



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Great Belfast Restaurant Week
<b>Date:</b>	22 May 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Belfast City Council has led and supported a range of food tourism initiatives over the past 8 years with the objectives to promote our local food product and encourage people to eat out and enjoy the diverse offering of restaurants and eateries throughout the city.
1.2	Food is a key theme of the tourism product development as well as a key theme influencing marketing campaigns of Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and Tourism Ireland (TI).
1.3	As well as promoting the food offering there has also been a focus on developing quality of the food served, encouraging restaurants to use local produce and sustain local businesses and overall raise the standards of eateries across the city.
1.4	In addition BCC also serves citizens and visitor restaurant and café choices through its own venues, as well as supporting Arts and Cultural venues that now offer visitors restaurant choices in the MAC, Lyric Theatre, Titanic Belfast and Grand Opera House.
1.5	A summary of the various food initiatives which have been delivered by BCC in partnership with others is summarised in Appendix 1.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	At the request of Councillor Máirtín Ó Muilleoir, officers attended meetings with a delegation of representatives from the restaurant sector. Following a review of past initiatives there was discussion around the benefits and merits of a restaurant week. Aldermen Stalford and Ekin, together with Councillor Reynolds were also in attendance. The restaurant sector gave unanimous support for such an initiative. It was recognised that many other cities host restaurant weeks which have proven to be successful initiatives.

2.3	The majority of restaurants represented were reluctant to support a discount driven week with preference for a PR and marketing campaign that would celebrate existing offers and events. A PR and marketing led approach would also be a more realistic proposal due the short lead in time. It was noted that a three year plan would present opportunities to enhance the restaurant week product offer in years two and three.
2.4	All proposed that October would be the best time to hold a proposed Belfast Restaurant Week. A key aim would be to encourage citizens and visitors to eat out during the dedicated week and increase trade throughout the day and evening. The restaurant week would be part in a three year plan to support the restaurant sector and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The delivery of a Belfast Restaurant Week 2012, 2013, 2014 during mid October.</li> <li>– Development of a restaurant focused tourism product</li> <li>– Establishment of a Belfast Restaurant Week Steering Group</li> </ul>
2.5	The objectives of the week would be to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increase bookings measured via participants</li> <li>– Increase foot fall and mid week dining</li> <li>– Promote eating out as a must do activity during that week</li> <li>– Showcase new and multi cultural food offering in the city</li> <li>– Showcase the range of dining experiences for a range of lifestyles</li> <li>– Showcase local produce, excellent chefs, skills and wealth of the food offer</li> </ul>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	To implement, launch and deliver a high profile Belfast Restaurant Week 2012 would require a budget of approximately £30-50K. The sum of £20K has been previously earmarked for food tourism initiatives for 2012. Proposed funding and/or partnerships could be sought from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)</li> <li>– Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB)</li> <li>– Food NI</li> <li>– Potential sponsors</li> <li>– Contributions from each participating restaurant</li> </ul>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	No equality and good relations considerations.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members agree and approve a budget of £20,000 to develop and implement Belfast Restaurant Week 2012.
5.2	Members approve Officers seeking partners to support BCC investment.
5.3	Members agree to consider support of a 3 year plan for the delivery of Restaurant Week.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
An update report be submitted to Committee in August 2012.	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1: Great Belfast Food & Drink Summary of Activity	