



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Northern Irish Connections/New York Launch

Date: 20 June 2013

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

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>Members will be aware that at a meeting of the Development Committee on 18 December 2012, it was agreed that the Council would become one of the sponsors of the NI Connections to participate on the NIC Board. NI Connections is a recently established organisation under the auspices of Invest NI designed to connect with the diaspora. Membership of NI Connections allows 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.
1.2	<p>Members will also be aware that the Cultural Framework 2012-25 states that Belfast City Council will take a leadership role on strategic alignment and coordination at city level, articulating linkages across creative industries, arts and culture and tourism to realise opportunities. We also work with partners in positioning Belfast as a creative and cultural city.</p>
1.3	<p>There is a critical link between Belfast’s creative and cultural industries and the visitor economy. The showcasing and marketing of indigenous artistic excellence enables Belfast to be profiled on the world stage as a thriving, vibrant and distinctive city and facilitates Belfast’s repositioning as major international authentic tourism destination. Our creative and cultural businesses act as ambassadors for the rich culture and internationalism of Belfast. Positive local, national and international media coverage through showcasing at home and abroad increases the profile and exposure of the artist, hence increasing their ability to do business on a global stage by targeting key international markets, increasing sales and attracting investment.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	Members are aware that work is continuing on the development of an International Marketing Framework for Belfast alongside over 20 stakeholders across trade and investment, tourism and educational sectors. A key aspect of this Framework centres on the North American market and securing economic return on a range of initiatives for Belfast.
2.2	Belfast had active international relations with North America between 1998-2006 and had previously civic links with a range of cities including New York. Council also had led trade missions to New York on several occasions as well as supporting tourism development and cultural promotions.
2.3	As part of a new draft North American Action Plan, officers are working on the delivery of an outward trade mission to the west coast with up to 15 companies in October 2013. A re-examination of the value of the Nashville Sister City link, the potential of a link with Austin and a review of the MoU with ITLG has also been completed as part of officers work to date and the results will be included in the forthcoming framework due to be presented to Committee in August 2013. Members have also asked that consideration is given to a re-ignition of the Friends of Belfast initiative.
2.4	NI Connections is holding a launch event in New York in September to coincide with the Lyric Theatre's 'Brendan at the Chelsea' during a four week run in the Theatre Row Studios. This critically acclaimed production stars and is directed by actor Adrian Dunbar and will showcase the very best of Belfast's creative talents. The staging of the play, itself set in New York's historic Chelsea Hotel, will take place alongside the first Irish Theatre Festival.
2.5	The production will portray the NI proposition specifically and Belfast's creativity and talent. The Lyric Theatre are keen to position Belfast as an outward looking, confident, extravert, international city who are capable of creating excellence at home and abroad which accords with Council objectives. Staging such an international tour will promote indigenously produced drama in a major cultural and media marketplace. By performing in New York, the production will be producing this in the heart of a most important market for the Northern Irish Diaspora.
2.6	<p><u>Schedule</u></p> <p>The production will open on Thursday 5 September 2013, run for 7 performances each week and close on Sunday 6 October 2013. NIC will co-host a gala night with the Lyric and invite NI Diaspora to attend and to join NIC. It will be an opportunity to present the key interests of NIC, education, investment, tourism and innovation. All NIC Council members have the opportunity to be involved and target their own key audiences in New York at the same time through parallel programmes. Belfast City Council is invited to send representation to the NIC Opening Event in New York.</p>
2.7	<p><u>Belfast Relationships with New York</u></p> <p>It is considered important that BCC takes the opportunity to connect with a wider range of partners and stakeholders in New York as part of the new emerging International Marketing Framework. New York and Belfast were previously connected in earlier years through civic links and a number of trade missions took place between both cities as well as educational and best practice visits. There is now the potential to renew civic links with New York as part of a wider</p>

	<p>programme and initial explorations could be properly pursued in conjunction with the NIC event on 5 September.</p> <p>Furthermore Belfast should consider specific international marketing opportunities around the Belfast product e.g. music and literary tourism at a later date. Additional information will be brought to Committee at a later date.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>A budget of up to £5,000 to cover the costs of flights, accommodation and subsistence for 3 people travelling.</p>

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

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>It is recommended that Members consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participation at the NIC Launch event in New York on 5 September 2013 and agree to the Chair/Deputy Chair or their nominees, along with one officer attendance. – Agree to a wider programme of meetings being set up to explore links between Belfast and New York under the forthcoming International Framework.

6	Decision Tracking
<p>An update will be brought to Committee in December 2013.</p> <p>Timeframe: December 2013 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay</p>	

7	Key to Abbreviations
<p>NIC - Northern Ireland Connections</p> <p>TI - Tourism Ireland</p> <p>NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board</p>	