

Côr-ffest

An initial study on the suitability of holding a similar event in Gwynedd / Anglesey.



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Foreword:

The idea of holding 'Côrffest' has been presented to the Gwynedd and Anglesey LAG panel. The idea is based on the large 'Octoberfest' festival which has been held for nearly two hundred years in Germany.

This study will look at the suitability of the idea in accordance with theme 1 of the plan, 'add value to local identity and natural and cultural resources' which includes the following objectives:

- Develop more work and business opportunities for local people through diversification and integration of the wider coastal economy.
- Encourage greater participation and use of out-of-term tourism markets through new and existing businesses working in collaboration with communities of interest
- Strengthen the productivity and identity of market towns as experimental symbols of the area's culture and products.
- Ensure that the Welsh language is heard and seen in the community and the workplace.

What is Octoberfest?

Octoberfest is a traditional festival in Germany. It dates from the eighteenth century (1887) and has now become a large-scale event.

Octoberfest's main attractions:



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The main attractions:

- A large parade or procession (about 1,000 people) through the town of Munich led by the Mayor with horses and trolleys carrying beer barrels, brass bands, percussion instruments, dancers and walkers in traditional costumes.
- The festival officially begins with the opening (tapping) of the first beer barrel.
- There are 14 tents (marquees) - each offering different beer, food and entertainment.
- There is music from brass bands, pop groups, orchestras and folk groups.



- It's a huge celebration of Germany's traditions and products.
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Octoberfest outside Germany?

- Octoberfest has now cascaded out of Germany with the United States, Canada, Brazil and London joining in the fun of recreating the festival in its original German form.
- Beer Festival was held on Anglesey some ten years ago at Mona Showground. The event was hosted by the Lions in Anglesey with elements of Octoberfest, such as a traditional oompah band, a part of the event. Although the event paid for itself for two years, there was no third event.
- There are many beer festivals in Britain - here's a calendar of existing events. <http://www.beer-festival-calendar.co.uk>

Turn Octoberfest into Côt-ffest in Wales?

The brief notes that the aim of the study is to see if Octoberfest could be adapted to a fun choral festival combined with a local beer and produce festival.

The main themes of Octoberfest are to celebrate the indigenous traditions of Germany by:

- displaying and selling local produce,
- encouraging everyone to attend in traditional costumes,
- displaying recreational art eg folk groups, brass bands and modern pop groups.

Evaluating the idea:

The arising questions:

Is there a need for another festival in North Wales?

Would choirs and producers be interested?

Would the event attract an audience?

Does it fit in with the LAG themes?

On the next page there are examples of the main festivals in Gwynedd, Anglesey and beyond which include elements of Octoberfest / Côt-ffest.

Choir / folk festivals:

North Wales Choir Festival (November).

Gŵyl Cerdd Dant- Pwllheli (November).

National Eisteddfod of Wales, Anglesey (August 2017).

Anglesey Eisteddfod (May).

Eisteddfodau in local villages eg Garndolbenmaen, Botwnnog, Llanuwchllyn, Chwilog, Bodffordd. (Not many choirs compete in the small ones).

Food / produce festivals: (including musical entertainment).

Beaumaris food festival.

Caernarfon food festival (Welsh language entertainment only).

Borth seafood festival.

Similar folk festivals:

Cnapan <https://www.facebook.com/Gwyl-Werin-Y-Cnapan-472253606163263/>

Gŵyl Ifan <http://www.gwylifan.org/>

Pan Celtic Festival - a great scope here to discuss the format. A much less formal musical festival. The social element of the festival is very important, singing in pubs after competing is a big part of the festival - but there is no food / beer festival around it.

The festival is held in a different area each year - very similar to Eisteddfod yr Urdd and the National Eisteddfod here. <http://www.gwylbangeltaidd.com/>

Music festivals:

There are a number of music festivals in Wales - here's a link that takes you to a list of all the main festivals: http://www.cerddcymru.com/music-in-wales/festivals?diablo.lang=cym&pagerequest1_ctl00_rptevent1055=4

Here are the main music festivals in Gwynedd and Anglesey:

Festival no.6

Copperfest, Amlwch

Gŵyl Pendraw'r Byd, Pen Llyn.

Sesiwn Fawr Dolgellau - which is described as a family folk festival. Pop groups, literary

readings and dancing are part of the festival.

Côr-ffest - would choirs be interested?:

There are many choirs in Gwynedd and Anglesey with each area having a youth choir, male choir, ladies choir or a mixed choir.

These choirs divide into two cohorts:

1. Choirs who compete consistently at a high level (regional and national). These choirs also hold concerts and travel to sing across Wales and beyond eg Côt Seiriol, Adlais, Côt Eifionydd, Glanaethwy, Côt Godre'r Arran, Y Brythoniaid, Côt Harmoni, hogia Llanbobman.
2. Smaller non-competitive choirs or parties that focus on entertaining the community eg Hogia Bodwrog, Genod y Gwyndy, Lleisiau, Cadwyn, Meibion Goronwy and many more.

The following points must be considered:

- There aren't many fun competitions for choirs. Eisteddfodau and choir festivals tend to require a varied programme of songs with standard and disciplined singing.
- In order to attract choirs to participate the following must be considered:
 - a. Time of year - Enough practice time? Clash with preparing for other competitions? Enough members available to attend?
 - b. Competition requirements - need to think about originality / a fun element to encourage Welsh music from all sorts, such as folk songs, original music, skiffle or a football chant!
 - c. A good award? Press or media coverage.
 - d. Location and resources (piano, stage, large meeting area, practice location)
 - e. Choirs love the social element of mass singing.
- f. The 'stomp cerdd dant' has become a very popular event at the National Eisteddfod. I therefore wonder whether it would be possible to copy elements of the 'eisteddfod dafarn' into this idea?

Attracting an audience?:

- A choir would naturally attract an additional audience as they bring their supporters with them.
- The choir's presence in itself fills the audience of any activity due to numbers in parties and choirs (15 - 70 in each choir).
- The downside to this of course is that the singers themselves often do not pay an admission fee to an event. This means that a high number of people therefore get free entry. Perhaps the answer is to charge a small fee for taking part in the competition (entry fee), but any prize would have to be attractive for people to come for free.
- It is necessary to consider that some choirs pay their accompanist and conductor.
- There are many concerts held in Gwynedd and Anglesey and the number has increased significantly as everyone strives to raise funds for the National Eisteddfod - is there a need for more activities like this?

CONCLUSION:

The idea of combining an event for choirs with a food and beer festival is a good and quite unique one. There aren't many 'casual' opportunities for choirs and it would be interesting to see the response of smaller choirs especially to competing at a fun and social event. This may be an opportunity for singers who wouldn't normally compete in more formal events and festivals. The appeal of the Pan Celtic Festival is a sign of this.

The attraction of recreating a festival such as Oktoberfest here in Gwynedd or Anglesey is understandable - but it is likely that it would be best to follow the spirit of 'Oktoberfest' to celebrate the traditions of our country in a fun way. This responds directly to some of the LAG's themes.

The idea could be extended to a real traditional Welsh festival adding folk dancers, cloggers, brass bands, singers and folk and pop groups to the choir element. Instrumental folk groups such as Calan and Mabon (to name just two) are now extremely popular and are working hard to revitalise the audience and the appeal of Welsh folk music. The price of this is a discussion point.

Combining the agricultural element and local produce would be a complete celebration of our traditions and would certainly promote and protect our heritage in the future. However, it must be borne in mind that fairly new food festivals are already taking place in Caernarfon and Beaumaris for example. They're large scale events that include a cultural element, musical entertainment and local produce. These events have proved extremely successful with major crowds attending.

There are also huge crowds attending the Copperfest in Amlwch and Sesiwn Fawr in Dolgellau, to name just two music festivals. What does this say? People enjoy standard large-scale festivals. Local people are good at supporting large events in their own square mile.

These festivals are successful because the product is right, the appeal is broad and the content is compelling. The big question is - is there capacity for another major festival in the Gwynedd and Anglesey calendar?

The National Eisteddfod is also coming to Anglesey in August 2017 and the buzz and the preparation is going to take a lot of the musicians' and choirs' time over the next year - especially with the Eisteddfod choir starting in October. Holding any additional events before August 2017 would be a risk.

Recommendations:

1. Conduct a further consultative investigation into the requirement to hold a folk festival that stands on its own feet within the Gwynedd and Anglesey festival calendar.
2. Explore the possibilities of collaborating with one of the existing festivals by offering to enrich the event by adding this element.
3. No further consideration as sufficient festivals and choir competitions are held.