



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	South by Southwest 2015
<b>Date:</b>	16 December 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Colin McCabrey, Economic Development Manager, ext 3805

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that at the 15 April 2014 Development Committee, Members were informed of the activities delivered through Council's participation in the South by Southwest (SXSW) Conference in March 2014.
1.2	For the past four years, the Council has been part of a delegation that has attended South by Southwest in Austin, Texas with a specific focus on promoting the City's music industry and promoting Belfast as a key investment location.
1.3	SXSW includes a conference and exhibition as well as a series of pre-arranged meetings, seminars, networking events and creative showcases. Traditionally music focused, SXSW has seen a significant growth in the digital and film elements of the conference and as such is now seen as key business development initiative for companies in the priority sectors of Film, Television, Digital Media and Music.
1.4	In consideration of the changing focus of the conference and the involvement of key stakeholders including Invest NI, Northern Ireland Screen, UKTI and Generator NI, an opportunity exists to review the Council's future participation in SXSW.
1.5	Officers have been engaging with the creative sector and key stakeholders, to scope out any potential role and future involvement by the Council, as part of a collective approach.

2	Key Issues
2.1	SXSXW has evolved in recent years to reflect the growth of the digital and film industries. Engagement with key stakeholders has identified the importance of reflecting this change, in any Belfast/Northern Ireland presence at the event.
2.2	The 2015 event will be held from 13-20 March and UKTI will again be coordinating the collective presence of participating cities and regions across the UK.
2.3	For the 2015 event, funding has been secured from Invest Northern Ireland and Generator NI to support the business and artist delegation. To date, 21 local companies have been confirmed to attend made up of 8 music business and 13 film and digital content companies. In addition the 4 artists selected to showcase at SXSXW music are expected to be announced early January. The majority of the companies participating at SXSXW are based in Belfast.
2.4	For the 2015 event, Invest Northern Ireland and Generator NI will support participating companies and artists by providing up to 50% of the travel, accommodation and conference pass costs. Generator NI will also provide support on the ground during the SXSXW music programme to help ensure local music artists avail of all showcasing opportunities presented to them.
2.5	Discussions have also taken place with Northern Ireland Screen and Belfast based Double Band Pictures, to secure the screening of the bike racing documentary "Road", as part of SXSXW Film. Following discussions with SXSXW, it is anticipated that "Road" will be screened during SXSXW with marketing support by NI Screen.
2.6	Over the past four years Belfast City has led the SXSXW mission, this has involved recruiting and supporting Belfast based creative businesses and artists; providing showcase, networking and exhibition opportunities for participants as part of the conference. Since 2013, the Council has secured the commitment and financial support from Invest NI and Generator NI in relation to business and artist participation, with Council contributing to the UKTI campaign to increase the profile of Belfast at the event and provide additional support to the business and artist delegation.
2.7	<p>Following discussions with UKTI the opportunity exists to again partner with UKTI, as part of a wider UK wider delegation for the 2015 conference. Partnership with UKTI will require a minimum financial investment of £10,000 for which the following will be provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence at the UKTI exhibition stand during the Film and Interactive conference and the music conference. The exhibition stand will carry the council logo, alongside other UK cities, and provide meeting space for the delegation within the conference convention centre.</li> <li>- Council's logo will also be featured on promotional material distributed by UKTI (posters, programme, advertisements), information on the participating companies and artists will also be included alongside a city narrative on investment and the creative industries.</li> <li>- Use of the UKTI venue to host a business networking event for the delegation. This will provide participating companies with the opportunity to invite key clients, potential buyers and investors from the film, television, interactive and music sectors to enable them to demo products and services in a focussed and bespoke environment. In addition UKTI will also issue invitations to key international businesses interested in doing business in the UK and Northern Ireland. An opportunity exists for council to influence the</li> </ul>

	invite list to maximise benefit for the city and participating businesses.
2.8	Without Council support to the UKTI campaign, participating businesses and artists will not avail of any of the activities outlined above. This will lessen the potential impact of the conference for participating businesses, through lack of profile and participation at bespoke events, which are crucial for the local delegation to meet and network with potential buyers and clients, in this very competitive marketplace. Due to the nature of funding provided by Generator NI and Invest Northern Ireland, they are unable to fund the UKTI element of the conference.
2.9	It is therefore recommended that Council support the UKTI campaign and to maximise the benefits from the event, it is proposed that the Chair and Deputy Chair (or nominees) along with one officer attend the SXSW event.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<u>Financial</u> Participation in SXSW will require a budget of £16,000.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no specific equality and good relations implications.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note the contents of the report.</li> <li>- Approve the financial resources and attendance of relevant officers/elected representatives at SXSW.</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
SXSW – South by Southwest UKTI– UK Trade and Investment	