



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Media Coverage for March 2009 – August 2009
<b>Date:</b>	16 September 2009
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development ext. 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Mark Ashby, Media Relations Officer (ext 6273)

### Relevant Background Information

Members agreed that a regular report on media coverage would be brought to committee to keep members up to date on current issues.

### Key Issues

A report on media coverage for the period March 2009 – August 2009 is attached.

### Recommendations

Members are asked to note the report.

### Decision Tracking

No decision tracking as the report is for notation only

### Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Media Coverage report

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## **Media coverage**

From March 2009 – August 2009, 132 press releases were issued in relation to the work of the Department. Copies of all press releases are available on the council website, at [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/news](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/news), and a full file of all releases also will be available at the meeting for members' reference.

A summary of some of the coverage generated is outlined below.

Economic development initiatives were highly profiled, with positive publicity generated for the ongoing work in relation to the World Trade Centre; the Belfast Entrepreneurs Network; initiatives in response to the current recession, including an employability fair, the Retail Therapy Programme, a 'Meet The Buyer' event, the HARTE programme and a series of workshops for small businesses; the 'Business Blitz', 'Dare To Be Digital' and 'Creativity Thirst' programmes

The Committee's concerns about delays in the Royal Exchange project also were highlighted in a press release, and in a number of interviews with the chairman.

The 'Renewing the Routes' programme continues to benefit from positive coverage, with the shopfront improvements along the Crumlin Road and public realm improvements on the Springfield Road a focus during this period. The council's quick response to vandalism at Clifton Street Orange Hall also was praised in the media: however, there was some criticism of the new public artwork at Carlisle Circus.

The 'Re-imagining Communities' initiative was a major focus over the summer months, with a number of projects completed and highlighted during the period. The murals project in the lower Shankill received much media attention, including at national level, and there has been much debate about the merits of such projects, in both the media and online as a result. The projects at Short Strand, Conway Street, Donegall pass, Glenbryn and in the lower Ormeau also received media coverage, although to a lesser extent.

The council's events programme continued to attract major media attention. The St Patrick's Day carnival and concert, the 'Titanic Made in Belfast' festival, the Belfast City Carnival and 'Ballet in Botanic' all received significant coverage, while the Corporate Communications Unit, in conjunction with the Events Unit, loaned considerable logistical and technical support to the highly successful Tall Ships visit.

The council's support for major sporting events in the city also generated much positive coverage, especially in relation to the Deep RiverRock Belfast City Marathon, which enjoyed another record-breaking year. The council's support for the Junior and Cadet Fencing World Championships, the Titanic 10K and the Dwarf World Games also received substantial recognition in the media.

The reopening of the Ulster Hall attracted a great deal of media coverage, especially around the time of the opening night concert. The Corporate Communications Unit has continued to work closely with the Ulster Hall management to maximise positive publicity for the venue, highlighting programming launches and individual events where appropriate to lend support.

In relation to culture, arts and tourism initiatives, activity remains consistent, with new products and initiatives highlighted on a regular basis. These have included the

Belfast Shopping Festival, the Late Night Art, Hidden History, literary and music tours developed as part of the council's cultural tourism strategy, the Summer Craft Fair at Victoria Square and the 'Summer Sundays' programme. Considerable media attention was given to the release of the Belfast Tourism Monitor, to the council's support for 'OrangeFest' initiatives and to the Belfast-Nashville Sister Cities programme. The council's ongoing support for the city's various festivals and cultural events, such as the Belfast Children's Festival, Festival of Fools and Belfast Film Festival, was also positively profiled in the local media.

The Corporate Communications Unit continues to work closely with officers from the Markets Unit, to generate positive publicity for both St George's Market and Smithfield Market. Activity in the past six months has included profiling individual traders and their success stories, the 'Urban Edge' fashion show, the visits by celebrity chefs The Hairy Bikers and the President of the National Market Traders Federation and support for the ongoing events programme, including the forthcoming 'Food Month' promotions.

### **Media enquiries**

In the period March 2009 – August 2009, 335 media enquiries relating to the work of the Development Committee were received by the Corporate Communications Unit. This represented 33.6 per cent of the total number of enquiries received by Corporate Communications in the same period.

More than 91 per cent of all enquiries were responded to within the corporate objective response time of less than one working day, with around 83 per cent responded to within one hour.