

OBAN BID FOR CITY STATUS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to update Members of the Community Planning Partnership on the Oban Bid for City Status as part of the Civic Honours.
- 1.2 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. It should be noted that Lord Mayor or Lord Provost Status are only open for existing cities. The series of competitions are also aimed at assisting the recovery of the UK economy following the negative impacts of the global pandemic.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the content of the report.

3.0 DETAILS

- 3.1 At the Full Council meeting on 30 September 2021 it was agreed that a bid for City Status would be taken forward for Oban. Working with key partners and the community of Oban, this bid was submitted on 8 December 2021. Decisions on winning cities will be taken in spring 2022 and announced shortly afterwards as part of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The Oban bid can be viewed at [Back the bid for Oban city status - 2022 \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://argyll-bute.gov.uk/back-the-bid-for-oban-city-status-2022), and the rationale below explains the choice of Oban for a bid.
- 3.2 Publicity for Oban since submitting the bid has been helpful in raising the profile of the town. The thirty nine entries into the city status competition has been the subject of local and national media, press, radio and others. An interview on the Oban City Status bid with Oban Live can be found here <https://podcast.canstream.co.uk/obanfm/index.php?id=6971>

BENEFITS of CITY STATUS

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.

WHY OBAN?

- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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 two 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.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 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 has submitted an application for City Status for Oban and the result will

be announced as part of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022.
City status would bring a host of benefits to Oban.

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