Service and Partnership Performance Panel. It also proposed that the annual report would include the Economic Impact Assessment from the previous year's event.

## **4. Proposals**

- 4.1 The International Ayr Show - Festival of Flight, was delivered successfully on Friday 6, and Saturday 7 September 2024. The event was well attended with over 250,000 visitors in total across the two days.
- 4.2 The cost to deliver the Ayr Show was £1,185m. The allocated budget this year was £395,000 (£250,000 was allocated as the core budget; £145,000 was allocated from events budgets) we received £154,000 from Sponsorship income and £200,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support local traders. Further costs were offset by income totalling £193,000. The unbudgeted costs of £243,000 for this year's air show will be covered by an over-recovery of payroll turnover within the Directorate. Details of the income and expenditure are attached at [Appendix 3](#).
- 4.3 The cost to deliver the air show in 2024 was higher than projected. This can be attributed to a few different factors. 1) Significant increases in supplier costs. 2) 2024 was a larger site with more infrastructure requirements. 3) The introduction of new charges, which were not included in 2023, such as Police Scotland costs.
- 4.4 However, The International Ayr Show - Festival of Flight delivered significant economic benefit to Ayr by attracting over 250,000 people into the area and it put South Ayrshire in the spotlight by highlighting the area as a destination of choice. A full economic impact assessment is underway to measure the event's impact on the local economy.
- 4.5 The 2023 Economic Impact Assessment for The International Ayr Show estimated total gross expenditure in South Ayrshire at over £7m.
- 4.6 Officers were able to attract more sponsorship this year and increased the financial contributions by 3% and in-kind by 20%. They continue to identify sponsors to raise funding for next year's event.
- 4.7 Three key areas for improvement were set out in the 2023 report. These were Car Parking and Traffic Management, Toilets, and Community Engagement. Significant improvement was made in all areas and these are outlined in [Appendix 1](#).

## **5. Legal and Procurement Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 The recommendations in this report are consistent with procurement requirements and we are working with procurement to deliver the optimal procurement journey for an event of this nature.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 All unbudgeted costs will be covered by over-recovery in Directorate payroll turnover targets.

## **7. Human Resources Implications**

- 7.1 Not applicable.

## **8. Risk**

## 8.1 ***Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations***

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

## 8.2 ***Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations***

8.2.1 There are no risks associated with rejecting the recommendations.

## 9. **Equalities**

9.1 The proposals in this report allow scrutiny of performance. The report does not involve proposals for policies, strategies, procedures, processes, financial decisions and activities (including service delivery), both new and at review, that affect the Council's communities and employees, therefore an equality impact assessment is not required.

## 10. **Sustainable Development Implications**

10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

## 11. **Options Appraisal**

11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

## 12. **Link to Council Plan**

12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Priority 2: Live, Work, Learn: Work and Economy and Priority 3: Civic and Community Pride: Pride in South Ayrshire.

## 13. **Results of Consultation**

13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.

13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Alec Clark, Portfolio Holder for Tourism, Culture and Rural Affairs, and Councillor Brian Connolly, Portfolio Holder for Sport and Leisure and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

**Background Papers** **Report to Cabinet of 1 November 2022 - [Proposal to Deliver an Airshow in September 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027](#)**

**[General Services Revenue Budget 2023-24 and Capital Investment Programme 2023-24 to 2034-35 – Proposals of the Conservative and Independent Members – 1 March 2023](#)**

**Report to Cabinet of 28 November 2023 – [The International Ayr Show – Festival of Flight 2023](#)**

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**Date: 23 December 2024**

### Delivery of The International Ayr Show – Festival of Flight 2024 Update

#### 1.1 Audience and Engagement

Over 250,000 people attended the Low Green and the surrounding area between Friday 6 and Saturday 7 Sept 2024.

The social media and marketing campaign for the event resulted in the following:

- 11,314,807 in reach
- 105,717 in engagement
- 305,246 views to the Ayr Show Website from June to Sept.
- Planes TV viewership was over 70,000, with 30% from an international audience.

#### 1.2 Charity Partner – The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund

The RAF Benevolent Fund's welfare purpose for the Ayr Show was to use the event to reach and inform the RAF Family in Ayrshire, the West of Scotland and Northern UK in order to increase support for those in need. With 2 new Fund case workers recruited in Scotland and a model for engagement that was devised with South Ayrshire Council, the Ayr Show has played a significant part in reaching the aim.

#### 1.3 Flying Display Programme

The flying display programme was developed in partnership with our strategic partner, theSKYLAB, and Flying Display Director Les Garside-Beattie OBE (Group Captain Retired). In addition to securing military air displays and civilian aircraft, flying safety, logistics and legislative aspects were put in place to deliver the programme, as noted in [Annex 1](#).

#### 1.4 The Festival Village

In addition to the flying display programme, there was a festival village at the Low Green with a wide range of activities, as detailed in [Annex 1](#), many of which were free for families to participate.

#### 1.5 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) was a key focus for the Ayr Show. TheSKYLAB, delivered a week-long set of activities at Prestwick Airport in the run-up to the Ayr Show, which enabled pupils to understand what a STEM career at Prestwick aerospace hub would look like. In an innovative approach, all aerospace companies worked collaboratively to generate a set of workshops that represented how important STEM is in the work they do, what they do with it and how pupils could do the same.

The initiative was then moved to the STEM Marquee for Saturday at the festival.

Stem activities continued on Sunday in Ayr Town centre, where the Grain Exchange and Cutty Sark hosted the Glasgow Science Centre travelling exhibitions.

## **1.6 Sponsors and Supporters**

We worked with a wide range of sponsors, supporters, partners and suppliers and they provided invaluable support in making The International Ayr Show - Festival of Flight possible. These are also detailed in [Annex 1](#).

## **1.7 Planning Group Partners**

Logistics and safety are paramount in holding an event of this scale. A wide range of agencies and organisations assisted with this through a range of planning groups. Partners are listed in [Annex 1](#).

## **1.8 Volunteers**

100+ volunteers gave up their time to help run this event by assisting across a variety of roles throughout the weekend. There will be ongoing opportunities throughout the year for the volunteers to network, develop their skills and become involved in other SAC events, including future International Ayr Shows.

## **1.9 SAC Staff**

Staff from many of our services were involved in organising the event, led by the Destination South Ayrshire team. All services went 'the extra mile' to ensure a superb experience for all our visitors and participants.

## **1.10 Health and Safety**

There were 43 medical referrals during the event which were reported to our medical provider with the majority being minor in nature. Of these referrals, 42 were dealt with on-site, and one had to be referred to hospital.

## **1.11 Economic Impact**

We are currently gathering and collating economic impact data from audiences and local businesses from across South Ayrshire, and a full report will be produced. However, anecdotal feedback provided shows that a number of accommodation providers have already sold-out rooms for 2025.

## **1.12 Improvements from 2023**

The first year the Council organised an Ayr Show was in 2023; it was a non-ticketed, free, outdoor event which meant that planning was challenging. The attendance was double the projected numbers which impacted provisions such as traffic management measures, car parking and toilets.

Debriefs were conducted with our planning partners, and feedback from attendees was also reviewed. Several areas for improvement were identified for future events. Below is a high-level summary of changes made this year:

- Car Parking and Traffic Management:

A need was identified for increased and improved car parking provision and traffic management measures to support the flow of traffic – particularly at the Whitletts roundabout, and greater enforcement of parking restrictions within local communities. The traffic and transport sub-group met regularly to develop robust plans for the Ayr Show. These included:

1. Increasing the car parking on Saturday by adding Rozelle as a second park and ride site.
2. Appointing a car parking management company to support the planning and delivery of the carparks.
3. Increased parking attendants and appointing a tow company to enforce parking restrictions.
4. A more robust traffic management plan, using all four lanes on Whitletts Road and closing all left turns to the beach from Belleisle Drive to Citadel Place to anyone without a permit.

The overall result was a much-improved ingress and egress customer experience.

- Toilet Provision

The number of public toilets on site significantly increased and volunteers were brought in to help manage queues. This improved the overall experience. We received no complaints regarding the toilets this year.

- Resident Engagement

We continued to work with This is EventoS to support community engagement for the Ayr Show. Community engagement events took place in November 2023 and in August 2024.

While significant improvements were made engaging residents and businesses, there is still work to be done on our communications strategy and around the dissemination of parking passes.

### **1.13 Areas for Improvement in 2025**

While the event was overall a success, there are a few small areas that we will look to improve next year.

- Permit allocation and information sharing for residents.

Officers are working with communications on a plan to ensure that information is provided early and updated regularly on the traffic plans. Due to a number of factors the TTRO was late in being publicised this year. We plan to share this information significantly earlier this year.

- County Building Gardens – Saturday

Officers are undertaking a review of how to use the county building garden space on Saturday. Hospitality, while quite popular, has not delivered the numbers we would like to see. A debrief has taken place and we are reviewing other options.

- Savings

Officers are working with procurement to deliver the optimal procurement journey for an event of this size. We continue to review requirements with a review to reduce costs.

- PA System

There was feedback that the PA system did not reach the length of the site. This presents a potential safety issue. This will be looked at next year, while also taking into consideration environmental health regulations.



## **2024 FLYING DISPLAY PROGRAMME**

### **Friday Night**

RAF Falcons  
Jet pitts  
Vampire  
wing walkers  
BBMF (Lancaster only)  
Typhoon  
Airborne Pyro

### **Saturday Day**

RAF Falcons  
RN special flypast  
NW Wasp  
NW Reliant  
NW Harvard  
Wingwalkers  
Vampire  
RCAF130 flypatst (INT)  
Gazelle Sqn  
BBMF (Lancaster only)  
Jet Pitts  
Starlings (we had one of them)  
Wee dram  
USAF C130J (INT)  
Airborne pyro  
Typhoon

## **2024 FESTIVAL VILLAGE ACTIVITIES**

### **Friday & Saturday:**

RAF Benevolent Fund Merchandise Selling Points  
Trade Area  
Army Village  
Veterans Meet and Greet  
RAF Village  
Royal Navy Village  
VIP Bar & Bleacher Seating Area  
Food vendors  
Family Creative & Fun Zone  
Children's fun activities  
Funfair  
Accessible Viewing Platforms  
Just Dive Scuba Experience  
Classic Cars Exhibitions  
Destination South Ayrshire Information Stands  
RAF Benevolent Fund Welfare Area  
Food and Drink Village  
STEM Village  
Sponsors Exhibition Area  
Ayrshire Food Village

Local Trade Area  
Public bar  
Scottish Fire and Rescue Heritage Trust Exhibition  
Dumfries and Galloway Aviation Museum Exhibition  
Scottish Aeromodellers Association Exhibition  
Laser Tag  
Abseiling Wall  
Royal Highland Fusiliers Exhibition  
Solway Aviation Exhibition  
Audio Description for the visually impaired  
Rafale Flight Simulator  
Jane McCarry (Isa in Still Game) – Ayr Show Roving Reporter  
Band of the RAF Regiment Performances  
RAF Central Scotland Pipes and Drums Performances

**Sponsors Trade Village:**

Ayrshire College  
BAE Systems (Operations) Limited  
Glasgow Genesis  
Park's Renault Ayr  
Regency  
Rohr Aero Services Ltd trading as Collins Aerospace  
Spirit AeroSystems (Europe) Limited  
Thales  
Woodward Inc

**Sunday Funday:**

Family creative and fun activities and farmers market in Cutty Sark  
Family creative and fun activities at Ayr Central outdoor area  
3 X Aviation-themed films curated by Ayr Film Society in Ayr Town Hall  
Art exhibition in Grain Exchange

**STEM PARTNERS**

**Airport STEM Week**

Collins  
GE  
Spirit  
NATS  
Woodward  
Storm  
BAE Systems  
Thales  
Leonardo  
Ryanair PAM  
Ayrshire College  
Navy STEM Team  
RAF STEM Team  
THE SKYLAB  
RAF Falcons

## **STEM Tent Low Green**

Collins  
GE  
Spirit  
NATS  
Woodward  
Storm  
BAE Systems  
Prestwick Airport  
Thales  
Leonardo  
LOP  
Ryanair PAM  
GSC  
RAF Falcons  
RAES  
Ayrshire College  
Prestwick Aerospace Operations Group

## **SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS**

ABP  
Ashleigh (Scotland) Ltd  
Ayr Racecourse  
Ayrshire College  
Ayrshire Magazine  
BAE Systems (Operations) Limited  
Billy Bowie Tankers  
Coalhill Farm Holiday Cottages  
GE Caledonian  
Glasgow Genesis  
Glas-Tec (Scotland) Ltd  
Hannah's Taxis & Minibuses  
James Frew Ltd  
JST Services (Scotland) Ltd  
Lawrie (furnishings) Ltd  
Leonardo UK  
MCW (SCOTLAND) Ltd  
Minuteman  
Montgreenan Property Group  
Park's Renault Ayr  
Regency  
Rohr Aero Services Ltd trading as Collins Aerospace  
Ryanair - Prestwick Aircraft Maintenance Ltd  
Spirit AeroSystems (Europe) Limited  
Stagecoach  
Thales  
The Double A Trading Company Ltd  
Thistle Cabs  
Trump Turnberry  
West Coast Tree Surgeons  
Wm Grant & Sons Ltd  
Woodward Inc

## **PLANNING GROUP PARTNERS**

Amey

Associated British Ports Ayr

Ayrshire Civil Contingencies Team

Ayrshire Roads Alliance

Ayr Show Health & Safety and Site Team

British Transport Police

Car Park Management Company

Flying Display Director: Les Garside-Beattie OBE (Group Captain Retired) and his team

Glasgow Prestwick Airport

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

NHS Ayrshire & Arran

Police Scotland

RAF Benevolent Fund

ScotRail

Scottish Ambulance Service

Scottish Passenger Transport

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Security Partner

Stagecoach

The SKYLAB

This is EventoS

Traffic Scotland

Traffic Management Company



# The International Ayr Show Festival of Flight 2023

## Economic Impact Assessment

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## 1. Summary of Key Findings

- 1.1 The event had an attendance of **240,000** people over the weekend. According to the visitor survey, each person attended the event for an average of 1.89 days, meaning that the overall event attendance was approximately **126,984** unique visitors.
- 1.2 37% of attendees were from South Ayrshire, with 57% travelling from elsewhere in Scotland, 4% from the rest of the UK and 2% from overseas.
- 1.3 We asked 74 businesses from Troon, Prestwick and Ayr if they believe the Ayr Show holds economic legacy for the area and 67% agreed.
- 1.4 99% of visitor survey respondents reported that following their experience in South Ayrshire, they would return to the area.
- 1.5 The event was rated: excellent and very good 93%, average 6% and poor 1%.
- 1.6 The estimated number of bed stays directly linked to the event is 6,349.
- 1.7 The estimated total gross expenditure is £7,173,324.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 This report presents an economic impact assessment of the International Ayr Show - Festival of Flight. The event took place on Ayr Low Green from Friday 8 September to Sunday 10 September 2023 with an impressive attendance of 240,000 people over the weekend.
- 2.2 Through analysis and assessment of key metrics and data points, this report provides stakeholders with insights into the financial contributions of attendees and the overall economic benefits generated by the event.
- 2.3 It should be noted that an economic impact assessment is not a perfect or definitive tool for economic analysis and decision-making, as there are some challenges and limitations that need to be considered. This approach relies on several assumptions and observations to generate the analysis.

## 3. Methodology

- 3.1 A comprehensive approach combining both fieldwork and desk research was employed to delineate the economic impact of the Ayr Show. Fieldwork involved direct interaction with event attendees, supplemented by desk research to gather additional data and contextual information. Central to our methodology was the administration of a structured questionnaire to visitors, aimed at capturing key insights into spending patterns, travel behaviours, and overall satisfaction levels.
- 3.2 Despite initial expectations, a total of 140 responses were gathered from the questionnaire—a figure slightly lower than anticipated. This deviation can be attributed to the unexpectedly larger audience size, necessitating the reallocation of resources during the event. However, considering the sample size in relation to the overall audience size, our analysis maintains a confidence level of 75%, with a margin of error of approximately  $\pm 5\%$  around the measured/surveyed values.
- 3.3 In addition to the survey data collected from event attendees, supplementary information was extracted from car park booking records, offering valuable insights into transportation patterns and visitor demographics. By analysing car park utilisation, we were able to discern trends in travel distances, modes of transportation, and visitor origins.
- 3.4 Furthermore, to gain a comprehensive perspective on the economic impact, in-depth discussions were held with 74 businesses spanning the regions of Ayr, Troon, and Prestwick. These consultations provided first-hand accounts of the event's influence on local commerce, ranging from increased foot traffic and sales to operational challenges and opportunities for growth.

## 4. Economic Impact Findings

### *Visitor Survey Feedback*

- 4.1 The event had an attendance of **240,000** over the weekend. According to the visitor survey, each person attended the event for an average of 1.89 days, meaning that the overall event attendance was approximately **126,984** unique visitors.
- 4.2 37% of attendees were from South Ayrshire, with 57% travelling from elsewhere in Scotland, 4% from the rest of the UK and 2% from overseas.
- 4.3 Based on the visitor survey, 19% of visitors had an overnight stay as part of their visit to the event. 73% stayed with friends and family, 13% stayed in a caravan or campsite, and 14% stayed in a hotel or guest house. We estimate that around 5% of the total number of visitors to the event stayed overnight in paid hotel or guest house accommodation locally, for approximately 1 night. Therefore, the estimated number of bed stays directly linked to the event is 6,349.



4.4 Gross expenditure, in the context of this economic impact assessment, is the total amount of money spent by visitors during the event in South Ayrshire. This encompasses various categories of expenditure, including but not limited to accommodation, dining, transportation, retail purchases, and entertainment expenses. Gross expenditure serves as a fundamental metric for assessing the economic impact of an event, as it reflects the magnitude of economic activity generated by visitor spending. By aggregating individual expenditure data from survey responses, we calculated the overall gross expenditure associated with the event.

We have estimated the average expenditure for visitors as follows:

	<b>Event</b>	<b>Wider Town</b>	<b>Accommodation, Hospitality etc Based on 5%</b>
Average Spend Per Person	£45	£11	£9.80
Gross Spend For Audience of 126,984 Unique Visitors	£5,714,280	£1,396,824	£62,220
<b>Total Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>£7,173,324</b>		

### *Car Park Data*

4.5 A sample of 426 bookings shows the following locations:

- Glasgow and East Kilbride – 39%
- Wider Ayrshire – 34%
- South Ayrshire - 7%
- Edinburgh – 7%
- Other – 13%
- Inc Inverness, Durham, Falkirk, Lancaster, Dundee, Aberdeen, D&G, Motherwell, Fife and Ilford.

### *Business Feedback*

4.6 We asked 74 businesses from Troon, Prestwick and Ayr if they believe the Ayr Show holds economic legacy for the area and 67% said yes.

Comments from businesses:

*'100% - some people are coming back. We need to build upon these - and celebrate it more. Especially for businesses that could benefit.'* Business in Ayr

*'I think so. Yes. We had it - a big group from the other side of Glasgow came for the Ayr Show and then two weeks later came back down and spoke about their day. It was their first time*

*in Troon a few weeks ago and they enjoyed coming back when it was quieter.’ – Business in Troon*

*‘Great place that can be viewed by visitors to encourage people to come back’ – Business in Ayr*

*‘Good for the locals. Helps out certain businesses.’ – Business in Ayr*

4.7 Businesses suggested initiatives to increase the economic impact, examples include:

- QR Codes – on posters with a link to the website for information regarding the Ayr Show.
- Programme/ Flag – entering a local business that would have discounts if they had any of these products. This would be listed on the website of the businesses that are providing ‘offers’.
- Showcase – On the Saturday announcements over the PA are mentioning about checking out the local high street.
- Planning your day at Ayr – showcase businesses for ‘having meals’, ‘having a drink’ etc.
- Business Bingo – Get businesses to have a stamp that participants go around the businesses and have to get a stamp.
- Pop Up – Markets in different areas of the town – to encourage people to ‘meander’.
- Shop Window Competition.

### *Media Coverage*

4.8 The publicity and promotion provided by the Council’s Communications Team and wider media reporting can bring unaccounted economic benefits to both the event being reported on and the town and region where it is taking place.

4.9 Our comprehensive coverage of the event via social media, press, radio and advertising campaigns saw a reach in excess of 15.5 million.

## **5. Visitor Feedback**

5.1 99% of visitor survey respondents reported that following their experience in South Ayrshire, they would return to the area.

5.2 The event was rated: excellent 59%, very good 34%, average 6% and poor 1%.

5.3 When asked how they heard about the event, some visitors provided more than one answer. There were a total of 179 responses, broken down as follows:

- Word of mouth – 36%
- Social media – 33%
- Facebook – 6%
- Radio – 5%
- SAC Magazine – 5%
- Signage / billboards – 4%
- Other – 7% ( advert – 4, all over- 4, newspaper – 4, google – 4, did not state – 3, online – 3, Sky TV – 3, been before – 2, was in the area – 2, locally – 2, letter -1, High St window – 1, ex-RAF 1, shop advertising – 1, Stagecoach signs – 1, list of air shows – 1, road closed – 1, SAC poster – 1, through work -1).

## **6. Conclusion:**

- 6.1 The International Ayr Show Festival of Flight plays a significant role in the local economy, with attendees contributing substantial expenditure during the event. Additionally, out-of-town visitors provide an added boost to the economy through their spending on travel-related expenses.
- 6.2 Hosting the event in Ayr is an excellent platform for promoting South Ayrshire as a visitor destination to audiences via the extensive coverage achieved by the Council's communication team, and the reach of the Destination South Ayrshire website and app.
- 6.3 Beyond the direct financial impact, the event serves as a catalyst for tourism promotion and brand exposure, positioning Ayr as a desirable destination for future visitors. Continued support and investment in events like the International Ayr Show Festival of Flight are crucial for sustaining economic growth and enhancing the vibrancy of the local community.

### Appendix 3

<b>Income and Expenditure</b>	
Core budget	£ 250,000.00
Event Funding	£ 145,000.00
Sponsorship	£ 154,000.00
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	£ 200,000.00
Income	£ 193,000.00
	<b>£ 942,000.00</b>
<b>Total Spend</b>	<b>£ 1,185,000.00</b>
<b>Unbudgeted Costs</b>	<b>-£ 243,000.00</b>