



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Nashville Sister Cities and SXSW Events
Date:	10 December 2008
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Relevant Background Information

At the May 2008 meeting of the Development Committee, members committed to developing the Nashville Sister City relationship by approving the contents of the 2008/09 Action Plan and its implementation within budget. One of the key elements of this action plan will be the Belfast-Nashville Sister Cities' Celebration event which is scheduled to take place in Nashville on 17 March 2009. This will feature five of Belfast's best musicians who will perform with their counterparts from Nashville. The event will be compered by Ralph McLean from BBC Northern Ireland.

At the same meeting, members voted to support Council participation in the South by Southwest (SXSW) Media Conference and Festival for 2009 and 2010. SXSW is the premier global event focusing on the creative side of the music and entertainment business which takes place each year in Austin, Texas. The 2009 event runs from 18–22 March 2009. At least five artists from Belfast have been successful in their application to showcase their music at this event.

As with last year's visit, it is planned that the artists will travel to Nashville and a selection of them will travel onwards to Austin. A civic delegation comprising the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Development Committee and three officers will travel to Nashville with the artists. Following the Nashville event, the rest of the delegation (Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee and three officers) will travel onwards to Austin. In addition, the Creative Industries Officer will travel directly to Austin.

Key Issues

A music tourism event is planned for Nashville on 17 March 2009. Delivered by the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival, this will feature five of Belfast's best musicians who perform with high profile singer-songwriters from Nashville. It is a unique opportunity to launch Belfast's Music Tourism initiatives internationally and this will be endorsed by the Nashville Mayor's Office of Economic Development and Nashville Sister City Representatives. Arts Council NI have committed £15,500 to cover artists' and promoters' costs for the Nashville event.

Tourism Ireland have been working with their offices across the United States in recent months to highlight events on 17 March and will be promoting the event to travel and music journalists. They invited the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival to attend their travel trade showcase in Atlanta to profile the Sister City Relationship and linkages. They will launch and market Belfast City Council's new music products including belfastmusic.org to promote Belfast as a vibrant European destination and the gateway to Ireland and Europe.

The Ulster Historical Foundation will also attend the event in Nashville on 17 March to run workshops in order to promote Scots-Irish genealogy and how to trace 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.

Media organisations within Belfast and Nashville are working in partnership to ensure maximum coverage and opportunities for live broadcasts.

An update of the Sister City Action Plan and March event was approved by the Belfast Nashville Sister City Advisory Group (which includes representatives from the leisure and cultural sector, historical groups, genealogy associations, community development, media, educational organisations and the US Consulate) at a meeting held on 26 November 2008.

Meanwhile, SXSW will provide an international showcasing platform for the Belfast artists invited to participate in this year's event. Selected artists will travel from Nashville on 18 March to attend the event while other artists will travel directly from Belfast to Austin. They will take part in two showcase events and will also attend individual meetings with production companies, record labels and other performing artists. The Belfast artists who participated in last year's event generated over \$450,000 of new business and the showcase events profiled Belfast as a creative city to the global entertainment industry and provided a platform for an enhanced presence at the 2009 event.

Resource Implications

For the Nashville Sister Cities event, no additional financial commitment is required from Committee. A budget of £49,663 was approved by Development Committee in May 2008 to implement the Belfast Nashville 2008/09 Action Plan. £10,350 of this budget will be required from Belfast City Council to carry out the Sister Cities event. This will be used towards member, officer and artists' travel from Belfast to Nashville and onwards to Austin.

Estimated costs break down as follows:

5 economy flights to Belfast/Nashville/ Austin/Belfast; (3 x officers, Chair & Deputy Chair of Development Committee);	£4500
Accommodation in Nashville; (4 nights, max. £180 per night x 5 people – Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee, 3 x officers)	£3600
Accommodation in Austin; (5 nights, max. £150 per night x 5 people - Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee, 3 x officers)	£2250
TOTAL	£10,350

For the SXSW event, a budget of £40,000 was approved by Development Committee in May 2008. This budget will be used towards the costs of the attendance of the Creative Industries Officer, two Belfast Showcase events, marketing, business and artist costs, and exhibition and conference registration for the four officers and two members. The indicative breakdown is as follows:

1 economy flight Belfast-Austin-Belfast for Creative Industries Officer	£700
Accommodation - 5 nights x £150 per night (maximum)	£750
Conference & Exhibition Registration - \$500 x 6 (\$3000)	£2000
Event Production & Co-ordination x 2	£15,000
Marketing & Promotion	£5,000
Exhibition Costs (Stand hire etc)	£5,000
Project Management (to be undertaken by NIMIC)	£7,000
Artist Costs (contribution to costs of 7 artists travelling directly from Belfast to Austin) – travel, accommodation	£4,550
TOTAL	£40,000

Recommendations

- Approve the Civic Visit to Nashville of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Committee or their nominees, plus 3 officers on 15–18 March 2009 at a cost of £11,850
- Agree the participation at South by Southwest 2009 of Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee (or nominees) plus four officers from 18-23 March 2009

Abbreviations

SXSW South by South West

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