



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast International Basketball Classic
<b>Date:</b>	9 June 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Tim Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues, ext 1400

### Relevant Background Information

In the last ten years, Belfast has built a strong reputation for hosting major events. Prior to 1999, the visit of the Tall Ships was perhaps the one stand out major event to be hosted by the City. However, with the changes in the political climate, the City has had a renaissance in major event management. It began with the World Cross Country Championships in 1999 and gradually bids for major events became more ambitious. The next eight years saw Belfast host many significant major events such as the World Irish Dancing Championships, the World Amateur Boxing Championships, the U19 European football Championships, the Special Olympics Ireland Games, the U-19 Rugby World Cup and the return of the Tall Ships in 2009 – arguably the largest ever event on the island, with an estimated economic impact of £16m to the City

An approach has now been made by USNI Sport, in mid May 2010, to request that Belfast City Council assist with the staging of a major basketball event with input from significant United States, Australian and English teams. These would include the following: Pittsburgh University, Melbourne Tigers, Georgia Tech University and the English National Team with tournament being staged 5–6 August 2010, at the Odyssey Arena.

#### Background of USNI Sport

USNI is an organisation that strives to grow the sport potential within Belfast and beyond by promoting the city in a progressive and positive manner. USNI Sport hope to achieve this through a long-term strategy that utilizes its connections with the US collegiate system to develop a variety of initiatives.

USNI Sport has developed a USNI Sport Foundation providing a Graduate Development Scholarship Programme to create international educational opportunities for both student-athletes and students with an interest in the management and development of sport. This programme called Victory Scholarships assists the very best US students in obtaining a scholarship package to study a Masters level

programme in Belfast universities. These graduates are seen as 'future leaders of corporate America' and will hopefully be influenced by their time in Belfast's universities. USNI Sport works through the US collegiate network and NCAA Athletic Departments to market the opportunity to travel to Belfast and study. This in turn allows USNI Sport to reach out to alumni within the collegiate network thereby opening Belfast to an impressive network of businesses, which supports the NCAA sporting system.

## **Key Issues**

### Format for the Belfast Tournament

USNI Sport proposes organising a basketball showcase called the 'Belfast International Basketball Classic' for high performance teams from USA, Melbourne, and Europe.

This will involve the following:

- using the Odyssey Arena, rather than a smaller venue, with the view of attracting 2500 spectators to the event and showcasing the Arena as a high performance sports facility.
- hosting the event on 5 & 6 August 2010.
- hosting a Belfast International Basketball Coaching Clinic at the Odyssey involving the respective Head Coaches from each of the teams in order to exploit opportunities for knowledge and expertise transfer to indigenous coaches and teams.
- organising opportunities for players from participating teams to complete a number of communities visits (e.g. RVH, Children's Hospice, BCC Leisure & Community Centres during the Council's summer scheme programme) to immerse visitors in the local community
- organising some cultural visits for the visiting teams to showcase world-class landmarks e.g. City Hall, Ulster Museum, Giants Causeway, etc.
- the event would be delivered via interagency partnership support from Belfast City Council, Sport NI, DCAL, the University of Ulster, Tourism Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board

The core benefits of supporting this event would be:

- Significant return on investment in the form of economic impact for the city. It is estimated that 122 players, from both the UK, Australia and USA will stay in Belfast. The estimated economic return on this is £252,000 due an estimated 500 bed nights.
- Further develop sporting, tourism and trade links with the US via the US collegiate circuit.
- In partnership with the BVCB & NITB, raise the profile of the city through major sports events within the media and visitor economy, particularly to the North American market.
- Increase the profile of Belfast as a first class venue for international sporting events.
- Assist with the longer term goal of hosting a UK professional basketball franchise to play in the British Basketball League (BBL) and other European competitions.
- To develop potential future US collegiate visits that have potential to attract US based television coverage
- To develop the expertise and capacity required to host major international and world class events in Belfast, particularly with the World Police and Firefighter Games in mind.
- To position Belfast as a potential training camp venue for teams in the lead up to

the 2012 Olympics and to capitalise on the political benefits both nationally and internationally from hosting a major sports event, particularly in the lead up to 2012.

The attached business case provides details on the sporting event and the wide range of potential benefits. This information has been provided by USNI Sport.

This two day event will undoubtedly bring significant benefits to the city in terms of tourism, economic impact and developing future relations, particularly in North America. The local organisers are confident that the event is financially feasible with the right support and could have returns in future years.

**Resource Implications**

The working budget for the event stands at £55,740, with projected income being in the region of £29,400. These figures have been determined based on previous similar events.

The deficit would be met by a cocktail of public and private sector funding. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Odyssey Trust, Sport NI and Tourism Ireland.

Therefore, Belfast City Council has been approached to support the event to the sum of £10,000. This maximum figure is available within current budgets, due to the cancellation of another annually funded event which the Events Unit has now been informed will not happen in the current financial year.

**Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to approve funding of a maximum of £10,000 towards the hosting of the USNI Sport basketball in August 2010.

**Decision Tracking**

Officers will monitor funding and evaluate outcomes post-project delivery. These outcomes will be presented to Members as part of the City Events Unit key performance indicators.

Timeframe: Post August 2010      Reporting Officer: Tim Husbands

**Key Abbreviations**

NCAA – National Collegiate Athletics Association  
USNI – United States Northern Ireland Foundation

**Documents Attached**

Appendix 1 - Business Plan