



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Collaboration between Belfast and Bilbao

Date: 17 September 2013

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The former Lord Mayor of Belfast, Alderman Gavin Robinson previously received correspondence from the Office of the British Ambassador to Spain based in Madrid, Mr Giles Paxman CMG LVO.
1.2	Mr Paxman had written to encourage collaboration between Belfast and the City of Bilbao. This is based on a proposal to the Ambassador by the Head of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), which is also based in Madrid.
1.3	Members considered the trip to Bilbao in April and it was agreed Officers would bring an update in due course.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The British Ambassador for Spain, Mr Giles Paxman, and the UNWTO Head, Mr Taleb Rifai, have proposed that BCC consider sending a team to Bilbao to explore the possibility for mutual learning and collaboration, and indeed to consider involvement of the current Lord Mayor of Belfast in this exploratory visit.
2.2	Mr Paxman has offered the support services of the UK Consul in Bilbao to assist BCC in planning such a visit, to involve relevant Bilbao authorities and local businesses as well as the Mayor of Bilbao, who has strong historical, industrial and commercial links with the UK.
2.3	The current proposed dates for the visit are the 18 and 19 November.
2.4	Invitations have been extended to relevant stakeholders across the City with the understanding that any costs will be met by the participating organisation/individual.

2.5	Officers have been in consultation with Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) in respect of a previous delegation visiting Bilbao and integrating the learnings of that visit into this trip, ensuring the opportunity is maximised.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	The cost of the visit is being funded through the European Unit and an outline cost for the trip for two Officers and three Members to attend will be in the region of £3000 to cover the cost of flights, accommodation and subsistence.

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

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Members are asked to agree to the allocation a budget of £3000 to cover the cost of flights, accommodation and subsistence.

6	Decision Tracking
There is no decision tracking attached to this report.	

7	Key to Abbreviations
UNWTO - United Nations World Tourism Organisation NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board	