
Expression of Interest for Borderlands City of Culture 2025

Report by Service Director Customer & Communities

SCOTTISH BORDERS COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

9 September 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to seek The Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership's endorsement of a City of Culture 2025 Expression of Interest (EOI) 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. The outcome should be known by the end of September. If successful considerable work will be required by officials to take a bid to the next stage by January 2022.**
- 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 at the end of September.
- 1.3 In late 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:

- a) The Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership 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**

- b) Scottish Borders Community Planning Partners begin to consider what they might contribute by way of time, resources and activities to the Borderlands UK City of Culture 2025 if the bid were to be successful.**

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.