



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Request to Support Cultural Economy Conference
Date:	7 March 2008
Reporting Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext. 3459
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Relevant Background Information

A cultural economy conference “Locality and Language” is being organised in Belfast on 8 May 2008. The conference will explore a diversity of approaches to understanding the economic importance of minority languages and maximising their integration into the policy making forum.

Key Issues

The “Locality and Language” conference is being organised under the auspices of the Gaeltacht Quarter Steering Committee. It will focus on exchanging best practice on ways to maximise the contribution of minority languages to economic development. It is expected to draw up to 500 attendees from across Europe. The event will take place in St Mary’s University College on 8 May 2008 (Europe Day).

The conference will be chaired by Tony McCusker, Chair of the Gaeltacht Quarter Steering Committee. It is being sponsored by Foras na Gaeilge. St Mary’s University College have agreed to provide the venue free of charge for the event.

The conference will involve a number of plenary and workshop sessions and key speakers will include:

- Miquel-Jordi Strubell Puerta: Professor of Linguistics, Minority Languages and the Economy – Catalonia University, Barcelona
- Tom Moring: Professor of Language and Media, University of Helsinki
- Meirion Prys Jones: Chief Executive, Welsh Language Board; Chair, British-Irish Council Secretariat on Minority and Lesser-Used Languages.

There will also be some exhibition space to allow a range of agencies to provide information on their work. Belfast City Council has been invited to present information on its work on economic development and European issues.

It is proposed that there will be an evening reception in An Culturlann as part of the event. This will mainly cater for the overseas visitors and it is expected that up to 200 people will attend.

The conference is being promoted through European networks and local contacts working in this field.

Economic Impact

It is anticipated that a minimum of 200 of those attending the event will be overseas guests, spending a minimum of two nights in the city.

It is also considered that this event will offer Belfast City Council an opportunity to enhance the profile of its work in tourism and economic development to a wider audience; as such it is consistent with Council's support for the development of the Gaeltacht Quarter under our cultural tourism activity.

Resource Implications

Financial

The conference organisers have requested a contribution of up to £2,000 towards the cost of the evening reception. This will cover the costs of catering and entertainment. An Culturlann have agreed to provide the venue hire free of charge.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to allocate £2,000 towards the costs of an evening reception as part of the Locality and Language conference.