



Report to: Development Committee
Subject: Destination Belfast Project
Date: 7 February 2012
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that there is a significant volume of investment being made by the Council and its partner organisations to maximise the economic potential of 2012 and the additional opportunities that will be presented in 2013 through the World Police and Fire Games and other events.
1.2	Through the Belfast Tourism Forum (BTF), representatives have identified for the industry to engage in a programme of quality and service improvement activities in order to enhance the quality and to develop new product and packages of activity.
1.3	In June 2011, an application for financial support was submitted to Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) through the European Sustainable Competitiveness Programme for a programme of activities under the heading of Destination Belfast. A decision on the funding application is to be made in early February 2012 and, if successful, it is proposed that the programme will be formally launched on 28 February 2012.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The aim of the Destination Belfast programme is to drive the competitiveness of our local hospitality and service sector through capacity and skills development, in order to maximise the unprecedented opportunities – principally the investment into capital infrastructure and major events – being brought to the local and international markets from 2012 onwards.
2.2	Destination Belfast is aimed at the hospitality and sector including

	<p>accommodation providers, attractions, restaurants, cafes, pubs, tour companies and transport providers across Belfast.</p> <p>2.3 The programme incorporates three strands including:</p> <p><u>The ‘Champions’ programme:</u> this will be open to key contacts in the tourism industry across the city (participation to be advertised publicly). The aim of the initiative is to create a number of “ambassadors” for the Belfast Tourism Framework and to provide them with key information on upcoming events as well as industry insights to inspire and engage them to improve the quality of their own product and to cascade the information locally or to other sectoral partners. Through this programme, we will encourage the development of new products and will provide mentoring and financial support to help test the concept and bring these forward.</p> <p><u>Customer Service programme:</u> we will put in place a comprehensive customer care programme, based on the “World Host” model, as adopted by Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB). We will supplement the standard training with a toolkit that allows the user to present a bespoke Belfast experience. We will also organise a number of customer service masterclasses with leading industry experts.</p> <p><u>Market and sales development programme:</u> this programme will help participants look at their current sales plan and marketing strategy and identify how these can be adapted to generate increased business and revenue. This programme will be accompanied by a number of “meet the buyer” days where businesses will be able to meet with tour operators and other providers to develop new packages and understand how they can collaborate more effectively.</p> <p>2.4 The programme will be promoted through the Belfast Tourism Forum and local tourism contacts. It will run for a period of around two and a half years. NITB is a partner in this programme and we will be working closely with them to understand how we can add value to and complement their offering and support in this field.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	The overall programme budget is around £400,000, half of which will be supported by DETI. Belfast City Council will contribute £200,000 over the lifetime of the programme. This has been accounted for in unit estimates through Economic Development Unit and Tourism and Culture and Arts Unit. NITB will also support individual events and initiatives to supplement this programme.
3.2	Part of the programme budget includes costs for a programme manager and part-time administrative support, up to a total cost of £50,000 per annum. 50% of these costs will be met by DETI while Belfast City Council will be expected to contribute up to £25,000 towards staff costs. It is anticipated that this project will require a full-time, dedicated project lead to ensure industry buy-in and to engage with potential participants.
3.3	Members are therefore asked to approve the recruitment of a fixed-term project manager and part-time administrative staff to deliver the Destination Belfast programme. The staff costs will be part-funded (50%) by DETI and will cost

	Belfast City Council a maximum of £25,000 per annum. This has been included with the Departmental estimates already agreed by Committee.
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4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no specific equality and good relations considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the proposed “Destination Belfast” programme and its individual initiatives - Note the proposed programme launch date of 28 February 2012 (morning). - Approve the creation of additional temporary posts for a full-time project manager and a part-time administrative assistant.

6	Decision Tracking
	There is no Decision Tracking attached to this report.

7	Key to Abbreviations
	BTF – Belfast Tourism Forum NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board DETI – Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment