



Subject:	Profiling Belfast through international cultural engagement
Date:	7 February 2018
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
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 this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Update Members on a number of international profiling opportunities for Belfast, focusing on the cultural and creative talent in the City.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the range of international profiling opportunities for Belfast, profiling the City's creative and cultural talentNote the opportunities for increased engagement with the City's investment messaging

	<p>as well as the potential for additional partnership engagement with relevant organisations in Belfast's Sister Cities, to promote cultural and business exchanges.</p>
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Members will be aware of the increased focus of the Council and its partners in promoting Belfast as a business and investment location. On the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) side, the Council works closely with Invest NI in supporting that organisation's work in bringing new investment to Northern Ireland. As set out in a separate report, working relationships are extremely positive between the organisations and we are in the process of putting in place an MoU to set out our parameters of engagement on Foreign Direct Investment support.</p>
3.2	<p>On the capital investment side, the City Centre Development Team has been leading on a number of initiatives to create confidence in the investment market and to bring forward new investment schemes. This includes the Council support for the £18.7million City Centre Investment Fund (CCIF) as well as proposals for the development of a new City Centre Visitor Attraction and regeneration frameworks for key development zones in the City Centre and surrounding areas.</p>
3.3	<p>One of the key factors in any investment decision – either capital investment or Foreign Direct Investment – is the wider City “offer” in terms of quality of life, city ambition and vibrancy. A City's cultural provision is a key pillar of that “offer” as it gives confidence to investors that it is a City that open to attracting people in and catering for the range of cultural tastes and interests. Recognising that this is a critical factor in our efforts to sell Belfast internationally, the marketing materials and messaging draw attention to the fact that Belfast is a dynamic, vibrant location with a sense of energy and ambition. The city narrative and brand emphasises this sense of vibrancy and uniqueness in a very competitive investment market.</p>
3.4	<p>The sense of momentum and ambition created through the development work on the European City of Culture (ECOC) bid as well as the success of some of the major cultural events and initiatives that take place across the City each year highlight the ambition and potential of the City's cultural sector. Recognising this potential, the Council has committed to supporting a number of profiling opportunities in which the cultural offer is in the lead but</p>

where it is supported by the City investment messaging. These include:

3.5 South by South West (SXSW)

South by South West (SXSW) is a global gathering for the interactive, digital and music sectors. The event takes place in Austin, Texas every year and regularly attracts visitors from all across the world. The event comprises a series of conferences, seminars, workshops and presentations on issues related to the development of the creative sectors.

3.6 Belfast has attended the event over the last ten years. Delegations have involved both civic and business representatives. The Council has provided support for five local companies to attend the event and has helped them prepare for the event in order to maximise the benefits of their visit. The Council will also host three investment and business to business events. The Lord Mayor will accompany the Belfast delegation.

3.7 The five Belfast companies will be accompanied by another 10 NI companies – supported by Invest NI. There will also be four musicians from Northern Ireland who have been successful in their application to attend the event (there is an open call process by SXSW for musicians' attendance).

3.8 The planned format for 2018 takes into account learning gained from the previous missions, which highlighted the need to increase businesses access to buyers and to better utilise SXSW to promote Belfast as an investment location for the CDI sector. The key elements of the mission – hosted by the Lord Mayor – include:

3.9 Output Belfast: City Investment – event to promote Belfast and investment opportunities in the City through the promotion of key sectors and initiatives including the creative digital, Cyber sectors and the Smart Cities ambitions. This will be an invitation-only networking event that provides business to business networking for Belfast City Council and the delegation and key US companies and civic stakeholders and partners/associates from the City of Austin, our Sister Cities of Nashville and Boston. This event will take place in Austin's leading digital hub, the Capital Factory.

3.10 Output Belfast: Creative Convergence – event to promote Belfast and the key sectors and initiatives with a focus on the creative digital industries. This will be an invitation-only networking event that provides business to business networking for Belfast business delegation and key SXSW attendees including Sony, Warner Brothers and Spotify.

3.11	<p>Output Belfast: Music – music showcase and networking event with a focus on promoting the music industry in Belfast and supporting participating bands and musicians identify business opportunities which will be marketed as a key part of the ‘Official SXSW 2018 Programme’.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Belfast International Arts Festival</u></p> <p>The Belfast International Arts Festival (BIAF) is a key city international arts event, with performances, exhibitions and spectacles taking place across the city in October each year. Their mission is to create a civic event of contemporary arts and ideas of international appeal and stature. The international significance of the Festival is reflected in both the programme and its ability to attract leading artists and events from around the world together with an extensive social media reach.</p>
3.13	<p>The International Festival has embarked on an ambitious programme to ensure that the event really is international in every aspect. That includes not only the international performers who come to the City for the event but also the visitors who are attracted by the standard of the cultural offering. In the last two years, BIAF have undertaken a number of international “launches” of the event – focusing on the US (mainly New York) as well as Dublin and London launches.</p>
3.14	<p>For the New York launch, the Lord Mayor of Belfast travelled to New York to provide civic support to the messaging around the cultural offer. This helped present a joined-up perspective of Belfast as a dynamic cultural and business location. At that time, the Lord Mayor also highlighted the development activity around the City’s plans to become the European Capital of Culture in 2023.</p>
3.15	<p>This visit also generated significant additional “ambassador” support for Belfast as a dynamic cultural location and investment destination. For example, the team was able to secure video message support for ECoC from Liam Neeson, Roma Downey, Geraldine Hughes and other major figures from the creative sector who are originally from Northern Ireland. They also met potential investors and companies.</p>
3.16	<p>The New York launch event for the International Festival provided a focal point for discussion on and promotion of the transformation of Belfast into a vibrant, outward-looking City with a rich heritage and a strong cultural product. Leveraging Council support for this work, the</p>

Northern Ireland Bureau and Tourism Ireland also provided funding to support the delivery of the event and to secure PR and media coverage. On the back of the launch event, the Lord Mayor also met a number of existing and potential inward investors through the Invest NI Office as well as some of the key political representatives in New York. This visit has generated additional opportunities in terms of inward investment and cultural and education partnerships which are currently being pursued by the Council and other partner organisations.

3.17 Final monitoring reports for the Belfast International Arts Festival are not yet complete but, at this point, it is understood that the event attracted more than 60,000 visitors (excluding visitors to the Poppies: Weeping Window at the Ulster Museum) and the print, online and broadcast value of the coverage was in excess of £1million. This illustrates the potential to use events such as BIAF as a platform for profiling the City, as well as the importance of agreed messaging across all partners who are profiling Belfast on the international stage.

Beckett at The MAC

3.18 As part of an earlier visit to Belfast by a Boston delegation, connections were established with the creative team at the MAC. One of the Boston delegation – Professor Bob Scanlon – is an Associate Professor with Harvard University and a friend of the playwright Samuel Beckett. Prof Scanlon worked with the team at the MAC to support the staging of a co-production by the Poet's Theatre in Boston of four Beckett Plays – “Beckett Women”. This was the inaugural project of a long term cultural exchange as part of the Boston-Belfast Sister Cities project.

3.19 11 performances took place at the MAC in early November 2017. As part of the Council support for this initiative, there were substantially discounted tickets for community groups, school children, tertiary level students, and for those under twenty-five, alongside standard concessionary rates.

3.20 As a direct and linked follow up, Belfast-based creative directors / artists will take part in a follow up Development programme in Boston later this year in order to consolidate links and partnerships and develop training in specialist theatre practice and skills immersion led by Professor Scanlan and Harvard University, with a view to co-producing a new production which will be showcased in Belfast and Boston towards the end of 2018.

An update report on our International Relations activity will be presented to the Committee

3.21	<p>in March 2018. This will include details of a proposed visit to Boston in 2018 as well as an inward mission from the City later this year. The cultural links established provide a unique platform for widening the City narrative as a dynamic business location with a vibrant, international cultural scene.</p>
3.22	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The Council contribution to the SXSW attendance is £40,000. The Council support to the Belfast International Festival for its international programming and promotion work totalled £75,000. The Council support to the MAC for the hosting of the Beckett work and the ongoing cultural exchanges with Boston totalled £30,000. These funding allocations have been set aside within the Development Department’s budget for the financial year 2017/18.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no specific equality or good relations implications.</p>
3.23	
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None