



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Food Tourism Product Development
<b>Date:</b>	9 June 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

### Relevant Background Information

Food Tourism is identified as a key area to be developed in the Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework and Northern Ireland's Draft Tourism Strategy to 2020. In 2008, the Northern Ireland Passenger Survey (NIPS) indicated that, of the £540 million spent by overseas and domestic tourists, 33% of this was spent on food and drink, equalling £178.2 million. This was the largest spend category– revealing the importance of food and drink to the visitor.

BCC's Tourism Monitor (2008) also highlights the importance of food as a key tourism experience and was identified as one of the most popular activities for both overnight visitors and day trippers with 41% and 28% respectively stating that they enjoyed dining in one of Belfast's eateries/restaurants.

These statistics highlight the need to focus on developing the quality of our food tourism product, promote authentic food experiences and develop products that will communicate our rich food stories and heritage. At the Development Committee on Wednesday, 9 December 2009 Members were made aware that BCC had been awarded £26,000 through the Northern Ireland Regional Food Development Programme administered by DARD. This supported BCC to secure an additional £57,610 through NITB's Tourism Innovation Fund and £10,000 from the private sector helping to deliver projects specifically aimed at developing our food tourism product.

The support from DARD helped to fast track this development. The 2009-10 funding delivered a widely celebrated and extremely successful programme comprising:

1. The Great Belfast Food Week 24 March–27 March 2010
2. Launch of new food section in partnership with BVCB – [www.gotobelfast.com](http://www.gotobelfast.com)
3. Belfast Bred Walking Tour, 17 tours running every Friday and Saturday from 16 April 2010 to 12 June 2010

(see Appendix 1 for more detail)

BCC have forged a robust partnership with DARD and have subsequently been successful in applying for financial assistance under the NIRFP 2010-2011.

Our proposal under this years NIRFP is to deliver “The Great Belfast Food Programme 2010-2011” which will be a continuation and further development of the previous project outlined above. The programme benefits will be:

- To raise the platform of Belfast’s food tourism product
- Improve knowledge of NI regional food and bring to life with unique stories
- Increase profits of our agri-food sector, bars & restaurants, food retail outlets
- Help to maximise visitor spend through promoting artisan producers
- Encourage more restaurants and food outlets to source local produce and promote in their venues through menus etc
- Enhance our visitor experience
- Attract more visitors
- Drive improvement of skills and standards of the Northern Ireland food sector
- Increase the attractiveness and visitor perceptions of the city

DARD has offered a maximum grant of £21,630 on condition that BCC provide match funding of £54,075.

#### **Key Issues**

To draw down the full grant, Members are asked to approve a BCC contribution of £54,075 from existing departmental budgets.

Tourism, Culture & Arts Unit, Events Unit and the Markets Unit all have food related projects within their 2010/11 Business Plans. The DARD funding will supplement these budgets.

#### **Resource Implications**

Match funding of £54,075 to be allocated from existing Tourism, Culture & Arts, Markets and Events budgets already aligned to food related projects.

#### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. notes the contents of the report;
2. accepts letter of offer from DARD and agree match funding of £54,075 from existing Departmental budgets and
3. agrees that the *Great Belfast Food Development Programme* proceed.

#### **Decision Tracking**

Members will be updated on any changes to the project and if financial partners have been secured.

Time Frame: September 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

**Key to Abbreviations**

BCC - Belfast City Council

DARD - Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

NITB - Northern Ireland Tourist Board

NIRFP - Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme

BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau