



Subject:	RDS Primary Science Fair
Date:	7 December 2016
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Lisa Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives & International Development,

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of the report is to give an overview of proposals for a Primary Science Fair to be held at Belfast Waterfront in June 2017 and to recommend Council support for the event.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Note the proposals for a Primary Science Fair to be held at Belfast Waterfront in June 2017.- Agree to provide financial support of £20,000 towards the event. These costs have been built into the estimates for the 2017-2018 financial year and will be put forward as part of the rate setting process.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members may be aware of a very successful Primary Science Fair that takes place each year at the RDS Dublin. The Dublin event has been running for eight years. It operates alongside the BT Young Scientist Event as a means of profiling the importance of science and technology as part of the educational development process. The events also showcase the very positive and innovative work of young people in this field.

3.2	The Science Fair is supported by the Royal Dublin Society (RDS) as well as education bodies and industry partners.
3.3	In 2016, The Science Fair was expanded to Limerick. The event attracted 60 schools and 1,500 pupils and was attended by 3,000 visitors over the two day programme including non-exhibiting schools, parents and families of those participating in the event.
3.4	Based on the success of the Limerick event, RDS is proposing to extend the event to Belfast for the first time in 2017. They have established a local planning team, supported by Sir Bruce Robinson, former Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.
3.5	The Belfast event will take place in the Waterfront on 8-9 June 2017. Participation is open to all primary schools and organisers are aiming to attract 60 schools, bringing with them around 1,500 pupils to the event. In addition to the 1,500 pupils participating in the event, the event organisers have set a target of attracting 2,000 additional primary school pupils along to the event. Schools will be invited to attend from January 2017. They have the option of preparing and presenting a science-based project idea which will be assessed by a Judging Panel or they can just come along to view the projects presented by other schools and take part in the interactive exhibits and large-scale science shows which will take place on the day. The format will be repeated on each of the two days of the event. The project work undertaken by the children is linked to the curriculum, particularly focusing on themes such as The World Around Us and Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities.
3.6	Event organisers are working closely with Department for Education as well as The Teacher Training Colleges, The Primary Science Teaching Trust and the W5 Science Ambassadors. They are proposing to build on the work undertaken by the STEM Ambassadors and other outreach work done by the Teacher Training Colleges to ensure that the event is not a one-off but that children are exposed to a range of opportunities to develop their skills of enquiry, information-finding and curiosity to explore the science behind the everyday.
3.7	In order to ensure that the event is targeted at young people in more challenged neighbourhoods, it is proposed that the Council works closely with Department for Education to target specific primary schools and encourage their participation.

	<u>Financial and resource implications</u>
3.8	The organisers expect that the costs associated with hosting the event in Belfast will be in the region of €230,000. The RDS has committed €115,000 of that amount and is seeking to secure investment with other partners. They are currently engaging with a range of government and industry partners to meet the outstanding amount (around £100,000). At this stage, they have secured €35,000 from the Irish American Partnership (IAP) and anticipate that they can achieve €20,000 from sponsors and exhibitors. It is proposed that Belfast City Council provides £20,000 towards the costs of the event.
3.9	Members will be aware of the emerging outcomes of the Belfast Agenda. These include an ambition to ensure that “Everyone in Belfast benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy” and that “Everyone in Belfast fulfils their potential”. Likewise, the priority areas of work include a focus on areas such as reducing economic inequalities, supporting our young people, addressing educational inequalities and increasing skills attainment, increasing skills levels of our residents and matching people and skills to opportunities around Belfast.
3.10	The Primary Science Fair recognises the need for early intervention with young people to stimulate their curiosity and to get them thinking about the science of how things work. At present, we have a deficit of essential STEM skills and this is at odds with the future growth areas in the city. There is a need to invest efforts and resources in new activities which will help steer young people towards STEM subjects when they reach secondary school.
3.11	The Primary Science Fair will work alongside a number of other STEM-related interventions that take place in the course of the year. This includes the Northern Ireland Science Festival which will take place in February 2017. The Science Festival focuses on getting people engaged and enthused with science while the RDS Primary Science Fair is the next step in terms of skills development and confidence with science for young children. One specific area of collaboration between the two events is around efforts to address the lack of quality learning materials. Both are currently working on a series of new curriculum-based materials for primary school children that will be trialled at the June Primary Science Fair and developed for inclusion in the programme at the Northern Ireland Science Festival in February 2018.

3.12	<p>The overall cost of the event is anticipated to be around €230,000 (around £200,000). It is proposed that Belfast City Council contributes £20,000 towards the costs. The RDS has committed to covering 50% of the costs (€115,000) and is working with other public and private partners to secure the outstanding amounts. The Council contribution has been included as part of the budget estimates for 2017/2018 financial year.</p> <p><u>Equality and good relations implications</u></p>
3.13	<p>No specific equality and good relations implications. Belfast City Council will ensure that all local schools have an opportunity to participate. There will be additional support available for young people with special educational needs.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None