



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Destination Belfast – Project Update
Date:	22 October 2013
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that the Destination Belfast project is an EU funded initiative to improve the quantity and quality of the local tourism offer across the city. The project has three elements <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tourism Development programme 2. Tourism Champions 3. WorldHost
1.2	The first element of Destination Belfast is the Tourism Development Programme designed to increase sales, growth and innovation of established tourism businesses across the city. 14 businesses have completed the first wave of the programme; a further 15 businesses have been recruited and will commence the programme in October 2013 and applications for participation in wave 3 will open in December 2013. By the end of March 2014, 44 tourism businesses will have been provided with assistance through this element of the programme.
1.3	The Tourism Champion element of Destination Belfast was designed to create local tourism ambassadors to enhance and promote the tourism offer in their locality. 20 Champions were engaged on the programme through an open application process. The programme content included industry workshops, product development mentoring, an ILM level 5 accreditation and a bursary of up to £1000 for product development. 16 champions have completed the workshops and mentoring, five have completed ILM Level accreditation and three have drawn down the product development bursary.
1.4	The final element of Destination Belfast is the rollout of WorldHost. This is an internationally recognised customer service standard. Through this element of the programme, we are encouraging businesses to become “WorldHost Recognised Businesses”. We also want the ten tourism destinations to become WorldHost Recognised and we want Belfast as a city to become the first WorldHost Destination in Northern Ireland.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p><u>WorldHost</u></p>
	<p>We have recently completed an audit to identify the level of uptake by local businesses and to subsequently point to the scale of the challenge if we are to achieve WorldHost destination status for the city.</p>
2.2	<p>Progress to date includes:</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2989 individuals trained - 112 businesses trained or in training - 29 companies have gained recognition as WorldHost businesses (i.e. 50% of their frontline staff have been trained).
2.3	<p>If Belfast is to achieve WorldHost Destination Status, 450 businesses from the sectors of Tourism, Hospitality, Leisure, Passenger Transport & Travel, Support Services and retail must have achieved “Recognised Business” status. We have set a target of achieving that figure by April 2014.</p>
2.4	<p>It is our intention that we will take a targeted approach to achieving this 450 figure. This will mean ensuring that all ten tourism destinations (namely City Centre, North Belfast Cultural Corridor, Cathedral Quarter, Gaeltacht Quarter, Shankill Quarter, Lisburn Road, Queen's Quarter, Belfast Hills, Connswater – East Belfast, Titanic Quarter) are actively engaged. In practical terms, it means that 25% of businesses in the relevant sectors in these locations must undertake the training and that the 25% target must be achieved across each of the sectors (i.e. all recognised businesses cannot be in one or two specific sectors).</p>
2.5	<p>The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is currently subsidising the cost of the training to the business. The cost to the businesses with subsidy is £20 per employee; without the subsidy, the cost is £190. DEL funding for WorldHost is to end in March 2014 and to date there is no confirmation of an extension. Therefore recruitment and training needs to be maximised by the end of March 2014 in order to avail of the significant opportunity. This is in line with our timeline for the city status designation.</p>
2.6	<p>In order to build momentum among the sector and to generate support for the rollout of World Host and the other programme elements, it is planned that an event will take place in the City Hall in the coming months. Members of the Development Committee will be invited to attend.</p>
2.7	<p><u>Champions programme</u></p>
	<p>The aim of this strand of the programme is to ensure that the Champions are ambassadors for our tourism development activities and that they act as conduits for improving the tourism offering in their area.</p>
2.8	<p>In order to improve their knowledge of tourism issues and of our wider policy in this field, we developed a bespoke training programme that has been accredited to ILM level 4 (through Belfast Metropolitan College). While the training programme has now finished, there are a number of champions who have yet to submit their written assignments. Unless this happens, they cannot achieve the accreditation.</p>
	<p>The champions can avail of a product development bursary of a value of up to £1,000 and this allows them to test a new product idea. While not all champions have yet availed of this support, new products currently being developed include:</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CQ Card (Cathedral Quarter Loyalty Card) - CS Lewis presentation and new content for tours.

2.9	<p>Tourism Development Programme</p> <p>In August 2013, an evaluation of the first wave of the programme was undertaken. It reported on a programme wide basis (14 participants) an estimated increase in sales of 22%, 64 full time jobs and 3 part time jobs were retained, 1 full time job had been created while 6 full time jobs, 2 part time jobs and 10 to12 temporary posts (for events) were in planning.</p> <p>The businesses who participated in the programme were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aunt Sandra's Candy Factory - Belfast Bus Company - Belfast Compass Tours - Castle Catering - Clifton House - Crumlin Road Gaol - Greenmount B&B - Knock Travel - Lagan Boat Company - McComb's Executive Travel & Tours - NI Taxi Tours - Ravenhill Guest House - SS Nomadic - Tara Lodge.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>There are no resource implications at this stage. Destination Belfast is 50% match funded by ERDF.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	No specific equality or good relations considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>Members are asked to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the work undertaken to date on the programme - Note the ambitious targets – particularly around World Host – and the associated plans to meet these targets. - Note the plan to hold an event in the City Hall to build support for the three elements of the programme.

6	Decision Tracking
No specific decision tracking required.	

7	Key to Abbreviations
<p>DEL – Department for Employment and Learning</p> <p>ILM – Institute of Leadership and Management</p>	