

# Social Enterprise Pivots its Event Delivery and Reaches Thousands Across the World

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Back in April when Ceangail, the organisation behind the recent growth of the Stirling Highland Games, had its income crippled because of the covid-19 pandemic, the future of this social enterprise based in Stirling was in serious jeopardy.

Their established Project, which surrounds connecting communities through its event delivery whilst supporting young people develop core skills through its training academy, had boosted the local economy since 2014 with over £1.7m generated for Stirling businesses but with the cancelling of its flagship event this year, the organisation was only 2 weeks away from closing its doors due to the lack of covid-19 funding support available.

Founder and Director of Ceangail Matt McGrandles comments, "It really was a horrendous time back in March and April as I scrambled from grant fund to grant fund. Over the last 6 years, we have relied very little on grants as our social enterprise does not seem to tick the right boxes, so it wasn't a huge surprise we were continually turned down by 3<sup>rd</sup> sector funders. It was however hugely frustrating, knowing that all the hard work we had previously done, including offering support to 160 young people, appeared to be of no value."

The organisation was one of the first to apply to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Resilience Fund in March but it was only on the 4<sup>th</sup> attempt, and having received guidance from Sencot and CEiS, did a trickle of funding come in 3 months later. During this rather nervous 'waiting period' the Director, using CEiS as a sounding board, also put forward a case to the Pivotal Enterprise Fund. He had already started to prepare options to present to the other Board Members should the grant be successful but also, that without funds, the need to close the organisation.

"The relief on that day in May was overwhelming," Matt recalls. "The idea that someone understood the value Ceangail brings every year to Stirling, to young people and to tourism was like a major weight had been lifted. The grant has now allowed us to pivot our event offering this year towards virtual events, acting as a bridge until the end of the year, where we are hoping to start work on attracting customers to our usual events in 2021."

With the Stirling Highland Games event still growing, it attracted almost 5500 visitors last year to Stirling so one of the main aims of the new virtual programme was to try and keep both Stirling and the event at the forefront of people's minds when they were thinking about destinations in 2021. "We still have room to grow the numbers attending the event and with the committee not wanting to lose 6 years of momentum, the virtual programme had to have as good a reach if not better. We were happy with the outcome as the programme reach was over 140,000 with viewers across the globe definitely seeing 'Stirling' at some point. When we decided to create a virtual programme, we wanted to include as many elements of the event as possible, so that's why we went for the title The Best of Stirling with Stirling Highland Games. The event offers so much more value than just a highland games and we wanted to convey that."

The virtual programme offered over 3hrs of content with clips from highland games events including the inaugural Bruce Challenge, the food and drink experience and the creative arts it's no wonder it received so many plaudits online from viewers around the world.

With the success of their first virtual event, Ceangail is now focusing on the delivery of their next project in November, The Frontline Festival Scotland. This will bring some of Scotland's artists together, entertaining viewers with a free virtual gig but also looking to raise awareness and donations for several frontline charities where lives in Scotland continue to be saved.

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