



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Request for Committee representation at Confex London
Date:	21 February 2012
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
Contact Officers:	Jacqui Owens, Operations Manager Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls ext 1402

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The purpose of the report is to make members aware of the opportunity to attend a press launch hosted by Tourism Ireland at “Confex” in London on March 6 th 2012. The subject of the launch is the proposed expansion of Belfast Waterfront and the development of an International Convention Centre on the site.

2	Key Issues
2.1	On 2 nd February, 2012 the Council publicly announced the Belfast Investment Programme, including plans for a £20m expansion at the Waterfront Hall in order to provide international standard Convention Facilities for Belfast. The business case was presented to the Development Committee on 6 th February, 2012 and highlights the key target market for the facility as national and international Association Conferences
2.2	International “Confex” is the primary UK marketplace for connecting event organisers with a world wide range of venues, destinations and support services. It provides an annual forum to do business in a trade exhibition format and is regularly attended by officers of the council representing Belfast Waterfront. Partner organisations, BVCB, NITB and Tourism Ireland also regularly attend and collectively use the opportunity to promote and market Belfast and The Waterfront in particular as a conference destination.

2.3	The recent publication of the councils Investment Package has given rise to significant levels of interest in the proposal for the extension of Belfast Waterfront and the development of a Convention Centre facility on the site. Officers intend to use the opportunity presented by attendance at Confex 2012 to commence marketing the new facility in order to immediately establish a place in the market.
2.4	National and International Association business is the main target market for Belfast Waterfront and Tuesday 6 March 2012 is Association Day at "Confex." This provides an exclusive stream of high-level seminars and networking opportunities for both UK and International associations and is the key target day for the council officers attending
2.5	Tourism Ireland, key partners in current marketing strategies for Belfast as a business tourism destination, intend moving ahead quickly to include the proposed International Convention Centre in all of their promotional activities. To this end a press launch has been arranged by them for lunchtime of March 6 th at Excel in London Docklands. Officers are providing the required information, materials and images in relation to the proposed expansion of Belfast Waterfront. Officers will be in attendance alongside Tourism Ireland to promote the development.
2.6	The committee is asked to provide representation at this press launch to speak on behalf of Belfast City Council and Belfast Waterfront.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	Costs associated will include travel and subsistence for Members attending the event. The costs are not expected to exceed £600.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	There are no equality and good relations considerations attached to this report

5	Recommendations
	It is recommended that the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Committee, or their nominees, attend the event.

6	Decision Tracking
	Nominations for attendance