



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Game of Thrones Exhibition 2014
Date:	18 February 2014
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Game of Thrones (GoT) is a major worldwide production by HBO which is broadcast in 74 countries worldwide. It has been a global phenomenon in terms of its success and the huge following that the show has garnered. Game of Thrones is shot on location in across Northern Ireland with Titanic Studios in Belfast being one of the key locations. The show is estimated to have generated in excess of £65M for the local economy and the tourism sector is now beginning to recognise and capitalise on the global appeal of the show. The show has the ability to reposition Belfast and NI as a cutting edge destination and has been identified as a key motivator by Tourism Ireland in its forthcoming marketing campaigns.
1.2	In the US, the most recent series of the show averaged 14.2M viewers per episode, with over 4.4M tuning into the new season on Sky Atlantic in the UK. Viewing figures do not encompass the reach of the show as the boxset and online viewing figures are hard to attain. The boxset for season two is the fastest selling boxset HBO has released and sold 241k unit on the first day of release in the US. HBO is a global company with over 10.6M Facebook followers and over 8.6M followers of the specific Game of Thrones Facebook page.
1.3	The Game of Thrones offers the opportunity to highlight the tourism offer associated with the show and to build new tourism products and experiences based on the show's locations and association with NI. However, the show also offers a platform to showcase the creative industries in Northern Ireland and the craft and workmanship of the Belfast cast and crew involved in the production.
1.4	The show enables the Belfast and NI tourism sector to reach new demographics and provides as truly global showcase through the association with HBO.
1.5	In 2013, Belfast hosted the HBO curated Game of Thrones exhibition at Titanic Belfast. The exhibition attracted almost 19k visitors. Over 12,500 tickets were

	distributed in advance of the show with over 30% of those being distributed out of state. The exhibition attracted significant press interest in the local market and NITB hosted a press trip of 22 international journalists including journalists from the New York Times, the Guardian, The Telegraph, Radio Times, Huffington Post and Paris Match. The exhibition was supported with a comprehensive NI and ROI marketing campaign and international competitions facilitated by HBO, TIL and NITB.
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2	Key Issues
2.1	The proposal seeking approval will bring the HBO curated Game of Thrones exhibition back to Belfast in June 2014 in partnership with NITB, Northern Ireland Screen and Belfast City Council. The exhibition is significantly bigger than last year and will feature new interactive elements. NITB have committed to support the exhibition with a PR and Marketing campaign which will link into any campaigns that BCC wish to run. There are a number of new tourism experiences based on screen tourism which will combine with the exhibition to create a compelling and time bound reason to visit Belfast. BCC will work with NITB and other key partners to engage and enable the tourism and hospitality trade to capitalise on the opportunity that the exhibition presents and create additional opportunities to spend in the city. NITB has committed to work with TIL to ensure full buy in to the exhibition and create marketing campaigns focusing on the exhibition in key markets.
2.2	The exhibition will offer the chance to showcase the host venue to an international audience and highlight Belfast's ability to host large scale events and exhibitions.
2.3	Currently the cost to secure the exhibition will be \$150K and will be shared by NITB and NI Screen. The costs of the marketing campaign, digital campaign, web build, email marketing, competitions, PR, Media visits and hosting, and media/ launch event have yet to be fully scoped but will represent a significant cost. There will also be costs for Tourism Ireland in terms of their marketing campaigns.
2.4	To support the above BCC proposes to contribute to the costs to host the exhibition. BCC has identified a number of potential venues and is keen that the venue is city centre based to secure high footfall. The Waterfront Belfast has been provisionally booked and will cost in the region of £40,000 to host.
2.5	Objectives of Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To strengthen and build the relationships with NITB, HBO, NI Screen, and other key partners. - To secure footfall of approx. 20k to the Game of Thrones Exhibition in 2014. - To create a compelling marketing focusing on Game of Thrones and utilising HBO to leverage the campaign.
2.6	The marketing campaign will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise awareness of Belfast as a holiday/ short break destination on a worldwide stage - Challenge perceptions of Belfast - Increase footfall, spend and bed nights

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Profile Northern Ireland as a viable destination for major films and TV productions positively impacting the development of the creative industries in NI - Create positive PR value in excess of £500k locally. - Host an international press trip in conjunction with HBO. - Utilise the exhibition to support trade to develop compelling visitor experiences based on Game of Thrones and/ or film productions and contributing to the development of the Creative Vibe pillar experience. - Support Tourism Ireland to utilise the exhibition and the GoT brand to profile NI internationally, create standout, increasing international visits and spend.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	One Officer from the TCA team will work with NITB and other key partners on the project and ensure that all opportunities are maximised and objectives met.
3.2	A financial contribution of up to £40,000 from departmental budget 2014–2015 will cover venue hire costs at the Waterfront Hall.

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

5	Recommendations
5.1	To approve report and a contribution up to a maximum of £40,000 towards securing the exhibition and hosting GoT Exhibition in Belfast.

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

7	Key to Abbreviations
NITB - Northern Ireland Tourist Board TIL - Tourism Ireland Limited TCHA - Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts Unit GoT – Game of Thrones	