



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Conference Subvention Update
Date:	22 May 2012
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen Director of Development ext 3470
Contact Officers:	Shirley McCay Head of Economic Initiatives ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p><u>Conference Subvention</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that at the Development Committee Meeting of 10 September 2010 that Belfast City Council in conjunction with Northern Ireland Tourism Board (NITB) and Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) adopted a new Conference Subvention Scheme for Belfast which superseded the previous policy.</p>
1.2	<p>Aligned to priorities in the draft Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework, NITB, BVCB and Belfast City Council developed this Conference Subvention Scheme with a total funding budget of £435,000 over three years, with Belfast City Council contributing £70,000 per annum and NITB £75,000 per annum.</p>
1.3	<p>The main objectives of the Conference Subvention Scheme are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To raise the profile of Belfast and Northern Ireland as a leading business and conference destination - To consolidate existing investment in Belfast and Northern Ireland hotel and conference infrastructure - To increase the contribution of Business and Conference Tourism to Belfast and Northern Ireland economy - To change the international perception of Belfast and Northern Ireland - To encourage inward investment to Belfast and Northern Ireland - To grow the number of leisure visitors by encouraging conferences to run partner and extender programmes - To develop a partnership approach to promoting Northern Ireland as a business and conference destination
1.4	<p>The main eligibility criteria for Conference Subvention are summarised below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The conference should be based in Belfast and include use of overnight accommodation in the Belfast area. - The conference should preferably have a minimum of 300 out of state

1.5	<p>delegates and accompanying partners staying for two nights in the Belfast area. However a conference with a smaller number of out of state delegates staying for multiple nights will be considered if there is evidence that this conference will lead to a larger associated conference coming to Belfast within the next 8 years. The level of subvention being sought against the potential economic benefit will be taken into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The conference should have an impact on and/or a potential for local businesses and organisations by providing opportunities for developing industry/sector links or to showcase local products, cultural, sporting or intellectual fields. - The subject areas of the conference should relate to local economic and tourism strategies or specific priority areas for Belfast or Northern Ireland. - The event, by locating in Belfast should enhance the areas international profile and as such the prestige value of the event will be taken into account i.e. media coverage, speaker profile - Conferences must demonstrate strict financial project management, cash flows and projected income and expenditure account. <p>Clear governance arrangements were agreed by NITB and BCC to ensure transparent and effective delivery of the scheme on behalf of both funders.</p>
-----	---

2	Key Issues		
2.1	<p><u>Agreed Conferences</u> Between April 2011 and March 2012 a total of £105,000 Conference Subvention Funding was agreed. This will result in an estimated value of £8,268,698 to the City of Belfast.</p>		
2.2	<p>Conference Award</p> <p>British & Irish Association of Law Librarians (BIALL) 2012</p> <p>Soroptomist International of GB & Ireland Annual Conference 2012</p> <p>Association of Teachers & Lecturers (ATL) Annual Conference 2016</p> <p>Association of Teachers & Lecturers (ATL) Annual Conference 2018</p> <p>European Conference on Fish Pathology (EAFP) 2017</p> <p>Rotary GB & Ireland Conference 2015</p> <p>Total</p>	<p>Estimated Value to Belfast</p> <p>£586,728</p> <p>£2,316,360</p> <p>£733,410</p> <p>£733,410</p> <p>£965,150</p> <p>£2,933,640</p> <p>£8,268,69</p>	<p>Subvention</p> <p>£10,000</p> <p>£25,000</p> <p>£15,000</p> <p>£15,000</p> <p>£15,000</p> <p>£25,000</p> <p>£105,000</p>

2.3	<p>Funding Agreement</p> <p>As part of the funding agreement a total of £210,000 has been made available by the Council for the duration of the project from 31 March 2011 until 31 December 2013, with any remaining unspent funding being refunded to Council by 31 March 2015.</p>
2.4	<p>Given the considerable time-lags between subvention approvals and completion of payments; as a result of long lead times, the trend of later booking of venues, and the scheme requirement that 25% of funding be withheld until provision of satisfactory post conference evaluation, it is suggested that the duration of funding is extended from 31 March 2015, until 31 December 2018.</p>
2.5	<p>No additional funding is required.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	Funding of £70,000 is available in the current 2011/2012 Tourism Culture and Arts Budget with further commitment of £70,000 in 2012/2013.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	None.

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that Members agree to extend the duration of the Conference Subvention from 31 March 2015 until 31 December 2018.

6	Decision Tracking
<u>Timeline</u>	
Tourism Culture and Arts Manager to produce annual report.	
Timeframe: April 2013	Reporting Officer: Kerrie Sweeney

7	Key to Abbreviations
BVCB	Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board