



## Belfast City Council

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Report to:</b>         | Development Committee   |
| <b>Subject:</b>           | Coach Parking in Belfast  |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 15 April 2014   |
| <b>Reporting Officer:</b> | John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470                   |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>   | Brian Johnston, Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts Manager, ext 5732 |

| <b>1</b> | <b>Relevant Background Information</b>   |
|----------|--|
| 1.1      | Coach Tourism is an important market for Belfast City. Cities across the UK and Europe have looked at coach tourism and tried to put in place infrastructure to support it. Edinburgh generates nearly £40m a year from coach-based tourism and in Bristol up to 40% of tourists visiting local attractions arrive by coach. |
| 1.2      | It is difficult to quantify the exact economic return from coach tourism in Belfast but it is an important part of the business mix for many visitor attractions and hotels. It is business that typically can be attracted during mid-week and shoulder seasons.  |
| 1.3      | Officers have been working with other agencies to enhance the drop off and pick up provision across the City. The provision has improved over the past number of years, but still has the scope to be enhanced.  |
| 1.4      | The availability of secure overnight coach parking has been raised as an issue by the chairman of the Coach Tourism & Transport Council of Ireland. This organisation is the industry body for the leading coach operators in the Republic of Ireland bringing International visitors to Belfast.                            |
| 1.5      | The Chairman has indicated that a number of coaches have been damaged while parked in lay-bys and at the side of the road.   |
| 1.6      | The need for secure overnight coach parking in Belfast has been raised by a number of other organisations involved in tourism including tour guiding groups, various hoteliers and industry bodies.  |
| 1.7      | This has been echoed by Visit Belfast staff that are selling Belfast in the market place and are frequently asked by coach/tour operators regarding the provision of this type of facility.  |

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 1.8  | At a recent presentation to Committee the Access Study report indicated that coach parking was required within the City.   |
| 1.9  | An independent report during one evening last summer recorded 70 visiting coaches within the City boundaries.  |
| 1.10 | A number of years back there was the provision for overnight coach parking provided in Corporation Street, on land owned by the Harbour Commissioners. This was managed by the Industry body for Coach Operators in Northern Ireland, the Federation for Passenger Transport. This ultimately wasn't successful for a number of reasons; namely the volume of coaches wasn't as anticipated; it wasn't a commercially viable operation rather a service for coach operators, so the Federation couldn't afford to sustain the monthly rental payments and the ticketing of coaches illegally parked across the City wasn't enforced. |

| <b>2</b> | <b>Key Issues</b>  |
|----------|--|
| 2.1      | There has been a strong lobby from various organisations across the City and from the key Coach Industry Body in the Republic of Ireland bringing International visitors to Belfast highlighting the need for secure overnight Coach Parking.  |
| 2.2      | It is clear that 2012 including the opening of Titanic Belfast has made Belfast a high profile destination. Titanic Belfast in particular has been a huge draw for visiting coaches to Belfast. This increase in coach traffic is a test for the City's infrastructure to handle this type of traffic. |
| 2.3      | DRD acknowledge that this has a knock on effect for traffic flow, particularly in and around the City centre.  |
| 2.4      | Coach parking would appear to be inadequate to cope with the increase in demand.   |
| 2.5      | If this is not addressed it could have an impact on the City as a destination for coach tourism.   |
| 2.6      | It is estimated that a maximum provision of overnight parking for up to 60 visiting coaches is provided to cope with the summer peaks. This will be less in the shoulder and winter months.  |
| 2.7      | The coach parking would also be available to coaches from Northern Ireland visiting Belfast.   |
| 2.8      | Officers have looked at the Council's portfolio of land and nothing is suitable to meet this requirement. Officers have also spoken to Translink regarding the use of space in their depots and facilities but again this is not possible.   |
| 2.9      | Various sites across the City have been explored and the ideal site has been identified as a plot of land over ½ acre owned by the Harbour Commissioners.  |
| 2.10     | Coach Operators would pay a nominal fee for the use of the site on a 12 or 24 hour basis.  |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>3</b> | <b>Resource Implications</b>   |
| 3.1      | It is estimated that the rental cost for the site will be £2,000 per month. It is proposed that the Federation of Passenger Transport as the Industry Body for Northern Ireland will manage the facility with a Service Level Agreement with Belfast City Council.               |
| 3.2      | The Federation of Passenger Transport have equipment in storage including CCTV equipment, electronic key pads, maintenance equipment for coaches that they will make available for the site at no cost to Council. To purchase this equipment from new would cost circa £20,000. |
| 3.3      | The Federation will provide insurance for the site and work with The Harbour Commissioners. In return the Federation will receive income from overnight rentals. It is estimated that this will be circa £2,000-£3,000 per annum.  |
| 3.4      | As the service is not commercially viable and The Federation is the Industry body for Northern Ireland, Legal Services are content that this is a single tender action.  |
| 3.5      | In order that coach parking as specified is successful a promotional/sales effort will be necessary. The Federation of Passenger Transport, Coach Tourism and Transport Council and Visit Belfast will provide this sales focus.   |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>4</b> | <b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>                                |
| 4.1      | There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report. |

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>5</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>   |
| 5.1      | That Members agree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To a trial period of one year, with a view to a rolling three year period</li> <li>2. A budget of £25,000 from Council is allocated per annum, up to a maximum of three years, subject to annual review to support this initiative.</li> <li>3. That a Service Level Agreement is put in place with the Federation of Passenger Transport.</li> <li>4. That further discussions be pursued at officer level.</li> </ul> |

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Decision Tracking</b> |
| Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts Manager to implement decision of Committee. |                          |