

Item: 10

Policy and Resources Committee: 21 June 2022.

Twinning Arrangements.

Report by Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an update on Twinning arrangements.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That links between Orkney and Norway have been in place through a longstanding twinning arrangement which has been in place since 1983.

2.2.

That, following the merger of Hordaland and Sogn og Fjordane, these links were reaffirmed in May 2022 with the digital re-signing of the Twinning Agreement between Orkney Islands Council and Vestland Fylkeskommune.

2.3.

That, as the focus of the current twinning agreement is on young people, re-establishment of exchange visits will be explored.

2.4.

That representatives of Vestland expressed a wish to explore the expansion of the Twinning Agreement to include areas of co-operation on sustainable communities and sustainable tourism, as well as other topics of mutual interest.

2.5.

The proposal that a co-operation agreement, which would be more specific than the Twinning Agreement and linked to a limited period, be developed, including topics detailed in section 4.3 of this report.

It is recommended:

2.6.

That a delegation, comprising the Convener, Leader and Depute Leader, with the appropriate officer support, as determined by the Chief Executive, visit Vestland in Autumn 2022 to further develop the proposal for a co-operation agreement.

2.7.

That the Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions should submit a report, to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee to be held on 22 November 2022, on proposals for a co-operation agreement and associated action plan.

3. Background

3.1.

Orkney and Norway's longstanding relationship dates back many centuries to when the islands were populated by Norwegians in the late 700s.

3.2.

Links between Orkney and Norway have been in place through a longstanding twinning arrangement which has been in place since 1983. This was initially with Hordaland Fylkeskommune; however in 2020 Vestland Fylkeskommune was created when the former counties of Hordaland and Sogn og Fjordane merged.

3.3.

These links were reaffirmed in May 2022 with the digital re-signing of the Twinning Agreement between Orkney and Vestland Fylkeskommune, attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The agreement promotes the friendship and encourages exchange visits which aim to develop mutual understanding and cultural relationships. In addition to the official twinning agreement a Christmas Tree is donated and delivered every year and, pre-pandemic, Orkney welcomed delegations from Hordaland at least twice per year.

3.4.

The focus of the current twinning agreement is on young people, and in accordance with this current agreement, it is recognised that the re-establishment of exchange visits be explored. A refreshed exchange scheme would focus on enabling more young people being able to participate through shorter visits/exchanges for a larger number of pupils / students rather than one or two pupils as was the case in the previous exchange scheme.

3.5.

Despite the frequent visits from Norway representatives, the Council has only sent a delegation to Norway once since 2008 when a delegation from the Council met with representatives from Hordaland in Bergen in May 2018. Areas of mutual interest were discussed such as renewables, volume tourism, education and hydrogen and electric transport.

4. Proposed Co-operation Agreement

4.1.

During the digital re-signing of the Twinning Agreement, representatives of Vestland expressed a wish to explore the expansion of the Twinning Agreement to include areas of co-operation on sustainable communities, sustainable tourism, and other topics of mutual interest. It was suggested that this could be achieved through the development of a new co-operation agreement.

4.2.

The co-operation agreement would be a separate document, have an action plan attached, and would be reviewed regularly and contain areas of work to the mutual benefit of both Orkney and Vestland. It is hoped to have this developed for consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee in November 2022 in order that, if agreed, a signing can take place during Vestland's representatives planned visit to Orkney in December 2022.

4.3.

It is proposed that the co-operation agreement will be more specific than the twinning agreement and linked to a limited period. The following topics could be relevant for this agreement:

- Cultural heritage.
- Sustainable communities.
- Renewable energy – wind.
- Renewable energy – related to local air routes (electric aircraft) and other transport that is adapted to a demanding nature and geography.
- Arctic Shipping routes.
- Sustainable tourism, including cruise traffic.
- Research on urban adaptation agriculture; seeds, cultivation, and agricultural methods, for example linking in with the Agronomy Institute at Orkney College.
- Fostering links with Orkney educational establishments, for example the Institute for Nordic Studies UHI.

4.4.

To explore this further, it is proposed that a delegation, comprising the Convener, Leader and Depute Leader, with the appropriate officer support, as determined by the Chief Executive, visit Vestland in Autumn 2022. A report on the visit and the proposals for a co-operation agreement and associated action plan would be presented to the meeting of this Committee to be held on 22 November 2022.

5. Links to Council Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priorities of Enterprising Communities and Quality of Life.

6. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Sustainable Recovery.

7. Financial Implications

The cost of travel to Norway would be in the region of £10,000. This can be met from the Twinning budget which is allocated for developing relationships and exchange visits with Norway.

8. Legal Aspects

There are no significant legal implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

9. Contact Officer

Karen Greaves, Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions, extension 2202, Email karen.greaves@orkney.gov.uk

10. Appendix

Appendix 1: Twinning Agreement with Vestland.

Twinning Agreement

Vestland fylkeskommune and Orkney Islands Council

Med grunnlag i lange historiske band inngjekk Hordaland fylkeskommune og Orkney Island Council 13.juni 1983 ein venskapsavtale. Denne vart stadfesta ved 20 årsjubileet for avtalen i 2003. Etter den norske regionforma 2020 vart Hordaland ein del av Vestland fylkeskommune. Vestland fylkeskommune er glad for å overta og vidareutvikle denne venskapen og avtalen.

Vestland fylkeskommune og Orkney Islands Council stadfester, samstundes som vi slår fast at venskapsavtalen som vart underteikna 13.juni 1983 har vore til framgang, gagn og nytte, å halde fram med å vørdsle og fremja avtalen, med desse føremåla for auga:

- å halda ved lag venskaps samband med kvarandre*
- Å odla og å utvikla forståing og vyrnad orknøyingar og vestlendingar innbyrdes*
- Å oppmoda og å hjelpa lag, samskipnader, skular og andre på Orknøyane og i Vestland til å ha samband og vitja kvarandre, og på dette viset utvikla menneskleg og kulturelt samkvem slik at fast grunn for framtidig age og venskap vert lagt mellom orknøyingar og vestlendingar i all æve.*

Based on long historical links, Hordaland fylkeskommune and Orkney Island Council signed a friendship agreement on 13th of June 1983. This was confirmed at the 20th anniversary of the agreement in 2003. Following the Norwegian regional reorganisation in 2020, Hordaland is part of Vestland County. Vestland fylkeskommune is happy to continue and further develop this friendship and the agreement.

Vestland fylkeskommune and Orkney Islands Council, acknowledging the success and mutual benefits of their resolution on 13th of June 1983 to establish a twinning arrangement. Further resolve to continue to honour and promote that arrangement for all these purposes:

-to maintain friendly relations with each other

- to develop further mutual understanding and respect between the people of Vestland and the people of Orkney

-to encourage and assist youth and adult organisations and groups, and individuals, to exchange visits, and so to develop mutual understanding and cultural relations, and build upon this firm foundation for greater understanding, respect and friendship between the people of Vestland and the people of Orkney, for all time coming.

*Underskriven for og på vegner av
Vestland fylkeskommune*



County Mayor Jon Askeland

*Signed for on behalf of
Orkney Islands Council*



Convener Harvey Johnston

29th April 2022