

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Policy and Strategy Committee

Does this report require to be approved? Yes No

Ref LR/HL Date 19/03/26

UK Town of Culture

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Executive Summary

In early January 2026, the UK Government launched the search for the UK's first Town of Culture. This programme builds on the UK City of Culture introduced in 2009 and sought to celebrate the contribution of people and places across the UK to our cultural life. The Town of Culture programme notes that everyone deserves the chance to share their pride in the place they call home and to have access to quality art, music, dance and drama wherever they live.

Following interest from community representatives in Cumbernauld to submit an application to become UK City of Culture, this report outlines the support that will be offered by North Lanarkshire Council and gives an outline of the programme and key next steps.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Policy and Strategy Committee:

- (1) Approves the proposal to support a community led application from the Cumbernauld community for the new UK Town of Culture award.
- (2) Otherwise, notes the contents of this report.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	Enhance participation, capacity, and empowerment across our communities
Ambition statement	(15) Encourage the health and wellbeing of people through a range of social, cultural, and leisure activities
Programme of Work	All Programmes of Work

1. Background

- 1.1 UK Town of Culture is a new Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) competition. For the first time, DCMS is inviting towns across the UK to enter the

competition to showcase original storytelling, and empowering, accessible culture. The competition is targeted at all towns, whether small, medium or large.

- 1.2 The winning town will be awarded £3 million to deliver a cultural programme in 2028 of around six months. Additionally, the two finalists from their category will receive £250,000 each to deliver elements of their bid. It is a UK-wide programme, developed in collaboration with the devolved governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- 1.3 The UK Town of Culture competition aims to celebrate the significant contributions of towns to our national story. The competition focuses on building a more socially cohesive country where communities feel proud of their place and empowered to celebrate it. The UK Town of Culture is an opportunity for places and communities to use culture and creativity to tell their story and why they are proud of their community. In addition to the £3 million main prize and £250,000 finalist prizes, the Government anticipate that winning will lead to significant, demonstrable outcomes, including a boost in civic pride, greater participation in cultural activities, and the formation of enduring community partnerships

2. Report

- 2.1 With the forthcoming celebrations of Cumbernauld's 70th anniversary, the council were made aware of significant interest from community groups in the area to submit a bid for this competition. With a population of approximately 50,500, Cumbernauld would bid for consideration under the medium town category. While there is a requirement for all bids to be made in conjunction with the local authority, this project offers the opportunity for the council to support the community to develop their own programme, building capacity and allowing them to steer and design future plans in line with community need.
- 2.2 The council's Heritage Outreach Officer will be the lead on behalf of North Lanarkshire Council, working with Cumbernauld Theatre Trust, who will act as the Accountable Body. The responsibilities of the Accountable Body include:
 - Ensuring the safe and successful delivery of a UK Town of Culture programme;
 - Managing the financial and legal requirements associated with the delivery of a UK Town of Culture programme;
 - Taking responsibility for the organisation of a UK Town of Culture programme, including leading on the necessary coordination between relevant partners;
 - Taking responsibility for any grant funding associated with a UK Town of Culture programme, for which the Accountable Body is the recipient organisation; and
 - Monitoring delivery of a UK Town of Culture programme and undertaking relevant reporting as may be required by DCMS.
- 2.3 The Delivery Body is still to be determined but will involve input from North Lanarkshire Council. Initial discussions have involved representation from Coatbridge and Cumbernauld Community Connect (4C Connect) Limited - a consortium of Cumbernauld FM and Cumbernauld College, Cumbernauld Village Community Council and Living Landscapes. All are likely to be involved in delivery, with the Delivery Body responsible for the planning, procuring, commissioning and delivery of a planned UK Town of Culture programme. With the support of Katrina Murray MP, the initial phase of the bid is distributing a short survey to local residents, businesses and stakeholders to determine the local priorities for the forthcoming application. Bidders are encouraged

to consider how their application will complement other UK government place-based initiatives, notably the Pride in Place Strategy which sets out a plan to create safer, healthier neighbourhoods where communities can thrive.

2.4 Next Steps

2.4.1 Timescales for the application and delivery process are tight:

Expression of Interests (EOI) to be submitted by 31 March 2026.

Stage 2 – shortlisted towns will be awarded a grant of £60,000 each to support them with developing and strengthening their full application. DCMS intend to publish detailed full application guidance in Spring 2026. Applicants will have up to five months to complete the full application.

Stage 3 – the decision-making panel will visit the shortlisted places, who will be invited to present to the panel and engage in detailed discussions about their plans. The panel will submit their recommendation for the finalists and overall winner of UK Town of Culture 2028 to the Secretary of State for DCMS, who will make the final decision.

DCMS aims to announce the UK Town of Culture 2028 winners in early 2027

3. Measures of success

- 3.1 A successful application from a community led bid which supports the forthcoming anniversary of Cumbernauld, while fostering a sense of local pride and strengthening of the community.

4. Supporting documentation

No supporting documentation.



Lyall Rennie
Chief Officer (Community Operations)

5. Impacts

<p>5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.2 Financial impact Does the report contain any financial impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.3 HR policy impact Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.4 Legal impact Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
<p>5.5 Data protection impact Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>5.6 Technology / Digital impact Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi?</p>

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

Where the impact identifies a requirement for significant technology change, has an assessment been carried out (or is scheduled to be carried out) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)?

Yes No

5.7 Environmental / Carbon impact

Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

5.8 Communications impact

Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

Corporate Communications are involved in discussions around the Cumbernauld anniversary and will contribute to further project develops as appropriate.

5.9 Risk impact

Is there a risk impact?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed?

5.10 Armed Forces Covenant Duty

Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.

5.11 Children's rights and wellbeing impact

Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these?

Yes No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out?

Yes No