



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Belfast at Venice
Date:	15 September 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, Ext: 3470
Contact Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects, Ext: 6217 Laura Leonard, European Manager, Ext: 3577

Relevant Background Information

A number of Council Officers were approached by Ard Architects in association with PLACE, the Council supported design centre and Forum for Alternative Belfast (FAB) the City planning and design lobby group in June 2010 to consider supporting a city design promotion event due to take place on 27-30 October in Venice.

The event 'Urban Promo' is a high profile event attended by over 1000 key European architects and investors which brings together some of the most successful European Cities to both exhibit and discuss key regeneration projects and strategies now being delivered.

Due to connection with an Italian architecture lecturer at the University of Ulster the organisers have agreed to make Belfast the case study City providing an opportunity to showcase regeneration projects to date such as Falls and Grove Centres, refurbishment of existing buildings such as the Ulster Museum, Ulster Hall and City Hall as well as new community based projects such as Connswater Greenway, Gaeltacht Quarter and more commercial projects such as those at Victoria Square, Titanic Quarter and the Lyric and MAC theatres.

Ard Architects were informed that they were too late to meet the Committee cycle in June and while Committee could consider a proposal in August or September the Council could not give any guarantees of support. If they wished to book the Urban Promo event they would be doing so at their own risk.

Key Issues

Ard Architects submitted a written proposal for support in August and also sought the Lord Mayors participation in the event. The Lord Mayors office has since declined the invitation. The following key points in terms of the submission include:

- (i) The group behind this have persuaded the Urban Promo organisers to use Belfast as a case study at a nil charge for Belfast; in effect contributing £38000 to the project. Urban Promo are now promoting the event with Belfast as centre piece.
- (ii) The exhibition is to consist of thirty A0 size panels featuring various projects include drawings, photographs and supporting text.
- (iii) A full day of the exhibition will be dedicated to speakers representing Belfast who will tell the story of regeneration in Belfast via the projects illustrated.
- (iv) Belfast speakers would then host a panel discussion on the conference theme which is 'Delivering projects in the current economic crisis with restricted government funding' using Belfast experiences but also hearing from other parts of Europe.
- (v) Besides the immediate City promotion impact a highly acclaimed academic journal urbanistica will feature Belfast in a number of articles highlighting various City projects. Both Belfast universities have contributed papers as well as other City organisations such as PLACE, FAB, Cathedral Quarter Steering Group and Gaeltacht Quarter.
- (vi) The final element of the project is a publication based on the materials and research created for the exhibition which will be a permanent asset in terms of telling part of the Belfast story in a highly graphic medium which can be used in the 2012 preparations or other documents such as a Belfast prospectus for investment.
- (vii) The organisers have sought support from a number of organisations and have received support in either cash or kind eg the event fee has been negotiated at nil cost; Ard Architects have committed to producing exhibition materials and are awaiting further responses from DSD, DRD and SIB subject to BCC's position. All those so far attending are funding their own travel and accommodation.
- (viii) The British Council is contributing £4000 as this event is happening alongside the British Biennale Pavilion which is part of the Venice Biennale a major cultural event that takes place annually in Venice.

Resource Implications

The organisers would like Belfast City Council to:

- To provide a speaker and panel representative. The cost would be approximately £2160.00. (£300 flights, £480.00 for accommodation and £300 for subsistence for two officers)

- To contribute to the costs of the exhibition materials and conference installation and to the production of a final publication (£10,000).

Council has approximately £10000 in its 'Showcasing Belfast in Europe' budget which is currently unallocated and this event would meet the objectives of the European Unit's business plan in terms of showcasing Europe as endorsed by Committee. Our Eurocities network can also be used to promote Belfast in this event.

In the event of a shortfall in funding some aspects of the project will need to be curtailed.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee agree:

- (i) To approval to use the Showcasing Belfast in Europe budget to support this project
- (ii) Approve that two officers attend to speak on behalf of the Belfast projects as nominated by Director of Development.

Decision Tracking

Further to agreement two officers will attend the event to speak on behalf of the Belfast projects and that the Showcasing Belfast in Europe budget will be used to support this project

Time line: October 2010

Reporting Officer: Gerry Millar