

SUBMISSION FROM STANDING COUNCIL OF SCOTTISH CHIEFS

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs (SCSC) is a non-political organisation. It and many of its members have close links to independent Clan-based organisations, both at home and overseas and the umbrella organisations.

Chiefs and Heads of Families have arranged Clan Gatherings for their Diaspora for many years. These events bring much-needed tourism and economic benefits, not only to businesses in the Clan heartlands, but also to Scotland as a whole. This is repeat business that could, and should, be exploited more fully.

Although not run by the SCSC, the 2009 International Gathering of the Clans was a watershed for Scottish Clan Tourism. If the brand was built on successfully, numbers attending in future could be considerably higher. However if a future Gathering is to fulfil its potential, the private sector creditors from 2009 must be reimbursed their losses.

The SCSC was not involved in the arrangements, but was asked for, and provided, advice to Stirling Council on The International Gathering 2014, or Clans 2014. Its cancellation was a huge disappointment, both nationally and internationally.

There are no other centralised clan events being marketed in place of the International Clan Gathering as part of Homecoming 2014. There are individual clan gatherings at a local level, but these are being promoted and marketed by Clan Associations at different times of the year around Scotland and not on any strategic level.

The vast majority of the Diaspora who attend these events cannot afford to take the time off, or make an expensive visit to Scotland more than occasionally. They tend to arrange these visits to coincide with Clan activities, and short notice of major changes of plan has a disproportionately negative effect.

The SCSC does not have the professional competence to comment on marketing and promotional issues to do with the re-enactment of the Battle of Bannockburn 2014. It does, however, have a wide-ranging knowledge of the Diaspora.

The SCSC is of the opinion that it is now too late to plan any other events around Bannockburn 2014 to attract the US Diaspora. Time is too short. Overseas clansfolk need at least two years' lead-time, but preferably longer.

The role of the SCSC in Bannockburn has yet to be fully determined, as there has only been one general meeting and, to date, no meetings of the steering group.

The SCSC believes that Bannockburn will be successful for the home market, but the event as it stands may not be large enough to bring the same numbers of the Diaspora to Scotland as occurred in 2009. Nor should it, as the site is too small to hold that number.

The SCSC believes there would be an economic benefit in mounting large, centralised International Clan Gatherings in the future, but they will need very careful consideration. They should be run by the private sector, with the SCSC in an advisory role, and with the full support of central and local government and the public sector.

A. The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs

The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs (SCSC) was founded in 1952. The Objects of the Council, which is **non-political**, are to consider matters affecting Scottish Chiefs and the Clans and Names which they represent and to submit their views and interests to HM Government, to the Scottish Government, to local authorities, to tourist authorities, to the media and to associations connected with Clan and Family in the UK and overseas.

Chiefs and heads of Clans, Families and Names, have been heavily involved in ancestral tourism. **They have arranged Clan Gatherings for their Diaspora for many years. These events bring much-needed tourism and economic benefits, not only to businesses in the Clan heartlands, but also to Scotland as a whole. Those attending will usually visit other places as well. This is repeat business that could and should be exploited more fully.**

SCSC research reveals that Clan Gatherings make substantial financial contributions to local areas – mainly through hotels, catering and transport, without grants or help of any kind from the centre. Recent examples are: 900 Camerons, £300,000 to Fort William; 200 MacPhersons, £100,000 to Newtonmore; and 250 Eliotts, £75,000 to Newcastleton.

In 2012, the Clan Maclean Gathering based at the Chief's home on Mull attracted 1000 people from around the world, bringing some £700,000 to the island. Working with local businesses, this Gathering was helpfully scheduled in the off-peak month of May when there was less pressure on accommodation and infrastructure.

Clan Gatherings in the regions bring publicity, regional affinity, community spirit, a sense of belonging, genealogy, education, research, footfall to local shops and Highland Games. Some clans run museums at no cost to the taxpayer, such as Clan Armstrong in Langholm. Others run heritage projects, such as the Clan Sinclair Heritage Trust, which has raised one million pounds for the restoration of Girnigoe Castle on the remote coast of Caithness. Whether it be gatherings, museums, or heritage projects, Chiefs and Clans operate like small businesses in the rural economy of Scotland.

The SCSC and many of its members have close links to independent Clan-based organisations overseas and the umbrella organisations - in particular the Council of Scottish Clans and Associations (COSCA) in the USA and in Australia, the Scottish Australian Heritage Council (SAHC). The feeling of kinship between many in the

Diaspora and the Clan or Family back in Scotland remains very strong. For them that is personified in the Chief, or Head of the Family.

B. The Gathering 2009

The SCSC was happy to support the International Gathering of the Clans based in Holyrood Park in Edinburgh, as part of The Homecoming 2009. Its composition and connections brought added value to the occasion. That Gathering was organised by a private company called 'The Gathering 2009 Ltd', in which the SCSC had no financial, nor management interest. It was a totally separate organisation. Nothing on this scale had been undertaken before and the unique two-day event, with its Royal Patronage, was a resounding success, with about 50,000 thousand people from 40 countries around the world attending. There were some 300 Clan and Family groups from across Scotland, with 125 separate Clan tents in the "Clan Village" and an array of tartans, kilts, and re-enactment groups.

Given the nature of the challenges posed by the uniqueness of this event, it is perhaps not surprising that disappointingly Gathering 2009 Ltd. collapsed owing some £344,000 to numerous private sector creditors. This has cast a cloud over the event. However it must be remembered that it exceeded the expectations of the Diaspora and was a life-changing experience for many people.

This event generated an estimated £10.4 million boost for the Scottish economy, of which £8.8 million came to Edinburgh. This was a phenomenal return on public monies invested and showed what could be achieved. There was a 98% satisfaction with 80% wanting another Gathering. Not surprisingly, even then, people were talking about something similar in 2014.

The event was a watershed for Scottish Clan Tourism. If the brand was built on successfully, numbers attending in future could be considerably higher. However if a future Gathering is to fulfil its potential, the 2009 creditors must be reimbursed their losses.

Gathering 2009 was preceded the day before by the first ever Clan Convention, organised by the SCSC in the Parliament. This was attended by over 100 Clan Chiefs. It attracted key leaders within the international clan network and added value to their weekend in Edinburgh. This, too, was a notable success and demonstrated how much could be achieved with the public sector working together with the private sector.

C. Stirling 2014

The Intellectual Property Rights to Gathering 2009 were purchased by Stirling Council with the intention of staging a similar International Gathering of the Clans on 11-13 July 2014 to coincide with the Stirling Highland Games. **The SCSC was not involved in the arrangements, but was asked for, and provided, advice.**

With Stirling Castle as the backdrop, the event would feature much of what was delivered in 2009 - with one notable addition. Stirling was to link the "2014 International Gathering" to the commemoration of the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn, which has considerable resonance amongst the clans. The

strapline 'Clans 2014' was used to signify that the event would aim at the clan network.

The starting gun for 2014 was fired in good time on 9th March 2012, with Stirling Council outlining their intentions in a detailed press release. It was clear at a reasonably early stage what was being offered. Added to this was a re-enactment of the Battle of Bannockburn which was to be organised by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) to run from 28-29 June 2014.

Although the logistics of holding a Gathering on the scale of 2009 at Stirling was always questionable, there appeared to be the political will for such an event and it looked an attractive proposition. Given the enthusiasm of the Diaspora, some Clans, which have a regular pattern of Clan Gatherings that did not include anything in 2014, started to reorganise their schedules to attend this event and groups began booking accommodation and travel.

There were various meetings chaired by Stirling Council to take this significant project forward. However, it became clear by September 2012 that there were difficulties. In early October 2012 the proposed International Clan Gathering was cancelled. Some clans which had made travel arrangements and booked accommodation had to cancel them. Some lost money.

The news of the cancellation does not seem to have been communicated as thoroughly as it should have been. Many Americans still had no idea that the International Gathering at Stirling was not taking place. Even today some Heritage Centres around Scotland think there is to be an event the size of 2009 in Scotland.

It is possible that this false start, and lack of will to take the proposal forward, has made the chances of arranging another large international gathering more remote. It is clear that it takes more than two years to arrange such an event. The logistics are crucial and probably mean that such an event on that scale can only be held in Edinburgh, Glasgow or Aberdeen. Inverness would find it difficult to cater for the anticipated numbers. Clans and Families as a whole are supportive and would like to be associated with such an event.

The cancellation of The Gathering 2014 or Clans 2014 was a huge disappointment to many, both nationally and internationally.

D. Bannockburn 2014

By now the Homecoming Team had moved swiftly to secure an extra day for the Bannockburn re-enactment, coupled with a form of tented village. There was no in-depth consultation with the SCSC. Although not a clan event as such, Bannockburn now became the 'clan signature event' for Homecoming 2014, with an extra day, thus running from 28-30th June, 2014.

The timing of the cancellation of the International Clan Gathering was unfortunate. The Stirling 2014 package was due to be fully announced three weeks later at a joint COSCA/SCSC clan conference at the Stone Mountain Highland Games in Atlanta, on 20th October 2012.

Attendees at this Clan conference were key leaders in the US clan network. Some had come from as far as California and Colorado. Most of those present were in Edinburgh in 2009. These clan leaders are fundamental to the clan network. If they are not persuaded of the merits of an event or a course of action then there is no 'buy-in' by the clan members at large.

They were surprised and disappointed to hear that the proposed International Gathering had been replaced, not by a Clan event, but by a battle re-enactment. Most had anticipated a re-run of Gathering 2009 in Stirling, and the watered down plans were not well-received. As far as the leaders of the US clan network were concerned, 2009 was a magical formula that worked and had considerable worldwide appeal. What was on offer now did not have the same appeal. Some ten Chiefs including the Convenor of the SCSC saw their disappointment, as did the President and board members of COSCA.

NTS is shortly to announce full details of the events on offer at Bannockburn. The emphasis will be on the battle re-enactment, which will be spectacular. But without the spectacle of a Highland Games, it remains unclear how the Clans fit in beyond a clan village, which may itself be limited due to the terrain. Whatever the package, it will not be big and wide-ranging enough to be called a Clan Gathering on the scale of the one in 2009.

The SCSC understands that there are no other centralised clan events being marketed in place of the International Clan Gathering, as part of Homecoming 2014. There are individual clan gatherings at a local level, but these are being promoted and marketed by Clan Associations at different times of the year, around Scotland, and not on any strategic level.

The clans that were prepared to change their plans to fit with the Homecoming are no longer prepared to do so and it is too late to make changes now. **The vast majority of the Diaspora who attend these events cannot afford to take the time off, or make an expensive visit to Scotland more than occasionally. They tend to arrange these visits to coincide with Clan activities and short notice of major changes of plan has a disproportionately negative effect.**

E. What promotion and marketing should be undertaken to promote the Bannockburn event and other supporting events to potential US visitors?

The interest of the Committee in the US market is noted from the above question.

Well over half of the participants in any individual clan gathering in Scotland are normally from the USA. In some instances it is as high as 80%. The International Gathering in 2009 attracted some 75% of attendees from North America, which includes Canada, but one must not ignore the other countries.

The SCSC does not have the professional competence to comment about marketing and promotional issues to do with the re-enactment of the Battle of Bannockburn 2014. It does however, have a deep knowledge of the Diaspora. The role of the SCSC and indeed COSCA is to assess the information available and make recommendations to their constituents.

As an observation, it would appear that apart from a dramatic Bannockburn website, there is little information on the internet to encourage or help visitors from overseas in making a decision on whether to come to the re-enactment, and base themselves in the Stirling area. There is no exposure of the event on any social networking site, which would create interest and discussion.

Gathering Ltd did its own marketing in 2009. The type and nature of any marketing will depend on the nature of the event and its size.

Bannockburn should be a great success, but if 25,000 people are trying to get onto a site that holds only half that number, it is likely to be remembered more for the problems than the event itself.

F. What further events should be planned around the Bannockburn event in order to attract the US Diaspora?

The SCSC is of the opinion that it is now too late to plan any other events around Bannockburn 2014 to attract the US Diaspora. Time is too short. Overseas clansfolk need a good two years' lead time. Some Clan societies even plan four or five years ahead of any large-scale gathering. Given the problems associated with 2014, unfortunately many American Scots are generally disenchanted with what is now proposed.

Also, there are some Americans who feel that Scotland takes the Diaspora for granted, is dismissive of their concerns, and forget that they have choices. This worrying viewpoint needs to be taken on board. The SCSC believes that building excellent long-term relationships are more important to Scotland than, say, a 'Return on Investment', or organising a clan march so that a target can be met.

Clanship resides out in the regions of Scotland and there may be opportunities to maximise that in 2014. For example, there is a well co-ordinated schedule of events planned in Lochaber in 2014, involving genealogy, history, presentations, music, book readings, Highland Games and Clan Gathering. This is all specifically aimed at the Diaspora, and yet no grant has been forthcoming. This project is entirely self funded and could attract upwards of 3000 people.

Another example is Glamis Castle in Angus. They plan to run a Clan Gathering based on their successful event in 2012, which attracted 20,000 people. This Gathering could have become International, but now there is not enough time to attract overseas American Scots.

Glamis has applied for a grant from Event Scotland for 2014, but it is unclear even at this late stage whether the grant will be realised. The application process appears to be too long and drawn out. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that if an international clan presence is required, then two years' lead-time is needed and the main blocks, particularly finance, need to be firmly in place.

There has been some discussion about enhancing local Highland Games with centralised funding. This would have a popular regional impact for Homecoming 2014. Unfortunately this concept does not seem to have been developed very much,

if at all. To help with local Highland Games in 2014 only, and not on an annual basis, would be discriminatory and cause more resentment than joy.

Even if the Glamis Gathering were to go ahead and the Highland Games proposal progressed, these are not compelling reasons for Americans to come to Scotland at this late stage. Doubtless some would come, but not on any large scale.

G. What is the role of the Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs in the steering group in relation to Bannockburn 2014?

The SCSC has attended one general meeting about Bannockburn and two working group meetings. These were mainly concerned with the broad prospect of the re-enactment which is primarily NTS business. The SCSC has been invited to sit on the steering group, but what role it can play has yet to be fully determined. To date, there have been no meetings of the steering group.

Once the steering group is up and running, the SCSC can advise on what is being planned for 28-30th June, 2014. We have no doubt that the battle re-enactment will be spectacular. But the SCSC cannot comment on the other aspects, such as a Clan tented area, as there are no visible plans for this yet. Neither can we comment on the food and drink facilities, music, or the medieval village.

It is emphasised that the SCSC has no expertise in setting-up and running such events. But it can offer opinions about the likely views of the Diaspora. **The SCSC believes that Bannockburn will be successful for the home market, but the event as it stands may not be large enough to bring the same numbers of the Diaspora to Scotland as occurred in 2009. Nor should it, as the site is too small to hold that number.**

H. Conclusion

The SCSC welcomes and fully supports the aims and objectives of the Scottish Government to bring more tourists to Scotland, whether it be through clan events, or in other ways.

It is appreciated that the Scottish Government and its agencies are doing more to engage with the Clans here and abroad than ever before. This is a positive step, but is very much new territory and a learning process for all parties. Inevitably some matters will not run smoothly immediately.

The approach to this whole project could have been better. Instead it was complicated by the financial fallout from 2009. The planning and engagement with the Clans for 2014 has been mixed and needs to be improved. Despite assertions that COSCA was part of the 'partnership', very little communication has actually taken place with them except via the SCSC.

The Scottish Government needs to decide what events are historically appropriate and relevant to attract the Scottish Diaspora. There is no doubt that many people, whether part of the Diaspora or not, will come to Scotland for such events. However if a substantial Clan and Family presence is appropriate, it should work with the SCSC and its members from a very early stage, to maximise economic benefits for

Scotland as a whole. That is surely more desirable and appealing than being presented with events into which the clans are expected to opt.

There are lessons that need to be learned from the way the approach to 2014 was managed. The whole aspect of future Gatherings should be discussed and assessed objectively by the key players involved, of which the SCSC is one. How often should such events occur, and, if so, where and when? How should they be organised? What other events, such as clan conventions, should be considered? How should they fit with the main programme? Whoever is in charge needs to appoint an Events Company very early on, so that work can begin immediately with interested parties.

The SCSC believes that any such wide-ranging event in the future should be run by the private sector, with the SCSC in an advisory role, but with the full support of central and local government and the public sector, and announced at least two years in advance.

Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs
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