



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Special Development Committee
Subject:	Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010 – 2014
Date:	25 August 2010
Reporting Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459
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Relevant Background Information

The draft Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010 – 2014 was agreed by Development Committee on 29 January 2010. It was agreed that the framework would go out for a four week consultation process, which began on the 2 March 2010.

Over 700 organisations and individuals were contacted as part of the consultation exercise and signposted to a pro forma on Belfast City Council's website (with links to Northern Ireland Tourist Board website). Presentations were offered on request.

Twenty five responses were received via the pro forma on the website and three presentations requested. Overall the responses have been positive as a whole with the exception being a number of responses from organisations in West Belfast. See Appendix 2.

Key Issues

The main changes that will be made to the Framework are as follows:

West Belfast

The Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager met with a wide forum of representatives of West Belfast to discuss concerns and worked with a smaller sub group to review areas of the Framework and agree a way forward.

Belfast Tourism Monitor – 2009 Figures

As part of the Belfast City Council's Belfast Tourism Monitor, the 2009 figures were presented to Committee in June. This shows a 30% increase in visitor numbers to Belfast in 2009, with a staggering 9.25 million visitor trips undertaken, worth £651 million to the local economy. The Framework must also be updated to reflect these figures.

Maps and Targets

The maps outlining Tourism Place Destinations will be updated so as all places are identified as opposed to arrows pointing off the page. Targets have yet to be aligned to Northern Ireland, however NITB is aware and supportive of this approach. Targets can be revised during the term of the Framework.

Visionary Drivers

The Framework identifies six visionary drivers for tourism growth which are capital projects to be delivered in partnership with government. These are:

- Titanic / Maritime Heritage
- Integrated conference and exhibition facilities
- Belfast Hills and Belfast Zoo
- Lagan Canal
- National Art Gallery
- Crumlin Road Goal

The response from party briefings and from the general feedback has been extremely supportive of the concept of the Belfast Story which was listed as a development lever as opposed to visionary driver. Most consultees felt that this merited significant capital investment and should be upgraded to a visionary driver. Belfast Hills will be strengthened to demonstrate a link to West Belfast and not just the Zoo. A National Art Gallery will be included as a Development Lever as opposed to a Visionary Driver and will include a caveat regarding the funding climate and the likelihood this is a longer term aspiration for DCAL.

Way Forward – 2010 Priorities

NITB, BVCB and BCC have met to agree key projects to progress in short to medium term. These are:

1. Titanic Maritime Belfast and Titanic 2012
2. Belfast Hills/Belfast Zoo
3. Integrated Events Strategy between NITB/BCC
4. Belfast Story
5. Integrated Visitor Servicing /Marketing Plan between BVCB / BCC and NITB
6. NITB and BCC Tourism targets and research aligned
7. City Event Planner launched for sector to plan/optimize opportunities
8. Launch of a new Belfast Pass
9. Solution for integrated exhibition / conference facilities
10. Conference Subvention Scheme
11. Relocation of BWC
12. Local Tourism Destinations - Audits of areas undertaken and partnerships established
13. Lagan Canal – medium term future agreed

A more detailed action plan must be developed against each of these themes and resources allocated, however it is important to note that progress has already been made against many of the areas outlined and each organisation has adopted these in their individual work plans where appropriate. For example:

Titanic Maritime Belfast and Titanic 2012

BCC's Tourism Culture and Arts Unit has taken the lead in commissioning a Maritime Heritage Study for Belfast in partnership with NITB and DSD, leveraging £20,000 to support the study.

Work has commenced on Titanic 2012 and BCC (via Events Unit) is supporting NITB to prepare a Business Plan to bid for central government support towards 2012 activities.

Belfast Hills/Belfast Zoo

TCA is working with Belfast Hills Partnership to submit an application for Rural Development Funds. BCC's Parks and Leisure Department has commissioned a study to review the future of Floral Hall.

Belfast Story

TCA is working closely with Facilities Management and Good Relations to identify the potential of incorporating elements of the Belfast Story into the City Hall. TCA is also working closely with the Titanic Foundation Ltd to ensure that the content within the Titanic Signature Project (Titanic-Belfast) reflects the wider Belfast Story

Integrated Events Strategy between NITB/BCC

BCC's Events Unit is in the process of finalising an Events Strategy for Belfast and NITB has just gone out to consultation with their Events Plan for major event funding. There is a conscious effort to ensure that these two documents are working in harmony.

Integrated Visitor Servicing /Marketing Plan between BVCB / BCC and NITB

NITB has agreed their Service Level Agreement with BVCB for 2010 worth approximately £600,000 BVCB has agreed to a new process in developing plans for 2011 and beyond, which will be based on a more integrated approach for the city as opposed to their corporate approach. This will better align BCC's Events Unit, TCA and Corporate Communications activities and achieve better efficiencies.

NITB and BCC Tourism targets and research aligned

The TCA Unit has tendered for the delivery of the Belfast Tourism Monitor 2010 – 2013 and NITB has been consulted throughout this process to ensure that national statistics feed into the Belfast model and again achieve greater efficiencies.

Solution for integrated exhibition / conference facilities

The need for Belfast to have new facilities is flagged within the NI Tourism Strategy 2020 and NITB are currently putting a case together to bid for £7.5 million under the next CSR. The Waterfront and Ulster Halls are leading on this project and commissioning a business case to identify most appropriate option for investment.

Conference Subvention Scheme

The Development Committee, through TCA, has agreed to ring fence £70,000 per annum over next 3 years towards conference subvention and NITB have agreed to match this with £75,000 per annum. This will create a Belfast and Northern Ireland Conference Subvention Fund worth £435,000 to attract larger conferences to the city.

Relocation of Belfast Welcome Centre

BVCB has prepared a business plan for the relocation and this project is currently being assessed within the context of Belfast City Council's Capital Projects Priorities. A number of premises have been identified and reviewed with the former Northern Bank Building opposite the City Hall being the most favoured. NITB have received an application for capital support, however there is no commitment as yet to financial support. Their most recent Visitor Information Strategy for Northern Ireland highlights how successful the Belfast Welcome Centre is in its gateway role for Northern Ireland.

Local Tourism Destinations - Audits of areas undertaken and partnerships established

Nine Local Tourism Destinations are identified in the Framework. This approach has

been developed to support tourism growth across the City and allow a more structured engagement between the Council and neighbourhood areas. Audits and action plans must be developed for all nine areas.

Lagan Canal – medium term future agreed

The Lagan Canal has undergone an economic appraisal and £1 million secured from Ulster Garden Villages. Approaches have been made to SIB, DCAL and DSD to identify possible sources of funding.

Next steps

Once agreed by Council, the following actions will be undertaken:

1. The Framework will be uploaded on the Council's website with consultation responses and the actions taken to address these responses. A shorter summary document will be published.
2. A Belfast Tourism Forum will be established (Autumn 2010), chaired by the Lord Mayor and will include key private and public sector stakeholders to play a key role in overseeing the delivery of the Framework. The first meeting will be an opportunity to launch the document to the wider industry and demonstrate the achievements identified above. A key output of the forum will be to agree a four year action plan.
3. Workshop(s) will be organised to progress the Local Tourism Destination concept across the City. A number of smaller initiatives will be identified for support across the Local Tourism Destinations to ensure buy-in from local stakeholders.

Resource Implications

£20,000 to publish and launch the Framework
£40,000 to progress the Local Tourism Destinations

All from existing Tourism, Culture and Arts Budget as agreed in Departmental Plan 2010 /2011.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree:-

1. To the changes proposed via consultation, to the Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010 – 2014
2. To publish and launch a summarised version of the Framework, with the full report available on line
3. That a Belfast Tourism Forum be established to oversee implementation of the Framework, chaired by Lord Mayor
4. That workshops are organised to further progress the Tourism Place Destinations and a number of local initiatives identified for support.

Decision Tracking

1. First Meeting of Belfast Tourism Forum

Time line: October 2010

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay ext 3459

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| 2. Published Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010 – 2014
Time line: October 2010 | Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay ext 3459 |
| 3. Local Tourism Destination workshop(s)
Time line: March 2011 | Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay ext 3459 |

Key Abbreviations

BCC	Belfast City Council
TCA	Tourism Culture and Arts
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
BVCB	Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
DCAL	Department of Culture Arts and Leisure
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review
SIB	Strategic Investment Board
DSD	Department of Social Development

Documents Attached

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| Appendix 1 - Copy of the Framework |
| Appendix 2 – Summary of Consultee Responses and proposed action |