



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: International Marketing and Relations

Date: Tuesday 18 September 2012

Reporting Officer: John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

Contact Officer: Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Following the council's adoption of the Investment Programme, work has commenced on delivery of one of the key actions under the Economy theme to: 'develop an International Relations Strategy to support attracting tourism, foreign direct investment, commercial investment, European funding and talent.'
1.2	Over the last decade, the council has developed a range of long-standing relationships with other cities across the world under the Council's previous International Strategic Relations Framework, agreed in 2003. Changing economies and changing priorities have resulted in elements of our original Strategy having become obsolete. A review of lessons learned from past activities in Belfast's international partnerships has commenced along with the formulation of an integrated city wide approach to international marketing and relations.
1.3	Notwithstanding all the advances in the city's infrastructure over the past four years, the city has suffered from the recession and economic recovery is still a major challenge. There is now a strong argument that Belfast needs to once again take stock, revisit and refresh the Belfast brand based on our current values, develop a new city narrative that is agreed by all city stakeholders and undertake a reinvigorated coordinated city-wide approach to international marketing.
1.4	We must sustain and capitalise on our existing networks and relationships outside of Belfast, of UK and Ireland and beyond. We are operating in an increasingly global environment and to be inwardly focused is to limit the potential for growth, investment and social enhancement of Belfast itself. We are already connected to the world through all sorts of channels and relationships, some planned, some by default or by coincidence, some known widely and some yet to be uncovered. In order to maximise the value that this brings, Belfast must speak to the world as one City with all its constituent parts identifying with the brand, the messages and the purpose.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>We envisage that the key objectives in agreeing and implementing an International Marketing and Relations framework will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To secure buy-in of agree a coordinated approach to international relations and integrated city marketing across all key stakeholders in Belfast. - To develop a city narrative which is agreed by all key stakeholders - To refresh the Belfast brand ensuring it reflects the current values and narrative of Belfast and has city-wide ownership - To agree the key target audiences, messages and methodologies for an integrated approach to marketing - To agree the optimum vehicle for coordinated international marketing in agreement with city's key stakeholders - Agree the key global destinations for an integrated approach to international marketing with all key stakeholders in Belfast
2.2	<p>As a city convener, Council must not only consider its own direct international relationships, but also respect other international relationships which are already in place or desired by our city partners and stakeholders.</p>
2.3	<p>The range of key city partners include Invest NI, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Tourism Ireland, Arts Council, British Council, Belfast Port and Harbour, Queens University, Ulster University, Belfast Metropolitan College, Titanic Quarter, Northern Ireland Science Park and Bombardier.</p>
2.4	<p>Presently Belfast is marketed internationally by a range of city stakeholders albeit each focuses on their own perception and experience of Belfast and their own messages, methodologies and target audiences. There has been some effort to coordinate these activities however this has been limited to leisure and tourism marketing and even now this area is also demonstrating fragmentation with a plethora of agencies shifting focus.</p>
2.5	<p>Belfast City Council has now commenced the process of developing the international relations framework and we have talked to around 20 key stakeholders in the city over the last few months to start building relationships and to scope out the level of international activity in the city. The main findings from our discussions are:</p>
2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is widespread support, in principle, for an integrated approach to international marketing. - Many stakeholders focus on international relations rather than explicit international marketing. - Stakeholders are engaged in international activity largely for economic benefits however increased profile and positive imagery is also cited as a valid rationale for international engagement. - There are already established partnership arrangements in place between certain stakeholders however these tend to be sporadic and based on particular events or campaigns rather than strategic. - There are some overlaps between stakeholders on geographical market selection. These tend to be with the more obvious locations with an historical connection to Belfast/Northern Ireland. - The area with most overlap is New York and Boston in the USA. - There is a great deal of interest in India however there is no specific geographical focus. - China and the Far East is a target market for the education sector although

	<p>not all in the same geographical locations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Agreement on need to refresh and refine the Belfast brand and consider its expansion beyond those that have adopted it to date. – Joint showcasing abroad is considered worthwhile although each stakeholder likely to want to do own activity as well.
2.7	<p>Many stakeholders are also currently reviewing international activity and preparing new strategies including NI Executive, University of Ulster and Invest NI therefore BCC's attention is timely. The OFMDFM is currently preparing an International Relations strategy which will be released for consultation in the near future. It is very timely for the Council to develop a Belfast focus to the international relations and tie in with the Executive to ensure the Belfast message is not lost. This also applies to the newly established Northern Ireland Parliamentary Group on the USA where it will be crucial that we have a clear message and priorities to ensure the this group works for Belfast interests as well. Furthermore NI Connections has recently been established under the auspices of Invest NI. The purpose of this new vehicle is to use the NI diaspora to attract new investment and social opportunities for Belfast.</p>
2.8	<p>In order to ensure the buy-in of the key stakeholders we propose that the Lord Mayor hosts a stakeholder discussion on international marketing, supported by the Chair and Deputy Chair or their nominees. The purpose of the dinner would be to develop an agreed approach to the development of an International Relations and Marketing framework for Belfast.</p>
2.9	<p>Building a shared Belfast proposition, focusing on the most lucrative international markets, making alliances and improving the city's infrastructure will enable us to grow our confidence and further ambitions for the future embodied in general keynote development and regeneration plans including Council's Investment Programme.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	It is estimated that the dinner would cost up to £1,000 and would come out of the Development department budget.

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

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to note the content of this report and approve that the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development, or their nominees, attend the stakeholder dinner planned for the beginning of October being hosted by Lord Mayor.

6	Decision Tracking
The main points from the stakeholder dinner and engagement will be presented back to Committee in December 2012.	
Timeframe: December 2012	
Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay	