



Coventry City Council

4.2

Public report

REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR

REPORT TO: Cabinet Member (Policy Leadership and Governance)
REPORT OF: Deputy Director of City Development
TITLE: Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC)
DATE: Working Group Meeting 8th - 10th April 2008
Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2008/ 1st – 3rd June 2008
VENUE: Lorient, France
Auditorio Kursaal, San Sebastián, Spain

1 Recommendation

The Cabinet Member (Policy Leadership & Governance) is recommended to support continued work arising as a result of membership to the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC) network for another year, including progressing externally funded project work where possible.

2 Background

2.1 *Background to the network*

The Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC) is a city network of some 35 cities from Ireland, UK, Spain, Portugal and France, which was founded in 2000.

CAAC has benefited from funding through the European Union (EU) Regional Programme Interreg aimed at improving co-operation and promoting economic development between certain EU regions – in this case the North West Periphery of the EU known as the Atlantic Arc. As a respected European city network, CAAC is regularly consulted by the EU on urban and regional policy and has good access to the European Commission, in particular through the CAAC Secretary General, Xavier Gizard.

2.2 *Work to date*

Coventry has been a member of the network since 2006 and as a lead city is currently a member of the Executive Bureau. Until the reorganisation of the network (see below) Coventry was the chair of the 'Urban Development and Port Cities' working group, and was also a member of the Economic Development working group.

3 Cost of attending

3.1 Breakdown of costs for Working Group

- Travel

- Flights £372 x 2 persons
- Airport transfers £56 total
- Accommodation and expenses
 - Hotel £145 x 2 persons
 - Food and drink during travel / when not provided by meeting £57 x 2 persons
 - Travel at destination £56 total

Total cost £630 per person, £1260 for total trip.

3.2 Breakdown of costs for Annual General Meeting:

- Conference fee – none
- Travel
 - Flights (indirect via Madrid) £202 x 2 persons
 - Airport transfers to / from Heathrow airport and to / from San Sebastian airport £162 x 2 persons
- Accommodation and expenses
 - Hotel 3 nights, £357 x 2 persons
 - Food and drink during travel / when not provided by conference £53 x 2 persons

Total cost £774 per person, £1548 for total trip.

4 Benefits

4.1 *Benefits arising from the working group meeting*

4.1.1 The working group meeting in L'Orient was an opportunity for Coventry to

- build relationships with partners
- develop the sustainable urban development project brief with partners in preparation for an external funding bid
- present to other cities about the City Centre Masterplan being developed in Coventry and look at examples of similar work being carried out by other European cities

4.2 *Benefits arising from the AGM*

4.2.1 *Briefings on EU developments and access to the European Commission*

Representatives, including officers and members, from approximately 28 European cities were present at the AGM, which also included a day devoted to working group meetings (one of which Coventry chairs) and a meeting of the executive bureau (of which Coventry is a member). There were also presentations from Georgi Dimitrov (from the European Commission Directorate-General for Education, Training, Culture and Youth) regarding the European Year of Creativity and Innovation and Jordi Pascual (Coordinator of the United Cities and Local Government Committee on Culture).

As a respected European city network, CAAC is regularly consulted by the EU on urban and regional policy and has good access to the European Commission, in particular through the CAAC Secretary General, Xavier Gizard, who chaired the AGM.

4.2.2 *Influencing the future direction of the CAAC network*

A substantial amount of time during the AGM was allocated to discussing the future prospects of the CAAC network. The network's aims are summarised in an 'Atlantic Charter on sustainable urban development' signed by members at the AGM, which focuses on 'green, attractive and solidarity-based cities'. This document was produced in consultation

with the cities as part of a piece of research undertaken by the ESADE Business School, Barcelona.

The conference provided a platform for member cities to influence the future direction and vision of the network. As a result, it was decided to streamline working group portfolios and reduce the number of these groups. The following three groups were proposed and approved:

- Environment and sustainable urban development (to be led by Nantes)
- Attractive and cohesive cities (to be led by San Sebastián)
- Co-ordination and strategy group (to be led by the CAAC president)

There is a strong desire to try and engage with British cities and increase UK membership. Coventry and Cardiff both operate on the basis that membership of CAAC offers the chance for a medium sized city to play an active role in a network focusing on sustainable urban development.

4.2.3 Access to partners for externally funded projects

At the AGM, as a result of project work developed in the working group, Coventry was approached by 2 Spanish cities and invited to join with funded projects being developed by these two cities. Since returning from the conference, Coventry has submitted a joint bid to INTERREG (an EU funding stream) in partnership with one of these cities, Jerez de la Frontera (Spain). This project would allow Coventry to share best practice and intelligence around sustainable urban development with up to 12 potential partner cities in Europe, as well as being part of a large European urban study.

Currently, the city is financially committed to remain within the network until the end of 2009.

List of background papers

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Papers open to public inspection

Description of paper:	Location:
International Strategy	CH71
Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities - associated papers	CH71