



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Food Tourism Development and Belfast Restaurant Week 2014
<b>Date:</b>	15 April 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Brian Johnston, Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts Manager, ext 5732

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Food Tourism is recognised globally as an important theme that many destinations are using to maximise tourism, investment, sustainability and marketing opportunities. Food tourism also plays a role in animating and enhancing the visitor experience, and it is also important as a product which can effectively market and sell a city and region. Belfast is the gateway to Northern Ireland and this role is tangibly achieved through the food tourism experience. The city's restaurants, St George's Market, chefs and producers showcased in the city are winning high acclaim and high profile national awards. Such accolades, as well as the growing perception of Belfast as a quality food destination, are successfully attracting interest from key food journalists and critics.
1.2	To maximise the opportunities that food tourism presents for Belfast it is important that events such as Belfast Restaurant Week (BRW) are integrated into a fully supported and integrated food tourism plan for Belfast.
1.3	Since the launch of BRW in 2012, it has become a well established event in the city's culinary calendar and has been fully endorsed as an important initiative by Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (DARD) and Tourism Ireland.
1.4	BRW 2013 took place from 5 to 12 October and research confirmed that it was extremely successful for the businesses taking part as well as for the promotion of the city and the development of a strong food tourism event.
1.5	BRW 2013 successfully: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Delivered Taste and Dine at Belfast City Hall on 5 and 6 October 2013 – a mini food village was created outside City Hall, featuring local artisan producers, pop-up restaurants, and St George's Market. Each day there was a packed programme of chef demonstrations, wine talks</li> </ul>

	<p>and a full celebration of the local agri–food sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The registration of 80 participating restaurants promoting special signature menus and offers to develop and encourage more patronage of the restaurants that showcase the agri-food sector among citizens and visitors during the week in October 2013. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 13 Hotel restaurants, 44 restaurants, 5 cafes, 12 bars/pubs and 6 other</li> </ul> </li> <li>- The programming of 30 special food themed events throughout the week which will raise the profile of the agri-food sector and the restaurants they supply.</li> <li>- BRW 2013 successfully showcased the brand of Belfast and Northern Ireland through delivering innovative, forward thinking, authentic and celebratory events which will fully promote our food offer in an exciting and inspiring way.</li> <li>- Delivered over 4.5 million impacts through the media plan</li> <li>- Wide coverage in key press – BBC and UTV, Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, Newsletter, Radio Ulster, U105, Cool FM, Downtown, Citybeat, BBC Radio 12 – all positive</li> <li>- Excellent interaction and involvement with restaurants</li> <li>- Developed excellent links with Translink and Belfast Fashion Week</li> <li>- 93% of restaurants surveyed agreed that BRW provided a positive platform to promote food in the city</li> <li>- 90% agreed BRW attracted new customers</li> <li>- 85% agreed it will impact positively on future sales.</li> <li>- 49,000 people from Greater Belfast Area attended a BRW event</li> <li>- Attendees rated the event(s) positively</li> <li>- 91% expressed likelihood to revisit the event in the future.</li> <li>- There was also strong agreement from respondents that the event(s): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased their knowledge of city’s food product (70% agreement)</li> <li>- Increased their knowledge of the use of local produce in Belfast restaurants (59% agreement)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Overall average spend per person during BRW was £20.61, with the highest spend coming from Special offers/menus at Belfast restaurants (£25.61 on average).</li> </ul> <p>1.6 A Belfast Restaurant Steering Group has been established and they have contributed to seminars and workshops to help shape BRW 2014.</p> <p>1.7 The objectives of the Belfast Restaurant Week 2014 are to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase footfall and mid week dining</li> <li>- Showcase new and multi cultural food offering across the city</li> <li>- Showcase the range of dining experiences for a range of lifestyles</li> <li>- Showcase local produce, excellent chefs, skills and wealth of the food offer</li> <li>- Contribute to Belfast’s culinary events calendar</li> <li>- Positive media attention of Belfast as a tourism destination</li> </ul>
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	It is crucial to build on the success of BRW 2012 and BRW 2013 and ensure that BRW 2014 creates more economic impact and support for the restaurant/hospitality sector. It is necessary that adequate resources and support are in place to achieve the aims and objectives.

2.2	BRW 2014 (4 to 11 October 2014) planning is underway and BCC has successfully been awarded sponsorship of £21,000 from NITB's events fund to support the week.
2.3	A key stakeholder Steering/Working group has been established to implement the plans as well as a Sector Steering Group to ensure that BRW 2014 delivers for the industry.
2.4	To instigate registration it is proposed that BRW 2014 will be launched to the consumer in August 2014.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<p>Food Tourism Development and BRW 2014 require support from a number of sources. The sum of £50K has been identified for BRW 2014 and broader food tourism initiatives within the departmental budget and £21,000 has been secured via the Northern Ireland Events Fund sponsorship.</p> <p>On approval additional funding will be sought from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DARD</li> <li>- Pork and Bacon Forum</li> <li>- Food NI</li> <li>- Potential sponsors</li> <li>- Contributions from each participating restaurant - £100 in 201</li> </ul>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	No equality and good relations considerations are attached to this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>It is recommended that;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Members agree and approve a budget of £50,000 identified from Department budget and approve officers seeking additional funding and sponsorship to support BCC investment which will develop a food tourism plan and support the delivery of Belfast Restaurant Week 2014.</li> <li>2. Members approve acceptance of £21,000 sponsorship package from the Northern Ireland Events Fund administered by NITB.</li> <li>3. Members approve Officers procuring services to help deliver Belfast Restaurant Week 2014 and a food tourism development plan.</li> <li>4. The Development Chair agrees to host an Industry Launch and take part in the consumer launch in August 2014.</li> </ol>

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

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
<p>BRW – Belfast Restaurant Week  BCC – Belfast City Council  VB – Visit Belfast  DARD – Department of Agriculture and Regional Development</p>	

