



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	American Ireland Fund Business Mission to Belfast
Date:	19 November 2013
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, EU Manager, ext 3577

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	As part of the Council's Investment Programme, we are committed to promoting job creation through inward investment and export promotion. To this end, Council has recently approved the Belfast International Relations Framework which commits the city to supporting activity to deliver economic impact under the 3 markets segments of trade and investment, business and leisure tourism, and education and talent. Over 20 stakeholders across Belfast have agreed to collaborate on target markets where appropriate and to coordinate activity for the wider benefit of the city overall. An annual calendar of proposed inward and outward visits has been compiled and will be updated regularly so that Council can track and support visiting delegations and deliver cross sectoral outward missions as appropriate as part of the city wide approach.
1.2	As part of the International Framework, North America has been identified as a destination market which can deliver extensive economic benefits for Belfast across each market segment. Previously Council and the City enjoyed a range of constructive civic and business relationships with political, educational, business and commercial institutions in USA. Formal Memoranda existed from the late 1990s to mid 2000s with New York, Boston, Portland in Maine and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Other less formalized but still structured relationships existed with keynote business leaders, politicians and educational representatives in other cities mainly on the East Coast and predominantly under the Friends of Belfast network.
1.3	Members will be aware that the Lord Mayor has just returned from a mission to the USA and Canada to promote Belfast as a business and tourism destination. During the visit the Lord Mayor was guest of honour at a business breakfast hosted by the American Ireland fund in New York City and KMPG. The event was attended by over 25 prestigious business leaders including Duncan Niederauer CEO of the New York Stock Exchange and Jim Clerkin CEO of Moet Hennesy and the Deputy Heads of both the British Council and the Irish Consulate, together with the NI Bureau and Invest NI.
1.4	The purpose of the event was to allow the Lord Mayor to engage directly with New York business leaders to promote Belfast as a prime investment location and to encourage consideration of the city as a gateway to Europe for business. Duncan Niederauer gave a

	personal testimony of the New York Stock Exchange's experience locating and working in Belfast and encouraged the business leaders present to make an exploratory visit to the city to experience its unique qualities and business culture.
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2	Key Issues
2.1	During the meeting, the American Ireland Fund through its President and CEO Chair Kieran Mc Laughlin, along with Duncan Niederauer confirmed their decision to take a first ever American Ireland Fund business mission to Belfast in 2014. This visit is proposed for 20 NYC companies, bringing a mix of entrepreneurs and blue chip business delegates to Belfast during 27-28 February 2014. The two day visit will be an opportunity for Belfast City Council and its partners to showcase the city and communicate reasons to invest and locate in the city through local testimonies and site visits as well as a civic programme hosted by the Lord Mayor. Members are asked to approve the facilitation of this visit at a max cost of £10,000 from the International Relations budget.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	The cost of hosting an inward business mission of 20 visitors will not exceed £10,000.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no equality or good relations implications.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to approve the hosting of the first ever American Ireland Fund endorsed business mission to Belfast for 20 businesses on 27-28 February 2014 at a maximum cost of £10,000.

6	Decision Tracking
Timeline:	28 February 2014
	Reporting Officer: John McGrillen