

# The International Links Policy 2006-2009

## Contents

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Foreword – by Councillor Roger Stone, Leader of the Council.....	2
Why is international work important? .....	2
Rotherham as an international borough.....	4
Rotherham’s current international work .....	7
Future priorities for international work in Rotherham .....	8
1. To encourage cultural exchanges and visits.....	10
2. To develop international business and trade opportunities.....	12
3. To engage in appropriate aid and assistance work.....	13
4. To gain a better understanding of international issues .....	15
5. To raise the profile of international work .....	16
6. To ensure that current and future international links address equality and diversity issues .....	17
7. To develop partnerships with towns and areas facing similar economic and social regeneration challenges.....	18
Conclusions .....	19
Contacts / sources of information .....	20
Appendix A – Action Plan 2006/07 .....	21
Appendix B - Summary of International visits and exchanges 2006.....	25



## Foreword

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By Councillor Roger Stone  
Leader of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

**“Our aim in developing this International Links policy is to raise the profile of Rotherham on the international stage, promote international co-operation and maximise funding opportunities for the benefit of Rotherham people, in accordance with our agreed priorities.**



In today's world there is growing recognition of the impact international events and issues as varied as the expansion of the European Union, globalisation, fair trade or environmental disasters can have at local level, and the role local government can play in global matters. It is also recognised that there are many global challenges that we cannot solve on our own and we are more effective at dealing with them in partnership.

The importance of international co-operation has never been greater. As the elected member with responsibility for International issues I feel that it is essential that Rotherham has a robust international policy which clearly outlines the importance of engaging in international partnerships, their benefits and our current and future priorities in this respect. Rotherham is already working at an international level and this policy will allow us to ensure a more coherent approach to build on success so far and profile the positive aspects of international links.”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Stone', with a stylized flourish at the end.

## Why is international work important?

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The potential benefits of international activity are numerous and diverse, ranging from an improvement in community cohesion by breaking down stereotypes and celebrating diversity, engaging young people in worthwhile activities and raising aspirations, promoting trade in Rotherham, encouraging inward investment and providing overseas aid. The specific benefits will depend on the type of activity undertaken, but the proposed outcomes of all international activity should be clearly stated and subsequently evaluated in order to monitor achievement against set objectives.

The national focus for international partner working has moved away from the traditional twinning locations of Western Europe to focus on linking with poorer countries, and there are many high profile campaigns to support such projects.

The Local Government International Bureau (LGIB) has just launched a new international strategy to promote all forms of international co-operation and highlight the benefits of engagement in this type of activity. The objectives of the policy are:

- i. to encourage more involvement in international co-operation
- ii. to raise awareness of the existing level of activity and highlight the potential role for local government in international co-operation
- iii. to emphasise the equal validity of all forms of activity, ranging from formal twinning to development co-operation

- iv. to outline the variety of benefits available and their direct relationship to the function of local government
- v. to lend more legitimacy and therefore confidence to local government involvement in international co-operation.

Recommendations are also made that local authorities in England and Wales should:

- i. become more actively involved in all forms of international co-operation
- ii. adopt an international policy and develop a strategy for engagement and activities
- iii. appoint an elected member to promote the international dimension.

In 2005 the LGIB published an International Development Strategy in recognition of the key role that UK local government must play in supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 8 MDGs were agreed in September 2000 during the UN Millennium Summit attended by 189 heads of state and governments, and aim to reduce poverty and build a fairer and safer world by 2015. The Goals are:

1. To eradicate extreme hunger and poverty
2. To achieve universal primary education
3. To promote gender equality and empower women
4. To reduce child mortality
5. To improve maternal health
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. To ensure environmental sustainability
8. To develop a global partnership for development

The MDGs see human development as the key to sustainable social, economic and environmental progress in all countries.

The UK has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 1973. Being part of the EU enables the UK to maximise on the actions that the European nations do better when they work together including:

- removing trade barriers to boost growth and create jobs
- improving our environment
- improving standards and rights for consumers
- fighting international crime and illegal immigration
- bringing peace and stability to Europe by engaging with its neighbours
- giving Europe a more powerful voice in the world.

Rotherham, together with the other districts in South Yorkshire, has benefited for many years from funding from the EU to help regenerate the economy and create new jobs. Since 2000 South Yorkshire has received the highest level of structural funds support from the EU in the form of Objective 1 money to improve the economic performance of the sub region relative to other areas in the EU. Under the Objective 1 programme South Yorkshire received over £730 million via the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) which aims to stimulate economic development and regeneration and the European Social Fund (ESF) designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion and support the Employment Action Plan. To date Rotherham has secured £26 million and has also directly benefited from many county-wide projects.

A new Structural Funds programme is currently being negotiated for the period 2007-2013 which will see South Yorkshire and hence Rotherham receive a much reduced level of funding. This is due to the improvements to our economic performance over the last 7 years, but also the enlargement of the EU which has seen the accession of relatively poorer countries who require higher levels of support to raise their economies to the EU average. Nevertheless, South Yorkshire will receive significant levels of transitional support from the EU.

One of the requirements of the EU Structural Funds support is that a minimum of 75% of the funding received must be spent on activities to support the EU Lisbon Agenda. The Lisbon Strategy was agreed in 2000, committing the EU to becoming the most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion and respect for the environment by 2010. During 2005 the Lisbon Strategy underwent a mid term review and was relaunched.

The Strategy now focuses on jobs and growth and has three strategic objectives:

- making Europe a more attractive place to invest and work
- knowledge and innovation for growth
- creating more and better jobs.

Future priorities for international work in Rotherham, as outlined in this strategy will take into account the Lisbon Agenda and its strategic objectives.

Increasingly European funding opportunities outside of the Structural Funds programme require an element of partnership working to secure funding for proposals. This is to encourage and promote trans-national working to facilitate the sharing of information and ideas between EU Member States, promote cohesion and develop European relations. Effort to build international partnerships can take time, so work to promote international links of any kind can provide the foundation for future joint work to secure European funds to progress projects of mutual interest.

The Yorkshire and Humber European Office in Brussels is a resource which aims to promote the region's strengths in Europe and secure influence for our region over future EU policies and legislation. They offer a variety of practical services including:

- a partner search facility for authorities wishing to develop trans-national projects
- notification of new funding opportunities being offered by the EU.
- general information about EU policy development

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) launched a strategy in 2004 entitled 'Putting the World into World Class Education' which underlines the importance of equipping young people to work in a global economy, engaging with international partners and maximising the UK's contribution to overseas trade and inward investment. In line with this strategy many schools in Rotherham have developed links with schools in other countries.

## **Rotherham as an international borough**

The Community Strategy and Corporate Plan - and future Community Action Plans – will identify clear priorities which will drive the whole process of external funding within the Council.

The Community Strategy describes the future vision for the borough and the priorities, key targets and actions that partner organisations across Rotherham have committed to achieving, working individually and collaboratively, in partnership.

There are five strategic themes which will direct the future work of the Rotherham Partnership and together with two cross-cutting themes, provide the strategic framework for the 2020 Vision:

Rotherham Achieving  
Rotherham Learning  
Rotherham Alive  
Rotherham Safe  
Rotherham Proud

## Fairness Sustainable Development

These strategic themes are also echoed in the Corporate Plan, which outlines the Council's role in delivering the Community Strategy for Rotherham. The Corporate Plan outlines the priorities that will be delivered over the next five years to support the local economy, promote the health and well-being of local people, provide an environment where they can enjoy their lives to the full and provide them with easier access to even better services.

The contribution that the International Links Policy makes to the Community Strategy is shown through the links between each of the seven objectives and the Community Strategy themes.

Rotherham's place as an international borough has been boosted by the recent opening of Robin Hood Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA) conveniently located close to the north borough border, and only 6 miles from the Rotherham boundary. This greatly improves accessibility in and out of the area, and flights are available from DSA to a wide range of international destinations.

There are approximately 90 overseas companies located in Rotherham, employing around 7,000 people. About 50 of these companies originate from Europe, employing approximately 4,700 people. In addition there are many international links with local businesses exporting all over the world. A good example of this is Martek Marine who since commencing trading in 2000 have developed total export sales in more than 60 countries representing 80% of annual sales in the last year.

Rotherham regularly plays host to numerous visitors from around the world; the visitors' book in the Visitors' Centre from 2005/6 includes entries from places as far apart as India, Taiwan, Greece, USA, New Zealand, Malta, Poland and Australia among others. Many of the schools in Rotherham have partnerships with schools in other countries and often organise for groups of international students to visit the borough. Young People's Services also regularly invite groups of young people to visit from abroad. The Visitor Centre in Rotherham town centre opened in 2003 and is a valuable source of information for visitors to the town, providing a comprehensive reference collection of guides, street plans, maps, and events leaflets, in addition to a wide range of Rotherham merchandise.

International-themed events are organised in the town, including regular continental markets which give local people the chance to sample produce from across Europe. International events such as International Women's Day are celebrated in the town by a range of agencies including RMBC. A Diversity Festival is held each year alongside the Rotherham Show in September and recognises the diversity of Rotherham's communities.

According to 2001 Census data, the size of Rotherham's ethnic minority community is 3.1% of the total population, which is significantly lower than the average of 8.7% for England and Wales. The largest ethnic group within Rotherham is Pakistani with 1.9% of the total population. More recently there have been refugees and asylum seekers from Iran, Iraq, French-speaking African countries and migrant workers from Eastern Europe since the expansion of the EU.

Rotherham libraries are an important resource for people arriving in Rotherham, and are well-used by the asylum seeker and refugee communities. There is free internet access and everyone is entitled to an email account which can provide a much needed link with friends and family in other countries. There are books and other resources available in several languages. They also run a Home from Home project which seeks to encourage those asylum seekers and refugees who are new to the area to improve their literacy and conversational skills and learn more about the English way of life. Also based in the Central

Library is a designated European Public Information Centre (EPIC) which is one of a network of centres around the country and holds a range of information on European issues.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has a Translation and Interpretation Service (ITS) based in Adult Services which helps improve the access of Social and Health Care Services for members of the Ethnic Minority Community residing in Rotherham whose first language is not English. The Interpretation and Translation Service is now widely used by all Council services and other agencies external to the Council. This service will assist the members of the non-English speaking community in their dealing with council departments and facilitate their access to services provided by all other agencies involved in community care. This service will also assist these people in exercising their right to full and informed participation in the planning, delivery and receipt of such services.

The International School Award is an accreditation scheme for curriculum-based international work in schools and is open to all schools from all sectors across the UK. Schools are encouraged to develop an international ethos in the school, develop year-round international curriculum-based work with partner schools, and involve the wider community and the majority of the pupils. Schools that gain the Award are given accreditation for three years and can then re-apply to renew their Award to reflect their current achievements. The scheme is supported and funded by the DfES, who are keen for all schools to gain the award over time. Wales High School in Rotherham has held an International School Award since 2003 in recognition of their extensive international programme. Wales High has active links with Sri Lanka, Paraguay, Korea, Romania, France and Zanzibar and uses these partnerships to successfully enhance work across all subject areas.

Rotherham became a Fair Trade town in 2006 in recognition of the significant levels of awareness and understanding of the concept of Fairtrade within the communities. Fairtrade seeks to ensure that disadvantaged producers in Third World countries get a better deal from international trade. The purpose of Fairtrade is not merely to avoid exploitation of suppliers but to help make a real improvement to people's lives. Fairtrade is essentially about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. It is an example of how people can influence global issues at a local level and has attracted much enthusiasm and interest because everyone can easily get involved.

Rotherham Young People's Services offer an accreditation opportunity for all young people who take part in International Youth Work through the Open College Network (OCN) accredited *Introduction to Independent Travel* course. In 2005 around 40 young people in Rotherham were accredited for their involvement in international work. This included young people who went to Morocco or Tanzania and young people who took part in work placements in Romania. All young people follow an accredited preparatory course before taking part in an international visit and some then put their file forward for accreditation. The course covers a range of topics including: teambuilding, culture, globalisation, health and safety and details specific to the visit, for example the programme, travel, climate, language, and health issues. Young People's Services are also in the process of writing a generic course specifically to cover their international work which will be accredited through the OCN or other organisation.

The Rotherham Chamber led a delegation to Nashville in Tennessee to attend the Global ATHENA Awards in March 2006. For 20 years, the ATHENA Foundation has advocated for women's leadership by recognising individuals who are achieving professional excellence, giving back to their communities and opening doors of leadership for women. Rotherham Chamber brought the prestigious ATHENA programme to Europe for the first time in 2005 after having discovered the ATHENA Foundation during a benchmarking visit to Youngstown Chamber in Ohio, USA.

## **Rotherham's current international work**

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For RMBC, participation with any twinning arrangement or international link should be based upon its direct relevance and contribution to the Corporate Plan and the Community Strategy. The local authority has a power to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of its community. The international link should have a beneficial impact for people in Rotherham.

The local authority can benefit from international links by improved service delivery through sharing information and expertise, increased international awareness leading to more effective global participation, access to more European funding via collaborative working with other countries and development opportunities for elected members and officers, including the opportunity to work with a wider range of people, leading to a better understanding of diverse cultures in the local communities.

RMBC's international work is currently overseen by a committee that meets bi-monthly to discuss proposals and forthcoming events. The committee also takes decisions on the allocation of grants to groups travelling to the twin town of St Quentin. In addition to the RMBC committee, there is an International Links Partners' Group which acts as a forum for individuals from a variety of organisations who are involved with international work in various forms. This group also meets bi-monthly. A review of the committee structure is currently underway to ensure that the most effective work practice is employed.

A range of networks have been established to enable officers working in the field of European and International links to share information and expertise, collaborate and improve efficiency through joint working. These include:

- Yorkshire and Humber European Officers Network
- South Yorkshire Collaborative working group on European and International Links
- Regional Twinning Officers Network
- Youth Work Unit – Regional International Youth Work Team.

Communities and partner agencies can also benefit from international work by improving relationships between communities, enhancing young people's provision and education and helping to improve public discussion and engagement on major global and local issues, such as the EU, racism and social exclusion. Businesses can also benefit from international contact which leads to commercial transactions and trading or to the exchange of technical knowledge to improve business efficiency and service delivery.

Rotherham's only current official twinning link is with Saint Quentin in France. The partnership began in 1990 when a Twinning Agreement was signed by the two towns. It is a very active partnership with some well-established links and new ones continually being formed. The support from politicians and officers in both towns was reinforced during a meeting held in October 2005 to evaluate the twinning link. St Quentin's location in the North of France makes it accessible (and affordable) to groups wishing to visit from Rotherham, and for many young people it is their first experience of travelling abroad. Examples of joint projects between Rotherham and Saint Quentin in 2005/6 have included: football team exchanges, work experience placements, school study visits, joint youth project, charity cycle ride between the two towns, junior school exchange, and exchange of information and expertise on priority issues.

There is an annual budget of £10,000 allocated to town twinning which is used to support groups visiting St Quentin, and groups from our twin town visiting Rotherham. It also covers the cost of the annual civic visit and some other joint activities. There is currently no specific budget allocated to other international links.

In addition to the official twinning link, RMBC has connections with many other parts of the world. For example, there is a partnership agreement between Rotherham and Riesa in the

East of Germany, which was signed in 1998, with the aim of sharing best practice and ideas around regeneration following the demise of the steel industry in both towns. The partnership was reactivated in 2004 after several years of lying dormant, and is now vibrant. A very successful long-term work experience programme has been set up between Riesa University and *ALcontrol Laboratories* in Templeborough, which provides invaluable work experience to the German undergraduates and enthusiastic, qualified volunteers to ALcontrol. In 2006 there have also been other work experience placements, a catering students study trip, participation in the Riesa dragon boat race, and performances in Riesa by the Rotherham Schools Youth Orchestra.

Several years ago, Rotherham was involved in a link with Sergeevka, near Odessa, on the Black Sea in southern Ukraine. Recently there has been some interest in re-establishing these links with a view to accessing the tourism market and developing international business and trade opportunities. Further discussions need to be held to determine the appropriateness of developing such a link.

Rotherham is currently involved with two municipalities in Bosnia-in-Herzegovina (namely Tuzla and Zenica), as part of the Beacon Council scheme for local economic development. Delegates from the two areas visited Rotherham in June 2006, with a reciprocal visit planned for September 2006. This activity is part of a wider UK and Bosnia scheme co-ordinated by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The two areas are steel and mining communities and the potential joint work is initially around regeneration and economic development.

Rotherham is involved in various aid and assistance projects, giving support to international partners on specific issues. Young People's Services are extremely active in this area with long-term, sustainable projects in Tanzania and Nepal and a more recent link established with Romania. Aston Comprehensive School has a well-established and nationally recognised partnership with Makunduchi in Zanzibar, and in addition to cultural visits and exchanges, work experience and curriculum development, they have developed Aston Trade, a fair trade project to raise money for the Makunduchi school by selling local handicrafts from Zanzibar in Rotherham.

At the end of 2004 a survey of international links was carried out across the borough to gain a better understanding of the types of international projects that Rotherham people were involved in. The results were extremely positive and showed that there are links with over 25 countries around the world, and of many different types including school exchanges, work experience, trade and export links, aid work and links between sports clubs and other organisations. The results also highlighted a lack of knowledge about existing links and very limited information sharing. It was decided that an international links policy should be developed for Rotherham in order to co-ordinate and focus RMBC's international work programme and to share this with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in order to develop an LSP approach to international work.

### **Future priorities for international work in Rotherham**

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From a consultation process, the seven objectives outlined on the following pages were agreed as part of the International Links policy framework. The objectives are already being met to varying degrees and examples have been listed under each one to show what is being done, as well as what more could be done in the future. The Vision themes which the objectives relate to and support have been shown in order to demonstrate how international work contributes to wider corporate priorities.

All of the objectives are important and could contribute to RMBC's Corporate Plan and Community Strategy. Consultation with Elected Members showed interest in a range of activity, which mirrors a central objective of the LGIB's new international policy launched in



2006 which underlines the equal validity of all types of international work. Members did however assign particular importance to the first three objectives:

1. To encourage cultural exchanges and visits; helping to break down stereotypes, increase global awareness and understanding, offer opportunities for language learning, and present exciting possibilities for international work experience, professional development and aid work.
2. To develop international business and trade opportunities – maximising inward investment, export opportunities, information sharing and the promotion of Rotherham businesses abroad.
3. To engage in appropriate aid and assistance work in other countries.

## Objective 1

**To encourage cultural exchanges and visits; helping to break down stereotypes, increase global awareness and understanding, offer opportunities for language learning, and present exciting possibilities for international work experience and professional development.**

### **[Rotherham PROUD, Rotherham ALIVE, Rotherham LEARNING]**

#### Current work

- Many Rotherham schools have established links with schools in other countries, and the importance of 'global education' is now nationally recognised. The school links in Rotherham range from virtual ones to physical exchanges, from subject-focused to full-school participation, from well-established to newly-formed, and with locations in Europe, Asia, Africa and America.
- A successful, sustainable programme of student work placements has been set up between the University in Riesa and ALcontrol Laboratories at Templeborough. The placements give invaluable international work experience to the German students, provide ALcontrol with experienced, qualified volunteers, and strengthen the Rotherham-Riesa partnership. A variety of work placements have also been organised within the Council for young people from other countries. In 2005/6, young people from Bulgaria, France, Germany and Slovenia were all hosted on placements relevant to their area of interest.
- A new partnership has been set up between the catering division at Rotherham College and the *Qualifizierungszentrum* catering school in Riesa, allowing exchanges of students and a sharing of skills and ideas.
- Rotherham Schools orchestra has recently performed in Riesa and St Quentin and established links with the music schools in both towns.
- Young players from the Rugby Club in Rotherham represented the town at the annual dragon boat race in Riesa in 2005. They have been invited back for 2006 and will combine it with a training camp.
- A folk group from Cluj Napoca in Romania performed in Rotherham in July 2006, giving local people the chance to experience traditional Romanian dance.
- Rotherham Young People's Services have developed a wide variety of long term international opportunities, with partners across the world. In 2005/6 these have included: participating in an international conference in Morocco with young people from six other African and European countries, work experience in an orphanage in Romania, and supporting a school and orphanage in Tanzania.

#### Future work

- Continue to encourage and support the links between Rotherham schools and organisations and partners abroad.
- Aim to strengthen existing links and make them more sustainable and self-reliant, so that less support is required which will enable requests for new exchanges to be accommodated.
- Secure funding to host an international Youth Conference in 2007 in conjunction with partners with the aim of fostering cross-cultural understanding and

communication. Consider linking this with the International Youth work training opportunities, developed through the regional Youth Work Unit.

- To support language learning, produce a quick reference guide in French and German for people taking part in visits to those countries.
- Provide support to international exchange students on placement within RMBC.
- Young People's Services to participate in a developmental project during 2007/8 with organisations in Pakistan, 'Engaging Community Youth Forums', through the British Council in Islamabad. Six local authorities will be involved and each one will link with one youth forum in Pakistan. The project will include regular contact between young people through video conferencing, e-mailing and letters, plus two visits to the UK from Pakistani young people, and one visit from UK young people to Pakistan.
- Continue to develop and diversify existing partnerships, for example with St Quentin and Riesa, within available resources.

## Objective 2

**To develop international business and trade opportunities – maximising inward investment, export opportunities, information sharing and the promotion of Rotherham businesses abroad.**

### **[Rotherham ACHIEVING]**

#### Current work

- There are currently around 90 overseas companies located in Rotherham, employing approximately 7,000 people. Around 50 of these companies originate from Europe, employing approximately 4,700 people.
- There are many international links with local businesses exporting all over the world. A good example of this is Martek Marine who since commencing trading in 2000 has developed export sales in more than 60 countries representing 80% of annual sales in the last year. They were announced 16th fastest growing company in the prestigious Sunday Times Fast Track 100.
- Rotherham recently hosted a delegation of Bosnian officials who were keen to learn about our work on supporting new businesses. As a result of the work the LGIB are involved in an initiative to establish a Beacon Councils scheme in Bosnia-Herzegovina, they recommended Rotherham to act as a 'mentor' authority and share examples of good practice with Bosnia.

#### Future work

- Maximise opportunities to promote Rotherham and local businesses abroad via appropriate networking opportunities.
- Ensure that 'mainstream' deliverers of international trade links (e.g. South Yorkshire International Trade Centre) are aware of RMBC's priorities and we engage them where relevant with any actions and activities arising from international links/work.
- Any potential inward investment activity (including marketing overseas) can be co-ordinated through the RiDO office, utilising the UK Trade & Investment teams overseas, where necessary.
- The Head of RiDO recently visited Nashville in Tennessee to participate in the Athena Awards Ceremony. As a result of the recent visit to Nashville, there are negotiations underway regarding :
  - arranging flights to local airports and tourism initiatives,
  - and Destination Management Partnership – a South Yorkshire Tourism Marketing Programme,as well as a Young People's Reading Project and linkages between schools.

## Objective 3

### **To engage in appropriate aid and assistance work in other countries.**

#### **[Rotherham SAFE]**

RMBC is currently involved in several projects providing assistance and aid to poorer countries. Many of these are through Young People's Services. There are many countries in the world who would welcome aid and careful thought needs to be given to how resources can be used most effectively. With aid work there is a danger of appearing patronising or providing well-meant gifts or materials that are completely useless because they are not what the partner community needs or wants. Consultation with partners is essential to understand their issues and priorities.

It is also worth remembering that aid and assistance work holds benefits for the 'giver' as well as the 'receiver'.

#### Current work

- Young People's Services project in Tanzania with the J.K Nyerere school in Moshi and orphanage in Machame, supporting their educational needs through group work, small project work, resources and visits – offering a link with other parts of the world.
- Work with Cluj-Napoca in Romania led by RMBC Social Services - exchange visits by managers and assistance given to the officials in Cluj-Napoca for the foundations of new partnerships and new services for older people, children, and people suffering with HIV/AIDS, as well as partnership working on tackling issues associated with drugs and substance misuse.
- Romania aid work – Young People's Services, in partnership with the Prince's Trust, are involved with a project with young unemployed adults, including care leavers, from Rotherham working in an orphanage in Romania.
- Long term lottery-funded project (since 1997) with Lungthung village in eastern Nepal, supporting health and education needs – employment of health & education workers, volunteer visits, scholarships and resources.
- Initial discussions about creating a link with a village in the Kashmir region of Pakistan. The majority of Pakistanis living in Rotherham come from the Kashmir area and many have friends and family there. It would therefore be a natural place for Rotherham to link with. Money raised following the earthquake was donated to the READ (Rural Education And Development) Foundation towards building a school in Kashmir. A councillor and a police officer from Rotherham and a voluntary aid group visited Pakistan during the earthquake to take medical supplies and money to villages affected by the disaster.

#### Future work

- Consider how to best progress setting up a valuable and sustainable link with Pakistan. South Yorkshire police have strong links with Pakistan and Young People's Services have previously organised exchanges to the area so this knowledge and expertise can be drawn on. Consider involving Friends of Lungthung (Nepal), and staff involved in aid work in Tanzania and Zanzibar, for advice and support in how best to develop a sustainable link.
- Support the development of appropriate aid and assistance projects as able within available resources.

- Explore the benefits of future collaborative work with Cluj-Napoca. Participate in an official visit there in September 2006.
- Consider the development of more international volunteering opportunities, as both a hosting and sending organisation.

## Objective 4

**To gain a better understanding of international issues, including a thorough grasp of European policy and funding thus increasing RMBC's influence at local, regional, national and international level and maximising funding opportunities and the benefit for Rotherham communities.**

**[Rotherham ACHIEVING, Rotherham LEARNING, Rotherham PROUD]**

### Current work

- RMBC Officer representation on the regional European Officers' Network which reports in to the national group organised by the LGIB.
- The European Public Information Centre in the Central Library provides up-to-date information on a range of European issues.
- Provide comments on European policies that are relevant to the work of the local authority. For example RMBC have contributed towards consultation on the National Strategic Reference Framework and the Assisted Areas map which will influence how EU Structural Funds will be allocated in England and how funds can be spent within the programme period from 2001-2013.
- Young People's Services are represented on the Yorkshire & Humberside International Team, which is the regional committee for Connect Youth, the national body for accessing European funding for international youth activities.

### Future work

- Develop a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to distributing information on funding to the relevant officers and partners.
- Consider available funding opportunities and develop appropriate project proposals with international partners to secure funding for international projects which will benefit Rotherham.
- Promote available funding and encourage groups and individuals to apply where appropriate.
- Benefit from the LGIB's International Cooperation Officer Network, a consultative forum which was set up in late 2005 to keep local government informed of developments in international cooperation work and share good practice.
- Enhance Rotherham's relationship with the Yorkshire and Humber Brussels Office in order to increase our awareness of European policies and relevant issues and in doing so become more influential on a European level.
- Continue to provide policy comments and briefings on European issues and distribute the information more effectively to raise awareness of how the European dimension is relevant to the work of the local authority and partners.
- Play more of a part in South Yorkshire related work via the city region, especially with regard to trade and business opportunities internally that support Rotherham.

## Objective 5

**To raise the profile of international work through improved communication and promotion to ensure as many people as possible can benefit from the links.**

### **[Rotherham PROUD, Rotherham FAIRNESS]**

#### Current work

- An International Links Partners' group was established in 2004 as a forum to share information, promote events and best practice and develop partner working on international issues.
- One article on an international theme is included in each issue of Rotherham Council Matters. Since being agreed in early 2006, this has had some positive results with each article published so far creating interest and generating enquiries from members of the public.
- Regular press releases issued via RMBC communications team to local press.
- Rotherham Young People's Services organised a regional conference at Rotherham International Centre, promoting International Youth opportunities.
- European and International links were identified by the South Yorkshire Chief Executives as issues for greater collaborative working between the four districts in the sub region. Agreement has been reached on sharing information and the workload around notification of EU funding opportunities, EU policy news and analysis and responding to EU policy consultations.

#### Future work

- Gain recognition for good practice and innovation in international work by considering a submission to the Council of Europe's *Europe Prize*. The Europe Prize was set up in 1955 to recognise engagement between local and regional authorities with European partners. Applicants must show what action they have taken under 9 headings around significant contact with other European towns, and the promotion of Europe in their home town.
- Develop current international links, to involve more officers, elected members and Rotherham residents to maximise the benefits of the link. Prepare an annual action plan of work to be undertaken with each international partner/link.
- Produce an annual report on international activity and circulate appropriately to raise awareness of the international work that is taking place.
- Consider the existing committee structure and how it can work to best effect.
- Enhance collaborative working, related to international links, across the sub region in order to make best use of our limited resources.
- Consider how more effective cross Programme Area and partner working might increase the benefits of, and strengthen, existing international links. Initially this will include the establishment of a network of people willing to support and facilitate international links eg. via exchange visits, translation, etc



## Objective 6

**To ensure that current and future international links address equality and diversity issues by involving people from a range of geographical areas and communities of interest.**

### **[Rotherham FAIRNESS]**

#### Current work

- Promotes community cohesion by facilitating opportunities that lead to a better understanding of diverse cultures in the local community.
- A project with a group of Asian girls from Rotherham to spend a week in St Quentin working on activities with French young people learning about cultural differences.
- A private visit of older people from Rotherham to St Quentin to explore the twin town and surrounding area, including members of the Access Liaison disability group who previously visited St Quentin in 2003.
- A condition of the travel grants awarded to groups visiting St Quentin is that no person be excluded from the visit because they are unable to afford the costs.

#### Future work

- Consider groups that might have not been involved in international work and be more proactive in promoting opportunities to these groups. Investigate funding to develop a new project aimed at involving disadvantaged groups in international opportunities - could be based on the Access to Adventure & Travel Project, which was funded through SRB 3 in Rotherham from 1997 to 2003.
- Ensure future international links align with Rotherham's priorities in order for projects to achieve maximum benefits for people in Rotherham through the development of appropriate assessment criteria.
- Collate data relating to age, gender and race of individuals taking part in international projects in order to identify any groups that might not be engaged in international work and identify potential barriers to their involvement.

## Objective 7

**To develop partnerships with towns and areas facing similar economic and social regeneration challenges in order to develop our collaborative knowledge around economic and social restructure.**

### **[Rotherham ACHIEVING, Rotherham LEARNING]**

#### Current work

- The partnership with Riesa in the East of Germany was established due to the towns' similar heritage as coal and steel towns. The town of Riesa is currently struggling to reduce a high unemployment rate of over 15% and is very interested to learn from Rotherham's experience in regenerating the economy. There is currently an active programme of events between Rotherham and Riesa.
- St Quentin have been particularly interested to learn about the work undertaken in Rotherham on economic and social regeneration. A presentation to the Senator-Mayor in St Quentin was hugely successful in promoting current and future regeneration projects in Rotherham. As a direct result, the Senator-Mayor will visit in person and will use examples from Rotherham in his paper to the Senate on the regeneration of French towns.
- The Commonwealth Local Government Forum is setting up a pilot database of senior local government practitioners who would be willing to provide practical advice and assistance to other Commonwealth countries. RMBC Corporate Management Team agreed to support appropriate officers who were interested in applying. Senior officers from the Council registered expressions of interest.
- RMBC was selected by the LGIB to host a 2-day visit in June 2006, looking at Supporting New Businesses for the municipalities of Tuzla and Zenica in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as part of the Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) Beacon Scheme. Both areas have an economic background in coal and steel and during the visit it became apparent that many similarities and a potential for future collaboration existed. A reciprocal visit has been organised by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to BiH in September 2006.

#### Future work

- Be more proactive in learning from international partners on specific issues.
- Be more proactive in promoting our knowledge, success and experience to other partners.
- Investigate the potential for future collaborative work with local authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Participate in a reciprocal visit to BiH in September 2006.
- Investigate the potential benefits of re-establishing the link with Sergeevka in the Ukraine.

## **Conclusions**

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In order to focus international work in Rotherham and to clarify what we want to achieve, it was decided to produce an annual action plan drawing on the 'future work' identified under each objective. The action plan will reflect the particular emphasis that has been placed by Members on the three objectives related to cultural exchanges and visits, business and trade opportunities and aid and assistance. The plan will be reviewed at the end of the financial year and a report produced and circulated showing the work that has taken place during that year measured against the set targets. It is envisaged that the International Links Policy will be revised in 2009 and the objectives will be reviewed at that stage.

Appendix A shows the Action Plan for 2006/7.

Appendix B shows a summary of international visits and exchanges for 2006.

## **Contacts / sources of information**

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The following resources are a useful starting point for information about international work.

The **European Public Information Centre (EPIC)** is located upstairs in the Central Library in Rotherham and contains current information on a range of European issues.

Rotherham Central Library  
Walker Place  
Rotherham S65 1JH  
Tel: 01709 823611/823606  
e-mail:central.library@rotherham.gov.uk

The **South Yorkshire International Trade Centre** is a regional support organisation dedicated to supporting local companies in all aspects of international trade.

[www.syitc.com](http://www.syitc.com)

Albion House  
Savile Street  
Sheffield  
S4 7UD  
Tel: 0114 201 2555

The **Development Education Centre (South Yorkshire)** – DECSY- works with teachers and others involved in education, promoting a development and global perspective in the curriculum. Based at Scotia Works in Sheffield.

[info@decsy.org.uk](mailto:info@decsy.org.uk)

Tel: 0845 458 2957 or 0114 241 2750

### **Local Government International Bureau (LGIB)**

[www.lgib.gov.uk](http://www.lgib.gov.uk)

The LGIB is the European and International arm of the Local Government Association. They work to represent UK local government within Europe and the Wider World.

### **UK Local Government Alliance for International Development**

<http://www.lgib.gov.uk/lg-alliance/index.html>

The Alliance is made up of 5 key local government agencies with backing from the British government, and aims to increase understanding of the importance of international development issues in local government.

The **Global Gateway** website was launched in 2004 by the British Council to facilitate educational partnerships between schools and colleges across the world.

[www.globalgateway.org.uk](http://www.globalgateway.org.uk)

The **READ Foundation** (Rural Education And Development) is an organisation working to provide education and training opportunities for young people in Pakistan.

[www.readfoundation.org.uk](http://www.readfoundation.org.uk)

## Appendix A – Action Plan 2006/07

FUTURE WORK	2006/07 ACTION	LEAD
<b>Objective 1 – To develop cultural exchanges and visits</b>		
Continue to encourage and support the links between Rotherham schools and organisations and partners abroad.	Deliver projects as per Appendix B.	CXD/ALL
Aim to strengthen existing links and make them more sustainable and self-reliant, so that less support is required which will enable requests for new exchanges to be accommodated.	Identify suitable projects capable of becoming self sustaining in 2006/07.	CXD
Secure funding to host an international Youth Conference in conjunction with partners with the aim of fostering cross-cultural understanding and communication. Consider linking this with the international Youth Work Training Opportunities, developed through the regional Youth Work Unit.	Put together a proposal for EU funding from the EU Active Citizenship budget.	CXD
Consider how international links can tie in to work being carried out across the Council on language learning.	To support language learning, produce a quick reference guide in French and German for people taking part in visits to those countries.	CXD/ ALL
Provide support to international exchange students on placement within RMBC.	Provide appropriate support as required.	ALL – host PA to lead
Participate in a developmental project with organisations in Pakistan, 'Engaging Community Youth Forums', through the British Council in Islamabad.	Set up the project and deliver preparatory work with Rotherham Young People.	CYP Services
Continue to develop and diversify existing partnerships, for example with St Quentin and Riesa, within available resources.	Deliver projects as per Appendix B and consider proposals from partner towns for future projects.	CXD / ALL
<b>Objective 2 – To develop international business and trade opportunities.</b>		
Maximise opportunities to promote Rotherham and local businesses abroad via appropriate networking opportunities.	Identify appropriate opportunities, assuring they align with the objectives of this policy.	EDS
Maximise inward investment potential through international links	Through Yorkshire Forward, North of England office, UKTI – ensure relevant international links, visits etc have considered inward	EDS

	investment activity.	
Develop the contact made with Nashville to benefit Rotherham in line with current policies and priorities.	Pursue the current negotiations on tourism initiatives.	
<b>Objective 3 - To engage in appropriate aid and assistance work</b>		
Consider how to best progress setting up a valuable and sustainable link with Pakistan.	Set up a working group to scope potential projects	ALL
Support the development of appropriate aid and assistance projects as able within available resources.	Identify suitable projects to support as opportunities arise	ALL
Explore the benefits of future collaborative work with Cluj-Napoca.	Participate in an official visit to Cluj-Napoca in Autumn 2006.	ALL
Consider the development of more international volunteering opportunities, as both a hosting and sending organisation.	Gather intelligence on what other local organisations are doing on volunteering, and consider RMBC involvement.	ALL
<b>Objective 4 - To gain a better understanding of international issues</b>		
Develop a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to distributing information on funding to the relevant officers and partners.	Via South Yorkshire collaborative working share information and workload around notification of EU funding opportunities, EU policy news and analysis and responding to EU policy consultations	CXD
Promote available funding and encourage groups and individuals to apply where appropriate.	Develop intelligence around funding opportunities from European sources and to support international projects.	CXD
	Distribute relevant information via Partners Group, Rotherham Matters and existing contacts.	CXD
Benefit from the LGIB's International Cooperation Officer Network, a consultative forum to keep local government informed of developments in international cooperation work and share good practice.	Rotherham to join network, liaise at a regional level with officers about regional representation, ensure systems are in place for effective dissemination of information.	CXD
Enhance Rotherham's relationship with the Yorkshire and Humber Brussels Office.	Rotherham to become more active within the Yorkshire and Humber European Officers Network	CXD
Continue to provide policy comments and briefings on European issues and distribute the information more effectively to raise awareness of how the European	Include international/ European issues in regular briefings for elected members and senior officers.	CXD

dimension is relevant to the work of the local authority.	Disseminate information to the international committee as appropriate.  Develop intelligence on emerging European policy issues. Take part in appropriate consultation exercises.	
<b>Objective 5 – To raise the profile of international work.</b>		
Gain recognition for good practice and innovation in international work.	Scope out the process for applying for the Council of Europe's European Prize in December 2007.	CXD / ALL
Develop current international links to involve more officers, elected members and Rotherham residents. Prepare an annual action plan of work to be undertaken with each international partner/link.	Plan the Civic visit from St Quentin in 2007 to co-incide with a high profile event to maximise benefits eg possibility of St Quentin having a stand at Rotherham Show	CXD
Produce an annual report on international activity and circulate appropriately to raise awareness of the international work that is taking place.	Produce first monitoring report and forward plan, including budget information, for April 2007	CXD / all to contribute
Consider the existing committee structure and how it can work to best effect.	Develop Terms of Reference for International Links Committee.  Develop the committee structure in consultation with the LSP.  Develop and strengthen the International Links Partners group via a review of the terms of reference and membership.	CXD
Enhance collaborative working, related to international links, across the sub region in order to make best use of our limited resources.	Take an active role in the South Yorkshire collaborative working group to influence activity across the sub region.	CXD
Consider how more effective cross programme area and partner working might increase the benefits for and strengthen existing international links.	Establish a network of people willing to support and facilitate international links eg via exchange visits, translation, etc	CXD
<b>Objective 6 - To ensure that current and future international links address equality and diversity issues</b>		
Consider groups that might have not been involved in international work and be more proactive in promoting	Promotion of international links work via appropriate events eg Diversity Festival.	ALL

opportunities to these groups.	<p>Scope, plan and prepare for an event in 2007.</p> <p>Investigate funding to develop a new project aimed at involving disadvantaged groups in international opportunities.</p>	
Ensure future international links align with Rotherham's priorities in order for projects to achieve maximum benefits for people in Rotherham.	Develop criteria for assessing the appropriateness and potential value of new and existing links, ensuring that they are inclusive and work to address equality and diversity and community cohesion issues in the borough.	CXD
Collate data relating to individuals taking part in international projects in order to identify any groups that might not be engaged in international work and identify potential barriers to their involvement.	Add questions on equalities data to the established monitoring process.	CXD
<b>Objective 7 - To develop partnerships with towns and areas facing similar economic and social regeneration challenges</b>		
Be more proactive in learning from international partners on specific issues.	Use visits to gain an understanding of relevant issues and how best practice can be applied to Rotherham.	ALL
Be more proactive in promoting our knowledge, success and experience to other partners.	Use available networks to promote our best practice and successes to partners.	ALL
Investigate the potential for future collaborative work with local authorities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.	Visit BiH – September 2006 Investigate potential future collaboration and joint work.	EDS
Investigate the potential benefits of re-establishing the link with Sergeevka in the Ukraine.	Measure the value of potential collaboration with Sergeevka against the criteria which are being developed for assessing the appropriateness of future links.	CXD/ all



## Appendix B - Summary of International visits and exchanges 2006

7 Jan - 11 Feb	2 students from Riesa on work placement at ALcontrol laboratories	incoming	Riesa
4-6 February	Thomas Rotherham College group of students learning French to St Quentin	outgoing	St Quentin
9-12 February	Annual civic visit to St Quentin, including a presentation on Rotherham's economic developments to Senator-Mayor Pierre André	outgoing	St Quentin
12 Feb - 17 Mar	Students from Riesa on placement at ALcontrol.	incoming	Riesa
17 February – 13 March	Work placement at Lugoj orphanage in Romania, RYPS and Prince's Trust.	outgoing	Lugoj
3 – 24 March	Team Challenge in Romany Community House, Timisoara, Romania, RYPS and Prince's Trust	outgoing	Timosoara
27-31 March	Delegation from RMBC and the Rotherham Chamber to Nashville, Tennessee.	Outgoing	Nashville
3 March - 31 May	Matjaz Macek, youth worker from Slovenia on voluntary placement with Young People's Services, RMBC.	incoming	Slovenia
1 – 14 April	Visit to Kathmandu in Nepal, to evaluate a seven year aid project in Lungthung, supporting health and education in the village.	outgoing	Nepal
17-21 April	Wath Comprehensive School visit to St Quentin (football theme)	outgoing	St Quentin
14-18 May	Catering students from RCAT to Riesa for a catering themed visit.	outgoing	Riesa
18-21 May	Civic visit from St Quentin to Rotherham	incoming	St Quentin
22 - 26 May	Brinsworth Comprehensive School pupils visit to St Quentin	outgoing	St Quentin
7-8 June	Bosnian Beacon Councils 'mentoring' visit to Rotherham (EDS lead)	incoming	Bosnia
19-22 June	Mayor and delegation official visit to Kaiserslautern, Germany.	outgoing	Kaiserslautern
19-23 June	Aston Hall Junior School visit to St Quentin	outgoing	St Quentin
21-28 June	Charity cycle ride from Rotherham to St Quentin	outgoing	St Quentin
25 June - 6 Aug	Riesa students on work placement at Alcontrol laboratories.	incoming	Riesa
3 – 10 July	Cultural visit to Granada RYPS	Outgoing	Granada

9th July	Romanian folk concert from Cluj Napoca in Rotherham	incoming	Romania
24 July - 25 August	Nicolas Macke, university student from St Quentin on work placement in CX office, RMBC	incoming	St Quentin
1 – 15 August	Visit to Rotherham from 20 young people from Morocco RYPS	incoming	Morocco
7 Aug - 17 Sept	Riesa students on work placement at Alcontrol laboratories.	incoming	Riesa
August	Anti Fascist visit to Poland including a visit to Auschwitz RYPS	outgoing	Poland
August	Independent Travel visit to Prague and Berlin RYPS	outgoing	Prague/ Berlin
24-27 August	Dragon boat race in Riesa - Rotherham rugby club to participate.	outgoing	Riesa
September 1-5	Visit of approx 50 Rotherham over 50s to St Quentin.	outgoing	St Quentin
September 17-22	EDS reciprocal visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina to look at work relating to 'Supporting New Businesses' beacon award.	outgoing	Bosnia
September – dates tbc	Official visit to Cluj-Napoca to discuss the potential areas for future collaboration.	Outgoing	Romania
September - dates tbc	Visit of Senator-Mayor Pierre Andre to Rotherham, looking at developments in town.	incoming	St Quentin
1-5 October - tbc	Business delegation from Riesa to visit Rotherham	Incoming	Riesa
20 October – 10 November	Team Challenge in Lugoj and Timisoara, Romania, RYPS and Prince's Trust	Outgoing	Romania
20 – 27 October	Maltby Linx visit to Tarnow in Poland RYPS	Outgoing	Poland
November	Quentin Barré school from St Quentin visit Aston Hall Junior School.	incoming	St Quentin
December (late) tbc	Rotherham Schools orchestra to St Quentin to participate in Christmas Village	outgoing	St Quentin