

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 8 November 2016

Visit by the Lord Provost to the United Arab Emirates

Item number	7.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	City wide

Executive summary

The Lord Provost has been invited to travel to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to attend the opening ceremony of the Abu Dhabi Science Festival, an event which has been co-delivered by the Edinburgh International Science Festival since 2011.

Edinburgh's connections with the Gulf States have grown since the Lord Provost first visited the UAE in 2012 and this report proposes that this is continued by a visit to further promote Edinburgh as a world leader in culture, education and festivals and as a destination for study for international students.

It is proposed that this visit takes place around 16 - 20 November 2016 and the Lord Provost is accompanied by a City Officer and an officer from the Economy service.

Links

Coalition pledges	P15
Council Priorities	CP5, CP6
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1

Visit by the Lord Provost to the United Arab Emirates

Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the acceptance of the invitation extended to the Lord Provost from the Edinburgh International Science Festival to attend the sixth edition of the Abu Dhabi Science Festival.
- 1.2 To note that a post-visit report will be provided after the event.

Background

- 2.1 The UAE is the UK's largest trading partner in the Middle East. There are already several connections between Edinburgh and the UAE. In September 2011 the Edinburgh International Science Festival was awarded the contract to assist the Abu Dhabi Technology Development Committee deliver the first Abu Dhabi Science Festival. The Edinburgh International Science Festival continues to be the Major Programming Partner of the annual Abu Dhabi Science Festival and they are currently helping to curate, produce and deliver the 2016 event.
- 2.2 The Lord Provost visited Abu Dhabi in 2012 and in 2015 as a guest of the Edinburgh International Science Festival to show Edinburgh's support. During those visits the Lord Provost met with several senior figures within the UAE Government and education system.
- 2.3 In addition to the Science Festival connection, the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation (ADMAF) in August 2012. The Lord Provost presided over the MOU which was signed by the Director of the EIF and the Founder of ADMAF.
- 2.4 Since June 2015 the UAE's airline, Etihad, has flown directly from Edinburgh. The Lord Provost and the Investment and International Relations team have supported this new flight connection.

Main report

- 3.1 The visit to the UAE by the Lord Provost provides an opportunity to bring together several strands of activity to enhance Edinburgh's profile. Whilst the final programme is to be agreed, it is proposed that it will involve several of the activities below.

- 3.2 **Abu Dhabi Science Festival** – The Lord Provost’s presence in the UAE, and meetings with the organisers of the Abu Dhabi Science Festival has lent considerable support for the connections with the Edinburgh International Science Festival team, with co-delivery commencing in 2011 and recent renewal as Major Programming Partner. The Lord Provost will attend the Opening Ceremony and hold meetings with the relevant government ministers and organising committee.
- 3.3 **Edinburgh Universities “Study Edinburgh” event** – The Gulf is an important source of potential students for Edinburgh’s universities. The Investment and International Relations team has previously supported representation by Edinburgh’s universities at recruitment events in Abu Dhabi. Discussions are underway regarding a joint university event to promote Edinburgh as a place to study. It is also proposed that this event is held in partnership with Etihad Airways to highlight the direct flight route.
- 3.4 **The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo Messaging** – The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo (REMT) plans to tour to the Middle East in 2018. In consultation with the REMT, the Lord Provost will act in his capacity as Chair of the Board of Directors of the REMT in supporting the key messaging of the organisation’s future activity in the UAE.
- 3.5 **The British Council UAE 2017 season** - The Lord Provost would use the visit to secure Edinburgh’s profile within the work being done by the British Council’s focus on UAE education and cultural programme in 2017.
- 3.6 Overall this visit has the potential to significantly boost Edinburgh’s profile in the UAE, raise further awareness of the direct air link and the opportunities for cultural, economic and academic connections. It is important that previous connections are built upon and refreshed to strengthen and develop mutually beneficial opportunities.
- 3.7 Due to the limited availability of seats on the day of departure, with no other direct flight options available that would allow the Lord Provost to be there for the opening events, the Council Leader and Executive Director of Place approved the acceptance of this invitation and the subsequent flight booking utilising the provisions of the Council’s Scheme of Delegation.

Measures of success

- 4.1 As there are no specific Capital Coalition Pledges and Council Outcomes for Investment and International Relations, the team monitors its contribution to a wide range of related pledges and outcomes:
- a. Raise Edinburgh’s profile in the UAE.
 - b. Promote Edinburgh as an investment location and an international Festival city.

- c. Increase the number of students from the UAE studying in Edinburgh.
- 4.2 Further information on the visit will be provided after the event.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The cost of travel and accommodation for the Lord Provost will be met by the Edinburgh International Science Festival with any additional costs met by partners and/or the Economy Service from the existing 2016/2017 budget.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The actions and outputs described in this report adhere to the risk compliance policy and governance arrangements.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no equalities impacts arising from the programme proposed in this report. The Council's European and International Strategy supports the Council's commitment to equal opportunities.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Travel arrangements have been made in accordance with the Council's Sustainable Travel Plan. Travel options have been considered and the recommendation is a direct return flight from Edinburgh to Abu Dhabi using the Etihad airline to support the above-mentioned economic links.
- 8.2 While there are adverse impacts in terms of carbon emissions, air quality and noise associated with air travel, overland travel is not considered practical given the distance and the impact of overland travel on the Lord Provost's diary around this time.
- 8.3 The carbon emissions are 705.0 Kg for return flights per person, as calculated by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The Investment and International relations team will consult with partners including the University of Edinburgh, Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh Napier University, Queen Margaret University, Festivals Edinburgh, the British Council, and the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo regarding the programme and arrangements.

- 9.1 Attendance by the Lord Provost at this event provides the Council with a channel for engaging and consulting on Edinburgh’s activities regarding culture, festivals, and education.

Background reading/external references

<http://www.sciencefestival.co.uk/projects>

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Elaine Ballantyne, Service Manager, Investment and International Relations

E-mail: elaine.ballantyne@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 469 3854

Links

Coalition pledges	P15 - Work with public organisations, the private sector and social enterprise to promote Edinburgh to investors.
Council Priorities	CP5 – Business growth and investment CP6 – A creative, cultural capital
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 - Edinburgh's economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all
Appendices	