



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	European Unit Progress
Date:	14 May 2008
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Relevant Background Information

Members are asked to consider the following progress reports:

1. Comet Interreg IVA - Tourism Applications
2. Quartiers En Crise AGM attendance
3. Opportunity Europe
4. INTERREG IIIC Project - BERI (Brownfield European Regeneration Initiative)
5. INTERREG IVC Application B -Team Task Force Group of Experts in Brownfield Regeneration

Key Issues

1. Comet Interreg IVA Tourism Application

Members will recall their decision on 15 October 2007 to sign off the Comet multi-annual Interreg plan for submission to the SEUPB to try and secure up to £16 million of Interreg IVA funding. This funding would allow Belfast City Council, on behalf of the Comet Partnership, to deliver a suite of cross border projects ranging from enterprise to waste management collaboration. At the time of submission the SEUPB had not yet opened its tourism call for Interreg IVA and the Comet Secretariat had only received one tourism project. Since submission the SEUPB has developed and opened a tourism project call (February 2007) and the Comet Secretariat, the Tourism Development officer and the Regional Tourism Partnership have sought to develop Comet tourism projects to submit under the call.

Three projects have been developed thus far:

Lagan Canal Project

To undertake waterways feasibility studies and appraisals necessary to establish the future validity of cross border capital east west waterway projects

BVCB UK Marketing Project

To attract tourists to Belfast and the border areas

Gaeltacht Quarter Cultural Trails

To establish a cultural tourism network between Belfast and Donegal

All three projects have cross border partners and will be submitted to the SEUPB as an addendum to the Comet multi-annual plan. Members are asked to note this development.

2. Quartiers En Crise AGM attendance

Members agreed at the March 2008 Development Committee to take on the management of the Belfast QEC network from 1 April 2008. This function and responsibility has been transferred from the Belfast Health Trust to Belfast City Council's EU Unit Hereafter. It is Belfast City Council's responsibility to lead the network of partners in Belfast, develop and deliver projects and engage at a trans-national level with other QEC initiatives.

The QEC European AGM is being held in Starogard, Gdansk, Poland from 11-14 June 2008. The attendance of the Chair (or his nominee) and the European Manager will be required. There will be an opportunity for the Chair (or his nominee) to vote on behalf of Belfast and to stand for election to secure the place as Treasurer on the Executive Bureau. Belfast has retained this post since 1989. It is important for Belfast's profile and influence to maintain a place on the Executive Bureau and the Treasurer post has proven to take up a minimal amount of the incumbent's time working alongside the QEC Brussels accountant.

The costs incurred by the attendance of the Chair (or his nominee) at the AGM will be covered by QEC. Approval is sought for the costs incurred by the attendance of the European Manager to be covered by BCC through the EU Unit budget.

3. Opportunity Europe

Members will be aware that the European Unit, in partnership with the European Commission Office in NI, organises an annual flagship event, called "Opportunity Europe". The aim of this sub-regional event is to promote the continuation of language learning amongst primarily post primary school students and the general public. Attendance figures have risen from 2 000 when the event was first held in 2004 to 6000 in 2007. Members will also be aware that this project has received a number of accolades – "Citizenship Prize" conferred by La Federation des Maisons d'Europe and also last year, the National Centre for Language Learning's "European Award for Languages" Prize.

This year's event will take place on 21 and 22 October 2008 and on offer will be workshops on career opportunities and cultural diversity, quizzes, language taster sessions, international volunteer schemes and workshops using drama and multi-media. A new perspective in 2008 will be a sub-theme looking at how young people can affect climate change in their local area and the announcement of the winners of an all Ireland schools competition. This year's event is being branded as part of the European Commission's "European Year of Intercultural Dialogue" and the Committee of Regions "Open Days" Programmes.

The Chair, Deputy Chair (or nominees) are requested to attend the official launch of the event on 21 October 2008.

Belfast City Council's contribution to the Opportunity Europe programme amounts to £20,000 and comes from within the EU Unit annual budget.

4. INTERREG IIIC Project BERI (Brownfield European Regeneration Initiative)

Belfast City Council acted as Lead Partner of the INTERREG IIIC project BERI (Brownfield European Regeneration Initiative) which was completed in April 2008. The practical project received positive feedback from the participating European partners as well as from the INTERREG monitoring bodies and has contributed to an enhanced reputation for the Council as a participant in Structural Fund Programmes.

The reports to the INTERREG Managing/Paying Authorities have been approved and the last payment was received in April 08. The results of the BERI project are published on the website www.berinetwork.org as well as in several publications which are available from the Development Department. The documents have formed the basis for ongoing lobbying for sustainable Brownfield development

5. INTERREG IVC Application B Team – Task Force Group of Experts in Brownfield Regeneration

The Development Committee in October 2007 approved the preparation and submission of a bid for the first call of the INTERREG IVC programme and the application was submitted for the first call on 15 January 2008.

500 applications have been received therefore the selection process will be very competitive.

The formal assessment of the projects is however now underway and a final decision is to be expected in September 2008. The B Team is the only project submitted with a Lead Partner from Northern Ireland and in addition to Belfast City Council, 14 European cities and research institutes have committed themselves to the project.

The project's objective is to create a resource of practitioners and experts which supports local authorities in redeveloping Brownfield sites. B Team will assist the partners of the project in developing solutions and approaches to progress to redevelopment or remediation of problematic or complex Brownfield sites.

The benefits for the Council would be:

- Advice from a resource of international practitioners/experts in Brownfield regeneration
- Establishment of Council as lead agency in Brownfield regeneration on the European stage
- Support in practical solution finding processes
- Possibility to explore or utilise newer unconventional methods

- European wide dissemination of results of work – raising of awareness
- Reduction of resources (finance and time)required to develop such sites
- Redevelopment of complicated Brownfield sites with international assistance

Resource Implications

1. Interreg
If successful, the three tourism Interreg IVA projects will be 100% funded
2. QEC
Cost of travel, subsistence and hotel for EU Manager
3. Opportunity Europe
£20,000 for the fifth annual Opportunity Europe event available from the EU Unit annual budget

Recommendations

Members are asked to -

1. Note the submission of three tourism projects under the Interreg IVA tourism call as an addendum to the Comet multi annual plan
2. Approve the attendance of the Chair (or his nominee) and the EU Manager at the QEC AGM to be held in Starogard, Poland on 11-14 June 2008
3. Approve the standing for election of the Chair (or his nominee) at the QEC Executive Bureau elections for the position of Treasurer
4. Approve expenditure of £20,000 for the fifth Annual Opportunity Europe event and the attendance of the Chair, Deputy Chair or their nominees at the launch event on 21 October 2008
5. Note the successful closure of the INTERREG IIIC project BERI
6. Note the submission of the B Team project application under the INTERREG IVC call

Abbreviations

SEUPB – Special EU Programmes Body
BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
BCC – Belfast City Council
QEC – Quartiers En Crise
EU – European