



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Sister City Nashville
<b>Date:</b>	16 September 2009
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

### Relevant Background Information

At a meeting of the Development Committee on 14 May 2008, Members committed to developing the Nashville Sister City relationship by approving the contents of the 2008/ 09 Action Plan and its implementation within budget. 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 Action Plan was delivered by the Belfast Nashville Advisory Group, which includes representatives from the leisure and cultural sector, historical groups, genealogy associations, community development, media and educational organisations. The aim is to explore, agree and implement identified areas of cultural, tourism and economic development and collaboration between the two cities and to co-ordinate and support the activities taking place between both cities and better maximise our relationship with Nashville

### Key Issues

Approval is sought from Committee to develop the Nashville Sister City relationship by approving the contents of the 2010 Action Plan and its implementation (see Appendix 2). New partnerships have been formed to deliver the Action Plan, which has been greatly expanded to include not only culture and tourism but education, economic development, genealogy, literary tourism, music tourism, international exhibitions, international marketing, creative industries, film and digital media and communications.

Group membership has been expanded to reflect the new Plan and now includes formal partnerships with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Queen's University. The group will meet on a bi-monthly basis in order to achieve economic benefits from the Sister City relationship.

Since May 2008, the relationship between the two cities has been greatly strengthened with a focus on achieving tangible outputs. Highlights include:

#### Increased Partnerships

A considerable number of partner organisations contributed both financially and in kind to sustaining the relationship, including Tourism Ireland, US Consulate, BBC, Ulster Historical Foundation, Ulster Scots Heritage Society, Queen's University and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Feedback from Partners is attached as Appendix 1.

#### Tourism

BCC worked in partnership with Tourism Ireland to utilise the Sister City Linkage to profile Belfast as a cultural tourism destination in the Southern States and increase tourism revenue from this market. Tourism Ireland worked with their offices across the United States to highlight events on 16 and 17 March and promoted 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 launched and marketed Belfast City Council's new music products including [belfastmusic.org](http://belfastmusic.org) to promote Belfast as a vibrant European destination and the gateway to Ireland and Europe:

- PR and media coverage in the States to send out a positive message of Belfast - TV, radio, web, Tennessee news press, specialist trade music magazines, specialist travel press
- Targeted marketing to the Scots-Irish community in the Southern States to increase cultural tourism visitors
- Launched the St Patrick's Heritage Exhibition at Nashville Airport
- Provided a Travel Trade Showcase with staff and literature from the Tourism Ireland New York Office at the Belcourt Theatre Showcase
- Advertisements placed in the Tennessean Travel Section and newspapers from the region, plus Charlotte, Raleigh, Charleston
- Targeted named direct mail of 1500
- 2008 mailing generated above average response
- 1500 Trace your Scots Irish Ancestors offered
- 2000 Northern Ireland CDs distributed
- Prizes / developed tours with tour operators
- Belfast's accreditation by Frommers acknowledged
- Prizes of tour offered
- Tours developed with Tour Operators

#### Music Tourism

Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival and Songwriting Convention held on 18–22 February 2009 increased dramatically in profile and scale and included over 100 songwriters, 30 concerts and 20 seminars. The Festival attracted higher profile artists to Belfast and hence successful local musicians. Visitor numbers increased by 29% in comparison to 2008 and it attracted over 20% of its visitors from outside Northern Ireland, leading to a much greater economic impact. 80% of visitors said they would not have come to Belfast if it had not been for the Festival.

Belfast Nashville Showcases and Concerts - Nashville 16 and 17 March 2009. Delivered by the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival, this featured six of Belfast's best musicians (Ken Haddock, Anthony Toner, Bap Kennedy, Eilidh Patterson, Ben Glover and Foy Vance) who performed alongside multi-million selling Nashville songwriters Guy Clark, Nanci Griffith, Gary Nicholson and Lee Roy Parnell. It was a unique opportunity to launch Belfast's Music Tourism initiatives internationally and was endorsed by Nashville's Mayor Dean.

Arts Council NI committed £15,500 to cover artists and promoters costs for this event. It was compered by Ralph McLean from BBC Northern Ireland and a live recording was broadcast on BBC Radio Ulster. The concert at the Belcourt Theatre was a sell-out success and was attended by Nashville's music industry professionals including publishers, record companies and agents. It was also supported by the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Sister City Representatives and travel and music journalists.

#### Creative Industries

Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Showcases and Concert improved the business networks and partnerships between Belfast and Nashville by showcasing Belfast's music talent in the international marketplace:

- Provided networking opportunities for those working in Belfast's music sector and potential buyers and distributors by inviting 200 key figures from the music industry to the Belfast Trade Show and Music Concert
- Produced and distributed 2000 audio visual resources that highlight Belfast, its artists and venues to the widest international audience
- Arranged and co-ordinated meetings with Belfast and US based creative companies
- Increased the number of Belfast musicians doing business internationally by identification of potential new investment and partnerships (see Appendix 1 for details)
- Raised the profile of the Sister City Relationship in Belfast
- Six musicians performed live to an invited audience of music industry figures, press, Mayor of Nashville Karl Dean, Sister Cities contacts and members of the public
- Promoted the 2009 Belfast Nashville Songwriters Festival and Belfast Songwriting Convention to new artists music industry figures.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of the opportunities available in Nashville for musicians by face-to-face meetings and distributing information
- Influential in securing sponsorship support from leading songwriter organisations for 2010.

#### Economic Initiatives

The influential Sister Cities International held its annual conference at the Belfast Waterfront from 29 July to 1 August. This was the first time in the organisation's 50 year history that the conference has been held outside the United States.

In total, there were over 800 visitors to Northern Ireland as a result of the Conference – many spending their 2 week summer vacation here. Over 20 countries were represented and almost 100 accompanying persons attended the social events at the Conference. Over 200 delegates attended the corresponding Youth Conference which took place in Queen's University.

Among the delegates were elected and appointed city officials, senior business executives – including a number of high powered financiers, venture capitalists, entrepreneurs and investors – and representatives from the education, community and voluntary sectors. The Conference generated the equivalent of 4,500 bed nights for hotels in and around Belfast and was worth at least £2.5 million to the local economy.

#### Genealogy

The Ulster Historical Foundation accompanied the Civic Visit to Nashville in March 2009 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.

#### Education

A formal relationship was established between Queen's University and Vanderbilt University which will result in international research collaborations, student and lecturer exchanges and facilitate connections between schools, departments and offices to promote internationalisation. The first exchange student from Queen's School of English started in September 2009 and will sit on the Nashville Steering Committee and a Vanderbilt student will be placed at Queen's from February 2010.

#### Outward Civic Visit To Nashville 2010

Approval is sought for an inward Civic Visit from Mayor Dean and delegation and outward Civic Visit by the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Committee or their nominees, plus 3 officers on 11–14 March 2010 (no additional financial commitment is required from Committee). Music tourism events are scheduled for Nashville in March 2010. Delivered by the Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Festival and supported by Arts Council NI, this will feature Belfast 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.

The Belfast City Council Delegation would be accompanied by Tourism Ireland, Ulster Historical Foundation, BBC, Songwriters' Festival and musicians. On 11 and 12 March, the Members would attend a programme of civic meetings scheduled by the Nashville Sister Cities Committee in relation to the 2010 Action Plan and also the:

- Media launch of the Belfast Titanic Exhibition
- Media launch of new Belfast Tourism Products
- Media launch of Genealogy Tourism Workshops

The Belfast Nashville Songwriters' Music Industry Showcases will culminate in a high profile public concert with Nashville and Belfast Musicians on Saturday 13 March and broadcast on BBC and Nashville Public Television.

#### **Resource Implications**

£51,150 which has been provided within the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit 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 2010 Action Plan (Appendix 2) and its implementation within budget.
3. Approve an inward Civic Visit from Mayor Dean and outward Civic Visit by the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Development Committee, or their nominees, plus 3 officers on 11–14 March 2010 (no additional financial commitment is required from Committee)

**Decision Tracking**

Further to approval of inward and outward civic visits, an update report in relation to planning and preparation will be brought to Committee.

Timeframe: December 2009      Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

**Documents Attached**

Appendix 1: Feedback from Sister City Partners

Appendix 2: Belfast Nashville Sister City Action Plan 2010

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