

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10:00am, Tuesday, 29 September 2015

Lord Provost visit to the United Arab Emirates

Item number 8.6
Report number
Executive/routine
Wards

Executive summary

This report proposes that the Lord Provost visits the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during November 2015 to promote Edinburgh as a place to visit, study and invest.

Edinburgh's connections with the Gulf States have grown since the Lord Provost first visited the UAE in 2012. The most significant of these new connections are the direct flights launched by Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways from Doha and Abu Dhabi direct to Edinburgh.

To build on this success it is proposed that the Lord Provost travels to the UAE to meet with senior figures as well as attend the opening of the Abu Dhabi Science Festival, which is organised by the Edinburgh International Science Festival.

It is proposed that this visit takes place around 10-15 November 2015 and the Lord Provost is accompanied by a City Officer and an officer from Economic Development.

Links

Coalition pledges	P15
Council outcomes	CO7, CO8 and CO9
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1

Lord Provost visit to the United Arab Emirates

Recommendations

- 1.1 To approve the visit to the United Arab Emirates by the Lord Provost, a City Officer and an officer from Economic Development.

Background

- 2.1 The UAE has one of the highest GNPs per head in the world. While still heavily dependent on revenues from hydrocarbons, the UAE is relatively well insulated from periods of low oil prices due to successful moves towards economic diversification, large foreign exchange reserves and overseas investments.
- 2.2 The UAE is the UK's largest trading partner in the Middle East. There are already several connections between Edinburgh and the UAE. In September 2011 the Edinburgh International Science Festival was awarded the contract to assist the Abu Dhabi Technology Development Committee deliver the first Abu Dhabi Science Festival. The Edinburgh International Science Festival continues to be the Major Programming Partner of the annual Abu Dhabi Science Festival and they are currently helping to curate, produce and deliver the 2015 event.
- 2.3 The Lord Provost visited Abu Dhabi in 2012 as a guest of the Edinburgh International Science Festival to show his support for the Abu Dhabi Science Festival. During that visit the Lord Provost meet with several senior figures within the UAE Government and education system.
- 2.4 In addition to the Science Festival connection, the Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation in August 2012. The Lord Provost presided over the MOU which was signed by the Director of the EIF and the Founder of ADMAF.

Main report

- 3.1 The visit to the UAE by the Lord Provost provides an opportunity to bring together several independent activities to enhance Edinburgh's profile. Whilst the final programme is to be agreed, it is proposed that it will involve several of the activities below.
- 3.2 **Abu Dhabi Science Festival** – The Science Festival in Abu Dhabi has been organised by the Edinburgh International Science Festival team since 2011.

During the Lord Provost's first visit to Abu Dhabi he met with the organisers and it is proposed that there is further contact to build on this strong connection.

- 3.3 **University of Edinburgh event** – The Gulf is an important source of potential students for Edinburgh universities. The University of Edinburgh is planning to be in the UAE in November and discussions are underway regarding a joint event to promote Edinburgh as a place to study. It is also proposed that this event is held in partnership with Etihad Airways to highlight the direct flight route.
- 3.4 **Ajman visit follow-up** – A visit to the UAE would present an opportunity for the Lord Provost to follow-up with important contacts made during his visit to UAE Emirate of Ajman (March 2015). This would highlight Edinburgh's commitment to the region and strengthen the connections made.
- 3.5 **Scottish Government visit** – It has been suggested that a senior figure from the Scottish Government will travel to the Gulf to lead the Scottish Development International delegation to the Oil & Gas trade show ADIPEC. This may present an opportunity to organise a joint event to further highlight Edinburgh.
- 3.6 This visit has the potential to significantly boost Edinburgh's profile within UAE and help to encourage visitors, students and investors to the city. It also provides the Lord Provost an opportunity to strengthen connections made during previous visits.
- 3.7 It is recommended that the Lord Provost is given approval to travel to the UAE.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Raise Edinburgh's profile in the UAE.
- 4.2 Promote Edinburgh as an investment location.
- 4.3 Increase the number of students from the UAE studying in Edinburgh.
- 4.4 A report on the visit will be provided to the committee.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The cost of the visit including flights and accommodation for the Lord Provost, City Officer and the Economic Development officer will come from the Investor Support budget 2015/16.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no foreseen risks arising from this report.

Equalities impact

7.1 There are no equalities impacts arising from the visit.

Sustainability impact

8.1 Travel arrangements have been made in accordance with the Council's Sustainable Travel Plan. Travel options have been considered and the recommendation is a direct return flight from Edinburgh to Abu Dhabi. While there are adverse impacts in terms of carbon emissions, air quality and noise associated with air travel, overland travel is not considered practical given the distance and excessive travel time. A direct return flight to Abu Dhabi offers best value, has no additional requirement for overnight accommodation above the minimum requirement, and is the most time effective. The carbon emissions are 760.72 Kg for return flights per person as calculated by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Consultation and engagement

9.1 The Investor Support team will consult with partners including the University of Edinburgh, Etihad Airways, Scottish Development International and the Scottish Government regarding the programme and arrangements.

Background reading/external references

- Papers held by the Investor Support team.

Greg Ward

Executive Director of City Strategy and Economy

Contact: Elaine Ballantyne, Head of External Relations & Investor Support

E-mail: elaine.ballantyne@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 469 3854

Links

Coalition pledges	P15 - Work with public organisations, the private sector and social enterprise to promote Edinburgh to investors.
Council outcomes	CO7 - Edinburgh draws new investment in development and regeneration

**Single Outcome
Agreement
Appendices**

CO8 - Edinburgh's economy creates and sustains job opportunities

CO9 - Edinburgh residents are able to access job opportunities

SO1 - Edinburgh's economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all