



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Special Development Committee
Subject:	Bus Tour Companies on Cruise Ship Days
Date:	27 th June 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, 3459

1	Background Information
1.1	At the recent BVCB Board meeting on 23 rd June 2011, the issue of aggressive and anti-competitive behaviour from bus tour companies – particular on cruise ship days – was discussed. Belfast welcomes approximately 33 cruise ships into the city every year which brings approx. 60,000 visitors, worth £15 million to the local economy. Due to the urgency of the situation (with the next cruise ship arriving on the 11 th July) Chairman of the Development Committee, Alderman Stalford, agreed to table the issues for discussion at Development Committee on 27 th June 2011.
1.2	Last year, Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM) pulled together an inter-agency officers' group including BVCB, BCCM, BCC, NITB, DoE Vehicle Licensing, City Beat Police and DRD Roads Service. The aim of the group was to agree a way forward to try and improve the visitor experience and avoid losing valuable cruise ship business.
1.3	As a result of this, most of the bus operators agreed to sign a Code of Conduct (Appendix 1) with the understanding that there would be repercussions for those companies that did not adhere to the code.
1.4	BVCB visitor servicing staff, plus sub-contracted personnel, put in place a system to monitor and record adherence to the Code of Conduct throughout the cruise ship season. This involved having one of two people present on the street at all times, monitoring, managing and recording the activity of the bus operators.
1.5	Whilst feedback was provided to the officer's monitoring group, little obvious action was taken last year. The group have agreed to continue to meet and

	monitor again for 2011, tightening up the process with clearer guidelines on activity which is in breach of their operator's license (issued by DoE) and the Code of Conduct.
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2	Key Issues
2.1	BVCB has formally requested financial and corporate support to provide a monitoring service for cruise ships this year from BCC and other stakeholders. The financial costs would be in the region of £2000 – BVCB has indicated that this should be split between 2-3 partners. This is based on human resource input of one person on smaller cruise ship days and two people on larger days.
2.2	BVCB Board at their meeting on 23 rd June agreed to introduce sanctions against bus company members whom they consider operating outwith the Code of Conduct and terms of BVCB membership. The sanctions would be withdrawal of BVCB membership i.e. withdrawal of all promotional activity, ticket sales.
2.3	DoE Licensing issue the operating licence to bus operators. As the current conditions do not cover good behaviour it is difficult of DoE to regulate the behaviour on cruise ship days, although there is currently new legislation being introduced which may help in the future.
2.4	BCC Street Trading can only act if tickets are being sold on the street. BVCB staff have witnessed this happening, although in most instances visitors are directed to ticket sales outlets. Again there are limitations as to what BCC Street Trading can do. The Director of Development has agreed to raise the issue with the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Health and Environmental Services to establish what contribution BCC can make through its licensing role.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	A maximum of £2000 to support monitoring personnel during cruise ships days over the 2011 period, from current Departmental budget. A request will be made to NITB to cover 50% of this cost.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no equality or good relation considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
	It is recommended that Members agree to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide financial support up to maximum of £2000 towards the monitoring service for the remaining cruise ships coming in 2011 2. Request NITB to contribute 50% towards the costs of the monitoring service. 3. Write to the Minister of Environment requesting an update on how they plan to address the issue, both in the short term this summer and in the longer term once new legislation is introduced.

6	Decision tracking
	Progress report on 2011 Cruise Ship visits October 2011 Kerrie Sweeney, Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager, ext 3586

7	Key to Abbreviations
	BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board DoE – Department of the Environment BCCM – Belfast City Centre Management

8	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Code of Conduct for Bus Tour Operators on Cruise Ship Days Appendix 2 – Cruise Ship list 2011