



Subject:	Routes Europe Conference 2017
Date:	11 January 2017
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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 this report is to update Members on the upcoming business tourism event taking place in Belfast in April 2017, the annual Routes Europe Conference.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the update on the Routes Europe Conference which will take place in Belfast for the first time on 23-25 April 2017.
3.0	Main report
3.1	In October 2016, the Council agreed to commit £100,000 to support the costs of hosting the 2017 Routes Europe event at Belfast Waterfront. Routes Europe have indicated that the benefits to a city hosting the event in terms of positive PR coverage, potential new airline routes announcements and additional leisure/business tourism visitors, could be in the region of more than £50million. This is based on feedback and measurement of Routes Conferences that have been held in other cities.
3.2	The bid for Belfast involves financial contributions from a range of partners. These include:

- Approximately £348,000 agreed by Invest NI. (In addition, they have spent £137,000 securing the Routes Conference for Belfast City)
- Tourism Ireland (TIL) - £20,000
- Tourism NI (TNI) - £165,000
- Visit Belfast - £20,000
- BWUH Ltd - £10,000
- Local airports - approximately £100,000 each

3.3

In addition to these funding contributions, all partners are also making additional contributions in-kind in order to ensure the success of the event.

3.4

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 key decision makers within the industry.

3.5

Routes Europe is an annual event which takes place in major European cities over a three day period. Following the successful bid by Belfast, the Routes Europe 2017 event will take place in the city 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.

3.6

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 financial impact of the delegate spend – estimated at around £1.3million – the event presents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate 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 airports and Belfast as a destination. There is a significant

promotional campaign underway for the event at present, and one of the key recent promotional opportunities has been at the World Routes conference which took place in Chengdu, China in September 2016.

3.7

The main Conference and showcase will take place in the Belfast Waterfront while a welcome reception will be held in Belfast City Hall and a gala networking event in Titanic Belfast. Organisers and the local team are working closely together on a programme of supporting events across the city. This “Team Belfast” approach has ensured joined-up working with all partners. 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.

3.8

In addition to the main conference programme, the local planning group is currently looking at animating the city during the event. This may include banners as well as some cultural animation. Tourism NI is also providing four delegate tours and these will be offered as part of a side programme to the main conference.

3.9

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.

3.10

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

3.11	<p>investment opportunities in the city.</p> <p>To ensure the successful delivery of the event and ensure that the City realises the full benefits of hosting such a Conference three working groups have been set up to co-ordinate the event:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Marketing/Communications group</u> Met 7 November. Working group with Event-ful Event Management company and all stakeholders to get partners up to speed on all aspects of event. - <u>Logistics group</u> Met 14 November. Working group with Invest NI, Visit Belfast, Event-ful Event Management, Tourism NI, Belfast International Airport, Belfast City Airport and Belfast Waterfront specifically relating to logistics, airport welcome, coach tendering and delegate transport and scheduling. - <u>Events group</u> Met 15 November. Working group with Invest NI, Visit Belfast, Event-ful Event Management, Tourism NI and Belfast City Council specifically relating to Welcome reception, networking event and animating the city
3.12	<p>These groups will continue to meet in the run-up to the event in order to ensure that all planning details for the event are taken care of and that the City makes the most of this opportunity to showcase Belfast as a successful business and tourism destination. A further progress report on all of this work will be brought to Committee prior to the April 2017 event.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The £100,000 funding allocation has already been approved by the Committee and is built into the 2016/17 budget and Q2 year end forecast.</p>
3.14	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None