



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Tourism Unit Update
<b>Date:</b>	10 December 2008
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives ext 3459 Pièr Morrow, Acting Tourism Development Manager ext 3585

### Relevant Background Information

#### Late Night Art

At the Development Committee on 17 April 2007 Members approved the organisation of pilot gallery tours on Thursday evenings in order to make specific areas of culture more accessible to visitors; encourage venues to extend their opening hours; complement evening economy activity; capitalise on momentum created by the Belfast Art Guide; and provide visitors with cultural activity in the early evening

'Late Night Art' was launched in August 2008 with public galleries staying open until 9pm on the first Thursday of every month. BCC worked in partnership with CultureNI to promote the initiative through Belfastgalleries.com and provided free monthly e-newsletters, an interactive map and online exhibitions.

Late Night Art has been a tremendous success and proved that galleries can increase audiences and profile by working in partnership and monitoring and research from the galleries that participated and a report on Belfastgalleries.com has shown:

- galleries have received record visitor numbers and with some receiving more visitors on a Thursday night than they do throughout the week. Feedback reports show total footfall recorded at approximately 1,000 per evening, the website is receiving more than 1,100 unique visitors per month from over 25 countries worldwide and there are 1,213 members signed up to receive the e-newsletter.
- all Belfast Gallery coach and walking tours sold out within days of going on sale including two tours on 4 December.
- 54% of visitors rated the initiative as excellent and 46% rated it very good
- it has given galleries access to new audiences, including visitors to Belfast, city centre workers and students
- it has raised the profile of Belfast's art in a way that would have been beyond individual galleries to achieve (see **Appendix 1** for details)

- the inclusion of introductions from artists and curators, workshops, entertainment and refreshments has made new audiences feel welcome in the gallery environment
- Galleries have recorded a significant increase in national and international visitors
- the initiative has had an overall effect in increasing numbers visiting galleries throughout the month

### Music Tourism

The Cultural Tourism Strategy 'Developing Belfast's Opportunity' details the aim to support and develop new cultural tourism product development. Music tourism is one of the newest types of tourism. Recent Visit Britain's research shows that 21% of potential visitors are inspired to choose a destination because of the music or bands of that country and 49% of visitors are very likely to go to live music concerts or events. Music and musicians, solo artists and bands are often someone's first introduction to the unique appeal of this country, and Members will be aware that in our Sister City Nashville the concept of music tourism has reached its ideal.

Music has been the key driver of visitors to Liverpool during their Capital of Culture 2008, supported by Visit Britain's campaign 'England Rocks' which promoted Liverpool internationally as the gateway to music. The Tourism Development Unit have been working with Liverpool's Music Tourism Department to utilise their strategy as a case study for music tourism in Belfast. Members will be aware that Belfast's music has received high international profile in recent months with articles in the New York Times ("Belfast Regains Its Voice...one of Europe's liveliest towns"), GQ, NME, and the Irish Times. The band Snow Patrol's current single "Take Back the City" is inspired by Belfast and we have a unique opportunity to attract cultural tourists through music.

The Tourism Development Unit has commitment from the NI Tourist Board, Tourism Ireland and the Arts Council NI to work in partnership to implement a new music tourism plan for Belfast in 2009. Based on leading case studies and Liverpool's strategy and following consultation with key venues and music providers in the City, this plan will include the following new products and initiatives:

#### 1. The Belfast Music Tour

A weekly event which includes a tour of the Ulster Hall and an opportunity to hear an Ulster Orchestra rehearsal, before departing on a two hour guided coach tour of musical venues and key sights including Van Morrison heritage, an introduction to all musical genres (jazz, traditional, folk, rock) and finishing at the Oh Yeah Centre with an exhibition on contemporary music.

#### 2. MP3 Tour

A downloadable self-guided tour of the above.

#### 3. Music Website

Marketing support will be provided by NI Tourist Board who will work in partnership with CultureNI to support belfastmusic.org. This will feature details on Belfast's jazz, traditional, folk, rock and classical traditions. Each genre will include introductions, venues, festivals, hall of fame and fully searchable events listings for all Belfast music genres (CNI is the Arts Council NI's strategic online vehicle to promote culture and the only online events listing service in Northern Ireland). This will be linked to Tourism Ireland in order to facilitate an international e-marketing campaign.

#### 4. Music Exhibition

To complement activity and dovetail with the music heritage exhibition in Ulster Hall, there is an opportunity to exhibit contemporary music at the Oh Yeah Music Centre.

This would include photographs, record sleeves, memorabilia, original stage clothing, timelines and listening booths to form a celebration of our greatest artists and serve as a focal point for contemporary music. There would be a cafe and merchandise area, a juke box with music over the generations and an atmospheric setting where tourists and local music fans can relax and take in some coffee and music. An acoustic stage could offer music during the day, while the main performance space would come alive in the evenings for themed nights and showcases. This exhibition will be procured via competitive tender which will be assessed against the following criteria :

- Cost.
- Experience and a proven track record in the delivery of interpretation.
- Understanding of learning styles, particularly experiential learning.
- Knowledge of exhibition multi-media, particularly the use of sound.
- Demonstrable creativity and innovation.
- A proven track record of delivering projects to a tight schedule.

#### 5. National and International Marketing

Tourism Ireland will promote Belfast's music products internally by organising a series of media familiarisation trips, and externally across the US through presence and activity in Nashville and South by South West. Music will be the hook to profile Belfast as a cultural tourism destination in the Southern States and increase tourism revenue from this market.

#### 6. Launch

It is planned to launch new music tourism initiatives with the reopening of the Ulster Hall in March 2009 and launch internationally in Nashville on 17 March and in SxSW on 18 March.

#### Street Trading Update

Members will be aware that the Development Committee approved the response to the Designation of Street Trading on 9 March 2008. At a meeting of the Licensing Committee on 4 November 2008, Members approved Street Designation for the following areas in the Cathedral Quarter - Cotton Court (Waring Street); Hill Street and Commercial Court.

Following new information from DSD, and feedback from those living and working in the Cathedral Quarter, it was agreed that approval for designation of Writers' Square be postponed. The future of Writers' Square is still uncertain with discussions between DSD and the Cathedral Quarter Steering Group as to its future role within in the new North East Quarter Development. The Cathedral Quarter Street Trading Initiative and complementary activity will be launched during the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival in May 2009.

#### Belfast Welcome Banners

Members will be aware that welcome to Belfast banners were produced as an integral part of the Cultural Tourism Visitor Management Plan and the time has come for them to be replaced. The welcome banners are themed on a seasonal basis and are placed along the main streets on the way into the city centre to provide a bright welcome to the city for visitors. There are 100 welcome banner sites which are two-sided in structure.

They will be flexible and will be able to incorporate the possibility of one additional message on half of the banners each season e.g. to profile the Tall Ships visit to Belfast, which is an enduring and important message for residents and visitors alike.

#### Cathedral Quarter

Members will be aware that the Cultural Tourism Strategy, 'Developing Belfast's Opportunity', details the aim to develop cultural tourism activity in the Cathedral Quarter.

BCC have representation on and work in partnership with the new Cathedral Quarter Steering Group, to ensure the development of the area as a cultural tourism destination and to enhance the quality of the visitor experience in the Quarter.

The Tourism Development Unit is continuing to develop work in this area and implement initiatives and products to develop communication between the cultural sector, the hospitality industry and the cultural tourist in the Cathedral Quarter. This includes:

- Highlighting and profiling the Cathedral Quarter's activities in tourism publications
- The Launch and profiling of Art and Craft Sunday street trading
- Skills Development workshops to ensure the hospitality industry is updated with recent developments
- Cathedral Quarter walking tours
- Developing monthly packages between cultural organisations and hospitality sector
- Work in partnership to develop a Cathedral Quarter Cultural Open Day

### **Resource Implications**

#### Late Night Art

£41,050 which has been provided for from existing budgets.

#### Music Tourism

No additional financial commitment required – budget approved by Development Committee in May 2008

#### Belfast Welcome Banners

£124,308 which has been provided for from existing budgets

#### Cathedral Quarter

No additional financial commitment required – budget approved by Development Committee in May 2008

### **Recommendations**

#### Late Night Art

It is recommended that Members approve spend of £41,050 to continue Late Night Art throughout 2009 thereby adding to the tourism visitor experience.

#### Music Tourism

It is recommended that Members note the update on development of Belfast as a music tourism destination and assessed against the criteria above and approve procurement of the music exhibition in accordance with Council procurement policy and procedure. Members are asked to approve delegation of authority to the Chairman of the Development Committee and the Director of Development to accept the most advantageous tender.

#### Street Trading Update

It is recommended that Members note the contents of this item.

#### Belfast Welcome Banners

It is recommended that Members approve spend of £124,308 to produce new seasonal welcome banners

#### Cathedral Quarter

It is recommended that Members note the update on the continued development of the Cathedral Quarter as a cultural tourism destination.

### **Key to abbreviations**

BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau

BCC – Belfast City Council

DSD – Department for Social Development

<b>Documents Attached</b>
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<b>Appendix 1: Media coverage from Late Night Art</b>
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