From Survival to Growth: A Vision for Highland Games Across Central Scotland

Monday 10 August, 2026

At a time when many community events are struggling with rising costs and diminishing funding opportunities, Stirling Highland Games is taking a proactive approach to securing its future.

Rather than simply responding to financial pressures, Chair Matt McGrandles at Stirling Highland Games is developing a long-term strategy designed to protect, expand, and strengthen the Highland Games tradition across Central Scotland.

For several years, Stirling Highland Games has demonstrated a successful model that combines community engagement, visitor attraction, sponsorship, and ticket sales to deliver one of the region's most recognised cultural events. However, increasing costs associated with event infrastructure, health and safety requirements, insurance, staffing, and logistics have placed unprecedented pressure on organisers Ceangail CIC.

While attendance and public support remain strong, sponsorship investment has not increased at the same pace as operating costs.

"The challenge isn't attracting people to the Games," said Matt McGrandles. "The challenge is ensuring the financial model remains sustainable. Ticket sales are currently being used to cover sponsorship shortfalls rather than being reinvested into future growth and organisational development."

McGrandles believes local businesses have a significant opportunity to play a bigger role in supporting flagship events that bring economic and cultural benefits to the area. Under the Stirling model, sponsorship should provide the foundation for event delivery, allowing ticket income to be invested in strengthening the long-term sustainability of Ceangail CIC and the wider Highland Games movement.

Looking ahead, McGrandles' vision extends beyond Stirling.

He is exploring opportunities to replicate the Stirling model through the development of **Edinburgh Highland Games** and **Glasgow Highland Games**, creating a coordinated portfolio of three major Highland Games events across Central Scotland.

The ambition is clear: by delivering multiple events under a shared operational framework, economies of scale can be achieved, expertise can be shared, sponsors can be offered greater value, and a more resilient income model can be created.

"One Highland Games can survive," said McGrandles. "Three Highland Games can create a platform for growth. I looked at a tri-city event approach back in 2019 and firmly believe that by building a portfolio across Stirling, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, we can create a stronger financial foundation, attract larger sponsorship opportunities, and generate year-round activity that benefits communities throughout Central Scotland."

A tri-city Highland Games model would create opportunities for shared marketing, coordinated sponsorship packages, volunteer development, cultural programming, and operational efficiencies. It would also allow Ceangail CIC to establish a sustainable events delivery capability that generates income beyond any single event.

Importantly, this approach is not simply about creating more events. It is about growing the Highland Games movement and ensuring that Scotland's cultural traditions remain relevant, accessible, and financially sustainable for future generations.

The wider vision is for Central Scotland to become home to a connected Highland Games network that celebrates Scottish heritage while delivering measurable economic, tourism, and community benefits. By creating a larger platform, the organisation hopes to attract strategic partners and sponsors looking to engage with audiences across Scotland's largest population centres.

"Highland Games are part of Scotland's identity," added McGrandles. "If we can successfully establish a Stirling, Edinburgh, and Glasgow model, we are not only safeguarding individual events but creating a sustainable future for Highland Games across Central Scotland. That creates opportunities for

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communities, businesses, visitors, and future generations alike."

As Ceangail CIC continues to develop its plans, the message is clear: the future of Stirling Highland Games is not just about preserving a tradition, but about building a regional platform capable of delivering cultural, social, and economic impact at a scale never seen before.

By transforming a successful local model into a Central Scotland Highland Games portfolio, Matt McGrandles is aiming not simply to keep the Games alive, but to help them thrive.

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