



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	EU Unit Update
<b>Date:</b>	11 August 2010
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### Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the EU unit provides regular updates in relation to current or future activity. This report comprises an update on two items:

1. Attendance at the annual Brussels Open Days event
2. Participation in the Committee of the Regions EU Cohesion Policy Monitoring Platform

### Key Issues

1. Attendance at the annual Brussels Open Days event

2010 marks the eighth year that the European Commission in partnership with the Committee of the Regions and cities across Europe host the EU Open Days event. This event held throughout Brussels from 4 – 7 October is structured around 100 seminars providing emerging EU policies and funding opportunities. Many of the 200 plus regional offices based in Brussels including the NI Executive Office host thematic workshops and showcase their strengths. The most topical EU policy under development currently is the new cohesion policy which will shape EU structural funds from 2014 onwards. This policy will be presented and discussed along with future opportunities for cities and regions.

For several years Belfast City Council and its stakeholders have participated in the Open Days and also hosted events in the official programme. For 2010 BCC has the opportunity to participate in a number of ways.

#### Quartiers En Crise Urban Panel:

Although BCC has withdrawn as member of this network since the AGM in June 2010, the city is legally obliged to see out the 2010 work commitments.

Until June of this year, BCC held the role of Treasurer of the QEC network and during our time as Treasurer an application was made to the Committee of the Regions to host an event as part of the Open Days week in October. The application was successful and as Belfast was a named partner we have been asked to fulfil our commitment to the event. The event theme is:

" Agenda 2020: A New Paradigm For Local Urban Development".

Our commitment to the event requires a BCC representative taking part in a panel discussion with the mayors of other cities such as Turin, Gothenburg and Prague, senior Commission officials such as Dirk Ahner from DG Regio and MEPs. It is recommended that the Chair of the Development Committee represent the city at this event and take part in the panel discussion.

As such BCC will co-host the event in the NI Executive Office on 7 October 2010 along with the city of Turin and high level representatives from the EU Commission and EU Parliament. "Agenda 2020: A New Paradigm For Local Urban Development", will reflect on the lessons emerging from the last 20 years of EU urban policy and feed into the current debate that DG Regio has launched in relation to the urban dimension and funding opportunities in future cohesion policy.

As Chair of Development, Councillor Conor Maskey has been invited to present Belfast City Council's experience of urban development and in particular the city's experience of European funding.

The cost of travel and accommodation will be met by Quartiers En Crise and the EU Commission.

#### NI Interreg Partnerships:

The five cross border Interreg Partnerships in NI have attended the Open Days each year and traditionally co-host a promotional reception in the NI Executive Office.

BCC's representatives on the Comet Interreg Board will not attend the Open Days as the Board is only funded to send the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board (Alderman Nigel Hamilton of Newtownabbey Borough Council and Councillor Darin Ferguson of Carrickfergus Borough Council respectively) and the BCC Comet Interreg Manager who acts as the Secretariat of the Board.

#### Resource Implications

All costs including subsistence, travel and accommodation for the Interreg manager will be reimbursed by the Special EU Programmes Body under the Interreg IVA Programme. Travel and accommodation for the Chair will be reimbursed by QEC. Travel, accommodation and subsistence for the European Manager is from the European Unit budget 2010/2011. The cost overall should not exceed £1500.

## Recommendations:

Committee are asked to approve:

Attendance and any attached costs, other than those to be reimbursed by SEUPB and QEC for the Chair, the European Manager and the Interreg Manager to attend the annual Brussels Open Days event

## Decision tracker

Further to approval the Chair, the European manager and the Interreg Manager will attend the annual Brussels Open Days event in Brussels from 4 – 7 October 2010.

Time line: October 2010

Reporting Officer: Laura Leonard

## 2. Participation in the Committee of the Regions EU Cohesion Policy Monitoring Platform

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the political assembly that provides the regional and local levels with a voice in EU policy and EU legislation.

The EU Treaties oblige the Commission, Parliament and EU Council to consult the Committee of the Regions whenever new proposals are made in areas that affect the regional or local level. The CoR has 344 members from the 27 EU countries, and its work is organised in six different commissions. The Commission examine proposals, debate and discuss in order to write official opinions on key issues.

All UK members of the CoR are elected politicians representing local authorities or the devolved bodies of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the secretariat to the UK Delegation to the CoR.

Although the UK Delegation is formally nominated by the UK Government, it receives proposals from the following bodies:

- The Local Government Association of England and Wales (in consultation with English regional bodies);
- The Scottish Executive (in consultation with the Scottish Parliament and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities);
- The Welsh Assembly (in consultation with the Welsh Local Government Association); the NI Assembly (in conjunction with the NI Local Government Association).

The secretariat to the UK Delegation is provided by the Local Government Association (LGA) offices in London and Brussels. The secretariat coordinates briefings for members attending meetings; gives feedback to local authorities on CoR developments and opinions; and promotes the work of the Delegation both within the UK and throughout the EU. The national local government associations and devolved bodies are key to determining not only the candidates for UK CoR nominations, but also proposing the policy the UK Delegation should take. The CoR too benefits indirectly from the expertise of the national associations and their member authorities, by drawing on the best practices and expertise they can offer.

The NI Committee of the Region members are nominated by the NI Assembly (2 places) and the NI Local Government Association (2 places). These are Councillor Jonathan Bell (full member UK), Francie Molloy MLA (full member UK), John Dallot MLA (alternative member UK) and Councillor Arnold Hatch (alternative member UK).

In 2010, the Committee of the Regions established the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. It will act as a vehicle for the local and regional authorities throughout Europe to have a say in the policy process of the new Europe 2020 strategy. The EU 2020 strategy developed and accepted by the EU Commission in June 2010, is the successor to the Lisbon Strategy and will focus on initiatives to build Europe's knowledge and innovation and to create a more sustainable economy, high employment and social inclusion. The EU 2020 monitoring Platform will monitor the roll out of EU 2020 and how it will affect cities and regions.

The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform aims to:

- Involve local and regional authorities in order to ensure better implementation of policies linked to Europe 2020 goals
- Examine the evolving relationship between the Europe 2020 strategy and cohesion policy
- Monitor the involvement of the local and regional level in the strategy's governance process
- Identify the obstacles encountered by local and regional authorities in implementing the Europe 2020 strategy
- Stimulate exchange of information, experiences and best practices

Membership of The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform is drawn from 115 regional and local authorities from the 27 EU member states who:

- Contribute to shaping the Committee of the Regions' political positions on Europe 2020 related issues
- Collaborate to the Europe 2020 strategy monitoring process
- Exchange views, experiences, best practices and learn from each other
- Co-operate in Europe 2020 oriented projects
- Participate in Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform events (workshops, political conferences)

The Monitoring Platform will undertake its work through online discussions and promotion policy workshops, questionnaires and surveys, monitoring reports, thematic initiatives and social networking tools. For example, it will hold two specific lobbying events for local and regional authorities during the Brussels Open Days.

As capital city and regional driver for NI, it is critical that Belfast is engaged in the design process and debates that will shape future EU policies and ensure we benefit from future EU funding. Members are asked to approve the BCC's membership of the EU2020 monitoring platform through the representation of the Chair of Development and the EU Manager. There is no direct cost related to membership although BCC's representatives will be invited to various EU events both in the UK and Brussels in the coming years until the EU funding policies and programmes post 2013 are agreed. Committee approval will be sought when such attendance is required.

Resource Implications:

There is no direct cost related to membership of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. Costs relating to attendance of the Chair and European Manager at related events is allocated from the European Unit budget 2010/2011.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to approve membership of and participation in the European 2020 Monitoring Platform through the Chair of Development and the European Manager

Decision tracker:

Further to ratification the European Manager will report to Committee to seek approval for costs related to attendance at European 2020 Monitoring Platform events.

**Key Abbreviations**

QEC:	Quartiers En Crise – Neighbourhoods in crisis network
EU:	European Union
SEUPB:	Special EU Programmes Body
CoR:	Committee of the Regions
DG Regio:	Directorate General Regio – EU Commission Department dealing with regional policy