



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy Consultation
Date:	12 May 2010
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Relevant Background Information

The NI Tourist Board (NITB) has produced a draft Strategy through to 2020. The vision for the strategy is to “Create the new Northern Ireland experience and get it on everyone’s destination wish list.” The overall target associated with this vision is to double the income earned from tourism by 2020.

More specifically there are targets to:

- increase visitors from 3.2 million to 4.5 million by 2020
- increase earnings from tourism from £536 million (based on NITB figures) to £1 billion by 2020
- progressively accelerate spend by visitors targeting specific markets and market segments
- support indigenous high quality businesses to grow; and
- be visitor inspired in all our actions.

There are three fundamental elements that run through the strategy. They are to:

Value Tourism: this means understanding that it is a key economic sector, providing government support at every level and ensuring that there is an enabling attitude to investment and development.

Value the Tourist: provide the best experience possible through a commitment to quality and offering professional training and development to the industry.

Value what the Tourist Values: this means protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment for the benefit of future visitors and residents.

The action plan associated with the strategy is arranged under four themes. The first three are:

People: “how we will work with the people of Northern Ireland to develop a visitor experience that is unique and an industry that has pride and professionalism.”

Product & Places: “how we will invest in our product and places to make them better for residents and ready to receive the visitors of the future.”

Promotion: “the actions we will take, with our partners in Tourism Ireland, to bring new visitors and to welcome back visitors to see a place that is confidently moving on.”

The fourth theme cuts across these and is:

Partnership: “actions to identify the roles and responsibilities of businesses and agencies and set out how we monitor progress.”

The strategy is planned to deliver the outcomes shown on the following table.

Outcomes for 2020

Markets	Market Segments	Industry	Products
<p>4.5m visitors of which 3.1m are Out of State. Income of £1bn. Tourism sector direct GVA contribution of 2.6%. 50% visitors from closer to home markets. 2% emerging markets. N. America and Germany key source markets. 1.4m visits made by NI residents - throughout the year.</p>	<p>Event led short breaks especially younger audience from UK/ ROI. Mature culture/experience seekers from UK and Europe. Extended families from domestic market, ROI and GB. Conference and Exhibition delegates. 'Eco' travellers especially from Germany seeking untouched landscapes. 'Hobby' visitors especially music, gardens, angling, golf, cruising, walking, cycling wellness and rejuvenation breaks with a luxury element. 'Foodies' inspired by the quality of raw materials and local chefs.</p>	<p>An additional 12,000 jobs. Young celebrity chefs and hoteliers a feature of the industry. Professionally managed visitor attractions. Pay on a par with other service sector employers (retail, distribution). High status careers with low job vacancy rates and competition for training posts. Productivity and profitability closer to UK industry average. Integrated development plans with sharing of expertise the norm. Industry leading the UK in adoption of sustainable business practices. NI brand and values incorporated into all marketing.</p>	<p>More accommodation unique to Northern Ireland. Award winning, indigenous businesses. Locally owned restaurants with rooms using local produce. State of the art interpretation at Signature Destinations. Year round events programme with local artists at the heart. Local people directly involved in creating the visitor welcome. Gateways to NI with award winning welcome. Local food, drink and products available everywhere. New product coming on stream continuously.</p>

The full 38 page version of the plan is available online at:
http://www.detini.gov.uk/ni_tourism_20100308-4.pdf

There is also a supporting 'facts and figures' document online at:
http://www.detini.gov.uk/final_supporting_evidence_260210-2.pdf

Officers from the Council have been involved in the development of the NITB strategy through various mechanisms such as workshops, informal consultation and the development of our own Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010-2014 (considered by Committee on 8/2/10 and currently out for further consultation to be resubmitted in June 2010). Consequently, the NITB strategy aligns very closely with our own tourism plans and objectives.

Key Issues

Due to the close alignment of the NITB strategy with our own, officers believe that it is a sensible strategy for developing tourism and the associated economic benefits. However, the strategy could be further strengthened by:

- Further consideration of the targets, especially the inclusion of job creation targets.
- Further consideration of direct air and sea access and internal transport links.
- Recognition for the Belfast and Northern Ireland Welcome Centre.
- Recognition of the Council's investment in promoting tourism.
- Further consideration and evaluation of the segments within the tourism market.
- Recognition of the role the Council has in supporting people development in tourism e.g. the HARTE programme.
- Consideration of support for small business start-ups to provide additional tourism product.
- Appreciation of the partnership opportunities between the private and public sector and improved access to the minister.
- Potential support for integrated' convention and exhibition facilities.
- Recognition of, and support for, four capital projects Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast Hills & Belfast Zoo, a National Art Gallery and the Lagan Canal.
- Additional support for parks and leisure sites.
- Increased reference to the tourism potential of waterways.

Resource Implications

There are no resource costs associated with this consultation response. However, it does provide an opportunity to show how the NITB and Council could work together in the future and so create efficiencies.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to :

- Approve the basic content and structure of the draft consultation response (attachment 1) and;
- To suggest additional comments to include in the response to the NITB.

Decision Tracking

Subject to approval, the draft response, together with any additional suggestions will be returned to the NITB by the 22 May 2010.

Timeframe: 22 May 2010

Reporting Officer: Barbary Cook

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: Draft Belfast City Council response to the proposed NITB Tourism Strategy to 2020.