



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Tourism Unit Update
Date:	10 September 2008
Reporting Officer:	Ms Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development, ext 3470
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Relevant Background Information

Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast

Members will be aware that a tourism strategy entitled "Developing Belfast's Opportunity" was completed in 2002. The Programme for Government has identified tourism as a priority for development and key to the Northern Ireland economy. Given that Belfast City region generates 50% of the Northern Ireland tourism economy it is important for Northern Ireland that Belfast continues to succeed as a Tourism Destination. It is therefore time to review the current strategy and to develop a new one for the next 5 years.

A number of agencies, government departments, community and voluntary groups and the private sector are working to maximise the tourism opportunity. It is evident that there needs to be a long term sustainable tourism approach to tourism development of Belfast by identifying the need and demand or gaps in current or proposed provision, responding to the needs of tourists through visitor servicing and maximising the economic benefit of tourism for the City. There are a number of stakeholders funding and supporting tourism projects and utilising tourism as part of an overall wider and economic agenda. It is therefore important to promote economies of scale, avoid duplication and build on previous tourism projects to set a co-ordinated approach for developing tourism in Belfast.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board wishes to work with the Council on the development of an Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast and has committed to a contribution of 50% of total costs of the study, capped at the £40k. The Framework will deliver an action orientated plan that outlines a clear programme of recommended initiatives and projects, set against a realistic time frame and budgets and allocating responsibility to the most appropriate agency. This will ensure that Belfast has a co-ordinated delivery and accountability framework. Its legacy will be to deliver real value to the industry as a whole, enabling and supporting collaboration based on exemplary partnership working, joint planning and a strong commitment to deliver.

Blue Plaques

Members are reminded that at the Tourism and Promotion of Belfast Sub-Committee in August 2003 approval was given for the development of a number of cultural tourism product initiatives, one of which included the development of Blue Plaques. The Sub-Committee agreed in June 2007 to provide funding of £3,600 to the Ulster History Circle to enable it to produce six blue plaques. The Ulster History Circle is the only body that produces and erects blue plaques and is run by volunteers in Northern Ireland.

The production of Blue Plaques aims to celebrate and highlight past citizens of note which in turn would add to the visitor experience in Belfast. It also encourages the distribution of both domestic and out-of-state visitors throughout the City and creates a critical mass of activities for the visitor to experience in Belfast.

Funding is requested for an additional eight plaques – Robert Mitchell Henry, Academic and Classicist; Wilhemina Geddis, Artist; Sam Hanna Bell, Folklorist, Musicologist and Writer; Francis McPeake, Musician; Howard Ferguson, Musician and Composer; Sir Samuel Kelly, Coal Merchant and Ship Owner; Francis Maginn, Educationalist; Edward Bunting, Musicologist; - with a cost of £700 per plaque. Appendix 1 provides a brief biography and potential sites for these additional plaques.

Clare Tourism Conference

Details have been received from Clare Tourist Council on a forthcoming tourism conference “Co-Operation and Integration – The Key to Successful Tourism” which will take place in Ennistymon, County Clare from 27 to 29 November. Appendix 2 outlines the Conference Programme. Members may wish to note that Council decided not to be represented at this Conference in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Resource Implications

Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast

Cost up to £40K which has been provided for within the 2008/2009 tourism budget.

Blue Plaques

Cost £6,300 which has been provided for within the tourism budget.

Clare Tourism Conference

£700 per Member.

Recommendations

Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast

It is recommended that Members approve the procurement and development of an Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework for Belfast jointly with NITB in accordance with Council procurement policy and procedure.

Blue Plaques

It is recommended that Members approve funding of £6,300 for the production of 8 additional Blue Plaques.

Clare Tourism Conference

It is recommended that Members consider whether they wish the Development Committee to be represented at this Conference and to approve all expenditure arising from a decision.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Biography Appendix 2 – Conference Programme

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