



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Civic Visit to Sister City Nashville
<b>Date:</b>	14 May 2008
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development, ext 3470
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### Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that, at a meeting on 12 September 2007, Development Committee approved the acceptance of an invitation for a delegation to visit Nashville in early 2008. A civic visit to Nashville took place on 9 – 11 March 2008 to explore, agree and implement identified areas of cultural, tourism and economic development between the two cities. The connection with Nashville has a special significance because of the very strong links between Ulster and the Tennessee capital which dates from the Scots-Irish settlement of the area in the eighteenth century. A Memorandum of understanding was signed by the Mayor of Nashville and the Lord Mayor of Belfast in 1994 and this has resulted in many collaborations. The Belfast Nashville Advisory group, which includes representatives from the leisure and cultural sector, historical groups, genealogy associations, community development, media and educational organisations, worked on an itinerary for the visit and outlined a number of proposed projects.

### Key Issues

The purpose of the visit was to work in collaboration to enable the relationship between the two cities to be strengthened and focus on achieving tangible outputs. Meetings with the Mayor of Nashville, Karl Dean and representatives from the Mayor's Office of Economic Development to discuss sustaining the Sister City Link identified many opportunities to take forward. The new 2008 / 09 Sister City Action Plan has now been expanded to include not only tourism, but health, education and economic development linkages. The draft action plan was approved by the Belfast Nashville Advisory Group at a meeting on 1 May at 1pm and a summary can be found in **Appendix 2**.

Key outputs:

#### 1. Tourism

- Reception in partnership with Tourism Ireland promoted Belfast as a vibrant European destination and the gateway to Ireland and Europe. Launched and marketed new cultural tourism products and distributed
  - 1000 72 Hour Guides to Belfast
  - 2000 Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival DVDs

- 1000 Researching Family History Guides
- 1000 Music in Belfast DVDs produced by NIMIC

## 2. Music Showcase

### A Celebration of Belfast Nashville Songwriters

Featured some of Belfast's best musicians, Foy Vance, Eilidh Patterson, Ben Glover and Brian Houston who performed with Nashville musicians Beth-Nielson Chapman, Nanci Griffith, Rodney Crowell and Mary Gauthier.

An invited audience of approx 250 guests included

Mayor of Nashville Karl Dean

Mayor's Office of Economic Development

Sister City Representatives

Travel and music journalists

Music industry figures

Nashville Public Television

Country Music Television

Tourism Ireland, NIMIC, BBC, Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival and the Real Music Club

- Created a high profile media event to raise the profile of Belfast
- Showcased Belfast's music talent in the international marketplace
- Provided networking opportunities for those working in Belfast's music sector and potential buyers and distributors in the world music industry
- Increased the number of Belfast musicians doing business internationally by identification of potential new investment and partnerships
- Raised the profile of the Sister City Relationship in Belfast - BBC Radio Ulster were present to broadcasted a two hour programme on the Sister City Relationship on 28 March.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of the opportunities available in Nashville for musicians by distributing information to NIMIC database on return
- Promoted the 2009 Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival to new artists music industry figures.

## 3. Genealogy And Culture

- Visit to Andrew Jackson's Homestead: photocall for the Belfast Nashville Guide and the Belfast Genealogy Guide to Tracing your Family History in order to profile cultural and historical links between the two cities and target the Scots-Irish community in the Southern States as potential holiday visitors.
- Tour of Cheekwood Tour of Botanic Gardens and Park identified opportunity to partner with Belfast Botanic Gardens and joint exhibitions with the Ulster Hall.

## 4. Youth And Education

Meeting identified the aim to form links with schools and communities in order to establish one educational project and one community exchange visit per year between Belfast and Nashville.

## 5. Health Care

Created an opportunity to engage with Nashville health care at a high level and discuss securing a Trade Conference in Nashville and Trade Mission in Belfast.

## **Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival**

The visit highlighted the potential to raise the profile of Belfast as a cultural tourism destination by showcasing its music talent in the international marketplace, in partnership with Tourism Ireland. Expanding the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival is a key component of the Nashville Action Plan and will enable:

- The creation of an annual high profile showcase of Belfast's music talent to be

delivered in Nashville and result in a live broadcast of the event by BBC and Nashville TV, thereby increasing awareness of the talent and festival to be held back in Belfast

- Further development of programme content and increase in number of events and songwriters taking part and also greater profile of Festival
- Creating greater potential for the Festival to attract high profile artists to Belfast and also high profile local artists
- Opportunity to increase in the number of concerts and workshops and use of a wider range of venues for these
- Establishment of a the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Convention
- Creating potential for higher return on investment and delivering greater quality of audience choice and experience

#### **Resource Implications**

£49,663 which has been provided within the Tourism budget for implementation of the action plan.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Members

1. Note the contents of this report
2. Commit to developing the Nashville Sister City relationship by approving the contents of the 2008 / 09 Action Plan (Appendix 2) and its implementation within budget.
3. Approve support to the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival of £30,000 in order to deliver the Belfast Festival in both Belfast and Nashville.

#### **Documents Attached**

**Appendix 1:** Nashville Civic Itinerary

**Appendix 2:** Belfast Nashville Action Plan 2008 – 2009

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