



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Creative Industries – Blick Shared Studios
Date:	15 September 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that, since 2005, Belfast City Council has invested in the creative industries as a key element of its programme of support for the local economy. As part of that work, we have engaged with companies who are based at Blick Shared Studios on an individual and collective basis.

At the September 2010 meeting of the Council, Members asked that a report recommending support for Blick Studios be taken back. This report contains additional information which Members may find useful in considering the proposal to support this project.

Blick Shared Studios is a business incubation project for the creative sector. It is located on the Malone Road in a property which is owned by the private sector and which has been let to creative businesses at favourable rates. The building currently houses 13 companies across a range of disciplines including fashion, textiles, graphic/web design, jewellery, television production, photography, game development, motion graphics, magazine production and feature film development.

Blick originated from a project by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) and the University of Ulster (UU) called Insight Out. This provided new business start finance to graduates who wanted to set up a business in the creative industries. Through financial assistance from NESTA, UU and UNLTD, the Blick project was developed as a means of providing bespoke support services to these businesses to ensure their sustainability. It subsequently developed into a support project for all new creative businesses in the Belfast area and the premises were provided by a private sector developer at a nominal cost.

Key Issues

Blick has developed a structured programme of business growth for its tenant companies.

Tenant companies include:

Ulan Productions	A television company working exclusively with comedy projects
Matchmedia	A technology company specialising in innovation, currently developing iphone applications
Urmuzic	A media company with a music based IPTV channel that currently runs within Northern and Southern Ireland
Magic Marker Design	A graphic design company that specialises in identity creation and design for print and screen including websites and promotional materials
Reach Media	A web design house who specialise in motion graphic design
Catherine B	Jewellery design for fashion and bridal wear, Catherine B Jewellery is sold through commission and in retail outlets in Dublin, London and Belfast.
Lovely	A web design and digital marketing agency
Lifeforms Design	A graphic design business that focuses on corporate logo, web and print design work
Quote Un Quote	A copywriting company
Santos and Santos	A design company focusing on brand development and 3D visualisation
Filmtrip	An interactive media company
Think Two	A web consultancy
Weeman Studios	A company specialising in iphone games and 3d mobile games

Belfast City Council's support for Blick Studios will focus on the delivery of a range of business support initiatives to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the participating businesses. These activities include:

Mentoring Programme

The aim of the programme will be to match commercially astute people from the public and private sector with the creative businesses based at Blick. The programme will give Blick businesses the opportunity to benefit from the experience and knowledge of an experienced mentor for a period of 12 months.

CREATE Belfast

This year-long programme of monthly business growth events will involve a combination of networking sessions, workshops and seminars. The aim of these events will be to encourage communication and collaboration between Blick's resident businesses and to stimulate and maximise their business growth potential. The sessions will be facilitated by inspirational industry experts, and will provide in depth informative sessions tailored to business growth topics relevant to Blick's individual and collective resident business needs. These will include business planning, IP- trade marking, copyright, patenting, procurement, product development, speed networking and bespoke one-to-one surgeries in specialist topic areas.

Quarterly Business Advice and Support Clinics

The clinics will be facilitated by industry experts with the aim of providing the participants with the specific business skills and knowledge required to maximise their business growth potential. In addition the interactive question and answer sessions and networking opportunities will lead to increased communication and collaboration between the businesses.

The topics of the clinics will be 'funding and support', 'legal, finance and IP', 'PR, sales, marketing and export' and 'tendering'.

Resource Implications

The request for support from Blick to carry out this work is £30,000. Match-funding of £15,000 is available from DETI under the EU Structural Funds programme.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members agree to the proposed allocation of £30,000 for the delivery of the identified activity, of which £15,000 will come from Belfast City Council monies and £15,000 from EU funds.

Decision Tracking

If recommendation is accepted, an update will be presented to a future meeting of this Committee.

Time frame: June 2011

Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay

Key to Abbreviations

NESTA - National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts

UU - University of Ulster