

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report summarises the work of the International Strategy Steering Group during 2010, gives an overview of significant international activity undertaken within the Partnership this year and of its benefits, and highlights areas of work to be progressed during 2011.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Sunderland Partnership's first International Strategy was endorsed as a consultative draft in October 2006. Following revision of the Sunderland Strategy, the International Strategy was updated and endorsed by the Partnership Board and City Council's Cabinet in October 2008 to run in parallel to the Sunderland Strategy for the period 2008 to 2025.
- 2.2 The overall aim of the International Strategy is **'to ensure the City's international engagement supports the Sunderland Partnership in achieving its vision for Sunderland, maximising the opportunities and benefits for the city and its residents'**.
- 2.3 Implementation of the International Strategy is overseen by a Partnership-wide Steering Group, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the University and supported by the City Council's International Team. An annual report is prepared each calendar year for the Partnership Board and City Council's Cabinet. This is the fourth annual report.

## 3.0 Co-ordination Arrangements

- 3.1 The International Strategy Steering Group met four times in 2010. Membership remains open to all Sunderland Partnership organisations and Thematic Partnerships which have the capacity to nominate a representative. The Sunderland Partnership Manager is also a member of the Steering Group to facilitate the engagement of those within the Partnership who are not able to attend.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive of Sunderland Software City joined the group in 2010, which has been influential in stimulating thinking about new sector development and potential international partnering as well as strengthening the Steering Group's focus on economic impact. The NE Chamber of Commerce's (NECC's) representative changed following a change to the Chair of NECC's Sunderland Committee, bringing the additional benefit of increasing the input of the Football Club to the work of the Group.
- 3.3 It is proposed to keep membership of the Steering Group under review during 2011.

## 4.0 Context

- 4.1 The landscape within which the Steering Group and its constituent partner organisations are working has changed substantially during 2009. Changes in policy direction at national level introduced by the incoming coalition government,

and confirmation of a programme of substantial reductions in public expenditure have required partners individually and collectively to start to review their priorities and consider the most appropriate means of focussing their efforts to be able to continue to deliver effective services and make progress in key areas. This changing context has stimulated significant internal debate within partner organisations regarding current and future priorities, potential operating models, and means of achieving the necessary savings.

- 4.2 This wider context is significant in view of the overall aim of the International Strategy, which is designed to ensure the city's international engagement underpins the mainstream objectives which partners are seeking to deliver.

## **5.0 Impact**

- 5.1 As in previous years, a Work Programme for the International Strategy Steering Group was established for 2010. This sets out a series of objectives, activity within partner organisations to support delivery of these objectives, timescale, anticipated outcomes and benefits, as well as potential indicators to enable the impact of this activity to be gauged over the longer term. It highlights linkages to the five priorities of the Sunderland Strategy, and incorporates the three categories of benefits identified by the Local Government Association and referenced in the International Strategy itself: institutional, citizen and socio-economic. International activity carried out during 2010, and summarised in section 6.2, has contributed to each of these three categories of benefits.
- 5.2 The impact of the significant changes during 2010, highlighted in 4.1 above and ongoing at the time of writing this report, has affected the group's ability to progress meaningfully the intended work with the City Council's Performance Improvement Team to develop more specific outcomes for Sunderland's international engagement and build on progress to date in establishing effective means of measuring the impact of international activity. Measurement of benefits has continued to be gauged in the same way as it has been in previous years as will be evident. Further work in this area will be prioritised during the first half of 2011 as the focus of partners' mainstream activity is clarified enabling the potential contribution of the international dimension to be identified and outcomes projected.

## **6.0 International Activity during 2010**

### **6.1 Overview**

- 6.1.1 During 2010, partners have continued to develop an international dimension to their work, building on their existing levels of activity. A number of the most significant outcomes in terms of international activity for the Partnership as a whole for the year are highlighted in the summary below in relation to each of the five key areas of activity identified to support delivery of the overall aim of the International Strategy. It is anticipated that impact will continue to increase as the co-ordinated and strategic approach initiated in this area of work with the establishment of the first International Strategy for the city in October 2006 continues to be consolidated.
- 6.1.2 Work during 2010 has primarily focussed on consolidating activity undertaken in 2009 with no significant new areas of development.

- 6.1.3 Relationships with each of the city's formal international partners have been strengthened during 2010. Sunderland was involved in Essen's year as European Capital of Culture on behalf of the Ruhr District which created further opportunities to develop the city's longest-standing relationship. The twinning relationship with Saint-Nazaire was strengthened through the joint school cluster project on sustainable travel and transport. British Council funding supported study visits by Sunderland Head teachers to partner schools in Washington DC and by Harbin Head teachers to Sunderland, and co-operation with Harbin and Washington DC provided opportunities for software companies to explore business partnership opportunities. Significant progress was made under the economic development project with Mbombela Local Municipality in South Africa as part of the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme.
- 6.1.4 The City's strategic partnership with the British Council as a key national partner in promoting the international dimension in education, which was initiated in mid 2008, has continued to be strengthened during this year. As highlighted in 2009, the approach developed within Sunderland of working strategically in clusters, which maximises the impact of those initiatives developed centrally by the local authority for children and young people in schools across the city, increases opportunities for joint working with the British Council and is regarded by them as good practice.
- 6.1.5 Joint working with regional and national partners in supporting city businesses to engage internationally has also continued to be developed during this year. This has included significant engagement with Sunderland Software City in relation to opportunities through the partnerships in Washington DC and China, as well as discussions regarding potential inward investment projects, and co-operation with UKTI.
- 6.1.6 Sunderland's membership of EUROCITIES, and the city's designation as a World Health Organisation (WHO) European Healthy City, has opened up further opportunities to exchange experience, influence policy and inform service delivery in key policy areas. Equally the establishment of the city's Economic Master Plan during 2010 presents opportunities to strengthen linkages between the international agenda and economic development activity in the years ahead.
- 6.1.7 The attached table (Aii) sets out in detail progress made during the year in relation to each of the areas included in the Work Programme for 2010 (Geographic, Thematic and Operational) and cross-references this to the five key areas of activity below, the priorities of the Sunderland Strategy, and the categories of benefits identified by the Local Government Association. Information has been taken from returns by individual partners and City Council Directorates summarising their activity during the year and its benefits.
- 6.1.8 It is also important to note that partners continue to engage in international activity in areas of their core business outside of the International Strategy Steering Group, including inward investment, overseas marketing, student recruitment, and development of in-country delivery for further and higher education. This type of activity undertaken by individual partners, as well as more ad hoc initiatives within the Partnership, is also reflected within the attached table (Aii) but to a more limited extent.

## 6.2 Key Outcomes in relation to the International Strategy's Five Key Areas of Activity

### **A) Forging strong links between the local and international business community – to maintain and attract further international investment, support local and home-grown businesses to access global market places and compete internationally**

- The City Council and Sunderland Software City led a trade mission to Harbin, Nanjing and Shanghai in August/September 2010 with 4 Sunderland companies participating. One has entered into a strategic development agreement with a partner in China. A second company, which made a return visit in November, is currently trialling its product in China with a view to launching it (via Hong Kong) in March/April 2011 and intends to open an office in Harbin to facilitate future developments. 8 Chinese companies are involved in discussions as part of Sunderland Software City's Soft Landing Programme to encourage inward investment, identifying market intelligence, another has been introduced to a Sunderland-based potential partner, and another is due to visit the UK in Spring 2011.
- A second Sunderland software company is exploring opportunities in the US market through contacts in Washington DC, with an initial and follow-up visit in 2010. This follows the successful establishment by a Sunderland-based software company of an American subsidiary company during 2009, which is chaired by a contact introduced through the Friendship Agreement and has its North American Headquarters in Washington DC. Significant development work has been undertaken for a software trade mission to be led by the City Council and Sunderland Software City to Washington DC and Seattle in Spring 2011 with approximately 10 Sunderland companies expected to take part.
- Creative businesses in the city continued to benefit from their Washington DC connections. Sunderland's new Creative Cohesion charity and the Creative Cohesion studio centre was inspired by the artist-led approach to events in DC experienced through participation in Artomatic and Glass3 in previous years. Follow-up opportunities for individual glassmakers during 2010 have included 1 artist having work promoted at the prestigious SOFA Chicago event, and 1 giving workshops in New York with an invitation to demonstrate at the Glass Art Society (GAS) Conference in Seattle in 2011. The ceramicist who began her 3 month residency in December 2009, also resulting from Artomatic contacts, sold the piece she made during her stay to a private collection in the USA. Two Washington Glass School Directors have been awarded Fulbright scholarships and are making plans to spend time with the University of Sunderland as guest lecturers during 2011 as well as the wider glass community.
- 19 Indian companies are engaged in active discussions with Sunderland Software City regarding inward investment activity following visits to India in March and November 2010. 11 companies are in initial stages identifying market intelligence, 3 companies are involved in dialogue on specific areas, and 5 companies are planning visits to Sunderland in Spring 2011 (3 initial and 2 return visits). Sunderland Software City also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Group of Technology Parks in Trivandrum in April to work together.

- B) Including an international dimension in the City's educational and cultural activities**  
**- to increase knowledge and understanding of other cultures, develop welcoming and inclusive communities, stimulate a sense of global citizenship and build the skills needed by employers operating in a global economy**
- A running total of 54 schools now hold the International School Award with the Foundation level as a minimum (as at December 2010), with 17 holding Foundation, 22 Intermediate, and 15 the Full Award. This represents an increase from a running total of 40 by December 2009, 21 by December 2008 and 13 by December 2007 when records first started to be collected by the local authority. 9 schools progressed from Foundation to Intermediate during 2010. The award provides external validation of the extent to which these schools are enhancing learning opportunities for children and young people through inclusion of an international dimension within education. A number of other schools have registered interest in the award and are being offered support to develop this area of work.
  - An International Student Ambassador Programme was developed in partnership between the University and City Council during 2010 with initial activity involving 3 schools. 9 Chinese International Student Ambassadors supported Sunderland schools during the incoming Harbin Head Teachers' visit in November 2010. An action plan has been developed to engage more schools in the International Student Ambassador Programme during 2011.
  - A number of school cluster initiatives were developed with support from the British Council increasing knowledge and understanding of other cultures among the city's children and young people and helping to prepare them for participation in today's global economy. These included:
    - the City-wide cluster of 9 schools (primary, secondary and special) linked with Harbin schools receiving a visit from their partner Head teachers in November at the end of a year when, in addition to ongoing activity in all 9 schools, over 200 children from 6 schools took part in a lantern parade to mark Chinese New Year and 15 primary pupils from 4 schools took part in a Chinese language immersion course
    - a new city-wide cluster of 8 schools (primary, secondary and special) linked with Washington DC being established, building on initial individual school links, through an education leadership visit to DC in February with a range of activities undertaken within each of the schools including links to the annual July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration
    - ongoing work in the city's 3 Connecting Classrooms projects bringing together clusters of schools in Sunderland with school clusters in Bangladesh, Syria and India in joint curriculum work and developing our young people as global citizens
    - a new initiative with a cluster of 12 Sunderland schools (primary and secondary) exploring UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award from an international perspective, linking to key issues including student voice
  - Sunderland hosted the British Museum's 'Journey to the East' touring exhibition, which ran for four months and was attended by 1500 pupils (aged 7-14) in school groups. 3,000 people took part in family activities at weekends and during half-term with over 40 teachers taking part in a 'Teach China' conference held in partnership with the British Council during the exhibition. 30 International kite fliers also took part in the Sunderland International Friendship Festival from countries all around the world.

**C) Developing, and exchanging, good practice within international partnerships and networks**  
**- to build knowledge within Partnership organisations and improve services**

- Following dissemination of the city's Climate Change Action Plan and related activity on the EUROCITIES website during 2009, Sunderland was invited to present at a seminar in European Green Capital Stockholm to establish best practice in involving citizens in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Best practice ideas gained from discussions will help shape future engagement work with Sunderland residents to help tackle climate change. Participation also led to the city being invited to take part in a subsequent seminar aiming to identify best practice in engaging businesses in establishing carbon reduction targets. Best practice ideas from Stockholm on their Climate Pact campaign, which has approx 130 businesses engaged, will support Sunderland to further develop its Low Carbon City campaign as part of the Economic Master Plan.
- Participation in the WHO's European Healthy Cities network has provided the opportunity to share experience on addressing equity in health, identifying obstacles to progress and key success factors, as well as to explore the importance of active/participatory citizenship within this context and examples of good practice in facilitating this. There has also been the opportunity to discuss urbanization and health, lessons learned from the H1N1 pandemic, and the WHO's global strategy on harmful use of alcohol as issues with significant implications for public health and local action.
- Sunderland was successful applying as a partner in a EUROCITIES-led project to start in 2011, Cascade, which will focus on energy and transport helping support development of the city's low carbon economy. Through peer review and access to experts it is expected to support the city in addressing knowledge gaps on the integration of smart card technology with electric charging points and public transport, building know-how, capacity and experience in developing the low carbon infrastructure across the City, and developing skills and employment opportunities in the low carbon economy.

**D) Engaging with EU policy-making and legislation**  
**– to influence areas which may impact on the City, and identify opportunities to implement EU policies and initiatives which will benefit the city.**

- The City Council was the first local authority in the UK to submit its Sustainable Energy Action Plan, which built on the city's existing Climate Change Action Plan, as part of commitments under the EU Covenant of Mayors which Sunderland signed in 2009 alongside all other NE local authorities. Development work began during 2010 with other regional partners to develop project proposals for potential funding streams. Being an active member within this network will provide opportunities to influence EU policy based on demonstration of a strong track-record in delivering against sustainability targets.
- Sunderland also submitted information on its Climate Change and Adaptation Strategies to inform the development of the new EU Strategy of Adaptation for 2013 through EUROCITIES, and contributed to the network's response to the European Commission's 5<sup>th</sup> report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, helping to influence future EU policy.

**E) Raising the profile of Sunderland internationally**  
**- to influence individuals and businesses in their decisions about where to live, work, visit, study and invest and to support the ongoing development of the city's economy.**

- Development work began to review the current City Ambassadors scheme including the role for overseas Ambassadors and for UK-based Ambassadors in their international activity. This will be built on during 2011 to support development of the city's image and profile as a place to visit, also exploring links to the University and College alumni and Honorary Graduates.
- The City Council developed its Reputation and Influencing programme which seeks to create the best possible conditions for continued economic development in the city, supporting inward investment marketing and maximising the city's international connections to generate further economic benefits
- 1 of Sunderland's international ambassadors from Washington DC returned to the city engaging with young people at the Youth Offending Service for a second time, as well as sharing experiences with young people at Springwell Dene Special School on his first visit to the school.

**7.0 Communication of International Activity**

- 7.1 A Communications Strategy for the International Strategy was developed and endorsed during 2008. This set out a series of objectives and a number of key messages to underpin communication activity. Communications activity has been carried out within this framework throughout 2010.
- 7.2 There has been a broad range of publicity of international activity again during 2010, following a significant increase in 2009 compared with previous years. This has been linked to the areas set out in this year's Work Programme for the International Strategy Steering Group, as well as to events which have taken place on a more ad hoc basis.
- 7.3 This includes 2 issues of Worldwide, the city's International bulletin, 14 press releases issued by the City Council with 13 resulting in coverage, and at least 8 occasions during the year where press coverage has been generated by partners on international activity. Within the City Council, the Chief Executive's blog has featured international activity, and 14 issues of the weekly Members' Update have included international engagement. The city's international activity has been featured in the bdaily e-bulletin and the regional Europe Direct Newsletter. There has also been coverage on at least 1 occasion during the year on Sunderland's international activity in the press in Essen, Saint-Nazaire, and South Africa.

**8.0 Work Programme for 2010**

- 8.1 The changing environment within which partners are operating, highlighted in section 4.1, means that there is a need for the 2011 Work Programme to be more tightly focussed to allow significant benefits still to be generated with more limited resources. The importance of close partnership-working within the city in this area of work will be even more important to facilitate this.

- 8.2 The Steering Group has given careful consideration to its proposed work programme, drawing on its experience during 2010, and has removed a number of areas to enable the necessary focus. These include consideration of a pro-active approach to migration from overseas due to changes in immigration policy impacting currently, for example, on the ability of both the University and College to recruit staff from overseas. Equally, focussing on Ireland is no longer a city-wide priority due to affects of the economic downturn on both business and tourism potential as well as changes in ownership of Sunderland AFC. The University will retain its programme of work on Irish Studies, the Irish Literature Conference, and developing institutional partnerships on an individual level however.
- 8.3 The relative importance of areas addressed in previous years by the Steering Group and excluded from the 2011 Work Programme will be kept under review and, if appropriate, they may be reconsidered for inclusion in future years.
- 8.4 An over-riding priority will be given during 2011 to the generation of economic benefits and the contribution the international dimension can bring to the economic wellbeing of the city in the short, medium and longer term. This aligns with the development of the International Economic Relations Strand of the City Council's Reputation and Influencing Programme, which will be led by the International Team as part of a wider corporate programme. The proposed work programme for the International Strategy Steering Group therefore continues to strongly reflect the contribution the Group's work can make as we seek to strengthen the local economy in difficult times.
- 8.5 It is proposed to broadly retain the three key themes established in the 2010 work programme.

Key Themes:

- Exploring the challenges and opportunities for the city and its communities linked to the global recession to enable us to respond appropriately in the short, medium and longer term
- Supporting and influencing the City's approach to marketing, including the role of our City Ambassadors and alumni, to support the ongoing internationalisation of the city
- Harnessing international good practice to support the city's ongoing development

- 8.6 These themes will be developed through the following series of actions

Thematic:

- Enable City Ambassadors (existing and new) to be able to support Sunderland's international engagement particularly in creating economic benefits - engaging city-wide support to identify wider opportunities to influence linked to international alumni from both the University and College and Honorary Graduates
- Support integration within the city, focussing initially on international students at both the University and College - opening up opportunities through linkages to existing events programme, the business community, schools and other partners
- Promote the value of the international dimension in education within the city (both formal and informal) - increasing the number of schools with the British Council's International School Award and participation by students and schools in the International Student Ambassadors programme



#### Geographic:

- Progress proposals for collective co-operation with China (Harbin, Nanjing and Liuzhou) to maximise economic and educational benefits
  - primarily through the China Steering Committee
- Pursue development of the business and ICT elements of the Washington DC Friendship Agreement and continue to strengthen the school and University activity, including research links
  - primarily through the Washington DC Steering Committee
- Ensure successful completion of the city's project on economic development with Mbombela in South Africa within the Commonwealth Local Government Forum's Good Practice Scheme
  - primarily through the City Council
- Continue to develop twinning relationships with Essen and Saint-Nazaire as a partnership to maximise benefits with a particular emphasis on creating opportunities for children and young people
  - led by the City Council

#### Operational:

- Continue to develop the city's role within the WHO's European Healthy Cities Network to develop and exchange good practice and support improvements in service delivery
  - primarily through the Healthy Cities Steering Group
- Engage effectively in EUROCITIES to develop and exchange good practice and support improvements in service delivery, prioritising Economic Development, the Knowledge Society and Sustainability.
  - primarily through the City Council's EUROCITIES Officer Group

8.7 Individual partners will continue to take forward their own specific areas of international activity in parallel, sharing information to identify additional linkages as appropriate. Emerging priorities will be considered by the Steering Group within the context set out in 4.1.

8.8 During the first half of 2011 the International Strategy Steering Group will work with the support of the City Council's Performance Improvement officers, as set out in 4.2, to build on progress to date in establishing effective means of measuring the impact of international activity drawing on national good practice where this is available.

## **9.0 Background Papers**

9.1 The following background papers have been used in preparing this report and are available on request:

- Work Programme for the International Strategy Steering Group for 2010
- Minutes of the International Strategy Steering Group
- Minutes of the Washington DC / China Steering Committees
- International Strategy Annual Report for 2007, 2008 and 2009
- Records of International Activity for 2010 completed by Partnership organisations

