

Appendix 1 - International Relations Delivery Plan 2026-2027 (DRAFT)

Trade and Investment						
Project/Initiative	Brief Overview	Belfast City Council Lead	Partners	Timeframe	Priority outputs and benefits	Opportunities for Member Engagement
New York, New Belfast 2026 “Belfast: a City of Talent & Tech”	Annual event and supporting side programme focused on engaging with key east coast USA economic “champions” and pipeline FDI companies considering investing in Belfast as well as 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 2026	Investment leads for City assets and trade leads for Belfast businesses Support Invest NI for investment and trade pipeline Promotion of major events and capital investments including Fleadh and Belfast Stories	Lord Mayor attends annually
Homecoming 2026	Business conference promoting Belfast to diaspora communities, particularly US based.	EUIRT	Event organisers	7-9 October 2026	Tailored messaging and engagement to focus on capital investment opportunities	Lord Mayor plays key role in welcoming incoming delegation and speaking at main event. Opportunity for Chair/Deputy/nominees to attend event and/or dinner

Trade and Investment

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US Sister City collaboration engagement - Boston	Development work to explore potential collaborative “Team Belfast” visit to Boston. Exploratory work to scope partner interest and potential key events as “hook”	EUIRT; Enterprise and Business Growth Team	ICB; universities; Catalyst; individual businesses	Indicative working date – Q2 2026 (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	Potential for Lord Mayor or Chair of CGR for outward mission 2026
US Sister City collaboration engagement - Nashville	Nashville inward trade mission: engagement with VCs and sector bodies to develop and deliver inward business mission, focusing on life and health sciences. Recce 23-24 March 2026; Inward Economic & Innovation Mission – 5-9 October 2026	EUIRT, working with EBG Team	Invest NI; Global Health Connector; HIRANI	Oct 2026 (indicative date)	Exploring FDI opportunities in key med tech sector; expanding business base in Belfast for key growth sectors	DLM will meet recce March 2026 delegation. Opportunity for all CGR members to meet October inward delegation
EU-based trade connections	Exploratory 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	EBG (linked to LEP work on developing new export opportunities)	NI Executive Office Brussels; other Brussels-based partners	Exploratory work underway; agreed way forward by June 2026	Agreed action plan for way forward – and identification of new market opportunities	Link to all party delegation to Brussels for EU Week of Regions and Cities, 12-14 October 2026

Trade and Investment

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Belfast City and Region Place Partnership	Rolling plan of work to include engagement in key events such as MIPIM (France, March each year) and UKReiiF (UK, May each year). The Partnership also produces resources such as a website and investment prospectus. Priority focus in coming year to include investment opportunities in new housing	City Regeneration and Development team	Other BRCD councils, Belfast Harbour, Universities, Invest NI, developers	Annual programme of work, with attendance at a number of flagship events	Leads generated in support of investment attracted and developments supported	CGR Committee approval in place for Members to attend UKREiiF 19-21 May 2026, to attend a devolution focused event and support wider BCRPP engagement, including attendance at a Belfast City Region Investment Showcase event
Messaging and comms	Develop and maintain updated Belfast's city proposition messaging and new products	Ongoing work to review and revamp investment info and develop new materials as required	Internal BCC teams	Invest NI; universities/ BMC; BMC projects	Review current: Q2 2026 ; revised products: Q4	All materials will be made available to members
Inward delegations	Facilitating requests for presentations on Belfast's ED proposition Note: we are developing a "qualification" process to identify projects with potential for positive impact – too many requests with no return	EUIR; EBG teams	Dependent on area of interest	Ongoing	Promotion of Belfast as a visitor destination/ investment location	Follow up engagement leading to more specific plans for investment /trade or collaboration

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Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor	Ongoing support for civic/business engagement work, including developing lobbying approach on key infrastructure investments. Focus on collaboration with new Industry Advisory Group	EBG	DBEC partners	Ongoing	Ongoing work programme agreed with partner councils	Member representation through Political Advisory Group

Innovation and Knowledge Exchange						
Project/Initiative	Brief Overview	Belfast City Council Lead	Partners	Timeframe	Priority outputs and benefits	Opportunities for Member Engagement
European Capital of Innovation bid 2026	Belfast City Council to bid to European Innovation Council for the annual award for €1 million	City Innovation Office	Innovation City Belfast and other innovation partners	Closing date June	Profiling Belfast as a “city of innovation”	Members will feature in engagement in the development of the bid – and in any shortlisting process
Bloomberg Philanthropies 2025 - 2028 Mayors Challenge	Alongside 23 other cities, this is two year programme harnessing digital and innovation. In Belfast the focus is on supporting an alleyway transformation programme	City Innovation Office /City & Neighbourhood Services	Bloomberg and the other 23 cities	Feb 2026 to March 2028	Sustainable, scalable alley-ways transformation programme. Plus supporting BCC leadership to lead on innovation	Members are/will be involved in the local programme design
Bloomberg Philanthropies Citylab	An international network of city mayors sharing practice and opportunities on city innovation	City Innovation Office/Deputy Chief Executive	Extensive global network	Annual workshop in April 2026	Support for Deputy CX in shaping transformation in Council by harnessing CityLab opportunities	Lord Mayor has been invited to April event. Still awaiting confirmation.
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	November 2026 – Attendance TBC	Leads in relation to partnerships, investment, research and funding opportunities	Not clear at this point

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Mobile World Congress 2026	International network of cities and industry partners in Barcelona	Innovation City Belfast	ICB Partners	March 2026	Potential to sign a number of MoU with industry partners. Engaging on major investment opportunities for Belfast	Not clear at this point
I30 Inclusive Innovation city network	Research exchange and visits with Medellin, Pittsburgh and Newcastle Upon Tyne	City Innovation Office	ICB partners	Feb – with potential future programme	Policy recommendations to inform the inclusive growth agenda	n/a ICB led
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	November 26	Greater coherence and clarity of messaging to priority market segments	Members will be briefed on this asset
Upsurge Initiative	EU funded climate demonstrator project linking Belfast to Maribor, Budapest, Breda, Katowice. Project includes officer visits to each partner city	Climate Team	CNS Team; Neighbourhood Services; QUB; EU Partners; Community orgs	Netherland visit October 2026	Inform and evidence viability of nature-based solutions for sustainable food production	tbc

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Support education partners' international 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 income; attract international students	Members will be made aware of any opportunity
EU Week of Regions and Cities	Participation in largest programme of urban specific workshops, seminars and briefings with additional side programme developed with strategic partners	EUIRT	NILGA Irish Regions Office NI Bureau (BxIs)	Ongoing	Informing Belfast-EU work plan; identification of key European partners; profiling Belfast	All party Members representation (pending CGR approval)

City Positioning, Tourism Promotion and Cultural Development						
Project/Initiative	Brief Overview	Belfast City Council Lead	Partners	Timeframe	Priority outputs and benefits	Opportunities for Member Engagement
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	Fleadh & Tourism teams	Visit Belfast Tourism Ireland Tourism NI	Engagement plan finalised – October 2025; comms campaign operates from January 2026	International positioning and profiling opportunities; increasing visitor numbers	Members involved in wider plans for Fleadh and other major events
Friendship Four – Men and Women’s Tournaments	US College Ice Hockey Tournaments linked to Boston Sister City	EUIRU, LM Office	Odyssey Trust NI Connections DfC Tourism NI	Q3	Economic impact on city – bed nights, TV coverage	Lord Mayor is usually invited for puck drop
Your Roots Are Showing	Folk music conference and trade fair which attracts over 100 artists – scheduled for January 2027	Culture Team	Visit Belfast ICC Belfast	January 2027	Improved city positioning (focusing on music/culture)	n/a
Celebrate Chinese New Year	Participation in city partner events to mark New Lunar year	Civic Offices (esp. Lord Mayor) EUIRT	Good Relations Team; Chinese partners locally	Q4	Enhances civic relations with Chinese players locally and internationally at civic, business and community level	Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor attended various official events in Feb 2026

City Positioning, Tourism Promotion and Cultural Development

Project/Initiative	Brief Overview	Belfast City Council Lead	Partners	Timeframe	Priority outputs and benefits	Opportunities for Member Engagement
UNESCO City of Music	Ongoing collaborative exchanges and investment in local music sector – as one of 70+ awarded Cities of Music within the UNESCO Cities of Culture network.	Culture Team and activity led by Culture Officer (Music)	Cultural sector	Ongoing programme of year-round activity (approved annually via CGR workplan)	Support development of local music sector; profile sector on international stage; present opportunities for international engagement by local artists	Attendance at various events; potentially speaking at international events
Engagement in activities to mark Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU	Working with local and Brussels-based partners to explore opportunities for civic engagement in Irish Presidency activities via Committee of the Regions UK Contact Group	EU	NILGA; CoR UK Contacts Group	Potential event planned for September 2026	Opportunities to showcase Belfast and explore opportunities for wider civic and cultural partnerships	Tbc – subject to details of the event being finalised

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	European network of over 140 cities and municipalities which serves to connect, showcase and develop policy and projects which highlight role of cities in shaping the economic, cultural, innovative and sustainable landscape of the continent.