



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Conference Subvention
Date:	21 February 2012
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officers:	Kerrie Sweeney, Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager, ext 3586

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that the Integrated Strategic Framework for Belfast Tourism 'Gateway to the Future' includes the aim to improve Belfast's competitiveness by expanding the number of conferences and to maximise opportunities from conferences in order to increase the number, length of stay and spend of business visitors.
1.2	At a meeting of the Development Committee on 15 September 2010, approval was given for a new Conference Subvention Scheme, in partnership with Northern Ireland Tourism Board (NITB) and Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB), to secure and support national and international conferences to Belfast and to build the profile of Belfast as a leading business and conference destination.
1.3	External requests have been made to the Development Committee to support two conferences which are aligned to priorities in the Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework and draft Cultural Framework and whose subject areas relate to specific priority areas for Belfast. Both conferences meet each criteria as stipulated in the Conference Subvention Scheme apart from one: they will not have a minimum of 600 bed nights for out of state delegates staying in Belfast area and are therefore deemed ineligible. However, the two not-for-profit organisations will have an impact on local businesses, will provide opportunities for developing industry/sector links, will enhance Belfast's international profile and can demonstrate that they will provide economic benefit to the local economy. They also offer the opportunity for Belfast City Council to host and chair bespoke sessions on the itinerary in relation to our recent Frameworks.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p><u>All Ireland International Arts Conference</u> <u>14-15 June, 2012</u></p> <p>Conference organisers, Theatre Forum Ireland, the Northern Ireland Theatre Association (NITA) and Audiences NI are requesting support from Belfast City Council of £7,000 of a total budget of £54,245.44. The combined return on investment to Belfast will be in the region of £350,000; based on 300 delegates attending.</p>
2.2	<p>In previous years Audiences NI, NITA and Theatre Forum Ireland have each individually organised their own annual conferences with considerable success. With support from the Arts Council of NI, this year for the first time the organisations have decided to pool their resources in order to create one conference for the whole arts community on the island of Ireland.</p>
2.3	<p>Taking place in the newly redeveloped Lyric Theatre and MAC, the two-day conference will feature high profile speakers from across Ireland, the UK and Europe. The conference theme 'Connections' will present an opportunity for arts practitioners to gather from all corners of the UK and Ireland to meet and learn from each other. 300 arts sector delegates will attend the conference, including artists and key decision makers from theatre, dance and opera companies, festivals and arts centres. As such, the conference will be an opportunity to establish connections between performing arts communities north and south, to share experiences in order to further common purpose and to explore creative collaborative opportunities.</p>
2.4	<p>The conference will explore themes of direct relevance to Council's draft Cultural Framework and interest those working within the arts. Themes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural leadership - Developing audiences - Organisational change - Cultural tourism
2.5	<p>The aim of the conference is to create legacy from which the partner organisations can work together, to showcase Belfast to delegates unfamiliar with its cultural landscape and to lead to a better connected arts community. The choice of Belfast for the location for the first all-Ireland arts conference builds on the growing perception of Belfast as a cultural hub that continues to demonstrate strong cultural leadership.</p>
2.6	<p><u>Tourism and Events: Opportunities, Impacts and Change; International Conference, Belfast, 20-22 June, 2012</u></p> <p>Conference organisers, the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management of the University of Ulster are requesting support from Belfast City Council of £7,500. The combined return on investment to Belfast will be in the region of £400,000; based on 250 delegates attending.</p>
2.7	<p>The conference has been planned to coincide with major events that will take place over 2012. This conference will attract an international audience to Belfast and provide the opportunity to showcase the city and Northern Ireland to a global audience that will have major input into how the destination is perceived. The conference will bring together industry and scholars and lead to a more informed</p>

	<p>understanding of the linkages between tourism and event planning, the challenges that event managers often face and the positive impacts and legacies that tourism events leave in destinations.</p>
2.8	<p>The conference is aimed at both industry and academia, providing an open forum in which a wide range of issues linked to tourism and events will be debated, around the following three broad areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism, event planning and development - Event management - Impacts and legacies of events
2.9	<p>This international conference will attract policy makers, destination managers, public sector managers, researchers, academics and educators across the tourism and event sectors, and private sector tourism and event business operators. Delegates are expected to attend from across all of Ireland, the UK, Europe, North America and Australasia. It is anticipated that 250 delegates will attend the three day event.</p>
2.10	<p>This conference is designed with our local tourism and event sector in mind, to illustrate through national and international best practice the value that tourism and events offers individual businesses, communities, and regions. In addition it provides the local industry with a forum in which to network with experts beyond the local and regional scale.</p>
2.11	<p>It should be noted that a further conference, National Association of Editors, also failed to meet the level of bed nights in the subvention scheme. However Tourism Ireland has agreed to sponsor this particular event and it has been secured to come to Belfast in November 2012.</p> <p>Members should be aware that subsidising conferences outside of the subvention scheme is not the norm, however, both these conferences have a strategic link to Council's objectives.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p>£14,500 to come from within the Tourism, Culture and Arts budget. The projected return on investment for Belfast is £750,000.</p> <p>All Ireland International Arts Conference: £7,000 Tourism and Events: Opportunities, Impacts and Change: £7,500</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
	<p>It is recommended that Members;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the contents of this report 2. Consider whether Committee wishes to support two conferences to the value of £14,500 to come from within the Tourism, Culture and Arts Budget.

6	Decision Tracking		
Further to approval, applications will be monitored against the existing Conference Subvention Scheme criteria, organisers will be asked to demonstrate strict financial project management, and a post conference report will be supplied to provide an evaluation of the economic impact.			
Timeframe:	September 2012	Reporting Officer:	Kerrie Sweeney

7	Key to Abbreviations
NITB - Northern Ireland Tourism Board BVCB - Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau NITA - Northern Ireland Theatre Association	