

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

DATE 31<sup>st</sup> May 2012

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT International Partnerships & Twinning Applications  
REPORT NUMBER: EPI/12/0124

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to bring before Committee applications for financial assistance from the International Twinning Budget 2012-2013 and to make recommendations.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee recommend the approval of the following grants from the International Twinning Budget 2012-2013:

- i) £2,500 towards the participation of strong-men in the 'Aberdeen Highland Games Tri-Twinning Challenge', from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012.
- ii) £2,600 towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Aberdeen Scouts visit to Gomel, 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October 2012.
- iii) £7,000 maximum contribution towards the visit of a youth theatre group from Regensburg to produce a theatre production with Aberdeen Performing Arts, 31<sup>st</sup> July to 12<sup>th</sup> August 2012.
- iv) £2,180 maximum contribution towards the participation of an artist from Clermont-Ferrand in the Aberdeen Art Fair, 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> August 2012.
- v) £6,950 towards the participation of a football team from Stavanger in the Denis Law Tournament, 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> July 2012.
- vi) £1,000 contribution towards sending a loan exhibition and the curator from The Gordon Highlanders to the Regional Gomel Military Museum and to be a representative in the 'Intermuseum' competition, 7<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Full council approved the International Twinning Budget for 2012-2013 of £137,350. The approved budget from the Common Good Fund, provides £102,000 of monies towards the support of twinning projects and/or visits.

	<b>Balance of Budget Available</b>	<b>£102,000</b>
i)	Contribution towards the participation of two strong men from Regensburg, Clermont-Ferrand and Stavanger in the Aberdeen Highland Games, 15 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> June 2012.	£2,500
ii)	Contribution towards the 21 <sup>st</sup> Aberdeen (Cults) Scout visit to Gomel, 10 <sup>th</sup> - 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2012.	£2,600
iii)	Maximum contribution towards the visit of a youth theatre group from Regensburg to participate in a production by Aberdeen Performing Arts, 31 <sup>st</sup> July - 12 <sup>th</sup> August 2012.	£7,000
iv)	Maximum contribution towards the participation of an artist from Clermont-Ferrand in the Aberdeen Art Fair, 17 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> August 2012.	£2,180
v)	Contribution towards the participation of a team from Stavanger in the Denis Law Tournament, 15 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> July 2012.	£6,950
vi)	Contribution towards sending a loan exhibition from Gordon Highlanders to the Regional Gomel Military Museum, 7 <sup>th</sup> - 16 <sup>th</sup> October 2012.	£1,000
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£22,230</b>
	<b>Amount remaining in budget if recommendations approved:</b>	<b>£79,770</b>

### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The health and safety implications of all visits are taken into account during planning, with any exceptional implications addressed at the time of application.

The International Partnerships Officer regularly reviews the travel advice provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and is in close contact with counterpart officers in the twin cities to ensure information provided to participants is accurate and up-to-date.

Where individuals/groups from Aberdeen are travelling overseas, comprehensive pre-visit briefings are offered by the International Partnerships Officer and all have the opportunity to ask questions and request support.

When participating in overseas visits, Council employees are covered by the Council's insurance policy while non-Council employees are instructed by the International Partnerships Officer to obtain comprehensive travel insurance.

Long established twinning links will not be maintained without regular reciprocal visits and ongoing projects being initiated by communities, groups and individuals and there is the potential for the city's international image to be damaged if we don't continue to support established relationships.

Without support from the twinning budget, exchanges and visits of this nature could not take place and people in Aberdeen would lose a wide range of opportunities to engage with the international community. In addition, incoming visitors to the city on twin city projects support the local economy through their participation at events and hospitality and retail expenditure while visiting the city.

The International Partnerships Officer will provide a strong link between Aberdeen and our twin cities who also provide organisational support, advice and guidance when required.

They will also make recommendations on funding available to the group and offer support to foster a relationship with the city so that it is long lasting and beneficial to the people of Aberdeen without requiring on-going financial support from the public purse.

All groups participating in twin city activities are encouraged to develop sustainable relationships with their partner groups. Links between most of the twin cities of Aberdeen are active, and links which have not recently been engaged have been contacted to re-establish communications. It is important that all visits and projects through twinning are long-standing and fruitful to ensure their benefit to the local people of Aberdeen, to establish and promote positively the overseas image of Aberdeen and for best practice to be shared between cities.

## 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

### i) **Contribution towards the participation of two Strong-Men from Regensburg, Clermont-Ferrand and Stavanger in the Aberdeen Highland Games, 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> June 2012.**

Having celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012, Aberdeen Highland Games is an integral part of the Grampian Games Circuit and also an important event within the Aberdeen City Council's Summer Festival programme. The organisers are looking to enhance and add value to the event which this year is being held on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June through the participation of Aberdeen's twin cities.

Aberdeen Highland Games is a very popular event within the Summer Festival programme and depending on the weather attracts over 10,000 visitors on a regular basis. The event is widely publicised through the local and national media, radio and Aberdeen City Council website.

Two senior strong men from Regensburg, Clermont-Ferrand and Stavanger have been invited to compete in the 'Aberdeen Highland Games Tri-Twinning Challenge' during the day of the event. They will compete against each other in traditional Highland Games activities such as tug o' war, throwing the light hammer, shot putt and tossing the caber. At the end of their tournament, a prize will be awarded for individual winner and the winning team.

The strong men will arrive on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2012 and will spend Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June with the International Partnerships Officer who will take them to Oldmeldrum Highland Games. Here they will have the opportunity to view the activities, learn tips and meet with Officials in preparation for the Aberdeen Highland Games on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June. The participants will leave Aberdeen on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012.

Local associations and businesses, which are representative of the competing countries, will be invited to the Aberdeen Highland Games to give encouragement to the twin city athletes. The winning team will be given a trophy engraved with their country and winning year. It will then be kept by the twin city council and used as a tool to raise the profile of Aberdeen as an attractive tourist destination and to publicise traditional Scottish events and sports. This event will then be established as a regular competition at the Highland Games in future years.

The participation of the twin cities will enhance and add value to the programme of sporting events offered at the Aberdeen Highland Games. It will also build on the growing interest from Europe in Scottish traditional events, and attract new visitors and fans to the city and surrounding areas

in future years. The local crowd will benefit from the additional entertainment and awareness of the twin cities of Aberdeen will be raised. The attendance of local associations and businesses, representing the twin city, will increase and stimulate their involvement and participation in twin city projects.

To determine the success of the 'Tri-Twinning Challenge' the organisers of the Aberdeen Highland Games will be asked for feedback on the success of the twin cities participation and how it impacted on the crowd and on the event. Feedback will also be asked for from the participants to determine the impact and success of the 'Aberdeen Highland Games Tri-Twinning Challenge' in the annual Aberdeen Highland Games event.

The contribution asks for a maximum £2,500 towards the participation of the six strong men to cover the costs of accommodation, meals and transport. The twin cities would cover the cost of air flights for the participants to and from Aberdeen.

**ii) Contribution towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Aberdeen (Cults) Scouts Visit to Gomel, 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October 2012.**

Following the success of the 21<sup>st</sup> Aberdeen (Cults) Scouts Visit to Gomel in 2011, a group of different individuals from the 21<sup>st</sup> Scout Group in Aberdeen have been invited to visit Gomel to take part in English Teaching projects which has been developed jointly with the teachers in Gomel. The visit will take place from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

The scouts will participate in English Teaching projects with schools which are selected by Gomel City Council. They will also deliver teaching materials during the visit. The schools involved in the project are as follows:

- Gomel State Children's Centre
- Gomel Skarina University
- Gomel Association of Children and Youth
- Linguistic Schools Numbers 10 and 71

Other activities which the Scouts will be involved in during their visit include:

- Visit Technical School 67
- Visit Gomel City Social Centre
- Visit Gomel State Technical School of Arts and participate in a workshop.
- Visit State Centre of Radioactive Medicine

The Scout Visit in October 2012 will develop and promote the existing Scout twin city partnership with Gomel. After the Scout Visit to Gomel in 2011 the participants received excellent positive press coverage where it was stated that the participants 'are a credit to their generation'.

Visits to Gomel are extremely developmental to the young people as they learn the different Belarusian cultural and social ways of life. As the visit involves teaching conversational English and working with people of a range of different ages, the visit will develop their maturity, communication and international relation skills. The skills which the participants will learn and develop during the trip will increase their confidence, develop their lifelong skills and they will better appreciate their place as a global citizen. The participants must also learn to adapt their teaching approach in each school accordingly to the level of the students and how best to engage the Gomel pupils. Adaptability is an essential skill for later life.

Based on previous participants, the young people from both cities forged long-standing friendships and communicate on a weekly basis through email, phone and social network sites. The Aberdeen and Gomel young people participating in 2012 have the opportunity to continue developing their communication and language skills.

As part of the project, the Scouts are required to give a feedback report on the Gomel visit covering information on which projects they undertook, any challenges that they faced and what they learnt from the experience. The report back is essential as it allows them to qualify for part of the Duke of Edinburgh award and various other Scout awards. The feedback report is also used to demonstrate how the donations and public money were used.

Before the Scouts leave for Gomel, they must attend meetings throughout the year to discuss how they will fund-raise the visit, and undertake a series of events indicating their commitment to the project. The participating Scouts also undertake meetings to practice their presenting skills and public speaking, which is done in consultation with the English Teaching staff in Gomel Schools.

The application requests a total of £2,600 to contribute towards the cost of insurance, transportation, visas, interpreters and meals. The total cost of the trip is £7,820 and a total of £5,220 will be raised by the Scouts through sponsored events, jumble sales and a Scout Community Event.

**iii) Contribution towards the visit of a group of young people from Regensburg to participate in a production piece produced by Aberdeen Performing Arts, 31<sup>st</sup> July to 12<sup>th</sup> August 2012.**

Aberdeen Performing Arts (APA) is a charitable company which begun trading in 2004. Audience attendance and income for APA has reached record levels, and their public profile has grown significantly. APA aims to 'touch emotions, lift the spirits, and expand the minds' of both residents and visitors to the North East of Scotland by producing a wide and diverse range of projects.

In summer 2011 APA took part in a highly successful youth exchange project with the Regensburg based dance company, Danceworxxx. This resulted in performances of street theatre created by the young people in both Regensburg and Aberdeen. The projects during 2011 proved to be hugely beneficial and APA aims to build on the success from 2011 and explore new challenges in 2012.

APA is collaborating with Danceworxxx again in 2012 to produce a piece of contemporary physical theatre to be showcased at the Lemon Tree during August 2012. There are eight young people and three adults from Regensburg who will be taking part.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> August, the Aberdeen and Regensburg groups will devise the piece together after opening a box of stimulus from Visible Fictions Theatre Company, renowned producers of theatre for young people. No preparation work will be able to be done prior to the start of the project therefore the groups must work together intensively to create the performance piece.

The groups will participate in Aberdeen International Youth Festival (AIYF) activities across the city by performing as part of 'Festival in the City' and will offer workshops to AIYF participants. This will give maximum exposure to the APA and Regensburg group performers and provide best value for money.

The participants will substantially improve their social skills and confidence levels. For the participants from Aberdeen, they will feel a sense of pride and ownership of their city and will thrive on the responsibility of hosting a group of young people from another city. For the participants from Regensburg, they will improve their English language skills and find new confidence in their abilities. Both groups will broaden their global horizons and they will be challenged by other young people's perspectives. They must learn how to overcome language barriers within a short space of time to bring about a successful production piece.

The participants will also have the opportunity to discover new ways of working and the proposed visit offers an intense professional development opportunity.

APA has been formally invited to a reciprocal visit to Regensburg by Danceworxxx in 2013. By establishing themselves with partners in the twin cities, APA will be a name that is trusted for providing high quality arts activities for young people and for fostering long lasting and meaningful relationships.

The application requests a maximum total of £7,000 to contribute towards the cost of accommodation and subsistence. Regensburg Council will cover the costs of flights and transport for the young people from Regensburg. The Regensburg participants will provide workshops to the local people of Aberdeen in order to achieve best value from the experience. The young people of Aberdeen will undertake fund-raising activities and sponsored events. A break-down of costs has been given below.

<b>Expenditure</b>	
Flights and Travel	£3,330
Accommodation	£6,050
Staffing	£4,720
Subsistence	£2,350
Production	£750
Rehearsal Space	£800
Venue and Technical Costs	£900
<b>Total</b>	<b>£18,900</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Estimated Fund-Raising	£500
Contribution by participants	£3,330
Other sources of income	£8,070
<b>Total</b>	<b>£11,900</b>
Expenditure-Income	18,900-11,900
<b>Total Applying For:</b>	<b>£7,000</b>

iv) **Contribution towards the participation of an artist and assistant from Clermont-Ferrand to participate in the Aberdeen Art Fair, 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> August 2012.**

The Aberdeen Art Fair, held at the Aberdeen Music Hall, has become an established event in Scotland's Art Calendar attracting artists and galleries from across the UK and Europe. In 2011, the Aberdeen Art Fair hosted exhibitors as far afield as Monaco, London and the twin cities Stavanger



and Regensburg. These two twin cities were chosen due to their rich cultural history, their strong artistic reputation and the well established links with Aberdeen.

An artist and their assistant from Clermont-Ferrand have been invited to this year's Aberdeen Art Fair 2012 given their high quality of exhibition work and their well-established reputation in the twin city. The organisers of the Aberdeen Art Fair also want to highlight the artistic talent from Aberdeen's twin cities and open opportunities for networking within Europe.

The artist and their assistant from Clermont-Ferrand will be in Aberdeen from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> August 2012. The programme of events for the visitors from Clermont Ferrand include the following activities;

- VIP Preview Evening on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 2012 which marks the launch of the Fair and comprises an audience of local dignitaries, councillors, sponsors, artists, gallerists, the media and key business people.
- 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> August are Public Open Days. Last year there were over 2,000 visitors to the Fair, and it is anticipated that in 2012 the event will attract increased number of visitors.
- Exhibitors to the Aberdeen Art Fair will be invited to a 'Meet and Greet' event held at the Music Hall on the Saturday evening. This event is sponsored by 'Artmag' magazine and will provide an opportunity for all the exhibitors to network with gallerists and artists from across the UK and Europe.

The organisers are in discussion with Robert Gordon's University so that the twin city representatives are able to present their work to the Gray School of Art students and provide an opportunity for networking and sharing of knowledge and best practice.

The organisers of the Aberdeen Art Fair want to develop a long-term partnerships with the twin cities due to the quality of art which their artists would bring to Aberdeen. There are also cultural and business benefits that are brought about by networking between the artists from the twin cities, and the businesses and public attending the event.

The application requests a maximum of £2,180 to cover the costs for an exhibition stand at the Aberdeen Art Fair and for the cost of accommodation and food for the participants. It is still to be confirmed if an assistant will be accompanying the artist which is why up to a maximum of £2,180 has been requested. Clermont-Ferrand will pay for the transport of the participating artist and assistant. In 2013 Clermont-Ferrand will play

host to Aberdeen representatives who are participating in their annual 'Court du Métrage Festival', an international short film festival.

**v) Contribution towards the participation of a team from Stavanger in the Denis Law Tournament, 15<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> July 2012.**

The Denis Law Tournament 2012 is open to Under 14 and Under 16 Boys, and has already secured teams from the US and England as well as top Scottish Premier League teams in Scotland. In 2011, the Denis Law Tournament was only open to Under 16 teams; therefore the organisers are developing the Denis Law Tournament 2012 into a bigger football event enveloping a greater number of players, audience numbers and talent.

The tournament will engage the local community and businesses with a week long festival of football culminating in the elite tournament finals. With football at the heart of the tournament, Aberdeen Sports Village (ASV) aims to generate a 'festival feel' by providing community events such as 4 v 4's for primary school children, corporate 7's, street football opportunities for spectators as well as the opportunity to watch teams from across the globe compete to win the title and Denis Law Tournament Trophy. The addition of more community based events will encourage local people of all ages and social backgrounds to participate and feel part of the event.

The aim of the Festival is to turn a traditional football tournament into an innovative, inclusive event which captures the imagination of the people of Aberdeen and attracts new visitors to the City. The event will be publicised in local and national media and aims to unite local, national and international young people.

Aberdeen Sports Village wants to maintain the international element of the football competition in Aberdeen as the event aims to showcase the unique attractions of Aberdeen and Scotland by encouraging teams from across the globe to take part in the tournament. It is therefore fitting that a twin city is represented at the inaugural football tournament.

The organisers want to ensure that the young people are connected, have international exposure and to provide them with the opportunity to compete, make friends and have fun. During the event it will promote practicing sport, showcase the unique sporting facilities at ASV and encourage healthy lifestyles. The football coaches will have the opportunity to attend workshops to share knowledge and best practice, and learn new ways to improve the coaching and training of the young people.

Stavanger has close connections with Aberdeen and in 2011 Stavanger invited Aberdeen football teams to take part in their annual football tournament. Aberdeen Sports Village wants to continue and develop this positive relationship by reciprocating the gesture. This is why Stavanger was chosen to participate in the Denis Law Tournament 2012. The Stavanger team, Vardeneset BK, was specifically chosen based the fact that they are a high performing team, therefore are capable of competing with the other participating teams and are part of the league table in Stavanger. The Stavanger team will share a sporting and cultural experience with the other international and national young players. The local people who attend the Tournament and the local young players will also get the opportunity to learn and forge an understanding of other nationalities and cultures.

Aberdeen Sports Village has undertaken a number of fund-raising initiatives and plans to hold a Fund Raising Dinner and Auction in order to help fund the overall cost of hosting the event. They are also actively seeking private sponsorship and will continue to do so in the run-up to the tournament. These fund-raising efforts will assist with the costs of running the whole event. The team from Stavanger will be undertaking fund-raising efforts also to support the cost of their visit to Aberdeen.

An application was previously submitted by the Denis Law Tournament organisers for the participation of two teams from Clermont-Ferrand and was considered at the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2012, however the teams from Clermont-Ferrand are no longer able to participate in the Tournament in 2012. No monies from the International Twinning Budget therefore have been spent as yet, on the Denis Law Tournament 2012.

The application requests a total of £6,950 to contribute towards the cost of transport whilst in Aberdeen, accommodation (full board in Halls of Residence), Tournament Registration Fee and transfer to and from Aberdeen Airport. The Stavanger group and Stavanger City Council will be covering the costs for the flights and travel insurance. Fund-raising efforts by Aberdeen Sports Village will also be contributed towards the Stavanger team visit.

<b>Expenditure</b>	
Flights	£7,400
Transport	£600
Accommodation	£6,000
Tournament Registration Fee	£350
Travel Insurance	£500
<b>Total</b>	<b>£14,850</b>

<b>Income</b>	
Estimated Fund-Raising	£1,025
Contribution by Stavanger Council	£2,180
Contribution by participants	£4,695
<b>Total</b>	<b>£7,900</b>
Expenditure-Income	14,850-7,900
<b>Total Applying For:</b>	<b>£6,950</b>

vi) **Contribution towards sending a loan exhibition from Gordon Highlanders Museum to the Regional Gomel Military Museum, 7<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012.**

The Gordon Highlanders Museum in Aberdeen aims to preserve and share the legacy of the world-famous Gordon Highlanders for future generations. A twinning link was established between the Gordon Highlanders Museum and the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory in 2008 when low-levels of co-operation began. In February 2010, a major exhibition, '*Gomel: A Belarusian Town At War*' opened at the Gordon Highlanders Museum, the contents of which had been loaned from the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory. This exhibition held artefacts from the Second World War which had never been viewed before outside Belarus. It was an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view the subject and a chance for the local people of Aberdeen to find out more about their twin city.

The Gordon Highlanders Museum is sending objects to the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory for a major new exhibition in Gomel titled, '*Highlanders in Afghanistan, Then & Now*' which will detail The Gordon Highlanders in Afghanistan in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and current operations in Afghanistan from the perspective of The Highlanders (4SCOTS). An exhibition of this kind has not been done before in Belarus. The exhibition in Gomel will open the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and the Curator of the Gordon Highlanders Museum has been formally invited to open the exhibition by the Director of the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory.

The loan exhibition from 2010, '*Gomel: A Belarusian Town at War*' has been entered into a Belarusian museums competition, '*Intermuseum*' by the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory. The curator of The Gordon Highlanders Museum has been invited to attend the competition as representative of The Gordon Highlanders Museum. If the Gomel Regional Military Museum is successful, it will mark a major milestone in the cultural relationship between Aberdeen and Gomel.

One of the anticipated outcomes and long-term benefits of this twinning activity will be promoting the military history of The Gordon Highlanders which is Aberdeen's legendary regiment. Their history will be prominently displayed in Gomel, allowing the population of Gomel and visitors to the city to appreciate the legacy of the Regiment associated with their twin city of Aberdeen. The exhibition will also give visitors to the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory an unprecedented view of current operations in Afghanistan from the Scottish perspective of 4SCOTS, a view which otherwise they would have no chance of seeing.

The twinning project would strengthen the relationship and cultural ties between The Gordon Highlanders Museum and the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory. Future collaborations are being explored currently for 2013 where The Gordon Highlanders Museum will host a mini-exhibition about the experiences of veterans living in Gomel who served in the Soviet Armed Forces in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

The exhibition would also promote and encourage increased partnership and understanding between veteran's organisations in Aberdeen and Gomel which will promote the social links between the two twin cities.

Jesper Ericsson, Curator of The Gordon Highlanders Museum, has provided a more detailed outline of the twinning projects with the Gomel Military Museum. Please see Annex 1.

The application requests a total of £1,000 towards the loan exhibition and sending the curator of The Gordon Highlanders Museum to Gomel. The total cost of the trip is £1,895.70. The Gordon Highlanders Museum is financing the transportation of items to Gomel. The Gomel Regional Military Museum will be covering the costs for the planning, preparation and mounting of the exhibition, all travel costs within Belarus, accommodation during the '*Intermuseum*' competition period and shipping the loan items back to Aberdeen. A higher amount of funding has been requested by the Gordon Highlanders Museum given that they are an independent, self-financed Museum governed by a charitable Trust and Gomel City is not able to contribute as much financially.

## 6. IMPACT

The use of the International Twinning Budget to support international activity links closely to several of the Community Plan Challenges for example Learning; Arts, Heritage and Sport, Aberdeen's Image; Getting Involved; Being Informed and Leading the City. Many of the recommendations for projects in this report create a positive image of Aberdeen internationally and provide local communities an opportunity to

learn from others, to participate in various, exciting events and to increase local pride in our city.

In the policy statement “Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking”, the Council sets out how it aims to make Aberdeen a better living place to live and work. Promoting and supporting international exchanges, involving various communities of interest contributes to this aim and to the actions of the Single Outcome Agreement. The outlined twinning projects also align with the cultural strategy vision as it allows for improved communication of cultural opportunities, helps with changing the perception of the city, to develop a stronger cultural identity and to have increased levels of effective partnership working.

Aberdeen’s twin city partnership initiatives:

- Foster international understanding and friendship and an appreciation of cultural diversity
- Provide Aberdeen’s citizens with an awareness of, and insight into, international issues and perspectives and their impact on Aberdeen and Scotland
- Promote the image and raise the profile of the city overseas; and
- Provide a forum for the exchange of knowledge, expertise, skills, ideas and best practice in any given field.

Opportunities for groups, communities and organisations to access twin city projects and exchanges and for possible sources of funding are advertised through the Council’s website, press releases, school circulars where appropriate and the Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations e-bulletin.

Human Rights, Equalities and Diversity: Aberdeen City Council has in place a range of statutory and discretionary plans, schemes and policies to promote equality. Officers endeavour to target groups and communities which have not previously had experience of international visits or exchanges, or have been under-represented in twin city activities. Applicants complete an equal opportunities monitoring form as part of the application process.

## 7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Annex 1 attached.

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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## ACCOMPANYING REPORT FOR GRANT APPLICATION

JESPER ERICSSON  
CURATOR  
THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS MUSEUM

MARCH 2012

In 2008, low-level co-operations between The Gordon Highlanders Museum and the newly established Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory were initiated by Pavel Zhdanovich, Director of the Gomel Museum, with the assistance of Elaine Robertson, Aberdeen City Council, and Sarah Malone, then Executive Director of The Gordon Highlanders Museum. A small selection of loan items was sent to add to a Second World War-themed exhibition at the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory. The loan items were returned after three months.

In December 2008, Jesper Ericsson became Curator of The Gordon Highlanders Museum. One of his first jobs was to receive these returning loan items. In 2009, he approached Aberdeen City Council with the idea of mounting a major exhibition at The Gordon Highlanders Museum about what happened to Gomel during the Second World War, a subject that had never been explored or displayed in Aberdeen before. Working together with Elaine Robertson and Nicolas Ellison, the idea was explored and in June 2010, Jesper Ericsson and Nicolas Ellison travelled to Gomel to formalise the relationship between The Gordon Highlanders Museum and the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory, and to plan for the upcoming exhibition in Aberdeen.

In February 2011, *'Gomel: A Belarusian Town at War'* opened at The Gordon Highlanders Museum. Pavel Zhdanovich and a small party of veterans travelled to Aberdeen to formally open the exhibition. *'Gomel: A Belarusian Town at War'* was a ground-breaking exhibition, which allowed everyone, from every level of society and backgrounds in Aberdeen, to find out about their twin city. For the first time, the plight of Gomel was told in the West. Also, objects were loaned from Gomel which had never, ever been seen outside Belarus before.

The exhibition ran from February to June 2011, which also took in the momentous 70th anniversary of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Additionally, *'Gomel: A Belarusian Town at War'* was the first exhibition ever in the UK to explore a twin town's wartime story in such depth and detail. No such exhibition about the Eastern Front in the Second World War has ever been mounted in another city in the UK, not even at the Imperial War Museum or National Army Museum in London.



During the run of the exhibition, information highlighting the twinning and leaflets promoting the Friends of Gomel were prominently displayed. At the end of the exhibition, framed posters, which had been on display, were raffled off, with the proceeds going to the Friends of Gomel.

Also, in June 2011, Jesper Ericsson gave a talk on '*Gomel: A Belarusian Town at War*' at the Scotland-Russia Institute in Edinburgh, further highlighting the twinning.

After the exhibition opening, discussions were held about trying to form a link between veterans' organisations in Aberdeen and Gomel. With information provided by The Gordon Highlanders Museum, veterans in Gomel have since contacted and formed a relationship with the charity Erskine.

The Gordon Highlanders Museum also provided contact information to a school in Gomel for them to potentially establish links with schools in Aberdeen. On another educational front, The Gordon Highlanders Museum worked with the SLOVO Saturday School in Aberdeen, designing and facilitating a special workshop for the pupils which incorporated *Gomel: A Belarusian Town at War*.

Additionally, an agreement on future co-operations between The Gordon Highlanders Museum and the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory was signed. The first result of this is directly relevant to this grant application.

This summer, The Gordon Highlanders Museum is sending objects to the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory for a major new exhibition in Gomel, titled '*Highlanders in Afghanistan, Then & Now*'.

This exhibition will detail The Gordon Highlanders in Afghanistan in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and current operations in Afghanistan from the perspective of The Highlanders (4SCOTS). An exhibition of this nature has never been seen in Belarus before. For the first time, the people of Gomel will discover the full Regimental story of The Gordon Highlanders, with particular detail on their involvement in the Second Afghan War (1878 – 1880) and operations on the North West Frontier in the 1890's. Also for the first time, the people of Gomel will discover the story of The Highlanders (4SCOTS) in Afghanistan in recent years. What will be particularly poignant is that Gomel is home to many veterans of the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan in the 1980's.

'*Highlanders in Afghanistan, Then & Now*' is due to open in Gomel on 9 October 2012 and Jesper Ericsson has been invited by Pavel Zhdanovich to formally open the exhibition and meet with veterans.

Additionally, '*Gomel: A Belarusian Town at War*', the exhibition displayed at The Gordon Highlanders Museum in 2011, has been entered into a prominent Belarusian museums competition, '*Intermuseum*' by the Gomel Regional

Museum of Military Glory. As part of this prestigious Museums competition, Jesper Ericsson, as a representative of The Gordon Highlanders Museum and Aberdeen, has been invited to attend to support the Gomel bid.

The Gordon Highlanders Museum is an independent charity, receiving no funding from either the Scottish Executive or the Ministry of Defence, and is entirely self-funded through Museum admissions, our Tea Room and hospitality events amongst other incomes. As such, we would be entirely dependant on a successful application of grant funding to be able to fulfil this kind invitation from the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory to travel to Belarus.

If the grant application is successful, both before he travels to Gomel and after he returns, Jesper Ericsson intends to highlight the twinning and co-operations between The Gordon Highlanders Museum and the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory through the local and national press. Also upon his return, he will undertake a series of talks to community groups to further draw attention to the twinning and raise public awareness of it, thereby gaining new audiences for both twinning and Museum projects.

*'Highlanders in Afghanistan, Then & Now'* will also help to promote and encourage increased partnership and understanding between veteran's organisations in Aberdeen and Gomel, something which is already underway through the charity Erskine. This will in turn promote social links between the two cities.

The next planned co-operation between The Gordon Highlanders Museum and the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory will take place in 2013. Next year, The Gordon Highlanders Museum will host a mini-exhibition of loan items from the Gomel Regional Museum of Military Glory on the Soviet experience of Afghanistan in the 1980's, with particular reference to veterans currently living in Gomel and their stories. This will be an opportunity to tell their story for the first time in the West, and an incredible chance for the people of Aberdeen to find out about what veterans from their twin city went through in comparison with current UK operations in the same country. Hopefully Afghan veterans will be able to travel from Gomel to Aberdeen for the exhibition launch and meet with veterans groups in Aberdeen, as well as meet current serving or recently retired members of the Armed Forces who have served in Afghanistan.

After 2013, there is boundless opportunity for future co-operations, which will only strengthen the twinning between Aberdeen and Gomel, raise awareness of the twinning across social and ethnic groups living here and gain new audiences for both twinning and the Museum. For example, major military anniversaries are fast approaching, for example the centenary of the First World War in 2014 and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE / VJ days in 2015. These will be discussed in due course on a museums level by Jesper Ericsson and Pavel Zhdanovich.