



Report to: Special Development Committee

Subject: International Marketing Framework – N. Ireland Connections Membership

Date: 18 December 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 is under way to deliver one of the key actions; to develop an International Marketing framework to support attracting tourism, foreign direct investment, commercial investment, European funding and talent.
1.2	<p>Members will remember from the Committee report in September 2012 a set of agreed key objectives for implementing an International Marketing framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To secure buy-in and agreement of a coordinated approach to international relations and integrated city marketing across all key stakeholders in Belfast. – To develop a city narrative 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 the city's key stakeholders. – To agree the key global destinations for an integrated approach to international marketing with all key stakeholders in Belfast.
1.3	Since our last report we have engaged nearly 20 key city stakeholders through meetings, surveys and an official breakfast symposium hosted by the Lord Mayor. All of the stakeholders are very keen to be involved and to shape Belfast's International Marketing framework. A representative from N Ireland Connections was at this symposium and she invited Belfast City Council and other stakeholders to officially join NI Connections (NIC) organisation.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>NI Connections is a recently established organisation by Minister Arlene Foster with the aim of developing and growing the support of people with a connection to Northern Ireland by birth, family, education or business. It is a not-for-profit public/private organisation which has been established to make use of Invest NI's systems but to act fully independent and be managed by its governing Council via a supervisory board made up of sponsors and subscribers.</p>
2.2	<p>The organisation's objectives are to promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - means for improved collaboration of diaspora consumer organisations, - methods to engage the strategic diaspora, - strategies to unlock the cultural diaspora market, and - mechanisms to support and remain connected with the recent diaspora.
	<p>More about the NI Connections is in Appendix 1.</p>
2.3	<p>Belfast City Council is invited to act as a sponsor at an annual cost of £30,000 for a period of three years, after which a review will be undertaken. The Council would be given a place on the NIC Board to guide the strategic direction of the organisation.</p>
2.4	<p>Membership of NI Connections will allow Council the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic alliances with other key international stakeholders in the city - An opportunity to develop a 'Belfast ask' list for NI diaspora - Developing lucrative links with NI diaspora - Marketing of the Council's information and stories to the NI diaspora. - Participation in NIC events throughout the world. - Cooperation of NIC Council at the council's events. - Leverage of the Council's investment in diaspora relationships and opportunity to build on the synergies that exist with others in NI.
2.5	<p>This is an opportunity for Belfast City Council to set the strategic direction of NIC and to engage with a wider diaspora with other NI organisations and to leverage their contacts' relationships and good will. NI Connections can provide the umbrella brand and with Belfast establishing 'Belfast Connections' as part of the overall strategic approach of the Belfast's International Marketing Framework.</p>
2.6	<p>NIC has already signed up as full sponsors (contributing £30K) N Ireland Tourist Board and Invest NI will soon include Tourism Ireland and Derry City Council. In addition, British Visitor and Convention Bureau, Belfast Harbour, Belfast City Airport and British Council are in negotiation to sign up as members only (contributing £6K). Negotiations are also in place with University of Ulster, Queen's University, Belfast Met and Titanic Quarter to join too. Full sponsorship would also allow the Council direct access to the key stakeholders in the city. NIC will also engage with general diaspora groups such as Ireland funds, ITLG and International Irish Business Network. In addition NIC will provide us with links to the NI Executive and its organisations in the US and Brussels.</p>
2.7	<p>Actively participating in NI Connections is only one action within the Belfast's International Marketing Framework and would provide us with the effective tool in marketing the city internationally and utilising NI and Belfast Diaspora across the world.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	It is estimated that the sponsorship of NI Connections would cost up to £30,000 and would be paid annually for the period of three years. This would come out of the Development Department's International Marketing Framework budget. It will also be required for a Council officer to sit and attend the quarterly meetings of the NIC Board.

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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. note the content of this report 2. approve that Council becomes one of the sponsors of the NI Connections and to sit on the NIC Board

6	Decision Tracking
Timeframe: March 2013 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay	