



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	South by Southwest 2014 – feedback report
Date:	15 April 2014
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officers:	Lisa Toland, Economic Development Manager, ext 3427

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that, at Development Committee meeting in January 2014, approval was given to attend the South by Southwest (SXSW) conference and exhibition and to host a networking and showcase event in Austin. The aim of this event was to provide participants with the opportunity to showcase their digital content, film and music products to an invited audience.
1.2	SXSW has seen a significant growth over the past number of years, especially in the digital/tech and film elements of the conference and, as such, is now seen as a key business development initiative for companies in the priority sectors of film, television, digital media, music and design.
1.3.	For the 2014 event, Invest Northern Ireland agreed to support 50% of the travel, accommodation and conference pass costs for local companies wishing to attend and Generator NI – the music industry body – agreed to support 50% of the costs for the selected musicians and bands to attend.
1.4	To support these interventions, Belfast City Council agreed to provide financial assistance towards a 'Creative Belfast' showcase event and to contribute to the UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) exhibition stand in the main conference centre. Tourism Ireland provided \$5k of support to help promote the city of Belfast as part of the campaign.

2	Key Issues
2.1	37 local companies took part in SXSW 2014. They received a financial contribution towards their travel and participation costs from Invest NI. Companies attending included Kainos, Women Who Code, Oli, Sian's Plan and Champion Sound Music. A full list of attendees is attached in Appendix 1.
2.2	The Creative Belfast event provided the opportunity for local companies and

	<p>musicians to network with other companies and potential partners/buyers in a small venue outside the main convention centre. This year, the Creative Belfast event acted as the North American launch of Roll TV, by Belfast based company Big Motive. Roll TV is a video curation and discovery app that lets the user discover and collect videos which are carefully chosen by bands, magazines and celebrities.</p> <p>2.3 As part of the Creative Belfast event and our support to the UK Trade and Investment exhibition stand, participating companies had the opportunity to attend additional business to business events. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meet the Music Embassy Partners – This event offered the Belfast delegation the opportunity to meet with representatives from AIM (Association of Independent Music), Creative Scotland, PPL (music licensing company), PRS (Performing Rights Society), UK Trade and Investment (international teams) and the Welsh Music Foundation - Country Connections – This networking event brought together delegates and companies from across the globe to discuss topics affecting the industry, build networks and develop business relationships and opportunities - International Business 2 Business – This event offered participants 5 minute meetings with as many international delegates as they can manage within a 2 hour time frame. These quick-fire meetings helped facilitate introductions and broker business connections with companies from around the world. <p>2.4 Invest Northern Ireland will be following up with the participating companies to identify outcomes and benefits of attendance by local companies and those companies that need to make return visits to markets as a result of attending SXSW. Generator NI are in the process of evaluating the event in relation to the artists/band participation and, to date, they have stated that new business has resulted directly from participation and contracts and legal documents are being discussed at present.</p> <p>2.5 Given the existence of a music industry support body (Generator NI) and the financial support provided to companies for participation in SXSW by Invest NI, it appears that the nature of any Council support in the future may be subject to review. While the UKTI stand is a useful focal point for those attending the event, initial feedback from partners and companies attending suggests that there may be other ways in which the presence at the event could be better coordinated. SXSW is increasingly focused on the technology sector and it appears that there may be an opportunity for further engagement with partners from Invest NI, DCAL and NI Screen to explore how collectively we can use this platform to actively promote business opportunities for our tech companies while also profiling the city as a dynamic creative location.</p> <p>2.6 In order to scope out any potential role, it is proposed that officers continue to engage with partners including DCAL, Invest NI and NI Screen to evaluate the impact of the investment in SXSW 2014 and to recommend how a collective approach to the event in future years could create a greater return for all partners. Once this work is completed, a report will be presented back to the Development Committee for consideration and approval.</p>
--	---

3	Resource Implications
3.1	No specific resource implications at this time.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no specific equality and good relations considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the contents of the report, including feedback from the SXSW 2014 event - Note the proposal to continue to engage with partners to discuss how a collective approach to SXSW 2015 could create greater return for all partners and to bring back a report to a future meeting of the Development Committee for approval.

6	Decision Tracking
A report will be brought back to Development Committee by October 2014.	
Timeframe: October 2014 Reporting Officer: Lisa Toland	

7	Key to Abbreviations
AIM – Association of Independent Music PRS – Performing Rights Society SXSW – South by Southwest	

8	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 - list of NI attendees at SXSW 2014	