

NEWS

IT'S GAME OVER

■ By ROSS THOMSON

LESMAHAGOW
Highland Games has been cancelled — just two weeks before the 50th event was to take place.

Members of the Highland Games committee met with local councillor Alex McInnes on Monday night to try to find a financial solution that would see the games continue.

However, the issue could not be resolved easily and, as a result, a gala day will be held instead.

The event will be held at Lesmahagow Miners Welfare Club sports field on Saturday, June 19.

For Highland Games secretary Kevin Avis the news came as a shattering blow.

He said: "Personally, I am absolutely devastated because the Highland Games was such a fantastic and popular event.

"We will still have the crowning of the Tartan Queen as well as the best decorated houses and other events.

"But not being able to have the games is very disappointing.

"I'm sure there will be discussions about whether to have a gala



Hard hit...the Games cancellation will be a hammer blow locally

day next year but I will be fighting tooth and nail to see the Highland Games return."

The news is sadly ironic — after last year's Games, organisers stated that the number of people who had attended was well up on previous years.

And this year would have marked the event's 50th year.

Despite being the only Highland Games in South Lanarkshire, funding sources still classed the Games as a gala day with the money given to the Highland Games committee

by South Lanarkshire Council not enough to cover various licences.

Kevin added: "With so many adults upset in the village, people seem to forget that the day is all about the kids. That's why we are going to be having the gala day.

"However, it will be back to the drawing board for next year.

"I definitely want to see the Highland Games returning.

"I remain absolutely 100 per cent committed to the Games."

Clydesdale South Councillor Alex McInnes has been on the

Highland Games committee for more than 20 years, on and off.

So, understandably, he too was upset at its demise.

He said: "I'm very disappointed. But there's no money and it costs a lot to put the Games on.

"However, I am pleased that the crowning will still take place and there will be a gala day because the kids don't deserve to have the whole event cancelled.

"What happens next year is up to the committee but, ultimately, if people want to see the Highland Games return they must vote with their feet next year."

A concerned Lesmahagow parent rang the *Gazette* to voice her displeasure at the cancellation of the Games.

The 38-year-old was even more upset as both her children would have been part of the Games.

She said: "I was gutted to hear the Highland Games had been cancelled and the kids were very upset too.

"I'm a proud mum who would have loved watching her kids perform on the day.

"I've got pals coming over from Belfast on June 19 and now I'll have to explain to them exactly what will be happening instead of the Highland Games."