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## **Expression of Interest for Borderlands City of Culture 2025**

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### **Report by Service Director Customer & Communities**

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## **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**26 August 2021**

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### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of a City of Culture 2025 Expression of Interest to the UK Government for the Borderlands area. To comply with bid timescales, an EOI has been submitted by SOSE on behalf of the Borderlands' five partner Local Authorities. Council's endorsement of the EOI is sought and the outcome should be known by early September. If successful considerable work will be required by officials to take a bid to the next stage by January 2022. A Council member governance structure is proposed to oversee and support the work if required from a Scottish Borders' perspective.**
- 1.2 The UK City of Culture is a UK Government programme. It is administered as a competition by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media, and Sports (DCMS). The competition has been run every four years and the current one is for the UK City of Culture 2025. For the first time, the competition is open to areas and places joining together to apply for the title to be awarded to their local area. There are three stages to the competition with the first one being the submission of an expression of interest with a decision made on a 'long list' of six in early September.
- 1.3 At the end of June 2021, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) identified the opportunity to submit a South of Scotland expression of interest for the City of Culture 2025 with the deadline for applications being 19 July 2021. Following deliberations it was considered the most effective approach was to submit a bid for the Borderlands area. This led to an expression of interest being submitted by SOSE on behalf of the five Local Authority areas of Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Borders, Carlisle City, Cumbria, and Northumberland who make up the Borderlands Partnership.
- 1.4 The bid is aligned to the theme of a Just Transition to Net Zero. By using the Borderlands region's heritage, culture and creativity, the bid will aim to create opportunities for future development and hopefully bring investment into the region. The UK Government is providing £40,000 to each bid that makes the 'long list' of six applicants for the next stage of the competition. It is considered that more resources are likely to be required in addition to this award to develop an exciting and innovative plan of cultural activities for the year that will be a key feature in the longer application required for the next stage.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

### **2.1 It is recommended that Council:**

- a) Endorses the Expression of Interest for the Borderlands to be UK City of Culture 2025 (as described in section 4) that was submitted to the UK Government by SOSE on behalf of the five local authority areas of Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Borders, Carlisle City, Cumbria and Northumberland which make up the Borderlands Partnership; and**
  
- b) Agrees that the following members:**
  - Councillor Shona Haslam;**
  - Councillor Mark Rowley;**
  - Councillor Simon Mountford;**
  - Councillor Carol Hamilton;**
  - Councillor Stuart Bell;**
  - Councillor Euan Robson; and**
  - Councillor Euan Jardine**

**as outlined in paragraph 4.6 oversee, advise, and support any further work involving the Council in the Borderlands bid for the UK City of Culture 2025**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The UK Government's City of Culture is a UK-wide programme and takes the form of a competition administered by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS). Derry/Londonderry was the inaugural UK City of Culture 2013 and the competition has been run every four years since, with Coventry as the UK City of Culture 2021.
- 3.2 It is apparent from cities that have entered the competition, even those that have not been successful in getting through the various stage in the competition such as Paisley and Dundee, have gained a lot in terms of national and internal promotion and profile, and from investments in culture, tourism and wider economic development.
- 3.3 The current competition is for the UK City of Culture 2025. For the first time, the competition is open to areas and places joining together to apply for the title to be awarded to their local area.
- 3.4 The first stage in the competition was an expression of interest to be submitted by the 19 July 2021. Six applicants will be identified for the second stage which will involve the development of a longer application and an award of £40,000 to support this work. The announcement of this 'long list' is early September 2021 and they will be asked to submit the application in January 2022. Once this is submitted a third stage will involve three shortlisted places being visited in March/April 2022 by an expert advisory panel and invited to present its plan. The panel will then submit its recommendation for the winner of UK City of Culture 2025 to DCMS Ministers and the Secretary of State for DCMS will make the final decision in May 2022.

### **4 SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

- 4.1 At the end of June 2021 the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency (SOSE) identified the opportunity to make an expression of interest for the City of Culture 2025 with the deadline for applications being 19 July 2021. Following deliberations it was considered the most effective approach to submit a bid for the Borderlands area. This led to an expression of interest being submitted by SOSE on behalf of the five local authority areas of Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Borders, Carlisle City, Cumbria and Northumberland who make up the Borderlands Partnership. The expression of interest involved the completion of an application form with a limited word count per question. A letter of support to accompany the expression of interest was submitted by each of the five Councils. There have also been letters of support for the bid from a range of other organisations across the Borderlands area.
- 4.2 The main theme of the Expression of Interest is a [Just Transition to Net Zero](#) and tackling of climate change and promoting bio-diversity. The Borderlands is a large rural area the size of Wales with a range of strong, vibrant and diverse towns, villages and communities which will make a major contribution to meeting this challenge. The transition to net zero was recognised as a major strategic theme in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.
- 4.3 The Borderlands City of Culture 2025 bid aims to contribute to a positive transformational cultural, economically and socially inclusive and environmental shift across the Borderlands area by celebrating the region's

heritage, culture and creativity, helping recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and ultimately bringing investment into its places and communities. It seeks to maximise the full potential of the region's rich natural capital, historic, scientific and cultural assets. These are under recognised nationally and internationally. It is hoped that the bid will lead to the development of a range of innovative and creative proposals based on the border connections and flows within the Borderlands area.

- 4.4 The Expression of Interest promotes the Borderlands as the right place for the City of Culture in 2025 because of its wealth of natural capital that have crafted its cultural identities and are integral to the area's economic and social development. It has talented people who contribute to, and are involved in developing and promoting its rich cultural heritage, and organising programmes of outstanding creative activities. It is also considered to be the right time for making the bid with COP26 coming to Glasgow in November 2021 as the world looks for leadership to deal with the twin issues of biodiversity loss and climate change, and the UK and Scottish Governments are committed to Net Zero.
- 4.5 The UK Government is providing £40,000 to each bid that makes it to the next stage 'long list' of six applicants of the competition. This is to be used to develop the application with a cultural programme of activities for the year together with the economic, social and environmental outcomes that will be achieved by the plan. There will likely be a need to provide more resources on top of this £40,000 award to ensure that an exciting and innovative application is completed.
- 4.6 It is considered that the Council Members of the Borderlands Members Reference Group and the South of Scotland Regional Economic Partnership i.e. Councillor Shona Haslam; Councillor Mark Rowley; Councillor Simon Mountford; Councillor Carol Hamilton; Councillor Stuart Bell and Councillor Euan Robson together with Councillor Euan Jardine the Executive portfolio holder for Well-Being, Sport and Culture oversee, advise, and support any further work involving the Council in the Borderlands bid for the UK City of Culture 2025.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

Additional financial resources from the Council are likely to be required to support the Borderlands City of Culture 2025 bid if the expression of interest is successful. These resource needs will be outlined in a further report to the Council on the subject, depending on the outcome of the bid.

### **5.2 Risk and Mitigations**

- a) The Borderlands City of Culture 2025 bid has the potential to make a significant contribution to the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of the Scottish Borders, and to assist the area in its transition to net carbon.
- b) There is reputational risk for the Council in not strongly supporting the Borderlands City of Culture 2025 bid. Scottish Borders Council has played a key role in the Borderlands Partnership and in supporting the work of the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency.

### **5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment**

Inclusive Growth and equality matters will be at the heart of the development of the Borderlands City of Culture 2025 bid.

**5.4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The Borderlands City of Culture 2025 bid has a major focus on sustainable economic growth linked to the SDG.

**5.5 Climate Change**

The Borderlands City of Culture 2025 bid is predicated on a zero carbon approach and is expected to have positive implications for reducing carbon emissions.

**5.6 Rural Proofing**

The Borderlands City of Culture 2025 bid is aimed at reaching out to both urban and rural communities across the region.

**5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

**5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There will be no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals set out in this report.

**6 CONSULTATION**

6.1 The Executive Director Finance & Regulatory, Chief Legal Officer (and Monitoring Officer), Service Director HR & Communications, Clerk to the Council, and Communications Team have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

6.2 The Corporate Management Team has been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

**Approved by**

**Jenni Craig**

**Service Director, Customer & Communities**

**Signature .....**

**Author(s)**

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**Background Papers:** None

**Previous Minute Reference:** None

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