

Magna Carta 800th Anniversary

Purpose of report

For update and information.

Summary

This paper provides Members with an update on planning for Magna Carta 800th Anniversary 2015. The paper provides a summary of the commemoration, the specific events planned and the LGA's role in the planning.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report and consider whether a further update in November would be helpful.

Actions

Subject to comments from the Board, officers to take forward any suggested actions.

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Magna Carta

Context

1. The Magna Carta is often highlighted as the cornerstone of individual liberty. Of the 63 clauses in the original document, the most important were clauses 39 and 40 which both established the fundamental principle that government must be subject to the law including the king. Therefore the document is often regarded as forming the basis for British democracy, the US constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. As the document was granted at Runnymede in June 1215, June 2015 will mark the 800th Anniversary of its signing and will act as the culmination to a series of build-up events. The anniversary will be commemorated across the free world and the programme of celebratory events be televised worldwide.
3. This is a key opportunity for local authorities to commemorate this important event with locally appropriate events and educational opportunities. Celebrations will provide two major benefits. Firstly there is huge local economic growth potential for these events, as the 'shop window' on Britain and its areas could produce economic benefits through tourism for years to come. Secondly, there is an educational opportunity to engage with younger generations to teach them about this document which gave rise to the individual liberties they enjoy, basic principles of fairness and the root of British democracy.

Current Plan

4. There are a multitude of local, national and international plans, many already underway, to celebrate the anniversary and raise awareness about the continued relevance of the Magna Carta.
5. The Magna Carta 800th Anniversary Organizing Committee and a UK Parliament All-Party Parliamentary Group are taking the lead on event planning. The Queen is the patron of the commemoration.
6. Below are a few of the plans taking shape:
 - 6.1. There are aspirations to hold an event in Surrey, where the document was originally granted. These plans are being developed by both Runnymede and Surrey County Council with £1million currently set aside by the County Council for a capital project and activities to mark the occasion, in partnership with the National Trust. The plans include Egham being branded 'the gateway to Magna Carta country'.
 - 6.2. The four surviving original copies of Magna Carta will be brought together for the first time in history. The unification, which will be held at the British Library in collaboration with Lincoln Cathedral and Salisbury Cathedral and supported by the law firm Linklaters, will take place over three days in early 2015. 1,215 adults and children can enter into a ballot to win free tickets to see the manuscripts.
 - 6.3. The Magna Carta towns of Canterbury, City of London, Runnymede, St Albans, Bury St. Edmunds, Durham, Hereford, Lincoln, Oxford and Salisbury will be planning their own events to celebrate their unique involvement.
 - 6.4. There is a campaign for an extra bank holiday scheduled to take place on the 15th June 2015.

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- 6.5. A wide range of music and artistic events will also mark the anniversary. Including a Magna Carta themed Opera, a play script called “The Great Charter” and the four musical compositions.
- 6.6. An education programme for schools across the country [and the world] is being developed. It is hoped the Magna Carta will become embedded in the British curriculum. Furthermore a number of exciting new teaching resources, competitions and events are under development. Libraries, museums and archives services will be involved.
- 6.7. Academic symposiums have been agreed to take place in the USA, UK and Poland.
- 6.8. Other celebrations include a commemorative £2 coin, a national call for a ‘LiberTeas’ break to be held on Sunday 14 June 2015 and the Woodland Trust will launch a connected ‘LiberTrees’ event.

LGA Role

7. Daniel Goodwin, LGA Executive Director for Local Government Finance and Policy, through his previous position as the Chief Executive of St Albans District Council, is the Deputy Chairman of the Magna Carta 2015 Commemoration Committee. After starting at the LGA, he agreed with Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive of the LGA, that he kept a watching brief for the LGA.
8. The commemoration of Magna Carta links to the ‘England Question’ and in the LGA’s *Rewiring Public Services* we have proposed that this should be based on a new deal between central and local government, based on a transformed sector. Including the Chairman’s initial Daily Telegraph article in June, there have been twelve articles linking the LGA with debate on this issue in a wide range of national media, along with a range of more specialist coverage.
9. The LGA is hosting the next Magna Carta Towns meeting on 19 September. This is part of the wider facilitative role the LGA is performing on behalf of the local government sector to develop their plans.
10. The LGA will continue to update members and the sector through the LGA website, Bulletins and FIRST magazine.
11. Further information can be found on the website; <http://magnacarta800th.com/>

Next Steps

12. As plans continue to develop, there is an opportunity for the LGA to get more involved from the autumn. Members are invited to give a steer on whether they would like a more detailed update at the November Board.