

# Jenny Marra MSP

Speech in the Scottish Parliament debate

## **Dundee City of Culture**

12 November 2013

In Dundee, I would like to see

“Urban meadows like the New York Highline”;

“An old boat parade with lighting and music”;

“sculptures of Broons characters throughout the city”;

“the Tay bridge lit at night”;

“A massive river pageant in the Tay”.

Nobody can say that we Dundonians are not romantic, ambitious and jealously proud of our beautiful home, because those are all suggestions for Dundee’s 2017 city of culture celebration.

The suggestions came from the people of Dundee using we Dundee, a new digital interactive community hub that allowed the team to pull together inspiration and ideas from all our citizens.

I believe it to be a first in the United Kingdom.

Everyone had their say on what they want Dundee to celebrate in 2017—a special year for them.

The bid is a community bid, made up of the voices of Dundonians singing proudly for their city.

Feats of engineering, computing, a history of jute—weaving and spinning, hard work

“shifting bobbins coarse and fine”—

and our tough experiences in the mills and the factories make up our stories and our struggles, all of which encouraged Dundee to seize cultural opportunities when they reappeared in our city, when the RRS Discovery sailed home in 1986.

Culture, music, art and drama are nothing without a story and a struggle.

They are about the art of making the everyday beautiful.

That is why our cultural renaissance has been so successful, so inclusive and so pervasive in the city.

Our city is not divided when it comes to embracing culture.

Music rings out from venues throughout the city, and art galleries are successful—especially the newly refurbished McManus galleries, which the culture secretary mentioned.

In Dundee, we are united in the love of our home city and the culture that it boasts.

However, our city is divided in terms of the share of wealth and opportunities.

That is why the greatest challenge of the 2017 bid is to ensure that the year of celebration reaps benefits for all our communities.

Our greatest challenge in Dundee is to create wealth and opportunity in communities that suffer the blights of unemployment, drugs, shorter lives and the desolation that wrecks dreams.

That is at the core of why Dundee is bidding for the important city of culture status.

We know the transformative effects of culture.

We have witnessed Dundee's transformation over the past 40 years from a post-industrial city to an exciting hub of scientific research, with some of the finest engineering minds in the world staying in the city and creating new companies and opportunities in the life sciences, medicine, technology, computing and gaming.

We witnessed the deluge of Dundonians into the Dundee Contemporary Arts centre when Donald Dewar opened its doors in 1999.

We remember the fun of the Dundee 800 and the community spirit of “Witch’s Blood”.

We know that with a well thought-out bid, as our bid is, and a well-funded plan for 2017, city of culture status for Dundee will make a difference to the lives of many of our citizens.

It will raise our aspirations further and give us shared and individual memories of the beautiful everyday, centred around our prized V&A at Dundee on the waterfront.

That is why I am delighted that there is cross-party support in Parliament for the Scottish Government’s motion, which clearly indicates the unequivocal support of the First Minister and the Scottish Government and its agencies, who stand four-square behind the bid.

That is what we need, if we are to win.

Our competitors are fierce, and rightly have aspirations for their communities that are similar to our aspirations for Dundee.

Our bid needs unequivocal commitment from all levels of government in Scotland if it is to be a success for Dundee and the whole of Scotland.

That is why I am delighted that the culture secretary has given such a commitment tonight.

We will vote for the Government’s motion at decision time, with pride and with hope.

web link :

Jenny Marra MSP

<http://www.jennymarra.com>