



Subject:	Year of Food and Drink 2016 - Proposed Belfast delivery plan Northern Ireland
Date:	13 January 2016
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Brian Johnston, Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts 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 request Members' approval for a 2016 Belfast Food and Drink Tourism Development Plan. The aim of the plan is to maximise Belfast's profile during the Northern Ireland Year of Food and Drink 2016 and generate maximum PR for the city. The plan will prioritise activities to achieve targets identified in the Belfast Integrated Tourism Strategy 2015 to 2020.
1.2	If successful in securing partner funding, the main elements of the plan will deliver the second Focus on Food Tourism Conference, a series of Twilight @ St George's Market events, a Tourism Northern Ireland Meet the Buyer support event and an extended version of Belfast Restaurant Week.
1.3	This Plan focuses on activity to be led by Belfast City Council. However, the activities have been developed in conjunction with a range of partner organisations. It will be important to maintain a partnership approach to the delivery of these activities.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to approve an allocation of £30,000 from the 2016-17 TCH&A budget to deliver upon the attached food tourism development plan to support delivery of the range of priority activities set out in Appendix 1 . This activity will be delivered with partners across the city as part of the Northern Ireland Year of Food and Drink 2016 programme. Sponsorship will also be sought.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Northern Ireland Year of Food and Drink 2016 is led by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in partnership with government departments including the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development. A total budget of £2.75m has been committed and this will be administered via Tourism Northern Ireland, Food Northern Ireland and Invest Northern Ireland. The PR targets set are ambitious and it is important that Belfast has a clear plan to maximise the opportunities for our city and attract the investment required to deliver our vision for tourism growth.</p>
3.2	<p>Belfast City Council has led the development of a series of food tourism experiences in partnership with the private sector and has successfully generated support and income from partners including DARD through the NIRFP. The programme has supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The launch and establishment of the Belfast Bred Tour in 2010 - Great Belfast Food Week March 2010 and 2011 - Belfast Restaurant Week October 2012, 2013, 2014 - Taste and Dine October 2013, 2014 - Focus on Food Conference February 2015 - New Norths Brian Friel Food and Drink Mini Festival August 2015 - Twilight @ St George's November 2015
3.3	<p>The programmes delivered have successfully raised the profile of the food and drink offer, generated positive and valuable PR and increased additional spend and visitor numbers as well as helping to animate the day and evening economy. In 2014 Belfast Restaurant Week generated over £1m in PR and attracted 36,000 people from the Greater Belfast area, spending £500,000. The recent Twilight @ St George's Market attracted 17,000 people from across Northern Ireland to the city generating over £600,000, with traders reporting record sales and restaurants throughout the city also reporting uplift in spend and footfall.</p>
3.4	<p>To ensure that the city continues to celebrate the food offering and maximises the opportunities arising out of the Year of Food and Drink 2016, Belfast City Council has developed a plan of activity in partnership with key industry contacts. The intended programme objectives are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generate £1m PR for Belfast in the RoI and National press. 2. Increase percentage of spend on eating out from 2014 baseline. 3. Improve Visitor Access to and awareness of Belfast/Northern Ireland Food and

Drink.

4. Encourage more Belfast hospitality businesses to source local food and drink.
5. Develop new food experiences and products that are “distinctly Belfast”.
6. Create experiences that strengthen place positioning work throughout a programme that is attractive to the urban high spend market.
7. Support a programme that promotes social responsibility and giving through the hospitality sector.

3.5

The objectives will be achieved through the activities and events identified in the plan. The summary of the key features of the plan include:

1. Second Focus on Food Conference 2016–23 February 2016

In 2015 Belfast City Council delivered the first Focus on Food Conference at St George’s Market which attracted over 300 delegates from across Northern Ireland. The purpose of the event was to bring producers and chefs/restaurateurs together to network and learn from food tourism leaders. The event successfully secured partnerships with producers and retailers/restaurateurs and inspired more food tourism activity. The 2016 conference has already attracted financial support from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Tourism Northern Ireland and Food NI. With 2016 being designated as Year of Food and Drink, the second Focus on Food Conference will be focussed on what the legacy will be from our celebrations and set out growth objectives for the years ahead.

2. Seasonal Twilight @ St George’s Market - Proposed

The successful pilot Twilight @ St George’s has proved that there is a demand for such an event on a more regular basis. The plan proposes to run the Twilight event on a seasonal basis to celebrate the best of our seasonal produce. The seasonal twilight will run over two nights up to three times per year on condition of successful funding and adequate resources. It will feature pop up restaurants, street food vendors and traders and include an animated programme of chef demonstrations, food talks, live music and entertainment.

3. “Meet the Buyer” Workshop - April 2016

Tourism Northern Ireland’s annual “Meet the Buyer” workshop will be held in Belfast in 2016. Belfast City Council proposes to use this opportunity to showcase the strong food and drink tourism products in operation in the city and offer potential buyers special food and drink packages. We will work with the delivery partners to ensure they have a presence at the event and can sell their products.

4. Belfast Restaurant Fortnight – 11 to 23 October 2016

Building on the success of Belfast Restaurant Week, we propose to run a Belfast Restaurant Fortnight which will be launched with a two night autumn harvest themed Twilight @ St George's Market on 11 October 2016. The targets will include signing up 60 restaurants to run 100 events throughout the fortnight. Events will include gourmet tastings, chef demonstrations, themed food and drink events, special brunches, suppers, dinners, food and drink workshops and talks. The week will also include the BBC Food and Drink show which will showcase local food and drink to the general public. The innovative events and activity will help to secure media visits and we will work with Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland to maximise the PR potential.

5. Marketing and Communications

The plan is to work with our key partners to maximise PR from all of the activity and events. There will be dedicated marketing plans to support all the events. We also propose bringing Belfast food and drink to potential tourism markets through the "Belfast Takeaway Campaign" which include showcasing chefs, food and drink on the road. This will be in partnership with Visit Belfast. Further detail of the above initiatives is included in the plan (Appendix 1).

3.6 Financial & Resource Implications

Belfast City Council has identified £30,000 from the Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts (TCH&A) 2016-17 budget estimates to support the plan and this investment could potentially secure £100,000 from our key partners including the private sector/hospitality industry, Tourism NI and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development via their Northern Ireland Regional Food Programme (decisions expected in January 2016). A further estimated £200,000 'in kind' support will be generated through our partners via marketing and communications platforms, resources and investment into the various events taking place. Members should note that, £5,000 was also committed from the Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts 2015-16 budget, which leveraged £8,000 from DARD and £5,000 from Tourism NI. This is a total investment of £35,000 into the NI Year of Food & Drink campaign. Two funding applications for £10,000 and £46,500 are pending and private sector support is to be confirmed. Should resources not be provided the programme will have to be scaled back accordingly.

Resources

Officer time committed to manage the projects and administration of the funding.

	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> There are no equality or good relations implications attached to this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Belfast Food Development Plan Appendix 2 – Belfast outline calendar 2016 – Food Related Activities