



Subject:	South by Southwest 2016
Date:	14 October 2015
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Ruth Rea, Assistant Economic Development Manager

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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 seek agreement on Belfast City Council support for the business mission to the South by Southwest (SXSW) event in March 2016, in partnership with Invest NI, Generator NI and UKTI.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Note the proposal to develop a programme of activity and support the business mission to Austin, Texas in partnership with Generator NI and Invest NI, in March 2016– Approve the participation of the Chair & Deputy Chair of City Growth & Regeneration Committee and one officer to attend– Approve a total budget of £20,000 to support the business mission. Note this is planned for in the existing estimates
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been playing a key role in supporting the development of the creative, digital and technology sectors in Belfast. A key element of this support is to assist local companies to export to new markets with USA identified as

	a key market for local businesses.
3.2	Since 2008, the Council has been part of a delegation attending South by Southwest in Austin, Texas to promote the City's music and digital industries and Belfast as a key investment location.
3.3	Taking place in March each year, SXSW includes a main conference and exhibition, along with a series of pre-arranged meetings, seminars, networking events and creative showcases, attended by over 15,000 individuals. The conference has global recognition, attracting international speakers from across the creative, digital and technology sectors. In recent years SXSW has developed an increasing emphasis in the digital/interactive elements of the Conference, better aligning to Belfast's key creative, digital and technology sectors.
3.4	In March 2015 Belfast City Council participated in a business mission to SXSW in partnership with Invest NI, Generator NI and UKTI. The delegation included 10 local companies and four musicians. Whilst many of the business opportunities are still being developed, the key business outcomes reported to date include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Over 100 new business leads identified and 2 new company/app launches – £45,000 of sales secured with potential for a further £75,000 – \$500,000 of debt finance being negotiated – Distribution deals identified in the America and Australian markets
3.5	An opportunity exists to build upon the 2015 Trade Mission, by attending SXSW 2016, once again in partnership with Invest NI, Generator NI and UKTI. The dates for SXSW 2016 are 14–18 March 2016.
3.6	Invest NI and Generator NI have confirmed that they will support participating companies and artists to attend SXSW by providing up to 50% of the travel, accommodation and conference pass costs. Generator NI will also provide support on the ground during the SXSW music programme to help ensure local music artists avail of all showcasing opportunities presented to them.
3.7	It is expected that 4 musicians will be selected to showcase at SXSW with a further 20 local creative and digital companies included in the delegation. It should be noted that due to the fact Invest NI is assisting with the financial contribution to local companies, it is not

possible to guarantee that all businesses will be based in Belfast, albeit that the majority of businesses in this sector are located in the city.

3.8

The planned format for 2016 takes into account learning gained from the previous missions, which highlighted the need to increase businesses access to buyers and to better utilise SXSU to promote Belfast as an investment location for the CDI sector. The key elements of the mission therefore include the following:

- A “Creative Belfast” Meet the Buyer Event, exclusively for Belfast businesses to engage with international buyers to sell their products/services. This invitation- only event will be hosted by Belfast City Council, with support provided by UKTI to identify and invite key buyers. The potential also exists to extend the invitation for this event to business contacts from the City of Austin, and our Sister Cities of Nashville and Boston to develop new business relationships between the cities
- A “Creative Belfast” music showcase and networking event with a focus on promoting the music industry in Belfast and supporting participating bands and musicians to identify business opportunities
- Support for participation on the UKTI Exhibition Stand, representing Belfast and other UK cities, across the four days of the event. Located in the main convention centre, the stand will provide a location to meet with potential investors and will incorporate funding and design detail that is consistent with the emerging work on the Belfast Positioning Strategy.
- Development of new marketing and promotional material to promote the City’s creative and digital sector. This material will offer the opportunity not only to showcase the work of individual businesses but also to promote Belfast as a dynamic business location that is home to both international tech businesses and innovative indigenous companies with a supportive business environment. It will build on the new Investment Portal that is currently in development.
- Opportunities for participating businesses to participate at UKTI business events, including eight networking events and four pitching events.

3.9

Much of the planned format of the 2016 Mission relies upon the involvement of UKTI, for which the Council must contribute £10,000 towards their overall campaign. In return for this investment, the Council can avail of UKTI venues for events and can present city branding through the exhibition stand. It will also cover support to help the business

	delegation to identify key buyers and to participate in UKTI events, thereby maximising the value of their engagement in SXSU.
3.10	As with SXSU 2015, it is recommended that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and one officer are in attendance, to help lead the mission by hosting networking events and representing the city at the UKTI exhibition stand.
3.11	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The total budget required for SXSU 2016 is £20,000 and is available within existing departmental budgets. It is envisaged these costs will contribute to travel, accommodation, conference registrations, UKTI participation fee, Meet the Buyer events and marketing.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations considerations.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	None