



Subject:	Routes Europe Conference 2017
Date:	12 October 2016
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
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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 the report is to advise Members of an upcoming business tourism event taking place in Belfast in April 2017, the annual Routes Europe conference and to secure Committee agreement for Council funding towards the costs associated with hosting this very significant event in the City.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the upcoming Routes Europe conference which will take place in Belfast for the first time in April 2017• Agree that the £100,000 planned subvention to support the event in the city is now confirmed. This amount was planned for given the importance of this particular conference to the Belfast economy and is in the Department's budget.
3.0	Main report
3.1	The newly extended Belfast Waterfront has been attracting conference and exhibitions since its opening in April 2016 which have had a significant impact on the local economy. In its first quarter it has hosted 9 major conferences, including the Association of Surgeons of the UK & Ireland and The World Council of Credit Unions, which generated

	<p>almost 10k out of state delegate days and had an estimated economic impact of £4.68million. This year the Belfast Waterfront is forecasting it will host 23 national and international conferences anticipated to generate in the region of 44,000 delegate days, with an economic return to the city of £19m.</p>
3.2	<p>The target by 2020 is for the Belfast Waterfront to be attracting 50,000 delegate days, with an economic return to the city of £35m a year. The future programme of conferences is very strong, with 16 National/International conferences confirmed for 2017/18 already. The Routes Europe conference, another major conferencing event, is due to take place in the newly extended Belfast Waterfront in April 2017. Hosting the conference in the Belfast Waterfront provides the venue with an opportunity to showcase the newly extended conference centre to a wide range of European Corporations, many of which host conferences in their own right. It also provides an opportunity to showcase the new Belfast Waterfront on a global stage, firmly positioning the venue as a world class conference centre.</p>
3.3	<p>Routes Europe is a particularly attractive conference due to the economic impact that it will have, particularly on potential new air routes. It is the largest regional gathering for all aviation-based companies operating in Europe. This major international event brings together decision makers from airlines, airports and tourism authorities to negotiate and build relationships that will shape the world's future air route networks. Routes events occupy a unique position, both in the field of aviation and as an economic development catalyst. Air transport is one of the means of regional economic development and Routes delivers to the event – and the host city – the very people who decide where, when and why the world's airlines fly.</p>
3.4	<p>Routes Europe is an annual event which takes place in major European cities over a three day period. Following a successful bid by the city of Belfast – comprising a partnership of Visit Belfast, Invest NI, Belfast City Council, Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and the airports – the Routes Europe 2017 event will take place in Belfast on 23-25 April 2017. The delegates are considered to be 'guests' of Routes and therefore of the host city which will provide Belfast with a rare opportunity to bring influential decision makers into the city, make them welcome, build a relationship with them and seek future partnerships.</p>
3.5	<p>It is estimated that the event will attract around 1,000 delegates representing more than 100 global airlines, airports and tourism promotion agencies. In addition to the significant</p>

financial impact of the delegate spend – estimated at around £1.3million – the event presents an excellent opportunity to provide the economic and tourism potential of the city of Belfast to a range of decision-makers, focusing on the key messaging identified within the emerging city narrative whilst showcasing all that is on offer for airlines, tourists, businesses and inward investors. It also provides the City with an opportunity to positively change perceptions about our airport(s) and Belfast as a destination.

3.6 The main conference and showcase will take place in the Belfast Waterfront while a welcome dinner is planned for Belfast City Hall and a gala networking event is to take place in Titanic Belfast. Organisers and the local team are also currently working on a programme of supporting events across the city. Research shows that the host city has a significant impact on delegates' overall satisfaction and the Belfast Waterfront will be able to showcase that it can deliver well-organised meetings and a high standard of events in a luxurious, state of the art, riverside location presenting a positive impression of the city.

3.7 The Routes Europe conference has the potential to accelerate air route development. Previous host cities report that they have secured agreement on up to six new routes after holding the event as well as increases in airline operations over subsequent years. Members will be aware that air route connectivity has been identified as one of the most critical elements required to support future tourism and business growth. The Integrated Tourism Strategy noted that limitations in air route connections to key business destinations was one of the most significant challenges to the ambition of doubling the value of tourism. Routes Europe helps support a fundamental part of the business tourism strategy – business and leisure tourism is of key importance in growing the tourism industry and doubling tourism spend by 2020.

3.8 The Northern Ireland Executive has invested in a range of incentives to secure key routes from the region's airports. Despite this, there are opportunities for further development – particularly to a number of key European business hubs – and it is considered that this event will be a critical part of work to secure these new routes. Longer term benefits will also come from the extensive international PR coverage for Belfast that the conference will generate and this can be used to profile the city as an attractive leisure and business tourism destination and to carry some of the key messages around the business and investment opportunities in the city.

Routes Europe have indicated the benefits to a city hosting the event, which includes PR

<p>3.9</p> <p>3.10</p> <p>3.11</p> <p>3.12</p>	<p>coverage, potential new airline routes and additional leisure/business tourism visitors, is in the region of £50m+.</p> <p>In order to support the bid, a funding package is required from the various partners involved. In principle Invest NI has agreed approximately £300k with TIL agreeing £20k, TNI £165k, Visit Belfast £20k, BUWH Ltd £10k and the Airports approximately £100k each. Final details of the event are still being discussed but Belfast City Council has been requested to provide financial support of £100k towards the costs of hosting the event at the Belfast Waterfront.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The Council contribution towards the hosting of the event is £100,000. These costs have been set aside within existing budgets as this event has been in the planning process for some time. The difference in this conference from others is that it was allocated to Belfast as an economic initiative as part of a joint city bid. The baton was passed over from Krakow to Belfast last April. However to attract such an event all cities have to provide significant subvention which is to be shared among the partners.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations implications.</p> <p><i>Abbreviations</i></p> <p>BWUH Ltd – Belfast Waterfront Ulster Hall Limited</p> <p>TIL – Tourism Ireland</p> <p>TNI – Tourism Northern Ireland</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>None</p>