

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee

DATE 20 April 2010

CORPORATE DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh
Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure

TITLE OF REPORT Links with Nagasaki

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/10/076

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to recommend an appropriate response to the request from Nagasaki to consider “forming a Citizens’ Friendship City link-up – a way of forming free and relaxed relationships between cities, with citizens and citizens’ groups as the main actors and without the formality of a sister city link-up”.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1 Agree to form a Citizens’ Friendship City link-up with Nagasaki
- 2 Instruct the International Strategist to work with interested parties to create an action plan to put the link into practice
- 3 Agree to continue using the criteria listed in section 6 to consider such requests in future, pending a review of international partnerships in 2010

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no budget available to directly support the Citizens’ Friendship City link-up. However, a limited amount of officer time on the part of the International Strategist and/or the International Partnerships Officer can be made available to support interested parties to develop links and, where possible, support projects that attract external funding support.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

Impact on the service of this proposal will be limited to the use of officer time. It is intended that the proposal, if approved, would impact positively on communities in Aberdeen, by providing opportunities for local people to learn about Japanese culture and society and in particular Nagasaki's historic trading links with Aberdeen and the north-east.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Health and Safety: None

Risk Management: The risk of declining the request from Nagasaki would potentially damage the existing friendship and links between people and organisations in both cities.

Human Rights, Equalities and Diversity: An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment would be undertaken on any action plan to develop links between the two cities.

6. REPORT

This report has been produced in response to the request from Nagasaki to consider "forming a Citizens' Friendship City link-up – a way of forming free and relaxed relationships between cities, with citizens and citizens' groups as the main actors and without the formality of a sister city link-up".

Background to Nagasaki's request

Nagasaki's international affairs section states:

"Nagasaki City has sister-city link-ups with six cities around the world, based on historical relations with those cities. This is amongst the highest number of link-ups for a city of our size (450,000 people).

Sister Cities conduct exchange not just in a specific field but across a wide range, against the backdrop of a shared history and culture. However in recent years these kinds of link-ups have not been increasing much in Japan. Instead, new kinds of inter-city link-ups have been on the rise.

In our city also, as part of the 'Nagasaki City Internationalization Promotion Plan,' we are engaged in free and informal citizens' friendship city link-ups, focusing on citizens' groups, outside the formality of a sister city link-up.

In the future, with the aim of developing our historic city as a site of international cultural tourism, we will continue to promote Citizens' Friendship City link-ups. We wish to link up with cities that have connections to Nagasaki across a wide range of fields, such as history, culture and economics. Based on such

connections, we aim to promote exchange and friendship between the people of both cities, contributing to the internationalization of Nagasaki.”

Current context for twinning in Aberdeen

The current Aberdeen City Council policy is that it will not form any new twin city relationships unless increased resources are made available. This is to avoid diluting the activity currently undertaken with Aberdeen’s existing five twin cities and supported financially through the Common Good Fund.

While a formal twinning cannot take place, there are nevertheless many other, informal and formal ways to link with other international cities and regions, for example through European-funded transnational programmes, exchanges of good practice, school links etc.

There are only two known twinings between Scotland and Japan – between Edinburgh and Kyoto and between East Dunbartonshire and Yoichi.

Current links between Aberdeen and Nagasaki

The main basis for links between Aberdeen and Nagasaki is the historic connection involving Thomas Blake Glover. Many of the existing links between Aberdeen and Nagasaki focus on this important part of the cities’ joint heritage, such as the work of the Grampian Japan Trust (which has links with Mitsubishi, which is headquartered in Nagasaki) and the scholarship exchange supported by the Rotary Clubs of Aberdeen Balgownie, Fraserburgh and Aberdeen and the University of Aberdeen.

Recent events have included a seminar on Doing Business in Japan at The Robert Gordon University and the Land of the Samurai exhibition at Aberdeen Art Gallery.

There are historical and other links between the wider North East of Scotland and Japan, with Scots bringing innovations to the latter.

Opportunities for future links

A number of actions (suggested below) could be undertaken to support the development of the relationship between the two cities, and these would require consultation with the relevant bodies.

1. Possible extension of Glover scholarship

Consideration could be given to whether there is scope to extend the Glover scholarship. Early discussion would be required with the Rotary Clubs and the

University of Aberdeen to ascertain if they were willing to explore this in principle, and the corresponding funding implications.

2. Promote Nagasaki and Japan on GLOW

Information on the City of Nagasaki and Japan as a whole, and their connections with Aberdeen, could be uploaded onto GLOW – the national intranet for schools. This could provide useful resources for teachers (materials are available to download from the Japan Society) and stimulate inter-school links. The Curriculum for Excellence specifically refers to young people “developing a knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland’s place in it”.

3. A season of Japanese films at the Belmont

The Japan Foundation provides financial assistance towards international film festivals, art festivals and screenings of special series of Japanese films. A season of Japanese films could be a valuable part of a package of measures to promote Aberdeen-Japanese links.

4. Festivals and Events

Information on key events and festivals in Aberdeen, such as the Aberdeen International Youth Festival and the Aberdeen International Football Festival among others, could be passed to Nagasaki to circulate among their local population in an effort to stimulate participation by Japanese groups in some of Aberdeen’s most popular and prestigious events.

5. Promote the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Programme to young Aberdonians

The 22 year old JET programme is aimed at promoting grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations. In 2009, the programme welcomed 4682 participants from 38 countries, of whom only 440 were from the UK and even this figure is in decline. Raising awareness of the programme among local young people may encourage them to apply for this well-established and highly-regarded programme.

6. Ask the universities to consider opportunities for strengthened links with Nagasaki.

7. There may be opportunities to host reciprocal arts and cultural events in both cities, perhaps including showcasing works of art and art forms in respective art galleries, museums and cultural venues.

Both universities already have good connections with Japan and it would be useful to know if they have any particular plans to strengthen links, for example, through research, exchanges etc.

Staffing and budget implications

The ability to deliver activities that will enhance the relationship between Aberdeen and Nagasaki will depend to a considerable extent on the availability of staffing and budget resources in the relevant organisations.

There is no City Council budget directly available to support the link, however individual projects could apply for certain grants for which they were eligible (eg cultural grants). A limited amount of staff time could be made available from the international team to support external organisations and community groups in developing their links and activities.

There are also a few organisations that provide grants towards projects between the UK and Japan (The Japan Foundation; The Japan Society; The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation etc) and officers from the international team would undertake to support interested parties in developing appropriate projects and funding bids.

Next steps

Further to brief consultation with relevant local partner agencies, there is clear interest in principle in opportunities to develop closer active links with Nagasaki.

Therefore it is suggested that the appropriate next step would be for an officer in the international team to approach the organisations mentioned above, including the City of Nagasaki itself, to get their views on the practical aspects of developing closer links between Aberdeen and Nagasaki, with the aim of agreeing a realistic and achievable action plan.

Responding to similar requests in future

A full review of the City Council's existing international partnerships is to be carried out within the next six months and this will include a review of criteria and scoring to be applied to future requests for international partnerships. The current criteria are

- Capacity of existing budgets to resource a new partnership
- Capacity of existing staff time to resource a new partnership
- Clear objectives, common areas of interest and desired outcomes
- Socio-economic conditions including population size, geography, accessibility, trade and investment exchange potential
- Political and financial commitment from both sides

- Current level of economic and diplomatic co-operation between the UK and proposed partner country
- Identify the most appropriate type and duration of partnership agreement (for example twin city partnership, Memorandum of Understanding, one-off technical co-operation)

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None