



Belfast City Council

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| Report to: | Development Committee |
| Subject: | Media Coverage Report for December 07 – March 08 |
| Date: | 9 April 2008 |
| Reporting Officer: | Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext. 3470 |
| Contact Officer: | Sue Corbett Media Relations Officer ext. 6271 |

Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that a quarterly report on media coverage is brought to Committee to keep Members up to date on current issues.

Key Issues

A report on media coverage for the period December 2007 – March 2008 has been circulated to Members.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of the report as attached in **Appendix 1**.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Media Coverage Report December 2007- March 2008

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APPENDIX 1

Council generated media coverage

From December 2007 until mid March 2008, 60 press releases were issued in relation to the work of the Department. A summary of some of the coverage is outlined below.

A number of economic development related initiatives attracted media attention during this period with extensive coverage received in the business press and elsewhere as a result of a steady flow of releases. The range of projects included the launch of the logo for World Trade Centre Belfast, publicity surrounding a number of World Trade Centre seminars, a programme supporting access to finance for local companies, a business programme aimed at independent retailers, our involvement in a major recruitment fair, a franchisor programme, a business development initiative and events linked with Enterprise Week.

As well as flagging up the extensive reach of our Neighbourhood Economic Development programme, PR was carried out relating to specific projects and these were picked up across the board as well as by publications targeted in the appropriate localities.

There was massive media attention given in advance of, during and following BCC organised events such as the Continental market, our Christmas activities, and the New Year's Eve concert. The recent St Patrick's Day celebrations proved to be highly successful and created positive publicity for the city and the council with cross-departmental working to ensure that this was achieved. Publicity surrounding the Titanic exhibition has been ongoing since January with heightened interest around the Festival itself from March 22nd.

Our sponsorship of the Irish Indoor Athletics Championships in January and ongoing publicity since the launch of the 2008 Belfast City Marathon ensured coverage and airtime from all outlets, as has the World Irish Dance championships which were launched in February.

We also facilitated several media enquiries concerning the Belfast Wheel at the City Hall which secured many positive reports in conjunction with the Christmas lights and market – all paying tribute to Belfast City Council for the festive buzz created in the city centre.

The ongoing success of St George's Market and the varied programme of events there all attracted positive coverage, as did the accolade of it being named one of the top outlets for local produce in the UK.

Our European unit continued to attract media interest with coverage of recognition of its positive contribution to community life here through the now annual Opportunity Europe event at St. George's Market. It earned a Highly Commended accolade from the European Award for Languages.

Belfast City Council's support for the Lyric Theatre was recognised across the media with widespread recognition of the Council's role in the fundraising drive as well as the outreach programme encouraging more community involvement. On the cultural tourism front, a conference organised by BCC and hosted in the Waterfront Hall was publicised and the announcement that Belfast will host a forthcoming Sister Cities conference also succeeded in attracting media interest.

The ongoing Evening Economy campaign was supported by pro-active PR activity which resulted in broadcast and print attention. A release flagging up Council's increased support for Belfast City Centre Management also attracted coverage.

Also on the tourism and economy front, the opening of the Victoria Square shopping centre prompted several requests for media interviews, as did the Council's involvement in the re-erection of the Jaffe Fountain.

Much work was done behind the scenes to secure positive promotion of the BCC delegation visit to Nashville and the South by Southwest Festival in Texas in advance of the trip. The

result was a series of hits across various print titles as well as on radio and television. Three press releases were also issued during the visit, all of which secured press coverage. Work is continuing to ensure feedback of the positive outcomes of the US trip.

Coverage also resulted from our work to highlight the Local Area Working and the draft Community Support Plan. Through the media we were able to inform the public of the impact on their communities by our drive to provide a more targeted and effective service to the ratepayers. BCC's involvement in a dedicated 'Travellers Week' in December also attracted media interest.

Issues rising directly from Development committee meetings – such as concerns over funding for community festivals and the need for more funding support for Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (other than from BCC coffers) – received coverage as a result of press releases to highlight politicians' concerns.

Other media coverage

Some reports of anti-social behaviour following the Christmas tree lights switch on and concern over the impact of the Big Wheel on the planned Titanic commemoration in April generated negative coverage. There were also stories criticising the planned trip to the South by Southwest Festival and the sculpture planned for Broadway roundabout.

We responded appropriately and provided a spokesperson when necessary. We also worked with the Titanic Society and Big Wheel operators to alleviate concerns.

Statistics

From December 2007 to the middle of March 2008 the Media Relations office dealt with more than 400 press enquiries –109 of which were directly related to the work of the Department. This accounts for around a quarter of the total number of enquiries dealt with by the Media Relations team for the same period.

All of the enquiries (100%) were responded to within one day. The majority (88%) were answered within one hour. For those that took longer to respond to, no deadlines were missed.