



Subject:	Community Based Tourism Programme
Date:	9 August 2017
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide Members with an update on the work to date on the Community Based Tourism Programme• Seek Members' approval to progress with a number of priority actions under this programme for the 2017/18 financial year.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the contents of the report; and• Consider the key areas of focus for 2017-18 as set out and endorse delivery of the actions and associated budgets as outlined.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Integrated Tourism Strategy was approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May 2015. The Strategy was developed in tandem with the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Investment Plan and the proposals are aligned to support the future development, economic growth and profile of the city.</p>
3.2	<p>The vision is to develop Belfast as a city that wants to welcome the world and share its history by creating a destination that the world wants to experience first hand. The strategic goal is to double the value of tourism by 2020 with the focus on achieving this by generating discretionary tourist overnight stays, especially higher value leisure and business tourism.</p>
3.3	<p>The strategy sets out a number of priority areas for investment, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitor management – providing excellence in visitor management standards through our £1.8 million investment in Visit Belfast on an annual basis, as well as securing more recently, coach parking in the city. - Capacity building development – building the capacity of locally-based tourism providers to develop their products and sell more effectively with plans now in place to progress Community Tourism. - Business tourism – supporting investment in business tourism through our investment in the subvention programme in partnership with Tourism NI. - Increased tourism product – particularly through new hotel developments and progress to develop the Belfast Story Visitor attraction. - Improved quality of service – improving customer service standards across all hospitality establishments through the provision of training programme such as World Host and training programmes offered through the hospitality academy which is managed by Council’s Economic Initiatives team. - Increased marketing activity – targeting key market segments and partnering with organisations through partnership working with Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast.
3.4	<p>Members will be aware that approval was given in May 2017 for the delivery of this year’s Tourism Plan. One of the key actions contained within that report was the development of community tourism and the importance of supporting the development of local tourism products across the city which will ensure the benefits of tourism growth are felt across Belfast – not just in the city centre.</p>

3.5	<p><u>Local Tourism</u></p> <p>Since then, Officers have been working with key organisations including Tourism NI and local tourism organisations such as East West Tourism Development Steering Group (involving East Belfast Partnership and Fáilte Feirste Thiar) to identify and explore opportunities for supporting the development of local tourism. From the engagement to date with these organisations, officers have developed a proposal for enhancing local tourism in the current financial year.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Programme Overview</u></p> <p>The aim of the community-based tourism programme is to develop tourism infrastructure across the city, provide support to tourism-related businesses and enhance the product offer in local areas. The programme will focus on enhancing capacity by upskilling local organisations and businesses with a view to improving quality standards and diversifying the product offer and will add value to the current tourism offering. In order to provide oversight and to ensure alignment with wider investment in the sector and with local regeneration activity, the development and delivery of the programme will be overseen by a stakeholder advisory committee which will consist of key tourism bodies such as Tourism NI, Visit Belfast, Tourism Ireland and relevant officers from Belfast City Council. This will ensure that the activities developed complement how, for example, Belfast goes to market and will help all parts of the city to benefit from the projected growth in tourism in the coming years.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Mechanisms for delivery</u></p> <p>Officers are currently compiling a baseline of the local tourism infrastructure across the City. This will cover not only the facilities (hotels, restaurants, visitor attractions, tours etc.) but also the level of investment in skills (e.g. World Host) and planned infrastructure investment (new hotels, new visitor experiences such as St Comgall's and Connswater Greenway (both supported by Belfast City Council). Taking account of the likely business growth in tourism and hospitality in the coming years, Officers will work with local tourism organisations to build capacity to ensure that these areas can benefit from the growth and maximise the economic return all across Belfast.</p>
3.8	<p>Following engagement with a number of organisations as part of the planning and development work, it is proposed that the first stage of activity will be to work with partners in east and west Belfast. Both have dedicated organisations working to support local tourism (Eastside Visitor Centre and Fáilte Feirste Thiar) and this will be important in acting as a focal point for the programme activity. Both East and West Belfast festivals, cultural organisations</p>

and tourism organisations have developed a positive and practical working relationship and have built momentum for future engagement and activity. They have developed initiatives collectively that have had positive outcomes in growing visitor numbers, enhancing product and brand awareness and securing further investment. This proposal, therefore, is to pilot a programme of support this year that will build on the work already undertaken specifically in these areas and to use this as a model of working to support the development and implementation of local tourism frameworks in other parts of the city.

3.9 In parallel with the dedicated programme of work in East and West Belfast, Council Officers will engage with relevant local tourism organisations in other parts of the City to see how the local tourism initiatives can be developed in these locations and will bring forward relevant initiatives in conjunction with these organisations, and in line with the broader objectives of this programme.

3.10 While the final details of the programme are still under development, it is likely to comprise the following elements:

- Establishment of a local tourism stakeholder forum

The development of a localised stakeholder forum who will oversee the delivery of the programme and will include participation from Visit Belfast, Tourism NI and Belfast City Council. This forum will support and develop community-led tourism with Belfast's statutory tourism bodies and will work with local communities to build capacity and develop new investment in key areas.

- Investment in local staff resources

For this initiative to be meaningful in its implementation, partners have identified the need for dedicated resources. It is proposed that this approach is tested out in the east and west of the City in order to evaluate how this can drive the sectoral development activities. Council Officers from the Tourism Development team will work closely with the local staff to ensure alignment with wider Council and Tourism NI activity and to share lessons across other local areas.

- Capacity Building

A series of masterclasses/workshops will be delivered that will be needs-led and build the capacity of local organisations and businesses. A number of businesses will also be targeted to avail of programmes such as the World Host accredited training, sales and marketing training and other relevant programmes. This will ensure that the businesses receive the necessary training to become recognised in supplying the highest levels of customer service.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Employability opportunities</u> Additionally, the programme will examine the potential for the delivery of localised hospitality recruitment programmes. This area of work will be delivered in liaison with the Council's Employability and Skills team. Partners will engage with local schools to raise awareness of the career opportunities provided by the tourism industry. • <u>Marketing</u> This element of work will consider how the narrative of Belfast's story could redefine the city in its marketing and brand positioning efforts in partnership with Visit Belfast and Tourism NI from the Visitor servicing perspective.
3.11	<p>The programme will be expected to deliver on a series of agreed outcomes and targets. These will align to Belfast Agenda targets and will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in jobs • Improvement in skills • Additional visitor spend • Increase in overnight stays.
3.12	<p>Members will be aware that Belfast City Council, in conjunction with Derry City and Strabane District Council, has agreed to submit a joint bid for European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2023. Lessons learned from previous Cities of Culture have shown the importance of developing a sustainable investment programme to underpin the viability of the ECoC designation – not only for the year but also in the run-up and after the event. They also point to the potentially significant return on investment and there are numerous examples of how local communities have benefitted from investment both in terms of jobs created but also in terms of civic pride and engagement. By this early investment in local tourism support, there is an opportunity to secure buy-in and build capacity as part of the development phase of the bid.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Activities identified will be resourced from the agreed Departmental budget allocations for the current financial year. These have already been approved by the Committee as part of the estimates process.</p>
3.14	<p>The total budget available for this programme is £130,000 of which £80,000 will be allocated specifically towards the activities in east and west Belfast. The remaining budget will support</p>

3.15	<p>wider interventions that Belfast City Council and Tourism NI will deliver to support local tourism across all of the City.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The Tourism Strategy was screened out and any major projects will be taken forward in consultation with the Council's Equality and Diversity Officer.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None