



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: International Relations Update

Date: 14 January 2014

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that one of the key commitments in the Council's Investment Programme 2012- 2015 is that the Council will work with city partners to promote Belfast proactively on the international stage to attract trade and investment, increase visitor and student numbers and build the networks necessary to support growth.
1.2	Over the last year work has been undertaken to develop a draft International Relations Framework that seeks to shape how city stakeholders can work together in a stronger and purposeful way to maximize the economic impact for Belfast as a whole.
1.3	This framework and a 2 year plan were agreed by Members at the August Development Committee. At this time, Members requested an update at a later stage in the year, outlining delivery of the action plan, highlighting additional areas of work that have arisen as the year progresses and resources to deliver these.

2	Key Issues
2.1	In summary, the aims of the International Relations Framework are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To maximise economic return of development for Belfast. - To increase the economic benefits of marketing Belfast internationally.
2.2	The following objectives are intended to help increase the economic benefits of developing a city-wide approach to proactively market Belfast internationally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliver increased economic return to Belfast through collaborative international promotion. - Develop meaningful international partnerships and civic relationships to support Belfast's growth. - Promote the attractiveness of the city for business, education and tourism. - Create the optimum mechanisms for international promotion of Belfast.

2.3	<p>The framework sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - targets for each of the three primary market segments – trade and investment, tourism, education & learning; and - key actions for each of the geographical target areas - China, Europe, India, North America. 																								
2.4	<p>The agreed action plan is appended for the period 2013 – 2015. It identifies the suggested role of Council as a co-ordinating partner and presents proposed priority actions for Council at this stage. Joint Projects emanating from other stakeholders have yet to be added to this plan which will occur during the next phase of consultation.</p>																								
2.5	<p>Proposed outcomes and annual targets for BCC are outlined in the Framework, focusing on Business & Leisure Tourism, Education, Learning & Talent and Trade & Investment. This includes longer term outcomes and annual targets which will be achieved most effectively by Council working with key stakeholders in the delivery of the Framework. As the regional driver, Belfast has a key role to play in helping to deliver a number of regional targets; however, it is important to recognise the targets and longer term outcomes need to be agreed with city stakeholders as they can only be achieved in partnership.</p>																								
2.6	<p>Key actions proposed and underway under International Relations for the current year are tabled below.</p>																								
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2.9	China	Support Chinese New Year	Mar 2014		
		Support Hefei inward visit	Jan 2014		
		Hold a Chinese Travel Industry Seminar as BCC's international dimension of Chinese New Year 2014	Dec 2014		
		Agree collaborative approach with local educational institutions, schools and Chinese counterparts under the Confucius model	June 2014		
		Continue relationship with UU Confucius Institute and source additional opportunities for collaboration	Ongoing		
		Receive and welcome new Chinese students to Belfast	Nov 2014		
		Potential bid to secure China investment conference in support of Invest NI	Nov 2014		
2.10	USA	Prepare Belfast in Shenyang showcase and explore collaborative outward mission with partners	Dec 2014		
		Establish working relationship with US Consulate	Ongoing		
		Continue co-operative music industry programme with Nashville Sister City	Dec 2014		
		Refocus Belfast's showcase at South by South West to highlight wider digital industry sector and link with Tourism Ireland promotion	June 2014		
		Investigate creation of incubation facility for Belfast companies in Silicon Valley in conjunction with University of Ulster	Oct 2014		
		Explore Sister City agreement with Berkeley, California	Oct 2014		
		Develop cooperative programme on connected health with Boston	Dec 2014		
		Develop cooperative programme around financial services industries with New York	Sept 2014		
		2.11	Europe	Explore potential inward mission from city of Seattle	Sept 2014
				Identify funding opportunities and partners for	Oct 2014

2.12	2014-2020 funds	
	Develop Belfast – Dublin economic corridor concept and launch initiative	April 2014
	Reinvigorate Cities of the Isles relationship connecting with core cities in UK & Ireland	Oct 2014
<p>Members are asked to note that there is a considerable volume of work attached to international relations activity. Given the limited staff resources as noted below, priority has been given to advancing only the most productive and relevant initiatives. This means the focus of efforts over the next year will be on developing a meaningful relationship with Shenyang in China and developing trade and investment initiatives, and to a lesser extent continuing the relationship with Hefei. Similarly there will be a focus on the US Market particularly strengthening Belfast's companies' presence in Silicon Valley and on developing cooperative sectoral programmes with New York, Boston and Nashville.</p>		

3	Resource Implications
3.1	Members have agreed a budget of £80,000, in the current financial year, for international relations, as well as a £150,000 budget specifically for the Global India Business Meeting. A further budget of £150,000 has been requested within the 2014/15 budget estimates.
3.2	Currently International Relations work is being undertaken by staff within the European Unit. This has resulted in a significant increase in workload in the unit which is expected to continue to rise given that the new EU funding calls 2014-2020 have now begun to open.
3.3	Consideration has been given by Senior Management with respect to the need to provide additional staff resources to deliver the International work and allow the EU team to ramp up its EU activity to pursue funding opportunities for BCC.
3.4	However, given the pending election of the new Council and appointment of a new Chief Executive it is expected that the governance and structure of Council will change. It is therefore proposed at this stage to focus on priority work and continue to operate within the current structure to deliver International Relations with the offer of an honorarium to the EU Unit staff. This is currently being considered at Senior Management and HR level as an interim solution. It is anticipated that a staff resource for future delivery of International Relations in the context of the new Council structures will be determined.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are unlikely to be any Equality and Good Relations issues attached to this report, although the International Relations Framework is currently undergoing equality screening.

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note the content of the report

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Note the proposed action plan for 2014/15- Note that consideration is being given to offer honorariums to EU Unit staff to deliver an increased programme of activity with regards to international relations
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6	Decision Tracking
Regular update reports will be brought to the Development Committee by the Director of Development.	
Reporting Officer: John McGrillen	

7	Appendices
Appendix 1 – International Relations Framework	