

Appendix 2: Belfast City Council – International engagement activity: Delivery Plan 2025-2026

| Trade and Investment | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Project/Initiative | Brief Overview | Belfast City Council Lead | Partners | Timeframe | Priority outputs and benefits |
| New York, New Belfast 2025 | Annual event and supporting side programme focused on engaging with key east coast USA economic “champions” and pipeline FDI companies considering investing in Belfast and potential trade opportunities for local companies. Also opportunity to position Belfast’s latest Tourism messaging (Fleadh 2026) and capital assets for investment | EU and International Relations Team (EUIRT) | Event organisers Invest NI US office and Belfast Chamber | June 2025 (<i>now complete</i>) | Investment leads for City assets and trade leads for Belfast businesses Support Invest NI for investment and trade pipeline Promotion of major events |
| Homecoming 2025 | Business conference promoting Belfast to diaspora communities, particularly US-based. | EUIRT | Event organisers | October 2025 (<i>now complete</i>) | Tailored messaging and engagement to focus on capital investment opportunities. Showcase will also draw on cultural engagement, including profiling Fleadh Cheoil |
| US Sister City collaboration engagement | Development work to explore re-engagement with Boston, using same successful “Team Belfast” model used for Nashville mission. Boston focus will also be Life and Health Sciences including access to innovation partnerships/VCs | EUIRT; Enterprise and Business Growth Team | ICB; universities; Catalyst; individual businesses | Indicative working date – Q4 2025/6 (subject to partner agreement) | Partnerships & access to finance / trade for Belfast businesses, with focus on L&HS Promotion of Belfast as a study and tourism destination |

| Project/Initiative | Brief Overview | Belfast City Council Lead | Partners | Timeframe | Priority outputs and benefits |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| | Nashville inward trade mission: engagement with VCs and sector bodies to develop and deliver inward (to NI) business mission, focusing on life and health sciences | EUIRT, working with EBG Team | Invest NI; Global Health Connector; HIRANI | June 2026 (indicative date). Preparatory work to commence September 2025 | Exploring FDI opportunities in key growth sectors; expanding business base in Belfast for key growth sectors |
| Developing new EU business connections | Undertaking scoping work with NI Executive Office in Brussels and Invest NI to explore opportunities for additional engagement in EU/Brussels-based activities, with a focus on increasing business engagement in new markets | EUIRT; EBG | NI Executive Office in Brussels, Invest NI | Initial exploratory work completed – November 2025. Action plan agreed and implementation from January 2026 | New market engagement opportunities for local businesses |
| Belfast City and Region Place Partnership | Joint public/private sector-led initiative focused on place positioning to attract investment and deliver on inclusive growth. Key events include MIPIM (France, March each year) and UK ReiiF (Leeds, May each year). Other special/one-off events may also be involved, in line with opportunities. The Partnership also produces resources such as a website and investment prospectus. Will also undertake targeted work to identify and engage with new international investment opportunities, with a focus on supporting priority city investments e.g. new housing | City Regeneration and Development team | Other BRCD councils, Belfast Harbour, Universities, Invest NI, developers, construction companies, legal and financial services | Annual programme of work, with attendance at a number of flagship events | Leads generated in support of investment attracted and developments supported |

| Project/Initiative | Brief Overview | Belfast City Council Lead | Partners | Timeframe | Priority outputs and benefits |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| Develop and maintain updated Belfast's city proposition messaging and new products | Review and update of existing collateral to focus on key investment messaging for specific target markets – complement innovation proposition (below) and Invest NI collateral | Internal BCC teams (EUIR; Comms; Research; ED; CRD) | Invest NI; universities and colleges; City Deal project leads | Review current: Q2 2025; revised products: Q4 | High quality products identifying unique investment opportunities; shared messaging among partner organisations |
| Inward Delegations: facilitate requests for presentations on Belfast's ED proposition | Facilitating inward visits, and using opportunity to showcase opportunities for investment, trade collaboration and good practice across a range of ED areas (note: will put in place "qualification" process to identify projects with potential for positive impact) | EUIRT (coordinate); input from relevant council and other partner leads | Range of city partners – depending on area of priority | Ongoing | Follow up engagement leading to more specific plans for investment /trade or collaboration (e.g. meeting with President of Babson College) |
| Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor | Work in collaboration with 8 councils along the corridor to take forward collaborative projects across several areas including sector development; research and innovation; skills development | Enterprise and Business Growth team | EUIR Team; other DBEC council partners; universities; NI/ RoI government depts | Ongoing work programme agreed with partner councils | Funded project activity in priority areas (circular economy; sector development; skills development). Note: funding for skills projects approved November 2025. |

| Innovation and Knowledge Exchange | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| Project/Initiative | Brief Overview | Belfast City Council Lead | Partners | Timeframe | Priority outputs and benefits |
| Belfast Innovation value proposition | Developing a shared investable value proposition for the Belfast innovation ecosystem – including the City Deal funded investments | City Innovation Office | Innovation City Belfast partners | Draft proposition to be tested at Smart Cities World Congress (November 25) | Greater coherence and clarity of messaging to priority market segments |
| Bloomberg Philanthropies 2025 Mayors Challenge | A two phase, 12-month programme with 50 other cities to deliver urban innovation solutions. Will include learning visit to to Columbia | City Innovation Office | Innovation City Belfast and challenge partners | First workshop planned for late Spring 2025 | Collaborative proposals for solving urban innovation challenges |
| Smart City World Congress (Barcelona) | Promotion of city messaging, focusing on opportunities for partnership, investment, research and trade in relation to digital innovation | Innovation City Belfast | ICB Partners | Q3 | Leads in relation to partnerships, investment, research & funding opportunities |
| Upsurge Initiative | EU Funded climate demonstrator project linking Belfast to Maribor, Budapest, Breda, Katowice including officer visits to each partner city | Climate Team | CNS Team; Neighbourhood Services; QUB; EU Partners; Community orgs | Netherland visit – October 2025 | Inform and evidence viability of nature-based solutions for sustainable food production |
| Support education partners' activity (focus on sister city links) | Use civic linkages to enhance international collaborations in innovation, research and attraction of international talent | EUIRT, City Innovation, ICB | Third level education partners | Ongoing | Education partners secure research £; attract international students |
| Network engagement | Developing opportunities to profile Belfast and support knowledge exchange through active participation in key networks and attendance at events such as European Week of Regions and Cities | EUIRT, City Innovation, Culture, Climate | NI Executive Office, Brussels | Ongoing network engagement; EU Week of Regions and Cities takes place in October each year | Identification of key profiling/ showcasing/ learning opportunities and sharing outcomes with teams/ committee |

| City Positioning, Tourism Promotion and Cultural Development | | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Project/Initiative | Brief Overview | Belfast City Council Lead | Partners | Timeframe | Priority outputs and benefits |
| Supporting strategic tourism stakeholders in attracting and promoting major tourism and cultural events | Collaborating with Visit Belfast, Tourism Ireland and Tourism NI to drive sectoral growth and positioning Belfast as a host city for major events and international exhibitions – focus on Fleadh Cheoil for coming year | Tourism and Fleadh teams | Visit Belfast Tourism Ireland Tourism NI | Engagement plan finalised – October 2025; marketing and comms campaign implementation starts Jan 2026 | International positioning and profiling opportunities; increasing visitor numbers |
| Friendship Four – Men and Women’s Tournaments | US College Ice Hockey Tournaments linked to Boston Sister City; associated STEM Festival and promotion of city via US TV airtime | EUIRT Tourism team | Odyssey Trust NI Connections DfC Tourism NI | Q3 | Economic impact on city – bed nights, Arena venue, US and global press coverage value, socially and impact on schools and community groups making US ice hockey links for future cooperation |
| Your Roots Are Showing | Folk music conference and trade fair which attracts over 100 artists – scheduled for January 2026 | Culture Team | Visit Belfast ICC Belfast | January 2026 | Improved city positioning (focusing on music/culture) |
| Celebrate Chinese New Year | Participation in city partner events to mark New Lunar year | Civic Offices (esp. Lord Mayor) EUIRT | Good Relations Team; Chinese Welfare Association; Chinese Chamber; Chinese Consulate, Confucius | Q4 | Enhances civic relations with Chinese players locally and internationally at civic, business and community level |
| UNESCO City of Culture | Ongoing collaborative exchanges and investment in local music sector – as one | Culture Team | Cultural sector | Ongoing programme of | Support development of local music sector; |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| | of 59 international cities of culture (music). International activities include October 2025 visit to South Korea | | | activity (approved annually via CGR) | profile sector on international stage; present opportunities for international engagement by local artists |
|--|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|

In addition to above workstreams, Council teams currently participate in strategic thematic networks aligned to the above themes including:

| | |
|--|---|
| Council for Global City CIOs | Information and opportunity exchange between innovation cities across the world including virtual speaking opportunity at UN Global Health Connector event for Belfast Innovation Commissioner and attendance and participation at the Connector Innovation Summit in Las Vegas |
| European & UK Learning Cities Networks | Exchanging best practice and developing initiatives to support community learning including officer engagement in Learning Cities network events in Paris and Shenyang, promoting Belfast's best practice programmes., including the role of lifelong learning in aging societies. (fully paid by network) |
| UNESCO City of Music | Active participation in UNESCO cultural networks with reciprocal benefits between the cities including but not limited to partnerships with UCoM cities Kansas City (US) Hannover (Germany) Daegu (South Korea), Conde (Brazil), Ghent (Belgium) and Bologna (Italy). This year an officer will travel to each partner city (fully paid by network) |
| IETM | International cultural network representing over 500 member organisations and individual professionals working in the contemporary performing arts worldwide. Belfast City Council and several of its cultural partners locally are members of the network |
| Eurocities | The Eurocities network comprises more than 200 large cities from within and outside the European Union, representing more than 150 million people across 38 countries. It focuses on policy influence and shared learning opportunities across a range of work areas including innovation; culture and social affairs. |