



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Cycling Tour Series – City Centre Grand Prix Races
Date:	14 October 2009
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Tim Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues, ext 1400

Relevant Background Information

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' views in relation to Belfast becoming one of sixteen UK and Irish cities to host an international city centre cycling event organised in conjunction with British Cycling and Cycling Ireland.

The event, known as the 'Tour Series', is organised by Sweetspot, a UK-based sports events company with experience in the management and delivery of events such as the Tour of Britain cycling event and the Tour de France 'Grand Depart' in London 2007. Sweetspot have approached Belfast City Council to host city centre races as part of the 2010 tour, with the Belfast event earmarked for a date in early May.

The format for the event, which is normally supported by the host city, is free to attend and based normally in the main city centre area – the proposed six lap circuit would be around Donegall Square, City Hall and the main shopping areas of the City centre. Overall the organisers design the course to create a carnival atmosphere with the event being televised on the ITV network. The races are sixty minutes in duration, with the option to run amateur, youth and fun based cycling 'races' during the evening.

The proposed 2010 programme would start in Dublin, followed by Belfast, after which the event would move to Scotland – heading to Dundee and Perth. These races would be then followed by series of events running through England and Wales. All the races would be covered by the ITV network and broadcast to an average television audience of 150,000 for the main event, with a re-run programme generating up to 78,000 viewers. It is estimated that the value of the television broadcast would be in the region of £250,000 to £350,000.

Sweetspot is currently seeking bids from cities to host the various legs of the 2010 series. The Event Manager of Sweetspot met with Belfast City Council in September 2009.

At this meeting it was considered feasible that Belfast could host one of the 'Tour Series' race events in May 2010.

If Members considered it appropriate for Belfast to host the event, it would require a level of financial support from the Council of:

- £60,000 contribution to Sweetspot to part fund the staging the event
- £10,000 to market the event
- £15,000 to cover hospitality, stewarding and additional infrastructure costs

In addition, it is envisaged that Belfast City Council would provide significant in-kind support to the public relations element of the event. If agreed by Committee it would be the intention of the City Events Unit to pursue additional sources of funding from NITB, DSD and private sector contributions to off-set the overall total expenditure, which would be £85,000.

Key Issues

'Tour Series'

The rationale for staging the 'Tour Series' is to present Belfast as a city capable of hosting major sports events and as a key tourism destination. If successful, the event will indicate that Belfast has the capacity to host an international class event. Key benefits to Belfast would include:

- UK & Irish television exposure via ITV (Sweetspot do not pay or get paid by ITV for this input)
- Economic benefit to the host cities in 2009 is estimated on average at £490,000 for each participating city
- It is also estimated, based on 2009 figures, that an average day time visitor would spend around £34.39 at the event, while an overnight visitor's spend would be an estimated £55.35
- An average event audience of 10,000
- Bringing a high profile international class sports event to the City
- Belfast City Council branding throughout the event
- Potential for positive coverage of Belfast portrayed through a multitude of publications and websites across the UK and Ireland
- Promotion of health and sporting activity that can be linked to Belfast and NI cycling clubs, with potential connections to the City's leisure centres
- Allowing Belfast to be considered for future major cycling events such as the Tour of Britain and the Tour of Ireland and, if developed, to bid for the Tour De France's 'Grand Depart' which has been staged previously in England and Ireland.

Resource Implications

The staging of any international sports event requires a high level of support funding. The maximum level of funding required to host a leg of the 'Tour Series' is set at £85,000. Members are asked to note that, as only £60,000 of this finance is currently available within existing budgets, that the event would not proceed, unless the shortfall of £25,000 can be found. However if the Committee approves the incurring of expenditure in the sum

of £60,000 in connection with the event, officers would actively pursue other funding opportunities, both commercially and within the public sector, in an effort to stage this event. It is pointed out that the event would not proceed unless the shortfall of £25,000 can be found.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the report and approve, subject to appropriate additional funding being secured, to the staging of the cycling 'Tour Series' in Belfast in May 2010.

Members are also further asked, subject to appropriate additional funding being secured, to approve BCC funding of up to a maximum of £60,000 from current budgets, to stage the 'Tour Series',

Decision Tracking

Further to approval a progress report be brought to committee to update members on the bid process, additional funding and resources

Time frame: January 2010

Reporting Officer: Tim Husbands

Key to Abbreviations

NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board
DSD – Department of Social Development

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – 'Tour Series' presentation and economic survey

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