



**Report to:** Development Committee

**Subject:** International Relations Update

**Date:** 17 February 2015

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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that one of the key commitments in the Council's Investment Programme 2012 - 2015 is that the Council will work with city partners to promote Belfast proactively on the international stage to attract trade and investment, increase visitor and student numbers and build the networks necessary to support growth.
1.2	Since 2013, work has been undertaken to develop and deliver an International Relations Framework and Action Plan that seeks to shape how city stakeholders can work together in a stronger and purposeful way, to maximise the economic impact for Belfast as a whole.
1.3	This framework and a 2 year plan were agreed by Members at the August 2013 Development Committee. This report includes a review of the work undertaken to date and outlines proposed activities for the coming year.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	In summary, the aims of the International Relations Framework are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To maximise economic return of development for Belfast.</li> <li>- To increase the economic benefits of marketing Belfast internationally.</li> </ul>
2.2	The following objectives are intended to help increase the economic benefits of developing a city-wide approach to proactively market Belfast internationally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deliver increased economic return to Belfast through collaborative international promotion.</li> <li>- Develop meaningful international partnerships and civic relationships to support Belfast's growth.</li> <li>- Promote the attractiveness of the city for business, education and tourism.</li> <li>- Create the optimum mechanisms for international promotion of Belfast.</li> </ul>
2.3	The framework sets out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Targets for each of the three primary market segments – trade and</li> </ul>

	<p>investment, tourism, education &amp; learning; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Key actions for each of the geographical target areas - China, Europe, India, North America.</li> </ul>
2.4	The purpose of this report is to highlight the activities of the International Relations work to date and to consider the proposed future activity in this field.
2.5	The International Relations Framework identifies a number of key target markets, alongside priority actions within these markets. Details of activity in each of the markets are listed below.
2.6	In addition to the market-specific activities, the Council has also engaged in a number of broad promotional activities and networks. This includes becoming a founding member of Northern Irish Connections – a diaspora network that aims to replicate the success of a number of similar initiatives that have been undertaken elsewhere. We also developed a joint calendar with key city partners to support alignment around international promotion activity. In recent months, we have been working on refining the city ‘pitch’ and this will feed into the work currently under way on city positioning.
2.7	<p><u>USA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Led a Belfast delegation to SXSW event in Austin in March 2013 and 2014</li> <li>– Undertook October 2013 trade mission to California with 20 Belfast companies</li> <li>– Undertook November 2013 mission to Washington, New York, New Brunswick and Toronto</li> <li>– Hosted Nashville delegation during Belfast Music Week 2013</li> <li>– Undertook Boston and New York civic mission in March 2014</li> <li>– Undertook Belfast business mission to New York City in May 2014</li> <li>– Signed Belfast Boston Sister Cities Partnership in May 2014</li> <li>– Hosted the Massachusetts State Senate President Therese Murray in September 2014 to help develop the Belfast Boston action plan</li> <li>– Supported the Lord Mayor’s mission to Boston in October 2014 to further plan the Sister City linkage</li> <li>– Undertook tech mission to California in December 2014 with 15 Belfast companies</li> <li>– Hosted New York State Comptroller, Tom Di Napoli, in Dec 2014 to visit the projects in Belfast that have received investment from the state pension funds facilitated in Belfast through Crescent Capital</li> <li>– Undertook visit to Boston in October 2014 to identify potential opportunities for collaboration around connected health.</li> </ul> <p><u>Europe</u></p>
2.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Undertook Bilbao tourism mission in November 2013</li> <li>– Held Lord Mayor’s Forum event with Dublin in March 2014</li> <li>– All party attendance and formal promotion of Belfast at the Liverpool International Festival and Global Cities event 17-18 June 2014</li> <li>– All party attendance at the Eurocities AGM in Munich in November 2014</li> <li>– Hosted Lord Mayor of Dublin in December 2014</li> <li>– Ongoing work to maximise EU funds for Belfast 2014 - 2020</li> <li>– Leading on NI European Regional Forum in Europe</li> <li>– Held stakeholder workshop on future Interreg V programme</li> <li>– Planning Lord Mayor civic visit to Dublin in February 2015</li> </ul>

2.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ongoing development of the Council’s EU Members working group and involvement of Members as speakers at EU events when the opportunity arises to promote best practice.</li> </ul> <p><u>China</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Facilitated and supported Chinese New Year 2013, 2014 and 2015 in partnership with Good Relations</li> <li>– Held 6 stakeholder workshops</li> <li>– Reviewed Sister City relationship with Hefei</li> <li>– Hosted multiple inward Chinese student visits with Lord Mayor</li> <li>– Attended the annual Hefei Sister Cities Conference in October 2013</li> <li>– Carried out research which identified Shenyang as a key city for Belfast to engage with</li> <li>– Signed a Cooperation agreement with Mayor of Shenyang in November 2013</li> <li>– Influenced OFMDFM’s activity in China to have a focus on Shenyang with the opportunity to open a NI office in the Liaoning province with the result that businesses are interested in visiting the city</li> <li>– Worked with the Mayor’s office in Shenyang to create new opportunities for QUB to expand on its educational portfolio in the city</li> <li>– Hosted a Hefei inward business, civic and arts mission in January 2014</li> <li>– Confucius Centre supported the BCC careers event in Belfast in November 2014</li> <li>– Welcomed the new Chinese Consulate General Ms Wang Shuying to City Hall and undertake regular meetings to support the establishment of the Consulate office</li> <li>– Planning underway with QUB to support an outward visit to Shenyang in 2015 to open the QUB medical campus</li> <li>– Planning underway to co-host an inward civic mission from Shenyang in Spring 2015.</li> </ul>
2.10	<p><u>India</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Undertook planning visit with Tourism Ireland and Invest NI to India in April 2013</li> <li>– Secured and hosted Global India Business Meeting (GIBM) in June 2013</li> <li>– Developed GIBM programme and secured 300 delegates, 20 investment leads and 50 local companies connected to Indian opportunities</li> <li>– Hosted the Indian Union Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister</li> <li>– Delivered 40 plus India in Belfast Week events in June 2013</li> <li>– Held 8 India stakeholder workshops</li> <li>– Hosted Union Minister of New and Renewable Energy visit to North Foreshore</li> <li>– Joined as a partner in the British Council funded UKIERI project for supporting Belfast SMEs in the Indian market</li> <li>– Through the UKIERI project an MOU has now been signed by the Mumbai Chamber of Commerce and the NI Chamber of Commerce.</li> </ul>
2.11	<p>Given the nature of international promotion activity, it can take some time to identify tangible outcomes. However some of the key outcomes of this activity to date include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Enhanced presence of Belfast in key international markets, with a focus on promoting a positive image of the city and encouraging further business, tourism and education linkages</li> </ul>

<p>2.12</p> <p>2.13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identified additional opportunities to exploit including business linkages on east and west coast USA, education and exchange opportunities in China</li> <li>- Enhanced relationships with international community in Belfast</li> <li>- Identified new investment opportunities in the city for international funds and helped broker contact between relevant partners</li> <li>- Identified additional partners to support transnational funding bids.</li> </ul> <p>In order to progress the ongoing activities and to develop new opportunities that have arisen over the past two years, a new action plan for 2015 – 2016 is being developed. This will be approved by the relevant council committee in due course. However Members may wish to note a number of key proposed activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Finalising details of steering group to manage Belfast – Boston collaborative activity</li> <li>- Exploring opportunities for a Belfast-based eHealth event in conjunction with our US partners as well as Invest NI, NI Science Park and both universities</li> <li>- Exploring opportunities to capitalise on Belfast – Nashville links. There are already healthy relationships between Queen’s University and both Vanderbilt and Belmont universities. Consideration will be given to further opportunities for collaboration - in line with partner interests.</li> <li>- Considering next steps in the programme of west coast business missions, ensuring that the event continues to add value to participating businesses</li> <li>- Supporting a QUB-led visit to Shenyang to explore further opportunities for business and education linkages</li> <li>- Further exploration of partnership and collaborative funding opportunities from EU, linked to key city priorities.</li> </ul> <p>The International Relations Framework was developed with the intention of bringing together local partners involved in international activity in order to coordinate this more effectively and to identify opportunities for collaboration. The local networks are now working much more effectively and there is significant sharing of information and expertise between partners. There are a number of pieces of work currently under way which may shape and direct the future focus of this work. These include a report on ‘Belfast positioning’ which will highlight the uniqueness of the city that we can present as ‘stand-out’ and that give us a competitive edge. The findings of this report plus the ongoing work on the Belfast Agenda, the Integrated Tourism Strategy and the Integrated Economic Strategy will help inform the future direction of the international relations work and this should be constantly reviewed and monitored to ensure that all these activities are mutually re-enforcing key messages and that there is greater clarity as to roles and responsibilities.</p>
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<p><b>3</b></p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p>	<p><b>Resource Implications</b></p> <p>Currently, International Relations work is undertaken by staff within the European Unit. This is expected to continue until re-structuring of Council has taken place.</p> <p>An annual budget of £150,000 has been agreed by Members to date to support this delivery of the International Relations work. Subject to final agreement on the 2015 – 2016 budget, it is likely that a similar amount will be available for the</p>
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<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	The International Relations Framework has undergone equality screening.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	It is recommended that Members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Note the content of the report</li><li>– Note the International Relations Framework delivery date for Belfast</li><li>– Note the broad outline of international activities for the coming year, subject to future committee approval.</li></ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Timeline: February 2015	Reporting Officer: John McGrillen