



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	World Trade Centre Belfast Update
<b>Date:</b>	16 September 2009
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### Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that, in January 2009, an update on the proposed business plan for World Trade Centre Belfast (WTCB) was presented to Committee for endorsement. This business plan identified a range of activities under six headings:

1. Global Gateway Service
2. Global business skills
3. Business development programmes
4. Trade Missions
5. Local networking events
6. Inward investment

### Key Issues

Outputs against target for each of the business areas to date are as follows:

#### 1. Global Gateway Service

The Global Gateway Service was set up to connect companies to business opportunities and contacts through the WTC network, as well as offer international trade advice to inexperienced companies.

Target:

Establish WTC Belfast website

Assist 200 companies (to period March 2011)

**Outputs:**

WTC Belfast website has been established with a mailing list of 1,300 companies that receive information on WTC Belfast activities.

To date 17 companies have availed of the Global Gateway service, with numbers increasing as awareness of this service develops. Enquiries have ranged from identifying new global suppliers, business partners and customers to advising early stage companies on international trade issues. Advantage NI is also using the services of WTC Atlantic Canada to plan a trade mission to Nova Scotia in September 2009. Two local companies have employed WTCs on a consultancy basis to develop business in the US.

**2. Global Skills Workshops**

These workshops are targeted at companies and individuals who are inexperienced at international trade. The workshop themes are on topics not delivered by other organisations in Northern Ireland, specifically on global supply chain management.

**Target:**

4 workshops per year

10 participants per workshop

**Outputs:**

To date 2 workshops have been hosted by WTC Belfast. 10 participants attended one and 8 the other. The feedback from both workshops has been very positive and participants have expressed interested in attending further workshops.

**Financial implications**

Participants are charged to attend these workshops. A one day workshop is £75 per person and half day workshop is £35 per person. This means that the cost implications to Council are generally very limited.

**3. Business Development Programmes**

These programmes are targeted at micro and SME companies inexperienced in international trade.

**Target:**

1 business improvement programme per year: 10 participants

1 channel development clinic per year: 10 participants

**Outputs:**

A 'Buy/Make/Sell Global' programme will be delivered from October 2009. This programme will help inexperienced companies develop their capacity to trade internationally and find new global business opportunities or partners. The Channel Development Clinic will help companies establish export sales channel strategies and find new sales partners.

**Financial implications:**

These programmes will be subsidised by Belfast City Council and DETI similar to other business improvement programmes delivered by the Economic Development Unit. The cost for delivery of two programmes will be approximately £50,000.

A registration cost of £150 per company will be charged to participants on the Buy Make Sell Programme. Participants will be charged £75 to attend the Channel Development Clinic.

#### 4. Trade Mission

WTC Belfast hosted a trade mission to Futurallia, an SME international matchmaking event which took place in Qatar. Invest NI co-funded this trade mission.

Target:

1 trade mission per year

10 companies to participate

Outputs:

11 companies participated in this trade mission. As a result of this trade mission, one healthcare diagnostics company has now established a new sales distributor agreement in Qatar, one environmental waste bins manufacturer has had requests for sample products from Qatar, Burkina Faso, Turkey and Iran with a view to purchasing goods. One recruitment company has received two new NI clients because of their contacts and experience in Qatar. Two other companies now plan to visit Qatar again in September to pursue business opportunities.

Financial Implications:

Invest NI co-funded this trade mission and companies also paid for 50% of the trade mission costs. DETI match funded the Belfast City Council costs.

The actual cost to Belfast City Council after income from partners and companies was approximately £2,650.

#### 5. Local Networking Events

Target:

4 local events per year

Target 40 companies attend each event

Outputs:

To date WTC Belfast has hosted 4 networking events.

WTC Qatar and WTC Dulles in Washington have attended two events. 80 companies attended the Qatar event and approximately 40 companies attended the Dulles event. WTC Belfast also organised discussion groups during the WTC Dulles visit with the universities, venture capital companies, trade associations, Invest NI and local companies which were all very well attended. One company is now employing WTC Dulles on a retainer basis to develop business in the US.

Financial implications:

Delivery cost for this year's activities is approximately £10,000, half of which is being funded by DETI.

These events are hosted at no costs to companies.

## 6. Inward Investment - Investor Gateway Service

WTC Belfast provides this service to potential investors in the city. Companies can receive information on Belfast as well as introductions to key individuals and a property search service.

Target:

40 enquiries per year

Outcomes:

There have been 8 enquiries to date this year. This is not unexpected given the difficult global trading environment. One enquiry presents potential investment opportunities in Belfast with regards to establishing Belfast as a strategic data hub providing outsourced services to larger clients such as financial institutions. WTC Belfast organised meetings for the company's visit to Belfast including meetings with private companies, developers and Invest NI. The investor is following up on a possible location and plans another visit to Belfast to explore this further.

Financial implications:

The service is offered free to potential investors and there are no direct costs for delivering this service to date, apart from staff time.

### Future Opportunities

Since the completion of the business plan, a number of additional opportunities have arisen. These include:

- WTC Association Certification: This is the quality standard of the Association, around one third of WTCs have been through the accreditation process. It is considered that this provides a useful benchmark by which the quality of services can be judged. It also provides a template for considering how the services complement the wider business support offering in an area. WTC Belfast will seek to successfully certify its services in 2010.
- Hosting a WTC Regional meeting: The WTC Association holds a regional meeting for Europe, Middle East and Africa on an annual basis. This event is generally attended by over 100 representatives from World Trade Centres in this region. It offers an opportunity to discuss possible collaborative activities and to share information on upcoming events and initiatives. It may be pertinent to propose Belfast as a location for an upcoming event, within the next three years.
- WTC Partnership: WTC Dublin has expressed an interest in partnering WTC Belfast on activities. WTC Dublin has ambitious plans to establish services as well as an online trade portal. They would like to involve Belfast companies in the roll out of the pilot operation for the trade portal. The license for WTC Dublin is held by WTC Boston, which also manages WTC Washington. WTC Dublin has suggested that it would be open to further collaboration with WTC Belfast.

- WTC Belfast Facility: While the focus of the work to date has been on developing the services side of WTC Belfast, Members are reminded that there is also an opportunity to consider the establishment of a World Trade Centre in Belfast. There is now the opportunity to further explore a number of channels including private developments or as part of the debate on Belfast City Council's assets. The WTC proposal is currently being examined as part of the discussion on the future of the Maysfield site.

#### **Resource Implications**

£100,000 has been agreed by Council to deliver WTC Belfast services from January 2009 – March 2010. This has been match funded by DETI under the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme 2007 – 2013. Proposals for future resourcing of WTC services will be incorporated in the Departmental Plan from April 2010.

#### **Recommendations**

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

#### **Decision Tracker**

No decision tracking applicable as report is for notation only.

#### **Key to Abbreviations**

WTC - World Trade Centre  
SME- Small and Medium Sized Enterprise  
DETI- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

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