

SERVICE UPDATE

<u>Name of Cluster:</u>	City Development and Regeneration
<u>Date:</u>	16 April 2024
<u>Title of Update:</u>	International Travel 2023/24 – Annual Service Update
<u>Author:</u>	Jen Lawie
<u>Chief Officer:</u>	Julie Wood
<u>Email Address:</u>	jlawie@aberdeencity.gov.uk

UPDATE:

In response to the decision sheet for the Finance and Resources Committee on 29 March 2023, item 11.3 (iv), please find below relevant excerpts from trip reports for all overseas activity undertaken during 2023/24, including follow-up activity and officers' recommendation as to future attendance.

Please note, of the travel approved at the aforementioned Committee and detailed in item 11.3 (i) of the same decision sheet, the WindEurope conference in Copenhagen in April 2023 and CERA Week in Houston in March 2024 were attended as planned. The World Hydrogen Summit in the Netherlands in May 2023 could not be attended due to diary commitments, and instead budget was reallocated to the High Wind conference in Stavanger in March 2024, with Finance and Resources Committee approval on 30 January 2024, see decision sheet item 11.1 (i).

In addition, travel was undertaken to the Hydrogen Valleys Forum in Zagreb in March 2024, as a result of an invitation to present. Travel and accommodation costs were fully funded by the British Embassy in Zagreb and approved by Council Co-leaders.

TRIP REPORT	
Event	WindEurope, Copenhagen
Date	25 – 27 April 2023
Attendees	Jim Johnstone, Service Manager; Jen Lawie, Senior Project Officer
Overview and Outcomes	<p>WindEurope is a world class European conference focused on all aspects of wind energy and including policy, industry and academia input. There were over 15,800 participants, 500+ exhibitors and 60+ information sessions as part of the Conference. ACC attended representing both trade and Invest Aberdeen.</p> <p>Meeting: Port of Esbjerg, world's largest base port for offshore wind activities, 23.6GW of offshore wind was shipped from the Port in 2022, alongside its other service areas of oil and gas and as a transport hub.</p> <p>Outcome: Look at similar frameworks to Esbjerg's MoU with 5 other European ports in accelerating wind projects for Aberdeen – Port of Aberdeen has since visited Port of Esbjerg on an SDI mission.</p>

	<p>Meeting: Mayor of Esbjerg Outcome: Discussion around our support in initiating collaboration via WECP to strengthen academic links between universities across our cities.</p> <p>Meeting: Mayor of Stavanger and wider Stavanger Kommune delegation Outcome: Interest in replicating STEM programmes for primary and secondary students in renewables, to facilitate an introduction to Ballard who have delivered the Hydrogen Schools Challenge in Aberdeen and across the country.</p> <p>Meeting: State of Victoria, Australia Outcome: Victoria holding Australia’s first auction for offshore wind projects in 2025, to facilitate an introduction to Crown Estate Scotland</p> <p>Meeting: Orkney Islands Council/Orkney Ports Outcome: Potential interest in going for an investment zone</p> <p>Meeting: Business France, Special Envoy for Pays de la Loire Outcome: potential incoming delegation to support St Nazaire Port in building regional supply chains and maximising opportunities around offshore wind. Introduction made to Green Lab DK, a circular energy site which may serve as a useful model for ETZ Ltd.</p> <p>Meeting: DEME, part of Thistle Wind Partners’ ScotWind consortium Outcome: A NE Supply Chain Manager and Stakeholder Manager is soon to be appointed and introductions will be made</p> <p>Meeting: Port of Aberdeen Outcome: Attending as a ‘walkaround’ with aim to inform future event attendance/stand presence etc. Regular partner meetings to be set up with new staff at the Port.</p> <p>Scottish Development International organised a trade mission to the event, with an itinerary for over 20 attending Scottish companies, including representative companies of Aberdeen and Shire (and members of AREG). ACC supported through attending networking ceremony for Danish, European and Scottish companies to discuss collaboration opportunities around wind. Representing Invest Aberdeen, an investment breakfast was attended led by Scottish Government’s Nordic Office, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Development International – attendees included Vestas, Fred Olsen Seawind, Orsted, NorSea Denmark, Copenhagen Offshore Partners, SemCo Maritime, COWI.</p> <p>Adjacent to the WindEurope itinerary, a kick-off meet for the Scottish Government-supported North Sea Partnership between Aberdeen, Esbjerg and Stavanger took place. Each city presented on its background, industries and current economic context, from which key themes to potentially collaborate on and progress were identified along with a timeline for doing so.</p>
<p>Follow-up Activity</p>	<p>Mayor of Esbjerg, WECP President</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey to determine Aberdeen universities’ interests in an academic exchange programme between WECP cities was circulated and positive responses received. Feedback has been collated to WECP Presidency and based on level of interest by other member cities, may be progressed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection with Education Esbjerg has been made who may lead on the above activity, and to facilitate cross-border academic collaboration and skills linkages. <p>Business France, Pays de la Loire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertook an overseas mission to Aberdeen and the NE in March 2024, with 5 regional economic development agencies and 5 companies. <p>Port of Aberdeen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various connection points between ACC and Port identified (covering decarbonisation of Port; hydrogen export; offshore wind) and regular meetings are now scheduled <p>Invest Aberdeen ScotWind Proposition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale of opportunity around ScotWind is clear – collaboration across region and industry actors to develop a specific proposition which can be ‘sold’ be stakeholders at similar events is being developed. <p>North Sea Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas identified for collaboration – a mobile, interconnected North Sea workforce; addressing skills via local education providers and joint degrees/student and staff mobility; knowledge sharing and peer support on supply chain development for hydrogen • Regular meetings scheduled, in-person where this can be attached to relevant conferences and events
<p>Future attendance?</p>	<p>While there were Scottish representatives (economic bodies, Ports, clusters) in attendance at the event, and many of the ScotWind developers, a more official presence by way of a Stand in the exhibition would be useful in the future to represent the strength, size and interest of the sector. A ‘ScotWind’ stand would be a great addition, bringing together Scottish Ports, clusters, local authorities and smaller consortium members potentially.</p> <p>The event was well attended by countries based around the North Sea, and the agenda may well evolve to focus more on offshore wind as opposed to all wind opportunities. It’s a good touch-base to maintain and progress our international relationships.</p> <p>If continued to be supported by SDI, this event is worthwhile to attend, particularly for Invest Aberdeen colleagues.</p>

TRIP REPORT	
Event	High Wind Conference, Stavanger
Date	11 – 12 March 2024
Attendees	Lord Provost David Cameron; Jen Lawie, Senior Project Officer
Overview and Outcomes	This was the 4 th annual High Wind Conference, hosted by the City of Stavanger, the ONS Foundation and the Stavanger Chamber of Commerce. The event attracts over 200 participants, including a dedicated programme for Master-level and PhD students from Norway, Denmark, Netherlands and Scotland. The Conference is a leading meeting place for industry, decision-makers and other players in the full value chain for offshore wind in the North Sea.

	<p>Meeting: Mayors of Aberdeen, Stavanger, Esbjerg and Groningen (the four European members of the WECP) and officers Outcome: sharing updates on energy transition progress and projects and identify potential areas for collaboration.</p> <p>Meeting: WECP AGM 2024 planning (Stavanger is host city for the WECP AGM in August 2024) Outcome: contribute to agenda, itinerary planning and site visits to ensure the event will showcase European cities to the other network cities.</p> <p>Meeting: Energy Transition Cluster Norway Outcome: initial connection has been made with NZTC, but follow-up collaboration should be encouraged, potentially through involving both in future itineraries</p> <p>Meeting: PhD students undertaking energy transition research were brought together from Aberdeen, Stavanger, Groningen and Alborg universities. Outcome: the group pitched commonalities in their research and how they will work together to identify potential areas for comparative research/themes.</p> <p>Meeting: Norse Group, a supply-based company similar to ASCO and Peterson in Aberdeen. Outcome: progress shared in diversification for the energy transition, including being a significant developer of industrial parks and its ambitions for Espevik, which has the potential to be a large-scale production facility for fabrication of concrete floaters for offshore wind.</p> <p>An invited Speakers' Reception presented the opportunity to meet and network with High Wind presenters and panellists, representing government, developers, environmentalists, finance partners and skills organisations.</p> <p>At the High Wind Conference itself, a wide range of sessions were attended providing an opportunity for knowledge building and reflections on how learnings can apply to the Scottish offshore wind market.</p> <p>The Lord Provost had the opportunity to represent Aberdeen as a speaker during a panel session. Following presentations from Scottish representatives, including Peter Robson of Scottish Power and Steven Alexander of SFF Services for Scotland, the Mayors of Stavanger, Esbjerg and Groningen joined together to add commentary on their own cities, their journeys in offshore wind development, and their experiences overcoming co-existence and public acceptance challenges to the marine sector.</p>
<p>Follow-up Activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groningen Newest member of the WECP, investing govt funding heavily and urgently in energy transition projects and pilots after stopping gas production at its field in October 2023 after seismic activity. There are opportunities for collaboration here, exporting solutions, plus a close link to Hamburg Port which is likely to be a receiving port for hydrogen export. Groningen has a large-scale H2 Valleys project ongoing under Horizon, HEAVENN, and contact was gained with the project manager who may be able to share experience and learning with Aberdeen partners submitting a similar bid. • Stavanger

	<p>Stavanger is developing its own hydrogen valleys project and are open to collaboration. Contact has been made to pass on to Aberdeen partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Esbjerg Knowledge and best practice from the Port of Esbjerg, and its launch of the world's largest 70 MW seawater pump to supply district heating can be shared. • CERA Week Mayors/elected members from Esbjerg, Stavanger and Aberdeen will together join a panel at CERA Week 2024 next week. To build on the projects shared today and structure the session messaging a pre-meeting has been set up. • WECP AGM/PhD Students Explore opportunity to invite city stakeholders to meet and connect at the AGM. Suggestions are industry/innovation clusters, academic representatives, business or industry representatives. Aberdeen to consider who they would like to invite and feedback to enable itinerary to be structured around these 'tracks'. It is suggested that the PhD students are supported back to attend WECP AGM and report on their progress/comparative work. Catch up meeting established with Aberdeen's student representative and how they can be supported. • Energy Transition Cluster Norway • Reaffirm contact and support with NZTC, involve in December itinerary for visiting Stavanger delegation.
<p>Future attendance?</p>	<p>The itinerary of this trip, with a day dedicated to partner meetings and a day dedicated to the Conference was meaningful. It strengthened partnerships with our European cities, knowledge-building on each city's projects and solidified that there are numerous opportunities for future projects and areas for collaboration. Connections with the businesses and clusters represented will also serve Aberdeen, in terms of potential investment and trading opportunities, and supporting our future energy transition projects, most notably H2 Valleys.</p> <p>The involvement of PhD students was very beneficial, and creates new connections between the cities, their universities and potentially future workforces. We should continue to support this in any way we can.</p> <p>Throughout the panel speaking opportunity, and the various networking events, Aberdeen's attendance and experience was reflected and referenced formally and informally and created a lot of interest. Our visibility and impact at the event was high and therefore it is strongly suggested that attendance in 2025 is considered.</p>

TRIP REPORT	
Event	Hydrogen Valleys Forum, Zagreb
Date	18 March 2024
Attendees	Claire Stevenson, Team Leader – Projects
Overview	A representative of Aberdeen City Council's hydrogen projects was invited to present at the Hydrogen Valleys Forum in Zagreb, fully funded, following a visit by Croatian government representatives to Aberdeen in late 2023.

	<p>The Hydrogen Valleys Forum was supported by the North Adriatic Hydrogen Valley, a Horizon Europe funded project co-ordinating action for the evolution of a cross-regional innovation ecosystem. It is supported by industry associations from the three participating countries, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. These three territories have been considered by the European Hydrogen Backbone as one part of the larger pan-European hydrogen supply and import corridor.</p> <p>The March Forum focused on the concept of hydrogen valleys, and Aberdeen was invited to share UK experience and challenges in its journey to net zero.</p> <p>Other speakers included representatives of the HyNet North West project, the Head of Development and Investment at Holding Slovenske and the Head of Energy Strategy from the Croatian government.</p>
Outcomes	<p>The North Adriatic Hydrogen Valley will represent and deliver a large hydrogen Valley across Croatia, Slovenia and Italy. It was clear from the presentations given that there has been extensive collaboration and a willingness to work together to achieve success. The experience of Aberdeen was very well received and the audience were keen to see real life examples of 'hydrogen technology in action'. The presentations were followed by a networking session that revealed a strong desire to take and build on the NAHV, extending further within Eastern Europe, with Romania also expressing an interest in having a similar session in Clus. It was also a good opportunity to hear from HyNet and Progressive Energy and their ambitions for decarbonisation and a good opportunity to present Aberdeen's excellent work to an audience that included UK Government Officers.</p>
Future attendance?	<p>This trip was an opportunity for Aberdeen to highlight the desire to continue with European partnerships and allowed discussion on Aberdeen's ambition to bid for Horizon Europe funding for our own small hydrogen valley.</p> <p>The fully funded invitation being received as a result of representatives of the Croatian government visiting Aberdeen last year underlines the importance of welcoming international delegations and the impact this has on our global reputation as a leader in hydrogen deployment and transition.</p> <p>Continued participation in events such as this one are extremely important in promoting Aberdeen and the Region. The ability to travel and participate in person is of particular benefit in order to fully engage with the other participants and audience.</p>

TRIP REPORT	
Event	CERAWeek, Houston
Date	18 – 21 March 2024
Attendees	Jim Johnstone, Service Manager; Councillor Christian Allard
Overview and Outcomes	<p>CERAWeek 2024 explored strategies for a multidimensional, multispeed and multifuel energy transition. It was also the anchor event for the World Energy Cities Partnership 'Working Group' meeting. Member Cities of the WECP were invited to attend the conference and offered opportunities to participate in panel sessions during the conference to showcase their cities energy transition efforts.</p> <p>This was an opportunity to learn from the other cities in the WECP, present Aberdeen as a leader in energy transition, a place for investment and access</p>

to the UK and the European market. In addition, it was an opportunity through the CERA Week conference to learn about the latest thinking on Energy Transition from experts around the world.

Councillor Allard had a speaking opportunity to represent Aberdeen, joining the panel session **The North Sea: A Beacon for a Low-carbon Energy Future** with the Mayors of Stavanger & Esbjerg.

Meeting: Andres Guevara - Bp - Senior Vice President, Strategic Corporates and Partnerships

Outcome: discussed the continued commitment of bp to renewables and energy transition and the challenges at this time. Confirmed the continued commitment of bp to the JV with Aberdeen City Council and its wider investment in the area eg Offshore Wind Global Centre for O&M.

Meeting: WECP Working Group Meeting

Outcome: understanding of the plans for the AGM in Stavanger (late August) and the potential for wider academic and business involvement, with the opportunity for building collaboration.

Meeting: Kornel Rost, Scottish Development International

Outcome: explored opportunities to work together to bring a mission to CERAWeek 2025; SDI official's keen to support with contact etc.

Meeting: Greentown Labs

Outcome: learning visit to site that acts as an incubator and growth space for Greentech business start ups at TRL5, lab supplies working and development space, linked to universities, expert support and exposure to venture capital. Interesting business model with funding from a range of private firms eg Equinor, charging for space etc. Potential model for Aberdeen to look at but on a smaller scale.

Meeting: The ION District

Outcome: part of a developing innovation district in mid town Houston, initial development at a disused Sears apartment store. Offers co working space, office space of differing sizes on easy in and out terms. In addition there is a "maker space" for the development of prototypes and new products and provision of expert help. Should the city consider an innovation zone or similar it is an interesting model to look at.

Sessions/events attended during CERAWeek included:

- **Houston/Perth – Sister Cities 40th Anniversary Reception**
Invitation to attend as Aberdeen and Houston are also sister cities. City of Perth Lord Mayor and officers were accompanied by 6/7 businesses, business organisations and academics, as part of a wider delegation to explore opportunities for working with Houston.
- **How to adapt to a changing climate?**
Presented by Deputy Mayor of Gronigan, Philip Broeksma
- **Cleantech Trailblazers Dinner**
- **British Networking Reception**

	<p>Opportunity to highlight opportunity for investment in Aberdeen as well as Aberdeen companies supporting Texas green energy development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Transition Cities: Leading the way – WECP Panel • WECP Mayor’s Reception
Follow-up Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three potential inward investment opportunities – have been forwarded to Invest Aberdeen for follow-up • Meetings with CEO of North Sea Transition Authority to be established • Potential for trade/academic mission and learning journey to CERAWeek/Houston 2025, with support of SDI. To build up a proposal for this by end of May – speak with CERA Week, WECP, Scottish Chamber of Commerce, local partners and businesses. • Link Stuart McKay and Alexandra Stein at Scottish Government to German Government regarding Offtake model discussed at the Hydrogen Leadership Dinner. • Follow up with contact at Future Houston which is leading on the development of the H2 Hub in Houston - interested in sharing H2 learning from Aberdeen and Scotland and exploring potential business/supply opportunities. • Continued collaboration with European cities in WECP, particularly in lead-up to WECP AGM in Stavanger in August 2024 • Follow up/research related to geothermal in NE Scotland and what the opportunities might be – share Dept of Energy’s “how to” papers on getting green energy projects to market
Future attendance?	<p>CERAWeek remains the anchor event for the WECP working group meeting so future attendance is required given Aberdeen’s involvement in the WECP.</p> <p>The event was well attended by fellow WECP cities and countries based around the North Sea. It’s a good touch-base to maintain and progress our international relationships and develop cross North Sea Energy Transition initiatives. An early example, being support from Stavanger and Groningen for the NE Scotland H2 Valley application to Horizon Europe.</p> <p>We should look to use the opportunity afforded by WECP/CERAWeek relationship to widen involvement for the city (Scotland?) with a trade/academic mission.</p> <p>Attendance by a senior elected member was a benefit as it opened more doors and conversations than by an officer on their own. It is interesting to note that while there were 2 representatives from ACC at the WECP sessions/CERAWeek activities, others had larger delegations. For example, Groningen and Stavanger had 3; the Chinese cities 5 each; while Perth and Esbjerg had delegations of 8, taking the opportunity to combine the WECP meeting with a trade/academic mission to Houston.</p>