



## Belfast City Council

**Report to:** Development Committee

**Subject:** Irish Tour Operators Association AGM

**Date:** 11 August 2010

**Subject:** **DARD Letter of Offer "The Great Belfast Food Programme"**

**Date:**

**Reporting Officer:** John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext [34703509](tel:34703509)

**Contact Officer:** Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

### Relevant Background Information

The Irish Tour Operators Association (ITOA) comprises of thirty two of Ireland's most prolific tour operators, professional conference organisers, destination management companies and ground handling agencies. ITOA members are responsible for handling over 465,000 passengers each year, and have relationships with over 4,000 overseas tour operators and others in the incentive, events and conference sectors. Members include some of the leading companies operating incoming travel and tours to the island of Ireland and consist of the following;

- Ground handler or handling agencies
- Destination management companies (DMCs)
- Professional conference organisers (PCOs)

The ITOA AGM has previously been held in a number of prestigious venues around the country including Adare Manor in Limerick and the Heritage Hotel in Killenard. For the first time ITOA have agreed to hold their AGM in Northern Ireland in February 2011. 30 members with their partners (70 in total) will be arriving in Belfast on Friday 4 February and leaving on Sunday 5 February 2011. This will be an excellent opportunity to showcase Belfast and Northern Ireland to a key group, capable of directing significant business and leisure tourism to Northern Ireland. We will be able to showcase achievements as well as major regeneration which will be completed in 2012.

### Key Issues

NITB are seeking support for the AGM to ensure ITOA receive the best of our civic hospitality and have an inspiring experience which will influence decisions to maximise tourism potential. The ITOA AGM taking place in Belfast is impeccably timed pre the launch of Titanic 2012.

For the first time ITOA have decided that they will have a more prestigious “black tie” Gala Dinner largely due to ITOA’s enthusiasm and an application has been submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the use of the City Hall and this will be considered by that Committee at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> August with a recommendation to approve the request. The dinner will offer the opportunity to extend the invites to a wider group of approximately 30 key dignitaries and ambassadors from the city.

In terms of budget, NITB have committed £8,600 and there is currently a deficit of approximately £9,080, this will be met through the support of key stakeholders including BVCB and additional commitment from NITB as well as sponsorship. If the Gala Dinner takes place in the City Hall, we will have a captive audience to showcase the major tourism initiatives BCC has led. It is recommended that the gala dinner is supported through the Tourism, Culture & Arts Budget and anticipates £500 via our Civic Hospitality Budget. The opportunity to deliver entertainment will be open to our Culture & Arts funding clients. Supporting NITB and the ITOA’s first AGM Belfast will bring valuable return on investment to the city in the medium to long term.

**Securing additional budget through partners**

### Resource Implications

- BCC to support the NITB planning team and help influence and organise the itinerary.
- BCC to commit a maximum of £5,000 to cover estimated costs (appendix 1) of;
  - reception and gala dinner in the City Hall
  - evening entertainment programme to profile our food and music and other tourism products

All negotiations will seek to get the best value possible for any expenses incurred.

**BCC to commit 75% to the project equalling £54,075**

### Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. notes the contents of the report;
  2. agrees to commit funding to the maximum value of £5,000 on condition that maximum support will be secured from stakeholders; and
  3. that the Chair and Deputy Chair be authorised to attend the Gala Dinner on Saturday 5 February 2011.
- 3.

### 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 Abbreviations

**BCC** - Belfast City Council

**ITOA** - Irish Tour Operators Association

**NITB** - Northern Ireland Tourist Board

**BVCB** - Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau

**DMC** - Destination management companies

**PCO** - Professional conference organisers

### Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Estimated Costs