

**UK City of Culture**

**Consultation Response**

**March 2015**

**Introduction**

1. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport runs the competition for the UK City of Culture. Derry-Londonderry was the first UK City of Culture 2013, following a competitive selection process in 2009/10. Hull was selected as UK City of Culture 2017, following a competitive selection process in 2013.
2. Continuing the four year cycle would result in the next UK City of Culture year being held in 2021. However, due to the fact that the UK is scheduled to host a European Capital of Culture in 2023, the Government decided to review the timing of the next UK City of Culture competition.
3. A consultation was held to assess the appetite amongst potential candidate cities to bid for one or both titles, and the willingness and ability of finding organisations to support both the UK City of Culture and European Capital of Culture within a short timeframe.
4. The consultation also considered how the UK City of Culture competition works, and whether improvements or changes could be made to the model that is currently in place.
5. The consultation ran for 5 weeks, from 15 December 2014 to 23 January 2015. The consultation document was published on the GOV.UK website and sent directly to organisations, cities and bodies with an interest in the UK City of Culture competition.
6. The Government would like to thank all those who responded. In total, 22 responses were received. These included:

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| City councils | 10 (one council sent 2 written responses) |
| Council partnerships/organisations delivering council cultural services | 4 |
| Individuals | 3 |
| Organisations within the culture and/or tourism sector | 5 |

7. We also consulted the devolved administrations throughout this process.

**Summary of responses, and Government response**

1. The consultation contained two sections:

**UK City of Culture 2021**

***Should DCMS run a UK City of Culture 2021 competition?***

1. The first section of the consultation asked whether DCMS should run a UK City of Culture 2021 competition when the 2023 European Capital of Culture competition will also take place at the same time, in 2017.
2. It asked whether potential candidate cities would feel obliged to bid for only one title; whether stakeholders would realistically be able to support both competitions; and whether we should postpone UK City of Culture until 2025.
3. All respondents emphasised the importance of the UK City of Culture competition: particularly its ability to regenerate and transform cities and leave a lasting legacy. The majority (17 out of 22) felt that a competition **should** be held for 2021 to maintain the momentum and reputation of the programme, and build on its success. Some respondents felt that postponing the competition would devalue the programme, and make the title seem to be of secondary importance when compared to the European title.
4. One city has already started preparing bids for UK2021 and felt that postponing the competition would slow down the pace of their regeneration. Another respondent suggested that other cities have had 2021 as a key milestone in their regeneration strategies, and that postponing the 2021 competition could stifle their creativity.
5. Almost all respondents suggested that the UK City of Culture and European Capital of Culture programmes are completely separate competitions, different in scale and ambition, with different aims and criteria, but both of value. Some respondents suggested that cities are unlikely to want to bid for both.
6. Some respondents pointed out that we have hosted Olympics, Cultural Olympiad, WW1 centenary, Derry 2013 within a short timeframe. Two individuals, who had been involved with previous competitions, felt that we should capitalize on having 3 cities of culture in a 5-year timeframe. Similarly, two city councils felt we should celebrate having competitions in quick succession, given that culture is a catalyst for regeneration.
7. 4 respondents raised concerns about the impact that postponing the UK City of Culture 2021 could have on Hull as UK City of Culture 2017, suggesting that delaying the competition could affect the programme’s reputation, and therefore impact on Hull’s negotiations with funders, the public, and stakeholders.
8. 4 respondents suggested postponing the UK City of Culture 2021 because of the difficulty that funding bodies would have in supporting both the UK and European competitions. 1 other respondent suggested either holding a Year of Culture 2023 or bringing the competition forward to 2019.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE: DCMS will hold a UK City of Culture competition for 2021 to maintain the momentum of a programme which has wide-ranging benefits for cities across the UK.**

***When should the competition for the UK City of Culture 2021 take place?***

1. The consultation also sought views on when the UK City of Culture 2021 competition should take place: whether it should take place at the start of 2016 (before the European Capital of Culture competition begins at the end of 2016) or whether the competitions should be run simultaneously in 2017.
2. Responses were mixed in relation to the timing of the UK2021 bidding process. Of those who stated a preference, 7 felt that the bidding process should take place in 2017, alongside the European competition, to give cities sufficient time to prepare their bids, and/or to allow for one city to hand over to another in the 2017 year.
3. One respondent suggested that if the bidding process was brought forward to 2016 then the announcements around the winning city would detract from Hull’s communications the following year. The Welsh Government pointed out that there will be elections in the devolved administrations in 2016, meaning that cities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland might be precluded from engaging effectively with their Governments.
4. 7 respondents felt the competition should be brought forward to 2016 to avoid confusion between the two processes (suggesting, for example, that announcements about the European competition could detract from the UK competition), and to allow the winning city more time to plan for and fund its cultural programme.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE: The competitive process will run in 2017 to allow cities sufficient time to prepare bids, to enable the winning city to be announced in Hull 2017, and to avoid the competition clashing with elections in the devolved administrations.**

**Future of the UK City of Culture programme**

1. The second section of the consultation asked questions around how future UK City of Culture competitions should be funded (for example: whether bidding cities could be asked to pay an ‘entry fee’, or whether the winning city could pay for the whole of the next competition through sponsorship funds they might raise), as well as questions about what sort of organisation is required to support the UK City of Culture competition.
2. 11 respondents felt that the competition should continue to be managed by DCMS to ensure the programme has sufficient gravitas, to maintain neutrality and transparency, and to encourage cultural organisations to support the competition, and to ensure stability and continuity of the programme. Some suggested that DCMS should dedicate more resources to the programme, and be more proactive in managing it, particularly with regard to building links between partners and disseminating evidence on the impact of the programme.
3. 1 organisation stated that they would be prepared to manage the competition in collaboration with partners. However, other respondents felt that transferring the competition to another organisation would be tricky, due to organisational or geographical bias, and could pose risks over accountability and transparency.
4. While some respondents suggested that creating a new single purpose body could be costly, with issues over sustainability, independence, and accountability, 4 respondents felt that a separate organisation could do more to provide links with stakeholders, manage the transfer of knowledge, disseminate research into the impact of the programme, support cities throughout the process, build links between cities, and identify partners and sponsors.
5. Almost all respondents felt that an entry fee would act as a deterrent to bidding cities who already face substantial costs in preparing bid documents, and would undermine the principle of cities being able to enter the competition on a level playing field. 3 cities thought an entry fee would be acceptable, provided the fee wasn’t too high.
6. 1 respondent supported the idea of exploring whether the winning city could fund the entirety of the next competition through sponsorship. Other respondents suggested that sponsorship is too volatile and dependent on external factors. 2 respondents pointed out that Derry-Londonderry didn’t meet its sponsorship target. However, some respondents felt DCMS could do more to explore the idea of national sponsorship for the whole competition.

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE: DCMS will continue to manage the UK City of Culture competition. DCMS will now consider whether the department can do more to support the programme, particularly in terms of building on and disseminating research about the impact of the UK City of Culture.**