



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	The Northern Ireland International Horse Show 2008-2010
Date:	9 April 2008
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development, ext. 3470
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Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that in the last ten years, Belfast has built a strong reputation for hosting major events. It began with the World Cross Country Championships in 1999 and gradually bids for major events became more ambitious. The last eight years has seen Belfast host many significant major events such as the World Irish Dancing Championships, the World Amateur Boxing Championships, the Under 19 European Football Championships, the Special Olympics Ireland Games and the Under 19 Rugby World Cup.

Belfast City Council has also supported a number of significant events through the Support for Sport Scheme. Through this scheme, some of these events are now attracting commercial support and are viewed by the public as annual must see events.

One such event is the Northern Ireland International Horse Show. An approach has now been made by the organisers, requesting Belfast City Council support for the event for the next three years, 2008 - 2010.

The inaugural event, held in 2006 was a huge success and in 2007 the audience figures grew by 33% to 20,000 over the 4 day event. The 2007 event welcomed 32 international competitors from 11 nations, 250 national competitors from across Ireland and employed 300 artists and contractors.

Event Specifics

The 2008 event will take place in the Odyssey Arena from Thursday 23 October to Sunday 26 October. The event is organised by the company Event Direct, headed by a board of six directors, all local equestrian enthusiasts who will deliver the event under the governance of the Show Jumping Association of Ireland and overseen by Federal Equest Internationale.

The organisers are keen to continue to develop the event further and have aspirations for international recognition in years to come. There is a 3 year plan in place to take the show to 5 star status by 2010, which is the highest ranking achievable in the equestrian competitive world.

Benefits to the City

- 25,000 visitors are projected for the 2008 event, rising to 30,000 by 2010.
- Bed nights (involving staff, contractors, officials, competitors and spectators) are projected at 3360 for the 2008 event, rising to 4200 by 2010.
- 75% of the £880,000 event budget will be spent in the local economy.
- Achieving the objective of a 5 star show by 2010 will secure Belfast's place on the international show jumping tour, ensuring the promotion of the City through worldwide television coverage.
- The Horse Show will be an inclusive event with an NSPCC Children's Day on the Friday allocating 3000 free spaces for children from across Northern Ireland and the ROI. The Saturday afternoon will include an event with 500-1000 free spaces allocated to disabled children and distributed through the Riding for the Disabled network in Northern Ireland. There is a significant junior element to the competition.

Key Issues

The Business Plan has been submitted by Event Direct. The company are projecting substantial private sector sponsorship of cash or in-kind at over £300,000, details in the Business Plan attached as **Appendix 1**. Funding from the public sector including the Department for Culture Arts and Leisure and the Irish Sports Council is projected at £150,000.

Resource Implications

The working budget for the event in 2008 currently stands at £880,263. The outline budget is attached within the Business Plan.

In 2008 a financial shortfall is projected at £30,000 and the organisers are hopeful that the success of the event will continue to grow with a diminishing shortfall. They are confident that within a few years, the event will be in a position to financially stand alone. With this forecast, they are requesting support of £30,000 from Belfast City Council in 2008, £20,000 in 2009 and £10,000 in 2010.

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has recently supported the Irish Indoor Athletics Championships in a similar manner gradually reducing funding to encourage the applicant to make the event sustainable.

The request for support equates to £60,000 over a three year period, should the funding be required, clearly higher than anticipated ticket sales will reduce the shortfall. While there is no specific information relating to estimated economic return, 2000 bed nights will be generated, the estimated audience being 20,000 and a significant proportion of the £900K budget will be spent locally.

Recommendations

Members are asked to approve capped shortfall funding of £30,000 towards the hosting of the Northern Ireland International Horse Show in 2008, with additional reduced funding in 2009 of £20,000 and 2010 of £10,000. There are currently sufficient resources within the Events Unit budget to support this event.

Documents Attached

Business plan (including budget) attached at **Appendix 1**.

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