

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report summarises the work of the International Strategy Steering Group for the period 1 January 2011 to 31 March 2012. It gives an overview of significant international activity undertaken within the Partnership during this time and of its benefits, and highlights areas of work to be progressed during 2012.

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 This overall aim of the International Strategy is underpinned by five key areas of activity, which are set out in full in section 6.2. The five key areas of activity focus on:
- attracting and retaining investment and supporting business growth
 - including an international dimension in the city's educational and cultural activities
 - sharing good practice with cities facing similar challenges
 - influencing EU policy and legislation, and
 - raising the city's profile.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 An annual report is prepared each year for the Partnership Board and City Council's Cabinet. This is the fifth annual report. Reports have been prepared on a calendar year basis to date. However, it is proposed that future annual reports will run from 1 April to 31 March and this report therefore covers the fifteen month period from January 2011 to March 2012.
- ## 3.0 Co-ordination Arrangements
- 3.1 The International Strategy Steering Group continued to meet quarterly during this period. There have been several changes in representation on the Steering Group during the year, but no changes in terms of organisation-level engagement.
- 3.2 Membership remains open to all Sunderland Partnership organisations and Themed Boards, 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.

- 3.3 In view of internal re-organisation among partner organisations, and to ensure effective linkages with bodies such as the Economic Leadership Board, It is proposed to review membership of the Steering Group during 2012. Current representation, developed prior to the review of the Sunderland Partnership structure, is attached as Annex B.

4.0 Context

- 4.1 The landscape within which the Steering Group and its constituent partner organisations operate continues to be influenced by policy developments at national level by the coalition government and significant reductions in public expenditure.
- 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 2011. This covered the key themes and actions proposed in the previous annual report.
- 5.2 Following the pattern established in previous years, the 2011 Work Programme included a series of objectives, activity within partner organisations to support delivery of these objectives, anticipated outcomes and benefits, as well as potential indicators to enable the impact of this activity to be gauged over the longer term. These were set out against each of the key themes and actions agreed for the year. The Work Programme also highlighted linkages to the five priorities of the Sunderland Strategy
- 5.3 Measurement of benefits has continued to be gauged in the same way as in previous years, recording areas of progress against the key themes and actions within the Work Programme. In addition, an exercise was carried out within the City Council during 2011 to assess the impact of the city's international engagement in relation to economic development. A copy of this report is available from the City Council's International Team on request.
- 5.4 There is also a lot of partner comment and narrative that the work of the International Strategy is of support to partners in their individual activities, notably Sunderland Software City, the University, College and Chamber of Commerce. It is proposed to look in more detail at this as a specific evidence review during 2012/13 to see whether this could be strengthened.

6.0 International Activity Undertaken

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 As in 2010, work during the time covered by this report has primarily focussed on consolidating activity undertaken in previous years with no significant new areas of development. This reflects the challenging context within which partners are

operating individually and collectively.

- 6.1.2 Partners have, however, continued to develop an international dimension to their work, building on their existing levels of activity. The most significant developments during this period in terms of individual partnerships are highlighted below. A number of the key outcomes, in relation to the five key areas of activity identified to support delivery of the overall aim of the International Strategy, are then summarised in 6.2.
- 6.1.3 The city's Friendship Agreement with Washington DC was renewed for a further five years on 22 February 2012, following establishment of strong working relationships with the city's new administration under Mayor Gray during 2011 and recognition of the benefits generated for both cities since the Agreement was first signed in 2006. Young people, businesses and key partners who have been engaged in activity under the Agreement took part in events in both Washington DC and Sunderland to mark the renewal. Five project proposals were developed setting out initial co-operation activities to be undertaken during the next stage of the Agreement, building on joint activity to date with the software sector, creative industries, youth engagement and youth participation, history including abolition of slavery, and University co-operation. The first young people from Washington DC to visit Sunderland also came to the city during this period, in March 2011.
- 6.1.4 Sunderland's co-operation with China was deepened as the first Sunderland children to visit Harbin, since the Friendship Agreement was signed in May 2009, spent time in their partner school in April 2011. A presentation showcasing the young people's experiences was shared with the Chinese Ambassador to the UK who visited the city in February 2012 to meet with Sunderland businesses. The first Harbin software company to set up an office in Sunderland did so during this period.
- 6.1.5 As the 60th anniversary of the city's twinning relationship with Saint-Nazaire approaches in 2013, this partnership was also strengthened significantly. Three school partnerships developed through a European Union project on sustainable travel and transport are now well established and the number of schools within the city as a whole exploring French language and culture through the twinning relationship has increased. Links involving City of Sunderland College and the University have also been reinforced during this period, and Sunderland companies have hosted work placements for Saint-Nazaire students for the third consecutive year.
- 6.1.6 Young people from Sunderland travelled to Essen to take part in the European Youth Arts Exhibition in January 2012, following their winning submissions within the arts category of the city's Young Achievers Programme. This youth arts exchange has now been operating for over ten years.
- 6.1.7 The economic development project with Mbombela Local Municipality in South Africa, as part of the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme, was completed successfully. City Council representatives took part in Mbombela's Local Economic Summit in January 2012 as new policies and practices developed during the project were launched.
- 6.1.8 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 2008, has

continued to be strengthened during this period opening up a number of opportunities. 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.

- 6.1.9 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 UK Trade and Investment (UKTI). Development work has also been undertaken on a number of initiatives by the University with partners in Washington DC and Harbin which could result in increased co-operation during 2012/13, particularly in relation to software, engineering, and automotive.
- 6.1.10 Sunderland's membership of EUROCITIES, and the city's designation as a World Health Organisation (WHO) European Healthy City for the period to 2013, has opened up opportunities to exchange experience, influence policy and inform service delivery in key policy areas. Delivery of the city's first two EU trans-national projects developed within EUROCITIES has also begun during this period. Equally, establishment of the region's European Leadership Board, which met for the first time in December 2011 following a review of regional European Engagement, may open up further opportunities for the city in 2012/13.
- 6.1.11 Creation of more than 2,000 new jobs by overseas-owned companies in the city was announced from January 2011 to March 2012, bringing £700 million of capital investment into Sunderland. Most of the new jobs were associated with Nissan's expansion programme, including investments by key suppliers including Lear (from the USA), Unipres (from Japan), and Snop (from France). Examples of other significant developments during this 15 month period included Nissan building its six millionth car in January 2011 and investment by American company TRW in their Sunderland plant which is dedicated to export markets. Other major projects are already in the pipeline for April 2012-March 2013.
- 6.1.12 The establishment of the city's Economic Leadership Board during 2011 presents opportunities to strengthen linkages between the international agenda and economic development activity in the years ahead.
- 6.1.13 The attached table (Aii) sets out in more detail progress made during the year in relation to each of the areas included in the Work Programme for 2011 (Geographic, Thematic and Operational). It is also important to note, however, that partners continue to engage in international activity in areas of their core business outside of the International Strategy Steering Group. These include inward investment, overseas marketing, student recruitment, and development of in-country delivery for further and higher education. Some of this activity undertaken by individual partners, as well as more ad hoc initiatives within the Partnership, is 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

- A second Sunderland software company set up an American subsidiary in the Washington DC area in March 2011, following participation as one of eight city software companies in a trade mission to Washington DC and Seattle in February 2011. A total of four Sunderland software companies have now set up operations in the United States since the Agreement was first signed.
- Two Washington DC glassmakers, Directors of Washington Glass School, spent two weeks with the University of Sunderland as Fulbright visiting lecturers in March 2012 working with staff and students. They gave two workshops at the university for undergraduate and postgraduate students on Glass and Ceramics programmes as well as a lecture to approximately 60 from the University and cultural sector. They also led a series of workshops strengthening links with Creative Cohesion in Sunnyside, which opened in 2010 and was inspired by the artist-led organisation Artomatic in Washington DC. Two of the city's creative businesses who participated in Artomatic 2009 in DC and the March 2012 workshops with the DC glassmakers have already booked facilities at Creative Cohesion to develop new skills and ideas generated through the workshops.
- The first Harbin software company to do so officially opened an office in Sunderland in November 2011. Two Sunderland businesses took part in a software trade mission to China, including Harbin, alongside regional companies in March 2012 to explore business opportunities. Both businesses are now looking to explore market entry strategies through further research and test marketing in China.
- Two Indian software companies have registered offices in Sunderland in the first quarter of 2012 and a further 15 are exploring the European market through Intelligence Reports from Sunderland Software City. The Indian company which set up an office in Sunderland, in 2010, has continued to explore the European market and staffing options.

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 total of 64 schools in the city hold the International School Award with the Foundation level as a minimum (as at March 2012), with 23 holding Foundation, 21 Intermediate, and 20 the Full Award. This includes 7 new schools gaining recognition for the first time at Foundation level and an increase of 25% within schools holding the Full Award compared to figures from December 2010. At 64, the overall number of schools recognised in this way has increased from totals of 54 (Dec 2010), 40 (Dec 2009), 21 (Dec 2008) and 13 (Dec 2007). 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.

- International Student Ambassadors from the University continued to engage with schools in the city. 4 Chinese Student Ambassadors supported Head teachers from Harbin during their visit to Sunderland in November 2011 as they spent time in their partner schools engaging in activities with staff and pupils are planning future co-operation.
- A number of school cluster initiatives have been developed with support from the British Council further 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
 - the first Sunderland children, eight pupils from Bexhill Academy, visited Harbin in April 2011 as part of a joint project with their partner school, and nine Sunderland schools are currently involved in a cluster-wide joint project on sustainability which began in September 2011. In addition to a range of activities in school, this includes support for a visit to Harbin planned for June 2012 by teachers and pupils from six of the participating schools.
 - Ten pupils from two city primary schools participated in the British Council's primary Chinese language immersion course in August 2011, with one entering into a new school partnership with Harbin increasing the total number of Harbin school partnerships to ten. This was the second year city young people had taken part in the course, with 15 pupils from four different primary schools having participated in August 2009.
 - the two-year school cluster project on sustainable travel and transport with Saint-Nazaire was successfully completed in August 2011. In addition to the expected outcomes of the three school partnerships and a toolkit to facilitate sustainability work in schools, its legacy included a successful application by one of the Saint-Nazaire teachers to spend 2011/12 teaching at Castletown Primary School. She has also supported ten other schools in the city with French language and cultural activities during the year and several more school partnerships have been initiated.
 - Four schools continued work on their British Council-funded Connecting Classrooms project with a cluster of eight schools in Rajkot, India. A further four schools continued their Connecting Classrooms cluster project with Syria. Despite communication difficulties due to the political situation in Syria, joint work has continued on various themes and pupils have been in direct communication with one another.
- The first two University of Sunderland scholarship students at the University of the District of Columbia began a semester in Washington DC in January 2012, and Sunderland Youth Parliament held their first video-conference with DC Youth Advisory Council in February 2012. This follows Youth Parliament's participation for the second consecutive year in DC-based Earth Day Network's Global Days of Conversation in April 2011. The first young people from Washington DC to visit Sunderland came in March 2011, following the study visit by city Head teachers to Washington DC in 2010 which was supported by the British Council. Young people from School without Walls spent time at Monkwearmouth School with 11 pupils from Monkwearmouth School taking part in a return visit in March 2012. This followed the first visit to Washington DC by Sunderland young people, pupils from Sandhill View School, in April 2011.

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

- Activity under the first two trans-national projects successfully developed within the city under EUROCITIES has begun. Plans have been developed for a peer review visit of six European partner cities to Sunderland to take place in May 2012 on transport policy and implementation, smart ticketing and low carbon transport initiatives, including electric vehicles. This will include site visits, interviews and workshops with expert practitioners as part of the 'Cascade' project, which is funded through the EU's Intelligent Energy Europe Programme. Representatives from the city's Voluntary & Community Sector and City Council have also shared experience on volunteering strategies, event management and youth engagement with colleagues from Madrid, Lisbon and Munich, and profiled the city's volunteering strategy and activity as part of the 'Madrid en Red' project funded by the Europe for Citizens programme.
- Participation in the WHO's European Healthy Cities network continued to provide the opportunity to share experience on addressing equity in health, identifying obstacles to progress and key success factors. Participation at the UK Network Business Meeting provided the opportunity to explore the concepts of Healthy Urban Planning and Age-friendly Cities and to consider example of good practice in these fields.

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.

- Consultation responses have been submitted in relation to the EU's Health 2020 and Horizon 2020 policy and funding documents through EUROCITIES Social Affairs Forum. Information on Sunderland's approach has also been provided to inform development of a EUROCITIES' ICT policy document on how cities publish data and engage with citizens.
- Sunderland's influence in relation to health has been raised through the City Council's Cabinet Secretary becoming a member of the UK Healthy Cities Politicians' subgroup since it was established in January 2012. As part of Sunderland's WHO European Healthy Cities engagement, this has opened up additional opportunities to exchange experience and influence development of the network and its activities.

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 continued 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 2012/13, also exploring links to University and College alumni and Honorary Graduates, with a particular focus on engaging City Ambassadors in support of the city's economic development.
- The City Council continued to develop its approach to creating 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

- One of Sunderland's international ambassadors from Washington DC, who has returned to Sunderland several times following his semester studying at the University in October 2009, shared his experiences with the Mayor of Washington DC, the Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy, and partners from the business and education community at the renewal of the Friendship Agreement. Since completing his studies, he has met with young people from Sunderland Youth Parliament (who now have a project with the DC Youth Advisory Council), Youth Offending Service, and Springwell Dene School. He also remains in personal contact with one of the young people met during his visit to Springwell Dene School in October 2010.

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 this period
- 7.2 There has been a broad range of publicity of international activity again during the period covered by this report. This includes at least 17 press releases issued by the City Council with 16 resulting in coverage including some national coverage, and at least four occasions during the year where press coverage has been generated by partners on international activity. Within the City Council, both the Leader's and Chief Executive's blogs have featured international activity, and at least 17 issues of the weekly Members' Update have included international engagement. The city's international activity has been featured in the bdaily e-bulletin as well as with an article in the region's Business Quarterly Magazine Sunderland supplement. There has also been coverage on at least one occasion during the year on Sunderland's international activity generated by colleagues in Saint-Nazaire, Essen Harbin, Washington DC and Mbombela.

8.0 Work Programme for 2012/13

- 8.1 The changing environment within which partners are operating, highlighted in section 4.1, means that there is a continued need for the 2012/13 Work Programme to be tightly focussed to allow significant benefits to be generated against key priorities within the limited resources available. The importance of close partnership-working within the city in this area of work will therefore continue to be important.
- 8.2 An over-riding priority will continue to be given during 2012/13 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. The proposed work programme for the International Strategy Steering Group therefore continues to reflect strongly the contribution the Group's work can make as we seek to strengthen the local economy in difficult times.
- 8.3 It is proposed to introduce a single series of actions for 2012/13, combining areas of work which have been separated between key themes and actions within the Work programme in previous years.

8.4 The proposed range of actions for 2012/13 recognises the need to consolidate activity in existing areas to ensure benefits of the city's partnership-wide approach are maximised. The introduction of one additional action, to consider a broader partnership approach to build on activity led by Sunderland Software City in India, reflects the potential for collective engagement with both the University and College and wider awareness of Sunderland in India.

8.5 The proposed actions for 2012/13 are separated into thematic, geographic and operational actions:

Thematic:

- Explore 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
- Support and influence the City's approach to marketing to support the ongoing internationalisation of the city - enabling City Ambassadors to be able to support Sunderland's international engagement and creation of economic benefits, and identifying wider opportunities to influence linked to international alumni from both the University and College and Honorary Graduates
- Support integration within the city, focussing 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 - 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 collective co-operation with China to maximise economic and educational benefits under the Friendship Agreement with Harbin, as well as economic benefits through software co-operation with Nanjing
 - primarily through the China Steering Committee
- Progress confirmed projects covering software and entrepreneurship, creative industries, youth engagement and participation, history and emancipation, and University co-operation within the Washington DC Friendship Agreement and develop additional opportunities to strengthen the partnership including research, sport and school activity
 - primarily through the Washington DC Steering Committee
- Continue to develop twinning relationships with Saint-Nazaire and Essen as a partnership to maximise benefits, with a particular emphasis on creating opportunities for children and young people
 - led by the City Council
- Explore the potential for a broader partnership approach to co-operation with India to maximise economic benefits, focussing on software and technology

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 Engagement Group

8.6 Individual partners will continue to take forward their own specific areas of international activity in parallel, sharing information to identify additional linkages as appropriate.

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 2011
- Minutes of the International Strategy Steering Group
- Minutes of the Washington DC / China Steering Committees
- International Strategy Annual Report for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010
- International Economic Relations, Phase 1 Report

