
Amberg-Sulzbach twinning arrangement

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide background information on Argyll and Bute Council's twinning arrangement with Amberg-Sulzbach, an update of the most recent official twinning visit, and propositions for strengthening the twinning arrangement in the future.
- 1.2 The twinning arrangement with Amberg-Sulzbach dates back almost 50 years when it was first ratified by Argyll County Council. It was then adopted by Argyll and Bute Council in 1996. The Council has four twinning arrangements but the arrangement with Amberg-Sulzbach is the most strategically valuable and is viewed as covering the whole of Argyll & Bute. Twinning arrangements have historically been cultural but have recently been used increasingly for economic purposes. The recent twinning visit to Amberg-Sulzbach from Argyll and Bute Council had a focus on economic growth. The delegation consisted of representatives from the Council, local businesses and the third sector.
- 1.3 The key aim of the visit was to share best practice and expertise in economic development and expose Argyll and Bute businesses to an international European market, an aim which contributes to internationalisation, one of four priorities (4 Is) in Scotland's Economic Strategy. The range of activities during the visit greatly reflected its aim. Delegates agreed that Argyll and Bute has many similarities with Amberg-Sulzbach and that both Councils could greatly benefit from strengthening the twinning arrangement.
- 1.4 Next year (2017) will mark the 50th anniversary of the twinning arrangement. It is proposed that an official delegation from Amberg-Sulzbach is invited by Argyll and Bute Council to ratify the future of the twinning arrangement with a focus on pre-agreed themes.
- 1.5 Members are asked to:
 - Note the content of this paper
 - Note the similarities between Argyll and Bute and Amberg-Sulzbach and the invaluable shared knowledge and experience.
 - Endorse and comment on the proposed strengthening of the twinning arrangement with Amberg-Sulzbach
 - Agree that a small delegation from Amberg-Sulzbach be invited to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the twinning arrangement in Argyll and Bute.
 - Agree that this will be funded through the existing twinning budget and supplemented by a one-off allocation of up to a maximum of £10k from the earmarked balances no longer required as outlined in the Reserves and

Balances August 2016 update report (para 3.3.3).

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The twinning arrangement with Amberg-Sulzbach was signed in June 1967 by Argyll County Council which was in existence from 1890 to 1975. From 1975 to 1996 the Argyll and Bute District Council was responsible for the twinning arrangement with Amberg-Sulzbach. In 1996, this two-tier system of local government was replaced by a system of unitary authorities, whereupon the extant Argyll and Bute Council adopted the twinning arrangement with Amberg-Sulzbach.
- 2.2 In the intervening 20 years, there have been occasions when visits have taken place such as ongoing visits by Youth Services and visits involving schools and music bands that have maintained a very active and positive relationship between the two areas.
- 2.3 The initial purpose behind twinning was the cultural exchange of young people. Particularly strong were exchanges of school pupils and teachers. However, now in the modern age of cheap international travel and advanced telecommunications young people are much more exposed to foreign culture and the purpose of cultural twinning may have somewhat diminished.
- 2.3 This report outlines a twinning visit that took place on 1-5 August 2016 when a delegation from the Argyll and Bute Council area visited Amberg-Sulzbach at their invitation. The report also presents options for strengthening the twinning arrangement in anticipation of its 50th anniversary in 2017.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to:
- Note the content of this paper
 - Note the similarities between Argyll and Bute and Amberg-Sulzbach and the invaluable shared knowledge and experience.
 - Endorse and comment on the proposed strengthening of the twinning arrangement with Amberg-Sulzbach
 - Agree that a small delegation from Amberg-Sulzbach be invited to

celebrate the 50th anniversary of the twinning arrangement in Argyll and Bute.

- Agree that this will be funded through the existing twinning budget and supplemented by a one-off allocation of up to a maximum of £10k from the earmarked balances no longer required as outlined in the Reserves and Balances August 2016 update report (para 3.3.3).

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Argyll and Bute Council has twinning arrangements with the following regions

- Amberg-Sulzbach, Germany (Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands)
- Korcula, Croatia (Bute and Cowal)
- Gorey, Ireland (Oban, Lorn and the Isles)
- Thouars, France (Helensburgh and Lomond).

4.2 The most strategically valuable twinning arrangement is with Amberg-Sulzbach.

4.3 Following a visit to Argyll and Bute by a delegation from Amberg-Sulzbach in 2014, officials from Amberg-Sulzbach invited an official visit from Argyll and Bute Council. They suggested that delegates would only need to make travel arrangements to Germany and they would take care of everything else.

4.4 In recent times, twinning has increasingly been used to form strategic international business links between member regions. The Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) has identified Germany as a key priority market for Scottish companies, while Bavaria is considered the “Economic powerhouse of Europe” with Amberg-Sulzbach being a “rising star in Bavaria’s economy” with a particularly resilient and successful manufacturing industry.

4.5 Recently the value in creation and transformation of twinning arrangements has been recognised, with the launch of a brand new domestic initiative to create twinning arrangements to share advanced ways of delivering growth, matching areas with similar characteristics and facing comparable challenges. As publicised and highlighted on the 10th of October 2016 within the [Scotsman](#) and on [Carnegie UK Trust](#) website.

4.6 Internationalisation is one of the four priority areas in Scotland’s Economic Strategy: “Scottish economic success will be realised through strengthening our links with the global economy and the opportunities this brings for increasing trade, attracting investment and sharing expertise”.

4.7 Therefore the visit to Amberg-Sulzbach focused on economic growth and aimed to:

- share best practice and expertise in:
 - Economic growth of the represented sectors

- European support through the LEADER programme
- strengthen and expand Argyll and Bute's international European network
- expose business delegates to international European markets

4.8 To achieve the aims:

- Four of the delegates (out of a total of 8) represented Argyll and Bute Council's Elected Members, Economic Development, and European funding sections. These delegates were responsible for sharing best practice and expertise at local authority level with colleagues at Amberg-Sulzbach
- The four remaining delegates represented local businesses from growth sectors. These delegates were exposed to an international European market and practices in Amberg-Sulzbach that can aid the internationalisation of their businesses/sectors.

4.9 List of delegates and organisations represented:

- Cllr Aileen Morton (Policy Lead, Sustainable Economic Growth, Argyll and Bute Council)
- Fergus Murray (Head of Economic Development and Strategic Transportation, Argyll and Bute Council)
- Greg Moschonas (Economic Growth Officer, Food & Drink and Marine Science, Argyll and Bute Council)
- Colin Fulcher (Argyll and the Islands LEADER/EMFF Strategic Co-ordinator, hosted by Argyll and Bute Council as the Accountable Body)
- Janey Campbell (Auchentullich Farm, Agriculture)
- Douglas McKenzie (Xanthella, Biotechnology);
- Ross Buchanan (Tilhill Forestry, Forestry); and
- Ailsa Clark (Inspiralba, Employability/Social Enterprise).

4.10 The official visit programme (appendix 1) included:

- Tour of and official reception at the Council Headquarters in Amberg with Landrat (Chief Executive and Council Leader) Richard Reisinger. Council officers delivered presentations on the economy, tourism, environment and LEADER projects in Amberg-Sulzbach. The continuation and strengthening of the twinning arrangement featured strongly.
- Visit at the Hammermühle organic farm which is supported by LIFE+ European funding. Council officers delivered presentations on Naturpark Hirschwald (Amberg-Sulzbach's nature park), the Landscape Association and the Jura Distl (lamb, beef, apples) marketing group. The Landscape association is an equal association of farmers, foresters, politicians and conservationists and aims to:
 1. build an area-wide network of near-natural habitats for conservation of nature in all German cultural landscapes.
 2. provide a reliable additional income for the farmers in the sector of nature conservation and to support them with the marketing of local products.

3. generate impetus for an ecological orientated development of economy and an environmentally friendly land use.

- Presentation and Tour at the Fraunhofer institute of applied sciences. The institute's research focuses on production of new energy sources, protecting biodiversity, coatings and recycling. The Fraunhofer institute in Rosenberg is unique in its kind as it is located in the relatively small rural town of Sulzbach-Rosenberg.
- Presentation at Centre for renewable energy and sustainability (ZEN) at Ensdorf. The mayor of Markus Dollacker gave delegates a tour of the local wood chip district heating system, which is managed by the forestry association and the Parish Church of St. James the Apostle which is part of the popular St. James pilgrimage route.

4.11 Amberg-Sulzbach Council funded the bulk of the trip. Argyll and Bute Council was responsible for the following costs:

Airport parking	£104.97
Flights	£1,955.00
Insurance	£109.00
Additional expense cover	£340.40
Council staff travel	£165.85
Total	£2675.22

4.12 The visit was very informative and the delegates learned that Amberg-Sulzbach has many similarities with Argyll and Bute given its rural nature and history of dealing with demographic challenges. In particular, the visit focused on providing a comprehensive introduction with regard to the main characteristics of the region.

4.13 Coinciding with this visit at the beginning of August this 2016 , a group of ten young people from Oban, Bute and Helensburgh youth forums accompanied by two Youth Workers took part on a Youth Exchange project to Amberg-Sulzbach. The theme of the project was Health and Well-being and the young people participated on a full programme of workshops and activities. They explored the difference in definitions and approaches to being fit and healthy and will be producing a report highlighting the findings. The German group are due to visit in Easter of next year and it would be good to use this as part of the celebrations to celebrate the 50th Anniversary with a formal/official event marking the twinning agreement. One suggestion has been a Ceilidh involving young people from Youth Forums across Argyll and Bute with one of the many talented young Ceilidh bands performing.

4.14 From an education perspective there are several areas that could be developed as a basis for further links with the potential to share practice and learn from each other:

- Early Years
- Literacy and Numeracy

- Use of ICT (information and communications technology)
- Vocational and academic models of schooling
- Outdoor Learning
- Music, Art and Culture
- Preparation for employment

4.15 The people of Amberg-Sulzbach are keen to maintain the connections with Argyll and Bute particularly given the decision by the UK to leave the EU. They see the benefits of maintaining good relations and sharing best practice through a range of different initiatives covering civic, cultural, educational and economic themes. This region of Germany has faced a great period of industrial change in recent years which it is now recovering from and returning to growth (appendix 2). This period of growth and high employment has also come with the challenge of successfully integrating over 1,000 Syrian refugees in a community of just over 100,000 people. Their economy has modernized into a number of different sectors such as life sciences, manufacturing and tourism. Initial thoughts on beneficial projects focused on:

- The continuation of school exchanges
 - Specific trade missions
 - Exchange of professional staff in both the public and private sectors
 - Sharing of marketing material in connection with the tourism industry
- Representatives of Amberg-Sulzbach were also keen to mark the 50th anniversary of the twinning agreement by visiting Argyll and Bute in 2017.

4.16 Officials from Argyll and Bute Council and Amberg-Sulzbach preliminarily discussed the possibility to strengthen the twinning around the themes:

- Economic Growth
- Culture & Education
- Civic Activities

4.17 It is reasonable that a small delegation from Amberg-Sulzbach should be invited to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the twinning arrangement in Argyll and Bute. This would be funded through the twinning budget and an additional one-off allocation of up to a maximum of £10k from the earmarked balances no longer required.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Given the similarities between Argyll and Bute and Amberg-Sulzbach (para 4.15, appendix 2) and, by extension, the invaluable shared knowledge and experience (appendix 1), the twinning arrangement with Amberg-Sulzbach should be maintained and strengthened on the 50th anniversary of the arrangement in 2017.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1	Policy	This visit aligned with the 'internationalisation' focus included in the revised Area-based Economic Development Action Plans, 2016-2021 (drafts), the SOA Delivery Plans and Scotland's Economic Strategy.
6.2	Financial	Argyll and Bute Council has a £2,500 annual budget for the Amberg-Sulzbach twinning arrangement out of a total twinning budget of £5,000. The 50 th anniversary could be funded through the existing twinning budget and an one-off allocation of up to a maximum of £10k from the earmarked balances no longer required as outlined in the Reserves and Balances August 2016 update report (para 3.3.3)
6.3	Legal	None.
6.4	HR	None
6.5	Equalities	None.
6.6	Risk	None
6.7	Customer Services	None.

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Appendix 1 – Itinerary
 Appendix 2 – Facts about Amberg-Sulzbach

Appendix 1

Time	Event/Venue	Summary
Monday 01 August 2016		
21:15	Arrival at Munich Airport	Welcomed by twinning point of contact Harald Herrle at the airport and transferred to Hotel Sperber in Sulzbach-Rosenberg by mini-bus.
Tuesday 02 August 2016		
09:30	Official Council meeting	Welcomed by Amberg-Sulzbach Council Leader and Chief Executive Richard Reisinger at the Council Headquarters in Amberg. A tour of the premises was followed by official introductions, gift exchange and buffet lunch in Council Chambers.
14:00	Project “growing old at home” showroom presentation	Presentation by officers of project “growing old at home” and tour of the dedicated showroom in company Standecker.
15:30	Culture Barn Elbart	Tour of a refurbished barn which is now used as a venue for cultural events and as a snapz distillery.
18:00	Leisure Park Monte Kaolino	Visit to a kaolinite (china clay) dumping site which has been converted to a leisure park with activities including sand boarding, swimming and high wire. Meeting with the Council-organised youth delegation.
Wednesday 03 August 2016		
09:30	Regens-Wagner-Stiftung	Visit to the social company Regens-Wagner which houses young people with different levels of disability. A tour of the premises was followed by a lunch and Q&A with some of the residents.
13:00	Fraunhofer UMSICHT	Presentation and Tour at the Fraunhofer institute of applied sciences. The institute’s research is focused on production of new energy sources, protecting biodiversity, coatings and recycling.
15:00	LEADER promoted projects	Visit and tour at restored synagogue that has been converted into a museum. Introduction to former mayor of Sulzbach-Rosenberg. Visit and demonstration at Seidelsche Druckerei, a historical printing shop that has been converted into an events venue.
18:00	Sperber brewery	Tour of the craft brewery Sperber.
19:30	Official Dinner	Official dinner with Richard Reisinger, Councillors, town mayors and educators involved in the twinning. Discussion on the future of the twinning arrangement.
Thursday 04 August 2016		

09:30	Hammermühle organic farm	Tour of organic farm supported by LIFE+ European funding. Presentations from Naturpark Hirschwald (Amberg-Sulzbach's nature park), Landscape association and Jura Distl (lamb, beef, apples) marketing group.
13:00	Bat sanctuary	Presentation and tour at horseshoe bat sanctuary supported by LIFE+.
15:00	Centre for renewable energy and sustainability (ZEN)	Presentation at Centre for renewable energy and sustainability (ZEN). Introduction to Ensdorf mayor Markus Dollacker. Tour of wood chip district heating system and Parish Church of St. James the Apostle which is part of the St. James pilgrimage route.
Friday 05 August 2016		
10:00	Official breakfast	Official breakfast (traditional Bavarian cuisine) with Richard Reisinger and Amberg-Sulzbach officials followed by a review of the visit and discussion on the future of the twinning.
19:00	Transfer to and departure from Munich airport	End of a successful twinning visit

Appendix 2

Example facts about Amberg-Sulzbach	
Similarities with Argyll and Bute	
Population	Population of about 100,000. It experienced population decline up until recently which has now stopped and is set to reverse.
Economic Sectors	<p>The food & drink sector focuses on high quality craft beer and schnapps as well as small diversified farms with a preference for organic farming. In collaboration with businesses, it has developed the marketing group Jura Distl (Jura Thistle) which includes local lamb, beef and apples. This is similar to the Argyll Hill Lamb initiative which is supported by Argyll and Bute Council.</p> <p>It is developing its tourism sector, which is not as strong as in Argyll and Bute. However, it successfully attracts business tourism in collaboration with the nearby city of Nuremberg. Moreover, it holds more than 120 festivals every year.</p>
Employment	It has a low unemployment rate of 2.8 %. However, this has resulted in a low number of skilled job seekers, which discourages businesses from settling in the region. In response, the focus is now on vocational apprenticeships, similar to modern apprenticeships in Scotland, to provide young people with the required skills to find employment in the region.
Environment	<p>Its economy is highly dependent on its natural environment and resources.</p> <p>Renewable energy is at the heart of environmental and economic progress. Solar, wind, hydro and biomass power schemes are present throughout the district. The Centre for Renewable Energy and Sustainability (ZEN) presently focuses on increasing the uptake of electric cars by the public.</p>
Differences & learning opportunities	
Economic Sectors	The closure of the steel works at Max Foundry in Sulzbach-Rosenberg in the late 80's-early 90's was a significant hit to its manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector has since recovered and now accounts for almost 40 % of employment there. In comparison, manufacturing accounts for 5.1 % of employment in Argyll and Bute.
Environment	It has an efficient waste management and recycling system which realises profit for the Council.

Environment & Planning	A landscape association has been formed to bring together stakeholders and help them make informed planning decisions. The focal points of the landscape association are conservation of biodiversity and support to farmers.