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| Report to: | Development Committee |
| Subject: | Belfast Waterfront/Ulster Hall Conference Sales Schedule 2013/2014 |
| Date: | 17 September 2013 |
| Reporting Officer: | John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470 |
| Contact Officers: | Jennifer Crawley Patterson, Revenue and Business Generation Manager, ext 1335 |

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| 1 | Relevant Background Information |
| 1.1 | As we prepare for the opening of the new extension planned for Belfast Waterfront in 2016, it is important that there is a proactive marketing and sales programme in order to ensure business success for the new facility. |
| 1.2 | During 2013-2016 the sales team intends to work in partnership with Visit Belfast, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and Tourism Ireland to maximise existing sales platforms and identify new market opportunities for Belfast and the Waterfront. At this stage it is envisaged that our annual programme for 2013/2014 will include attendance at a number of key UK, European and International tradeshows and targeted meet the buyer events. |
| 1.3 | The purpose of this report is to make Members aware of the national and international sales activity planned to promote the new extension and to request that Members approve the attendance of key conference sales staff to participate at each of the tradeshows/sales missions outlined in the activity schedule in Appendix 1. |

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| 2 | Key Issues |
| 2.1 | In the past the Waterfront's conference sales team has attended on average three tradeshows/destination showcases per year, this activity has for the most part been concentrated in the United Kingdom. As a result of the planned extension, we are able to offer conference and meetings planners an enhanced proposition and can confidently target the European and International marketplace now that our physical capacity is increasing. |
| 2.2 | Execution of the activity outlined in the sales schedule aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise awareness and interest in the new extension planned for Belfast Waterfront in 2016 - Identify and target new large-scale national and international conference |

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| | <p>opportunities for the venue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Position the city and the Waterfront as a leading conference destination - Reinforce the Waterfront's position as a top-tier European conference centre - Support central and local government strategies to enhance business tourism development, job creation and socio-economic growth <p>2.3 In terms of peer group analysis it is worth noting that the Convention Centre Dublin (CCD) recently increased its sales resource and doubled the number of European tradeshows it will attend this year in order to win more business from European corporate and associations. Many of our UK competitors are already established in the international market place and attend the main Meetings, Incentive, Conference and Exhibitions (MICE) industry tradeshows such as IMEX America, IMEX Frankfurt, EIBTM in Barcelona and International Confex in London.</p> <p>2.4 International conference business lead times on average range from 2-6 years. In order to attract conferences to the new extension it is imperative that we plan ahead and engage with international conference planners now if we are to secure bookings for 2016 and beyond. Working with Visit Belfast and NITB, we've identified a number of key sales platforms for the incoming year, these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 x NI industry event launch (September/October – timing subject to project funding announcement) - 2 x Belfast Ambassador Events –October and December presentation (timing subject to project funding announcement) - 3 x extension launch events in London (November depending on funding announcement), Washington (October 2013), Brussels (February 2014) - 6 x sales missions – GB x4 (one per quarter), Europe x 1, Kenes International HQ x 1 - 3 x tradeshows - IMEX America in October 2013 and in 2014, International Confex in March and IMEX Frankfurt in May - x super familiarisation trip (January – March 2014) <p>2.5 Given the significance of the Waterfront extension project and the level of financial investment from Belfast City Council, NITB and the European Regional Development Fund, there may be ministerial representation at a number of these key business tourism launch events, namely the Washington Business Tourism event on 6 November and the Brussels launch planned for February 2014. It is recommended therefore that the Development Committee also considers representation at events where the DETI Minister may be present. Please note at the time of writing this report we understand that the Lord Mayor will be in attendance at the Belfast Business Tourism event in Washington.</p> |
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| 3 | Resource Implications |
| 3.1 | Participation fees to attend all of the national and international activities specified in Appendix 1 are estimated to come in at a cost of £20,000. This does not include officer travel, accommodation and subsistence costs however if Members approve the units participation at these events then the team will look to book their travel and accommodation requirements well in advance of each trip to secure preferential rates. |

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| 4 | Equality and Good Relations Considerations |
| 4.1 | There are no specific equality and good relations considerations attached to this report. |

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| 5 | Recommendations |
| 5.1 | <p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the contents of the report - Approve the participation of one Council Officer at each of the sales missions outlined in the sales calendar - Consider political representation at events at which the DETI Minister may be present |

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| 6 | Decision Tracking |
| Reporting Officer: Jennifer Crawley Patterson, Revenue and Business Generation Manager | |

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| 7 | Key to Abbreviations |
| <p>NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board TIL – Tourism Ireland VB – Visit Belfast</p> | |

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| 8 | Documents Attached |
| Appendix 1 –Belfast Waterfront Sales Promotional Schedule 2013/2014 | |