



Subject:	Creation of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance
Date:	7 February 2018
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to advise Members of correspondence received from Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) regarding the creation of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA). At the City Growth & Regeneration Committee meeting in January, Members asked for a number of clarifications on a previous report on this proposal.
1.2	TNI have asked that Belfast City Council becomes a member of the Alliance at a cost of £2,000 per year.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the request for Belfast City Council to become a member of the NI Tourism Alliance.</li> <li>• Approve the contribution of £2,000 per annum for an initial period of 3 years.</li> <li>• Funding to come from within the Development Department’s existing budget.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>Members will be aware of the growing importance of the tourism industry to Belfast and Northern Ireland. It is estimated that around 18,000 people are employed in the tourism and hospitality sector. The significant growth in hotel development – with an additional 1,000 rooms becoming available in 2018 – will only serve to increase the employment potential of the sector.</p>
3.2	<p>At present, hospitality accounts for around 5.2% of GDP. This is around half of the figure for comparative cities across the UK and this demonstrates the potential for additional development.</p>
3.3	<p>Unlike other industry sectors, tourism and hospitality does not have a strong industry body to represent its interests to government and to provide a focal point for engagement with the sector. Taking account of this, Tourism NI has been working with a number of key representatives from the sector and agreement has been reached to establish the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance.</p>
3.4	<p>Recently, a number of trade associations and tourism businesses comprising senior and influential stakeholders from across the NI tourism sector have come together in recent months to seek the formation of such a body. Tourism NI as the lead agency for the development of tourism in Northern Ireland has sought to support the group in its efforts by facilitating this process. However, it is important to note that whilst Tourism Northern Ireland is a non-departmental public body of the Department for the Economy (DFE) this initiative is private sector led.</p>
3.5	<p>The group has progressed matters to the point of incorporation of a LTD Company with agreed Articles of Association in place. It is their desire for this Limited Company to be formally known as ‘The Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance’. Such a name will demonstrate that the organisation speaks with the necessary authority as a pre-eminent and substantial</p>

representative for its sector across Northern Ireland.

3.6

The purpose of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance is to champion the tourism sector and its benefits to the regional economy, make the case for resources to be made available for the development and delivery of tourism growth, including the work of local government, and to advocate for positive policy change in areas such as VAT, Air Passenger Duty and Licencing Legislation.

3.7

A Steering Group has been established to explore the potential for creating an independent, private sector – led representative body for the tourism industry. The group met in early December 2017 and the meeting was facilitated by Tourism NI and chaired by Ellvena Graham, Chair of NI Chamber of Commerce and Chair of Belfast Waterfront Board.

3.8

The Steering Group agreed that it would be important to have all 11 Local Authorities engaged as members of the Alliance, given local government's role in delivering major visitors attractions, visitor servicing through Tourist Information Centres, regeneration and development of their local tourism industries. It was also recognised that given the scale of the contribution made by the local government sector that it should be afforded a seat at the Executive of the Alliance.

3.9

#### Membership of the NI Tourism Alliance

Currently seventeen organisations from the tourism industry have agreed to become members. These organisations will represent the views of its membership (smaller organisations) and make submissions and representations to industry leaders, government departments, agencies and other bodies which impact upon the tourism industry in Northern Ireland so as to develop a collective position on behalf of the sector. In order to ensure the Alliance is suitably resourced these organisations have also agreed to make a financial contribution of £5,000 so that the alliance is suitably resourced to fulfil its objectives. These organisations include: Belfast Harbour, George Best Belfast City Airport, Belfast International Airport, British Airways, Aer Lingus, FlyBe, NI Hotels Federation, National Trust, National Museums NI, Titanic Belfast, Visit Belfast, Hospitality Ulster, Translink, Stena Line, ABTA, NI Federation of Passenger Transport and Food NI.

3.10

In addition, it was felt that local authorities would have a good understanding of local tourism opportunities and challenges so it would be productive to have local government representation on the Executive.

#### Partnership with ROI (The Irish Tourism Industry Confederation)

3.11	<p>The Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance will work with the equivalent partner in the ROI (The Irish Tourism Industry Confederation - ITIC) and other jurisdictions where it is mutually beneficial to do so, collating research in international markets for example and the sharing of information and best practice. The former CEO of the ITIC was an adviser to the steering group tasked with setting NITA up.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Tourism NI's Role</u></p> <p>Tourism NI will provide £30,000 support and will act as observers at meetings of Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance. This is to ensure that there is no conflict of interest and that the group is independent from Government. This reflects the position adopted by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland in relation to Irish Tourism Industry Confederation in the ROI.</p>
3.13	<p>The Steering Group has proposed that each of the Councils contribute £2,000 per annum towards the running costs and all Councils have been approached to provide this support.</p>
3.14	<p>A Board will be appointed by the members at the first full meeting of the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance. It has been agreed that the Board should be reflective of the breadth of the tourism industry. It has however been agreed by the Steering Group that there will be at least one local government representative on the Tourism Alliance Board to reflect the collective contribution of Councils to the body and its importance within the tourism industry.</p>
3.15	<p>It is considered that the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance will provide a useful vehicle for engagement with the industry. Likewise, it will help increase the profile of the industry to government and, in turn, help shine the spotlight on the economic potential of the sector. This is likely to lead to additional focus and resources being directed to support sector growth. Given the potential of the sector in Belfast, this will have a positive impact on the City.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations implications.</p>
3.17	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The contribution required from Belfast City Council is £2,000 per annum for three years initially and would be provided from existing Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts annual budget.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None.

