



## Belfast City Council

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| <b>Report to:</b>         | Development Committee                                 |
| <b>Subject:</b>           | Bolshoi Exhibition                                    |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 18 February 2014                                      |
| <b>Reporting Officer:</b> | John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470     |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>   | Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459 |

| <b>1</b> | <b>Relevant Background Information</b>  |
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| 1.1      | An approach has been made to Council, via the Lord Mayor's office, to consider an opportunity that has emerged to host an exhibition from the internationally renowned Bolshoi's collection of costumes. This will be a first of its kind with no substantial tour of this material outside Russia to date. The closest comparison has been a select exhibition of designs and other associated artefacts in some of Europe's leading cultural venues and capitals including La Scala, Milan. Due to a series of local connections this unique opportunity has been presented to Belfast. UK-Russia Year of Culture has helped leverage the necessary funding from the Russian government to cover the high insurance costs to support this first ever exhibition of original costumes. |
| 1.2      | <u>Cultural Framework</u><br>The vision for our Cultural Framework is that<br>"By 2020, everyone in Belfast experiences and is inspired by our city's diverse and distinctive culture and arts. Arts and heritage are valued for enriching quality of life and creating wealth, and the city's culture and creativity is renowned throughout the world."  |
| 1.3      | In support of this vision in 2012-13 Belfast City Council's Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit invested just over £1.4m to support arts activity. The majority of this funding was distributed through the Annual and Multi annual Funding schemes which gave core support to 53 local arts organisations and in addition there were three other grant schemes. In addition a £900,000 flagship fund was launched to challenge social exclusion.  |
| 1.4      | Another essential element of the Cultural Framework for Belfast is to attract authentic world class cultural experiences that have the potential to provide people in Belfast with an opportunity to access international arts as well as attracting visitors to the city.  |

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| 1.5 | <p><u>Bolshoi history</u><br/>         Founded in 1776, the Bolshoi is perhaps the world's most renowned ballet company and distinguished opera producer. Bolshoi is associated with many of the world's leading ballets including famously premiering Swan Lake in 1877. This collection of costumes will help build Belfast's reputation as host city for leading international exhibitions.</p>   |
| 1.6 | <p><u>2014 UK Russia year</u><br/>         2014 is the UK-Russia Year of Culture supported by the Russian Department of Foreign Affairs and the British Council. As part of this connection there is a major programme of events and corresponding series of cultural showcases. In the UK Belfast would host the only flagship event outside of the Greater London area. This cultural event would create a critical platform to develop commercial and business relationships between Russia and Belfast. In support of this exhibition the Russian government will contribute up to £250,000 to cover transport, insurance, staff and other associated costs.</p> |

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| <b>2</b> | <b>Key Issues</b>   |
| 2.1      | <p>This exhibition has the potential to attract over 30,000 people including up to 50% being out of state visitors. A full exhibition and engagement programme would take place in Belfast from July to September 2014. Potential venues for the exhibition include Titanic Belfast with a wider accompanying programme of outreach events and activities in other locations across the city. This would include -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 45 original Bolshoi costumes</li> <li>- 12 costumes from National Ethnography Museum</li> <li>- Selection of original sketches, drawings and set designs</li> <li>- Masterclasses from Bolshoi's current repertoire</li> <li>- Performances from Bolshoi's current repertoire</li> <li>- Events focussed on potential Belfast-Russia business connections</li> <li>- Events focussed on potential Belfast-Russia tourism connections</li> <li>- International marketing campaign</li> <li>- Education and community engagement programme</li> </ul> |
| 2.2      | <p><u>Potential Benefits</u></p> <p>The benefits of Belfast securing this exhibition include –</p>  |
| 2.3      | <p><u>Cultural</u><br/>         The company has the highest name-recognition and has never before shown this material, inside or outside Russia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Belfast the exhibition will attract national and international attention</li> <li>- It will associate Belfast with culture of the highest prestige</li> <li>- It will indicate that Belfast is a safe and appropriate place in which to mount high value exhibitions</li> <li>- It will generate major international coverage</li> </ul>  |
| 2.4      | <p><u>Economic</u><br/>         Economically, there are considerable potential benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For every £1 investment there will be a return of approx. £7</li> <li>- There are clear short term revenue benefits and return for the local</li> </ul>  |

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|     | <p>economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– It will support for longer term tourism growth and entry into new and emerging markets</li> <li>– It will improve infrastructure and provide capacity gains.</li> </ul>  |
| 2.5 | <p><u>Infrastructure &amp; Reputation</u></p> <p>If the exhibition takes place in Titanic Belfast it will have further major benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– It will refresh Belfast’s cultural profile</li> <li>– It will reposition Belfast as having capacity to host major touring exhibitions</li> <li>– It will establish the wider cultural credentials of Belfast</li> <li>– It will provide the necessary infrastructure to mount other major exhibits, lacking in Belfast</li> </ul>   |
| 2.6 | <p><u>Connections</u></p> <p>The partnership with Bolshoi has further potential as the only UK – Russia year event outside Greater London</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– It will create the potential for other partnerships and relations with Russia</li> <li>– It will position Belfast as competitive regional hub in the context of Edinburgh and Cardiff</li> <li>– It will reinforce partnership with British Council with the potential to build other international relationships</li> <li>– It will offer potential for high-profile business engagement, e.g. Russian companies or others working in Russia using the exhibit for corporate events</li> </ul> |
| 2.7 | <p><u>Artistic</u></p> <p>Culturally, the Bolshoi is absolutely in the premier league globally, and this is the only event of this type they have ever put together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– It will provide access to the costumes to inspire local designers</li> <li>– It will provide inspiration for local singers and dancers for the exhibition</li> <li>– It will provide inspiration and capacity building for local singers and dancers through the masterclasses</li> <li>– It will provide inspiration for local audiences and performers through the public performances</li> </ul>  |
| 2.8 | <p>There is plenty of international evidence to demonstrate the success of costume displays of this type, especially the on-going popularity of a series of Ballet Russe exhibitions in a range of venues from Australia to Paris.</p>   |
| 2.9 | <p><u>Investment</u></p> <p>A total budget of £75,000 is required with a commitment of £25,000 from Council. The project would be delivered in partnership with other key organisations. Potential partners and funders include ACNI, British Council, NITB and Tourism Ireland. If hosted by a Council venue the ticket revenue at a maximum cost of £5 per person would hope to recover the majority of Council’s investment.</p>  |

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| <b>3</b> | <b>Resource Implications</b>  |
| 3.1      | There is a need to allocate a budget of up to £25,000 subject to leveraging an additional £50,000 from other sources. £25,000 would come from 14/15 Tourism, Culture & Arts budget. |

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| <b>4</b> | <b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b> |
| 4.1      | There are currently no implications.              |

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| <b>5</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>  |
| 5.1      | <p>That Members consider</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That a provisional commitment is made to proceed with the project subject to raising necessary external funding.</li> <li>2. That a budget of £25,000 is allocated from departmental budgets.</li> <li>3. That further discussions be pursued at officer level.</li> </ol> |

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| <b>6</b>   | <b>Decision Tracking</b> |
| There is no decision tracking attached to this report. |                          |

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| <b>7</b>   | <b>Key to Abbreviations</b> |
| <p>TCA – Tourism, Culture and Arts<br/> ACNI – Arts Council of Northern Ireland<br/> NITB – Northern Ireland Tourist Board</p> |                             |