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Summary of work undertaken by Glasgow City Council (IT) on behalf of the Police Services in Scotland and Malawi.

Background notes on Lord Provost's Projects

My initial involvement with Malawi arose from my work in collaboration with the University of Strathclyde's Millennium Project. In 1999, I began working with colleagues at the University in connection with their project and was in a position to supply computers and counterfeit clothing which they were intending to send to Malawi. At that time, I was employed as the Council's Director of Environmental Protection Services.

During the period 2000-2003, having secured the agreement of the Council's Management Team, I arranged to donate desktop computers which were being refurbished prior to being shipped to Malawi. These computers were used to support the University's "Making Wonders" project in assisting blind and partially sighted children. The counterfeit clothing and shoes, which had been seized by my Consumer and Trading Standards Section, and were no longer the subject of any legal proceedings, were released for humanitarian purposes use, having secured the agreement of the various Trade Mark holders.

I retired at the end of 2003. Soon thereafter, I was approached by the then Lord Provost of Glasgow, Liz. Cameron, who asked if I would be willing to continue with my work in Malawi, on behalf of the Council, as a volunteer.

It was agreed that we would initially enter into a partnership with Edinburgh City Council and the two Lords Provost formally launched the project in 2004, with Glasgow taking the lead in the areas of health and education.

Very quickly, it became evident that there was great potential to expand what had been done previously and it was agreed that I could secure the use of a large former warehouse in the city, where goods could be stored prior to shipping.

Using contacts which I had in Health Boards throughout Scotland, I began to collect large volumes of medical equipment and supplies. I continued to receive significant numbers of computers via the Council's various departments as refresh programmes progressed.

The support which I received from the Lord Provost's office was invaluable and, in particular, the working relationship which developed between Gillian Walsh, International Officer, and I, was a major benefit and in many respects the key to the success of our work in Malawi over the last 17 years.

Financial support was made available for the running of the projects via funding generated from events which were promoted by the Lord Provost's & International Office, principally by way of the annual Lord Provost's Burns Supper.

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My first visit to Malawi was undertaken in 2004 in company with Professor Alan McGowan of Strathclyde University. The reason for our visit was to decide on the location and design of a maternity clinic wherein student nurses from the Nurse Training College could be trained and gain practical experience. The financial support for the proposed clinic, was in the main, provided by the Lord Provost's Malawi Fund with assistance from Strathclyde University, Bell College (Hamilton), World Emergency Relief and Glasgow the Caring City.

The clinic was built using local labour and was officially opened by Lord Provost Cameron when she visited Lilongwe in the Spring of 2006.

The development of the IT elements of the Lord Provost's project took a significant step forward following a meeting with a number of potential volunteers from the Council's IT department in 2005.

The group of volunteers agreed to attend our store on one evening per week when they could refurbish computers, load the necessary software and test all the kit prior to packing it in readiness for shipping.

The first visit to Malawi by volunteers from the IT department took place in August 2006, and proved to be a huge success. Computers were installed and training was given to the potential users in hospitals, colleges, schools and local authorities.

When the Lord Provost visited in 2006, a significant need was identified for a clinic for sufferers of AIDS/HIV. It was decided that a clinic should be built at Chikwawa District Hospital. The clinic was a pre-formed kit building which was shipped from Glasgow along with all the required fixtures and fittings. A team of tradesmen from City Building (Glasgow) volunteered to undertake the work. They were based in Blantyre and had to travel each day to Chikwawa to construct the building. The work was arduous but was completed in the planned timescale and subsequently proved to be a major success.

In the Spring of 2008, I had the privilege to meet Olivia Giles. Olivia had set up a charity, 500 miles, to help provide prosthetics and orthotic devices to those in need in Malawi. I suggested that it might be possible to build a clinic for 500 miles at Kamuzu Central Hospital in Lilongwe. The quickest way to carry out the work was to utilise three steel shipping containers which could be bolted and welded together and thereafter be converted into a single unit supplied with workrooms, offices and toilet facilities.

A site was identified and the containers with all the necessary materials, tools and fittings were sent from Glasgow. A team of volunteers from City Building constructed the building and fitted it out. 500 miles organised the provision and installation of the required specialist medical equipment.

The clinic became a highly valued asset with considerable numbers of patients utilising the facility, which had not previously been available in that part of Malawi.

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In the course of 2009, it was decided that a purpose built, and significantly larger, prosthetic and orthotic clinic was required and we set in motion the planning and preparations for delivering such a new facility. It was decided to site the clinic at Kamuzu Central Hospital.

City Building supplied a team of volunteer tradesmen and they returned to Lilongwe and constructed the new prosthetic and orthotic clinic as planned. The clinic was duly commissioned and became operational soon thereafter. It is gratifying to know that in excess of 9000 people have benefited, many of whom would have had little or no such opportunity.

The team from City Building returned to Lilongwe in 2013 to refurbish part of the Old Town Hall building and create offices for use by doctors, an optician, a dentist, and a pharmacist.

The building works were completed successfully, but, having been handed over to the control of the local authority, the intended use of the building could not be guaranteed. It still functions as a clinic and pharmacy but the dentistry and optician elements were not sustainable and lapsed fairly quickly due to the lack of ongoing funding.

The most recent building project was undertaken by City Building in 2019. The purpose was to refurbish the prosthetic and orthotic clinic which was built in 2010 and was in need of renovation. Again, the project was highly successful and places the charity in a good position to hand over the clinic to the Health Ministry when the current agreement ceases to be the responsibility of 500 miles.

The IT volunteers have returned every year since 2006 and over that period we have installed in excess of 3000 desktop computers and in addition, many laptops, printers, mobile telephones and peripherals in support of the installations.

The principal recipients have been hospitals, clinics, universities, colleges, schools, orphanages, local authorities and charities. Over the years we have been working in Malawi we have provided IT training for doctors, nurses, and local authority staff. Many technicians have also been trained and the computers are well maintained by very competent, skilled and motivated people.

A few years ago we established contact with the Malawi Prisons Authority and we are now providing computers to prisons on a regular basis for use by staff and inmates.

In 2014, we donated two desktop computers to the Police station at Dedza and two desktops to the Prison Service there.

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Collaboration with Police Scotland and Police Malawi

Our first contact with Police Scotland occurred, by chance, in 2013, when Gillian and I met a group of Scottish Police Officers in Lilongwe. They were on route to Zomba to work with Police Malawi on developing more modern techniques for riot and crowd control.

In 2015, we were able to arrange a meeting with the Commandant at the Police Headquarters in Zomba. At that time we donated 10 desktop computers and 20 Blackberry cell phones.

In 2017, we were approached on an informal basis by Superintendent Shaun McKillop and Inspector Iain Ward of the International Development and Innovation Unit based at the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan Castle Headquarters, Fife. We had several exploratory meetings to establish if we could work in collaboration for the mutual benefit of Police Scotland and the Lord Provost's Malawi Project.

In view of the fact that the Lord Provost's project had a flow of computers and other IT kit arising from the refresh of the Council's IT stock, we were able to offer to supply desktop and some laptop computers to Police Scotland. We could deliver the IT kit to Malawi in the containers which we sent there on a regular basis.

Police Scotland was developing a Malawi wide project for the protection of vulnerable women and children. It was recognised from the outset, that standardised questioning of witnesses and forms for use of field staff should be utilised. The downloading of information to computer systems in the various regions, and the ability to centralise the data in the major population centres using computers in local the police offices was a requirement if the project was to succeed.

Police Scotland was also in a position to make IT kit available to the Lord Provost's project, albeit the hard drives had to be removed from all the processors which were supplied. Police Scotland supplied hundreds of pieces of hardware comprising processors, monitors, keyboards, cables and mouse units. The kit was delivered to our store from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee.

Support was given by Darrell Gough, Head of ICT Operations, Tim Glanton, Alliance Project Manager, Fiona Hamilton, Business Development Officer and Mark Steelman, ICT Operations and Support Officer.

In September, 2017, Gillian and I met with Alex Sementi and Memory Mgeni, based in Blantyre at the Southern Region Headquarters. Their role was to head- up the Community Policing aspects of the new project and they were being assisted by Raphael MPophiwa. We agreed to supply fifteen desktop computers. The computers were installed by two members of our IT team who worked with two Officers from the Police HQ in Lilongwe, Superintendent Petro MKokamasa, Deputy Head of IT for the whole country and his network administrator, Chisomo Tolani. They were charged with overseeing the future

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development of the Local Area Network and associated systems in Blantyre. A small network was set up in one of the computers rooms in preparation for the Internet arrangements which would be provided later. Two laptop computers were also given over for use by officers working in the field on the new Vulnerable People Protection measures.

There are fifteen police districts in the Southern Region and the Blantyre HQ would become the main hub and data centre for reporting and co-ordination of resources for the region.

As the project progressed, there would be exchange visits between Police Scotland and Police Malawi in order to transfer skills and knowledge on the subject of protection of vulnerable people.

The team from the Lord Provost's Malawi Project was very pleased to be able to provide some IT kit in order to get the new task force off the ground. Our meetings with the Malawian Police Officers were productive and we were impressed by the enthusiasm shown by all involved.

Police Scotland had already been working with Police Malawi in Lilongwe and had a fully working LAN with Internet access incorporating various servers and systems covering many aspects of police work.

The last Lord Provost of Glasgow to visit Malawi, in 2014, was Councillor Sadie Docherty. It was she who met the Malawian Police Officers who visited Scotland in 2017 and welcomed them to the City Chambers in Glasgow. The current Lord Provost has expressed a desire to visit Malawi when an opportunity arises. His predecessor also expressed a wish to visit Malawi but her period in office did not permit that to happen. However, the current Lord Provost remains supportive of the work being carried out by Gillian and myself, on behalf of the City Council.

Conclusions

The collaboration which developed between Police Scotland and the Lord Provost's Malawi Project is possibly unique, insofar as it reaches out to what is a poorer country and is known to be among the world's poorest nations. I am unaware of anything similar being undertaken at this time in the United Kingdom.

The modernising of police work in Malawi, using the latest information technology, is bringing unprecedented benefits to the police and the communities which they serve, via more efficient and effective use of resources.

In Scotland, it has been demonstrated that agencies can work effectively, outwith their own spheres, if there is a drive to help others without the need to spend large sums of public money. The outcomes provide satisfaction for the efforts made and the personnel involved have every right to feel that they are making a worthwhile contribution.

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Good practice in policing is being readily transferred to Malawi by utilising the Internet and the software developed in the UK. The benefits now being enjoyed in Malawi would have been many years away.

Partnership working with Health Boards, Police and local authority has resulted in less waste being produced in all these sectors. For example, by recycling medical equipment and computers, there is no need to landfill such kit which would otherwise have been its fate.

I can state, with some certainty, that the local authority volunteers derive a great deal of satisfaction from the work they carry out and I know they are keen to develop new partnerships and find new ways of working in order to sustain the contacts they have with their Malawian colleagues. I am sure there will be similar feelings among the staff involved on behalf of Police Scotland.

I am awaiting the release of the next batch of computers from the Council. Some of them will be made ready for shipment to Police Malawi in our next container which will be sent when the current pandemic subsides sufficiently to allow us to return to work.

The cost of sending a forty-foot container to Malawi, including local distribution costs, is around £7,000. To be cost effective, only high value goods are shipped. Although the computers are second hand, we are installing Windows 10, for which we have to purchase licences. We also load free software.

In my view, the project would pass sustainability tests, because we revisit all of our supported sites each year to ensure that the kit is functioning and is being correctly maintained. Defective items are repaired or replaced, as required. Both organisations, Police and local authority, are making effective use of assets which are no longer needed, in a sustainable manner.

The outcomes of this collaboration have been the delivery of benefits to the Police Services in Scotland and Malawi and assisting the continuation of the Lord Provost's Malawi Project in Glasgow. Police Scotland has helped financially by paying for the licencing of the computers they receive and by making a contribution towards the shipping costs.

All of the foregoing should serve to demonstrate what can be achieved by talented, innovative people who are prepared to go the extra mile in order to help others who are less fortunate. It would be a wonderful outcome if other local authorities and police forces could adopt this as an example of best practice and consider undertaking similar projects in other parts of the world. I am pleased to be able to wholeheartedly endorse what has already been done and is planned in the years ahead.

Professor Brian Kelly.
1st February, 2021.

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