



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Literary Tourism
Date:	10 June 2009
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Relevant Background Information

The Cultural Tourism Strategy 'Developing Belfast's Opportunity' details the aim to support and develop new cultural tourism product development and to make specific areas of culture and heritage more accessible to visitors. Literary tourism is a type of cultural tourism that deals with places and events from fictional texts as well as the lives of their authors. This could include following the route a fictional character charted in a novel, visiting particular settings from a story or tracking down the haunts of a novelist.

There is substantial potential for the development of literary tourism in Belfast. The UK currently features number one in a list of the top ten literary destinations of the world compiled by TripAdvisor and literary tourism contributes up to £2.6 billion a year to the British economy. Unquestionably, Belfast now attracts global literary renown. Our roll-call of talent ranges from Brian Moore, Michael Longley, Derek Mahon and the Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney. Subsequent generations have included talents equally distinguished and distinct: Bernard McLaverty, Paul Muldoon, Medbh McGuckian, Ciaran Carson, Frank Ormsby, Tom Paulin, Gerard Dawe, Sinead Morrissey and Glenn Patterson.

Belfast's literary heritage has an important role to play in 'place-making' and is an important dimension in the marketing of Belfast as an international destination.

Key Issues

The Tourism Development Unit has commitment from NI Tourist Board, Tourism Ireland and the Arts Council NI to work in partnership to develop literary tourism in Belfast:

“Literary tourism would be an excellent addition to the list of tourism products in Northern Ireland and will give visitors a chance to explore our rich literary heritage and experience our thriving contemporary scene. This initiative would add momentum to the good work that has already been done to highlight Northern Ireland’s strong connection with CS Lewis. At a time when visitor numbers continue to grow it is important that we continue to develop authentic experiences such as this, to add depth to Northern Ireland’s reputation as a must-see destination.” Northern Ireland Tourist Board

“Ireland has given the world great plays prose and poetry and for millions around the world our literary heritage is their first connection with the character and characters of Ireland. We love a good story well told and the promotion of literary tourism will engender greater appreciation of Belfast’s impressive literary CV.” Tourism Ireland

Based on leading Case Studies from the UK’s Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change such as ‘Developing the Potential of Literary Tourism’ and Dublin’s Literary Tourism initiatives, this will include the following new products and initiatives:

1. The Development of Literary Tours and Trails - Belfast City Council has piloted literary walking and coach tours of Belfast which are designed to provide a snapshot and celebrate our literary heritage. ‘In the Footsteps of CS Lewis’ tour shows how the author’s life and work is very firmly rooted in the places, people and traditions of early 20th century Belfast. The Belfast Literary Walking Tour assists you as you journey through the literary city and the many shades of our history, taking you from the splendour of City Hall or the lives commemorated in Writer’s Square, to back alleys and quiet suburban streets across the City where the finest of our writers lived. Following successful pilots of these tours, plans are to make them a permanent, weekly fixture.

2. An MP3 tour of the above which would be downloadable from all tourism websites. It would enable visitors to take a self-guided tour of Belfast’s literary highlights.

3. Establishing Partnerships and Networks - using the success of models such as late night art and music tourism to work in partnership with all current providers to develop and promote literary tourism, including the Belfast Book Festival, Linen Hall Library, Central Library, Queen’s University, Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, Between the Lines Festival, Belfast Festival at Queen’s, Féile Festival, Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, CS Lewis and literary societies, Belmont Tower, Culture Northern Ireland, publishers and booksellers. Working in partnership with all of these organisations will increase the profile and impact of our literary product to domestic and out-of-state visitors.

4. Increasing and developing Literary Events - working with ACNI and programming partners to increase the variety and number of literary events (such as readings, lively discussions and creative workshops for all ages) and ensure they are spread throughout the year. These will reflect our literary heritage and the changing modern city, and deliver an enhanced experience for our visitors.

5. Effective marketing of Literary Tourism - The themed products are supported by coordinated information and marketing in partnership with BVCB. Along with Belfast’s literary heritage, we will be promoting our vibrant writing culture.

- *E-marketing*: Work in partnership with CultureNI and NITB to support a literary portal which would feature fully searchable events listings (CNI is Arts Council NI’s strategic online vehicle to promote culture and the only online events listings service in Northern Ireland). This would also use the latest web technology to allow audiences to listen,

watch and read in their own time. It will be linked to gotobelfast.com and Tourism Ireland in order to facilitate an international e-marketing campaign.

- *International marketing*: Tourism Ireland will promote Belfast's literature and new products internally by organising a series of media trips familiarisation trips, and externally to raise the profile of Belfast and its writing scene internationally and increase tourism revenue from this market.

Resource Implications

£58,000 which has been provided within the Tourism budget for implementation of the action plan.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee consider the proposal to develop literary tourism in Belfast and agree to a spend of £58,000 for its delivery.

Key to Abbreviations

NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
BVCB	Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
ACNI	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
TI	Tourism Ireland
CNI	Culture Northern Ireland

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