



Belfast District Council (Shadow)

Report to:	Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Review of NITB and wider tourism structures – proposed council response
Date:	26 September 2014
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

1.0	Purpose of report
1.1	The purpose of the report is to provide members with a draft response to the current review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) and wider tourism structures which was launched by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment in summer 2014.
2.0	Relevant Background Information
2.1	The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment commissioned an independent review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in December 2013. The work was carried out by John Hunter. The draft findings were issued for consultation in summer 2014. The closing date for submissions is 30 September 2014.
3.0	KEY ISSUES
3.1	The document is wide-ranging and covers a range of issues from branding and marketing to governance, collaboration and skills development. While NITB is the main focus of the report, it also includes a range of other organisations actively involved in business support for the tourism industry including local councils, Invest NI, Tourism Ireland and Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).
3.2	It incorporates a range of key recommendations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Need for Northern Ireland Executive to publish an updated strategy for tourism – Need for NITB to continue its work with Invest NI to develop an economic development brand for Northern Ireland – Need for NITB should clarify roles and responsibilities with key partner organisations, including the new District Councils, through Memoranda of Understanding – Need for NITB and Tourism Ireland to deepen their relationship through improved communication and enhanced collaboration, with robust and clear targets for increasing tourism numbers based on the updated Strategy for Tourism – Proposal that NITB appoint “pillar managers” for each of its five experience pillars, working alongside existing destination managers in order to coordinate its service provision more effectively – Proposal for Invest NI and DEL/People 1st should continue to provide business support services and training services respectively to the tourism industry, albeit with a call for greater clarity around roles as well as the need for improved communication to the industry in order to avoid duplication of activity – Call for an overall review of the skills needs of the tourism sector by DEL in order to ensure

	<p>that future growth prospects are met</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Proposal that internal re-structuring within NITB to ensure more coordinated delivery of its portfolio of services as well as ensuring that the service is more client focused – Suggestion that, in order to signal the scale of its envisaged transformation, NITB should be re-named.
3.3	<p>The consultation document consists of a series of more than 30 specific questions that relate to these broad proposals and respondents are asked to make their comments against each of these. The proposed Belfast City Council response is attached as Appendix 1. Some of the proposed key comments are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support for a Tourism Growth Fund with significant resources to meet the ambitions around future growth within the tourism sector – Suggestion that an MoU is developed between NITB, Visit Belfast and Belfast City Council to clarify roles around visitor servicing and city promotion – Recommendation that NITB and TIL work to address any ambiguity around roles and functions as well as consistency of message – Commitment to developing a new "narrative" for the city with the request that NITB use this in their campaigns and commitment to ensure that it complements the work already under way at regional level – Suggestion that the current grading system for accommodation needs to be addressed, given the rising interest in concepts such as "Air B n B" and taking account of accommodation shortages for major events – Request that NITB and People 1st/DEL look at the skills issues within the sector, particularly higher end skills and progression routes within the industry.
3.4	<p>Members will be aware that Belfast City Council is currently in the process developing a new tourism strategy for the city, in conjunction with NITB and other partners. This reflects the value of tourism to the economic future of the city. In 2012 tourism was worth in excess of £450m to the Belfast City/ Northern Ireland economy, equating to almost 10,000 full time equivalent jobs. Draft figures for 2013 show a similar economic impact.</p>
3.5	<p>The draft strategy will run to 2020 and includes a range of very ambitious targets, including generating an annual economic return of £876m to Belfast and Northern Ireland by 2020. This requires an increase of almost 100% on current performance by the strategy end date. This target has a number of caveats. These include addressing a number of macro issues including; air access, need for greater hotel provision within the City and need for investment funds. These proposals are included within the draft council response.</p>
3.6	<p>Members should note that the draft tourism strategy will be presented to the Shadow SP&R Committee meeting in October 2014 for input and endorsement. Subject to approval and ratification by council, it will then be issued for consultation.</p>
4.0	Recommendations
4.1	<p>It is recommended that members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note the draft response to the review of NITB and wider tourism structures – Agree to submit this as the council response, subject to ratification of Shadow Council in early October.
5.0	Call In
<p>This report is subject to call in.</p>	

6.0	Decision Tracking
The Director of Development will feed back on any issues arising from the review.	
7.0	Equality
No specific equality or good relations implications.	