



Twinning Relations 2019 Update – Working with you, for you.

Report by Provost and Depute Provost

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update in relation to twinning activities from 2019 and looking ahead to 2020.

2 Background

Midlothian has a strong history and tradition of twinning, this operates at both local and council wide levels. Midlothian Twinning Association covers Midlothian and is operated by local people with representation from Midlothian Council. The representatives are the Provost, Depute Provost, Education Representative and Chairs/Secretaries of each of the Constituent French Twin Town and Village Associations. The Midlothian Twinning Association was established by Midlothian County Council with Kreis Heinsberg and Komárom - Esztergom to help develop, sustain and support the links. Music has provided strong links within twinning and this has been strongly reflected in the activities of 2019. Local twinning groups also operate linked to the areas they are officially twinned with. Midlothian's communities have or have had links with: Kreis Heinsberg in Germany, Dalum in Denmark, Harnes, Jarnac, Saint-Cyr-l'Ecole, L'Isle sur la Sorgue, Angres in France and Komárom-Esztergom County in Hungary.

In 2019 there has been four twinning activities which the Council has supported in relation to hosting a formal visit as per the updated guidance on the level of support available from the Council. These have incurred limited expenditure mainly for catering (Elected Member Budget £316.25) and catering/transport (Provosts Budget £1,035). The Provost budget is regulated by statutory provisions which specifically refer to twinning expenditure.

Those visiting have self-funded the majority of their activities apart from one tour of the mining museum which was funded by the Provost's Budget. Midlothian Twinning Association also supported the cost of catering for key events.

The following twinning activities have taken place in 2019:

31st May 2019

Midlothian hosted a visit from Elected Members from Kreis Heinsberg



The group travelled to visit Midlothian from their self-funded Edinburgh location by train from Edinburgh to Eskbank. The group visited Dalkeith Country Park, the Mining Museum and Rosslyn Chapel. The benefits of these visits were:

- Discussions of future joint initiatives in relation to schools and cultural links.
- Midlothian Council and Kreis Heinsberg staff sharing their work experiences and approaches to equalities and education.
- Celebration and recognition of historic links and professional relationships with the Provost, Depute Provost, Landrat and twinning members.
- Promotion of Midlothian and its key tourist destinations.

29th July 2019

Danderhall Local Twinning Associated hosted French Visitors from Aller de An á Calais

The Provost and Depute Provost hosted a small group to the Provosts office and attended the reception for them in Danderhall, hosted by the local association.

The benefits of this visit was:

- A recognition to the local twinning association of their incredible efforts to host and operate a self-funded programme and in retaining the long tradition of twinning with France.
- The tourist attractions of Midlothian and surrounding areas were also highlighted to visitors.
- Twinning visitors marched in the Dalkeith Festival parade thus helping to increase cultural diversity of those in the parade.

9th August to 13th August 2019
Crichton Church and the Jünger Chor Hünshoven Choir



Midlothian hosted the visit and performance in Partnership with Crichton Church and Jünger Chor Hünshoven Choir. Midlothian Council arranged accommodation for the group which was self-funded by them at Loretto School which proved successful.

The benefits of this visit were that:

- The Choir performed as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival with associated publicity for Midlothian.
- They attracted both local people from surrounding villages, those from twinning across Midlothian and new visitors to Midlothian.
- The Choir was able to visit through financial support from the Ministry of North Rhine-Westphalia after winning a competition based on theme of Europe at home and also through self-funding.
- Frau Barbara Quick, the German Consul attended and new connections formed.

23rd August 2019
The Trommler – Pfeifer – und Franfarencorps Höngen e.V Kries Heinsberg (Wind Band first came to Midlothian in 1979)



The band were being hosted by the Borthwick Pipe band who had funded and organised their programme. They played within Dalkeith town centre and received very positive comments. The benefits were:

- Recognition of the long standing relationship and tradition.
- Entertainment for those in Dalkeith.
- Midlothian Council recognising the work of Pipe Band and their tremendous efforts in hosting and organising the programme.
- Celebration spanning 40 years.

Twinning Activity 2020

There are no formal approved plans for 2020 as yet, however there is the possibility of the following:

- A visit to Hungary self-funded possibly by a local choir.
- Potential return visit to Kreis Heinsberg.
- October / November 2020 Midlothian Band have a potential joint project with representation from Germany, Hungary and France.
- April 2020 Cascaido Choir from L'Isle sur la Sorgue who will be guests of the community choir.
- A potential for Penicuik and Borthwick Pipe Bands to visit their Partner Bands in Kreis Heinsberg.
- 60th and 40th Anniversaries with Dalkeith and Danderhall respectively.

There is further potential to develop theme based activities building on previous work, for example:

- School exchanges and youth seminars.
- Work experience and job shadowing.
- Mining museum links.
- Science and digital technology.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

Resourcing twinning, on a themed minimal level is challenging, it is important to manage expectations, avoid embarrassment whilst ensuring Midlothian is portrayed in a positive light. This has been managed by explaining to our local twinning groups our financial position and explaining to visitors in advance that the majority of the programme requires to be self-funding apart from the standard catering arrangements. Through the events in 2019 it has become clear that at times it is required to fund some basic transport arrangements for example a bus from the train station to, Dalkeith Park to Mining Museum and then to Rosslyn Chapel. The total expenditure on catering, transport and visit fees from the Council was £1351.25, it is understood that neighbouring council's spend up to £14,000.

Access to staff member to liaise with the Provost's Twinning Working group to manage risks and processes is important to ensure Midlothian

adheres to regulations and promotes the positives sensitively. The Executive Director of Place and Partnership will consider allocation of a staff member from the council to support the Twinning Working group.

When receiving invitations for Midlothian to visit it will be important to manage these sensitively. If we are expecting visitors to our authority to self-fund then we too in return would require to self-fund. This requires further thought and consideration to avoid incurring cost by the Council, by staff or Provost/Depute Provost in their formal role whilst not causing offence to those extending an invitation.

3.2 Risk

There are a number of key risks as detailed below:

- If a staff member is not allocated to manage the risks and processes the risk level increases.
- The risk of recurring reputational damage in relation to limited offers to visitors and the inability to take up invitations to visit other twinned countries.
- Reliance on the Provost budget to fund essentials out with catering for example transport around Midlothian.
- Disadvantaging those on low income from participating in visits to other countries due to self-funded basis.

3.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☒ Community Safety
- ☒ Adult Health, Care and Housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving Opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable Growth
- ☒ Business Transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

It is difficult to assess how the twinning activities have immediately contribute to the three priorities below

- Reducing the gap in learning outcomes.
- Reducing the gap in health outcomes.
- Reducing the gap in economic circumstances.

However there is longer term scope to build on links through international school learning, health and social care as well as promoting Midlothian as a tourist destination.

3.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The work in 2019 has supported performance outcomes to work together with our communities through a proportionate shared response to twinning.

3.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Working with communities on twinning can instil a sense of belong and tradition whilst increasing tolerance and understanding of other cultures.

3.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Joint work and planning has taken place with the Midlothian Twinning Association.

3.8 Ensuring Equalities

Due to the self-funded nature of future twinning visits to other countries this in itself could exclude local people on low income from participating.

3.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

Sustainable development of twinning requires further consideration for 2020. We have been informed provisionally of three to six visits which would require minimal support for example a welcome from the Council. To date we have received no official invitations to visit other countries.

3.10 IT Issues

None

4 Summary

In summary good progress has been made in 2019 to support a revised approach to twinning with minimal expenditure incurred however it is challenging to manage without causing offence due to the level of hospitality offered. Transport costs on occasion will be required to be funded by the council for travel across the authority area.

5 Recommendations

- Note the positive progress with twinning projects in 2019
- Note the successful inclusion through partnership working in the Edinburgh Festival which attracted new visitors to Midlothian.
- Note the continued joint working with local people and the twinning association.
- Note the challenge of implementing the revised approach and the need to include transport costs as a recognised expense for travel across Midlothian.
- Note the need for officer support to reduce and manage risks both practical and reputational. This may be required out of normal working hours.
- Note the provisional plans for 2020.

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