
CIVIC HONOURS AND UK CITY of CULTURE COMPETITION

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Queen is celebrating 70 years on the throne in 2022 which will be her platinum jubilee. To mark this unique occasion the UK Government has launched a number of rare civic competitions including, 'city status' and 'Lord Mayor or Lord Provost status', for a number of worthy towns and cities located in the United Kingdom, a Crown Dependency or Overseas Territory.
- 1.2 The UK Government also launched at the same time a competition for a new UK City of Culture that will take place in 2025 with a further round in 2029.
- 1.3 This report therefore considers the possibility of entering into these competitions with a recommendation contained in the report that the council enters one of our main towns Oban into the City status competition and further examine the possibility of entering the UK City of Culture competition in 2029.
- 1.4 It is recommended that the Council:
- Consider the contents of this report and approve the submission of an application for City status for Oban and look to prepare a further application for UK City of Culture status in 2029.

CIVIC HONOURS AND UK CITY of CULTURE COMPETITION

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the Queen is celebrating 70 years on the throne in 2022 which will be her platinum jubilee. To mark this unique occasion the UK Government has launched a number of rare civic competitions including, 'city status' and 'Lord Mayor or Lord Provost status', for a number of worthy towns and cities located in the United Kingdom, a Crown Dependency or Overseas Territory.
- 2.2 The UK Government also launched at the same time a competition for a new UK City of Culture that will take place in 2025 with a further round in 2029. For the first time this competition can be entered by a place rather than restricted to a city which allows Argyll and Bute to also consider if they wish to enter this competition for the first time.
- 2.3 This report therefore considers the possibility of entering into these competitions with a recommendation contained in the report that the council enters one of our main towns Oban into the City status competition and further examine the possibility of entering the UK City of Culture competition in 2029 given that is now open to places (for example, the whole of Argyll and Bute) and not confined to cities.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council:
- Consider the contents of this report and approve the submission of an application for City status for Oban and look to prepare a further application for UK City of Culture status in 2029.

4.0 DETAILS

- 4.1 The UK Government has launched a series of competitions to help celebrate the platinum anniversary of the Queen on the throne of the UK and also to assist the recovery of the UK economy following the negative impacts of the global pandemic.

- 4.2 The competitions include a call for new cities, Lord Mayor or Lord Provost Status for existing cities, and also additional rounds of UK City of Culture Status in 2025 and also in 2029. Argyll and Bute is currently eligible to enter both the city status competition and the UK City of Culture status in 2025 and/or 2029 as this competition is for the first time open to a place (the whole of Argyll and Bute for example) and not restricted to existing cities.

BENEFITS of CITY STATUS

- 4.3 The definition of a city in the UK is a place which has been granted city status by the monarch. There are currently seven cities in Scotland meeting this definition with Perth being the latest city declared. It is important to recognise that size is not an issue to be declared a city with the smallest city in the UK being St David's in Wales having a population of only 1,600 people.
- 4.4 Whilst the principal benefit is simply the status of being a City, newly created Cities tend to outperform other areas in terms of economic performance through increased investment, increasing population and additional employment opportunities. This can be clearly seen in Inverness which dominates growth in the Highlands and Islands. Research has also found that civic pride can be boosted with city status with additional cultural and creative opportunities.
- 4.5 The application process has been deliberately kept simple by the UK Government to keep costs down to a minimum for Local Authorities to enter. The deadline for submissions is the 8th of December 2021 and a link to the application form is embedded in this report.

[Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition - Application form](#)

WHY OBAN?

- 4.6 Argyll and Bute has five Main Towns that could all be considered for being submitted for City Status. Whilst all of our towns have their own individual merits it is considered at this particular time that the town of Oban offers the best opportunity for Argyll and Bute to achieve City status in this round particularly given the published criteria issued by the UK Government.
- 4.7 In particular the town of Oban can offer the following attributes:-
- The town occupies a strategically important position on the west coast of the Highlands and Islands region independent of other cities;
 - A growing population with an expanding and diversifying economy;
 - It has 2 cathedrals;
 - It is a key transport hub as one of the busiest ferry ports in the UK with good road, rail, active travel and air links;
 - It is an important tourist hub with its population boosted from 8.5k to 25k during peak summer periods;
 - It is an established gateway to a number of our island communities;

- It is recognised as the seafood capital of Scotland;
- It is a University Town with in excess of 1,000 students including the world renowned SAMs marine institute;
- It is a centre of Gaelic culture, including home of the National MOD that has Royal status;
- It has played an important role in the history of the nation from the Bronze Age to the Second World War.

4.8 Given all of the above factors it is considered that the council look to work with our key partners, including the community of Oban, to submit an application in December for City status. The competition has been designed to be cost effective to enter with a simple application form. HIE have already expressed a willingness to assist the council make the application as competitive as possible. It is considered by entering the competition this has the potential to raise the profile of Oban, Lorn and wider Argyll and Bute to a wider audience and it will also help us better understand the unique appeal of the town and its infrastructure needs.

4.9 Another major consideration was for the council to enter the **UK City of Culture Competition** as announced by the UK Government working with the devolved administrations. A link to the application process for the completion is embedded within this report.

[Search for the next UK City of Culture launched - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Applications are encouraged from towns and cities across the UK with the winner succeeding Coventry the current UK City of Culture 2021. The competition, delivered by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in collaboration with the devolved administrations, will use culture as a catalyst for levelling up areas outside London and put culture at the heart of their plans to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

4.10 For the first time, groups of towns will now be able to join together and apply for the title to be awarded to their local area - widening the scope of which areas of the country could benefit. Towns and cities are required to articulate a strong and unique vision for their future growth, celebrating local heritage and using culture to bring communities together, build a sense of place and inspire local pride. Bidders will also be asked to demonstrate how investment in culture and creativity will drive growth, how they will open up access to culture and to develop partnerships and celebrate links with places across the UK.

4.11 Bidding for the title in its own right can have a hugely positive impact on a place - helping to bring partners together and develop strategic cultural leadership. To encourage as many places as possible across the UK to bid and to benefit from the UK City of Culture process, DCMS will offer funding of up to £40,000 to up to six longlisted places to help develop their applications. Bids for the 2025 title will be assessed by an independent panel include representatives for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. It will visit each of the shortlisted cities, to be announced later this year, before each city

or town makes a final pitch to become the next UK City of Culture in 2025. The winning city or towns will be announced in Spring 2022.

- 4.12 It is to be noted that the deadline for the Expression of Interest for UK City of Culture 2025 is closed. Consequently, the report recommends that the council explores the possibility of preparing for a possible bid in 2029 working with all relevant partners.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The UK Government has launched a number of rare civic competitions to help celebrate the Queen's platinum jubilee that will take place in 2022. Argyll and Bute is able to submit an application for City Status for one of its Main Towns. It is therefore considered that Oban offers the best opportunity for success with a deadline for an application by the 8th of December of this year. It is hoped that this application can be assisted by HIE.

- 5.2 The UK Government, working with the devolved administrations, have also launched a new UK City of Culture competition for 2025 with a further round scheduled for 2029. Given the considerable resources required to submit an application it is considered that the council work with other key partners to look at the possibility of preparing a bid for City of Culture status in 2029.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 **Policy** - None arising from this report.

- 6.2 **Financial** - None arising from this report

- 6.3 **Legal** - No legal issues

- 6.4 **HR** - This will need to be resourced from existing staff.

- 6.5 **Fairer Scotland Duty:**

6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics: There are no equal opportunities implications.

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty: It is intended that by submitting an application it has potential to help support the social and economic needs of Oban, Lorn and wider Argyll and Bute.

6.5.3 Islands: None arising from this report; the economic needs of our islands will require to be fully considered as we move forward.

- 6.6 **Risk** - There is a risk that if we do not take advantage of opportunities that present themselves our communities could miss out.

- 6.7 **Customer Service** - There are no customer service implications.

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