

APPENDIX 1
Belfast Food and Drink Plan 2016



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The content of this document outlines what Belfast City Council in partnership with stakeholders propose to deliver during Northern Ireland’s Year of Food and Drink 2016.

Belfast City Council

Year of Food and Drink 2016

Foreword

Belfast City Council has developed this plan in response to the campaign which will champion 2016 as Year of Food and Drink in Northern Ireland.

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 £2.750m has been committed and this will be administrated 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.

Food and Drink experiences are integral to the Belfast visitor experience.

Belfast's reputation as a great food city has increased dramatically in the last five years. This has been achieved through the opening of more quality eateries and drinking establishments and more culinary walking tours and events that have successfully generated national and international PR. The commitment of the city's restaurants to sourcing the best produce has inspired local producers to create award winning artisan produce. Many of our local producers continue to win prestigious awards and supply some of the best restaurants and retailers throughout Ireland and the UK.

With the visitor expectation raised, there is even more collective effort needed to ensure that the food and drink experiences exceed expectations. Belfast's competitor cities offer impressive food and drink experiences and it is important that Belfast has a plan to increase its competitiveness and showcase what is unique about the City's food and drink.

1. IMPORTANCE OF THE FOOD AND DRINK SECTOR TO THE TOURISM ECONOMY

Food Tourism is defined as ‘any activity that promotes a high quality, distinctive, local and sustainable food experience linked to a particular place’.

Food and Tourism are particularly important in Northern Ireland due to the economic importance of the two sectors. Food Tourism provides a means of drawing together the strengths of a local destination by building the relationships between the hospitality/catering industry and local food and drink producers.

Increasingly visitors are researching a destination’s food and drink offer before they make their holiday choices. A location that has great food and drink and uses this in their destination message and call to action drives the decision making process.

An effective food tourism plan will help visitors to discover our food and drink story. It is about championing our fantastic local produce and telling the story of its journey to our plates. Telling the story of a location through food will inspire and encourage visitors to return.

Increasing the prevalence of local and regional foods in our shops and on our menus offers immediate and direct benefits to our local economy. Farmers, fishermen, producers, suppliers, restaurateurs, cafes and pubs and accommodation providers should be working together with the tourism industry to improve food information available to visitors. Intelligent marketing of signature dishes, local events, hero products, food ambassadors and award-winning venues will result in increased visitor spend and sustainable development.

The Belfast Integrated [Tourism Strategy 2015 to 2020](#) has set a target to double the value of tourism by 2020. The strategy identifies experiential tourism as a strand which requires expansion with an emphasis on developing and creating international standout experiential products that will support the positioning of the city as well attracting target market segments for overnight stays. This strategy will support the overall Belfast Agenda that sets out the priorities for the city.

To support the strategy the *Belfast Food and Drink Action Plan* has prioritised activity to support food tourism development. The plan aims to create a competitive position for food and drink experiences and in doing so help to create awareness of Belfast as an outstanding authentic food and drink destination.

A strong and vibrant food and drink product:

- Animates the city and contributes to the vibrancy of the day, evening and night time economy.

- Creates and supports direct and indirect employment.
- Enhances the visitor experience and creates opportunities to showcase the city.
- Strengthens the city's reputation as a place to invest and establish business.
- Increases the competitiveness of the city.

In 2014 overnight visitors to Northern Ireland spent an estimated £751million of which, approximately 1/3 was spent on 'food and drink'. In addition £282million was spent by NI residents on tourism day trips, of which, approximately 40% was on 'eating out'. The industry is crucial for the local economy, supporting local businesses and creating employment direct and indirectly.

The food and hospitality sector is hugely important with almost 100 food companies from Northern Ireland scooping awards in the Great Taste Awards organised by the UK Guild of Fine Food. 99 companies secured an all-time record of 349 gold stars.

- In 2012 the food and drink processing industry generated sales of £4.2bn, a 4.2% increase on 2011.
- Almost 20,000 people are directly employed full-time in the industry (2011).

Total sales outside Northern Ireland amounted to £2.8bn (2011), accounting for 69% of the industry's sales. The main external markets serviced are Great Britain (40%) and the Republic of Ireland (16%).

Most cities, noticeably those within Belfast's competitive set, are now paying close attention to food tourism as a means of increasing visitor numbers and revenue, with the result that the development and promotion of food tourism plays an ever increasing role in national tourism strategy, particularly in countries such as Scotland and Wales. In line with this, the development of local and regional food destinations is also a growing trend globally, whereby food-related activities and events comprise a key feature of attracting increased numbers of visitors to particular localities.

2. CURRENT STATUS

Belfast City Council has been working proactively with the hospitality sector since 2009, mainly in the realm of food product development including:

- Great Belfast Food Week March 2010
- Launch of Belfast Bred – food tourism tour March 2010, continued support 2011 and 2012
- Belfast Restaurant Week October 2012, 2013, 2014
- Focus on Food Conference February 2015
- New Norths Brian Friel Food and Drink Festival August 2015
- Development of Great Belfast Food website

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- New food videos and photography
- Events at St George's Market throughout the year
- First Twilight @ St George's Market November 2015
- Over the last year Belfast's reputation as a great food city has been building momentum starting with Tom Parker Bowles statement that the City was on a "Gastronomic Roll" and "Food Revolution".

The activity has successfully generated valuable PR and media endorsement including:

1. Belfast listing in the BA Highlife Magazine as one of the top 10 food cities to visit in 2015.
2. The "Observer Food Monthly" supplement listed Belfast as 8 of the 50 best places to eat in 2015.
3. Two Belfast restaurants – Ox and Epic gained Michelin star status in 2015.
4. Superb reviews and endorsement from well respected and highly influential food journalists including Tom Parker Bowles, Jay Rayner, Sheila Dillon and Charles Campion.

In 2014 Belfast City Council and partners invested £70,000 into food tourism events including Taste and Dine at City Hall and Belfast Restaurant Week. This generated spend of at least £500,000 and generated over £1m of local, National and International PR for the city.

In 2015 Belfast City Council hosted the first Food Tourism Conference – Focus on Food 2015. The Conference attracted over 300 delegates from the food industry to network, learn from best practice and focus on what Belfast and the industry need to do to continue to strive for success and achieve world recognition as a top food destination.

To build on the success of the 2015 conference and to continue to develop Belfast's Food Tourism potential, Belfast will host another conference in 2016.

Belfast City Council also supports the wider food agenda and hospitality sector through:

- Implementation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and works with businesses to improve hygiene ratings
- Dealing with food poisoning cases
- Supporting healthy diets
- Implementation of food labelling legislation
- Ensuring that the Port of Belfast meets environmental health standards
- Ensuring that all food and drink events meet the correct hygiene standards
- Helping businesses to have in place the correct entertainment licenses, street trading licenses for food vendors, registering food businesses and approving food businesses.
- Delivering programmes to tackle food waste through the Bring Box Home initiative

Visit Belfast which is funded by Belfast City Council, private sector and Tourism NI also offers the hospitality sector a platform to promote their restaurant and to participate in marketing and PR campaigns.

NORTHERN IRELAND YEAR OF FOOD AND DRINK 2016 – PROPOSED BELFAST DELIVERY PLAN

The scope for the development of Food Tourism in Belfast provides an opportunity to engage with a range of partner organisations, therefore collaboration and co-operation will be at the core of all activity.

The overall aim is to raise awareness of Northern Ireland / Belfast's Food and Drink and make information about Belfast Food and Drink more widely available to leisure and business visitors to the city.

The Challenge: 'To strengthen and raise Belfast's profile as a high quality food tourism destination'

The aims for 2016 are to:

1. Generate £1m PR for Belfast in the ROI and National press.
2. Improve visitor access to and awareness of Belfast/Northern Ireland food and drink.
3. Encourage more Belfast hospitality businesses to source local food and drink.
4. Develop new food experiences and products that tell the Belfast story.
5. Increase percentage of spend on eating out and food from 2014 baseline.
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.

The 2016 Food Tourism Action Plan will build on the activities and knowledge and experience delivered by Belfast over the last ten years. The Action Plan is also intended to inform and provide a lead on the development of future food tourism projects and proposals.

3. KEY PARTNERS

To deliver the plan Belfast City Council will work with a range of key stakeholders from throughout Northern Ireland.

Partner	Abbreviation
Artisan NI	ANI
Belfast City Council, Development, Building Control, Environmental Health	BCC
Belfast Food Network	BFN
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	DARD
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	DETI
Department for Employment & Learning	DEL
Food NI	FNI
Health Promotion Agency	HPA
Hospitality Ulster	HU
Hotel Federation Northern Ireland	HFNI
Industry – retail, eateries, pubs, producers, farmers, distributors, brewers etc	PS
Invest NI	INI
Media and food experts	MEDIA
Belfast Metropolitan College	MET
People First	PF
Queen’s University	QUB
Slow Food Ireland	SFI
St George’s Market	St George’s
Tourism Ireland	TIL
Tourism NI	TNI
Ulster University	UOU
Visit Belfast	VB

Food Tourism Action Plan - Priority Tasks

1. Events and activities

	Event/Activity Programme	Audience	Delivery	Belfast objectives	Budget/Source and potential lead partners	PR
JUNE	Seasonal	Domestic market	Evening Market at St George's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animate the city and enhance day and evening economy • Increase opportunities to spend • Generate media and PR through opportunities to share experiences via social media. • Support Street Food Development. 	20k x 3 - £60K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure key names / celebrities to endorse the week and pop up in local restaurants. • Create unique pop ups that will generate valuable PR to be brought to market. • Programme and activity will present VB, TNI and TI with excellent stories to secure press and generate significant PR. • PR should be secured in ROI, National and International market
OCT	Twilight @ St	market	Market		A target of 60% of budget to be generated from other sources.	
DEC	George's Market (dependant on resources up to three twilight markets)	ROI/GB Market Young and Lively and culturally curious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop up restaurants • Street food • Local producers/agri-food sector • Chef demonstrations • Local drink • Drink and food sampling • Local music • Local entertainment • Food themed dressing of the market 		BCC TNI DARD Private sector	
APRIL	Tour Operator Workshop; April 2016	Tour Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Package the city food products and promote as the Belfast Food Tourism Experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure tour operators to bring groups to the city to enjoy the food package • Secure food tour packages. 	£5k BCC PS VB	Opportunity to generate PR due to event location and the staging of food exhibitions as part of the event.

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	Event/Activity Programme	Audience	Delivery	Belfast objectives	Budget/Source and potential lead partners	PR
OCT	Belfast Restaurant/Eateries Fortnight	Domestic ROI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restaurants requested to offer customers a signature menu that best promotes the quality and NI food scene and talent. Eateries also asked to deliver a special food event/experience which will generate positive PR for their establishment and attract media attention. Encourage food industry to test new food product and tours during the week/fortnight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 events 60 participating restaurants Generate national and international PR. Position Belfast in line with the new positioning strategy and tourism strategy. Increase vibrancy and animation in the city. 	50k to be generated from partners. BCC TNI VB TIL FNI HU NIHF ANI DARD	ROI and National coverage via Tourism NI plans – the stories and events that will be created to take place during the week will command media interest and attention. Visit Belfast to ensure that the various menus, demos, events are sold to the media and press. Dedicated PR campaign to propose stories, features, competitions, editorial deals. Ensure that media visit include itineraries during BRW/F and organise special evening/interviews etc.
All Year	St George's Market	Domestic and international visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop more events in the market that will take place on a regular basis – wine tastings, celebrity appearances, cooking demonstrations. Use the Twilight Market to develop a street food culture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City animation and enhancing the status and positioning of the city. 	BCC Private sector	Constant food stories throughout the year to build on the food and drink messaging.

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	Event/Activity Programme	Audience	Delivery	Belfast objectives	Budget/Source and potential lead partners	PR
All Year	Homeless support	General public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restaurants sign up to encourage customers to add to their bill – donation will be given to homeless organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social responsibility agenda 	n/a	Belfast supports projects that address homelessness and poverty.

2. Developing Expertise

	Audience	delivery concept	Belfast objectives	Budget/Source and potential lead partners	PR
Focus on Food Conference Annual	Food and hospitality industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2016 event delivered by Belfast City Council. • Encourage other bodies to commit to delivering an annual conference. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase links between the agri-food sector and the hospitality sector through the meet the supplier workshop • Create new food tourism products • Support standards and skills service in the hospitality sector • Increase the promotion of local producers on menus in restaurants – as a requirement to participate 	20k BCC/DARD Private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ROI and National coverage via Tourism NI plans - conference key note speakers will present a good opportunity to maximise PR and promote the city • Social media – last year's conference generated extensive social media content.

3. Marketing and Publicity

Activity	Detail	Lead organisation	Budget
PR "Wow" events	Belfast "Take Away" – take the Belfast food and drink experience to key markets.	VB BCC TNI TIL FNI	Budget to be identified to cover flights, venue costs, entertainment, video coverage, management.
Food and Drink marketing and communications	Showcasing the vibrancy of the city's food and drink scene/vibrant and charismatic producers, chefs. Researching and discovering the quirky stories that will be carried in communications and messaging. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated food and drink promotion • Food blogs • Videos • Snapchat • Pinterest 	VB BCC TNI TIL F NI	
Food and drink publicity	Identifying key influencers and press to check out the food scene in Belfast – from ROI, GB, International markets – establish good relationships.	TIL T NI VB BCC F NI	